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**'F – F – FELT IT': BREATHING FEMINIST, QUEER AND
CLOWN THINKING INTO THE PRACTICE AND STUDY OF
SARAH KANE'S *CLEANSED* AND *BLASTED***

NINA ROSANNE KANE

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE
OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract:

This thesis uses studio practice, scholarly research, close reading of text, performance observation and conversation with practitioners to establish diverse readings of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*. It includes original material from the 2012 productions of *Cleansed* in Japan (Kamome-za Fringe Theatre), and in Ireland (Bare Cheek Theatre). It notes practice on *Cleansed* in gallery spaces (Cast-Off Drama, UK). It offers a dramaturgical approach to workshopping the play from a feminist and queer position, informed by theories of gender and transgender, and the marginalised, loving and delinquent practice of clowning. The research discusses principles of breath, voice and sexuate difference drawing primarily on the philosophies of Luce Irigaray, on the voice practice of Cicely Berry and the clown teaching of Sue Morrison.

The work challenges the 'in-her-face' theatre discourse on Kane arguing that it represents a McDonaldization of its subject matter, and an insidious trivialisation of her texts. It offers new thinking on the opening night of *Blasted* (1995), suggesting that the 'furore' was fuelled by collective male hysteria and superstition; its roots centred in mourning. Analysing *Cleansed* in relation to Edward Bond's *Saved* and *Lear*, it explores tropes of ghosts, stitching and the silent scream, and argues that Kane militates for gynocentric time and becoming. It analyses the symbol of the perimeter fence as a feature of 1980s Britain, noting the strength of binary associations configured in it with reference to both English football hooliganism (male) and the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (female). It argues that Kane sets up heteronormative binaries in *Cleansed* to debate and contest them.

A key conclusion of the thesis is that *Cleansed* politically addresses and dramatises issues of transgender experience presenting accounts of gender violence, mutability, transitioning, the sharp fractures and silences of gender dysphoria, but also, ultimately, queer desire, love and optimism.

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1. Overview

This thesis is a qualitative report into the complexities of staging Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* (1998).¹ The work has fused both practice and intellectual enquiry in alternating measure – one informing the other cyclically. It is interdisciplinary in both its practice methodologies and its theoretical bases. At a working level it is essentially a piece of 'practice-based research';² however, in its presentation, and for the purposes of assessment, I offer it as a 100,000-word written document designed to provoke thought and prompt practical experimentation and enquiry for anyone with an inclination to stage Kane's text. The balance between practice and writing offered here is that identified by Elliott Eisner thus:

the products of this research are closer in function to deep conversation and insightful dialogue than they are to error-free conclusions.³

More centrally, this thesis is a work of dramaturgical enquiry. It uses studio practice, scholarly research, close reading of the text, performance observation and conversation with practitioners to establish readings of and approaches to the play.⁴ As part of this, I have undertaken a four-year practical investigation of Kane's *Cleansed* with actors and non-actors within a university drama department, a community arts

¹ The 1998 script differs very slightly from the one published in 2000. S. Kane, *Cleansed*, London, Methuen Drama, 1998. S. Kane, *Cleansed*, London, Methuen Drama, 2000. S. Kane, *Complete Plays*, London, Methuen Drama, 2001, pp. 105-151. I will cite from the *Complete Plays* version in this thesis.

² H. Smith and R.T. Dean (eds.), *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, 2nd edition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010. First published in 2009. I have found discussions by Kathleen Vaughan, Baz Kershaw, Brad Haseman & Daniel Mafe and Anne Brewster enlightening in considering the contextualisation of practice and theory in this thesis.

³ E. Eisner, 'Art and Knowledge', in J.G. Knowles and A.L. Cole (eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples and Issues*, Thousand Oaks, CA., Sage, 2008, pp. 3-12. This observation is made on p. 7 of Eisner's text; also in K. Vaughan, 'Mariposa: The Story of New Work of Research/ Creation, Taking Shape, Taking Flight' in Smith and Dean, *Practice-Led Research*, op. cit., pp. 166-186. Vaughan quotes Eisner on p. 170 of her article.

⁴ E. Barrett and B. Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, London and New York, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010. First published in 2007. See in particular, articles by Annette Iggulden, Shaun McLeod, Barbara Bolt, Stephen Goddard, Brad Haseman and Estelle Barrett.

space and a city centre art gallery.⁵ Sections of this thesis have been disseminated in the public domain in papers given at the Universities of Huddersfield (UK), Szeged (Hungary), Lincoln (UK) and Warwick (UK).⁶ It has also been disseminated through my solo performance work at Leeds Art Gallery (UK) and as part of a community arts exhibition at Leeds Central Library Exhibitions' Space (UK).⁷ The structure, practice and ethos of the research's activities and dissemination reflects a politicised community arts thinking. This thinking owes much to my training experiences in community theatre in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s, also to a long professional history as an adult-educator of experimental combined arts practice in public spaces.⁸

The thesis reflects a dramaturgical approach that develops from 'negotiating a many-hatted professional existence'.⁹ Tamsen Wolff identifies this pattern of working as feminised and queer; a notion she usefully problematises with regard to questions of economics, access to resources, gender stereotyping and professional recognition. It is nevertheless, she suggests, an approach that offers much to drama for the progression of practice and thinking:

⁵ See under Live Performances, Exhibitions and Projects: *I Love To You*, the Sarah Kane Research Group, Gallery Workshops on *Cleansed*, *Keen*, *Faun*, the *Elements* Project and *Wolf*. With the exception of the Sarah Kane Research Group, all practice-based aspects of the research were undertaken through my professional theatre company, Cast-Off Drama. N. Kane, 'Cast-Off Drama: A Theatre Company of Life-Models, Street Performers and Itinerant Artists', [web blog], 2002, <http://www.castoffdrama.blogspot.com>, (accessed 1 June 2013).

⁶ See chapters 2.ii, 3.i, 4 and 5.iii.

⁷ Cast-Off Drama, '*mother bird* residency: A Gallery Interpretation of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*', Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 2-8 July 2012. I note in particular, performed readings of early drafts of the written thesis in the public space of the gallery on 6 July 2012; and the open display of rough drafts of the thesis in an installation work left for gallery visitors to read and comment on, 6-8 July. Thesis findings and documents were also displayed publicly in the *Out of the Blue* exhibition, Modelworks, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Central Library Exhibitions' Space, UK, 3-31 October 2012.

⁸ N. Kane, 'Embodying the Other': Pedagogic and Performative Strategies Used in *The Art of the Life-Model* Course, 2002-2007, Research Series Commission, Community Education, Leeds College of Art & Design, Leeds, UK, 2007. Copies: Leeds College of Art Libraries, Leeds Art Gallery Education Department.

⁹ T. Wolff, 'Women's Work: Gender and Dramaturgy', *Theatre Topics*, vol. 13, no. 1, March 2003, pp. 103-104.

Negotiating a many-hatted professional existence has consistently fed my belief that teaching, theatre scholarship, criticism, writing, directing and dramaturgy are interdependent, and that each, done well, is essential to the health of the others.¹⁰

I concur with Wolff's observations here, and would also add 'performance' to this list. I further note from years of practice that negotiating ones 'many hats' and using this to make meaning is an aspect of clowning. I will discuss Dramaturgy and Clowning in the latter section of this Overview.

The initial premise for this doctoral study was that it is possible to establish a double heritage of influence on Sarah Kane's work from both theatre and performance art sources. The idea developed from my Master's thesis, where I analysed crossovers and trajectories in 'The Treatment of Rape in Women's Performance Art and Sarah Kane's *Blasted*'.¹¹ In researching this, I traced performance art indicators in each of Kane's five published plays, and mapped them with a selection of performance art works from the 1950s-1990s, illustrating resonances – thematic aesthetic, political – and sometimes concrete stage images born of performance art antecedents.¹² The written thesis was accompanied by a seminar in which I presented the selection of performance art images traced for each play as a series of five visual maps pinned up on the walls of the seminar room. The findings of this research, and the visual map of *Cleansed*, informed the practical aspects of the doctoral research in its early stages.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹¹ N. Kane, *The Treatment of Rape in Women's Performance Art and Sarah Kane's Blasted*, Master's Thesis, Drama Department, University of Huddersfield, 2008. See Kane, *Complete Plays*, *op. cit.* pp. 1-61 for the full script of *Blasted*.

¹² N. Kane, *Mapping Performance Art Influence and Images in Sarah Kane's Plays*, Seminar Presentation, Drama Department, University of Huddersfield, 1 February 2008.

Whilst rape and sexual violence emerge as a key connecting theme in literal readings of Kane's plays, the process of visual mapping through performance art reference, reveals stark differences in mood, association and conceptual structure, when applied play by play. These differences were noted by participants in the 2008 seminar. Read visually, the plays present as discrete entities, each very different from the other. Subsequent and deeper reading of the works with these maps in mind reveal further differences between Kane's plays in content, language, rhythm, voice, physicality, mood and formal structure. Working from an awareness of each play's distinctive ontology, this thesis therefore recognises and problematises a convention within Kane scholarship that requires writers to address all her plays in their analysis, sometimes in equal balance. I have chosen not to do this, as I feel that to do so can often result in the depths of each work not being fully explored, and through this, the agency of each work to speak differently to the world around it is frequently curtailed.

This research suggests, however, that it is important to understand how the development of a play comes about in the context of the writer's other work, also to consider a writer's working processes and stated intentions where found. Kane was an active director, performer, script-reader, workshop facilitator, newspaper contributor and a reviewer of other playwrights' works. She was frequently engaged in writing two scripts at once, and there is ample documentary evidence of her approach to the craft, also her beliefs and opinions about theatre and its functions. This thesis argues that useful understandings can be gained from looking more closely at the chronology, context and processes of Kane's scriptwriting practice, and seeks to demonstrate how a feminist, queer and clown dramaturgy can be offered for staging *Cleansed*, when this

evidence is attended to. It suggests that a too-close adherence to the chronology of the plays as premiered in the London theatres and ordered in *Complete Plays*, can lead to blind spots and misreading of Kane's *oeuvre*, and argues instead for a focus on process and practice.

I note a continuum between *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, Kane working on the latter play as early as January 1995.¹³ My dramaturgical exploration of *Cleansed* is therefore supported with theoretical writing on *Blasted* in this thesis. I am interested in the connection between *Blasted* and *Cleansed* with regard to binary and heteronormative structures of gender, and the exploration and deconstruction of these by Kane as she moves from the earlier play to the later. I suggest that the excessive focus on the media hysteria around the opening night of *Blasted* in 1995, has interrupted and obscured recognition of this continuity in pernicious and aggressive ways. As such, this thesis offers further feminist intervention (both a weaving on and an unravelling of) what Elaine Aston usefully terms 'the fabric of *Blasted*'; with the intention of building better understanding of how gender has operated (and continues to operate) in relation to Kane's plays, their staging and their reception.¹⁴

¹³ Note: Mel Kenyon, 'I think *Cleansed* was a slow-burner. We spoke about it relatively early on, shortly after *Blasted* came out'; 'Conversation with Mel Kenyon', in G. Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002, pp. 143-153, this quote, p. 151; and Sarah Kane: 'I started it before *Blasted* was produced and it took three-and-a-half years to write', in A. Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Theatre Today*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd, p. 116. See also, Mark Ravenhill, 'In the summer of 1997, she gave me a copy of her play *Cleansed* to read', M. Ravenhill, 'Obituary: Sarah Kane', *Independent*, 23 February 1999, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-sarah-kane-1072624.html>, (accessed 28 January 2013); also, Sarah Kane: 'I'd actually finished *Cleansed* when I directed *Woyzeck*', in G. Saunders, *About Kane: the Playwright and the Work*, London, Faber & Faber, 2009, p. 43. These sources date *Cleansed* as being in process from the Summer/Autumn of 1994 to the Summer of 1997, approximately. Mel Kenyon was, and remains, Sarah Kane's literary agent. 'About Casarotto Ramsay & Associates Limited.', <http://www.casarotto.co.uk/about>, ND, (accessed 12 May 2013).

¹⁴ E. Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric of *Blasted*', in L. De Vos and G. Saunders (eds.), *Sarah Kane in Context*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 13-27, this quote, p. 14.

My decision to focus on *Cleansed* for practice-based study was not an immediate choice. The visual mapping of the play was the least appealing to me initially. It revealed a structure that was visceral, bestial, dark, interior, with a focus located closely – too closely for comfort – on the body. There was an immediate intimacy emerging from it that I found uncomfortable – fleshy, sweaty, bloody, hairy. There was something claustrophobic in its institutionalised setting and a focus on clothing, sexual orientation and ‘gender-bending’ in the assorted images that I found heavy and wished to ‘step back’ from.¹⁵ The visual maps referenced a familiar and queer playing of gender themes that I had explored a decade or so earlier and had no particular wish to return to at the time. Yet as I revisited each playtext through reference to the maps and further reading in subsequent weeks, it became apparent that *Cleansed* actually had the strongest ‘claim’ on me. It somehow held something (I did not then know what it would be) that was resonant to my life and important to investigate. In short, the work gradually demanded that I pay attention to it and give it my time. Before I knew it, it had become the one play I wanted to look at, and devote four years of practice and study to.

¹⁵ ‘gender-bending’ as ‘(a) *adj.* that defies or challenges traditional notions of gender, esp. in terms of dress or behaviour; (b) *n.* gender-bending activity; the action or practice of dressing and behaving in a manner characteristic of the opposite sex. ‘The Oxford English Dictionary’, <http://oed.com/view/Entry/77468?redirectedFrom=gender-bending#eid3045282>, ND, (accessed 20 March 2013). Commonly used in queer circles in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s to refer to anything that problematised the constructedness of binary systems of gender. Examples may include androgynous self-presentation, cross-dressing, bisexuality, butch-femme play.

Cleansed is conventionally viewed as a challenging and demanding play.¹⁶ Discussion of this frequently cites Kane's own testified struggles in writing it, also issues in the early productions with regard to staging certain visual images in the script. When this study commenced in 2008, it was the least performed of all Kane's works in the professional, amateur and student sphere.¹⁷ This informed, in part, my decision to investigate *Cleansed* dramaturgically, rather than *Blasted*, which had been the subject of numerous revivals and significant scholarly focus at the time. This has changed in recent years, and *Cleansed* is emerging as a play that theatre-makers seem keen to tackle. Given the tendency in Kane scholarship to centre discussion on the five professional productions gathered together in *Complete Plays*, *Cleansed* is often looked to as marking a middle period in Kane's development as a writer, though it is in fact one of her latest plays to be produced, and one of the earliest to be written. As noted, it had a long gestation period.¹⁸ I suggest that it is a transitional play that marks a maturity and increasing agency in Kane's writerly vision. I will discuss the formal qualities of the work in more depth throughout this thesis, but it is important to note from the outset that *Cleansed* is a play that contains risk, and demands that theatre-makers take risks.

Of central interest to me in this thesis is the scope *Cleansed* offers for exploring gender, and its affinity with feminist and queer themes and politics. In considering the

¹⁶ 'Mel Kenyon' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit., p. 151; and 'Cleansed' in R. Little and E. McLaughlin, *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out*, London, Oberon Books, 2007, pp. 374-375.

¹⁷ In the early stages of the research (2008-2009), I undertook an audit of how many times Kane's plays were performed using general internet searches. A central website of assistance in this task was the one maintained by Iain Fisher. It has a number of chat forums and remains a first point of contact for many people researching Sarah Kane. See I. Fisher, 'A Sarah Kane Site by Iain Fisher', <http://www.iainfisher.com/kane.html>, 2000-2012, (accessed 20 March 2013).

¹⁸ 'Mel Kenyon' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit., pp. 151.

connection between *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, I note the oft-repeated suggestion that Kane considered these plays the first and second works in a proposed trilogy on war.¹⁹ I suggest that gender forms a key site of battle fought by Kane through these texts, and am interested in the structural placing of theatrical ‘bombs’ within each play (see chapter 5.iii). The research concludes that *Cleansed* politically addresses transgender experience, dramatising gender dysphoria, transsexualism and the experience of the transgendered person within medical institutions (see chapter 6). Inherent in this are narratives of gender terrorism and oppression; there are narratives of violence towards the transsexual body and transsexual people; there are accounts of mutability, binary crossings, transitioning and the sharp fractures and silences of gender preoccupation and inversion.²⁰ There are also narratives of healing, change and difference. Centrally, there are narratives of queer desire, love and optimism.

Philosophy and Practice: Three Women Working with Breath.

Two key theoreticians informing my enquiry are Luce Irigaray (b. 1932) and Cicely Berry (b. 1926). Now aged in their 80s with careers spanning six decades, both women still actively contribute to their respective fields and enjoy reputations of significant influence within philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics (Irigaray) and voice work with actors (Berry). Irigaray is an international scholar, and most recently, an Emeritus

¹⁹ *ibid.* It is for this reason that I focus on *Blasted* rather than *Phaedra's Love* in relation to *Cleansed* here. Given that the gestation of *Cleansed* entirely covers the time in which Kane was engaged in the process of writing and directing *Phaedra's Love* nevertheless opens up interesting questions with regard to the relationship between those plays. There is insufficient space to address this here, but I note this as relevant for further enquiry.

²⁰ Dr Louise Chambers argues that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite, transgender, queer and intersex people share a common history of oppression – the history of inversion. I use the term in reference to that principle. L. Chambers, ‘Tales of Inversion’, *Gendered Intelligence Anatomy: Drawing Bodies, Drawing Sex, Drawing Gender Project*, London, UK, 9 February 2013. See Gendered Intelligence, ‘GI Anatomy’, <http://gianatomy.tumblr.com/post/42869550815/week-one-talks-on-the-body-in-art>, ND, (accessed 12 March 2013). An audio recording of Chambers’ talk is due to be posted on this site.

Professor of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool, UK, (2005-2007).²¹ Cicely Berry is Voice Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), UK, a position she has held since 1969.²² Each woman also combines theory with practice interchangeably, developing ideas and applying them in constant exchange with others. I am particularly interested in how Irigaray and Berry's separate theories on the importance of 'breath' converge and complement when placed together in an interdisciplinary context.²³ I also note the importance placed by the practice of each woman on lips, tongue, speech, voice and rhythm.²⁴ I trust their work implicitly when working with it in practice-based situations. This is largely due to the relational values embedded in their methods, and the importance placed on holism, connection, conversation, listening and respect for the other in their theories.

Irigarayan philosophy is woven through every aspect of this thesis, and was the lens through which I viewed and shaped the evidence and reflected on practice. I discuss Irigaray further in the section of the Overview entitled 'Sexuate Difference and Breath'. Applying Berry's work on breath, voice and language was a significant activity in the practice projects informing the research, and also assisted in the literary analysis

²¹ *Concept and Form: The Cahiers pour l'Analyse and Contemporary French Thought*, 'Luce Irigaray', <http://cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/names/irigaray.html>, ND, (accessed 1 June 2013).

²² Royal Shakespeare Company, <http://www.rsc.org.uk/>, ND, (accessed 9 September 2012).

²³ The following texts were researched to explore breath, lips and speech. L. Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air (in Martin Heidegger)*, trans. M.B. Mader, London, The Athlone Press, 1999. L. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, trans. H. Bostic and S. Pluháček, London and New York, Continuum, 2002. L. Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, trans. S. Pluháček, New Delhi, New Age Books, 2005. *Forgetting of Air* was first published as *L'oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger* by Editions de Minuit in 1983. *Between East and West* was first published as *Entre Orient et Occident: De la singularité à la communauté* by Editions Grasset & Fasquelle in 1999.

²⁴ The following texts were researched to explore Berry's voice practice and theory. C. Berry, *Voice and the Actor*, London, Virgin Books Ltd., 2003; first published by Harap Ltd. in 1973. C. Berry, *The Actor and the Text*, Revised Edition, London, Virgin Publishing, 2000; first published as *The Actor and His Text* by Harap Ltd. in 1987. C. Berry, *Text in Action: A Definitive Guide to Exploring Text in Rehearsal for Actors and Directors*, London, Virgin Publishing Ltd, 2001. C. Berry, *From Word to Play: A Handbook for Directors*, London, Oberon Books, 2008.

of scripts. As the experience of practice is not the main focus of this thesis, I will not discuss Berry's work much; rather, I note it as a set of working practices and principles that have informed all aspects of this thesis, and that are of significance to studying and staging Kane's plays.

A third influence on the work with breath in this thesis is clown teacher Sue Morrison (b. 1955). Morrison is an internationally-acclaimed teacher and performer of Clown and Bouffon, noted for her progression of the work of Richard Pochinko (1946-1989). She has been the Artistic Director of the Theatre Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada, since 1993. I undertook a brief but intense study of clown practice with Morrison in June 2004, and this has informed my work ever since.²⁵ As with Berry's work, clowning forms part of the breath sitting under the written words of the thesis.

Kane's Primary Texts and Some Initial Thoughts on Breath.

I now turn to a consideration of resources useful to the Kane scholar, and researched as part of this enquiry. In developing a dramaturgy of *Cleansed*, I have studied all extant works currently available to the general reader from Kane's *oeuvre*. This *oeuvre* comprises three student plays contained in the folio entitled *Sick*, and held in the archives of the Women's Theatre Collection, University of Bristol, UK; *Comic Monologue*, *Starved* and *What She Said* (1991-1992).²⁶ It includes the four professional

²⁵ 'Introduction to Baby Clown', Sue Morrison with Yellow Belly Theatre, Workshop Theatre, University of Leeds, UK, June 2004.

²⁶ I noted the importance of these plays early on in the research and read them at the Theatre Collection archive in Bristol, UK on 25 August 2009. See University of Bristol Theatre Collection 'Women's Theatre Collection', <http://www.bris.ac.uk/theatreollection/women.html>, 2002-2012, (accessed 21 March 2013). The monologues are mentioned in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 149n, but there was little discussion of them until recently. More scholarly consideration is now, thankfully, being given to these. See D. Rebellato, 'Sarah Kane before *Blasted*: the monologues', in

works produced within her lifetime – *Blasted* (1995), *Phaedra's Love* (1996), *Cleansed* (1998) and *Crave* (1998), and the one produced posthumously – *4.48 Psychosis* (2000).²⁷ It also includes the 11-minute short film *Skin*, initially screened at the London Film Festival in 1995 and subsequently shown on Channel 4 television in June 1997.²⁸ Final-edit scripts for the five professional productions and the film can be found in the aforementioned *Complete Plays*.

A text of interest to this research has been the original playscript for *Blasted*, reproduced in *Frontline Intelligence 2*.²⁹ This was published in the autumn of 1994 following Kane's student-showing of the work at the MA graduation performance, Birmingham University, UK.³⁰ In her introduction, Pamela Edwardes describes the playwrights featured as:

the most original and exciting new voices for the nineties [...] whose work demonstrates a preoccupation with crime.³¹

This is an interesting assessment of *Blasted*. Edwardes states that Kane's focus on crime is concerned specifically with 'war crimes' – an analysis which situates Kane as a political writer from the outset.³² Kane's contribution to the *Frontline Intelligence*

Saunders and De Vos, op. cit., pp. 28-44, also in the same collection, Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', op. cit.

²⁷ Kane, *Complete Plays*, op. cit. For *Phaedra's Love*, see pp. 63-103, for *Crave* see pp. 153-201 and for *4.48 Psychosis* see pp. 203-245.

²⁸ *Skin*, dir. Vincent O'Connell, UK, Tapson Steel Films, British Screen and Channel 4, 1995. Available online at Youtube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z35muSIISg>, (accessed 21 March 2013). For Kane's playscript of *Skin* see ibid. pp. 247-268.

²⁹ P. Edwardes (ed.), *Frontline Intelligence 2: New Plays for the Nineties*, Great Britain, Methuen Drama, 1994, pp. 1-51.

³⁰ See Graham Saunders' discussion of this in interview with Aleks Sierz for the Theatre Voice website. Saunders was a fellow student, studying in his final year at Birmingham when Kane was completing her Masters. 'Academic Graham Saunders Assesses Sarah Kane', [online audio recording], 27 August 2009, http://www.theatrevoice.com/2412/academic-graham-saunders-assesses-sarah-kane/#_URKaiZpwZjo, (accessed 4 January 2013).

³¹ Edwardes, *Frontline Intelligence 2*, op. cit., p. vii.

³² ibid.

collection allows us to consider a different story for the history of *Blasted*, and see the play not just as a 'theatre moment', but as a professional theatre text with a reading public that predates its viewing audience in the London theatre. Approaching the 1994 and 2001 scripts as literary documents of a play at different moments on its journey can provide useful insight into Kane's processes and the impact of professional production on the work.

Pertinent to this particular study on breath and life is Kane's 'Afterword' written in July 1994, in which she says:

Blasted now exists independently of me – as it should do – and to attempt to sum up its genesis and meaning in a few paragraphs would be futile and only of passing interest. If a play is good, it breathes its own air and has a life and voice of its own. What you take that voice to be saying is no concern of mine. It is what it is. Take it or leave it.³³

In this statement, Kane asserts the importance of a play's ontology, but goes beyond an accepted concept of 'the world of the play', to conjure more intensely an idea that a play has its own life, breath, lungs and voice.³⁴ Kane's view of her own play is of something that has depended on her but now exists 'independently' as a breathing, embodied entity, complete with its own life; as such it will essentially speak for itself to an audience or reader.³⁵ It is a generative image, and one that has associations with

³³ Edwardes, *Frontline Intelligence 2*, op. cit., p. 51. Kane's fascinating 'Afterword' on *Blasted* is not included in the *Complete Plays* edition. See also Saunders in *Love Me or Kill Me*, pp. 26-27.

³⁴ Through this, Kane is building on a concept central to Berry's work, where she defines language and independent use of the voice as the key to entering into and unlocking the play's world. Berry notes, 'I have listed all the rehearsal strategies which I have developed over the years to free the actor's response to the language itself and to discover other possibilities [...] 'diversion' or 'displacement' strategies [...] which by taking the conscious mind off the literal need to make sense, allow the words to be on the moment and to surprise [...] they are of basic importance, for they allow the words to take us into that other world – the world of the play. That world belongs to us all.' Berry, *From Word to Play*, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁵ The idea that the autonomy and life of the play, is discovered by a reader, production cast or audience member, bears some relevance to Roland Barthes' concept of the *Death of the Author*. I note

birthing and release. In Irigarayan terms it evokes resonance with the philosophy of placental economy.³⁶ Debra Bergoffen usefully describes this as an economy that:

thinks autonomy according to a deconstructive logic of difference and a feminist ethics of generosity.³⁷

Applied to dramatic writing processes, it allows one to envision the relationship between a playwright and text, as being:

regulated by a space between one and another that belongs to both and to neither, and that is characterized by intimate relations of contiguity and contact, rather than substitution or negation. It thus allows differences to remain palpable between two beings who are nonetheless not straightforwardly separable.³⁸

I have found this of interest when considering Kane's rehearsal processes and practice as a director, and her presence/activity as a writer in the rehearsal room.³⁹

Irigaray's work on the placental economy concords with feminist politics and interventions concerned with establishing new paradigms by which people and society can understand themselves and articulate agency; new paradigms located in sexual difference and a restitution of the feminine as an active principle in balance with the masculine in progressing political and cultural systems. It is:

this as a line of enquiry worth pursuing for scholars interested in connections between Kane, Berry and Barthes. 'The Death of the Author', http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/.../death_authorbarthes.pdf, ND, (accessed 28 May 2013).

³⁶ L. Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together' in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. C. Porter with C. Burke, New York, Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 205-218. First published as *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* by Editions de Minuit in 1977. See also the 1980 essay 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother (le corps-à-corps avec la mère)' in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. G.C. Gill, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 9-21.

³⁷ D. Bergoffen, 'Irigaray's Couples', in M.C. Cimitile and E. Miller (eds.), *Returning to Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy, Politics and the Question of Unity*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 157.

³⁸ R. Jones, *Irigaray*, Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA, USA, Polity Press, 2011, p. 161.

³⁹ R. Darren Gobert, 'Finding a Physical Language: Directing for the Nineties Generation. James MacDonald in conversation with R. Darren Gobert', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2, May 2008, pp. 141-157; and M. Lyons, '"How skinny I got, and how fucking weird I was"', Michael Shannon, Sarah Kane, *Woyzeck and Experiential Theatre*, Honours Project, Illinois Wesleyan University, 2008.

ethical and political, not epistemological [...] by choosing the maternal rather than the medical paradigm of autonomy and otherness we can replace our current exploitative modes of sociality with ethical ones.⁴⁰

Kane's generative statement on *Blasted* also recalls Ariane Mnouchkine's view of the theatre director as a midwife whose role is to assist in birthing 'the baby' of the play.⁴¹

Mnouchkine says:

I'm like a midwife. I help to give birth. The midwife doesn't create the baby [...] but if she's not there, the baby is in great danger and might not come out [...]. A midwife is not somebody who just looks at the baby coming out easily. Sometimes she has to shout at the woman, sometimes she says 'Push'. Sometimes she says 'Shut-up'. Sometimes she says 'Breathe'. Sometimes she says 'Don't do that'. Sometimes she says 'Everything is alright. Everything is alright. Go! Go!' It's a struggle.⁴²

In recalling philosophies of placental economy and notions of midwifery in her reference to the play as an independent being, Kane's statement on *Blasted* also invites us to consider lips, tongue, teeth, nose, head, heart, lungs and circulatory systems in her configuration of an embodiment centred in breath and voice. It also asks us to consider wombs, vaginas, arses, strong legs and feet, birthing, pushing, expelling and releasing. I will investigate these ideas further in this thesis.

Audio Recordings.

In consideration of the importance of breath and voice, the research has focused on audio recordings. One document of note is the sound recording made of the 1998 production of *Cleansed*, which features Kane understudying the role of Grace.⁴³ This is

⁴⁰ Bergoffen, op. cit., p. 158.

⁴¹ Ariane Mnouchkine is the Artistic Director of Paris-based company Le Théâtre du Soleil; a project she originally developed with others as a collective in 1964. See 'Le Théâtre du Soleil', <http://www.theatre-du-soleil.fr/>, 1999, (accessed 22 March 2013).

⁴² M.M. Delgado and P. Heritage, (eds.), *In Conversation With the Gods? Directors Talk Theatre*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996. p. 187.

⁴³ The audio recording was made during a performance on 28 May 1998. Kane took on the role after the actress playing Grace (Suzan Sylvester) injured her back.

currently held in the sound archives of the British Library, London, UK, and is fascinating in what it offers as an example of Kane's work as a performer, also as a dramaturgical document of the original script, and of the production choices made by director, James MacDonald.⁴⁴ Reviewers of this production frequently dwell on the visual. This is reflective of the importance placed on the set design by the Royal Court production and its investment in Jeremy Herbert's realisation of this; but it is also indicative of the prioritising of the scopic in Western theatre.⁴⁵ Hearing the play offers an opportunity to read the production differently.

A second audio recording of note, and one accessed frequently during this research, is the interview with Kane, hosted by Dan Rebellato at Royal Holloway, University of London, Drama Department, UK.⁴⁶ Whilst extensive sections of this interview have been usefully transcribed and published, the audio-recording offers an opportunity to listen to tone of voice, breath, emphasis, pause, laughter and audience response.⁴⁷ This reveals much that is missed when the words are printed on the page alone, and I will discuss the implications of this throughout the analysis.

⁴⁴ This is held at the British Library, London, UK. The audio recording is not available online. I accessed this recording on 15 September 2011 and on 30 May 2013. It is on two separate files, referenced 1CDR0000294 and 1CDR0000295, ref MP3 (856). The British Library, 'National Sound Archive', <http://www.bl.uk/nsa>, ND, (accessed 23 March 2013).

⁴⁵ Directed by James MacDonald, *Cleansed* was the flagship production for incoming Royal Court Artistic Director Ian Rickson (1998-2006). It was one of the most expensive productions ever staged by the theatre, and took a large part of the set design budget for 1998. The set was realised by Jeremy Herbert. See Little and McLaughlin, *The Royal Court Theatre*, op. cit., p. 374; see Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., pp. 86-87, also p. 171.

⁴⁶ Community Audio, 'Sarah Kane Interview', [online audio recording], 3 November 1998, <http://archive.org/details/SarahKaneInterview>, (accessed 23 March 2013). See also Royal Holloway, University of London, 'Dr Dan Rebellato' [http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/dan-rebellato\(2feeb129-f04e-4e0c-bce7-0d1eb77f3e30\).html](http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/dan-rebellato(2feeb129-f04e-4e0c-bce7-0d1eb77f3e30).html), ND, (accessed 23 March 2013) and D. Rebellato 'Sarah Kane Interview', <http://www.danrebellato.co.uk/sarah-kane-interview/>, ND, (accessed 29 May 2013).

⁴⁷ For transcribed sections and discussion of this interview, see the index, under 'Rebellato, Kane interview' in G. Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., p. 182.

A third audio resource investigated is the TheatreVOICE website, established by Dominic Cavendish of the *Daily Telegraph* and co-edited by Aleks Sierz in association with the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.⁴⁸ This is an insubstantial archive for information on Sarah Kane, but interesting to this research in what it reveals about the journalistic discourse on her work, and its shortcomings. The site brands itself as ‘the web’s leading resource for audio about British theatre’, and Kane is evoked – in apparent endorsement of this – through a dedication to her on its home page:

TheatreVOICE is dedicated to the memory of Sarah Kane: ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins’ T.S. Eliot.⁴⁹

The attention given to Kane’s work in the site’s contents does not match the weight of that offered to her in the dedication. It is sparse, reductive and contains inaccuracies in parts; the archiving of interviews purporting to discuss her work, is idiosyncratic and baffling. There are 22 posts listed under Kane’s name, and of those, only 4 of them actually address her work in any detail.⁵⁰ Those that do include an interview with Matt Peover on *Crave*, an interview with Belarus Free Theatre on *4.48 Psychosis*, Graham

⁴⁸ ‘TheatreVOICE’, <http://www.theatrevoice.com>, ND, (accessed 3 January 2013).

⁴⁹ *ibid.* It quotes T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, perhaps referencing Kane’s interest in the poem, and its importance as an inspiration for *Crave* (1998). The complete rendering of the stanza is:

‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo’s mad againe.’

Eliot’s second line references Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, and is from a scene which functions as a play within a play, where a murder is revealed and revenge enacted. It is a curious and stark dedication. See T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, Great Britain, Faber and Faber, 1990, p. 79. First published in 1963. T. Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Great Britain, University Paperback, 1969, p. 103.

⁵⁰ Of the other 18 posts listed, 6 are catalogue listings and one is about the Theatre Voice website. 2 are on Martin Crimp and mention Kane once in passing with reference to *Blasted*; a debate with young writers on Sean Holmes’ revival of *Blasted* lasts for 9 minutes then cuts off in the middle of a contributor’s point with no explanation given. A talk with Jonathan Mills mentions *4.48 Psychosis* once, an interview with James MacDonald lasts for under 10 minutes before cutting off, again mid-conversation. The three posts listed as ‘Theatrevoice Debate: New Writing’, the interview with Phillip Ridley, and the discussions entitled ‘New Writing in British Theatre Today’ and ‘A Crisis in New Writing’ refer solely to the ‘opening night of *Blasted*’ media storm and contribute nothing whatsoever on Kane’s work beyond that reference.

Saunders interviewed on his *About Kane* book, and a post-show discussion after Sean Holmes' 2005 revival of *Cleansed*.⁵¹ These posts contain some good material, largely due to the input of its contributors, but the forum as a whole lacks substance and is frequently disparaging in its approach to Kane and her work. The sum total of audio-recorded discussion represented by these four posts comes to one hour and 50 minutes. I will discuss the problems of the journalistic discourse on Kane in chapters 2 and 3.i.

Newspaper Sources and Journalistic Fabrics.

Given the weight of media commentary on Kane's work, research into newspaper reviews and articles have formed part of this enquiry.⁵² Elaine Aston argues that the initial reviews of *Blasted*:

are part of the fabric of her theatre, and that as part of that fabric, they can serve to revitalise rather than to diminish our understandings of Kane's work.⁵³

I agree with this premise, and would argue that it is possible to extend this to an array of journalistic fabrics that have become woven into the story of Kane's life and work. I have read a number of reviews of the original London productions of *Blasted* (1995) and *Cleansed* (1998), including those given by playwrights contributing to the debates

⁵¹ 'Crave by Sarah Kane as Rehearsed by Matt Peover', [online audio-recording], 30 January 2004, <http://www.theatrevoice.com/1842/in-rehearsal-nearly-five-years-after-her-death-sarah-kane/#UU462ppwblu>, (accessed 3 January 2013); 'Belarus Free Theatre Co-founders Interviewed', [online audio-recording], 23 July 2011, <http://www.theatrevoice.com/5094/belarus-free-theatre-co-founders-interviewed/#,URKgLppwZjo>, (accessed 5 January 2013); 'Academic Graham Saunders', [online audio-recording], 2009; 'Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*: Post-Show Discussion', [online audio-recording], 22 November 2005, <http://www.theatrevoice.com/2069/reputations-sarah-kane-cleansed-post-show-discussion-with-d/#,URKSkJpwZjo>, (accessed 12 December 2012).

⁵² See under 'Newspaper Sources' in the Bibliography.

⁵³ Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., p. 14.

arising from the reviews.⁵⁴ I have also sourced newspaper articles on Kane's work in general, including interviews given by Kane as part of this.⁵⁵ Kane's own reviews of theatre and contributions to newspapers and magazines on theatre-related topics are important to an analysis of the media.⁵⁶ They represent an intervention by Kane in the public space of the media, arguing passionately for the kind of theatre she wants. A study of the obituaries written on Kane has also been a focus.⁵⁷ In addition to this I have researched available books, journal articles, web forums, conference proceedings and reports of productions on and of Kane's work to keep abreast of developments within the scholarship.

I am interested in the tactile qualities of fabric reviewing noted by Aston and how the 'physical, tangible and touchable' nature of the printed texts may relate to Kane's experiences as a child of journalist parents, and her subsequent weaving of texts for theatre.⁵⁸ I have therefore sourced where possible, articles written by her father Peter Kane, a tabloid journalist, for reflection on Kane's experience of journalistic writing

⁵⁴ I will reference a number of reviews throughout the thesis, but some key ones on *Blasted* include: N. Curtis, 'Random Tour in a Chamber of Horrors', *Evening Standard*, 19 January 1995, C. Spencer, 'Awful Shock', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1995, T. Morris, 'Fair Deeds, Foul Play', *Guardian*, 25 January 1995, C. Bayley, 'A Very Angry Young Woman', *Independent*, 23 January 1995. Responses by playwrights include: E. Bond, 'A Blast at Our Smug Theatre. Edward Bond defends Sarah Kane's widely pilloried first play, and says her apocalyptic vision of violence and injustice of our society is fully justified', *Guardian*, 28 January 1995, p. 022, D. Greig, 'Letter to the *Guardian*', *Guardian*, 24 January 1995 and also 25 January 1995; C. Churchill, 'A Bold Imagination for Action', *Guardian*, 25 January 1995. Some key ones on *Cleansed* include: K. Kellaway, 'And who shall be cleansed?', *New Statesman*, 15 May 1998, p. 42; C. Woddis, 'Cleansed', *Herald*, 9 May 1998, p. 19; N. De Jongh, 'Force-fed Horror at Gross Banquet of Cruelties: First Night: Cleansed at the Royal Court', *Evening Standard*, 7 May 1998, p. 14 and J. Montgomery 'And you thought it was all over', *TLS, Times Literary Supplement*, 22 May 1998, p. 23.

⁵⁵ B. Nightingale, 'Disgusting Violence? Actually it's Quite a Peaceful Play', *Independent on Sunday*, 23 January 1995,

⁵⁶ S. Kane, 'Drama with Balls: Arts Edinburgh Festival; Why can't theatre be as gripping as footie?', asks playwright Sarah Kane', *Guardian*, 20 August 1998: T012.

⁵⁷ L. Gardner, J. MacDonald, M. Billington, 'Obituary: Sarah Kane: Of love and outrage', *Guardian*, 23 February 1999, p. 16; S. Hemming, 'An Uncompromising and Talented Young Playwright: Obituary – Sarah Kane', *Financial Times*, 24 February 1999, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', loc. cit., p. 14.

and culture within the home.⁵⁹ Kane mentions this experience as an influence on the development of *Blasted*, and it is clear from reading the headlines of Peter Kane's articles that they offer something of relevance to a study of tabloid languages, themes and questions of gender and kinship in Kane's plays. I suggest, with some caution and hesitation, that these could provide a useful starting point for wider questions of journalistic discourses, gender and family. Such an enquiry necessarily needs to take into account, however, that Peter Kane is a grieving father, with a right to privacy, and that whilst he is, to a degree a 'player' in the Sarah Kane story (and one that Kane brought into focus on a number of occasions), there is a limit to how much any researcher should intrude on somebody else's grief.⁶⁰

I have similarly considered the implications of the absence of 'mother texts' in the fabric of journalistic heritage discussed by Kane and her brother Simon, and considered what this absence indicates for questions of gender and authorship. Articles written by Kane's mother may prove an interesting point of textual comparison for consideration of Kane's development as writer, particularly when read in relation to the father's texts. However, it needs noting that Kane's mother remains a

⁵⁹ P. Kane, 'Kiss of Life: Back From Dead Daphne Tells Husband "I'm Fine"', *Daily Mirror*, 11 January 1996. P. Kane, 'You Brutes. Jail For Cruel Police Dog Trainers Who Ordered Animals To Be Hanged, Punched And Kicked', *Daily Mirror*, November 6 1998. P. Kane, 'I'm Sew Lucky; Boy, 17, Tells How Surgeons Saved Arm Severed By Saw', *Daily Mirror*, November 27 1998. P. Allen and P. Kane, 'Is One Telling Fibs?', *Daily Mirror*, February 3 1996. D. Mackay and P. Kane, 'Mother of All Evil: Drug-Crazed Ruth Beat Tots Senseless, She Burned Them With Her Cigarettes, She Kept Girl Caged In Filthy Room For Hours', *Daily Mirror*, 31 October 1996. P. Kane, N. North, and A. Shaw, 'I Floored Lesbian Fiend For Stealing My Hubby; Exclusive: Wife Tells Of Revenge As Rachael's Kinky Killer Gets Life', *Daily Mirror*, 29 November 1996. I note this as useful for further enquiry into languages of gender and journalistic texts in relation to Kane's theatre.

⁶⁰ 'Sarah Kane interview', [audio-recording], 1998; S. Hattenstone, 'A Sad Hurrah', *Guardian*, 1 July 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/jul/01/stage>, (accessed 10 June 2010). This interview notes that Kane's mother was also a journalist before she gave birth to Kane's brother Simon. As the question of journalistic influence was a relatively marginal focus in my research, I chose not to pursue this line of enquiry further due to considerations such as those discussed.

comparatively hidden and private individual in the narratives on Kane and her family, and that this could well be out of choice. Kane demonstrated a protection towards her mother's feelings and privacy, and as such, any consideration of exploring this line of enquiry further would need to judge whether the scholarly benefits of exploring this would similarly compromise or threaten well-being or privacy of a woman grieving for her daughter who has never made any public statement on her daughter's work, or indeed her own. I therefore consider instead the implications of that which is hidden, private, withheld (held back), unwritten and unspoken on female lives – the strength of the 'reserve' – and maintain the hope that in acknowledging absence or invisibility as a material thing, we reclaim something of a 'gendered, feminist and hopeful fabric' from the ultimate weave.⁶¹ To consider the strength of the reserve, I note Hilary Robinson's observations in her excellent text *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women*:

the mirror does not reflect itself, [...] the mirror has its own form, [...] the mirror does not reflect its own silvery backing. This silvery backing is 'the reserve' of the mirror – a part of the mirror reserved from the phallogentric gaze [...]. As with the hysteric, and as with the implementation of productive mimesis, so too in the structure of the flat mirror which bears the phallogentric gaze upon the/his reflection-image of the representation, 'woman', there is a reserve that can be deployed strategically in order to disconcert the economy of representation, disrupt the unity of the male subject.

⁶¹ Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', loc. cit., p. 14. The 'reserve' as a place of feminist and political agency is something formulated initially in L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1985. First published in French as *Speculum de l'autre femme* by Les Editions de Minuit, 1974. It relates to Irigaray's analysis of 'the mirror' in patriarchy and questions of scopis power. Inherent in the concept is a play on the reversibility of the words 'reverse' and 'reserve'. Irigaray extended on the idea that the reserve was one of potential dynamism in subsequent writings. See her essay 'Sexual Difference' in W. McNeil and K.S. Feldman (eds.), *Continental Philosophy: An Anthology*, Malden, MA and Oxon, UK, Blackwell, 1998, pp. 421-428.

Not wishing to tear or destroy fragile threads I chose to look no further into texts by Kane's mother, choosing instead to allow the question of silence, reserve and hidden words to form the maternal aspect of the journalistic fabric considered here.⁶²

Sources on Workshopping and Staging Kane's Plays.

This thesis welcomes the increasingly diverse body of writing in the English language on Sarah Kane internationally. There has been a growth in the field in recent years, as many new scholars emerge with doctoral theses and first-time articles on Kane's work. Of particular interest to this study is the emergence of papers which directly address the workshopping and staging of Kane's plays. Notable examples of this include Stephen Farrier (2005) on rehearsing students on *Crave*; Helen Iball (2008) on Graeae Theatre and the Schaubühne's production of *Blasted*; R. Darren Gobert's (2008) interview with James MacDonald on directorial approaches to *Blasted* and *Cleansed*; Gay McAuley (2008) on Brink Productions' 2004 version of *4.48 Psychosis*; Justyna Drobnik-Rogers' (2009) work on Krzysztof Warlikowski's *Cleansed*; Phillip Zarilli (2009) and Geoffrey Colman (2012) who have both written on their approaches to staging *4.48 Psychosis*; and Chris Megson, whose forthcoming monograph on Sarah Kane for Routledge involves discussion of recent performances of Kane's texts (2013-2014).⁶³

⁶² H. Robinson, *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women*, London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 67.

⁶³ S. Farrier, 'Approaching Performance Through Praxis', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol 25, issue 2, August 2005, pp.129-144; H. Iball, *Sarah Kane's 'Blasted'*, London and New York, Continuum, 2008; Gobert, 'Finding a Physical Language', op. cit.; G. McAuley, 'Not Magic but Work: Rehearsal and the Production of Meaning', *Theatre Research International*, vol. 33, special issue. 3, October 2008, pp. 276-288; J. Drobnik-Rogers, 'Krzysztof Warlikowski: Theatre as a Collective (Auto) Therapy', *TheatreForum*, issue 35, Summer/ Fall 2009, pp. 10-16; P.B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski*, Oxon and New York, Routledge, 2009; G. Colman, 'Flash Flicker Slash Burn: Acting Sarah Kane', *Sarah Kane Now: 21st Century Sarah Kane Symposium*, Lincoln School of Performing Arts, Media, Humanities and Performance, University of Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012; Royal

My thesis adds to this particular trend in Kane scholarship. It introduces new perspectives on staging Kane in Japan with original material from director Tomoco Kawaguchi and Kamome-za Fringe Theatre's work on the first Japanese translation of *Cleansed* (2010-2013).⁶⁴ It includes discussion of the first Irish staging of *Cleansed* with original material from director Tony McCleane-Fay and Bare Cheek Theatre (2011-2012).⁶⁵ It offers new perspectives on dramaturgical enquiry in the UK from my own feminist and queer practice in cross art-form community and education arenas (2009-2013).⁶⁶

Productions of *Cleansed*, 2012: Kamome-za Fringe Theatre, Tokyo, Japan; Bare Cheek Theatre Company, Cork, Ireland

I note a growing interest in producing *Cleansed* amongst professional theatre-makers and student groups, but recognise that many people have still never had a chance to see the play staged. Kane scholarship on *Cleansed* continues to focus on either the original 1998 London production, or the long-running interpretation by Benedict Andrews, first staged at the Schaubühne in Berlin in 2004. Though these productions are important to consider, the current situation offers practitioners and scholars a limited range of documents and perspectives from which to consider new ideas.

Holloway, University of London, 'Dr Chris Megson', ND, [http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/chris-megson\(d439964a-4a2f-403c-a51a-0e643853b9bb\).html](http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/chris-megson(d439964a-4a2f-403c-a51a-0e643853b9bb).html), (accessed 29 May 2013).

⁶⁴ For some excellent blog postings documenting the Kamome-za Fringe Theatre process on the play (2010-2013), see Kamome-za, 'Cleansed project' [web blog], 2010, <http://cleansed.seesaa.net/>, (accessed 27 January 2013). There is a short video presentation of the production I witnessed, and this can be found on the blog and via Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3UMYtlvXAA>, (accessed 24 May 2013). See Live Performances, Exhibitions and Projects, 'Cleansed ('Be Cleansed')', Kamome-za Fringe Theatre Company, Tokyo, Japan, Space Edge, Shibuya, Sunday 27 May 2012.

⁶⁵ See Bare Cheek Theatre Company's Facebook page and the Granary Theatre's website for details of this performance. Facebook, 'Bare Cheek Theatre Company', <http://www.facebook.com>, ND, (accessed 8 December 2012); Granary Theatre Cork, 'Cleansed', <http://granary.ie/event/cleansed-2/>, ND, (accessed 27 January 2013). See Live Performances, Exhibitions and Projects: 'Cleansed', Bare Cheek Theatre Company, Cork, Ireland, Granary Theatre, Thursday 6 December 2012.

⁶⁶ See Live Performances, Cast-Off Drama, op. cit.

To redress this imbalance, and to offer new perspectives on staging *Cleansed*, I discuss two contemporary productions of the play, witnessed in 2012, at different points of this thesis. One was staged in Japan and the other in Ireland. The Japanese production was directed by Tomoco Kawaguchi with choreographer Aki Tsujita, and performed in Japanese. I attended the performance held at Space Edge, Shibuya, Tokyo on the afternoon of 27 May 2012. The Irish production was directed by Tony McCleane-Fay, and performed in English. I attended the performance held at the Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland on the evening of 6 December 2012. Attending the performances in their host countries gave me an opportunity to meet and talk with the directors and casts face-to-face, and to establish a conversation with each company that has extended through e-mail and Facebook correspondence since.⁶⁷ Prior to seeing the Tokyo performance, I attended a three-hour rehearsal with the Kamome-za cast, which gave me an opportunity to observe their dramaturgical approaches and to compare it with my own workshop experiences of the play. At a post-rehearsal meal kindly hosted by the company, I had the opportunity to talk with the directors and cast at length. I talked with them again after seeing the production on 27 May 2012, where I also met translator Hiroyuki Kondo (Tokyo Gakugei University). Similarly I had an opportunity to meet with Tony McCleane-Fay on the afternoon of 7 December 2012 at the Granary Theatre, Cork and spent time discussing the Bare Cheek Theatre production. As such,

⁶⁷ See E-mails: Tomoco Kawaguchi and Nina Kane, May 2012-June 2013; Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012, 27 May 2012; Conversation with Takimoto Naoko, Tsuneo Kobe, Aki Tsujita and Tomoco Kawaguchi, Suiteganame, Tokyo, 22 May 2012; Rehearsal: Kamome-za Fringe Theatre Company, Suiteganame, Tokyo, and conversation with the cast, 22 May 2012. My visit to the company's rehearsal is noted in the director's log dated 23 May 2012, see Kamome-za, 'Diary section', [web blog]. Conversation with Hiroyuki Kondo, Shibuya, Tokyo, 27 May 2012. See also: Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland, 7 December 2012 and E-mails: Tony McCleane-Fay and Nina Kane, December 2012-June 2013.

this thesis includes reflections on how each production approached aspects of the play in performance (from my perspective as an audience member); also dramaturgical information about each company's decision-making processes and their rehearsal experiences, from discussion and observation.

Each production was important for Sarah Kane scholarship and practice in their producing country and marked the introduction of Kane's work to viewing audiences. Hiroyuki Kondo's script is the first translation of the work into Japanese, and Kamome-za is currently the only professional company performing *Cleansed* in Japan. Bare Cheek Theatre's production of *Cleansed*, also marks the premiering of the work in Ireland, McCleane-Fay having been granted the rights to launch a pilot version of this in 2010.⁶⁸ Kamome-za and Bare Cheek have a relationship to universities and to the experimental fringe theatre communities of their areas, and both companies have a commitment to Kane's work and to furthering understanding and appreciation of it. Kamome-za have a relationship with Tokyo Gakuai University and to the University of Kyoto's Art Centre, and Bare Cheek Theatre have a relationship to University College Cork. As such, their works extend their reach across both innovative contemporary practice and emerging research in powerful and integrated ways.

Kamome-Za's work on *Cleansed* began in 2010, and is extensive, rigorous and innovative. As little is known of this work outside Japan, I feel it is useful to summarise something of the company and its engagement with Kane's play here. Kamome-za Fringe forms part of the larger Kamome-za parent company, which is under the

⁶⁸ Bare Cheek Theatre also premiered the first Irish production of Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* in 2004; see Facebook, 'Bare Cheek Theatre Company', [website].

direction of Satoh Makoto.⁶⁹ Satoh initiated the Fringe group so young directors and performers could have an experimental space to try new works, ideas and translations of plays.⁷⁰ The direction of the Fringe's work is entirely led by Kawaguchi and Tsujita. For the sake of expediency, except where stated differently, I will refer to the Fringe company simply as Kamome-za in this document. Kamome-za have a stable ensemble of actors, dancers and musicians, and are currently performing their fourth interpretation of *Cleansed*. They are passionate about the play, and the ensemble know it in depth; this is something that makes the experience of watching their production very enriching, likewise the discussions of it.⁷¹ The actors change roles with each new interpretation; hence in the work I saw, the actors playing the roles had had experience of playing at least one other role in an earlier production. Each interpretation takes a different angle and though they are all *Cleansed*, and work directly from Kane's text, the company will use a variation of the title in each new production to reflect a shift in focus.

The first production launched Hiroyuki Kondo's translation, and was a performed reading of the work presented under the title *Kurenzudo* (2010). The second interpretation centred its focus around the character of Tinker, and took inspiration from the colloquial meaning of the English word 'Tinker' to reference Gypsies and

⁶⁹ G.H. Cody and E. Sprinchorn (eds.), 'Satoh Makoto' in *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama* vol. 2, New York and Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 1193. See also D.R. Goodman, *Satoh Makoto and the Post-Shingeki Movement in Japanese Contemporary Theatre*, University Microfilms International, 1997.

⁷⁰ Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

⁷¹ The ensemble emphatically reject the 'in-her-face' theatre and media interpretations of the play, and said that these have created much misunderstanding about the nature of Kane's work. They argued along similar lines to the ones put forward by myself in chapter 2, and note the second discourse as having had a pernicious effect on audience's perceptions of Kane's work in Japan; something they have tried, through the rigour of their production work, to redress. Rehearsal: Kamome-za and conversation with cast, 22 May 2012.

Travellers. The title of the second version was *Cleansed* ('Purification') and it was performed in 2011. The ensemble interpreted the institution as a Nazi concentration camp and the characters as 'a group of Romany musicians and theatre actors' (including Tinker) who arrive at the camp together, and are interned.⁷² As the play progresses, Tinker assumes authority over his fellow inmates, and begins to collude with the violence of their oppressors as a strategy for survival; a strategy frequently witnessed and recorded by writers such as Walter Winter, Primo Levi and Bruno Bettelheim in their testimonies of life under the Nazi regime and in the camps.⁷³

The third *Kamome-za* interpretation was the one I witnessed in May 2012. Originally entitled *Cleansed* ('The Sanctified. 2012. Wash'), it later became known as *Cleansed* ('Be Cleansed'), 2012. It was made in response to the devastating earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011, and was focused on healing the pain of survivors and those who had lost loved ones in the disaster. This version appeared to be more in line with Clown performance; as with my own response to the Japanese earthquake, performed the day after in Leeds, UK, the production was centred somewhat in processing the shock and grief on behalf of others.⁷⁴ Talking a year after the disaster, Kawaguchi told me that on the day of the earthquake she was directing a production of Bond's *War*

⁷² Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

⁷³ W. Winter, *Winter Time: Memoirs of a German Sinto who Survived Auschwitz*, Hertfordshire, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2004. First published in German as *WinterZeit Erinnerungen eines deutschen Sinto, der Auschwitz überlebt hat*, by Ergebnisse Verlag in 1999; P. Levi, *If This is a Man and The Truce*, trans. S. Woolf, Second Edition, Abacus, 1987. First published separately in Italian as *Se questo è un uomo* in 1958 and *La Tregua* in 1963 by Giulio Einaudi editore S.p.A; B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: A study of the psychological consequences of living under extreme fear and terror*, London, New York, Victoria, Ontario and Auckland, Penguin, 1991. First published as *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age*, by The Free Press, A Corporation in 1960. See the section in Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, op. cit, entitled, 'Traumatization: The shock of imprisonment' for analysis of this, pp. 119-131.

⁷⁴ Cast-Off Drama, *Oi Moonface! You wanna know me, you gotta look close!*, in response to the Henry Moore exhibition, Leeds Art Gallery, 12 March 2011.

Plays for the main Kamome-za company in Shibuya, when the earthquake struck.⁷⁵ As she walked home in shock, she was aware of the silence in the city and the ghost-like nature of people around her. She became preoccupied with thoughts of nuclear holocaust and had an overriding feeling that this is what the world would be like after a nuclear disaster and how people would behave in a 'nuclear Winter'. She knew that the next *Cleansed* would have to express this, and the aesthetic and direction of *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*') takes its inspiration from this experience.

Kawaguchi noted that after the Fukushima leak, all theatre companies in Japan that year had become politicised. All new work made was collectively centred on both articulating guilt and responsibility for devastation caused by the failings of the nuclear power plant and lobbying for the nuclear industry to be shut down; it also expressed empathy for those who had lost loved ones in the disaster and worked to bring healing to the country. Working in a Buddhist context (and not, she affirmed, feminist in any Western sense of the word), Kawaguchi looked to Kane's text to bring that healing because of the strong presence of 'powerful feminine energy' within it. Centring the production on Robin as a character who expresses a powerful female energy, the work sought to bring a feminising, healing energy into play that could challenge the dominant masculine energies responsible for the destruction wreaked by the nuclear industry. The articulation of gendered binaries in relation to the nuclear industry by Kawaguchi was of particular interest to me in the references it raised in relation to Greenham Common – an area of *Cleansed* research I had already written on, lectured about and performed through Cast-Off Drama that same year. There were many

⁷⁵ Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

aspects of political crossover in our readings of *Cleansed* emerging from the text, but also from events in the wider world, and this was significant.

Another key aspect of concurrence in the third *Cleansed*'s work with the feminine gender was Kamome-za's conclusion that Robin was a transgender character – a conclusion reached separately by myself through the work in England, and also, it subsequently transpired, by Bare Cheek Theatre in their work in Ireland. I discuss this in some depth in chapters 5.iii and 6. Kamome-za are currently producing their fourth version of *Cleansed* ('*Body Perfect*'), 2013. This work enters further into the questions of the body, mutability, gender and silence provoked by dramatisation of the feminine and transgender aspects of Kane's text in their 2012 production. It is performed non-verbally and the play is compacted into 20 minutes. Kawaguchi says the ensemble will continue to produce new interpretations of *Cleansed* for the foreseeable future.

I have had less opportunity to research Bare Cheek Theatre's interpretation of *Cleansed*, and the company have not performed as many interpretations as Kamome-za hence I reference this less in the thesis. I nevertheless note it as an important production for Kane scholars and practitioners to look further into. As with performances by Kamome-za and by my company Cast-Off Drama, McCleane-Fay's interpretation moves the staging of the work into an arena marked by cross-artform, site-specific and performance art aesthetics. His original plan was to stage the work in a factory and spread the action over a vast area, moving the audience from one place

to another, locating the playing in both physical performance and technology.⁷⁶ This fell through for economic reasons, and the performance happened in an intimate studio theatre. The sense of space – and the breath this brings with it – nevertheless made its way into McCleane-Fay’s production, as did a powerful video installation, which brought fluid images and feminised backdrops firmly into play.⁷⁷

A phenomenon discussed during McCleane-Fay’s rehearsal period was apparent haunting by ghosts and voices, and increasingly, the ‘voice’ of Sarah Kane weaving its way into the playing; interrupting, and prompting searches for meaning.⁷⁸ The search for meaning led McCleane-Fay to follow the example of the Warlikowski production and incorporate fragments from *4.48 Psychosis*, and more centrally, from *Crave* into the production. McCleane-Fay argued that it is possible to read *Cleansed*, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* as a single text of different movements. As he progressed this into rehearsal, it became apparent that the texts needed to be located in one voice and that that one voice was Sarah Kane’s. As such, the Bare Cheek Theatre production eventually scripted the character of Sarah Kane into the performance, played by an actress, whose sleeping, breathing, face towered over the stage on a projection screen at different moments of the action. This created a powerful image of embodiment with the whole production effectively ‘returning to the mother’ and being played out

⁷⁶ Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

⁷⁷ L. Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. G.C. Gill, New York and Oxford, Columbia University Press, 1991. First published in French as *Amante marine* by Les Editions de Minuit in 1980. I had chosen to take Irigaray’s *Marine Lover* with me for the trip to Cork, the cover design of which is of a blue, rippling sea. In complete synchronicity, a repeated back drop for the Bare Cheek Theatre production was a closely-filmed image of a swelling and ever-moving sea lit in the same blue as Irigaray’s text. This underlined the fluid nature of the performance for me, and also prompted me to reflect on the abyss-like quality of the stage space, marked by high, grey, flats and vertical, column-like trajectories, contested by the horizontal planes of the video installation.

⁷⁸ Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

from within her mind, voice and body. There was a curious tension of theatrical ventriloquism at play in this and a beautiful rhythm of movement between an interior, embodied landscape, and a fluid and shifting exterior. Movement was assisted by the presence of a string quartet at the corner of the stage. By listening to and physicalizing the ghost of Sarah Kane through the space of rehearsal and inter-textual readings, Bare Cheek effected a curious resurrecting of the author from death that recognised a compulsion to tell stories in her texts, and a demand to be seen and heard. The gender questions arising from it were powerful and absorbing, and McCleane's production served to further place Kane's work in a continuum of female authorship that recalled the work of Irish women dramatists – but one that recognised and marked powerful and painful issues of gender dysphoria located both in Grace and in a female Robin. I discuss these issues further in chapters 4, 5.iii and 6.

Use of Photographs and Visual References in the Thesis

Whilst working on practical explorations of *Cleansed*, new performative and visual languages have emerged, and have been documented variously through drawing, photography, audio and visual recording. Where appropriate to the discussion, I include photographs from the projects and offer them as visual texts to extend on particular ideas within the thesis. I also include production images from both Kamomeza's and Bare Cheek Theatre's work on *Cleansed*, and references to online recordings of the productions where available. This is important, for where students or practitioners lack an opportunity to see *Cleansed* performed live, they frequently turn to the internet and seek photographic and visual documents from earlier productions. Many of the extant web images are repetitive and dated, yet they continue to create a

set of visual associations – a visual dramaturgy – that informs thinking and ideas. By including process-centred, newly-produced photographic images, and web-links showing video footage of recent productions in the context of this thesis, I therefore offer opportunity for the consideration of alternative and contemporary visual dramaturgies for *Cleansed*.

Dramaturgy and Translation.

This thesis notes approaches from translators in Japan and Iran wishing to discuss interpretations of *Cleansed*. It was generally found that aspects of *Cleansed* are difficult to translate with literal reading or viewing of production alone. This thesis suggests that those of us forming dramaturgical or workshop-based studies of Kane's plays have much to offer to translators in this complex task, and *vice versa*. Conversations with those translating Kane's texts into another language can raise interesting questions about the plays when undertaking dramaturgical enquiry.⁷⁹ The international spread of scholarship and practice on Kane's work raises important questions of translation and communication. It asks that the scholar or practitioner address their own relationship to the English language and consider the benefits and the drawbacks of dialoguing wholly in English.⁸⁰ My conversations with theatre-makers and scholars in Japan, Hungary, Germany, Malta, and China on *Cleansed* have been enriched by the necessity of translation between languages – the pauses for breath;

⁷⁹ I have discussed points of translation on sections of *Cleansed* with both Hiroyuki Kondo and Yuki Ishida in Japan (Yuki is a PhD researcher at Fukuoka Women's University), and with Mahmood Sowdaee in Iran (Mahmood is a graduate researcher at Tarbiat Modares University). Conversation with Yuki Ishida, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012; Conversation with Hiroyuki Kondo, May 2012. E-mails: Yuki Ishida and Nina Kane, April-October 2012; E-mails: Mahmood Sowdaee and Nina Kane, 2 August 2011, 11 February 2013.

⁸⁰ Luce Irigaray raised questions about the dominance and 'sameness' of the English language within international scholarship and academia at the Luce Irigaray Conference held in London, December 2010. See also Berry, who raises similar issues, *From Word to Play*, op. cit., pp. 10-13.

the use of the body/gestures to convey meaning; the space that listening gives for feeling and watching whilst waiting for a third party to translate; the humour and laughter that frequently results when things are misunderstood; and the opportunity to observe different social and cultural codes when conversing that enrich our understanding of other people, and also the theatre they make.

Irigaray's later writings emphasise the importance of processes of translation in enhancing communication between people, and of developing capacities for 'receptiveness'.⁸¹ She chooses to write in different European languages – Italian, French, and English – identifying the language that is most resonant to the topic. She emphasises the importance of the conversations she has with translators and notes that they are undertaken in a spirit of co-operation and sharing. In discussing the translation of *Entre Orient et Occident*, she comments:

I thank Stephen Pluháček for the way in which he carried out the translation of *Between East and West*. He gave time for listening to thought. He prepared a receptiveness for its welcoming. His work does not represent a simple passage from one language to another, with the loss of meaning and style that often results. It bears witness to an exchange between thinkers, the place where speech is generated, comes to light and is put to the test.⁸²

Thus, the translations take place as a dialogue between her and another in a space that acknowledges the irreducible difference ('irreducible otherness') between languages and speakers.⁸³ This thesis argues that the space between languages, performative and linguistic, is often fruitful for theatre-makers staging Kane's texts,

⁸¹ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit.

⁸² *ibid.*, p. xii.

⁸³ Irigaray, *Conversations*, op. cit. pp. 129-130. Irigaray's notion of respecting the 'irreducible invisible' and difference of others is, as she notes 'not only a question of sexual relations, but of all relations.' See also, L. Irigaray, *Sharing the World*, London and New York, Continuum, 2008; in particular 'How to Welcome the Call of the Other?', pp. 17-23.

and that scholarship benefits from international collaboration seeking to embrace and understand work from different starting points and perspectives.⁸⁴

Three Key Discourses on Kane

In exploring the arena of Kane scholarship, this thesis notes three distinct text-based discourses driving discussion of her work within the UK. The first discourse debates Kane's placing within a literary canon of Western theatre studies, and this was established shortly after her death by Graham Saunders through *Love Me or Kill Me*.⁸⁵ The second discourse relates to media reviews of her plays, and debates Kane as a figure of 1990s new writing with reference to the canon of 'in-yer-face' theatre. This discourse is largely constructed and promulgated by theatre critic Aleks Sierz.⁸⁶ The third discourse relates to feminist readings of Kane's work, and primarily situates her in relation to female playwrights from the British post-war era onwards. This discourse emerged in 1997 with Heidi Stephenson and Natasha Langridge's *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting* and was developed further by Elaine Aston's 2003 text *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights, 1990-2000*.⁸⁷

It is important in any overview of Kane's work to recognise the distinctions between these discourses, also to note where they converge and overlap, and where they

⁸⁴ Cast-Off Drama's work on *Cleansed* has led to a direct association with Dali University, Yunnan Province, China, through Chinese National Painter Bai Ni (Yun Yang).

⁸⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit. See also 'Academic Graham Saunders', [online audio-recording], 2009.

⁸⁶ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, op. cit., 2001. A. Sierz, 'In-Yer-Face Theatre', <http://www.inyerface-theatre.com/>, 2000, (accessed 7 February 2013). This website ceased to be updated from 5 October 2010. Visitors to the site are now directed to other sites.

⁸⁷ H. Stephenson and N. Langridge (eds.), *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting*, London, Sydney, Auckland and Parktown, Methuen, 1997. E. Aston, *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights, 1990-2000*, Cambridge, New York, Port Melbourne, Madrid and Cape Town, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

depart. Their emergence tells stories that relate not only to Kane, but also to contexts of theatre-making, academia and scholarly writing in a particular period of British-centred cultural history. They emerge from shared positions of local knowledge and time (the UK theatre scene in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century), and each has its own international trajectory which takes the story of Kane and her work beyond the UK.⁸⁸ I am interested in the inter-textual bindings and bondings of these discourses, and the role each plays in the exporting of a particular version of British theatre history. Each offers a different and sometimes conflicting perspective to the reader. I will therefore briefly take each of these discourses in turn, reflecting on their origins, impulses, trajectories and usefulness (or otherwise) for those wishing to study or stage Kane's plays.

The First Discourse

The first discourse places Kane in a tradition of classical and modern theatre – one that is largely male, and which conventionally finds expression in the terrain of the middle and large-scale theatre venue. This discourse is now comfortably-established and holds a recognisable 'narrative' for scholars, reviewers, teachers and practitioners of Kane's work. It places Kane within a theatre continuum, which includes Sophocles, Aristotle, Seneca, Shakespeare, Jacobean Tragedy, Racine, Büchner, Strindberg, Chekov, Ibsen, Artaud, Brecht, Beckett, Osborne, Bond, Müller, Handke, Brenton, Barker, Pinter, Churchill, McIntyre, Nagy, Neilson, Ravenhill and Crimp. This discourse was developed by Graham Saunders and other young men in Kane's immediate post-student circle; key figures were Dan Rebellato, David Greig, Sean Holmes, James

⁸⁸ These discourses originated in the mid-1990s, and maintain their centres, drive and publishing bases in the UK.

MacDonald, Mark Ravenhill, Thomas Ostermeier and Nils Tabert. These were primarily men who were emerging as young professionals in British and German theatre at the same time as Kane. Some were educated, like Kane, at Bristol or Birmingham universities in the UK; some knew her professionally from activities in the London theatre scene; others were involved in the new writing exchanges developed between the Royal Court, London and the Baracke and Schaubühne Theatres in Berlin, Germany.⁸⁹ Since Kane's death her brother, Simon Kane, has also contributed to the development of this discourse.⁹⁰ It is a discourse that Kane herself participated in forming in interviews given and letters written on her work in her lifetime.

Graham Saunders is an important figure in the positioning of Kane within this canon, and remains its central spokesperson. Whilst *Love Me or Kill Me* was written, and completed in a short time after her death, it nevertheless had a long gestation period. Having witnessed the end-of-year MA showing of *Blasted*, Saunders subsequently interviewed Kane and corresponded with her whilst writing his doctorate in the mid-late 1990s.⁹¹ I note the international journeying of Saunders' narrative on Kane, and have examined works by French scholars that progress this trajectory – namedly Angel-Perez,⁹² Cuisnier-Delorme and Obis.⁹³ These texts show clear readings of and

⁸⁹ For an excellent overview of this period of German theatre history, and the links with the Royal Court, see the chapter on Thomas Ostermeier in M. A. Carlson, *Theatre is More Beautiful than War: German Stage Directing in the Late Twentieth Century*, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, 2009, pp. 161-180.

⁹⁰ Simon Kane is Sarah Kane's brother and trustee of her estate. S. Kane, 'Simon Kane Photography', <http://www.simonkanephoto.com>, ND, (accessed 9 May 2013).

⁹¹ 'Academic Graham Saunders', [online audio-recording], 2009.

⁹² See chapters 'Introduction: Théâtre et théorie du traumatisme', pp. 11-24; 'Les fantômes de Bond: pour un nouveau réalisme traumatique', pp. 93-124; 'Howard Barker: de la Catastrophe à l'épiphanie', pp. 125-152 and 'Poème du deuil de sol: le théâtre de Sarah Kane', pp. 153-177 in É. Angel-Perez, *Voyages au bout du possible: Les théâtres du traumatisme de Samuel Beckett à Sarah Kane*, Paris, Klincksieck, 2006.

concurrence with the first discourse and its canon, also familiarity with Saunders' 2002 text. This concurrence extends to promotional aspects and design of the books – the front cover of *Voyages au bout du possible*, for example, uses the same photograph of Kane as that used by Saunders on the cover of *Love Me or Kill Me*.⁹⁴ Saunders' text has also been translated into Italian.⁹⁵ This edition includes an article by Rodolfo di Giammarco not available in the English or French versions.⁹⁶

The first discourse is strongly European, and usefully situates Kane's work and British theatre itself in the context of wider European traditions and histories. This has made reception of Kane's work richer, contributing to a spread of productions beyond the UK, away from the reductionist and insular narratives of London-centric media criticism. Germany remains a centre of Sarah Kane practice and scholarship in Europe and has sustained an engaged and articulate focus on her work since the mid-1990s. It is important to note that Kane was actively involved in the dissemination of her work in Germany and spoke favourably of the intellectual approach of its theatre critics.⁹⁷ A

⁹³ S. Cuisinier-Delorme, 'Au-Delà de la Représentation, le Discours Autour des Corps dans *Manque de Sarah Kane*', in C. Coulon and F. March (eds.), *Théâtre Anglophone De Shakespeare à Sarah Kane: l'envers du décor*, Montpellier, Les éditions L'Entretiens, 2008, pp. 133-142. In the same collection see also, E. Obis, 'Stratégies d'Effacement et de Déconstruction du Corps sur Scène dans *4.48 Psychose de Sarah Kane et Atteintes à sa Vie de Martin Crimp*', pp. 143-153.

⁹⁴ Portrait of Sarah Kane by Pau Ros. For details of Ros' work, see Pau Ros 'Theatre and Dance Photography', 2007, <http://www.pautheatre.co.uk/>, (accessed 25 March 2013).

⁹⁵ G. Saunders, *'Love Me or Kill Me': Sarah Kane e il Teatro Degli Estremi*, (trans.) Lino Belleggia, Rome, 2005.

⁹⁶ E-mail correspondence with Graham Saunders, 8 September 2012. The Di Giammarco interview can be found on pages 17-22 in the Italian edition, and was a interview with Kane held on the 16 September 1997. Di Giammarco also provides the foreword for the Italian edition, and continues to reference Sarah Kane in his journalistic writing on new Italian theatre. See article in *Il Tamburo di Katrin*, 'Per un teatro del non ditto: Rodolfi di Giammarco presenta Nuove drammaturgie in scena', <http://www.iltamburodikatrin.com/interviste/2013>, 25 February 2013, (accessed 23 March 2013). The 1997 Di Giammarco with Kane is referenced in *About Kane*, p. 37, and there are translated extracts from the interview in this book.

⁹⁷ 'Interview with Sarah Kane' [Community Audio Recording], 1998. See also Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 12.

text that helped the spread of Kane's reputation in Germany was Nils Tabert's 1998 work *Playspotting: Die Londoner Theaterszene der 90er*. This features a lengthy interview conducted with Kane in German in her Brixton flat, together with the first German translation of *Phaedra's Love*.⁹⁸ Tabert notes the influence of Kane on German theatre in conversation with Saunders in July 2000:

Sarah has reintroduced to German theatre the idea that you can be challenging in a formal way, but not forget about content in the process – or forget about so called social reality. She reminded German dramatists that you can do both: that you can write politically [...] without dealing with reality in a journalistic way – that you can work it into some kind of poetry or work of art. I think that's basically what she introduced, or reintroduced into the theatre.⁹⁹

Tabert was involved in translating *Cleansed* into German – a process he worked on at length with Kane – and the decision to use the word *Gesäubert* for the title has marked *Cleansed* as a political play in the German tradition, and ensured that its critique of power and of systematised or institutional violence was recognised as such, and not treated gratuitously.¹⁰⁰ *Playspotting* placed her in a shared context with Marina Carr, Mark Ravenhill and Martin Crimp. The association of Kane's work with Carr's is rare, but there are many crossovers. In chapter 4 of this thesis I briefly reflect on questions of female authorship and the formal and thematic similarities in Kane's work to contemporary Irish women dramatists.

⁹⁸ N. Tabert, *Playspotting: Die Londoner Theaterszene der 90er*, 2nd edition, Hamburg, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001.

⁹⁹ 'Conversation with Nils Tabert' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., pp. 134-142, this quote, p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Tabert says: 'We varied between *Gesäubert*, which [...] alludes more to ethnic cleansing. *Gereinigt* leans more to the religious context, and 'clean' as in free from drugs.' *ibid.*, p. 139. The association of the German title with the very definite reference to 'ethnic cleansing' is not entirely unproblematic, and Kane warns against an over-simplification of *Cleansed* with reference to tying it too specifically to any one historical event, arguing for the political nature of its inherent mutability to be recognised and maintained in dramatic interpretation. 'With *Cleansed*, I didn't want to get the situation of: this is about Germany and the Jews. It definitely had a strong impact on me, but the play is not about that [...]. [...]here's the problem that you get so specific, something actually stops having resonance beyond the specific ... Whereas I hope that *Cleansed* or *Blasted* have resonance beyond what happened in Bosnia or Germany specifically.' *ibid.*, p. 94.

The relationship with German theatre established in the 1990s has endured, with Thomas Ostermeier's long-running inclusion of Kane's plays in the repertoire of the Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin. Ostermeier recently discussed an idea that for him his work drew strength from an existential philosophy related to 'the humiliation of being born'.¹⁰¹ He also proposed an idea that theatre exists to find solutions to things, and was always about 'working something out'. I note these principles as being relevant to approaching a dramaturgy of Kane.¹⁰² Ostermeier says of Kane:

I was a big big admirer of her work [...]. She was a very nice person, very influential for my work because I found out that with the tenderness and the fragility that she was approaching her issues you can talk about the most horrifying things which you have to face as a human being. She was a very important influence, not only because of her plays but also for me in approaching classical drama, approaching Shakespeare, approaching Ibsen, in the spirit of her writing.¹⁰³

I have encountered familiarity with this discourse – and ideas similar to those expressed by Ostermeier – in my discussions with theatre-makers and translators outside the UK. Prior to working on *Cleansed*, Kamome-za staged a series of Beckett Plays, Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*, and Bond's *War Plays*.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Yuki Ishida's research is centred in a literature department, and shows influence of both French and German interpretations of the first discourse. She is concerned with mapping texts from Shakespeare through to contemporary writers that relate to *Cleansed*, and is due

¹⁰¹ 'Talking Germany: Talk with Theatre Director Thomas Ostermeier', [online video], 15 April 2012, <http://youtu.be/vaUHxKXjkwI>, (accessed 28 January 2013).

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Before translating *Cleansed*, Hiroyuki Kondo completed the first Japanese translation of Bond's *War Plays*. Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

to have her work published in Japan, but as yet this is not translated into English.¹⁰⁵

Her key figures include Shakespeare, Beckett and Tom Stoppard.

McCleane-Fay noted the importance of Bond, Beckett and Brenton on Kane, and expressed a familiarity with the European spread of Kane's work. The cast's dramaturgical research centred on European art traditions (Van Gogh was a strong influence on the rehearsal process), also taking inspiration from Warlikowski's 2002 interpretation of *Cleansed*.¹⁰⁶

Adrian Buckle of Unifaun Theatre, Malta, notes similar European influence on his repertoire. Buckle is involved in a long-running dispute with the Maltese government over theatre censorship after Unifaun's interpretation of Anthony Neilson's *Stitching* was banned in 2009.¹⁰⁷ The company premiered the first Maltese production of *Blasted* in 2008, to considerable public outcry and support, and had been intending to stage *Cleansed* in 2013. He has now postponed his plans to produce the play in wake of the censorship issues still raging. Unifaun have recently staged Bond's *Olly's Prison*, and Edward Bond has spoken publicly on behalf of the company's attempts to change the theatre censorship laws as part of that programme.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Conversation with Yuki Ishida, 31 March 2012; E-mail correspondences April-October 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Censor Watch, 'Stitching: Maltese censors ban stage play *Stitching*' http://www.censorwatch.co.uk/thread00459_stitching.htm, ND, (accessed 15 December 2012).

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with Adrian Buckle at *Bond@50*, University of Warwick, UK, 2 November 2012. Facebook messages from November 2012-March 2013. See also 'Unifaun Theatre', <http://www.unifauntheatre.com/page34.php>, ND, (accessed 4 November 2012). Note also Natalia Kaliada's discussion of censorship in 'Belarus Free Theatre', [online audio-recording], 2011.

It is apparent that there is a powerful international spread of Kane's work, stemming from the first discourse and its European outlook. Much of this happens through university English Literature departments which have a drama component, though not exclusively so. The international journeying of Kane's plays and the spread of the first discourse is interesting to note, and whilst it is not a central focus of this thesis, I suggest that it would yield useful findings if explored further. There are whole bodies of writing on Kane produced in languages other than English, which relate to stagings of her work in different countries. These writings contain cultural perspectives of interest for scholars and theatre-makers outside the countries in which the work is produced. Conferences such as the excellent ones held at the Universities of Cambridge and Lincoln on Sarah Kane offer opportunity for an international exchange of ideas, but still primarily attract those scholars who can write in English as an academic language and who come from a literary background.¹⁰⁹ This research notes the value of practitioners conversing outside universities on professional stagings of the work to understand issues that emerge in differing cultural and political contexts; and to encounter wider performative traditions and interpretations. The research notes that practitioners from different countries frequently connect through performance with languages that supersede spoken language. Encouraging dialogue between theatre-makers internationally would greatly open up communication on Kane's work in the field.

In considering the international field of Kane scholarship written in the English language, some key themes emerge from the first discourse. Theories of the body,

¹⁰⁹ *Sarah Kane: A Reassessment*, Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, 16 February 2008; *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, 2012.

religion, love, catharsis, space, trauma, violence, existentialism, Tragedy, institutionalism, torture, disappearance, the Holocaust, narratology and ritual theatres have become staple focuses of literature-based studies undertaken in connection to her plays. Whilst a literary reading of Kane's work is not a central focus of this thesis, I have found considerations of space and geography useful, notably those of Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002), Wixson (2005), Pankratz (2010) and Chatzivasileiou (2012).¹¹⁰ Also useful to a consideration of *Cleansed* are recent theories of viscosity, the gendered body and its absence, and for this, I have drawn on research by Woodworth (2010), LePage (2012) and Delgado-Garcia (2012).¹¹¹

The Second Discourse

The second discourse is constructed and promulgated by Aleks Sierz and relies centrally on his 2001 text *In-Yer-Face Theatre* and on a number of Internet forums.¹¹² This discourse is London-centric and continues a particular critical trajectory, journalistic in approach. Whilst Sierz is its dominant spokesman, the now-deceased Jack Tinker of the UK-based *Daily Mail* was clearly an influence on its formation in tone and content.¹¹³ It is a discourse which relies on the fabric of newspaper texts produced

¹¹⁰ E. Fuchs and U. Chaudhuri, *Land/Scape/Theater*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2002; C. Wixson, 'In Better Places: Space, Identity and Alienation in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*', *Comparative Drama*, vol. 39, issue. 1, Spring 2005, pp. 75-91; A. Pankratz, 'Neither here nor there: theatrical space in Kane's work', in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., pp. 149-160; C. Chatzivasileiou, 'In Ye[r]teropias Face: *Blasted Hotel*', *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, 2012.

¹¹¹ C. Woodworth, 'Summon Up the Blood: The Stylized (or Sticky) Stuff of Violence in Three Plays by Sarah Kane', *Theatre Symposium, Volume 18: The Prop's the Thing: Stage Properties Reconsidered*, (2nd edition), Tuscaloosa, AL, USA, 2010, pp. 11-22; L. LePage, 'Moving Beyond the Binary: Sarah Kane's Post/Human Characters', *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, 2012; C. Delgado-García, 'Subversion, Refusal and Contingency: The Transgression of Liberal-Humanist Subjectivity and Characterization in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*', *Modern Drama*, vol. 55, issue. 2, Summer 2012, pp. 230-250.

¹¹² In addition to the 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' website and book listed earlier, Sierz continues to reference Kane's work through a number of other forums. See: A. Sierz, 'Sierz: New Writing for the British Stage', www.sierz.co.uk/, 2011, (accessed 7 February 2013).

¹¹³ An alternative term I will use when referencing this discourse is 'the Tinker-Sierzian discourse'.

from the press opening of *Blasted* in 1995, and its contributors return constantly to that era.¹¹⁴ My thesis argues that the Tinker-Sierzian discourse is disadvantageous to scholars and theatre-makers wishing to understand Kane's work, and that it is time to challenge the idea that it has content worthy of serious scholarly study.

In an excellent chapter in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1600-2000*, Mary Luckhurst addresses the bellicose nature of the critics' writing on the 'opening night of *Blasted*', and locates it as a reactionary phenomenon – 'Kane and her play made excellent material for right-wing ideologues' – deriving its vitriol, in some measure, in response to Kane's gender and age.¹¹⁵ She notes the peculiarity of Jack Tinker's response in particular – something I will address in more depth in chapter 3.ii. Luckhurst writes:

Tinker's assault is extraordinary not just for its aesthetic conservatism but also for its expression of personal prejudices. Tinker declares war on Kane's youth, talent, intelligence, sanity (linked by implication to her sex) and morality; he criticises the play's failure to adhere to realist conventions and finally condemns it as utterly worthless. As an outburst it is extreme for the way it pathologises the playwright, yet was matched in tone by other attackers, who became much more obsessed with passing judgements on the author than on the play.¹¹⁶

Thus the origin of the second discourse on Kane is anchored in extremity, irrationality and a reactionary aggression, and the discourse continues to circle back to that point, viewing it as 'exciting', 'explosive' and influential.¹¹⁷ Whilst some of the critics will now

¹¹⁴ J. Tinker, 'This disgusting feast of filth...', *Daily Mail*, 19 January 1995. This review is reproduced in full in J. Inverne, *Jack Tinker: A Life in Review*, London, Oberon Books, 1997, pp. 188-189.

¹¹⁵ M. Luckhurst, 'Infamy and Dying Young: Sarah Kane, 1971-1999' in M. Luckhurst and J. Moody (eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, Great Britain, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, p. 110.

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 109.

¹¹⁷ The extremism and sexism of the media response was noted by some journalists at the time; P. Holland, 'Monstrous Regiment: Men can get away with depicting violence. Women are attacked for it. Time for a change, writes Patricia Holland', *Independent*, 27 January 1995; B. Nightingale, 'Disgusting Violence? Actually, it's a really peaceful play', *Independent*, 22 January 1995; M. Bradbury, 'Is There a Critic in the House?' *Independent*, 25 January 1995, p. 24; P. Holland, 'Dangerous Women', *New Statesman and Society*, vol. 8, issue 342, 3 March 1995, p. 33.

admit that they ‘got it wrong’ about the play, none have expressed any real empathy or self-reflection on how horrific their reactions to the play must have been for Kane personally. Nowhere in Tinker-Sierzian discourses on the opening night of *Blasted* is the idea expressed that far from being a ‘exciting’ theatre moment, it was actually a shameful and vicious attack. Sierz and other journalists return victoriously and proprietorially to that moment in 1995 like hunting hounds to the scene of a kill. The thesis therefore questions the usefulness of the second discourse.¹¹⁸

Recognising that there is a different story that can be told about these distressing and painful events, I have endeavoured to investigate ‘the opening night of *Blasted*’ in other contexts.¹¹⁹ In chapter 3.ii, I suggest that ‘the opening night of *Blasted* furore’ should be regarded as an abhorrent display of patriarchal superstition and hysteria, rooted in mourning, and one that is reflective of gender-unease amongst the theatre reviewers present. I argue that the ‘unleashing of the hounds’ on Sarah Kane in the aftermath of the opening night represents an act of gender terrorism and mob-fury against the playwright, and an expression of collective nausea driven by fear, repression, cowardice and ambivalent desire.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Helen Iball and Elaine Aston have both argued that along similar lines to this. See H. Iball, ‘Room Service: En Suite on the *Blasted* Frontline’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, vol. 15, issue. 3, 2005, pp. 320-329; and Aston’s ‘Reviewing the fabric’, in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., pp. 13-27. Steve Waters expresses ennui at the continual return to the opening night of *Blasted*, though as with Aston, can see some merit in recognising it as part of the fabric of Kane’s narrative: ‘It is illuminating, if wearying, to go back to the reviews of that foundational moment.’ ‘Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma’ in M. Luckhurst (ed.), *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005*, Malden USA, Oxford UK, Victoria Australia, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 371-381.

¹¹⁹ This work has already started. For an excellent article, see E. Aston, ‘Feeling the Loss of Feminism: Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* and an Experiential Genealogy of Women’s Playwriting’, *Theatre Journal*, vol. 62, no. 4, December 2010, pp. 575-592.

¹²⁰ K. Bornstein, ‘Gender Terror, Gender Rage’, in S. Stryker and S. Whittle (eds.), *The Transgender Studies Reader*, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 236-243. See also Aston’s discussion of ‘affect-stripping and disgust-making’ by the media in relation to the opening night of *Blasted*; Aston, ‘Reviewing the fabric’, in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., pp. 14-20.

The Third Discourse

A significant and long-standing area of Kane scholarship is the feminist thinking on her work. I present this thesis as a contribution to this field, and in doing so aim to participate in the political 're-membering' of 1980s and 1990s feminisms, with consideration of its growth today, and the relevance of Kane's plays to theatre-makers concerned with feminism and gender issues.¹²¹ It is important to recognise Sarah Kane as part of this tradition. I write consciously as a 'queer sister' of Kane, and offer alternative, site-specific reflections on her work from a point of feminist history, politics and practices in the UK and beyond. This process has included an in-depth look at texts emerging from the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, particularly those of Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, Caroline Blackwood, Beth Junor, Sasha Roseneil, and Sarah Hipperson, and my findings on this are to be found in chapter 5.iii.¹²² In chapters 5 and 6, I include 'queer sister' autobiographical and feminist reflections on Britain from the 1970s until the present day to assist in this recognition.

I note the presence of feminist interest in Kane from her time as a student at Bristol University. Linda Fitzsimmons, author of *File on Churchill*, was one of Kane's lecturers during her undergraduate years and invited Kane to submit her student manuscripts to

¹²¹ M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, London: The Women's Press, 1991, pp. 92-93.

¹²² B. Harford and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, London, The Women's Press, 1984; C. Blackwood, *On the Perimeter: Caroline Blackwood at Greenham Common*, London, William Heinemann and Flamingo Press, 1984; ; B. Junor, *Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance 1984 – 1995*, London, Working Press, 1995; S. Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham*, London and New York, Cassell, 2000; S. Hipperson, *Greenham: Non-Violent Women – v – The Crown Prerogative*, London: Greenham Publications, 2005

the Women's Theatre Collection archive whilst she was setting it up in 1998.¹²³ This suggests that Fitzsimmons was aware of Kane's student works at the time of their original production and supported them. The establishing of the archives by Fitzsimmons testifies to the presence of feminist thinking within the department in the 1990s. The inclusion of Kane's work in the Women's Theatre Collection archive at Bristol constitutes something of an Irigarayan reserve, and I will discuss the implications of this in relation to both feminist and queer ideas arising from the staging of her plays.¹²⁴ I note the continued feminist interest in Kane at Birmingham, where Kane was taught by feminist playwright Clare McIntyre, and in her professional work as writer, director and performer, where as noted, she quickly attracted the attention of a female literary agent (Mel Kenyon) and publisher (Pamela Edwardes). Kenyon had been Literary Manager at the Royal Court in Kane's undergraduate years. Kane approached her with copies of her *Sick* folio whilst still at Bristol, but Kenyon turned them down.¹²⁵ However, Kane clearly demonstrated enough professional quality to be seriously considered by Kenyon, and was taken on immediately after graduating from the MA programme at Birmingham.¹²⁶

Kane later attracted the attention of Vicky Featherstone (Paines Plough, UK) and Sue Parrish (Sphinx Theatre, UK).¹²⁷ Kane approached Parrish whilst at Bristol and asked her to stage the monologues. Parrish declined, but was interested in Kane and

¹²³ L. Fitzsimmons, *File on Churchill*, London, Methuen Drama, 1989. I was told this information by an archivist whilst reading Kane's *Sick* folio at the Women's Theatre Collection, Bristol, 25 August 2009.

¹²⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum*, op. cit.

¹²⁵ 'Mel Kenyon' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 150.

¹²⁶ It is possible that Kenyon's interest in attending the Birmingham showing had some connection to Kane, though this idea needs further research to substantiate either way.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 151. 'Conversation with Vicky Featherstone' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 128. Featherstone employed Kane to work at Paines Plough and directed the premiere of *Crave* in 1998. Sphinx Theatre Company, <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/>, 2010, (accessed 3 June 2011).

considered ways of her working with Sphinx Theatre, formerly the Women's Theatre Group.¹²⁸ Aston notes that Kane staged a version of *Blasted* for a 1996 Glass Ceiling event, and Kenyon notes that at the time of her death, Kane was working on an adaptation of *Medea* for Sphinx Theatre. Kane's relationship with the company is the subject of some mystery and silence, and is of interest to a feminist scholar. Kane was in correspondence with the company from 1995, and documents of this are in the Sphinx Theatre Company Archive, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum: Theatre Collections, London, UK. Access to this file, in particular correspondence on the adaptation of *Medea*, has had restrictions placed on it and cannot be accessed until 1 January 2028.¹²⁹ I have no suggestions as to what the file holds, but I note the curious silence in relation to Kane's adaptation of *Medea* for Sphinx Theatre as currently representing a gap in feminist theatre knowledge. I trust that, in time, the information will be disclosed and the riddle of its long silence answered, leading to new questions about the nature of silence and time in an unfolding feminist scholarship on Kane. Like so much of Sarah Kane's story, there are silences and areas of privacy which must be both respected and wondered about.

I note aspects of Kane's practice that point to other reserves of interest for feminist scholars: for example, Kane's relationship to a lesbian canon of theatre; the

¹²⁸ Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., p. 23.

¹²⁹ Victoria and Albert Museum: Theatre Collections, 'Sphinx Theatre Company (formerly The Women's Theatre Group) Archive, 1973-2005', <http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/theatre/archives/thm-322b.html>, ND, (accessed 1 June 2013). See reference THM/322/4/7: Correspondence with Sarah Kane over proposed adaptation of *Medea* in the 1995-1997 folder. There was informal discussion at the *Sarah Kane Now* conference amongst some delegates that suggested that Sphinx's artistic directors have been legally bound by the Sarah Kane estate from talking to anybody about Kane's work with them for a period of 50 years. This is anecdotal evidence and at this time I cannot substantiate it, beyond recognising that the evidence of the prohibition on the correspondence would suggest there is some form of legal barrier to further enquiry on this.

significance of her work to *l'écriture féminine*;¹³⁰ the structural similarities of her work to left-wing and Suffrage political theatres, also Irish Women's theatres;¹³¹ questions of authorship – female, lesbian and gender-queer – that arise from both the production and reading of her works, also from analysis of her writing choices;¹³² and Kane's relationship to female and gender-queer filmmakers, performance and visual artists.¹³³ I note with pleasure the growth of feminist scholarship on Kane's work centred around Lancaster University (UK), and have found Elaine Aston's work in this field invaluable.¹³⁴

The practical aspect of this project, which fuses both theatre, clown and body art practice, recognises an often unacknowledged but significant body of contemporary performance artists interested in Kane's work. Whilst theatre theorists appear to build ongoing relationships with the canon, centring their scholarship and practice within the established 'family' of theatre or literary frames, it is notable that performance artists do not. Instead, they tend to work with Kane in a shifting interdisciplinary vein. I

¹³⁰ L.A. Sifuentes, 'Biting Off the Tongue of Discourse: How Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* Performs as Hélène Cixous's "Laughing Medusa"', *Journal of Drama Studies*, Spring 2009. I am grateful to Lian Amaris Sifuentes for kindly sending me a copy of her article. See also E. Prenowitz (ed), *Selected Plays of Hélène Cixous*, Oxon and New York, 2004.

¹³¹ Conversation with Kaori Nakayama, Leeds, UK, 4 April 2013. Nakayama is Drama Officer for the Japan Arts Council and Director of Japan's Theatre Planning Network. She noted Kane as being in a continuum of British community and political theatre-makers in writings published in Japan as early as 1997 (primarily Joan Littlewood, British Theatre-in-Education and Community Theatre practices). I have been unable to read this due to language barriers; but note the strong interest in Kane's work occurring in Japan for a number of years, and Nakayama's placing of Kane in the British political theatres spectrum, for further enquiry. See also M. Sihra (ed.), *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

¹³² D. Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, New York and London, 1991. See also, J. Halberstam, 'The Transgender Look' in A. Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Second Edition, London and New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 146-154.

¹³³ S. Lin Tay, *Women on the Edge: Twelve Political Film Practices*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Kane, MA Thesis, 2008.

¹³⁴ See primarily Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit., Aston 'Reviewing the fabric' in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., and Aston, 'Feeling the Loss', op. cit.

have noted that whilst their involvement with Kane is frequently fleeting, their interests tend to concur more centrally with my own in applying feminist, queer, practice-centred and body-focused explorations of the text. Though less easy to immediately identify, performance artists often have much to offer to a feminist scholarship on Kane and have already expanded the picture of her work in ways that may not be so immediately apparent to those in the field tied more centrally to a formal theatre and literature exegesis.

There is a formal innovation introduced by Kane in her first three professional plays which relates to performance art. This is never discussed, and to my knowledge, has not as yet been performed in a production of *Cleansed*; hence I draw attention to it here. In the opening notes of *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love* and *Cleansed*, Kane writes: 'Stage directions in brackets function as lines.'¹³⁵ I suggest that this innovation, were it to be practised, would effect an interruption to the fourth wall mode of performance that is conventionally maintained in productions of Kane's work, allowing greater understanding of her theatrical impulses and her intentions to be realised and understood. In *Cleansed*, as in *Phaedra's Love*, the first use of this technique relates to acts of 'looking'. In *Cleansed*:

Tinker. (*Looks up*).¹³⁶

In *Phaedra's Love*:

¹³⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 106. In the *mother bird* residency at Leeds Art Gallery (Cast-Off Drama, 2-8 July 2012), I voiced every one of these directions in *Cleansed* in performance in the gallery space during an exploration of the theme of 'institution'. The effect of their utterance completely changes the dynamic of the scene and the implication of the words and gestures being performed. Were there to be a performative investigation of these moments alone in rehearsal it would radically alter the actors' perceptions of their role and further unlock the playing potential of each scene.

¹³⁶ *ibid.* p. 107.

Doctor. (*Looks at her*).¹³⁷

In voicing an act of looking, the characters draw attention to questions of scopic activity, and in doing so, also draw attention to physical action – something an actor may choose to play (on the line, as directed) or play against physically.¹³⁸ It is essentially a gesture delivered through language, and in making this gesture Kane asks that we address our relationship to the scopic.¹³⁹ The location of gestured looking in a figure of the doctor evokes psychoanalytic reference. In this Kane makes use of a gestural language common in psychotherapeutic treatment whereby the doctor will use a clear look back at the patient to indicate emphasis, and to interrupt the stream of language with non-verbal gesturing. This is clearly indicated in *Phaedra's Love* – the doctor's 'look' at Phaedra in this moment invites her to consider the import of the words she has just uttered – words that reveal the truth of her feelings for Hippolytus, despite her best efforts to hide them. It is a use of psychoanalytic gesture that is progressive – it can only be used when the doctor and patient are looking at each other face-to-face, usually seated, and is a form of psychoanalytic physicality which challenges patriarchal models of dominance such as that described by Irigaray in *Sexes and Genealogies*.¹⁴⁰

The linguistic effect of this innovation also disrupts the theatrical language of dialogue and replaces it with a narrative prose form.¹⁴¹ The actors whilst showing the moment

¹³⁷ Kane, *Phaedra's Love*, op. cit., p. 67. The Doctor looks at Phaedra.

¹³⁸ It is dramaturgically-important to note that it is specifically the 'stage directions *in brackets*' that Kane indicates are to be spoken as lines.

¹³⁹ For an interesting analysis of Irigarayan philosophy on the scopic, see H. Baker, 'Speculating on the Exclusion of the Feminine', *Law and Critique*, vol. 13, 2002, pp. 51-73.

¹⁴⁰ Irigaray, 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis' in *Sexes and Genealogies*, pp. 89-104.

¹⁴¹ Note Graeae Theatre Company's extension of this idea into scenography, as discussed by Helen Iball. H. Iball, *Sarah Kane's Blasted*, London and New York, Continuum, 2008, pp. 64-65.

also tell/describe the moment, and in this gesture Kane effects a form of narratological intervention that alienates the audience from immersion in the fiction of the piece, instead revealing its constructedness, and through this, the truth that theatre itself is a fiction, constructed through words and gestures. There is potentially a relationship to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* technique, also *Gestus* through this.¹⁴² In my analysis of *Cleansed* as a play that centrally concerns itself with transgender themes and politics, I suggest that the voiced moment in scene 18 where 'Grace. (Touches her stitched-on genitals.)' is potentially a 'gestic moment' that:

in a sense explains the play, but [...] also exceeds the play, opening it to the social and discursive ideologies that inform its production.¹⁴³

I will explore the significance of this moment in chapter 6.

What became apparent in my own playing with this in the *mother bird* residency at Leeds Art Gallery, is that the voicing of the 'stage directions in brackets' which 'function as lines' points to a presence of Clown technique in Kane's theatre.¹⁴⁴ In breaking the fourth wall, it creates possibilities for 'Conversation' with the audience to occur. As Coburn and Morrison note

The clown's story is a constant and it is against this story that all other stories, including script, are told or revealed. The clown's story is present when the clown is Connected To Self [...]. Theatre of clown is about communication, the communication that happens where the clown and the audience overlap, the conversation that happens in that common space. For this conversation to happen the clown must be Connected To The Audience, aware of the audience, what they are thinking and feeling. This live communication is called Clown Conversation. There is no fourth wall in clown performance.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² M. Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, Oxon, USA and Canada, Routledge, 2009.

¹⁴³ E. Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 53.

¹⁴⁴ *mother bird* residency: A Gallery Interpretation of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 2-8 July 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 97

It is outside the scope of this study to investigate Kane's formal innovation in more depth here, but I draw attention to it as a rich vein of feminist, queer, cross-art form and political performative enquiry; the full potential of which has as yet, curiously, been unexplored.

Kane's use of techniques that reveal the fictions and constructions of theatre with its fourth wall, recalls experiments in form shared by her friend and contemporary, Elana Greenfield in her play *Nine Come*.¹⁴⁶ Greenfield wrote *Nine Come* as part of two works submitted for her MA thesis. The first work was called *Nicht Ich: Lunatic Grace*.¹⁴⁷ There is a clear connection to *Cleansed* in this title and also to Samuel Beckett's *Not I*.¹⁴⁸ Greenfield's thesis was submitted in 1998, the same year that *Cleansed* premiered. I have been unable to research this further to ascertain who is citing whom, also whether the writers actively collaborated on each other's texts, but I note the relationship between these playwrights as something of interest to feminist scholarship that merits further enquiry.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ E. Greenfield, 'Nine Come' in M. Wellman and Y.J. Lee, (eds.), *New Downtown Now: An Anthology of New Theatre from Downtown New York*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 75. Kane dedicated *Phaedra's Love* to 'Simon, Jo and Elana', Kane, *Phaedra's Love*, op. cit., p. 63. Greenfield in turn wrote in her dedication for *Nine Come*: 'For Sarah'.

¹⁴⁷ E. Greenfield, *Nicht Ich: Lunatic Grace : Nine Come*, MA Thesis, Brown University, USA, 1998.

¹⁴⁸ 'Voices. Lunatic Grace', Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 134. S. Beckett, 'Not I' in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London, Faber & Faber, 2006, pp. 373-383. 'Not I' was first performed in New York in 1972.

¹⁴⁹ New York Foundation for the Arts, 'Introducing ... Elana Greenfield', <http://www.nyfa.org/level3.asp?id=540&fid=6&sid=17>, ND, (accessed 1 June 2013). Greenfield was the Artistic Director of New Dramatists in New York and they met when Kane was on a writing residency shortly after *Blasted* premiered in 1995. Greenfield wrote an account of Kane's visit in an article published in *The Brooklyn Rail*, and I discuss this further in chapter 5.iii. 'New Dramatists: Dedicated to the Playwright', www.newdramatists.org/, ND, (accessed 1 June 2013).

Nine Come extends the destabilising idea that the play is a book that loses its materiality through the performing, and can be seen as working formally with the kind of innovations explored by Kane in both *Cleansed* and *Blasted*. The opening lines of scene 1 state:

*The feel of any production of this play should include a sense – however faint, and perhaps the fainter the better – that all we are seeing on stage is contained in the book Anna opens in scene 1: we are seeing what can be deciphered of it as its pages turn to dust.*¹⁵⁰

In this, Greenfield reaches for (and prompts a cast to embrace and make sense of) an aesthetic that will offer a challenge to the scopic (displacing successively the frames of the naturalist stage, then the book) through fluid and haptic dissolving. In the midst of this disintegration, characters tell stories in short, intense, monologues and engage in dialogue with each other. Groups emerge in separate times and locations, their stories weaving close in some moments to a point where their lives appear to touch and connect with one another, and then moving far apart. Greenfield extends the disintegration of the scopic frame and collapses its distancing mechanisms through breath and silence. Stage directions such as: *'Sound of a breath: exhale, inhale'* and *'Silence. Something shifts'* invites reader and actors to pay attention to embodiment and to their sensory perception.¹⁵¹ Greenfield does not assign the breathing to a character – it is just there. It exists within the body of the text and is there for the reader and cast to decide where, how and in whom to place it. Similarly she leaves it for the reader and cast to decide what it is that has shifted, and how they register or express this within and between themselves in silence. Nevertheless there is an internal structure to the work that plays itself out, as the title indicates, in nine

¹⁵⁰ Greenfield, 'Nine Come', op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 79 and p. 95.

rhythmic sections. In considering Greenfield and Kane's innovations, I suggest that their work was engaging with (to paraphrase Aston and Raymond Williams), 'new structures of feminist feeling' informed by breath, touch and shifting.¹⁵²

Within the third discourse, of significance to feminist studies on Kane, and comparatively nascent, is the emergence of queer theory on Kane's plays. There is a particular focus on *Cleansed* in queer theory on Kane and articles of note are those of both Frances Rayner, and Selina Busby and Stephen Farrier.¹⁵³ In chapter 6, I argue that the form as well as the thematic content of *Cleansed* reflects lesbian and transgender aesthetics, and that this integration of form and content is intentional and political. An essential and much referred-to theoretical text accompanying me in the conclusion of this process has been Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle's 2006 anthology, *The Transgender Studies Reader*.¹⁵⁴ Of particular interest to this project, and of direct relevance to *Cleansed* is the recent work by Catherine McNamara on transgender masculinities and voice.¹⁵⁵ The research has also benefitted from the Gendered Intelligence Anatomy Project held at the Central School of Speech and Drama in the Spring of 2013.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁵³ S. Busby and S. Farrier, 'The Fluidity of Bodies, Gender, Identity and Structure in the Plays of Sarah Kane' in D. Godiwala, (ed.), *Alternatives Within the Mainstream II: Queer Theatres in Post-War Britain*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. F. Rayner, 'Written On the Body: Gender, Violence and Queer Desire in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*', in *ex aequo* no. 20, 2009.

¹⁵⁴ Stryker and Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader*, op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ C. McNamara, 'Re-inhabiting an uninhabitable body: interventions in voice production with transsexual men', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre Performance*, vol. 12, issue 2, pp. 195-206; C. McNamara, *The Constitution of Transgender Masculinities Through Performance: A Study of Theatre and the Everyday*, PhD Thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2009.

¹⁵⁶ 'Anatomy: Drawing Gender, Drawing Sex, Drawing Bodies', Gendered Intelligence, Central School of Speech and Drama, London. Held on the 9 and 16 February, and 2 and 16 March 2013. See <http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>, ND, (accessed 27 January 2013).

I will reflect on all three of these key discourses throughout the thesis.

Sexuate Difference and Breath

As noted, the initial premise of this thesis took as its focus, an idea that Kane's work can be usefully understood as crossing between traditions of both theatre and performance art in equal and shifting measure. I employed Irigaray's paradigm of the two lips speaking together as a model for reflection and as an organising structure for consideration of a double approach to the work – an approach that was always passing in-relation between-two.¹⁵⁷ In contemplating Kane's work, I took both entities of theatre and performance art as being at once equal, irreducibly different, but also able to touch, share mucus and embrace when her work is explored.¹⁵⁸

In considering questions of inheritance and generation in Kane's work, I studied Irigaray's ideas on the 'natural and cultural breath', acknowledging some tensions of 'alliance or passage' between the two.¹⁵⁹ I placed Kane's position within male-dominant theatre histories (Bond, Beckett, Barker et al) as being concomitant with breathing a masculine-identified cultural breath, and her relationship to feminist performance art practitioners of the 1970s-1990s (Orlan, Emin, Ono, de Saint-Phalle, Hatoum, Abramovic) as having some resonance with a significant, (but as yet unresolved and in need of clear horizon) female-identified natural breath. At heart, I sought to explore *Cleansed* through a model of sexuate difference, centred firmly in

¹⁵⁷ Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', *This Sex*, op. cit. See also 'Veiled Lips' in Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., pp. 75-119.

¹⁵⁸ For an excellent discussion of Irigaray's early philosophies, see M. Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991.

¹⁵⁹ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit., p. 75.

Irigarayan thinking and informed ultimately, in practice, by established and emerging theories of transgender.¹⁶⁰

Cleansed centres its trajectory on an investigation of clothing and bodies which implicates and indicates the gender binary as a site of contestation, violence, desire, making, unmaking, resistance and mucosity. It frames a dramatisation of sexuate difference and binarism through clothing and bodies from scene 3 of the play. The central action of scene 3 is one of cross-dressing between two characters, one nominally designated female (Grace, 'Miss'), the other male (Robin, 'a nineteen year-old boy').¹⁶¹ Kane directs the cross-dressing to indicate full nudity, and draws attention to the actors' bodies through this. The transvestism of these characters continues for the rest of the play.

Kane then structures a second key moment of focus on the gender binary three scenes from the end of *Cleansed*. In scene 18, Grace and another nominally male character Carl awake, naked but for bandages, to discover that their bodies have been genitally transfigured through surgery; Carl losing, through inference, a penis, and Grace again through inference, losing her breasts. Grace gains (through explicit reference) 'stitched-on genitals' – by inference, a penis. Thus through clothing and the body,

¹⁶⁰ 'Sexuate difference' is a key philosophy in Irigaray's work, and is at the centre of this particular enquiry into Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*. See Irigaray, *This Sex*, op. cit. Other key texts informing this are as follows: Irigaray, *Speculum*, op. cit.; L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G.C. Gill, London, The Athlone Press, 1993; first published in French as *Ethique de la Difference Sexuelle* by Les Editions de Minuit in 1984; Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, op. cit.; L. Irigaray, *To Be Two*, trans. M. Rhodes and M. Cocito-Monoc, Great Britain, The Athlone Press, 2000. L. Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. A. Martin, New York and Oxon, Routledge Classics, 2007. Understanding of this area of Irigaray's work was assisted by attending the following conference: Sexuate Subjects: Politics, Poetics and Ethics, Luce Irigaray Circle, UCL (University College London), London. 3-5 December 2010.

¹⁶¹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 112-116.

Cleansed offers a transsexual journey through the figure of Grace, which implies and involves other characters in processes of gender and bodily transition and reassignment. As Busby and Farrier note:

What Kane reveals in the character of Grace [...] is a larger story about the constructedness of gender and sexual identity. Kane shows that gender and sexual identity are mutable and related to conditions of the performative.¹⁶²

Inherent in this transgender milieu are narratives and debates regarding sexual orientation, incarceration, repression, desire, violence, institutionalisation and economics.

I am particularly interested in the ways in which Kane maintains the gender binary whilst presenting us, ultimately, with an image of its transitioned state. This marks Kane's text as ultimately queer. Notably, for an Irigarayan reader, Kane does not focus her narrative solely on Grace and transsexual change for one, but ends with touch and breath between two:

Grace/Graham looks at **Carl**.
Carl is crying.
Grace/Graham. Help me.
Carl reaches out his arm.
Grace/Graham holds his stump.
They stare at the sky, **Carl** crying.
The sun comes out.
Grace/Graham smiles.¹⁶³

As such the play's treatment of gender resists foreclosure and the concomitant reduction of the male and female subjects into sameness:

never a completeness of the One, but constitution of two worlds open and in relation with one another, and which give birth to a third world as work in common and space-time to be shared.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Busby and Farrier, 'The Fluidity of Bodies' in Godiwala, *Alternatives*, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁶³ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

¹⁶⁴ Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, op. cit., p. 10.

The exploration of sexuate difference and becoming marks *Cleansed* as a political and philosophical text of some significance to contemporary thinking. As Irigaray notes in

An Ethics of Sexual Difference:

Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our 'salvation' if we thought it through [...] sexual difference would constitute the horizon of worlds more fecund than any known to date – at least in the West – and without reducing fecundity to the reproduction of bodies and flesh.¹⁶⁵

In its presentation of feminist and queer transitions enacted on and through bodies onstage, the play indicates thinking on notions of nature and culture and on the natural and the sexual, beyond reductionist heteropatriarchal models. It reflects debates and issues of central concern to the lived experiences of people in the contemporary world and suggests alternative, differentiated and diverse ways of understanding self and others. As Elisabeth Grosz notes, paraphrasing Irigaray's ideas:

Sexual difference is not contained only within the sexual identities of male and female. Rather its implications are far ranging and touch on the real itself. Sexual difference is not simply the existence of two irreducibly different types of subject, but at least two irreducibly different perspectives, frameworks, experiences, modes of conceptualization, forms of knowledge, techniques of existence, at least two ways of undertaking any activity. The ontology of sexual difference entails sexually different epistemologies and forms of pragmatics, that is, different relations to subjects, objects and the world itself.¹⁶⁶

In the latter part of the thesis I will explore how notions of sexual difference, sexuate becoming and transgender usefully intersect in *Cleansed*. I suggest that the final image of Grace/Graham and Carl and Grace/Graham's long monologue dramatises mucosity, and as such:

¹⁶⁵ Irigaray, *Ethics*, op. cit., p.5.

¹⁶⁶ E. Grosz, 'The Nature of Sexual Difference: Irigaray and Darwin', in *Angelaki, Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 17, no. 2, June 2012.

lends itself to the representation of the unthought; [...] it is interior [...] more accessible to touch than to sight [...] essential to the act of love [...] neither simply solid nor fluid [...] it expands, but not in a shape [...] it cannot be swallowed (incorporated) or spat out [...] it corresponds both to sexuality and speech (the two pairs of lips).¹⁶⁷

Essentially, Whitford notes, 'the mucous is also related to air, because of the mouth's links with breathing, speaking and singing' and that:

Air corresponds closely to a possible female imaginary; it is both mobile and immobile, permanent and flowing, with multiple temporal punctuations possible [...].¹⁶⁸

This thesis suggests that the mucosity of *Cleansed* cannot be understood or felt through sight alone, and notes that investigations into staging the play gives space for breath, speech, lips and touch and the sharing of 'the air in the room between us' to come into play.¹⁶⁹ The practice element of the thesis has increasingly been concerned with mucosity and with exploring and strengthening the natural breath of Kane's text, restoring a corporeal, cultivated, earth-centred, rhythmic and emotionally-open feminine focus to it. It has also been concerned with understanding and expressing fully its cultural breath, recognising blockages to it achieving full masculine expression, and ensuring that the passages and alliances between these breaths, natural and cultural, feminine and masculine remain open to exchange and difference, with desire to be-in-relation and speak together.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Whitford, *Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 163

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ M. Tuffnell and C. Crickmay, *Body, Space, Image: Notes Towards Improvisation and Performance*, London, Dance Books, 1993, p. 22. First published 1990.

¹⁷⁰ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit., p. 129.



- 1.a. Christine Smith, *To Be Two*, mixed-media on lining paper roll, made in response to life-model performer reading from Irigaray's philosophies. *I Love to You*, Cast-Off Drama, Bates Mill Artspace, Huddersfield, UK, August 2009.

Reading Left-Right:

- 1.a.i. I love to you
- 1.a.ii. A body brought to life by consciousness
- 1.a.iii. Caress is a gesture, word, a gift of safety, an invitation to peacefulness
- 1.a.iv. I cannot fall asleep in my knowledge of you, we look at the invisible together, to be two is to help each other to be
- 1.a.v. I can become a bridge for you as you can for me
- 1.a.vi. It is pleasant to rest in the still light



1.b. Touching mucous. Detail from Christine Smith, *To Be Two*, mixed-media on lining paper roll, *I Love to You*, Cast-Off Drama, Bates Mill Artspace, Huddersfield, UK, 27 July 2009.



- 1.c. Kerry Ely, Siobhan Harrison and Carly Wood, Sarah Kane Research Group, *Finding a Moment of... Love in 'Cleansed'*, University of Huddersfield Drama Department, UK, 21 October 2009. Young women exploring Christine Smith's artwork *To Be Two*, mixed-media on lining paper roll. Artwork produced in response to a model-led reading of Luce Irigaray's philosophies in the Cast-Off Drama, *I Love to You* project, Bates Mill Artspace, Huddersfield, UK, 27 July 2009. The young women took inspiration from Smith's work to build 'a dance of love', also using scenes 5-9 of *Cleansed*.

Writing with use of the 'I' and Ficto-critical strategy

I will use the first-person singular throughout this thesis, eschewing the 'author-evacuated' analytical writing of conventional patriarchal scholarship, in favour of an embodied and differentiated speaker (I, me, myself).¹⁷¹ This of course places my thesis further in line with many feminist projects within different academic schools, and is possibly more a feature of inter-disciplinary reflective work and practice-as-research by necessity. It also honours the Irigarayan centre of the work, and concurs with the premise that the:

transformation of the autobiographical *I* into a different cultural *I* seems essential if we are to set up new ethics of sexual difference.¹⁷²

I offer this mode of thesis-writing to you (the reader) with a principle of exchange, breath, space and difference at heart between you and I:

the *I* tends to leave some space for *you* and the *world*, for the objectivity of words and things.¹⁷³

I also recognise the gendered nature of my own body, which whilst not exclusively feminine / female, is at least politically and structurally regarded as being so within the binary systems structuring the social world I inhabit. Given the marginalised position accorded the work of myself and others designated female both historically and now within patriarchal structures, I concur with the political importance of recognising Woman and women within the world, and of women self-representing through strong use of 'I'. Hence I echo Irigaray's comments here from *Je, Tu, Nous* in connection to this choice:

¹⁷¹ A. Brewster, 'Beachcombing: A Fossicker's Guide to Whiteness and Indigenous Sovereignty', in Smith and Dean *Practice-Led Research*, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁷² Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p.175.

I write as a woman. I write with who I am. Why wouldn't that be valid, unless out of contempt for the value of women or from a denial of a culture in which the sexual is a significant subjective and objective dimension?¹⁷⁴

Where I use terms 'us' and 'we' in this thesis I do so to signify broadly any reader, theatre-maker or audience member engaging with Kane's texts, recognising that processes of dramaturgy, theatre-making and scholarship are collective enterprises, that gather people with similar interests together in conversation and shared endeavour. As a dramaturg and Clown, I recognise that this thesis articulates positions and ideas from my movement within disparate groups – primarily, but not exclusively – theatre-makers, Kane scholars, feminists, transgender people, philosophers, queer theorists. My reference to the collective 'we' may give accent to this position of speaking from within and to any (or all) of these groups, as well as to a general reader. As this thesis is in some measure a Clown conversation, I leave it, respectfully, to the reader to decide where to position themselves and their views in relation to my use of 'I' or 'we/us' at any given point in the thesis.

I echo Irigaray in recognising the importance of scholarly writing, and in using an 'I' that leaves space for 'You'; to be able to discourse through written language in ways that create 'new meaning' and recognise the importance of being-in-relation in the 'present moment':

My principle interest in language does not consist in repeating already coded meanings but in creating new meanings in order to speak in the present: to enter into relation with the world, the other(s) and also myself in the present.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁷⁵ 'Towards a Wisdom of Love: Conversation Between Luce Irigaray and Judith Still', in L. Irigaray, *Conversations*, London and New York, Continuum, 2008, p. 23.

Irigaray's constant reiteration of a philosophy of two is liberating to an interdisciplinary thinker and allows for the necessary labial shifting, moulding and space for mucus, efficacious and pleasurable to those of us who move between disciplines.¹⁷⁶ I very much welcome Hilary Robinson's work on applying Irigarayan theory to readings of visual art.¹⁷⁷ I have found her 2006 text useful in developing my own methodological approach to analysing both fine art texts and performance moments through an Irigarayan lens. Robinson notes the deeply-rooted feminism and gender-consciousness informing Irigaray's approach to theory and practice:

there are elements in her thinking concerning women's subjectivity, the enunciation of that sexed subjectivity, and of mediation between subjects, which are not only exciting philosophically, but are also important for theoretical and critical discussions of contemporary art.¹⁷⁸

It is of surprise to me that Irigarayan philosophy has not been used for discussing drama and performance more, particularly with regard to feminist or queer theatres. This situation shows signs of changing.¹⁷⁹ My thesis therefore supports the emergence of new thinking in this area and demonstrates the applicatory potential of Irigaray's ideas to building dramaturgies, and to reading theatrical practice. It also demonstrates the potential of applying Irigaray's ideas on communication, breath, gesture, gender,

¹⁷⁶ Irigaray, L., *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. by A. Martin, New York and London, Routledge, 1996. First published in French as *J'aime à toi: esquisse d'une felicité dans l'histoire*, by Grasset in 1992.

¹⁷⁷ Robinson, *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ At time of writing, an anthology of articles exploring Irigarayan philosophies on breath is being prepared, and some of these relate to dance. It has not been possible to access this book for use in this thesis, but I note it as a body of knowledge that may potentially expand understandings of Irigaray in the performance field, and be applicable across a significant spectrum of dance, theatre, performance art, circus and clown. L. Skof and E.A. Holmes (eds.), *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, London, New Delhi, New York and Sydney, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

space and the body as a reflective theoretical tool for evaluating rehearsal and performance.¹⁸⁰

Something that makes Irigaray's work particularly applicatory to drama and dramaturgy, is the extent of interdisciplinary, professional and political practice informing her own work. As Robinson notes:

Irigaray's work is not generated from a solely theoretical framework. It is informed by, and feeds back into, a range of practices – for example, professional (her work as a psychoanalyst), party political (such as her work with the youth movement of the Communist Party of Italy), spiritual (her practice of meditation) and scientific (her collation of the uses of language).

In commenting on the more widespread use of Irigaray's theory in art history and visual arts scholarship by women artists, Robinson goes on to say:

It is this return of practice to the acts of theorising, and of theory to the place and time of practice - allowing practice to be productive of theory - that to my mind is one reason why Irigaray's work is so attractive to artists. It is my contention that, although it barely engages with art directly, much of Irigaray's work cuts across many of the tired areas in present-day art criticism, and can help us to develop ways of reading the practices of contemporary women artists, and feed into the studios and related practices of those artists.¹⁸¹

Writing as a clown, I will employ a particular form of theoretical strategy at some key moments of this thesis, notably at the start of chapter 6, also in 3.i. The form I will use is Ficto-criticism. As Helen Flavell notes:

Rather than mere surface play, ficto-criticism is a political form that seeks to unlearn its authority and privilege at the beginning of a process towards developing an ethical relationship with the other. For the author, ficto-criticism implies risk since it transgresses the rules of both mainstream academic and creative writing through the incursion of generic markers belonging to the other.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸² H. Flavell, 'Who Killed Jeanne Randolph? King, Muecke or "ficto-criticism"', *Outskirts: Feminism along the edge*, Australia, 2009

It is also, as Gibbs notes, performative:

It is, in essence, performative, a meta-discourse in which the strategies of the telling are part of the point of the tale.¹⁸³

Practical Dramaturgy and Clowning.

This thesis suggests that it is worth exploring *Cleansed* as a process-based text, and one that lends itself to a range of arts-making methodologies and purposes. To understand the value of this involves a re-situating of the practice-work away from the expectation that it should lead to production. It involves envisaging the work outside its conventional arena of the professional middle-scale theatre venue. It is notable that *Cleansed* is the least-performed of all Kane's plays in both the professional and amateur fields, and I suggest that this has something to do with the challenges it poses to conventional theatre spaces and processes.¹⁸⁴ Recognising that a professional middle-scale theatre venue production may not be the appropriate location for, or aim of, the work provides a starting point for breathing the play afresh.

This account therefore notes some dramaturgical approaches to *Cleansed* that involve an emphasis on process rather than production. It informs the reader of recent experiments with staging the play in small-scale, non-professional and cross-artform arenas, and notes the application of specific value-systems – feminist, queer, non-Western, inter-textual – to its rehearsing and investigation. It notes the presence of desire and commitment to staging the work even where restrictions are placed upon

¹⁸³ A. Gibbs, 'Bodies of Words, Feminism and Fictocriticism – explanation and demonstration', *TEXT*, vol 1, no. 2, Sydney, 1997.

¹⁸⁴ As noted, this situation appears to be changing with the recent performances cited in this research within the last couple of years, and interest shown in staging *Cleansed* in other places, for example Malta.

this.¹⁸⁵ It is an account of working that argues for time to be spent on discussing the ethical dimensions of the play, and in finding an appropriate dramaturgy for working with the body, and with occurrences of sex and violence within the text. The research recognises that there is limited potential in understanding Kane's plays through reading alone, and that in the absence of the means or permission to produce the play professionally, there are still understandings to be gained from practice. This research recognises that the dramaturgical starting points for *Cleansed* currently offered through scholarship are frequently repetitive, and only relate to the viewing and staging of professional productions in middle-scale theatre venues. It offers as progression therefore, a dramaturgical exploration of *Cleansed* from a feminist and queer perspective – one that is located in practice, and informed by some key Irigarayan concepts. This alternative dramaturgy is supported by breath, both philosophical and embodied.

There is an agency and a life to dramaturgy that is frequently ignored. Establishing the correct dramaturgy for a script involves work – in etymological terms 'turg' means 'work',¹⁸⁶ and its secondary placing to the 'drama' locates it (in Irigarayan analyses of linguistic structuring), in a feminised position – one frequently regarded with negative connotations.¹⁸⁷ In her book, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, Mary Luckhurst notes negative attitudes in general to the word 'dramaturg' within UK and US theatre

¹⁸⁵ By design and default, the research has drawn to it a number of young female directors who desire to stage *Cleansed*, but have not been granted permission by the estate to do so.

¹⁸⁶ 'Online Etymology Dictionary', <http://www.etymonline.com>, ND, (accessed 25 February 2013).

¹⁸⁷ See Irigaray's discussion on relative values of love and wisdom contained within the structuring of words, and of the negative feminised connotations attributed to words such as 'zoophilia' and 'theosophy' through the key component of the term being placed in a secondary position. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

practices, and relates this to the presence of ‘deeply entrenched cultural fears, territoriality and prejudice’ in the rehearsal room with regard to the dramaturg’s role.¹⁸⁸ Luckhurst argues that the word ‘dramaturg’ is viewed with ‘deep-rooted suspicion’, largely due to the potential of the dramaturg to challenge ‘conventional power structures’ and:

inherently shift [...] the manner in which theatre-making processes are organised and cut [...] across territories.¹⁸⁹

In discussing the place of the dramaturg in the twenty-first century, Duška Radosavljević extends on Luckhurst’s ideas, and quotes Jen Harvie’s view that prejudice against the dramaturg stems from a wider problem of ‘anti-intellectualism and anti-theatricality’ in British theatre.¹⁹⁰ In considering the roots of the UK theatre’s prejudice and its territorialist form, Radosavljević cites an inherent itinerancy to the development of the dramaturg as having some effect, writing that her own training was:

characterised by a ‘magpie effect’ – collecting everything that shone in my path and creating a repository from which to draw in fulfilling the duties of my job description.¹⁹¹

The itinerant and feminised nature of dramaturgy, is something that I myself have always recognised. The practice informing this research is characterised by itinerancy, and by the crossing of territories and disciplines. I find both Luckhurst and Radosavljević’s ideas useful in considering the potential of dramaturgy to challenge the manner in which theatre-making with Sarah Kane’s work is organised. To do so

¹⁸⁸ M. Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, Cambridge UK, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁹⁰ D. Radosavljević, ‘The Need to Keep Moving: Remarks on the place of a dramaturg in twenty-first century England’, *Performance Research Journal*, vol. 14, issue 3, 2009, p. 45. I am indebted to Radosavljević for this excellent introduction to Luckhurst and Harvie’s ideas.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 46.

involves movement. Radosavljević usefully articulates the role of the dramaturg as a 'moving body within a theatre-making environment' whose practice should be regarded as one 'that ultimately necessitates a consideration of space.'¹⁹² She elaborates on her own experience of dramaturgy as:

Being on the margins, both literally and metaphorically [...] bridge-building on the one hand, and on the other, a negotiation of the frontiers between theory and practice, between writers and directors, between the show and the audience, between theatre and academia, and sometimes between different cultures too.¹⁹³

She recognises cultural conditions that she predicts will challenge the status quo of territorialism and suspicion within the English rehearsal room and bring forward understandings and practice from the margins to the centre. She hopes that this:

will enable new ways of working, new kinds of theatre making and new hierarchies of knowledge to move from the margins towards the mainstream.¹⁹⁴

This research notes the benefits of bringing the intersectional and itinerant practices of the dramaturg more centrally into readings and rehearsals of Kane's work. I argue that the feminised and shifting practice of dramaturgy – the *work* of the *drama* that happens before production (and arguably continues after) – is essential to undertake for a cast wanting to work with *Cleansed*. I recognise, however, that the placing of myself, marginal dramaturg and clown, at the centre of a shifting and storytelling journey into *Cleansed* here, bears some relation to what Radosavljević, quoting de

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 49. Radosavljević utilises Conquergood's notion of place as a 'heavily trafficked intersection' and extends it in reference to Heddon's description of England as 'a meeting place composed of different networks'. This analysis bears some useful relationship to concepts of 'networked individualism', and my own progress in building a dramaturgical journey through *Cleansed* has relied to a certain extent on these conditions. See L. Rainie and B. Wellam, *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, Cambridge MA (USA) and London (UK), The MIT Press, 2012.

Certeau, calls a 'kind of delinquency'.¹⁹⁵ The inherent delinquency of the dramaturg is necessarily effected so that its 'story' does:

not [...] live on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces.¹⁹⁶

My particular gesture of itinerant dramaturgic delinquency is offered so that space can be opened up for new ways of thinking about *Cleansed* within the realm of theatre studies and Kane scholarship. In considering space, de Certeau recognises the value of the body in this process:

in matters concerning space [the] delinquency begins with the inscription of the body within the order's text. The opacity of the body in movement, gesticulating, walking, taking its pleasure is what indefinitely organises a *here* in relation to an *abroad*, a 'familiarity' in relation to a 'foreignness'.¹⁹⁷

Engaging with dramaturgical work on a script, and recognising it as a feminised, delinquent, foreign and marginalised activity that needs its own space and agency, *before* the rehearsal, is important. Giving dramaturgy its place and time are vital if we are to find new breath, life and familiarity in and with the text, and new ways of 'coming into being' within the mainstream.

Ultimately however, this thesis and its journey through practice, space and time, is an act of clowning. I primarily owe my clown consciousness to experiences with some beautiful artists, clowns and fools in the North of England in the early Millennium years, and also to training undertaken with Sue Morrison.¹⁹⁸ Her approach is summarised here by the Institute of Canadian Clowning:

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.* p.48.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 51. Quoting de Certeau, 1984.

¹⁹⁸ 'Introduction to Baby Clown', Sue Morrison with Yellow Belly Theatre, Workshop Theatre, University of Leeds, UK, June 2004.

It's really hard in clown to make rules, because clowns are by nature anarchists [...] they exist as the conscience of society, every culture has a clown. Everybody. As far back as we can look, to prehistoric man, there were shamans communicating between the gods and the people. And clowns were shamans, because they were involved in transformation, and transformation is healing.¹⁹⁹

As a Clown, and approaching this thesis cautiously from an unconventional, yet theoretically valid position of love, I feel it needs to be acknowledged that there is considerable grief playing itself out through the scholarship and practice surrounding Sarah Kane's work. This is not only present in writing, but in professional stagings of her work by people who knew and continue to mourn her. Those of us didn't know her encounter ghosts in our stagings.²⁰⁰ It is important to recognise that people are still living with the shock of her loss, and as such a scholarly approach to Kane's work requires a balance of strength and sensitivity, whilst maintaining a disciplinary rigour and a commitment to telling the truth you find, whatever that truth is. Clowning offers this balance.

As part of maintaining this balance, I have worked with actors and non-actors using theatre direction and acting techniques, performance art, body art, mask-work and singing. I have also used gallery-dwelling, performing in response to artworks, the general public and the specific spaces of galleries to better understand the world of Kane's text. Most useful to a clown investigation have been improvisation methods, life-modelling theatre and festival /street-theatre skills. I suggest that there is a role

¹⁹⁹ 'About – Institute of Canadian Clowning', www.canadianclowning.com/about.php, ND, (accessed 7 September 2012).

²⁰⁰ Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012. Some cast members of the Actors Touring Company recounted a number of 'haunting incidents', and testified to feeling the apparent presence of ghosts throughout their rehearsals for *Crave*; After-show discussion, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012. 'Crave', Actors Touring Company, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012. I have similarly, at times, felt 'haunted' by phenomena and had a strong sense of the 'voice', the 'character' and the apparent 'presence' of Sarah Kane, whilst researching her plays.

for dramaturgic performers and clowns in taking on the risks of a script and of being able to enter into those areas of risk that a tight rehearsal schedule, teaching situation or commercial production may not have remit or capacity to explore. As Maggie Irving finds in her doctoral research on female clowning:

my embodied practice operates in the borders of objectivity and subjectivity. Thus, my research methodology involves examining theoretical and practical knowledge.²⁰¹

I also echo Irving in noting that:

as a mature woman I bring to clowning a mixture of a life's insights, often mixed with a blend of innocence, curiosity and naivety.²⁰²

Recognising that performers take risks in *Cleansed*, and allowing myself, clown-like, to go into the risky spaces of the process as a way of mapping its dramaturgy, is offered here in empathy to other performers in the spirit of new thinking, understanding and practice informed by maturity and naivety.

Having practised clowning for many years in theatre, performance, gallery and festival arenas in ways both consciously and impulsively political, feminist and queer, it is with some joy that I note an emergence of scholarly discourses on female and feminist clowning, and I offer this thesis as part of that nascent movement. As MLima Caminha notes in her paper, 'Female Clowning: The Place of Women in the Clown World':

[...]It is possible to see a contemporary movement of women taking place in the clown world, which has been historically dominated by men, patriarchal and humanist traditions on laughter and comedy. A type of feminist movement on clowning is being created and/or reinforced, especially in the last decade, through festivals, courses, discourses and performances on a variety of themes such as: female universe, gender roles, gender oppression, female identity and

²⁰¹ M. Irving, *Toward a Female Clown Practice: Transgression, Archetype and Myth*, PhD Thesis, School of Humanities and Performing Arts, University of Plymouth, UK, 2012, p. 32.

²⁰² *ibid.*, p. 89.

women's body. Female clowning appears with a strong potential to inquiry about gender and sexual discourses and politics.²⁰³

It is essentially a Clown discourse on theatre, born of body, travel, love, desire for connection and touch, and with recognition of the need for academic discourses to evolve, transform and embrace in and with difference. I offer this thesis as a meditation on Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* played out in space and time, primarily within the North of England, between the years 2009-2013, but with some roaming elsewhere informing it. I will elaborate further on clowning through the thesis, noting throughout, the qualities in *Cleansed* that mark it as a text with transformative, and ultimately healing potentials.

²⁰³ M. Caminha, 'Female Clowning: The Place of Women in the Clown World', *11th InSEA EUROPEAN CONGRESS: 'Arts Education at the crossroad of cultures'*, Lemesos, Cyprus, 25-27 June 2012.

2. Finding ‘an adequate language with which to discuss’ the Drama of *Cleansed* and Establishing Some Principles of Breath ²⁰⁴

2.i The Problem of *In-Yer-Face Theatre*

This section starts with the problem of narrative. It posits as a problem the fact that it is hard for any theatre reader to approach Sarah Kane’s plays without first encountering the dominant narrative of media criticism on her work and biography. In my overview I refer to this as the second discourse – and, with reference to its key architects, as the Tinker-Sierzian discourse. The media narrative principally offers readers two starting points for looking at Kane. The first starting point is the media furore around the ‘opening night of *Blasted*’. The second starting point is the suicide of Sarah Kane at the age of 28.²⁰⁵ I argue throughout this thesis that the components of this media narrative and the way it is constructed warrant some interrogation, and that the less useful aspects of it need challenging if scholarship and practice of Kane’s work is to progress.

The dominance of media-based criticism on Kane’s texts poses considerable problems for scholars and practitioners wishing to explore their formal innovations. A central issue is one of absolutism, and the inter-textual circling of ideas on Kane’s work, which too often relies on superficial readings of productions seen, and on sound-bites. In order to move forward, it is necessary to locate a key source of this trend and consider its intentions and approach. The source that centrally progresses the media narrative

²⁰⁴ Stephenson and Langridge, op.cit., p. 132.

²⁰⁵ There is insufficient space in this thesis to fully address the question of suicide, though I direct the reader to Janelle Reinelt’s excellent work on this, as presented at the Women’s Writing for Performance: Process and Practice Conference, LICA – Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, UK, 28-30 April 2006. See ‘Suicide – A Reappraisal’ [webcast], 2006, <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/theatre/womenwriting/pages/symposiumdocumentation.htm>. (accessed 20 January 2013). I briefly address suicide in chapter 7.

on Kane is Aleks Sierz's 'in-yer-face' theatre project. I call it a 'project' consciously for it disseminates its ideas not just through the book published in 2001, but also through its own 'in-yer-face' theatre website, through Sierz's own blog and numerous connected blogs.²⁰⁶ It extends its ideas on Kane through Sierz's appearance at conferences, through interviews given and reproduced in the texts of other writers on the playwright and through interviews given to research students in universities. Sierz's project on Kane also extends to discussion of her work in 22 audio recordings published on his website under TheatreVOICE.

This discussion therefore starts with a consideration of Sierz's 'in-yer-face' theatre legacy, and argues that this constitutes a McDonaldization of Kane's theatre and of the scholarship on her work.²⁰⁷ I will use Luce Irigaray's principles of language and breath, as found in two key texts, to explore this, namedly *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* and *The Forgetting of Air*.²⁰⁸ I note as significant Kane's criticism of London-based theatre reviewing during her lifetime, and her recognition of its destructive impact on theatre-making. Taking breath as a central solution to help us move beyond the 'in-yer-face' narrative, I lay out a framework towards an examination of the formal qualities in *Cleansed* employing examples of practice

²⁰⁶ As noted earlier, the 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' website ceased to be updated from October 2010 and effectively closed in 2012, though an archiving note latterly added states that much of the material on it is 'not dated later than 2003.' The link entitled 'More Sierz' directs the reader to Sierz's other web projects – which are largely administrated from his personal blogger account, but are centrally accessed through the 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' website. A.Sierz, 'Sierz: New Writing for the British Stage', [web blog], ND, www.sierz.co.uk, (accessed 19 January 2013) and A. Sierz, 'Pirate Dog', [web blog], 2012, www.sierz.blogspot.com, (accessed 19 January 2013). His personal blog also links to the journalistic forum The Arts Desk: 'The Arts Desk', www.theartsdesk.com, ND, (accessed 19 January 2013), and to the *Daily Telegraph* initiative, TheatreVOICE: 'TheatreVoice', <http://theatrevoice.com>, ND, (accessed 19 January 2013).

²⁰⁷ For a key discussion of the processes and effects of McDonaldization see George Ritzer's 1998 work *The McDonaldization Thesis: Explorations and Extensions*, London and Thousand Oaks CA; Sage.

²⁰⁸ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit. and Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, op. cit.

involving breath in the work of Cicely Berry and Sue Morrison. In doing so, I prepare the ground for deeper investigation of the formal innovations within the text that will take place throughout the thesis.

An irony of Kane scholarship is that whilst much of it prioritises literary analyses of her work, close critical reading of her scriptwriting is rarely done. Language is rarely, if ever, discussed, nor is formal construction and its relationship to content and stage-image. It is a glaring omission, and one that inhibits understanding of her work. There is too frequently a disregard for the languages of Kane's scripts both literary and theatrical, and instead, a repetitive narrativised focus on character and plot. Theorists frequently quote one another's findings, circling consensus between them, and in accounts of *Cleansed* there is repetition of the specific narrative established by Sierz through the *In-Yer-Face Theatre* book: a perspective that drew heavily on the media responses to Kane's London premieres, and which set a particular tone.

The 'in-er-face' theatre discourse is effectively a triumph of media. The creation of the website was an astute move which ensured the global spread of the book at a time when most academics were still coming to terms with digital communications and its uses. It accounts largely for the familiarity of this narrative amongst younger students. In the UK, it accorded with a Blairite agenda in state schools in the early Millennium which sought to focus education towards technology.²⁰⁹ The phenomenon of *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, with its formulaic 'one-size-fits-all' approach to discussing plays and playwrights, its tendency to 'sloganise', its repeated modes of self-branding and the

²⁰⁹ See BBC News: Education, 'Blair's manifesto promise for schools', 26 September 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/943374.stm>, (accessed 20 February 2013).

organisation of material into bloated yet rapidly assimilable ‘bite-size chunks’, represents a McDonaldization of its subject matter.²¹⁰ It is an approach that is intentional in its sparseness and efficiency, and one that is aimed at mass dissemination of its product at as cheap a price as possible for maximum return to its producer.²¹¹ Of the playwrights squashed inconsequentially onto its ‘menu’, none has been as big a ‘seller’ as Sarah Kane.²¹² The fact that *In-Yer-Face Theatre* has been the cornerstone of Sarah Kane scholarship for the last thirteen years is problematic. The reductive quality of Sierz’s type of narrative on her plays is one that Kane frequently criticised in her lifetime:

There’s been a failure by the critical establishment to develop an adequate language with which to discuss drama. A list of contents is not a review, but that is almost, without fail, what new plays receive – a brief synopsis with a note at the end saying whether or not the story was pleasing to the reviewer.²¹³

²¹⁰ Stephenson and Langridge, op. cit., p. 132. In expressing her concern about the London theatre critics, Kane noted, ‘they fail to understand any play which refuses to sloganise.’ An issue with the writing in *In-Yer-Face Theatre* is its repeated sloganising in relation to plays discussed; with nifty sound-bites continually substituting for meaningful discussion. See, for example, Sierz’s generalisation in reviewing *Cleansed*: ‘The play’s themes come at you with their pants down, defying criticism by being over-the-top.’ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, op. cit., p. 114.

²¹¹ ‘in-er-face’ theatre – the book, the website, the theory, the brand – comply with Ritzer’s observation on the four key components of McDonaldization: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and increased control through the replacement of human labour with technology, or by deskilling the workforce.

²¹² See discussions between Aleks Sierz and Graham Saunders: ‘Academic Graham Saunders Assesses Sarah Kane’, [online audio-recording], TheatreVOICE, 2009.

²¹³ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit., p. 132. Kane’s comments on the ‘critical establishment’ appear here to relate to the establishment of theatre reviewers in mainstream journalism, and not to theatre analysis written by the ‘critical establishment’ of scholars and academics within universities. The line between journalistic and academic discussion of theatre has nevertheless been blurred in the Millennium years, and it possible that Kane was seeing overlaps and noting fusions in the late 1990s, and expressing this by her use of this generalising phrase. Kane discusses her views of theatre journalism and the London reviewers at some length in the 1998 interview with Dan Rebellato - see Community Audio, ‘Sarah Kane Interview’, [online audio-recording], 1998. She articulated the same views as early as 1995 in response to the journalistic attack on *Blasted*: ‘it is what most theatre reviews are – a kind of synopsis of what happens and then a short note at the end saying whether or not this story was pleasing to the critic’ Kane on *Start the Week*, 1995, (Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., p. 51).

Let us turn to Sierz's description of the play for deeper consideration of this. The following quotation is rather long. I include it in full to illustrate the breathlessness of it, noting also its capacity to harness readings of this play into a self-same discourse:²¹⁴

Set in what is ironically called a 'university', the play is a highly symbolic story, which has four interweaving storylines, that defy easy summary. The main one is about Grace's search for Graham, her brother, an addict, who's been murdered by Tinker, a lunatic guard or doctor at the institution. Grace wears Graham's clothes, dances with his spirit, makes love to him and finally – after having a penis transplant – becomes him. Juxtaposed with this story of sibling bonding is the romance of two men, Rod and Carl, who discuss love and betrayal. Carl, who promises eternal love, betrays his lover; Rod, who lives for the moment, dies for love. In a subplot, Robin a disturbed nineteen year old, falls for Grace when she tries to teach him to read. After learning to use an abacus, he realizes how long his sentence is and hangs himself. The last story is Tinker's: he visits a peepshow and imposes Grace's identity onto that of an erotic dancer. He seduces her, then turns nasty. At the end, Tinker has his own 'Grace'. Grace looks identical to Graham, Carl is dressed in Grace's clothes. But despite the punctuation of Grace's final speech by the word 'pointless', the play ends in a blaze of sunlight.²¹⁵

Were this a casual review in a magazine, it would be just about passable as a description of the play.²¹⁶ Its style and efficiency is comfortable and superficially compelling. It is also strangely hard to argue with on first reading and seduces the reader with its unequivocal lightness in the setting out of character and plot. Yes, these are the key characters in *Cleansed* and these things do happen in it. But it misses so much. What it essentially does is strip the characters of any agency. It

²¹⁴ For discussion of Irigaray's concepts of 'sameness', see the section entitled 'Love of Same, Love of Other' in Irigaray, *Ethics*, pp. 97-115. See also 'The Culture of Difference' in Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous* op. cit., pp. 39-44; and also the discussion between Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz – 'Sexuate Identities as Global Beings: Questioning Western Logic', reproduced in Irigaray, *Conversations*, op. cit., pp. 123-137.

²¹⁵ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, op. cit., p. 112.

²¹⁶ A read-through of the newspaper reviews for Sean Holmes' 2005 revival of *Cleansed* at the Arcola Theatre reveals similar narrative patterns in critics' discussion of the play. Few give any more detail than that of Sierz's, and, in general they offer little in way of further thinking. See for example, M. Billington, 'Cleansed', *Guardian*, 9 November 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/nov09/theatre2> (accessed 14 May 2013); and P. Fisher, 'Cleansed: Review', *British Theatre Guide*, 2005, <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/cleansed-rev>, (accessed 14 May 2013).

does not recognise love as existing between the characters. It leaves no space for a reader or audience member to find meaning or hope. Curiously – and perhaps crucially – the one embodied character who remains nameless is Woman. It omits any mention of the Voices. It also ignores the spaces, the edges, the ambiguities and ellipses in Kane’s texts – gaps and fracturing that are fundamental to the subversive intentions of her formal innovation. Suturing *Cleansed* with such crude stitching does the play, its author, and practitioners wishing to stage it, a huge disservice. I would go further and suggest that this suturing also effects an insidious trivialisation of the feminist and queer complexities of Kane’s texts – innovations which challenged the ‘boys’ club’ of mainstream theatrical and critical establishments, and which reflected the dominant political ideas of many young women and men at the time.

In my clown performative practice, I took to referring to such media accounts of *Cleansed* as ‘nail in the coffin texts’, for they literally stop the life of new findings, stop its breath.²¹⁷ Kane noted the profile of her reviewers in the late 1990s as being ‘white middle-class, middle-aged and male’ and eschewed their approach, deploring the cursory journalism of their tone, and arguing that the best critics of

²¹⁷ In the *mother bird* residency at Leeds Art Gallery in July 2012, I effected a ritual exorcism of the violence contained within such media texts, by shredding a copy of *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, and nailing the most pernicious and destructive extracts of its writing on *Cleansed* to a block of wood. This anarchic and rattling release through naked hammering and shaming gave way to breath, and from this came grief, loss and a raw, child-like feeling of exposure. I concluded the process with singing, and this became a keening – a grieving for and in solidarity with Sarah Kane’s mother, and for all who lose their children through violence. This action was undertaken with some reference to a performative shredding of texts enacted by Kamome-Za in rehearsal and performance of scenes 10-15 of *Cleansed*, witnessed in May 2012. Bare Cheek Theatre employed a similar motif of book destruction and scattering when performing these scenes in December 2012.

playwriting were playwrights themselves.²¹⁸ In her interview with Stephenson and Langridge, she observes the destructive effects of shoddy critical reviewing on theatre makers:

Critics do have the power to kill a show dead with their cynicism, and I regret that they don't take their jobs as seriously as the writers they so frequently and casually try to destroy.²¹⁹

Sierz's central aim is to create 'polemic', and in his PhD thesis, he notes a lack of attention to literary and dramatic analysis of the play script, as a conscious strategy:

My analyses of plays in *In-Yer-Face Theatre* stressed their role in the production and circulation of images and cultural meanings, rather than being analyses of the value of canonical texts. In fact I say little about the literary qualities of the plays and focus on them as performances.²²⁰

This approach is reductive and generalised, and leads to a general disregard for the integrity of specific texts, their languages and intention. Within the 'in-yer-face' legacy of theatre writing, analyses of Kane's scripts too often confuse viewings of production (and stage images seen in particular productions) with textual reference. For example, in discussing Carl's torture in scene 4 of *Cleansed*, Sierz erroneously states that 'a broomstick is shoved up his rectum.'²²¹ Numerous newspaper reviewers describe Cate in *Blasted* as being 'mentally-retarded', which Kane was quick to refute in

²¹⁸ 'Sarah Kane Interview', [online audio-recording], 1998.

²¹⁹ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit. p. 132. See also Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., p.87.

²²⁰ A. Sierz, *In Yer Face Theatre: Interpreting New Writing for British Theatre in the 1990s and After*, PhD Thesis, University of Westminster, UK, 2005, p. 8. This is not available on any electronic archive, but a hard copy of the thesis is available to read in the University of Westminster library with prior arrangement. See 'Westminster Research' ND. <http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/>, (accessed 4 May 2013). I read the thesis in full in the archive on 30 May 2013.

²²¹ Sierz, op. cit., pp. 112-113. The text for scene 4 states that a 'pole is pushed a few inches up his anus', not a broomstick. The broomstick was a props' choice in Macdonald's 1998 premiere, and this choice of prop was repeated for Sean Holmes' 2005 production.

interviews.²²² The trend has continued to the most recent writing. In discussing *Cleansed* in her chapter on Sarah Kane as a 'guest contributor' to Sierz's *Modern British Playwriting: The 90s*, Catherine Rees states:

Grace starts to dress in Graham's clothes, makes love to his spirit and eventually 'becomes' him after his genitals are grafted onto her own.²²³

Many students discussing Kane similarly fail to distinguish between text, production viewing, their own experience of staging it under someone else's directorial choices, or information supplied by a reading of media reviews and sound-bites.²²⁴ Too often, the plays themselves are the last thing students look at, an erroneous strategy and a clear case of a situation where:

patriarchal traditions have progressively replaced life with speech, without assuming between them relations capable of allowing each to enrich the other.²²⁵

I cannot think of another contemporary playwright where this is so relentlessly the case. There is a serious risk of breathing stale air when a 'sound-bite' approach to writing on Kane becomes viewed as scholarship – a sad but real danger of 'gob-rot'

²²² As with most erroneous and reductive clichés on Kane's work, the origin for this can be traced to Jack Tinker's 1995 review of *Blasted*: 'We begin with a journalist indulging in all manner of graphic sexual activity with an underaged and mentally retarded girl in his hotel room somewhere in England.' (Inverne, op. cit., p. 188). In a 1995 interview with Graham Saunders in Brixton (referenced both in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me* and *About Kane*, op. cit.), Kane took issue with this view of Cate: 'I seem to have a completely different take to the rest of the world, which is I don't think Cate is simple. Cate constantly surprises me [...] I see her as possibly the most intelligent of them all.' The character of Cate is also aged 21 so is clearly of legal age for sexual activity, and a woman not a girl. I will discuss Kane's construction of Cate further in chapter 4.

²²³ C. Rees 'Sarah Kane', in Sierz, A., *Modern British Playwrighting: The 1990s – Voices, Documents, New Interpretations*, Great Britain, Methuen Drama, 2012, p. 122. This is a common misreading of scene 18. The dramaturgical and metaphysical structuring of the text clearly suggests that it is Carl's genitalia that have been grafted onto Grace, not Graham's. However, this is a point that requires deeper analysis in general, and I will progress discussion of this throughout the thesis.

²²⁴ I have taught classes on Sarah Kane in various UK universities since 2007 and am alarmed to note this trend. Drama students frequently encounter Kane's work from GCSE onwards, and *In-Yer-Face Theatre* is the ubiquitous introductory text cited. It appears from discussions with international colleagues both at conference and online that this pattern of introduction to Kane's work is by no means confined solely to the UK.

²²⁵ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit., p. 53. The patriarchal tradition most apparent in this is the Sierzian institution of 'in-yer-face' theatre writing, and media reviewers whose writings on Kane are informed primarily by the inheritance of the original *Blasted* reviews.

and failing lungs – a ‘forgetting’ of breath, and a curtailment of breathing (and thinking) independently. The dangers of this are indicated by Irigaray:

As long as we do not breathe in an autonomous manner, not only do we live badly but we encroach upon others in order to live. We remain confused with others, forming a sort of mass, a sort of tribe, where each individual has not yet conquered his personal life but lives on a collective social and cultural respiration, on an unconscious breathing of the group, beginning with that of the family.²²⁶

I would argue that the areas of Sarah Kane scholarship that rely too heavily on *In-Yer-Face Theatre* and media-led interpretations of work, and which do not address Kane’s texts independently of these schools, are in danger of too-shallow breathing, and of ‘tribal’ confusion. When discussion of the plays regenerates itself solely through the inter-textual tennis of Sierz *et al*, the free feminine and queer breath is stopped. Moreover, the body of work’s capacity for self-generation (and regeneration) is stifled, and its ‘voice’ becomes distorted. As Irigaray notes:

in this patriarchal horizon, the very use of speech and the circulation of breath have changed. Speech finds itself subjected to ritual, to repetition, to speculation [...] uprooted from its present engendering, in relation with the rest of the energy of the body and of the world that surrounds it.²²⁷

The second discourse imposes a universalising, heteronormative gaze on Kane’s theatre, a gaze critiqued by Monique Wittig who usefully conceptualises this as being indicative of ‘the straight mind’:

With its ineluctability as knowledge, as an obvious principle, as a given, the straight mind develops a totalizing interpretation of history, social reality, culture, language and all the subjective phenomena at the same time. I can only underline the oppressive character that the straight mind is clothed in in its tendency to immediately universalize its production of concepts into general laws, which claim to hold true for all societies, all epochs, all individuals.²²⁸

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

²²⁷ Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit., p. 54.

²²⁸ M. Wittig, ‘The Straight Mind’, in R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T.T. Minh-Ha and C. West (eds.), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, reprint, New York, Massachusetts and London, The New

The pressure to remain close to the 'family' of Sierz-identifying scholarship is particularly difficult for younger students, who, as Irigaray notes, find themselves, through this condition of 'collective social and cultural respiration' in a position of permanent adolescence, unable to breathe and speak autonomously in their own space. In short, they and the scholarship, fail to grow (up).

The state of permanent adolescence induced by the collective respiration of Sierz's McDonaldized maintenance of the 'in-yer-face' brands find its method through language. As noted earlier, a key problem of the narrative text cited, is the suturing and effective 'sheathing' of some of the gaps and spaces in the work. As Irigaray notes in *The Forgetting of Air*, to ignore these gaps, represents on Sierz's part, an uprooting of Kane's text from its 'ground'. He:

makes the thing his own, (having) already torn it from its soil, giving back to it as a ground or a surrounding what he has already received from it [...] settling his debt by enveloping it in, or hollowing it out of, airs? Using his knowledge and know-how in this. Deploying or pouring out his energy here, but thereby immobilizing the thing in a surrounding of death.²²⁹

The taking of the object (in this case, Kane's work) involves Sierz's 'know-how' of language. In fact Sierz's text, which not only ignores the gaps in Kane's work but which seeks to close them up, effectively uses language to keeps its object close and circling eternally back to himself. It is a use of language 'in which the gap, indeed the abyss of an irreducibility is obliterated' and as a result of this 'the

Museum of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999, p. 54. First printed in 1990.

²²⁹ Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, op. cit., p. 153.

persistence of the other in presence.²³⁰ In this case, I suggest that the 'other in presence' persisting irreducibly in the abyss outside Sierz's circle/self-circle and yet obliterated by him through language is two-fold. It is both Kane's work itself and also the reader of Sierz's narrative. As a reader of Sierz's narrative, we consume a bloated and bloating text, full of air but with no space (in the consuming) for a passing of breath between two. We take it in, but are unable to speak with it. In Sierz's text, and in his overall project, there is no space for dialogue – there just 'is' and it is 'in-yer-face'. The second discourse extends a heteronormative reading of Kane's work and life, that ignores and denies the political import of spaces and silences in her work; spaces that testify to Kane's presence as a woman working with a queer and feminist theatre of 'othering', mutability and change in an arena assessed and measured by white men working with straight paradigms, standards and expectations. As such there is a violence to the 'in-yer-face' discourse that effectively works to 'obliterate' the 'other in presence', and it is for this reason that this thesis argues for a challenge to this discourse.

Whilst he has knowledge, Sierz does not concern himself with quality, but rather aims to promote the same 'in-yer-face' morsel in different packaging. Irigaray notes how language used without respect for the irreducibility and difference of the 'other in presence' effectively talks to itself and closes down connection:

Talking to itself (such) language forgets the fundamental concern of its aim: how – and in what, for what – to join with the other that springs up, is situated, and dwells before one. What freedom opens up, or is rejected in the space of this meeting?²³¹

²³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 154.

²³¹ *ibid.*

In repeatedly 'talking to itself', the 'in-yer-face' narrative on Kane has failed to join with or support the development of other narratives on her work. Despite recognising limits to the *In-Yer-Face Theatre* book at a conference in 2002, and acknowledging its insular, London-centric focus, Sierz has continued to promote its theories through internet means and personal appearances. Dramaturg Hanna Slattné notes in her report on the *In-Yer-Face? British Drama in the 1990s* conference in 2002 that:

This label, absorbed into the new writing parlance, has been to the detriment of the chosen plays in spite of their being dramaturgically different in structure, literary and conceptual merit. They are treated more or less as a coherent group; not so much by Aleks Sierz himself but as a consequence of being labelled under the term 'in-yer-face'. This was illustrated in the chosen papers for the conference, concerning themselves in particular with Sarah Kane but also with the plays of Mark Ravenhill and Jez Butterworth.²³²

The recent acknowledgement on the 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' website that the material contains few updates beyond 2003 suggests that Sierz is fully aware of *In-Yer-Face Theatre's* shortcomings, yet he still actively keeps it close to himself and his other projects, shifting its centre (and his own self-promotion as a critic) to the area of 'new writing', arguing:

I believe that my role in studying British new drama in the 1990s begins and ends with defining the trend, delineating the field, popularising such insights and then moving on.²³³

He has never updated or rewritten the 2001 text or its accompanying Internet portals to suggest an expansion or revision of its acknowledged limits within his

²³² *In-Yer-Face? British Drama in the 1990s* - Conference held at the University of West England, 6-7 September 2002. For a useful account of this, see Hanna Slattné's report, 'In-Yer-Face Conference: A Dramaturg's View' on the Dramaturgs' Network website: http://www.ee.dramaturgy.co.uk/index.php/site/comments/reporting_from_the_in_yer_face_conference, ND, (accessed 23 January 2013).

²³³ Sierz, PhD Thesis, 2005, p. 31. He also acknowledges in the thesis, 'I live and work in London, and the book reflects this localism', *ibid.*, p. 12. The circling of the text's content around him and his environment is of note here, and underline the 'sameness' of his project.

own thinking, despite declaring frankly in his PhD thesis in 2005 that there are some significant flaws in the book and his approach to the work. He never incorporates new findings or dialogues with other critical texts or scholars on his idea, but rather continually asserts ‘in-yer-face’ theory, as established in 2001, as the one point of origin for all thinking on the work.²³⁴

The phenomenon of a discourse ‘talking to itself’ in a circle of the self-same is frequently engineered by Sierz through networking and bringing together key men connected to the Sarah Kane legacy in the public eye, and giving them a forum for developing consensus and promulgating the self-same debates.²³⁵ Take, for example, his hosting and dissemination of a post-show discussion during Sean Holmes’ 2005 revival of *Cleansed*.²³⁶ A recording of the talk can be found on the TheatreVOICE website and is represented on the webpage listing thus:

REPUTATIONS: SARAH KANE

Cleansed post-show discussion with directors Dominic Dromgoole and Sean Holmes, brother Simon Kane and academic Graham Saunders. Aleks Sierz hosts at the Arcola Theatre. Recorded live. Excerpt.

*She was very much, and perhaps still is,
perceived as this writer who just wrote
gratuitous violence...*²³⁷

²³⁴ The ‘in-yer-face’ theatre project predicates itself on an axis of scopic appropriation and speedy consumption. When one follows this particular vein of contemporary theatre discourse, one is invited to feast (sometimes disgustingly so) on a daily digest; to submit oneself to a diet of eager watching, to lunch with the ‘self-same’ salty sea-dogs, sniffing the same tails, asking ‘What do they know of theatre who only theatre know?’, finding only the same old bone.

²³⁵ In Irigarayan terms, Sierz has appropriated Kane and Kane’s work as his ‘envelope’. See the chapter, ‘The Envelope: A Reading of Spinoza, Ethics, “Of God”,’ in Irigaray, *Ethics*, op. cit, pp. 83-94.

²³⁶ Sean Holmes’ revival of *Cleansed* was staged by the Oxford Stage Company and ran at the Arcola Theatre, London from 2 November-5 December 2005. It was the outgoing project of the OSC’s Artistic Director Dominic Dromgoole. I will discuss Dromgoole’s reductive contribution to discourses on Kane in the following chapter.

²³⁷ See ‘Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*: Post-Show Discussion’, [online audio-recording], 22 November 2005, <http://www.theatrevoice.com/2069/reputations-sarah-kane-cleansed-post-show-discussion-with-d/~,URKSkJpwZjo>, (accessed 12 December 2012).

When reading this, one must ask questions about the nature of ‘reputations’ – whose and what? Sarah Kane’s reputation is instantly configured as ‘this writer who just wrote gratuitous violence’ whilst the men on the panel are validated and promoted as concurring in debate about (whilst also having the power to offer dissent to) this overarching, singular and highly reductive appraisal of her work and character. Each man is represented as having some claim on her. Each is presented as an expert on her work in his own right, with Sierz placed among (and above) them as the host of the theatre; it is his event, presented by himself, with familiar ‘television game-show’ bombast. It is notable that in his configuration, Sierz presents the order of the panel within a certain institutional hierarchy – a hierarchy that put Saunders as ‘the academic’ last on the list in the line-up of Kane experts.

Whilst such forums are hosted under the auspices of such singular and unyielding views and structures, there is always a danger of ‘tribal confusion’ for those participating. Each member of this panel actually had a very different relationship to Kane both in working terms and biographically, and represent discrete though interconnected spheres in their own fields. Yet they are bound in an over-arching frame by Sierz, subsumed very much into the body of his own personal project and subjected to the repetition of his own particular ‘take’ on Kane – one that is sensationalised and offers little promise of new thinking on the work. It is notable that only an ‘excerpt’ of the discussion is broadcast, and it would be interesting to know what, as editor, Sierz cut out.

To move on from the reductive and sensationalised positions offered by the Sierzian project and by other reviewers, it is vitally important for teachers and scholars to take a stand in presenting more rigorous analysis of Kane's texts both through clear literary reading and exploratory drama practice. There is a need for theatre analyses of Kane's work to move beyond the breathless, repetitive and over-deterministic interpretations of plot, characterisation and 'feeling' based largely on productions seen by a handful of middle-aged men nearly twenty years ago. It is important to allow space for respiration to come through the texts. As Kane herself said in her last letter to Mel Kenyon: 'these are not museum pieces. I want these plays performed.'²³⁸

As noted, the heinous lack of distinction in defining that *which has come from* the text (writer's vision), that which *has been interpreted from* the text and presented by a cast onstage (directorial or actor vision) does a disservice to both writer and theatre maker(s). Through such erroneous and unindividuated conflation, the subtlety of Kane's writing is frequently lost, and her intentional use of theatrical language and structuring denied full agency. As Kane herself noted in an interview shortly after completing *Cleansed*:

Much more important than the content of the play is the form. All good art is subversive, either in form or content. And the best art is subversive in form *and* content. And often, the element that most outrages those who seek to impose censorship is form.²³⁹

If we are to understand the subversive nature of Kane's plays and to recognise the life they offer through their challenge to 'censorship', we cannot ignore the

²³⁸ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 145.

²³⁹ Stephenson and Langridge, op. cit., p. 130.

question of 'form'. To enter into a formal enquiry of depth, and to summon up the strength to join Kane in the challenges of her work, we need to start from breath.

2.ii. 'F – F – ' Finding a Centre for Breath in and through *Cleansed*.²⁴⁰

As Cicely Berry, quoting her own highly influential teacher Gwynneth Thurburn in *Text and Action*, notes, at the centre of all theatre and performance practice 'There is only breath.'²⁴¹ Further quoting Thurburn's teaching in *From Word to Play* Berry also comments that 'Breath is voice and vice-versa.'²⁴² To give voice to breath, and find voice through breath, we need to approach breathing itself in a conscious manner, and (accepting Irigaray's central premise in *Between East and West*) to pay attention to the ways in which breathing is or could be sexuate and differentiated. We also need to cultivate a 'culture of breath' if we are to survive independently in the world.²⁴³ As Irigaray observes:

Breathing in a conscious and free manner is equivalent to taking charge of one's own life, to accept solitude through cutting the umbilical cord, to respecting and cultivating life for oneself and for others.²⁴⁴

The process of 'taking charge of one's own life', accepting 'solitude' to cultivate 'life for oneself and for others' and finding voice through breath is also an aspect of clown initiation. In the practice taught by Sue Morrison, each student is required to develop a 'personal mythology' through the creation of six masks – each associated with a different direction, or aspect of themselves. Central to the formation of each mask is a

²⁴⁰ Short extracts from this section have been disseminated in the public domain through a conference paper given at Warwick, UK, in 2012. Copies of the paper were given to a number of interested parties after. N. Kane, 'Ghosts, Breath and Crude Stitching: Exploring Connections Between the Theatres of Edward Bond and Sarah Kane', *Bond@50: The Work of Edward Bond*, English and Theatre Studies Departments, University of Warwick, UK, 2 November 2012.

²⁴¹ Berry, *Text in Action*, op. cit., p. 82. Gwynneth Loveday Thurburn (1899 – 1993), Principal of the Central School of Speech and Drama, London, UK, from 1942 – 1967. Berry expresses her gratitude to both Thurburn and to playwright Edward Bond in the acknowledgements section of this text. I discuss Bond's links to Kane in chapter 3.

²⁴² Berry, *From Word to Play*, p. 165.

²⁴³ In *Between East and West*, Irigaray discusses her philosophy of cultivating a 'culture of breath' through yogic practice that recognises sexuate difference and warns against neutrality or a reduction of the practice into a patriarchal sameness: 'I expect yoga to help develop this horizon of the difference of the sexes through taking account of our body and our psyche as women and as men.' Irigaray, *Between East and West*, op. cit. p. 69.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.74.

notion of finding innocence through experience, and the importance of each clown being able to look at all sides of themselves honestly and laugh at the beauty and ridiculousness of each mask they present. As Morrison tells the students:

each mask has two sides, a mask is infinite but we look at two sides – experience and innocence. We do not get hung up on the semantics of those words. And we want, in clown, innocence after experience. Innocence before experience is stupid. It has survived nothing so how can it understand humanity.²⁴⁵

The clown is very much an adult, not a child, and the importance of a clown knowing all sides of her or himself (experience) and being able to laugh at them is so they can freely carry out the work necessary for allowing the audience to see its own humanity through self-exposure and openness to the truth of the moment (innocence). As Coburn notes:

Clown theatre is a shared experience. The clown is the conduit to that which is common. Humanity. The audience is provided an opportunity to privately indulge their humanity through the public display of the clown's humanity. And if the clown is brave enough to lead the way then the audience will follow and the prize for all is release.²⁴⁶

The building of a 'personal mythology' is an essential component of a clown's training, and Coburn describes this as developing:

a plurality of stories, a fictional system to contain a body of knowledge... a collection of stories, untrue stories that contain personal truth to achieve profound personal understanding [...]. Students need to be relieved of their intellect and their ego to tell their stories. Born as they are of our whole selves, our conscious and our subconscious, reflecting as they do all that we are, our intellect, our physical beings, our emotions, our dysfunction, our joy, these stories need to erupt into being. They can only come forth in unconscious experience accessed [...] through structured ritual that bypasses the conscious mind.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 173.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 154.

The ritual that marks the entry into this journey is centred fundamentally on breath – both that of the student, and of Morrison as teacher. Standing with their feet placed on the floor and having closed their eyes, the student hears the following words from Morrison:

You're going to breathe in through your mouth and out through your asshole – it's hard to do it physically but you can do it visually. Take in a breath through your mouth, let it travel down through your torso and let it out through your asshole. In through your mouth and out through your asshole.²⁴⁸

Whilst the students concentrate on breathing, Morrison stops behind each, and draws the number and the direction of the mark they are building on their back with her fingertips/hands, mouthing the words as she does. She then 'breathes her breath into the human place enlivened by her touch' and tells the students that once she has written on and breathed on their back they can open their eyes and 'walk the breath' for that particular direction into their body.²⁴⁹ Morrison explains her use of breath thus:

If you give a meaning to that ritual people will feel more contained by it. It becomes an anchor. It grounds them. The breath is literally to waken the body and get students moving in different directions. The writing on the back, you know I don't think Richard used to do that but I do and it's really important to me. When I breathe on people's backs that feels very important to me because I feel I'm supposed to do that. You're sending people out. That breath is a safety line to that person. It's also the breath in the sail that sets them off, sends them on their journey [...].²⁵⁰

Considering *Cleansed*, I suggest that Kane encodes these various principles of breath noted by Thurburn, Berry, Irigaray and Morrison at a central moment of challenge and change in the play. In scene 18, Grace awakes from a medically-induced coma to find herself the recipient of a phalloplasty and bilateral mastectomy. The scene is full of

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

breath. This is textually inscribed in and through Grace and consists largely of a rhythmic series of 'F – F – F – ' sounds leading to an utterance of 'Felt it.'²⁵¹ The presence of breath at this moment of rebirth and solitude is powerful, and marks a moment of 'taking charge' for Grace in a situation that is clearly terrifying, painful and chaotic.

Whilst working with young women in the Sarah Kane Research Group, it became apparent that the articulation of 'F – F – F – ' was a pivotal moment in the play, and one that warranted further investigation.²⁵² Kerry Ely, a member of the group, suggested that there was 'horror' in scene 18, and at the centre of the horror, there was a 'fear of fluids' linked to touch. But, she asked, 'what is the horror? What is the risk of fluid in this scene?' Discussion led to the further question - what is Grace trying to express through 'F – F – F – '?²⁵³ We decided to devote the whole of the next 3-hour workshop session to exploring the 'horror' and 'feel' of fluids, and the significance of Grace's utterance of 'F – F – F – '.²⁵⁴ Kerry structured a series of exercises involving fluids, textures, percussive instruments and 'blind-leading' and facilitated the activities. I participated as a performer. The group worked with taking it in turns to lead one another, blind-folded and barefoot through the space.²⁵⁵ Each of us was invited to use the assembled props to create a journey that provoked and

²⁵¹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit. p. 146. Grace moves between an utterance of 'F – F – F – ' and 'F – F – ' in scene 18, hence I use both interchangeably in discussion here.

²⁵² The research was undertaken at the University of Huddersfield Drama Department over a ten-week period between October and December 2009. It involved young women from both the third-year BA and the MA pool who met on a weekly basis as the Sarah Kane Research Group and investigated staging options for *Cleansed* using a variety of drama, performance art and 'making' processes.

²⁵³ Notebook entries, Sarah Kane Research Group, Huddersfield, 2 December 2009.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 9 December 2009.

²⁵⁵ One young woman chose to wear shoes, as she felt barefoot-working was too exposing, and did not wish to feel the fluids with her feet. I had set as a premise for the workshop programme that people should only do what felt right for them and respect their own boundaries as well as others'.

disconcerted our companion with an emphasis on letting the other 'feel' the fluids. Everyone was very nervous exploring this, but what emerged, to the group's surprise, was not a feeling of horror or fear, but relief. The engagement with touch and listening generated a complex interplay of sound-making, non-verbal gesturing, clowning with fluids and an attention to and awareness of breath. New thoughts, feelings and creative impulses emerged which led to the young women exploring new horizons of trust and reassurance amongst themselves, and rather than being frightened, they became interested in the fragility and tenderness of the moment of 'F – F – ' in the text. In short, they found at its centre, not horror, but empathy and breath.

The innovative use and choice of 'F – F – F – ' within the structure of the dialogue marks Kane as a theatre-maker who understood principles of breath and voice work. In *Text and Action*, Berry suggests a structure of exercises which places breathing through and with the 'F' sound as the first point for actors in 'centring the breath' and in working from and on 'the stomach breath':

To focus on the stomach breath, put one hand on your stomach below the waist so that you can feel how deep you can take your breath into the centre – for that centre is the starting point of the voice. Take the breath down, feel the muscles in the stomach, allowing for that movement, and then sigh out. Repeat, breathing out through 'F'. Repeat, breathing out on 'V', feeling its vibration.²⁵⁶

The importance of the 'F'-'V' work in Berry's system is in the potential it offers the actor for connection; for 'reaching down to your centre for the sound'.²⁵⁷ As Berry explains in her early text, *Voice and the Actor*:

physical resonance opens up areas of understanding, of feeling, of emotional resonance, and sometimes just the act of making that sound increases your

²⁵⁶ Berry, *Text in Action*, op. cit., p. 88.

²⁵⁷ Berry, *Voice and the Actor*, op. cit., p. 22.

understanding. [...]he breath goes in, and the sound comes out – you are touching down to your centre, you are finding the ‘I’ of your voice. When you find this it is as though you belong, you are present in what you are saying. You will then find the breath like a sound touching off a drum. You will find that you will not have to use a great deal of breath, because the breath will be made into sound. It is economy of effort. When you find this absolutely right use of breath the voice will be effortless, it will impel itself. This is where your true energy is. This is what I mean by rooting the voice.²⁵⁸

Morrison’s practice also uses an articulation of ‘F’ – the ‘F.E.’ (‘FA’) sound – as an entry into deeper knowing of self and belonging or becoming. She uses it in a foundation exercise, Exploration of Colour, a significant part of the introductory process to clowning and ‘the first time that students encounter the working process of Ritual, Experience And Public Shame’:²⁵⁹

Ritual. Form to contain an experience.

Experience. Action to express that experience.

Public Shame. A public articulation, a sharing, of that experience.²⁶⁰

Having directed the students to work energetically in the room visualising a single colour between them, Morrison introduces the use of ‘F.E.’:

I’m going to ask you to crouch down with your butt to the ground and your head flopped down. And you are going to F.E. the sound. F.E. makes the sound FA. F.E.-ing the sound is saying the name of the colour out loud followed by an F.E. for each syllable in the colour. So for red it would be RED FA. Yellow would be YELLOW FA FA. And if you’re Spanish and want to speak in Spanish then do so. So in Spanish yellow would be Amarillo. AMARILLO FA FA FA FA....²⁶¹

Morrison is asked by a student, ‘What does the F.E. do?’ and replies:

It opens up the diaphragm. And the physical position opens up the asshole. We’re moving into vocalization. And then you stand up and walk THAT sound into your body [...] ²⁶²

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Coburn and Morrison, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁶² *ibid.*, p. 132.

In short, the moment of 'F – F – ' empowers and centres the actress playing Grace, allowing for breath, focus, movement, opening of the stomach, the diaphragm, the asshole, the establishing of her centre, a starting point for relaxed/protected/rooted voice, vibration and sound. It is a 'safety line' for the actress to herself, her space, her experience and innocence, to the journey of the play's activities, and also to the 'anchor' of Kane's text. In its length and duration, the 'F – F – F –' in scene 18 allows for deeper breathing on the part of other members of the cast and audience through the body and rhythms of the actress. Set in dialogue with the confused yet continuous speaking of Tinker, and the traumatised silent (unbreathed/unvoiced) scream of Carl, it occupies a middle space. It militates for difference – a different mode of breathing and utterance within the scene, and also a different way of hearing for the audience. Ultimately it offers space for an inner touching and movement of self through a dance and song of breath at one of the most challenging moments of the play.²⁶³ I would argue that this breath is sexuate, is differentiated and located, at least for the purposes of this initial reading, within the feminine.²⁶⁴

The physical work on Kamome-za's 2012 version of *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*') was developed by choreographer Aki Tsujita, and she also played Grace for this production.²⁶⁵ When Kamome-za staged the moment of 'F – F – F –' in scene 18 for this, they progressed the breath into a physical stance by Tsujita that was sustained for

²⁶³ Note also Barbara Houseman's analysis of the 'very sensuous sounds' of the 'fricative consonants' 'f' and 'v'. B. Houseman, *Finding Your Voice: a step-by-step guide for actors*, New York and London, Routledge and Nick Hern Books, 2002, p. 208. Houseman formerly worked with Cicely Berry in the Voice Department at the RSC, and was the voice coach on the 1998 production of *Cleansed* at the Royal Court.

²⁶⁴ I will revisit this idea and extend on it further in the thesis, arguing beyond my initial establishing of the breath in the feminine to suggest that it is also a transgendered breath situated between a feminine-masculine, masculine-feminine state of becoming.

²⁶⁵ Aki Tsujita played Grace in '*Cleansed* (*Purification*)' in 2011 and '*Cleansed* (*Be Cleansed*)' in 2012.

nearly 15 minutes.²⁶⁶ In performing the 'F – F – ', she stood in a pool of water in the mud, her back to the audience in a partial squat – knees bent, head and back curled downwards to where she was lifting her dress in a gesture of looking directed to her pelvic area. The stance recalled both Morrison and Berry's physical directions for releasing the breath in the stomach, diaphragm and asshole. Tsujita's stance moved the audience through a number of emotional states – shock, shame, acceptance, detachment, nurturing, also feelings of a certain ridiculousness and lightening, through to calm. This emotional resonance, engendered by sustained physicality, recalled a clown direction from Morrison to a student about acceptance and validation of even the most painful and private things:

Stand still. Stop moving about. Stand in this thing. Stand in your shit. Your wonderful shit. Stand in the thing that is happening to you. That is happening in you. Beautiful.²⁶⁷

It recalled clown teaching about allowing oneself to feel and express whatever is happening emotionally, as both a public shame, and a beautiful thing. Thus the performer and audience are released through clown.

It is clear that in this moment, Kane offers a production cast and the audience an opportunity to explore levels of knowledge, experience and innocence opening from the finding of breath through the 'F – F – ' in both rehearsal and performance. Depending on how it is approached, it will open the possibility for clowning, theatre and philosophical systems relating to centring, emotional exposure, and use of the ground. Berry's physical direction to actors for accessing the potential of the 'stomach breath' through 'F' and 'V' involves them lying in the first instance on the floor, knees

²⁶⁶ 'Cleansed (*Be Cleansed*)', Kamome-za, Tokyo, 27 May 2012.

²⁶⁷ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 117.

up with feet firmly supporting, head resting lightly, breath easing the spread of shoulders into the floor, allowing the spine to lengthen naturally. Where clowns will find their shame and creation through squatting, it is with the support of the horizontal plane that the actors in a contemporary Western theatre context find their voice and centre.²⁶⁸ Berry's warm-ups gradually move the actor from the floor, to sitting supported by a chair and then to standing.²⁶⁹ Recognising that the centring of a 'stomach breath' opens up voice at its deepest level from the floor, and that 'F – F – F –' recalls this deep support for the actress at a challenging moment in the play, I would suggest that Kane additionally offers the director and actor an opportunity to apply Grotowski's use of 'the belly voice', which is conventionally directed 'towards the floor' as the scene progresses.²⁷⁰ The effect of working from 'the belly voice' is often to slow down and deepen the speaking voice, sometimes to the pace and timbre of a yawn. For the actress, it enables her to use the lower registers of voice, and as such gives a vocal dimension to the transitioning of female to male that we are witnessing in the theatre of the scene.

I turn now to a consideration of men in Kane's theatre – the men who reviewed Kane's plays; the men who continue to promote her legacy; the representatives – some official, some unofficial – who hold the keys to her estate. As part of this, I will

²⁶⁸ 'Squatting, ass to the floor and head full forward, is primal. It is the position of birth and defecation. It is not possible to make birth tidy or shit pretty and there is no requirement to make what is seen sensible, acceptable or palatable.' *ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁶⁹ Berry, *Voice and the Actor*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-42.

²⁷⁰ J. Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, reprint, London, Methuen Drama, 1991, pp. 146-149. First published in Denmark by Odin Teatrets Forlag in 1968. First published in England by Methuen and Co. Ltd in 1969 and as a University Paperback in 1975. Reprinted by Eyre Methuen in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981 and 1982. Notably, Grotowski's method also involves physical touch of his pupils to release breath – in this exercise, he massages his pupils' bellies. Richard Pochinko was a student of Grotowski's and there are a number of overlaps with their methods.

consider centrally the figure of Graham in *Cleansed*, and will debate the presence of corporeal ghosts within the text. In doing so, I will debate further Kane's breathing – inhalation and exhalation – of the masculine cultural breath of Western theatre, and consider the 'tensions around issues of gender, age and the masculine' that Aston astutely notes formed part of her reputation amongst reviewers during her lifetime.²⁷¹ As a starting point for this, I analyse links between her work and that of one of her influences, Edward Bond.

²⁷¹ Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit., p. 79.

3 Corporeal Ghosts: Superstition and Mourning on the *Blasted* Heath

3.i. Ghosts, Breath and Crude Stitching²⁷²

The opening of this section explores something of the connection between Edward Bond and Sarah Kane's theatres. It recognises the importance of ghosts in Bond's *Lear* and Kane's *Cleansed*, and asks what we can infer from their substantive presences on the stage.²⁷³ It notes the importance of written language as a political tool for each playwright, and builds on the previous chapter's consideration of scene 18 to explore the relationship of breath to crude stitching. It explores this theme in relation scenes 9 and 11 of Bond's 1965 play *Saved*.

In her lifetime, Kane was an admirer of Bond's work, and drew on his plays and advice in writing her own. Bond was a supporter of Kane's development as a writer engaging in personal correspondence with her through letters from 1995 until her death, and in actively defending her work in the public realm.²⁷⁴ In an article, first published in *Theater Der Zeit* in May 1999, Bond stated that Kane's first professional play *Blasted*:

changed reality because it changed the means we have of understanding ourselves. It showed us a new way in which to see reality, and when we do, that reality is changed.²⁷⁵

In the same article he attempted to find some meaning for her death, concluding that, in the twenty-first century:

²⁷² As with parts of chapter 2.ii, significant sections of this chapter have been disseminated in the public domain through the paper given at the Warwick conference, and copies of the paper distributed to interested parties. Kane, 'Ghosts, Breath and Crude Stitching', *Bond@50*, Warwick, 2012.

²⁷³ E. Bond, *Lear*, Second Edition, London, Methuen Student Edition, Methuen London Ltd., 1990. First published by Eyre Methuen in 1972. This edition first published in 1983. *Lear* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, London in September 1971. E. Bond, *Saved*, Second Edition, London, Methuen Drama, 2011. First published in the UK by Methuen and Co. Ltd. in 1966. *Saved* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in November 1965.

²⁷⁴ E. Bond, 'Letter to Sarah Kane, 15 September 1997', in I. Stuart (ed.), *Edward Bond, Letters*, 5, London and New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 167-169.

²⁷⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 190.

Everyone – alone or collectively – will confront the implacable. Without the elucidation of drama they will not know till too late - if at all - what is happening [...]. Sarah Kane had to confront the implacable [...]. If she thought that perhaps the confrontation could not take place in our theatre, because it is losing the understanding and the means – she could not risk waiting. Instead she staged it elsewhere. Her means to confront the implacable are death, a lavatory and shoelaces. They are her comment on the meaningless of our theatre and our lives, and on our false gods.²⁷⁶

Bond's contextualisation of Kane's suicide within the social and theatrical sphere is unusual, and welcome. Too often tributes focus on Kane's depression in terms that suggest an individual pathology disconnected from the wider world. Bond's suggestion that we can read Kane's death as expressive, theatrical and political is a fitting tribute to a playwright whose work was strongly ethical and politicised in its approaches to the body and questions of society.

In exploring connections between the work of Kane and Bond in relation to *Cleansed*, I have chosen to focus on the two Bond plays most often cited in reference to her work – *Lear* and *Saved*. I propose that the staging of ghosts in *Cleansed* and *Lear* create schisms and ruptures in our perceptions of corporeality. I argue that critiques of class and gender violence are effected through these schisms, and that each playwright prioritises breath and gesture as key modes of agency for protagonists, in resisting oppressions and abuses. I note the importance of crude stitching to gesture and breath in both *Cleansed* and *Saved*. Centrally, I consider the importance of the 'silent scream' in the works selected, and the possibilities of 'confronting the implacable' through it.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 191.

Ghosts are inherently political in theatre, and through their appearance at key moments, trouble the status quo, problematising the smooth-running of the corporeal world. Ghosts call into question the ontologies and hierarchies of the world they visit, frequently commenting on the wrongs within it. The classic observation by Marcellus in *Hamlet* that 'Something is rotten in the State of Denmark'²⁷⁷ establishes a tradition of political and social comment in Western theatre through the appearance of the revenant. Fundamentally ghosts trouble protagonists and audiences alike with their demands for recognition and a listening ear. There is always a message to be heard, and unlike the 'human' characters whose function is largely just to be and to act, the significance of a ghost appearing onstage demands that the reasons for their 'being' are examined, and their import known and understood.

The ghosts in *Lear* and *Cleansed* appear in the first quarter of each play. They initially appear to human beings at moments of extreme anguish, notably, connected to the incarceration of the characters within corrective institutions. Graham, the central ghost in *Cleansed* appears to his sister Grace in scene 5 following her confinement within the 'university'.²⁷⁸ The ghosts of Bodice and Fontanelle, and of Ghost (formerly the Gravedigger's Boy) in *Lear* appear to its protagonist in Act 2 scene 2, following his incarceration in prison. On analysis, it is clear that Graham in *Cleansed* and Ghost in *Lear* share similarities in construction and function.

²⁷⁷ W. Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', *Four Great Tragedies*, New York, London, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland, Signet Classic, Penguin, 1982, p. 57.

²⁷⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit. p. 107.

The respective appearances of Graham and Ghost do not unduly trouble the audience at first. They are immediately recognisable as spirits, having appeared onstage in their human form previously and subsequently been killed off. Each is clearly established within the scheme of the play's world and they effect continuity albeit through the time-honoured tradition of the dramatic revenant. Kane and Bond, however, disrupt the audience's security in this continuity through an emphasis on corporeality. Both ghosts immediately trouble the boundaries between corporeal and incorporeal, and bring instabilities of time and place into play in ways that alienate the audience, forcing them to question the shifting realities they are witnessing.

Both Graham and Ghost occupy highly physicalised presences on the stage – presences too physical for the audience to completely trust in their relegation to the world of spirit alone. Though nominally a spirit, Ghost appears to retain a measure of corporeal substance – horrifically, he appears to be still in the process of decay – a fact he draws attention to in his invitation to Lear to touch him:

Ghost When I died, I went somewhere. I don't know where it was. I waited and nothing happened. Then I started to rot, like a body in the ground. Look at my hands, they're like an old man's. They're withered. I'm young, but my stomach's shrivelled up and the hair's turned white. Look, my arms! Feel how thin I am. (*Lear doesn't move.*) Are you afraid to touch me?

Lear No.

Ghost Feel.

Lear (*hesitates. Feels*) Yes, thin.²⁷⁹

The fate of Graham's corpse is likewise indicated by Grace's comment: 'They burned your body', and yet Graham's corporeal post-death presence is likewise emphasized, initially by the action of Grace slapping him round the face, hard.²⁸⁰ They subsequently

²⁷⁹ Bond, *Lear*, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁸⁰ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 120.

have sex. The sex act is described in precise anatomical detail within the text with directions such as: '*He sucks her right breast*' and '*She undoes his trousers and touches his penis.*' The act of orgasm – '*They come together.*' – signifies an interiority to the ghost's physicality, and Graham's spoken word 'Lovely' emphasises that the ghost is experiencing physical, human sensation and pleasures.²⁸¹

The underscoring of corporeality troubles some conventional understandings of the ontology of ghosts. Though Western theatre traditionally has actors depicting ghosts, the suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience that the character is not actually flesh-and-blood but insubstantial – see-through, immaterial – is supported by distance and light. Though less common nowadays, the actor playing Hamlet's ghost traditionally stands in his own 'neutral' space, spot-lit spookily from above or behind – and the other actors stay back from physical contact to maintain the fiction that this apparition is something 'other' or 'other-worldly'. The function of the ghost is to appear in a 'dissembling' form and to give a message. It is the surface appearance, the voice, the words and the message that is of importance – not the question of the ghost's body or physicality. The distance given to ghosts in Western theatre underscores an array of folklore and superstition maintained in everyday life – ghosts should not be approached, ghosts should not be touched, ghosts are as cold as ice, something will happen if you reach out to touch a ghost – it will disappear on you, or worse, leave something of death with or in you. There is also a belief in European culture that ghosts are an out-of-ordinary occurrence – they come from far away and disappear far away – 'vanishing into thin air', when their unfinished business is

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

done.²⁸² They are only present when they actually contact the living by appearing in light, or by random sound or fleeting touch. They do not hang around or linger, they are not warm, they do not have physical substance, they are economical and purposeful with their disruption to the everyday, and they are functional.

Twentieth-century European theatre has progressed conventional representations of ghosts, abstracting and extending their traditional qualities, and, with a nod to existentialism perhaps, putting them more centrally in the frame for contemplation and debate. In his chapter on Samuel Beckett in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, Martin Harries notes that 'in Beckett's late play, *A Piece of Monologue*, the lone figure of the piece – called simply Speaker – combines ghost and light' and, that in its reiteration it 'marks a difference' and 'can modify anything and everything' aspiring 'almost to universality'.²⁸³ Harries' consideration of Beckett's play also notes that it is:

a play about ghosts and memory, and about theatre as a privileged site for meditation on ghosts and memory [...] and about theatre as a technological site.²⁸⁴

²⁸² C. Davis, 'The Skeptical Ghost: Alejandro Amenabar's *The Others* and the Return of the Dead', in del Pilar Blanco, M., and E. Peeren (eds.), *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, New York and London, Continuum, 2010, p. 67.

²⁸³ M. Harries, 'Beckett's Ghost Light', *ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.* The reference to theatre as a site for 'meditation on ghosts and memory' recalls Marvin Carlson's notion of the theatre. Carlson argues that: 'All theatre is, as a cultural activity, deeply involved with memory and haunted by repetition. Moreover, as an ongoing social institution, it almost invariably reinforces this involvement and haunting by bringing together on repeated occasions and in the same spaces the same bodies (onstage and in the audience) and the same physical material [...] operations of repetition, memory and ghosting are deeply involved in the nature of the theatrical experience itself.' M. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2003, p. 11.

The 'universality' of ghosts in contemporary culture as a feature of the twenty-first century is something noted by editors del Pilar Blanco and Peeren in their introduction to *Popular Ghosts*:

This volume posits the everyday as no longer strictly opposed to the supernatural realm of the ghost or simply disturbed by it on specific occasions, but as fundamentally intertwined with the ghostly. Rather than being confined to cultural margins and fringe genres, ghosts now appear as part of the mainstream, invading the everyday realm and, in doing so, provide a cultural commentary on its increasingly spectral construction. Ghosts are no longer just perceived as mysterious, other-worldly manifestations that need to be put to rest *elsewhere* to restore order, but are seen to reveal something of the enigma of everyday life.²⁸⁵

An example of the notion of the commonplace nature of ghosts in everyday life reflected in popular culture is to be found in the profusion of 'reality TV shows' where intrepid ghost hunters equipped with an array of technological apparatus create space in prime-time viewing slots for the investigation of haunted buildings in an effort to tap an everyday ghost or two into performance for entertainment purposes. As noted by Karen Williams in her chapter on the subject, this form of reality TV 'blurs boundaries':

not only in terms of factual and fictional, real and unreal, subjective and objective, but also in terms of what is private and what is public, what is personal and intimate, and what is for general display and common spectacle. Indeed, ghosts themselves can range from the most public to the most private of entities, manifesting the horrors of national histories and the grumpiness of dead grandfathers [...]. The ghost itself, though, often remains unsubstantiated, its presence charted through acts of haunting registered only as a series of phenomenological experiences – raps heard, cold spots felt, shadows glimpsed.²⁸⁶

Technology and television, thus serves to reinforce the insubstantial and incorporeal aspects of a ghost's ontology to the point of marginalisation, placing the scientific,

²⁸⁵ M. del Pilar Blanco and E. Peeren, 'Introduction', *Popular Ghosts*, op. cit., p.xiii.

²⁸⁶ K. Williams, 'The Liveness of Ghosts: Haunting and Reality TV'. *ibid.*, p. 150.

human spectator, replete with their microphones and Geiger counters, more firmly in the frame than ever as mirror to our human condition. Having been bidden to show themselves for our entertainment, the ghosts shrink and rattle their invisibility at us through taps, spots and shadow. They have no message – they merely respond to tell us, wearily perhaps, ‘yes, we are still here’ and send us a tiny token of ‘proof’ to satisfy our unquestioning prurience and insatiable desire for immediate response.

In some ways, this is highly unsatisfactory, and I would argue that Kane, Bond and Beckett’s plays articulate the inadequacy of such slender ghostings, and redress the situation with corporeality and a questioning of technology. Fundamentally, they assert the need for theatre to reclaim its ground as a site where the ghost can find substance and materiality. Bond offers a useful insight into the ontology and function of ghosts in the Western theatre, and their value in an economy of theatrical fictions.

He states in his foreword to *The Chair Plays*:

In drama fiction is the first layer of psychosis. But there are fictions-within-the-fiction: Gods, ghosts, witches, phantoms. These are immanent transcendents, dramatic absolutes. It is as if the fictions-in-the-fiction become real, so the audience becomes, say, the ghost. Then the fictions-in-the-fiction undo, cathex, the fictions of ideology, because the audience know they are in fact not the dead who came to the theatre as ghosts. The fictions-within-the-fiction of Shakespeare’s ghosts tell the first fictions the truth. The whole structure of reality-and-drama is psychotic so the fictions-in-the-fiction, the ghosts and witches, use the psychosis of the characters (Hamlet, Macbeth) to create the audience’s sanity. One level of fiction is not more profound than another; all are at the same level. It is a matter of the relations between fictions. This relation also involves the actor’s ability to perform, show, the ‘invisible object’. In role the actor is himself a fiction-in-the-fiction in the structures of psychosis. The play’s character shows the audience the reality of the actor in the fictions of his own drama. These are simply the layers of reality that are ignored outside the theatre.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ E. Bond, *The Chair Plays*, London, Methuen Drama, 2012, p. xxxvii.

Ghosts in theatre therefore help the audience to regain sanity, also help the actor understand the fictions of 'his' own reality through drama.²⁸⁸ They restore a materiality to life and ground players and spectators with insight into the layers of fiction and psychosis within human exchange. They disrupt the audience's passivity and spectral inclinations, instead demanding that the spectator 'take heed' and consider the exposition of the drama with all its material fictions and truths. Bond, like Beckett, appears to be arguing here for theatre's specific function as a privileged site for such exploration. I would suggest that Kane held a similar understanding and appreciation of this particular function of theatre, and that *Cleansed*, in placing the ghost of Graham so centrally, progresses this function and exemplifies the value of this.

Notably, *Cleansed* is a play made only for theatre; Kane firmly rejected the idea that it could or should ever be reworked for television or film:

I was having a particular sort-of fit about all this naturalistic rubbish being produced, and I decided I wanted to write a play that could never ever be turned into a film, that could never ever be shot for television, that could never be turned into a novel. The only thing that could ever be done with it was it could be staged. Believe it or not, that play is *Cleansed*. That play can only be staged. Now, you might say 'it can't be staged', but it can't be anything else either, that's fine, it can only be done in the theatre. Of course, I knew there were impossible stage directions, but I also genuinely believe you can do anything on stage, both in terms of, you know, causing offence, but also pragmatically you can do anything on stage. There's absolutely nothing you can't represent one way or another. It may not be represented naturalistically [...] but that's kinda the point.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ I am interested in the relationship between ghosting and the male actor as indicated by Bond's use of 'actor [...] himself' in this context, and note this gendering as significant in discussions of Kane's participation in a masculine cultural breath of theatre. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, loc. cit., p. 75.

²⁸⁹ 'Interview with Sarah Kane', [online audio recording], 1998.

Cleansed demands that a production team or audience consider the extent of possibilities and potentials, and find a solution to the challenge of the seemingly impossible. In setting the bar high on this challenge, and in forbidding the opt-out of film and TV with its useful editing and technological wizardry, Kane suggests that theatre-makers and audiences look deeper at, into and through theatre's specific functions, and find their sanity and their solutions through this. To reiterate Kane's comment, 'you can do anything on stage', and in stating this she demonstrates her commitment to theatres of possibility and to the idea that theatre is fundamental, and can change lives and transform human situations:

I am convinced that the theatre is part of the most fundamental of human needs. I believe that if a city is destroyed by a bomb, the people first of all look for food and shelter, and having provided these necessities they start to tell their stories. For me the function of the theatre is to allow experimentation through art in a way that we are not able to experiment effectively in real life. If we experiment in the theatre, such as an act of extreme violence, then maybe we can repulse it as such. To prevent the act of extreme violence out on the street. I believe that people can change and that it is possible for us as a species to change our future. It's for this that I write what I write.²⁹⁰

It is perhaps this faith in human possibilities that accounts for an emphasis on corporeality in the ghosts of Kane and Bond's theatres. The characters of Graham in *Cleansed* and Ghost in *Lear* are transgressively and resolutely corporeal, and it is notable that both Kane and Bond use the action of potentially transgressive embrace to underline the substantive presence of their spirits. There is a queering of the material/immaterial through this and, given the everyday presence of ghosts in late twentieth century culture, this is perhaps inevitable. The embrace of ghost and human on the stage, whilst highlighting this, also begs questions of our assumptions that such

²⁹⁰ Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

an embrace is commonplace or even desirable, and mitigates for some kind of definition and delineation of both human and ghostly ontologies, and of intentions and purpose.

Both Graham and Ghost have the intention to stay. Graham tells Grace: 'I'm here. I went away but now I'm back and nothing else matters'²⁹¹ and Grace echoes this back to him in acceptance: 'Doesn't matter. You went away but now you're back and nothing else matters.'²⁹² Likewise Lear's Ghost begs: 'Let me stay with you. Keep me here, please.' To which Lear assents:

Lear. Yes, yes, poor boy. Lie down by me. Here, I'll hold you. We'll help each other. Cry, while I sleep, and I'll cry and watch while you sleep. We'll take turns. The sound of the human voice will comfort us.²⁹³

Unlike Hamlet's ghost, who appears at a fixed time, and more or less repeats the same spooky routine until he achieves his objective (i.e. talking to his son), the ghosts in *Cleansed* and *Lear* come and go without apparent pattern or clear purpose, and do not remain the same. They act, grow and change as characters, existing as fully-rounded players with a significant impact on and responsiveness to events throughout the course of the play. As such they require actors for their realisation – actors, who will enter into the 'psychotic structure of reality-and-drama' and grapple with the challenge of performing and showing 'the invisible object'.

In the Autumn of 2009, I worked with a group of young women aged 19-23 on exploring staging options for *Cleansed*.²⁹⁴ As the weeks progressed the group

²⁹¹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 120.

²⁹² *ibid.*

²⁹³ Bond, *Lear*, loc. cit., p. 42.

expressed strong antipathy to the character of Graham, and on more than one occasion decided collectively not to leave one woman with the 'burden' of the role, but rather chose to read his lines collectively – each member of the group taking on the lines as and when. Their ambivalence about the substance of the role, their unwillingness to allow Graham to be embodied by one performer alone, and their choice to keep sharing the role – sometimes within the same scene – was noted by the young women as a way of managing the destructive aspects of his representation. Eschewing the conventional reading of him as a lover, they felt that he was a negative, oppressive, abusive presence. They ascribed his capacity to be both seductively and sensuously physical, but also incorporeal – able to come and go at will, to appear and disappear, to be at once seen and unseen – as one of extreme power. In many ways, they argued, he was a mirror of Tinker – the oppressive overseer and torturer, whose constant watching and appearance 'out of nowhere' made him similarly ghostly. It is notable that the last words Graham speaks in the play, 'Goodbye Grace', are spoken in tandem with Tinker.²⁹⁵

The interpretation of Graham as a destructive presence was one also presented by Kamome-za in their 2012 interpretation of *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*').²⁹⁶ They aligned Graham with Tinker from the start, reading the relationship between them as homosexual, and creating triangles of emotional tension between Grace, Tinker and Graham through this. Tomoco Kawaguchi and Aki Tsujita dramatised an exorcism of his destructive ghostly presence towards the end of the performance in a

²⁹⁴ Sarah Kane Research Group.

²⁹⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 146.

²⁹⁶ '*Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*')', Kamome-za, Tokyo, 27 May 2012.

choreographed dance section where Woman kicked his rolling and falling body the length of the stage.²⁹⁷

In exploring the destructive aspects of Graham, the young women's focus centred increasingly on scene seven. In this scene, Grace is teaching Robin to read, and is distracted constantly from the task by the presence of Graham – seen and heard by her, but unable to be seen or heard by Robin. The dialogue of the scene becomes split, schismatic; the meaning and flow of the exchange between Grace and Robin gradually breaks down under the pressure of Graham's ghostly interventions and his demands for Grace's attention.²⁹⁸

The demands of staging scene 7 actually place significant strain on the actress playing Grace. The question of where Grace looks in this scene – specifically who she looks at – becomes central. The energy required to constantly look back and forth between Robin and Graham, the challenge of managing Graham's interruption, also the need to engage with both an 'outer voice' in her addresses to Robin, and a secret, concealing and dissembling, 'inner' voice in exchanges with Graham, places huge pressure on the focus of Grace in the scene. It requires precision, concentration and flexibility on the part of the actress. Finding a place for Graham on the stage in this scene also took much discussion, and the cast discovered that it became necessary to let the performer playing Graham lead on this; in fact, it made better sense of the script were this to be the case.

²⁹⁷ *ibid.* Woman was played by Ayano Teramoto in this production. 'Cleansed (*'Be Cleansed'*)', Kamome-za, Tokyo, 27 May 2012.

²⁹⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-129.

In the Kamome-za production, Kawaguchi's and Tsujita's resolution of this was to put scenes 5 and 7 together and choreograph a brief dance section between Grace and Graham, signifying love-making.²⁹⁹ This concluded in the actors maintaining a frozen pose for more than ten minutes' duration throughout scene 7 and beyond. The pose, whilst enduring for both actors, placed particular tension on the actress playing Grace, as it involved her suspended off the ground, with one leg on Graham's shoulder, the other balanced on his thigh, and tilted backwards, so her head was inclining towards the floor. Graham supported her back in a cradling gesture, keeping her close to his body. Whilst frozen in this position, she turned her head round to look at and speak to Robin with some clear tension placed on the upper body, then twisted back to Graham throughout the scene. It was a huge feat of endurance – its awkward, frozen nature, built tension and discomfort at every turn for the audience. Reaching similar conclusions to those of the young women in the Sarah Kane Research Group, Kamome-za's interpretation indicated that Graham holds the power in the scene – he leads Grace 'a merry dance' – and the effect on her agency and focus is schismatic and draining.

Thus, where the corporeal nature of the spirits in *Cleansed* and *Lear* clearly pose a challenge to the conventional theatrical ontology of ghosts, they also, on closer analysis, trouble the physical ontology or identities of the characters they lovingly embrace. *Lear's* meeting with Ghost coincides with a splitting of self. Looking in the

²⁹⁹ Bare Cheek Theatre and McCleane-Fay made a similar decision and likewise played scene 7 immediately after scene 5. 'Cleansed', Bare Cheek Theatre, Cork, 6 December 2012; Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

mirror, Lear thinks he is a wounded animal, and references his image in the third person.³⁰⁰ As noted, Grace quickly yearns to take on the physical identity of her dead brother and change her body: 'So it looked like it feels. Graham outside like Graham inside.'³⁰¹ The schisms attending the protagonists' encounter with the ghosts bears a relationship to desire, fantasy, escapism and madness, but, crucially, it also pushes them to recognise central truths about themselves, to look on what is hidden and to understand their inner nature.

As the action continues there is a reduction of the ghosts' credibility and power. They become overfamiliar, relatively indistinguishable from the 'live' humans onstage, sharing their fate. They do not so much inspire dread but provoke irresolvable misgivings and frustrations. *Lear's* Ghost shrinks throughout the play, becoming thinner, whiter, more inhuman in appearance. It is finally gored apart by pigs and in its statement: 'O Lear I am dead!' dies again.³⁰² Graham becomes increasingly aligned with the violence and schisms of *Cleansed*. In scene 17, it is notable that Robin, having hanged himself, finally '*sees him*.'³⁰³ The stage directions note:

Still choking, Robin holds out a hand to Graham. Graham takes it. Then wraps his arms around Robin's legs and pulls. Robin dies. Graham sits under Robin's swinging feet.

This moment is particularly distressing, as it is the only moment in the scripted action of the play where Robin initiates touch towards another character. Robin is distanced from the other characters, frequently looking at them as if from the outside, and

³⁰⁰ Bond, op. cit., pp. 32-42. The split happens in the preceding scene, and then progresses in Act 2 scene 2 when Lear is in dialogue with Ghost, also distracted and preoccupied by the parallel appearance of the ghosts of his daughters.

³⁰¹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 126.

³⁰² Bond, op. cit., p. 86

³⁰³ Kane, op. cit., p. 144.

reaching out emotionally for love through words and eyes, but not with his hands. The distressing implications of this became apparent during practical investigations of the play with the Sarah Kane Research Group and in Cast-Off Drama workshops. On 13 August 2011, I collaborated with Paul Ashton to further investigate this aspect of *Cleansed* following work on cross-dressing, tights and gallery explorations of the works of Henry Moore and Francis Bacon.³⁰⁴ Earlier projects had revealed a haptic quality to the play. Recognising that this haptic quality is in part effected through repeated touching amongst the characters – often in extreme ways – it seemed an important aspect of dramaturgical investigation to seek ethically-negotiated and reflective ways into working with this. Prior to the session I undertook a structural analysis of moments of touch within the script. Taking each character in turn, I listed the number of times each character initiates touch towards another character. I then undertook a parallel analysis of how many times each character is touched by another character. Robin is touched once by Tinker in an act of extreme violence in scene 15:

Tinker enters [...] He pulls **Robin** up by the hair [...] and [...] puts a knife to his throat.³⁰⁵

Robin's reaching for Graham, and the moment of embrace in death is therefore significant to the relationship with ghosts, and the relationship of touch (experience of violent touch/ lack of nurturing touch) warrant some attention in rehearsal.

³⁰⁴ This session was photographed by David Nunney. See under Live Projects, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 'Cross-dressing and gender' with Paul Ashton, 5-6 February 2011; 'Stockings, Tights and Stitching' with Kerry Ely, 26 February 2011; 'Making a skin-suit of tights – peel and reveal?', Nina Kane, 27 February 2011; Nina Kane, performance, *Oi Moonface, you wanna know me you gotta look close!* in response to the Henry Moore exhibition, 12 March 2011; and Nina Kane, performance, *Padre/Sounding Out Bacon*, in response to *Painting* by Francis Bacon (1950) and *Head VI* by Francis Bacon (1948/9), 25 June 2011.

³⁰⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 138.

Graham is also visible and present during scene 10, where Grace is beaten and raped by '*an unseen group of men whose Voices we hear*'.³⁰⁶ The Voices underscore a continuum of ghostly referents in *Cleansed*, encompassing Tinker and Graham, all strongly identified with the masculine. Graham is apparently unable to intervene in stopping the rape and beating, and instead plays a role of arbitrary protector, holding: '*her head between his hands*'. The violence in scene ten is punctuated by repetition of the word 'never' by the Voices, and this is underlined by Graham in an ambiguous yet nihilistic echo: 'No one. Nothing. Never.'³⁰⁷ At the fire of an automatic machine gun Graham: '*shields Grace's body with his own*.' When the round is finished, Grace 'opens her eyes and looks at him'. She is led off by Tinker, an action that Graham concludes with the word 'Lovely'.³⁰⁸ Whilst nominally alive, Grace enters a zombified state of inaction – a result of cumulative violence and enforced incarceration. Graham's culpability in the violence remains inferred but ambiguous – his intentions remain opaque and shifting.

If we consider the link between seeing, touch/holding, and passing over enacted between Graham and Robin at the moment of Robin's death, it is possible to argue that Grace is actually dead at this point, her passing over 'to the other side' helped by her ghostly brother/lover. And yet, as with *Lear*, it is not clear, how 'dead' the dead really are, nor how alive the living. Arguably the characters of both plays, existing as they do in worlds of extreme brutality and degradation, are somewhere between the two. This is not unlike the prisoners described by Bruno Bettelheim as 'walking

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 130 -133. The Voices function as a character in the play, hence the inclusion of the name in unitalicised type within the stage directions.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

corpses' in his account of existing under extreme conditions in the Nazi concentration camps.³⁰⁹ Writing in *The Informed Heart*, he describes how the type of prisoners referred to by other inmates as 'walking corpses' were:

prisoners who came to believe the repeated statements of the guards – that there was no hope for them, that they would never leave the camp except as a corpse – who came to feel that their environment was one over which they exercised no influence whatsoever.³¹⁰

I suggest that the ghosts within the institutions in *Cleansed* and *Lear*, in embodying this ambiguous dead-alive state, draw attention to the 'walking corpses' within its walls, and, in their persistently unresolved state, function as irritants and forewarners to prompt questioning, schism and disquiet in the audience.

I now turn to Bond's play *Saved*, and venture that the ghost haunting the pages and boards of this particular piece is the figure of the baby. Arguably its dramatic presence also haunts British theatre history, and it frequently manifests itself in discussions of both Bond's and Kane's work.³¹¹ Attending Sean Holmes' production of *Saved* at the Lyric in November 2011, I was struck by an interval debate being passionately contested by a group of young female school students regarding the problem, as they saw it, of the empty pram. Their premise was that in a play of so much realism and heightened drama, it was bizarre that the production: 'hadn't made more of an effort to make us believe there was an ACTUAL baby in the pram – not even by putting a doll

³⁰⁹ Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, op. cit., Bettelheim's discussion of the 'walking corpses' or 'Muselmänner' is to be found pp. 151-153.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 151.

³¹¹ Commentators on 'the opening night of *Blasted*' furore frequently link the media response to the outcry over the opening of *Saved* in 1965.

in it or something – it was so obviously empty’.³¹² A similar observation had briefly crossed my mind whilst watching scene 6, and the question of the ‘obviously empty pram’ was one that took me back to the text for some deeper consideration. What had jarred with me whilst watching the scene was the lack of any human noise coming from the pram – a silence not explained by the initial scripted suggestion that the baby has been ‘doped up’ on aspirin to keep it quiet. Surely, I wrestled, babies – even the most silent, most severely traumatised babies – whimper, babble, sigh, cough, sneeze, fart, snuffle, breathe? The deadening, theatrically-alienating silence of the obviously-empty pram, being booted across the stage, was suddenly screaming at me, and it is in this, I argue, that the ghost of the baby in *Saved*, makes its political presence felt.

The silence of the pram is central to scene 6. It marks the oppression of both the baby and its mother – Pam’s desperate attempts to encourage the abusive Fred to spend time with her, return frequently to the assertion that the baby ‘won’t disturb’ him.³¹³ Its silence is in sharp contrast to the cries, rage, screams and whimpers of the child throughout scene 4.³¹⁴ Scene 4 illustrates one aspect of the baby’s ghostly presence. Unseen, driven by a relentless impulse to communicate need, unfettered by boundaries or expectation, the child’s vocalisation demands response, demands witnessing. Ultimately it reflects the very human need for touch, and for the sound of ‘another human voice to comfort us.’ The baby’s cries do not create an atmosphere or a backdrop to scene 4 – they are too strong, too insistent, too alive and too pervasive and all-encompassing for that. I suggest instead that the baby’s sounds create the

³¹² Paraphrasing of comments, noted during the interval of *Saved*, directed by Sean Holmes at the Lyric Theatre, London, 3 November 2011.

³¹³ Bond, *Saved*, op. cit., p. 52.

³¹⁴ *ibid*, pp. 28-36.

environment for scene 4; in fact they mark and convey the environment of the whole play.³¹⁵ The baby's cries are not unheard or ignored – they are lived with, recognised for what they are; they are commented upon, and they are problematised and borne. Pam, Mary and Len are fully aware of the environment they are enduring. What they seem unable to do is act within the environment created by the cries. They appear unable to reach out and touch, nurture, hold or speak to the child – in short, they are seemingly paralysed by their inability to challenge the environment, take ownership of it, make choices within it and empathise. In this way, they represent the 'walking corpses' of Bettelheim's Dachau and Buchenwald experience:

They were people who were so deprived of affect, self-esteem and every form of stimulation, so totally exhausted, both physically and emotionally, that they had given the environment total power over them. They did this when they gave up trying to exercise any further influence over their life or environment [...]. Once his life and environment were viewed as totally beyond his ability to influence them, the only logical conclusion was to pay no attention to them whatsoever [...]. But even (they), being organisms, could not help reacting somehow to their environment, and this they did by depriving it of the power to influence them as subjects in any way whatsoever. To achieve this, they had to give up responding to it at all, and become objects, but with this they gave up being persons [...]. First they had given up all action as being utterly pointless; then feeling, because all feeling was merely painful, or dangerous, or both.³¹⁶

I suggest that the silence of the child within the script and the anti-realist, some might say, anti-theatrical device of the obviously empty pram in its staging, relate to empathy and to rigorously ethical considerations. The question of how best to stage violence is one that recurs in rehearsals of Kane's and Bond's work – it is another of

³¹⁵ My consideration of the 'environment' of the play was prompted by a recognition of similarities between the behaviour of the protagonists in *Saved*, and the behaviour of the *Muselmänner* described in Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart*. The writing subsequently quoted makes draws attention to this connection. Bettelheim, op. cit., p. 152.

³¹⁶ *ibid.*

the factors that links their theatre – and the playwrights share a political empathy and intention to challenge not only audiences and readers, but actors and directors. The challenge offered to casts through the scripts of Kane and Bond is to work with violence ethically. Rehearsing a Bond or Kane script requires empathy, courage and a desire, I would argue, to examine the root causes of violence and present its effects and extremities honestly. Bond recently commented in a 2010 interview in the *Guardian* that the ‘most obscene’ thing he’d seen recently was *Slumdog Millionaire*. When asked by interviewer Bella Todd, ‘why obscene?’ he replied:

because drama must pay attention to the thing that is most extreme in human behaviour. In this film, a child has his eyes burned out. You don’t write a film about winning when that can happen [...] it’s a corruption of human reality – which we create in the imagination.³¹⁷

Considering this statement, it occurs to me that to attempt to ‘fill’ the pram with something approaching the representation of a human baby at the moment of extreme violence in scene 6 would essentially result in an excess of imaginative creation, which would indeed corrupt the human reality being configured. Filling the pram with a human character could only ‘fall short’ and be unreal – phoney in its rendering – and to do so could potentially detach actors and audience from empathy with its subject, also possibly would leave the ‘puppet subject’ in the pram open for gratuitous or vicarious excess. The anti-theatricality of the empty pram is necessary for the reality of the imagined experience uncluttered by inadequate artifice. It alienates the audience from the event, prompting questions. It leaves space for empathy. It also leaves space for realist focus on the violence enacted by the grown men – for the adult

³¹⁷ B. Todd, ‘Edward Bond: The most obscene thing I’ve seen recently is *Slumdog Millionaire*’, *Guardian*. 30 April 2010. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a British film written by Simon Beaufoy, directed by Danny Boyle and co-directed in India by Loveleen Tandan. It was released in UK cinemas on 9 January 2009.

actors to make ethical choices, considerations and discoveries about the limits of their own connection to the playing of this, and also for audiences to consider the truth of the violence they are witnessing. It is clear that the consideration of the child's position and experience of the world – in this experience, a child's devastating experience of abuse – is uppermost in Bond's mind and empathy here.

The 'empty pram' as a motif is politically significant in the questions it poses about responsibility, agency and the capacity or willingness to intervene on behalf of others in violent situations or systems. As a symbol it has a cultural relationship to 'the silent scream' of the woman and the horrified watching of the man in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), as the baby in the pram hurtles down the Odessa Steps, and by extension reaches back through to Munch's 1893 work *The Scream*.³¹⁸ Implicated in the 'silent scream' of the pram is Pam, the baby's mother – P(r)am are metonymically connected by Bond here – and her apparent inability to act on behalf of herself or her child is configured in the silent screaming of the pram with all its political and cultural resonance.³¹⁹ Where a scream is unvoiced however, breath is still present, and in scene 8 of *Saved*, we see the effects of Pam's alienation – and attempts to control the scream – emerging in the fast-moving stream of tense, terse dialogue between her and Len. She is literally made 'breath-less' by the situation, and beats her fist at the world through words, for to pause for breath and thought would inevitably bring

³¹⁸ I am very grateful to Edward Bond for telling me of this particular chronology in relation to his work on *Saved*, and for his encouragement and assistance with the writing of this section. Private letter, Edward Bond to Nina Kane, 21 December 2012. 'Battleship Potemkin', [online film], 1925, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKgH-VzQbis>, (accessed 28 December 2012). Directed by Sergei Eisenstein. See also, 'Odessa Steps Clip: Battleship Potemkin', [online video], 1925, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLEE2UL_N7Q, (accessed 28 December 2012). B. Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, Second Edition, London, Methuen Drama, 1983. First published in German as *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* in 1940.

³¹⁹ Private letter, Edward Bond.

feelings to the surface, and a consciousness of the terrible and terrifying situation she is in. She does not stop, and scene 8 effectively just ‘bangs on’ until words and feelings which tell of the real problem begin to slip out through the cracks:

Pam (to Len). Yer’re so bloody clever!
Len. If I upset yer like this why don’t *you* go?
Pam. Thass what you want!
Len (shrugs). You want me t’ go!
Pam. I ain’ bein’ pushed out on no streets.
Len. I’m tryin’ t’ ‘elp.
Pam. Yer wouldn’t ‘elp a crying baby.
Len. Yer’re the last one a bring that up!
Pam. ‘Elp? – after the way yer carried on t’night.
Len. I lost me job stayin’ out a ‘elp you when yer was sick!
Pam. Sacked for bein’ bloody lazy!
Len (stands). Satisfied?³²⁰

The metonymic fusion of P(r)am testifies to her object-status in the world, and the ghost of the ‘crying baby,’ which she maintains within (and without) her rages within its territory in political and emotional limbo. Whilst she refuses to be ‘pushed out on’ the streets, her impotence means that she will not be in a position to push herself either. She essentially lacks agency. And yet, like the unwavering and relentless tramp of the soldiers in *Battleship Potemkin*, she continues to go on, marching herself (breathlessly) through the scream. In this she bears some political and cultural relationship to Brecht’s *Mother Courage* also to the Women of Bond’s *War Plays*.³²¹ Helene Weigel’s now-iconic *Gestus* of the ‘silent scream’ (scene 3) as performed at the

³²⁰ Bond, *Saved*, p. 80. There is insufficient space in this particular research to investigate the connections of P(r)am, the motif of the pram and the links to *Mother Courage* as much as I would like to. It is clearly a rich vein of potential research for feminist and political theatre scholars, and I include these initial observations on it here to open up debate and thinking for further scholarly enquiry in this area.

³²¹ E. Bond, *The War Plays*, London, Methuen Drama, 1991. *The War Plays* comprise *Red, Black and Ignorant*, *The Tin Can People* and *Great Peace* and were first published between 1984 and 1985.

Berliner Ensemble's 1949 production of *Mother Courage*, was described by George Steiner in 1961 thus:

She turned her head the other way and stretched her mouth wide open, just like the screaming horse in Picasso's *Guernica*. A harsh and terrifying, indescribable sound issued from her mouth. But, in fact there was no sound. Nothing. It was the sound of absolute silence. A silence which screamed and screamed throughout the theatre, making the audience bow their heads as if they had been hit by a blast of wind.³²²

In unpublished drafts to his commentary on *The War Plays*, Bond makes explicit the link between the motif of the pram in *Saved*, *The War Plays* and *Mother Courage* when he writes that 'The Woman's pram is a psyche x-ray of *Mother Courage's* wagon'.³²³

Spencer analyses this connection between Bond's plays and *Mother Courage* thus:

Like Brecht, Bond understands and elaborates on, the situation in which a woman cannot be both a good mother and a good neighbour. The contradiction of Brecht's play is startlingly, but accurately, stated in Bond's interpretation: "When Katherine beats her drum, she is beating her baby to death. That, at least, is what we ask of the Woman – and of those who make bombs. Fictional characters show us what we do but cannot live our lives for us. So Katherine beats out her baby's brains. How else can the town be saved?"³²⁴

Where Kattrin beats the baby to death with her drum, Pam effectively beats the baby to death with a relentless barrage of words and rage. Sitting under, and needy of recognition is the terrifying sound of the 'silent scream', which by implication, has

³²² E. Barba and N. Savarese (eds.), *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, 2nd edition, Oxon, USA and Canada, Routledge, 2011, p. 266. First published by Routledge in 1991. Another of *Guernica's* screaming figures appeared to make its way into the choreography for Kamome-za's 2012 production of *Cleansed* ('Be Cleansed'). When Tinker chopped Carl's tongue and hands off, the actor (Kanya Takeda) did a fast, furious, terrifying dance of pain, hurtling his whole body across the stage, concluding in a static gesture where he stood in profile upstage, threw his head back and opened his mouth in silent scream. His head was positioned at a right angle and he maintained this position for approximately twenty minutes, and for the duration of scenes 5 and 7. The actor playing Rod (Kousuke Suzuki), stood next to him in a gesture of sorrow and empathy for the duration of the pose.

³²³ J. S. Spencer, *Dramatic Strategies in the Plays of Edward Bond*, Cambridge, New York and Victoria, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 267.

³²⁴ *ibid.*

moved through the haunted theatres of Western culture from Munch, to *Battleship Potemkin*, to *Mother Courage* through *Saved* and on to *Cleansed*.³²⁵

Essentially, scene 6 of *Saved* performs the trope of the silent scream in the unfolding of its action. Arguably, the scream continues for the rest of the play, but is masked by a babble of language. The audible dimension of scene 6 is provided by language – the words and sounds uttered by the abusers. Through their eyes and language we are given to understand that the baby is ‘there’ – not only is it there, but it is alive and responding. As my own experience of riddling the significance of the empty pram has indicated, and, I believe, for the young women debating the baby’s absence, ‘looking out’ for the child, and questioning its apparent absence, is part of our empathetic response to its plight. Ultimately we connect to its humanity, and seek its referent for our own in the space. The baby’s response is one of gesture. And the gesture offered by the baby in its silent screaming is one of fighting back:

Barry. Yer woke it.
Pete. Look at its fists.
Colin. Yeh.
Pete. It’s tryin’ a clout ’im.
Colin. Don’t blame it.
Pete. Goin’ a be a boxer.³²⁶

Consider also:

Colin. Look at that mouth.
Barry. Flippin’ yawn.
Pete. Least it’s tryin’.

This dialogue is shortly followed thus:

Mike. Look at its little legs goin’... Can’t keep ‘em still..
Pete. ‘Avin’ a fit.³²⁷

³²⁵ Private letter, Edward Bond.

³²⁶ Bond, *Saved*, op. cit., p. 59.

Essentially, in the experience of extreme abuse, where resistant speech and sound have been suppressed by violence and meaningless language, Bond offers the audience the silence of the victim. In the extremity of the silence we hear the ghost of its former screaming, and this potentially touches the silent scream in all of us.³²⁸ In the reaching and yawning for air and in its instinctive physical gestures of resistance, we essentially have a representation of the impulse towards survival, and ultimately, a bleak but significant optimism.

The trope of the silent scream is one employed by Kane in *Cleansed*, and its inclusion relates to empathy, and to the desire to find the truth of human response to extreme situations. Janette Smith, assistant director of the Royal Court production in 1998 noted that:

This used to be vocal, but was changed in rehearsal after discussion with people from Amnesty International. They told us about the way in which a victim watched another being tortured. They felt they were screaming, but in fact they became paralysed with fear, and though they wanted to, they could not scream. So in the penultimate scene we have Carl physically screaming, but without the sound.³²⁹

Extending on the centring mechanism of the moment of 'F-F-F' in scene 18, I wish to conclude this particular focus on Kane and Bond with a consideration of survival options, and with consideration of the movement beyond the silent scream back to

³²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 60

³²⁸ Research on the 'silent scream' and 'the institution' was informed by practical working at Leeds Art Gallery through Cast-Off Drama, in particular; *Oi Moonface! You wanna know me, you gotta look close!* 12 March 2011; *Padre/Sounding Out Bacon*, in response to *Painting* by Francis Bacon (1950) and *Head VI* by Francis Bacon (1948/9), 25 June 2011; Nina Kane, 'Making a Female Skin-Suit / Exploring a Female Tinker/ Cutting / Peel and Reveal', 14 August 2011 and *mother bird* residency, 2-8 July 2012.

³²⁹ The comment from Janette Smith was originally published in a Theatre Museum Education Pack - Mal Smith, *Antonin Artaud and his Legacy*. London, 1999. It was reproduced by Graham Saunders in his chapter on *Cleansed* in *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 91.

breath and voice. I suggest that Kane and Bond employ a motif of stitching as a turning point, and as a way of releasing despair through breath. Let us look again at scene 18 of *Cleansed*, and at scenes 9 and 11 of *Saved*.³³⁰

Carl's silent scream ends scene 18, a scene in which one of the play's central themes - the abuse of the body within institutions - is concluded politically through the image of the transsexual body suffering through medical incompetence. As noted in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, at the start of the scene, Grace awakes from a medically-induced coma to find herself the recipient of a phalloplasty and bilateral mastectomy. In a powerful moment of *Gestus* and Clown mid-scene, the actress playing Grace, steps out of role and states:

Grace (*Touches her stitched-on genitals*).³³¹

The phrase 'stitched-on' has a crudeness about it, and suggests a 'botching' on the part of the operating surgeon – a 'botching' later confirmed by Tinker's comment: 'I'm sorry. I'm not really a doctor.'³³² The horror of this is underlined by Carl's silent scream as he wakes, with bloody, bandaged groin, to realize that his penis has been severed and, transferred, it would seem, monstrously, to Grace.

³³⁰ Cast-Off Drama, 'Stockings, Tights and Stitching', 26 February 2011; Nina Kane, 'Making a Skin-Suit from Tights – Peel and Reveal?'; 27 February 2011, '*Oi Mooface! You wanna know me, you gotta look close!*', 12 March 2011; 'Making a Female skin-suit / Exploring a Female Tinker/ Cutting / Peel and Reveal', 14 August 2011.

³³¹ Kane, op. cit., p. 145. Cast-Off Drama, 'Making a Skin-Suit from Tights – Peel and Reveal?'. 27 February 2011; Cast-Off Drama, Kerry Ely and Nina Kane, 'Exploring the Landscape of *Cleansed*/Tinker and Grace's Big Day Out (From the Institution)', in response to the *United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s* exhibition, and *Exit the Model* by Bruce McLean (1982), 28 and 29 January 2012 Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Institute, UK.

³³² *ibid.*, p. 146.

The use of this technique to break the fourth wall coupled with an image of the crudely-stitched transsexual body, recalls Susan Stryker's powerful performative address to the 'Rage Across the Disciplines' conference held at California State University, San Marcos, USA, in June 1993.³³³ For this she used a literary moment from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as 'a metaphor for the critical encounter between a radicalized transgender subjectivity and the normativizing intent of medical science.'³³⁴ In discussing her planning of the address, Stryker notes that the inspiration for it came from discussions and interventions undertaken co-currently as part of her involvement with Transgender Nation, 'a militantly queer, direct action transsexual advocacy group' and their disruptions of the American Psychiatric Association's 1993 annual meeting. In the address, which was intended as an interventionist critique of the medical establishment's approach to transsexual and transgender people, Stryker notes how she:

wanted the formal structure of the work to express a transgender aesthetic by replicating our abrupt, often jarring transitions between genders.³³⁵

In her performance, entitled simply *Monologue*, she said:³³⁶

The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist.

³³³ The conference was an interdisciplinary arts, humanities and social sciences conference held 10–12 June 1993 at California State University, San Marcos, USA.

³³⁴ S. Stryker, 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage', in Stryker and Whittle, op. cit., p. 244. M. Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, Second Edition, London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland, Penguin, 1987. Originally published in 1818.

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 245.

³³⁶ *ibid.*

The use of the title *Monologue* recalls Kane's early student works contained in the folio entitled *Sick*, held at the Women's Theatre Collection. Feminist and queer in construction and theme, and reflecting debates of interest to gender activists both at the time of writing and now – date-rape, eating disorders, sexuality and polyamory – each monologue in the *Sick* folio is voiced by a distinctly different character, all named, intriguingly, Woman.³³⁷ The monologue was a form preferred by Kane as a writer, and one that she was interested in as a director too.³³⁸ Whilst a student at Bristol she directed a production of Franca Rame's monologue *Rape (Lo Stupro)*.³³⁹ As with Stryker's address, Rame's monologue is a defiant text of rage and reclamation, and was performed on more than one occasion by Rame as a performative address.³⁴⁰ It recounts in detail her experience of gang-rape by neo-fascists in Italy in 1973 – a rape that was in direct retaliation for Rame's left-wing theatre work and anti-government political activism, and one which was later proven to have been carried out on the orders of senior police officers. There are some clear parallels between Rame's rape, and the figure of Grace raped by unseen voices and establishment figures in *Cleansed*.

³³⁷ See Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', in De Vos and Saunders, loc. cit., pp. 22-23 for more discussion of this.

³³⁸ It has been noted anecdotally that playwright Clare MacIntyre persuaded Kane to experiment with forms other than the monologue at Birmingham. *Blasted* resulted from this experimentation with other forms.

³³⁹ F. Rame and D. Fo, 'The Rape' in *'A Woman Alone' & Other Plays*, Second Edition, London, Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore and Toronto, Methuen Drama, 1995. Originally published in 1991. Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., p. 88. There are some formal similarities in voice between Kane's student monologues and those of Rame that would benefit from deeper scholarly investigation.

³⁴⁰ 'Franca Rame – Monologo Lo Stupro'. [online video], 1988, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzh7FmmNDAM>, (accessed 21 February 2013). A. Gumbel, 'Dario Fo looks back in anger on era when Italy's rulers had his wife beaten and raped,' *The Independent*, 7 March 1998, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/dario-fo-looks-back-in-anger-on-era-when-italys-rulers-had-his-wife-beaten-and-raped-1148763.html>, (accessed 21 February 2013).

Noting crossovers between Kane's work and that of Rame and Stryker through the monologue form, I would go further with the association, and argue that Kane is effecting a performative and political use of the Frankenstein metaphor favoured by Stryker through the image of Grace's traumatic rebirthing as Grace/Graham in scene 18. This is marked by the moment at which she 'touches her stitched-on genitals'. Whilst at one level the 'stitched-on genitals' evoke fear and horror, there is also sorrow, rage, empathy, love and self-affirmation expressed through the gesture of touching in this context. Notably, it is a gesture that is voiced. The final scene of the play comprises largely of a monologue voiced by Grace/Graham. Scene 20 marks a stylistic departure from the rest of the play. It is fluid, rhythmic, meandering and reflective and marks the return of the monologic form in Kane's writing – one that she progresses and develops in her last two plays *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, and ones, like Rame's, that are peopled by shifting, discrete and gendered voices or 'characters'.

The young women in the Sarah Kane Research Group were unanimous in finding transgender concerns present in the performing of this moment. The sessions in which scene 18 were worked on led to lengthy and often outraged discussions of gender, transgender and transsexual-related themes, with a focus on the mistreatment of transsexual and transgender people within institutions and social systems. One key issue discussed by the group was the then-current news reports of the sex testing of Caster Semenya – a procedure the young women judged as disgracefully intrusive, degrading and as an unnecessary attack on a strong and high-achieving female

athlete.³⁴¹ A second key issue discussed in the rehearsal room was that of the enforced medicalization of intersex babies by doctors, to assign a fixed gender soon after birth.³⁴² The group felt strongly about this, likening it to child abuse and ‘butchery’. This latter issue was seen as having thematic relevance to the unthinking and callous ‘butchering’ of Carl and Grace’s bodies by Tinker. The women concluded that *Cleansed* was a political play, which allowed for both debate and ethical consideration of gender, transgender and transsexual themes in the processes of staging and production.

Thus Kane’s script ‘gives voice’ to the ‘silent screams’ of the abused transsexual figure within the medical institution, and stitching in *Cleansed* encodes within it possibilities for rage, intervention and breath. There is a similar release through stitching in *Saved*. To return to ghosts, I suggest that a theatrical forerunner for Graham can be found in the character of Len. There is something of the corporeal ghost about Len. He appears out of nowhere, establishes himself within the corpse-like state of the home through fleeting embrace, then sets about irritating, questioning, ‘coming and going’ as he pleases, and refusing to leave. His status of a lover quickly gives way to that of an incestuous brother, and he pursues Pam relentlessly, despite her rejection of him. A sinister, needy presence, who watches and listens incessantly, transgressing all boundaries of privacy and intimacy, he eventually provokes necessary uproar in the

³⁴¹ D. McRae, ‘Caster Semenya: “People want to stare at me, to touch me. I don’t think I like being famous so much.”’ The Guardian, 14 November 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2009/nov/14/caster-semenya-donald-mcrae-training-camp>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

³⁴² Discussion of this issue in the later stages of the Sarah Kane Research Group project was informed by Cheryl Chase’s article ‘Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism’, in Stryker and Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader*, op. cit., pp. 300-314.

fabric of the home through a seductive exchange of stitching in which he openly flirts with the mother of the house in the process of fixing a hole in her stockings.³⁴³ The fallout that follows challenges the walking corpse environment of the house, and finally provokes the act of empathy and recognition of loss necessary for the family to begin to live again, as Pam suddenly breaks and recognises the reality of her situation:

Pam (*crying*). No 'ome. No friends. Baby dead. Gone. Fred gone.³⁴⁴

As with Grace's 'Felt it', the sound of Pam's sobbing heard through the floor punctuates the penultimate scene, marking the first step of grieving, and through it, the possibilities of redemption, understanding and growth. Her tears mark a step towards confronting the implacable.³⁴⁵

Len is essentially an example of the feminised male character, the like of which can be seen to emerge in post-war kitchen sink dramas such as *Look Back in Anger* (Cliff) and *A Taste of Honey* (Geoffrey). These mild-mannered working-class men represent a drift away from conventional configurations of masculinity, towards a more feminine and feminising middle-ground.³⁴⁶ Len is an outsider, gentler in nature than the other young men, a watcher and questioner, one who does not engage in the physical horseplay or gratuitous violence of his peers. He is more inclined to domesticity and care of the baby than Pam or Mary and yet as his exchange with Harry in scene 12, and his subsequent dominance of the living room in scene 13 suggests, he is very capable of

³⁴³ Bond, *Saved*, op. cit., pp. 80-87.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁴⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit. p. 191.

³⁴⁶ M. Wandor, 'Heroism, Crises of Manhood and the Kitchen Sink' in *Look Back in Gender: Sexuality and the Family in post-war British Drama*, London, Methuen, 1987. L. Ferris, 'Cooking Up the Self' in S. Smith and J. Watson (eds.), *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, pp. 186-210.

assuming the conventional patriarchal role and its status and power when able to. Despite his steady assumption of power over women in his domestic space through his tenacious, relentless, interrupting presence, Len is unable to assert agency or power in situations of violence with stronger male figures, and as such, becomes complicit in the maintenance of their power and abuses. In scene 7, we learn that he witnessed the stoning of the baby from a hiding place in the park, but failed to intervene:

Len. I saw

Fred. What?

Len. I came back when I couldn't find 'er.

Fred. Yer ain't grassed?

Len. No.

Fred. O.

Len. I was in the trees. I saw the pram.

Fred. Yeh.

Len. I saw the lot.

Fred. Yeh.

Len. I didn't know what t'do. Well, I should a stopped yer.

Fred. Too late now.

Len. I juss saw.

Fred. Yer saw! Yer saw! Wass the good a that? That don't 'elp me. I'll be out in that bloody dock in a minute!

Len. Nothin'. They got the pram in court.

Fred. Okay, okay. Reckon there's time for a quick burn?

Len. About.

*He gives Fred a light.*³⁴⁷

Len's 'nothin'' recalls Graham's 'Nothing' in scene 10 of *Cleansed*.³⁴⁸ There are clear links between the apparent inability or unwillingness of Graham to intervene in preventing the rape and beating of Grace and Len's ghostly watching of the stoning of the baby. The passivity of these characters is disquieting – largely because within the economy of gender relations established in patriarchal societies, there is perhaps an

³⁴⁷ Bond, *Saved*, op. cit., p. 69-70.

³⁴⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, loc. cit., p. 133. It is not the only linguistic link between Len and Graham – consider also the repetition of 'Lovely' voiced by Len throughout the sex activity in scene 1 of *Saved*, and repeated a number of times by Graham throughout *Cleansed* – notably, at the end of the sex activity in scene 5 and also, at the end of scene 10.

inevitability that these men, however 'harmless' they appear, will always benefit at the expense of women and children in their inability to intervene on the violence their fellow men create unless the distribution of power is altered.

As noted, the Sarah Kane Research Group and Kawaguchi's interpretation of Graham indicated clearly his participation in a continuum of male violence, and placed him alongside the abusers with clear indictment. This view of Graham accords most closely to my own. Tony McCleane-Fay's interpretation however, reflected more sympathy for Graham's weaknesses.³⁴⁹ The Bare Cheek Theatre production presented Graham within a Foucauldian model, very much as a victim of Tinker's patriarchal control and higher class status, and as a man made complicit yet insubstantial by events. McCleane-Fay's Graham bore strong resemblance to feminised working-class males of post-war kitchen sink dramas, particularly Len. He was presented as a passive, desperate, needy character, suffering from addiction and withdrawal, desperately in love with Grace, trying to remain as close to her as much as he could. Having been characterised as a victim of Tinker's abuse before death, he seemed unable to change this pattern after death. The interpretation of ghostliness in this production is of one who can see and feel and touch in love, but is unable to act or intervene in preventing violence and ultimately withdraws cringing, foaming and bubbling into himself. It recalled for me the figure of the watching man in *Battleship Potemkin*, cowering against a mirrored frame, and shouting feebly as the pram rolled down the Odessa steps.³⁵⁰ There was considerable power in this presentation, and it raised questions

³⁴⁹ 'Cleansed', Bare Cheek Theatre Company, Cork, 6 December 2012.

³⁵⁰ *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925.

about the limits of agency for the male figure, able to witness, but unable to act within patriarchal institutions and hierarchies.

I now turn to consider the wider implications of 'ghosts within institutions' and relate this to the explosion of male hysteria, superstition and gender terrorism at 'the opening night of *Blasted*'. For this I consider the circle of reviewers fuelling the hysteria and also the circle of men around the Kane legacy. I note in particular the nature of anecdotal sharing as a feature of both grief and bonding, but also as a means of creating exclusionary hierarchies. For reasons that will become apparent in my treatment of the content, I will utilise elements of ficto-critical writing in my approach to this next section.



3.i.a. Silent Scream. Carl (Kanya Takeda), Rod (Kousuke Suzuki) and Woman (Ayano Teramoto) in Kamome-za Fringe Theatre's 2012 version of *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*'). Space Edge, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan, 27 May 2012. Reproduced with kind permission of Tomoco Kawaguchi.

3.ii. A View of the *Blasted* Hysteria from One of *Hamlet*'s Grave-digging Clowns³⁵¹

As noted in chapters 1 and 2, the British picture of Sarah Kane tells a repetitive story. 'The opening night of *Blasted*' and her 'suicide at the age of 28' feature prominently in every introduction to her work. The *Daily Mail*'s Jack Tinker and his 'disgusting feast of filth' comment is etched like a tombstone on the narrative, and she is regarded with some tension as both 'the bad girl' of British theatre but also 'one of the lads' in light of her radical viscosity.³⁵² In the canon of Theatre Studies, her work is now comfortably placed in a continuum of male playwrights running from Aristotle to Crimp, and this constitutes what I discuss in the overview as the first discourse on Sarah Kane's theatre. Socio-historical influences noted in relation to Kane's work focus largely on the 1990s, and position her theatre-making in a world haunted by ghosts of Thatcherism, New Labour, acid-house nihilism and end-of-century ennui, with an obligatory nod to the 'angry' 1950s as the only other historical period of relevance. The socio-historical frame frequently extends to commentaries on Kane's youth, and

³⁵¹ There is interesting variation in the naming of these characters, and different editions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* refer to them variously as Gravedigger or Clown. From a clown perspective they are very much Clowns and their role at the graveside of the bereaved fulfils something of the sacred function of clowning. A preparatory exercise for the journey into experience and innocence in Morrison's training is an exercise called 'Saying Goodbye to Someone You Love' and in discussing this Coburn notes: 'Clowns are not for children. A clown is not a child. Clowns are not childish. They are innocent, but don't be fooled by innocence, innocence is not necessarily nice. The word innocent has a Latin origin, from the Latin *in* meaning "not", and *nocere* meaning "to hurt", so it literally means, "not to hurt", "not harming". Clowns may startle us, shock us, even scare us but they won't harm or hurt us [...]. Clowns are whole beings. They have lived. They are of this world. Clowns straddle the firmaments, their feet are on the earth, and they have earthly knowledge. Human experience.' Coburn and Morrison, loc. cit., p. 173. Given they are more variously referred to in theatre as 'Hamlet's Gravediggers' and it is the world of theatre-makers, critics and academics I am discussing here, I will use both Clown, Gravedigger and Grave-digging Clowns interchangeably in this section.

³⁵² Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit., pp. 77-81.

from this, an image of 'her generation' is shaped, frequently in patronising, reductive and media-friendly terms.³⁵³

The narratives of brouhaha and death circle in funereal dirges of self-sameness, creating a Kane mythology that gains more exposure than any considered writing on the playwright's work. Many male practitioners and writers who knew her have either been written, or written themselves into, the narrative as eternal guardians of 'the flame' – a flame that united them in a historical moment somewhere in mid-1990s London. The phenomenon of the grieving circle is reminiscent of that which formed around Simonetta Cattaneo – Botticelli's *Venus* – a woman who died at the age of twenty, but whose beauty inspired a cult of courtly lovers. There are no actual written documents of anything she said or did, but her face and 'story' were painted obsessively by those who knew her, and later those who did not, for centuries after her death.³⁵⁴ There is a certain poetry, even heroism, in being one who remembers until death, the young woman taken too soon. As Dan Rebellato comments, in an article in *New Theatre Quarterly* six months after Kane's suicide:

Since her death, there have been many testimonies to her inspiring presence as a teacher of playwriting, in rehearsal, and as an actor and director. But cruelly these memories will fade, and when the last eyes that saw her are closed, it will be as a writer that she will be remembered.³⁵⁵

The importance placed on the 'eyes' that remember Kane, and the inscription of himself in the narrative as one who gives testimony to, remembers and who will

³⁵³ A. Sierz, 'Cool Britannia? 'In-Yer-Face' Writing in the British Theatre Today', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 14, issue 56, November 1998, pp. 324-333.

³⁵⁴ M. Segal, 'La Belle Simonetta: Botticelli's golden dream girl', in *Dolly on the Dais: The Artist's Model in Perspective*, London, Gentry Books, 1972, pp. 29-35.

³⁵⁵ D. Rebellato, 'Sarah Kane: an Appreciation', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol 15, issue 3, August 1999, pp. 280-281.

remember until his eyes 'that saw her close', typify such speaking of and about Kane. Grief, loss, remembering (the constant configuring and invocation of her bodily and vocal presence through anecdote and retelling), infuse discussion of her work. This is a curious phenomenon, and on entering into the conventional arena of Sarah Kane scholarship, one finds oneself somewhat in the position of *Hamlet's* Gravedigger Clowns, endlessly shovelling soil, poking the odd bone or two, and listening to the anecdotal musings of princes: 'Alas poor Yorrick, I knew him Horatio'.³⁵⁶ Whilst official versions of her life and work repeat rather monotonously in print, verbal discussion of her by those who 'knew' her are littered with variety and anecdote: 'I actually knew Sarah Kane and I remember/she was/she said/she did....'. Telling anecdotes about the departed is a symptom of grief of course – also a healing act that venerates the lost ones' life and gives comfort to mourners. It is often a very generous, loving and sharing act – and this is often the case when anecdotes about Kane are recounted. Listening to such anecdotes requires a sympathy and openness on the part of the hearer, and a use of intuition and tact. Sometimes it is clear that the retelling is an act of self-comforting on the part of the speaker; but this is not always the case, and this ambiguity, and the intentions of the teller and their configurations of Kane's character through the telling, are not always clear.

A peculiar feature of anecdote-telling about Sarah Kane in the UK is the frequency with which the information recalled is regarded as secret. There is an intimation that 'not many people know this but...'; and yet it is clear, in its retelling, that many people actually do know about it, and yet it is not deemed worthy of printing, or perhaps is

³⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, op. cit., Act V sc. I, lines 185-187, pp. 149-159.

not considered ethical to disseminate widely. This creates a dynamic of casual intimacy between those who 'learn things about Sarah' from those who knew her. It also acts somewhat as an informal initiation into what the hearer perceives as a more knowledgeable inner-circle of people 'close to Sarah' who don't just know of her and her work but who 'remember her' and become charged with 'remembering her'. The fact that much of it is delivered as hearsay, rumour, inconsequential trivia or something that is very definitely not to be passed on, destabilises the validity of the anecdote just enough to ensure that the information does not actually get printed. It also keeps the information contained within the circle of speakers, and does not enable the anecdotes to become connected to wider issues, ideas or observations by those who did not know her in her lifetime. The power of the anecdote (or the fact that must be kept close) extends notably to the rehearsal room in formal re-stagings of her work. Where rights have been granted for professional revivals, it is common for Simon Kane to attend rehearsals as a consultant, and inform the cast of particular things about the play's origins or meaning that can be built into the production but which must not be passed on to others outside the walls of the rehearsal room.³⁵⁷ It is also common practice (or so I am told informally by various people, but I cannot reveal my sources) that Simon Kane will tell directors and casts how particular sections should be staged in accordance with Sarah's wishes or in line with the original productions staged in consultation with her during her lifetime. As such, hierarchies, intimacies and hermeneutic pockets of knowledge, knowledge-acquisition and ownership are frequently set up around the life, work and memory of Sarah Kane.

³⁵⁷ Simon Kane makes reference to rehearsal involvement in staging his sister's plays on his professional website. Kane, 'Simon Kane Photography', [website]. "Spending a lot of time in rehearsal rooms as an *active participant* working on my sister's plays has given me distinct advantages when it comes to working in a rehearsal room as a photographer", (emphasis mine).

Notably, most of the speakers and writers about Kane who direct attention onto the memory of her through anecdote are male. There are men within academia, theatre reviewing and theatre-directing who, one way or another through their 'knowing' of Kane in her lifetime, frequently speak and are frequently *called on to* speak of and for her in her absence. Women in the Sarah Kane Research Group and the young female directors I encounter in my research and teaching express some frustration with this situation, particularly where the question of interpretation of works and the obtaining of professional rights to stage the work come into play.³⁵⁸ Whilst Kane and women of her generation like myself looked along the stalls of theatre reviewers and saw a sea of 'white, middle-aged, male theatre critics' dominating the frame, young women today look at Sarah Kane scholarship and encounter a sea of 'greying griever' claiming the privilege to speak on her work largely by dint of having 'been there' and 'known her'.³⁵⁹ The public voices on her work are still, it seems, white, middle-aged men. Of interest to an Irigarayan scholar is the fact that their expressions of grief and remembering are played out through speech, words, testimony and declaration.

In considering how women who knew Kane speak of or for her in the social and public realm, I found myself with a much smaller list of individuals to look to. Considering this

³⁵⁸ The research indicated considerable issues with obtaining the rights to stage *Cleansed*, with some directors being told that their choice of venue was not suitable for the play and others receiving no reply whatsoever from the agent despite repeat e-mails and telephone calls. It is possible that this is due to the sheer volume of requests to stage Kane's work outstripping agency resources, but there is clearly also a screening process in operation that is rejecting applications for staging the work outside its conventional middle-scale theatre venue terrain.

³⁵⁹ The term 'greying griever' emerged during the Sarah Kane Research Group discussions, and whilst the focus of it was on the men in question, I also took it in some ways to relate to women like myself who were grieving for losses of the 1990s through remembering Sarah Kane.

I turn to Simon Hattenstone's 2000 article in the *Guardian*, and note his description of Mel Kenyon at Kane's memorial service:

When Mel Kenyon stood up to give a little speech at Sarah Kane's memorial, the words wouldn't come. She tried two or three times, before being defeated by her tears. In the end, she asked the crowd of friends and relatives at London's Royal Court to listen to a song for Sarah. Kane had killed herself just a couple of months before, and the raw sore of grief wept through the whole theatre.³⁶⁰

Kenyon's expression of grief – the inability to speak in the moment of grief and the overwhelming desire to weep – is in some contrast to the public expression of the grieving males around Kane whose mourning is conveyed through a continuous flow of words. In the course of the research, I have encountered and heard tell of a number of women who knew Kane as friends, lovers, professional associates and fellow theatre-makers, but who are still, nearly fourteen years on, unable to bring themselves to talk about her. Their names are not known in the extant Kane circles of theatre, media and academia, largely due to this impulse towards silence, grief, disappearance, keening, weeping or gesture, but possibly also to mechanisms of exclusion that perhaps operate when the formation of a dominant mythology around someone you knew differs from your own memories and experiences of the person.³⁶¹ I would suggest that there is something in the silence and withdrawal of women from the dominant public discourses on Kane that highlights an impulse to preserve and protect her status as a woman, and also to retain space for mourning, breath and song in the processing of grief, and a desire for life. The silence constitutes something of a feminine reserve within discourses on Kane. Those women, like Vicky Featherstone, who remained in

³⁶⁰ Hattenstone, 'A Sad Hurrah', *Guardian*. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, op. cit., Act V sc. I, lines 185-187, pp. 149-159.

³⁶¹ One of Sarah's friend, known only in public as Jess, quietly leaves a bunch of red roses at the entrance of the Royal Court theatre every year on the anniversary of her death. 'Sarah Kane', Iain Fisher, [website].

the public eye and within the professional theatre field, were selective with whom and how they spoke about Kane. An interesting dichotomy has emerged from this. It appears that men in Kane's circle have increasingly melded their personal history and connections with Kane into professional working and some have built careers and reputations as Kane experts. Women like Featherstone (and possibly, also Kenyon) by contrast, have moved on to other projects and collaborations in their professional lives, and over time have gradually disassociated themselves from their earlier Kane connections, at least in public.³⁶²

This situation is peculiarly imbalanced in that it leaves a state of affairs whereby men control the legacy and interpretation of Kane's work and reputation in the field. I do not believe that it is only women who occupy this feminine reserve of invisible remembering – I am sure that there are men who similarly have employed the strategies of distance, private mourning, breath, weeping, silence and disassociation like the women who knew her, in the aftermath of her death. I am also sure that many of the men who remain Kane experts in the public realm, continue their championing of her from love, loyalty, respect for the work and a similarly enduring grief that finds solace in the open retelling of stories and remembering happier times. It is important in approaching Kane's work to take a moment and say to all who knew her 'I am sorry for your loss'. This does not happen enough in discussions of Sarah Kane.

³⁶² Whilst Featherstone's earlier professional biography mentioned her association with Kane, write-ups of her accession to the Artistic Directorship and Chief Executorship of The National Theatre of Scotland, and her most recent biography on becoming Artistic Director of the Royal Court do not mention Sarah Kane. P. Miller, 'Interview: Vicky Featherstone, National Theatre of Scotland', *Herald Scotland*, 17 December 2012, <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/news-home/i-had-a-period-where-i-thought-i-dont-know-how-to-do-this-job.19657538>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

The status quo does, however, raise questions about why it is primarily men who maintain the public face and decision-making on Kane's work, what exclusions this creates for women, particularly younger women, but also younger men, wishing to stage her work fresh from the script and free of anecdotal reminiscences. It raises questions about the retelling of singular stories with a single voice and the exclusionary hierarchies that may emerge if other storytellers, coming later and in a different rhythm, find no space for air or expression amongst the company gathered. When a single voice repeatedly tells a story very loudly, it may be that those with other stories stop talking to the person or people telling the same old tale (particularly if the same old story rings hollow in parts). There is also a danger that the men retelling the same grieving story may grow tired of their tale, resent its empty echo and the experience of loss it evokes and turn on its original subject in revenge.

The growth of Sarah Kane mythology recalls Luce Irigaray's observation on the way men in patriarchy look on themselves in the female and hold that mirror image very tightly, encircling it within and amongst themselves – a situation that inevitably leads to paralysis. She also notes how men make a fixed mirror of women in which to constantly see themselves and their world-view reflected back. I believe that this has happened with the Sarah Kane legacy in the working spaces of public institutions concerned with her work: universities, the London theatre and theatre media forums. One way or another it has become an arena in which women's voices, experiences and memories of Kane have become marginalised, and men have found themselves maintaining the status-quo. The status quo as it stands is unsatisfactory. In speaking as 'Marine Lover' to the 'Old Man' of Nietzsche's 'Zarathustra', Irigaray argues for a

different kind of reciprocity between men and women in such instances. She suggests that men should concern themselves less with finding themselves in the mirror and the narratives they shape with and from the female in culture, and more on allowing women to find their own image in the male. For women to find their image in the male or in the male sphere (in this instance, the masculine spheres of theatre, academia and the media, also arguably, the elements of Kane's theatre that strongly accord with the masculine cultural breath), the men operating within those spheres need to be willing to let themselves be a mirror for a woman to find herself in, and give her images back to her. As Irigaray's lover notes to the old man:

If you were to gaze on yourself in me, and if in you also I could find my reflection, then those dreams would unlimit our spaces. But if I keep your images, and you refuse to give me back mine, your self-same (ton meme) is but a prison. Love of you but a paralysis. The moving universe of our entwining mirages becomes the mirroring outline of your world. The mists rising from our encounters become a cloud blotting out the sun, blocking off the horizon.³⁶³

The same applies to Kane's work. Women writers, theatre-makers and scholars need access to the texts and legacies of Kane's oeuvre, and similarly those with memory of her and her time need to be able to articulate visions and thoughts from that place which offer a different reflection and a different set of images from those maintained within the male-dominated frame on that history. Women have been talking about, making work from and writing on Kane from the start, and yet their views struggle to find expression, representation or validity in the prevailing dominant discourses. Graham Saunders, a loyal and staunch promoter of Kane's legacy recently asked in his paper at the *Sarah Kane Now* conference in Lincoln, why feminists in the aftermath of Kane's death, failed to come forward and argue more forcefully on her behalf as a

³⁶³ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

feminist theatre-maker?³⁶⁴ My answer is that they did, and continue to do so, but the picture is complex and is still playing itself against a fraught and shifting backdrop of gender relations and positions that cannot achieve their full potential or expression until aspects of the dominant discourses on her are dismantled – or perhaps, choose themselves, to lie down and ‘sleep’. As Irigaray’s speaker says to her aged lover:

let the ice break up now. Let us be done with believing that we need flints which only open up the solid shells of your ideas, or spurs to get your impassive things moving. In me everything is already flowing, and you flow along too if you only stop minding such unaccustomed motion, and its song. Learn to swim, as once you danced on dry land, for the thaw is much nearer at hand than you think.³⁶⁵

Trusting that midnight will bring healing and not monsters is a frightening prospect for men haunted by ghosts. And Western theatre is full of ghosts, and full of watchmen extending the suns of day into night with their flaming beacons, maintaining the gates and walls of the city for the supposed good of citizens within its walls. The playful and philosophical exchange of *Hamlet*’s grave-digging clowns remind us that death will always prove the strongest house, and no amount of watchfulness will prevent it carrying us off shrieking, raging or laughing into eternal sleep.³⁶⁶ The trick, as Irigaray’s lover notes, is to learn how best to live by allowing midnight, the abyss and the endless sea its place in cycles of collective growth, breath and becoming.

³⁶⁴ G. Saunders, ‘Sarah Kane: Cool Britannia’s Reluctant Feminist’, *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, 2012.

³⁶⁵ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit. p. 37.

³⁶⁶ ‘**Clown**. What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright or the carpenter?/
Other.The gallowsmaker, for that frame outlives a thousand tenants./ **Clown**. I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church. Argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To’t again, come./ **Other**. Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright or a carpenter?/ **Clown**. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke./ **Other**. Marry, now I can tell./ **Clown**. To’t./ **Other**. Mass, I cannot tell./ **Clown**. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace by beating. And when you are asked this question next, say “a gravemaker.” The houses he makes lasts till doomsday. Go, get thee in, and fetch me a stoup of liquor.’ *Hamlet*, Act V, sc.i, lines 42-61.

In order to move beyond the perpetual state of mourning currently freezing the progress of thinking on Kane's work, it is important to acknowledge its existence within the current discourses. I would argue that the presence of grief and mourning amongst coteries of men close to Kane's legacy actually predate her suicide and can be traced to and recognised as existing in the 'opening night of *Blasted*'. To consider this further, I return to the theme of ghosts, and in noting Kane's situating of *Cleansed* within a university, ask what it is that she was indicating to us should be looked at through the play and its ghostly referents.

Ghosts call attention to watchers to look at what is happening within the walls of the city and ask questions of it, and I suggest that the presence of ghosts in *Cleansed* asks us to look more closely at the institutions around its formation. Noting Kane's concern about a lack of rigour in scholarship and her initial suggestion that *Cleansed* takes place in a university, leads me to consider Catherine Spooner's reflections on the haunting of the university in the BBC TV drama *Sea of Souls* and the implications of this cultural haunting.³⁶⁷ Spooner notes that within the frame of the drama:

Academia's self-reflexive questioning of its own relevance in contemporary culture is figured as a crisis in the production of knowledge itself [...] In *Sea of Souls*, the university is both the place that is haunted and the zone of knowledge that is unsettled [...]. It is through the university, however, that the hauntings are gathered together, assembled into a body of knowledge [...] If the university provides a means through which [...] supernatural phenomena can be gathered together, then it becomes, to borrow Foucault's term, a kind of paranormal *heterotopia* in which different orders of supernatural phenomena co-exist. [...] If the modern university is implicitly a humanist institution, from which the supernatural is by definition excluded, then the haunted lecture theaters and laboratories of *Sea of Souls* offer a...'counter-site'

³⁶⁷ C. Spooner, 'The Haunted Lecture Theatre: Ghosts in the Academy in the BBC's *Seas of Souls*' in del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, op. cit., pp. 175-184.

in which, as Foucault, suggests, the real site can be simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.³⁶⁸

Extending this idea of a Foucauldian 'counter-site' to *Cleansed*, I ask what real site or sites can be said to be 'represented, contested and inverted' in its playing. Violence, abuse and gender-terrorism are clearly key themes, and the origin of these atrocities are centralised, within the scheme of the play in the character of Tinker.³⁶⁹ It has been noted variously that Jack Tinker was the reviewer most famed for leading the attack on Sarah Kane with regard to 'the opening night of *Blasted*'. A recurrent piece of speculation in chatter on *Cleansed* is that Kane named this character after him as a kind of casual joke or 'dig' designed to get a reaction from him personally and from the press, and yet, this is clearly not her intention, as when *Cleansed* was premiered, Jack Tinker had been dead for two years.³⁷⁰ I would argue that Kane's thinking ran deeper on this point than a throw-away snipe. That Jack Tinker is somehow indicated by the personification, is however highly probable, and in considering the significance of this, I suggest that Tinker in *Cleansed* represents not so much the man, but the *ghost* of the man, and the ghost of what he stood for. Tinker's ghost haunts the spaces of the university in *Cleansed* to draw attention to the institutions and spheres within which Jack Tinker the man operated – the British theatre and the media – and, I suggest, the violence, desire and chaos within these spheres is indicated and contested by this spectral signifying.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.177.

³⁶⁹ In this particular section, I will refer to the character of Tinker as Tinker, and where I discuss the critic Jack Tinker, I will make distinction between the two by referring to him with his full name.

³⁷⁰ Saunders notes this speculation in *Love Me or Kill Me*, but offers another suggestion too. Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 96.

I will now, therefore, turn to that familiar old spook, ‘the opening night of *Blasted*’ and return to my earlier assertion that the brouhaha around it was fuelled by collective male hysteria and superstition. Grief and mourning are revealed through this hysteria, and the source of this, as I will demonstrate, was Jack Tinker. To consider this, I offer to the reader some Kleinian observations on mourning.

Repetition, extremes of emotion, regression, eventual repression and revenge are hallmarks of grief. In her work *Mourning and Its Relationship to Manic-Depressive States*, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein posits that ‘mourning is an illness of manic-depressive character rooted in infantile development.’³⁷¹ Klein analysed how experiences of later grief reactivated the depressive stages of childhood loss, and required the mourner to ‘relive the constant threat of the loss of the mother in infancy’ towards the reinstatement of the ‘good parents’ within him as part of healing. This, she argues is part of a process towards the reinstatement of his ‘actually lost loved object’ (the departed) within him, as necessary for the ‘rebuilding of his inner world, which was disintegrated and in danger’ through the bereavement.³⁷²

Klein’s work built on Sigmund Freud’s studies on *Trauerarbeit* which Griselda Pollock translates as the ‘work of mourning’.³⁷³ In a discussion ‘On mourning and melancholia’ Pollock usefully contextualises Freud’s discussion of *Trauerarbeit* thus:

³⁷¹ M. Klein, ‘Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States’, in J. Mitchell (ed.), *The Selected Melanie Klein*, London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland, Penguin, 1986, pp. 146-174. The paper was originally published in 1940.

³⁷² *ibid.*, p. 174.

³⁷³ G. Pollock, ‘On mourning and melancholia’ in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories*, London and New York, 1999, pp. 189-191.

the process of adjusting slowly and painfully to the reality which tells us that the loved object, place or ideal no longer exists – or cannot be regained. So intense can be the refusal to give up libidinal investment, that the subject can turn totally away from reality, clinging to the lost object with hallucinatory zeal. Slowly, painfully and bit by bit, with a great expense of time and energy, prolonging the existence of the lost object all the while, the libido attached to the object is brought up and hypercathected, detached and released, making the ego 'free and uninhibited again.'³⁷⁴

Pollock links the later stage of mourning and the final separation from the loss (the 'revenge' stage) with artistic expression, and suggests that in the final stages of grief, the enactment of 'revenge' against the loss, or the subject of the trauma, must involve an 'act' or a 'process' that 'must be publicly i.e. symbolically articulated after *Trauerarbeit*. Thus, after Mourning comes Revenge.'³⁷⁵

Considering these points, I would suggest that the grief surrounding Sarah Kane scholarship needs identifying and shifting. A prolonging of grief, and a risk of being stuck in its early cycles, leads to a depression which can quickly become destructive and paralysing. By acknowledging a pattern of mourning and being aware of the likelihood of 'revenge' against the lost object/subject, we can be alert to the potential for a complete rejection and critique of her work and life that may result (if not carefully analysed) in a complete 'trashing' of earlier opinions and a backlash against its inclusion in the canon or on our theatre stages. If one notes Aleks Sierz's comments

³⁷⁴ Pollock analyses this further in relation to depression: She discusses how 'depression follows a similar path' but it is different in that: 'in depression, the ego internalises the loss and the anger associated with the violence of loss. Directed at the ego itself, this can result in extreme situations of violence against the ego: suicide' arguing that 'remaining trapped in incomplete mourning [...] (is) to degrade and devalue the ego, to allow oneself to remain the victim' whereas 'to mourn the loss, is to examine the meaning of what is felt as lost, and to free the creative subject for action – for a future escaping entrapment within a depressing past (involves) [...] separating it off from oneself and refusing [...] to feel responsible for what has been inflicted.' *ibid.*, p.189.

³⁷⁵ Pollock's discussion was in relation to Lubaina Hamid's exhibition entitled *Revenge* and is quoting Himid in stating that 'After Mourning comes Revenge'.

in a 2005 interview with Saunders on his own changing response to Kane, there are indications that the 'revenge' process may already be in motion:

Well, the Saint Sarah thing was brought home to me in March 2003 when I went to the Sarah Kane symposium [...] in Berlin. At the airport I saw Graham Whybrow and James MacDonald, the two apostles of Kanedom, and when I got to the theatre, it was full of young women with short hair dressed in black – and I thought, 'yes, it must be Easter because the pilgrims are gathering at the shrine of Saint Sarah.' [...]. Dominic Dromgoole made a good point when he said, 'the only problem with Sarah, in my view, is that I'm not sure she's a natural writer' and I can understand that perfectly [...] if you're going to criticise her work I think that you have to look at the writing itself. I did over-praise her when it mattered, when her work was in danger of being censored in the mid-1990s. However, since then I have reassessed some of her plays.³⁷⁶

Comments such as 'I did over-praise her when it mattered' make Sierz an unreliable critic of Kane's plays. My concern as a scholar and theatre-maker in recognising a process of grief in the analysis of her work is to ensure that we can find ways of breaking through the process, and its patterns, and bring other energies, influences and methods of assessing her work to bear. It is time to move beyond the Tinker-Sierzian discourse and take the journey elsewhere, thus enabling Kane's work to be seen in its own right, and to be staged in its contemporary contexts, without the burden of a one-eyed 'History'.

To do so, it is important to recognise that in addition to the mourning processes from her suicide, that there are traces of grief in the narratives around Sarah Kane prior to her death, and that many of them are locatable in the reviews of *Blasted*. The key feature of grief manifested in those reviews was anger, and I would suggest that the

³⁷⁶ 'Interview with Aleks Sierz', in Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., p. 124.

source for this is Jack Tinker – a man who was still grieving for the loss of his daughter Charlotte, who died in 1990.³⁷⁷

Famed for his ritual of churning out a 1,000-word review immediately on the evening of the first night, for it to hit the press the next morning, Jack Tinker was reportedly so outraged by the opening night of *Blasted* that he telephoned his response through to the editor of the *Daily Mail* ‘from a call-box across the road from the theatre’ during the interval, and completed it, again with a telephone call immediately after. The damning phrase from these phone calls – ‘this disgusting feast of filth’ – has become infamous, and has left a vitriolic and destructive legacy.³⁷⁸ Anne Mayer’s observation of this moment is telling in what it reveals about the power of Tinker as a catalyst for the subsequent brouhaha:

Pre mobile phones, the nearest phone was the red box immediately outside the theatre. Jack Tinker of the *Daily Mail* was overheard by Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph*, waiting to use the phone, as he phoned in his ‘Disgusting feast of filth’ review [...]. Charles rushed back into the theatre to use the phone in my office. Within half an hour two photographers appeared at the cast party looking for Sarah. She was there but we all said she had left. My home phone was ringing off the hook when I got home at midnight and the next morning I found a journalist crouched under my desk. Stephen, who was in New York, flew home that day, and by the time he got back the BBC Outside Broadcast van was parked in the alleyway, where it remained for two weeks.³⁷⁹

Tinker was a highly influential theatre reviewer, and is generally regarded as the ‘top dog’, the ‘alpha male’ of theatre journalism in his day. In his posthumous biography of Tinker, Inverne states:

³⁷⁷ S. Morley/D. Lister, ‘Obituary: Jack Tinker’, *Independent*, 29 October 1996.

³⁷⁸ ‘Stephen Daldry’ in J. Inverne, *Jack Tinker: A Life in Review*, London, Oberon Books, 1997, pp. 120-121. Also, Tinker in Inverne, loc. cit., pp. 188-189.

³⁷⁹ Little and McLaughlin, *The Royal Court Theatre*, op. cit., p. 306. Anne Mayer was Head of Press at the Royal Court Theatre in 1995.

When he died suddenly in 1996 at the age of 58, his death was felt throughout the world of showbusiness. The West End in particular knew that a friend and ally had been lost forever. Many theatres dimmed their lights as a mark of respect [...]. Performances of *Cats*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Les Misérables* were dedicated to his memory, and a memorial service [...] was packed fit to burst with celebrities, friends, relations and members of Jack's wider family of *Daily Mail* readers from across the country.³⁸⁰

The reference to the 'family of *Daily Mail* readers' indicates something of the 'tribal' nature of Tinker's circle, and it is not a 'family' that I or many other feminist and queer theatre-makers would readily feel connected to. For many young theatre-makers of Sarah Kane's generation, fresh out of articulate, engaged and politicised university departments, confident in our ability to debate, challenge and 'bring in the new', it was easy to overlook the power of a man like Tinker with his predilection for light entertainment, and cosy familiarity with the heart of Middle England. In fact, I think it's fair to say, many of us would regard him as someone vaguely risible, and certainly a man whose values and aestheticism were at odds with, and not particularly relevant to, the world we were creating theatre for. Whilst his reviews may have the power to stop a West End run, his views on theatre rarely accorded with the world of our outer experiences, nor arguably, the world of our inner visions. However, in the narrow but highly competitive, lucrative and patriarchal system of London theatre, he was a man of power.

The London Theatre is first and foremost an 'industry' whose economy is largely dependent on audiences generated by media reviews commercially, and also on the advice of the intellectual hierarchy of 'approved innovators' amongst its chosen

³⁸⁰ Inverne, op. cit., p. x.iii.

directors and producers in key venues such as the Royal Court. These are validated by the 'thinking critics', and to a small measure, scholarly opinion. It is a largely conservative operation, riddled with gender, race, age and class imbalances. Tinker's power in this media operation of this system was absolute, and his influence on the press pack of first night reviewers, contagious. As Inverne comments:

He was a veteran first-nighter whose verdict was eagerly awaited, or feared, next morning [...]. His articles are shot through with wit and vigour, and never less than entertaining.³⁸¹

Inverne later continues:

Much of Jack's writing is concerned with preserving a state of balance in the theatre, so that the entire spectrum has room to flourish [...]. He unleashed a dazzling barrage of offensive and defensive manoeuvres to keep his beloved theatre on an even path of progress. Passionately protective of the critic's right to express his honestly held opinions, he was sensitive to the proper limitations of that privilege. Balance, balance, in all things balance [...] sometimes amused by the changes in the theatre world, often encouraged, occasionally angered. One thing was certain – if anything threatened to affect the sanctity of British theatre, his piercing gaze would be turned upon it. Hence the new depths plumbed by Sarah Kane at the Royal Court with *Blasted* provoked his wrath (and how!)³⁸²

The relish of that additional 'and how!' belies a hostility to Sarah Kane amongst Tinker's peers in light of the critic's damning assessment of her work. As noted by Mary Luckhurst, and discussed in the overview section, it set a tone for a pack with a mentality not unlike a set of rabid dogs, and the 'barrage of offence' heaped on Kane in the days following the opening night left her hiding under a desk in the Royal Court – more the actions of a scared child, than an 'enfant terrible'.³⁸³ It is hard to see how Tinker's reaction to *Blasted* was 'balanced'. The dynamics of group power within the middle-aged, white male journalists present in the auditorium that night were

³⁸¹ Inverne, op. cit., pp. xiii-xiv.

³⁸² *ibid.*, p. xvii.

³⁸³ Luckhurst, *Theatre and Celebrity*, loc. cit., pp. 109-110.

stronger, it seems, than the individual agency of any one member present, a point indicated later by Michael Billington in his disgust at his own reaction. As Saunders notes, Billington retracted his earlier condemnation of the play in 2001 saying 'I deplored the tone with which I reviewed it, which was one of lofty derision.'³⁸⁴

The reaction to *Blasted* was essentially that of a 'witch-hunt.'³⁸⁵ The witch-hunt-like nature of the critics' reactions is borne out by the language used in their reviews – language which frequently suggests that they had no control over the events they were witnessing and that they felt bodily and psychically attacked by the play. Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph* described it as 'this nauseating dog's breakfast of a play'; Kate Kellaway, in the *Guardian* reported, 'it made me feel sick and giggly with shock', and Paul Taylor of the *Independent* commented that:

Sitting through *Blasted* is a little like having your face rammed into an overflowing ash tray, just for starters, and then having your whole head held down in a bucket of offal.³⁸⁶

Michael Billington of the *Guardian* described the end scene with a focus on Ian thus:

by the time the blinded, hungry hack is reduced to digging up the floorboards to devour a dead baby (I did warn you), we have supped so full of horrors that we are reduced to bombed-out indifference.³⁸⁷

The title of Billington's review, 'The Good Fairies Desert the Court of the Absurd' is notable for its child-like and superstitious referencing and imagery suggesting that

³⁸⁴ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 9.

³⁸⁵ Inverne, loc. cit., p. 120.

³⁸⁶ Spencer and Taylor are both quoted in W.C. Boles, *The Argumentative Theatre of Joe Penhall*, North Carolina, McFarland and Company Inc. Publishers, 2011, p.18. K. Kellaway, 'Throwing Out the Blasted hatred bag. THE DESIRE TO SHOCK is not enough says Kate Kellaway', *Guardian*, 22 January 1995, p. 009.

³⁸⁷ M. Billington, 'The Good Fairies Desert the Court of the Absurd', *Guardian*, 20 January 1995, p. 022.

spectators were supernaturally changed by witnessing *Blasted* were common. Take, for example, Tinker's comment:

Here, our hero not only loses his eyes after being severely raped, his torturer munches on them before our own eyes which by now are standing out unbidden on stalks.³⁸⁸

Fears relating to feelings of 'being possessed' in some way found expression in anxiety over cultural taboos. Billington's listing of 'atrocities' contain:

continuous scenes of masturbation, fellatio, frottage, micturition, defecation – ah those old familiar faeces! – homosexual rape, eye-gouging and cannibalism.³⁸⁹

This listing has been a repeated feature of many reviews on *Blasted*, and the pattern and tone continued with reviews for *Cleansed*, blurring distinction between the content of the plays. Note Jackie McGlone's review in the *Scotsman*:

Masturbation. Fellatio. Frottage. Eye Gouging. Micturition. Defecation. Sex Changes. Heroin Abuse. Cannibalism. Serial Amputations. Homosexual Rape. Sarah Kane: A Nice Girl Really.³⁹⁰

Within this outrage is a distaste for bodily functions and an anxiety about secretions or activities that threaten to overflow and overwhelm or take possession of the watcher.³⁹¹ Similar fears can be seen in the British media reviewers' responses to Tracey Emin's *My Bed*, which exhibited in London in 1998. Abjection and disgust were central to both sets of reviewers' complaints in ways that disregarded the aesthetic

³⁸⁸ Inverne, loc. cit., p. 188.

³⁸⁹ Billington, 'The Good Fairies', op.cit. Descriptions of Ian's defecation brought reductive humour and child-like language to the fore – for example, Jonathan Miller's comment that 'Poor Ian has to do his poo on stage' as the Royal Court is short of lavatories A. Sierz, 'The element that most outrages; Morality, Censorship and Sarah Kane's *Blasted*', In-Yer-Face Theatre, [website], 2001.

³⁹⁰ J. McGlone, 'Masturbation. Fellatio. Frottage. Eye Gouging. Micturition. Defecation. Sex Changes. Heroin Abuse. Cannibalism. Serial Amputations. Homosexual Rape. Sarah Kane: A Nice Girl Really', *Scotsman (Festival Supplement Edition)*, 11 August 1998, p. 4.

³⁹¹ D. Cherry, 'On the Move: *My Bed*, 1998 to 1999', in M. Merck and C. Townsend (eds.), *The Art of Tracey Emin*, London, Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002, pp. 134-154, this quote, pp. 144-145. Cherry notes that reviewers in other countries did not share the London media's hysteria over Emin's work. I discuss the similarity of the British media's response to Emin's and Kane's work, locating it as gendered, misogynist and political, in more depth in my Master's Thesis. Kane, MA Thesis, 2008.

subtlety and political intentions of the works. As Deborah Cherry notes, reviews of Emin's work were fuelled by 'associations of *My Bed* with an aesthetics of dirt and disgust' and yet:

My Bed [...] invites ambivalent and contradictory responses. The linen is both disordered and smoothed, bright white and stained; beside the soiled items are pristine objects such as the glistening clear glass of the vodka bottles. Encountered in daily life, all these items exude distinctive and powerful smells: sweaty feet, stinky ashtrays, stale bodily fluids. But *My Bed* emits no strong odour. Indeed it does not smell at all. Nevertheless, a stink metaphor, already in circulation, drifted around *My Bed*.

A fear of the abject is a common feature of witch-hunts and is associated with the feminine or with women. Transgender and transsexual people also often experience others projecting expressions of disgust and nausea onto them, as Kate Bornstein writes:

That's what gender outlaws do: our mere presence is often enough to make people sick. Take that great scene in *The Crying Game*. You know the scene: the one that got all the attention – the one you weren't supposed to talk about? The one with the (gasp) full penile nudity – on the body of what appeared to be a woman! To me, the telling aspect of the scene is not so much the revelation of the person as transgendered, as much as it was the nausea and the vomiting by the guy who did the discovering. That's a fairly strong reaction in any language, any culture. Many transgendered people will tell you that's an all-too accurate reaction; one usually followed [...] by a physical attack on the transgendered person. With all the talk centring on the movie at the time of its release, no-one focused on the issue of revulsion. I think no-one brought it up because it would draw focus to the other side of revulsion: desire.³⁹²

To apply Kristeva's principles, the reviewers of *Blasted*, in their reports of nausea, had in their own way touched the skin on the surface of the milk, and they spat out their disgust and rage in the reviews like angry toddlers:

I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me

³⁹² K. Bornstein, 'Gender Terror, Gender Rage', in Stryker and Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader*, op. cit., p. 237.

from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire. 'I' do not want to listen. 'I' do not assimilate it, 'I' expel it. But since food is not an 'other' for 'me', who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*.³⁹³

The general suggestion in the reviewers' comments was the spectators were victims of the play – that Sarah Kane had something mysterious that she was trying to do to them, an agenda that was 'morally depraved' yet which couldn't be pinpointed. Tinker concludes his review with a withering note, 'Luckily for all of us, the play becomes so risible the only thing to do is laugh'.³⁹⁴ His response was clearly one of angry, overwhelmed, silent panic and cold hysteria.

The presence of witch-hunt dynamics around the opening night of *Blasted* bears some relevance to grief and mourning. In her anthropological study, 'Witchcraft, Grief and the Ambivalence of Emotions', Michele Stephen makes a compelling argument that belief systems of sorcery and witchcraft amongst certain Balinese and Mekeo groups can be related to experiences of bereavement. She discusses these within the specific frame of Klein's analysis of 'the relationship between bereavement, witchcraft and the mother imago' and identifies an intensification of accusations of sorcery and witchcraft to a specific stage in the mourning process, identified by Klein where the loss of the loved one:

reactivates infantile persecutory and paranoid fears wherein the child splits the mother-figure into two radically-opposed figures: *the good mother*, the source of all satisfactions and pleasure and *the bad mother*, the prototype of everything bad and destructive. The child's hatred and rage towards the bad mother figure yield paranoid fears of her terrible retaliation. According to Klein, this devouring, destructive, mother imago is reactivated at unconscious

³⁹³ J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, New York and Chichester, Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 3. First published in France as *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur* by Editions du Seuil in 1980.

³⁹⁴ Inverne, op. cit., p. 189.

levels in adult mourning, and I shall argue, forms the basis of the cultural image of the witch, regardless of the gender of persons so accused.³⁹⁵

I therefore return to my earlier suggestion that the witch-hunt around the opening night of *Blasted* was precipitated by Jack Tinker as a direct response to his own processes of mourning for his 23-year old daughter Charlotte. Such a premise is not inconceivable when one looks more carefully at his actions. His response to the first half of the play was highly emotional; the urgency with which he put through the calls to his editor to 'let off steam' indicates a lack of professional control. I would argue they were a cry for help to an old friend.³⁹⁶ Tinker after all was famed for his quick writing, and his review was always looked to first – he did not need to telephone. If he had been formulating a rational response, his usual dry, ascerbic wit could have made his points clearly enough known after the performance. There is something of a man in panic about those phone calls – a man whose body and mind perhaps could not cope with holding a pen or typing into a keyboard at that moment – nor perhaps able to process his responses to what he had witnessed alone afterwards. His dash to the phone box outside the theatre and the aggression of his contempt for the work indicate a 'fight or flight' response. The anger is that of a depressed man, a man unable to control his own melancholia and despair in the situation he was in.

³⁹⁵ M. Stephen, 'Witchcraft, Grief and the Ambivalence of Emotions', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 26, no. 3, August 1999, pp. 711-737.

³⁹⁶ Inverne, loc. cit, p. xi.

Tinker wrote about his daughter's death originally in an article for the *Independent* in August 1994, and this was reprinted by the *Daily Mail* after his death.³⁹⁷ It is an honest and moving account of a parent's grief, and is the last document in the Inverne book.

Tinker writes that it is 'against all reason' but 'that is the guilt, which never seems to go: that she died without me having the slightest premonition'.³⁹⁸ He describes how every detail on hearing of her death 'stands out so clearly in my memory – as if the sudden shock and subsequent grief have etched it there in bold relief for ever'.³⁹⁹ Charlotte, who 'from childhood [...] had been subject to petit mal and asthma' died having drowned in the bath of an epileptic attack.⁴⁰⁰

For a grieving man who presumably had witnessed his daughter's attacks of petit mal over the years, and lived with the imagined image of her death in the bath, witnessing a performance on stage of an actress of a similar age experiencing fits in the presence of a middle-aged man (journalist), and her linking the experience of them to masturbation, must have been disconcerting:

Cate. It's like that when I have a fit...
The world don't exist, not like this.
Looks the same, but –
Time slows down.
A dream I get stuck in, can't do nothing about it.
One time –

Ian. Make love to me.

Cate. Blocks out everything else.
Once –

Ian. [I'll] Make love to you.

Cate. It's like that when I touch myself.

³⁹⁷ 'Jack Tinker on his Daughter's Death', Inverne, op. cit., pp. 268-270.

³⁹⁸ *ibid.* p. 268.

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*

*Ian is embarrassed.*⁴⁰¹

Tinker's article was written for the *Independent* six months before *Blasted* opened, and four years and a half years after his daughter died. By his own admission, he was still working through the mourning process, and conveys an idea that time has stood still – 'Time, in fact, is no such thing'.⁴⁰² It is possible that the compressions and altered perceptions of time in the formal structures of *Blasted* could prove disruptive to a man whose own time-frames were disrupted by grief. He describes how he rejected the idea of 'grief therapy' preferring to mourn his daughter privately, finally accepting an offer of solace from his friend Patric Walker with whom he could find 'seclusion impossible amongst a family in which each member is having to come to terms with his or her own personal sorrow'.⁴⁰³ There is something of isolation in his grieving and an indication that he was going through it alone, and largely unsupported. Like many homosexual men of his generation, Tinker had married and had children (subsequently grandchildren), before 'coming out' after changes to the legislation in 1967, and divorcing to live openly as a gay man.⁴⁰⁴ There is no indication of a partner around to support him through his loss, and the description is one of a man whose public life has continued as before but whose inner life has in many ways stopped:

the overwhelming kindness of friends and strangers [...] helped to deaden the worst of the pain.⁴⁰⁵

His comments on the advice he 'carries like a talisman ever since and which I always pass onto parents [...] "Don't look on it as a life interrupted"'⁴⁰⁶ becomes strangely

⁴⁰¹ Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁴⁰² Inverne, loc. cit., p. 269.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Morley/Lister, 'Obituary: Jack Tinker', *Independent*.

⁴⁰⁵ Inverne, loc. cit., p. 269.

chilling when one begins to reflect on the grief experienced by Sarah Kane's parents four years later when she died at the age of 28 – the age Charlotte Tinker would have been had she lived when *Blasted* first opened:

Of course, every parent must sooner or later realise that their children are only on loan and learn to let go.⁴⁰⁷

I believe that when Jack Tinker witnessed the opening night of *Blasted*, he was still very much in the early stages of grieving for his daughter, and that his frozen inner world was severely disrupted and distressed by the play. I believe this was largely located in certain parallels to Charlotte's life played out in the character of Cate, and in his witnessing perhaps of uncomfortable and frightening mirrors to his own presence as a middle-aged male journalist, and to inner detachment, as presented on the stage by Ian. I believe that moments such as Ian eating the dead baby, and Cate's changing status from what he erroneously describes as an 'under-aged and mentally-retarded girl' to an independent, surviving, woman, provoked an unusually violent and uncontrolled response to the material.⁴⁰⁸

I suggest that the infantile rage of the early stages of grief broke through and were expressed by Tinker in spite of himself. His status as an alpha male meant that the pack of reporters around him reacted with similar 'hysteria' and infantile, puerile, vitriol, in many ways retreating to a place of collective toddler rage and simplistic, anally-focused creativity in their writing on the work – 'poor Ian doing a poo'.⁴⁰⁹ For a man who six months earlier had believed himself to be over the worst of his grief,

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 270.

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Inverne, 'This disgusting', loc. cit., p. 188.

⁴⁰⁹ Sierz, 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' [website].

possibly even ready to publically express the 'revenge' stage of after-mourning, and the triumph of the ego in overcoming the loss (as his comments on finding peace and seclusion with Patric Walker suggest); the violence of his response to *Blasted* would suggest that he was nowhere near past grieving for his daughter.⁴¹⁰ He acknowledges that he is still deep in the grieving process at the end of his article on her death:

I have learned to accept hers as a life complete. Looked at like that, I can have no happier last memory. Sometimes. Of course, the trick simply doesn't work.⁴¹¹

The final memory referred to of his daughter was of them lunching together to celebrate her 'having secured the highly-responsible social services job she had set her heart on'.⁴¹² The emphasis on 'highly-responsible' reflects a value judgement of social worth, and this valuing of his daughter is underscored by his reference to the moment he finally broke down in grief:

in the end, it was the coroner's kindness, his genuinely touching words about a *useful* young life cut short, which caused me to break down for the very first time since it happened [...]. I had to be helped from the court. (Emphasis mine).⁴¹³

Set this narrative of the 'useful' and 'highly-responsible' young life lost (Charlotte) against the '23-year-old' writer appearing to know 'no bounds of decency' (Sarah), and there is a clear example of the 'good mother/bad mother' split outlined by Klein and noted as the regressive childlike feature typical of early grief.⁴¹⁴ There is also, very possibly, a premature and displaced form of public revenge targeting Sarah Kane in the

⁴¹⁰ He writes in August 1994, 'I was given that healing peace and seclusion [...] and suddenly it seemed to make the first real sense since I had come home on that awful night'. Inverne, loc. cit., p. 269.

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*, loc. cit., p. 270.

⁴¹² *ibid.*

⁴¹³ *ibid.*, loc. cit. p. 269.

⁴¹⁴ 'For utterly and entirely disgusted I was by a play which appears to know no bounds of decency, yet has no message to convey by way of excuse. Why the 23-year-old Sarah Kane chose to write it is her affair. [...] As a piece of drama, it is utterly without dramatic merit. Ms Kane merely creates her own lawless environment, and then allows her three characters to behave with utmost bestiality to each other as a result of it'. Tinker, 'This disgusting', loc. cit., p. 188.

place of his dead daughter, from whom he cannot yet separate. Blind, like Lear, in the pain of his madness, he screams at 'the *Blasted* heath'.⁴¹⁵

Despite his belief that he has 'finally been driven into the arms of 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells', Tinker's response to *Blasted* was clearly highly personal and emotional, and not really anything to do with a considered critical judgement or a moral code of what content should or should not be explored on stage. Having exorcised some of his demons through the collective witch-hunting of Sarah Kane, and secured the boundaries that allowed him to retain that famous 'balance, balance in all things', we see Tinker return to the Royal Court the following year to review Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*.⁴¹⁶ Were one to believe that Tinker's response to *Blasted* was considered and rational, his rage expressing a coherent moral position on 'decency' in the theatre; one might expect, by extension of logic, that *Shopping and Fucking* with its similarly visceral examination of gender, sex, violence, vulnerability, relationships, language and capitalism, would have received a similar response to *Blasted*. It did not – at least not from Tinker:

Speaking of blood and guts, those blessed with iron-lined stomachs and a strong social conscience should hurry to the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs [...]. There, a compelling new voice is to be heard [...]. It is a shocker in every sense of the word. But whereas I led the chorus of disapproval when the Royal Court staged Sarah Kane's now notorious *Blasted*, I can only applaud its courage in staging this dangerous, and to some, offensive work.⁴¹⁷

In his testament to Tinker in the Inverne book, Stephen Daldry sets his descriptions of Tinker's reviewing of both *Blasted* and *Shopping and Fucking* coolly side-by-side. The

⁴¹⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁴¹⁶ M. Ravenhill, 'Shopping and Fucking', in *Plays:1*, London, Methuen Drama, 2001.

⁴¹⁷ J. Tinker, 'A compelling new voice to be heard...', *Daily Mail*, 4 October 1996, in Inverne, pp. 119-120.

detachment of this is curiously effective at underscoring the oddness of the situation, and highlights that there was more sitting under the extremism of response to *Blasted* than is discussed. The repetition of the *Blasted* story is possibly to do with similar misgivings and unanswered questions about the media hysteria. As Daldry notes, Tinker's review of the Ravenhill play was 'the last thing he ever reviewed at the Royal Court' and he died some weeks after. Cryptically, and with some quiet reproach perhaps, Daldry concludes: 'None of us will ever forget this unique critic, both larger and smaller than life.'⁴¹⁸

One person who had not forgotten Jack Tinker, of course, was Kane, and two years after his death she released *Cleansed* in which the central figure, named Tinker, oversees an institution of incarceration, watching, correction, mutilation, rape, torture and economic exploitation. Tinker the critic would never review this work, but whilst his body was now dead and gone, his ghost, and the memory of the witch-hunt was still clearly alive in Kane's memory and imagination, likewise the institutions and hierarchies of power that he represented.

In the following chapter I consider the play of *Blasted* in more depth, weaving the fabric further towards an appreciation of the play as a feminist text, and one that establishes a framework for deeper considerations of gender binaries and for an interrogation of heteronormativity in Kane's later plays.

⁴¹⁸ Inverne, loc. cit, p. 120.

4. Gender, Fracture and the Architecture of *Blasted*⁴¹⁹

In the opening of this section, I reflect on Kane's writing processes and on the importance of recognising the spaces and fractures in her texts. I then turn to an analysis of formal structure in her work, before focusing on the significance of architecture in *Blasted*, and its relationship to embodiment, language and gender politics.

It has often been asserted that Kane's characters have no history, no social placing or context to refer to, unlike those in social realist drama.⁴²⁰ I disagree on the whole with this premise, and would argue that in the case of both *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, the characters are locatable in a mediated geography and time through scenography, through language and through relationship onstage (dynamic). The challenge to the audience is not that the characters lack context or 'linear narrative', rather that they are characters situated in a state of flux; flux is arguably both within and beyond context, eternally here and forever already gone (*déjà vu*). Kane's plays are noted for their intensity, and the mediation of geography and time shifts with energy and complexity, challenging and enervating the reader, audience, actor and director in a dynamic quest for meaning.

⁴¹⁹ The bulk of this chapter has been disseminated in the public domain. It was presented on two separate occasions; firstly as a 90-minute seminar and secondly as a 30-minute conference paper. N. Kane, 'Gender, Fracture and the Architecture of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*', *Research Seminar Series*, Drama Department, School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield, UK, 8 June 2011 and also, the *English Department Postgraduate Researcher Conference*, English Department, School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield, UK. 9 June 2011.

⁴²⁰ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit. pp. 8-12.

Kane's scripts are not empty of meaning. Nor are they the result of an ascetic application of select words to the empty space of the page. They are in fact the opposite. As Kane herself notes in her discussion of writing *Blasted*, the sparse, succinct, immediacy of her dialogues results from a long process of careful crafting, and a pattern of immersion and selection:

The first draft was about three times as long as what's there now and I don't think there's a single word in the first draft that is in the final draft, because I suppose what I was writing was sub-text – great reams of it. Everyone having these huge monologues.⁴²¹

In the 1998 interview with Dan Rebellato at Royal Holloway College, she said:

I don't like writing things you don't really need, and my favourite exercise is cutting – cut, cut, cut!⁴²²

Kane's plays are therefore the precisely-honed fragments of a much wider set of stories which sit underneath – invisible, deleted, out-of-reach but existing in the spaces and still, in their erasure, carrying import, meaning and 'sub-text'. The page, far from being empty or cool, is a space that has had energy, stories, dialogue and actions thrown at it; it is fat with dynamic. Only after Kane removed and cut what she did not need, to shape the selection of words she chose, did the definitive text emerge. Arguably, her technical processes are filmic – what we read is 'the final edit'. The space of the page through such engagement is, thus, charged. It is this that gives Kane's theatre a disconcerting – sometimes uncanny (*unheimlich*) – quality.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁴²² 'Interview with Sarah Kane', [audio-recording], 1998.

⁴²³ S. Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Uncanny*, London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, New Delhi, Auckland, Rosebank, Penguin, 2003, pp. 121-162. First published as *Das Unheimliche* in *Imago* 5 (5-6) in 1919. 'among the various shades of meaning that are recorded for the word *heimlich* there is one in which it merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*. As witness the passage from Gutzkow: 'We call that *unheimlich*: you call it *heimlich*.' This reminds us that this word *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory,

When we engage with Kane's text as actors or directors, the uncanny is made manifest, and meaning unfolds and opens unexpectedly in rehearsal. This is true, to a lesser or greater extent, with most production processes. In my experience of working on *Cleansed* with young people, however, I would assert that Kane's writing brings unanticipated and sometimes disruptive elements into play that are not easy to foresee. In engaging with the dynamics and the relationships 'between' characters, readings and inferences not immediately visible to the silent, literary reader, become apparent.

This makes Kane's work challenging, interesting and inherently disruptive to a British theatre that is still largely preoccupied with language and action. As James MacDonald notes in an interview for the *Independent* during the first run of *Cleansed*:

Words are only a third of the play. The bulk of the meaning is carried through the imagery. That's incredibly rare for a British playwright.⁴²⁴

If words constitute 'a third of the play', and 'imagery' carries the '*bulk* of the meaning' (a second third, *italics mine*), is there arguably a third site of 'meaning' located in Kane's construction of the text? I argue that there is, and that it is to be found in the spaces left by Kane's edit. I propose that an honouring of, an instinctive 'listening' to or sensing of *that* which exists *in absentia*, is important

but very different from each other – the one relating to what is familiar and comfortable, the other to what is concealed and kept hidden... the term 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open. p. 132.

⁴²⁴ J. Christopher, 'Rat with hand exits stage left', *Independent*, 4 May 1998, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/rat-with-hand-exits-stage-left-1161442.html>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

when approaching Kane's work. I would go further and argue that for actors and directors, it is essential to find meaning from the gaps in the text. For it is in attempting to realise the script with its fractures and deletions, that the unexpected and sometimes uncontrollable occurs in rehearsal – because space can be vast and unfathomable, and history conceals more than we perhaps realise. It is here that actors and directors find what the production means for them, and will, possibly mean for an audience.

I would like to consider architecture at this point in relation to Irigarayan scholarship. When we 'build' or 'construct' a set, particularly one that conveys a Naturalist interior (as the set design for *Blasted* frequently does), we are working with architectures that mirror the spaces, frames, fixtures and fittings of the world beyond the stage. Yet architecture, as Irigaray notes in her November 2000 address to the International Architectural Association, is not neutral. It encodes gender in its arrangements, and conventionally, in the construction of dwelling places, prioritises survival over relational needs in its organisation of space.⁴²⁵ This emphasis on survival results in family or partnership dwelling-places being built around conventional features of communality (shared dining room, shared adult bedroom, shared kitchen): the traditional 'hearth'. This, she argues, effects a sublimation of the individual to the group through an enforced being-ness with another or others. In gender terms, Irigaray argues that this arrangement forces individuals into a conflictual and destructive 'oneness' that is essentially masculine (self-same), reinforcing patriarchal control. It does not allow either partner (or

⁴²⁵ L. Irigaray, 'How can we live together in a lasting way? Address to the International Architectural Association, November 2000', in *Key Writings*, 2004, pp. 123-133.

other family members) to develop their own subjectivity or desires through use of space and it does not allow for 'difference' nor for 'differentiated relationships' between people:

Intimacy, familiarity and proximity do not exist only through living alongside one another and sharing the same space. On the contrary, that often leads to their destruction. The intimate and familiar are first confused with being in the mother, being with the mother, and dwelling in the family home [...] (resulting) in an infantile need for undifferentiation.⁴²⁶

In her address, Irigaray advocates a new model of architectural development for shared living, which moves away from the 'traditional hearth' and prioritises relational concerns through separate but connected dwellings:

Then each can keep their own economy, and thus coexistence is possible in difference(s).⁴²⁷

Such dwellings would be constructed with consideration of:

all perceptions: visual, but also tactile, auditory, olfactory, gustatory [...] (with concern for) [...] a culture of breathing [...] a place for nature [...] a place of intimacy with oneself.⁴²⁸

She advocates new models of construction that allowed for sexuate difference, and the development of intimacy through having the space to develop ones' own 'self-affection', leading to ones' 'being-in-relation' to the other: a 'being-two' rather than 'being one':

The point is important to save and lay out the space for living together: the space for each one and the space between the two.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ In discussion with Andrea Wheeler reproduced in *Conversations*, Irigaray usefully defines 'Undifferentiated' thus: 'Undifferentiated can be endowed with at least a double signification: without difference and indifferent, that is to say, both unimportant and awakening no feeling, perhaps not even any specific mood.' Irigaray, *Conversations*, op. cit., p. 56.

⁴²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴²⁹ *ibid.*

Irigaray's analysis of conventional dwelling spaces within patriarchy extend usefully to a consideration of the gender politics of *Blasted*. In the script, Kane constructs a hotel room centrally occupied by a double-bed, shared bathroom and drinks cabinet providing sustenance. The hotel room marks (and appears to maintain) a unity of place, dominated initially by an older man, Ian, whose language and physicality mark the territory of the room as being one of white, patriarchal, economically-comfortable dominance. The initial ordering of the room as self-same with Ian is offset by the female figure of Cate whose language and action initially centre around him at a loss to herself. The alignment of Ian with the space also receives colonial inflection through the unseen presence of the room-service waiter who is abused (racially) for his black ethnicity, and (given his role in 'serving' Ian) also for his class position. The space of the stage, with its unity of place, represents a communal world, self-same with Ian. In this space, Cate and the room-service waiter can only exist in alterity or sublimation; in an enforced relationship *with*, not a loving, 'reciprocal' or mutually respectful *relation-to* Ian. It appears impossible for Ian to consider the space or the people around him as anything other than his; as objects to possess, dominate and control. Thus Act 1 presents us with a set of relations within a frame embodied by Ian that:

does not concern itself with a quantitative difference, which somehow remains in sameness and maintains relations in a parental or hierarchical dimension, and even in a sadomasochistic bond.⁴³⁰

With a deft structuring, cogniscent of the agency of the oppressed at resisting sadism, and with an active desire to 'save' and not destroy her characters, nor keep

⁴³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 68.

them trapped forever in a Sartrean hell without exit, Kane articulates a space for both Cate and the room-service waiter in the offstage.⁴³¹ In enabling each to retreat to or exist in this offstage space at points, she indicates the possibility of 'leaving a monosexual culture.'⁴³²

In her recognition of the political potential of the offstage, Kane extends and develops a dramaturgical strategy identifiable in the work of Irish women playwrights such as Anne Devlin who creates a:

transgressive, radical refigured realism of discontinuity [...], a form in flux, which can break the certainties of a saturated, outmoded realism and question its ideologies, thus opening up wider and transformable rooms of history, identity and experience.⁴³³

A number of commentators in the Sihra anthology locate this as a conscious female authoring strategy which intervenes on behalf of the female character (and playwright) to effect a shift and change in the patriarchal stage frame, thus releasing a *cailleach* or 'hag' energy – 'the despised, left-out, repressed female energy'.⁴³⁴ It offers opportunity for the audience/reader to consider a change in the theatrical picture presented to them and by extension, arguably, to reflect on the potential of such changes in relation to their own lives:

In order to meet with the other as such, we have to reverse the situation: to leave our usual quotidian in order to open ourselves to the strange, the still

⁴³¹ J-P Sartre, 'No Exit', *No Exit and three other plays*, New York, Vintage International Edition, 1989. First published in Paris as *Huis Clos* in 1945.

⁴³² Irigaray, *Conversations*, loc. cit., p. 56.

⁴³³ E. Cerquoni, 'Women in Rooms: Landscapes of the Missing in Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*', in Sihra (ed.), *Women in Irish Drama*, op. cit., pp. 160-174, this quote, p. 171. See also in the Sihra anthology, A. Roche, 'Staging the Liminal in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Dún na mBan Trí Thine* (The Fort of the Fairy Women is On Fire)', pp. 175-185; M. Sihra, 'The House of Women and the Plays of Marina Carr', pp. 201-218; and C. Leeney, 'The Space Outside: Images of Women in Plays by Eva Gore-Booth and Dorothy Macardle', pp. 55-68.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.*, Roche, p. 182.

unknown, the unusual and unfamiliar. We have to give precedence to the other and not to our usual world.⁴³⁵

Thus, Kane seeks a space within the rigid naturalism of her original stage setting, and indicates a possibility for an alternative model of becoming for both the man (Ian) and the woman (Cate) on her stage. To do so involves bringing the hitherto ignored and invisible world of the offstage, backstage, wings, fly towers and fly floors into play coupled with a destruction of the onstage architecture to allow 'breath' and 'nature' through.⁴³⁶ It also becomes necessary for the perception of the audience to be shifted from a primary 'visual', to encompass sound, smell, touch and taste. Whether it be evoked through Ian's 'stinking rotten lung', through the abject imagined horror of eating human flesh, through the sound of rain and running water, through the nurturing touch of being fed (feeding another) or devastating touch of being raped (raping another), this opening of the senses to a wider perception of the spaces possible beyond the dominant space of the hotel room (stage) is essential to a dismantling of the patriarchal dwelling-place and its destructive 'sameness'.

Arguably a temporal, abject and feminist challenge to the unity of place is necessary for an eventual 'being-two' and a 'being-in-relation' to be reached, and Kane sets this in motion from the start of the play. It is important to note how the

⁴³⁵ Irigaray, *Conversations*, loc. cit., p. 56.

⁴³⁶ To extend on the importance of 'hag' energy, see M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, Second Edition, London, The Women's Press, 1991. 'For women who are on the journey of radical be-ing, the lives of the witches, of the Great Hags of our hidden history are deeply entwined with our own process. As we write/live our own story, we are uncovering their history, creating Hag-ography and Hag-ology. Unlike the "saints" of Christianity, who must, by definition, be dead, Hags live. Women travelling into feminist time/space are creating Hag-ocracy, the place we govern. [...] The vehicles of our voyage may be any creative enterprise that further women's process. The point is that they should be governed by the Witch within – the Hag within'. p. 15.

unity of place operates as a liminal space in both *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, and to recognise the fracturing effect of the movement between interior spaces and exterior spaces at significant points in the action. Kane uses architecture within the scenography to contain, anchor, hold and support the reader and audience's encounter with its elements. She uses fracturing to challenge the audience and to open up the space of the stage to new possibilities. Central to this is a clear and intentional use of form, and I will look in more depth at this, now.

Recalling Kane's comment in conversation with Stephenson and Langridge, that more important than content is form, it must be noted that formal construction and its relationship to content and stage-image is rarely, if ever, discussed in Kane scholarship.⁴³⁷ It is a glaring omission, and one that inhibits understanding of her work. Her discussion in this instance was centred on the media response to *Blasted*, and she usefully analyses her theatrical structuring of the play thus:

In terms of Aristotle's Unities, the time and action are disrupted, while unity of place is retained. Which caused great offence.⁴³⁸

Retaining the Aristotelian unity of place is clearly a theatrical choice for Kane here (it is not incidental) and the geography of her works frequently retain this classical feature. It is important to consider Kane's investment in maintaining a unity of place in *Blasted* and the dramaturgical implications when the other unities are set non-classically in combination. What Kane does with unities in *Blasted* is this. She presents a unity of place, which represents a classical security for the audience. She then disrupts the unities of time and action to fluid, chaotic and jarring effect

⁴³⁷ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit., p. 130.

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, loc. cit., p. 131.

as the play unfolds. As such Kane undermines, fragments or threatens the continuity (or exclusivity) of location and the 'security' such unity of place supposedly represents. It is an incendiary combination of forms, and underlines the content of the play effectively. The effect on an audience member investing in a security of location is, however, potentially explosive.

Kane typically signposts the inevitable destabilisation of location early on through scenographic description. For this she uses naturalism both as an aesthetic and as a tactic. Stage directions introduce the reader to location by employing naturalist techniques, but they are not a reinscription of convention. Rather Kane quickly challenges our investment in the theatrical certainties of place and naturalism, presenting the reader with 'a very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive, it could be anywhere in the world.'⁴³⁹

Thus through oxymoronic juxtaposition and a precise use of language she reveals the theatrical trope of naturalism in the script to be one of artifice. It is something that the reader of the text knows, also the actor and director, but that the audience, however, does not 'read' clearly in their viewing until later on. Notably architecture features strongly in this process of deconstruction from the outset.

Having destabilised the location geographically, she quickly moors the reader back to an immediate position with a highly-visual, materially-seductive structuring of the room that is precise and micro-cosmic in detail:

⁴³⁹ Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit., p. 3.

There is a large double-bed.
A mini-bar and champagne on ice.
A telephone.
A large bouquet of flowers.
Two doors – one is the entrance from the corridor, the other leads off to the bathroom.⁴⁴⁰

In scene 2, she subsequently dismantles the cool pictorial and materialist security of the setting with 'body blows'. Hence the opening description suggests a sudden, impending, heat and the stage directions note that 'the bouquet of flowers is now ripped apart and scattered around the room'.⁴⁴¹ Whilst the action remains rooted in unity of place, the action happening off-stage brings uncertainty, and Kane evokes an uncanny atmosphere through a conjuring of invisible others, and through moments of disappearance and apparent erasure. The room-service waiter, though gendered and described physically in racist terms by Ian, is never actually seen.⁴⁴² Cate goes into the bathroom for a bath, locks the door, and apparently disappears.⁴⁴³ She re-enters from the bathroom in scene 4 'soaking wet and carrying a baby'.⁴⁴⁴ At the end of scene 2, the onstage architecture is blasted by a mortar bomb leaving 'a large hole in one of the walls, and everything [...] covered in dust which is still falling'.⁴⁴⁵

A pattern of physical deterioration in the structural unity of the room continues to the end of the play. By scene 5, the floors of the room become symbolic of earth, whilst (hyper-spatially) retaining floor-boards that can be broken and made into a

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁴² *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁴³ *ibid.* p. 38.

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 39.

graveyard cross ('Cate is burying the baby under the floor').⁴⁴⁶ The 'grave' widens in inference towards the end of the play, becoming big enough for the figure of Ian to crawl into. Finally the roof appears to give way, allowing rain that has been heard since the end of scene 1 in through and onto Ian who is now, largely 'under' the ground-level of the room.

The destabilising significance of the 'very expensive hotel room in Leeds' that could be 'anywhere in the world', finds full expression in the unfolding of time and action by the end of the play. Though the unity of place is maintained, it is left violently transformed and (literally) leaking by acts of humanity and nature committed inside and out. Suggestions of 'disappearance' through the onstage body's relationship to the architecture of the space heighten a supernatural quality pervasive in the play, and as with Harold Pinter's *Dumb Waiter*, we can find ourselves asking questions about invisibility, and whether 'somebody' is 'really there'?⁴⁴⁷ Does the room-service man actually exist? Where does Cate disappear to from the bathroom? How does she get back in? The textual image of Cate emerging soaking wet from the bathroom evokes the fairy-tale idea that she somehow disappears down the plughole in scene 2, finding the baby in some strange 'otherworld' down in the pipes.

The mystery of disappearance and reappearance nevertheless persists, and is further emphasised by the sudden presence of physical characters not previously

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁴⁷ H. Pinter, 'The Dumb Waiter' in *The Caretaker and The Dumb Waiter*, New York, Grove Publishing, 1988. First published by Eyre Methuen in 1960. See Saunders' useful discussion of this in *Love Me or Kill Me*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58.

seen, and with no obvious immediate link to the narrative of the preceding scenes.⁴⁴⁸ What do we make of the knocking ritual enacted between Ian and the ‘invisible’ soldier?⁴⁴⁹ Where does the soldier come from? Where has the baby come from? How much time has passed and what is happening to the room? The soldier’s entrance in scene signifies a violent intensification of physicality, marked in words by his possession of geographical location and by his centrality on the stage: ‘Our town now!’⁴⁵⁰ But who are the ‘we’ or ‘they’ possessing the town, and which town is it? Words fail to reassure on the stability of place; rather they mark the hotel room and the stage as a site of liminality, also of violence and destruction.

Hence increasingly, questions of disappearance become emmeshed in the architectural framework of the room itself, and prompt imaginative speculation. Imaginative speculation is necessary for the processes of staging a production, but in this case is also, notably, an inevitable consequence of the naturalism through which the reader has architecturally constructed the scene in her/his mind. Staging *Blasted* obliges the reading scenographer or director to engage with the construction of architecture and its subsequent dismantling. To not do so would involve a strong break from Kane’s text, and the erasure of many parts of action and dialogue, which would then need to be ‘fixed’. Like the deletions of Kane’s scripting processes, the holes in the hotel wall of *Blasted* support the remaining

⁴⁴⁸ Kane, *Blasted*, loc. cit., pp. 35-36.

⁴⁴⁹ Note also the use of knocking as a trope of liminal construction in Ní Dhuibhne’s work, as discussed by Roche in Sihra, op. cit., p. 179: ‘The first scene sets up the inside/outside opposition, with Leiní secure inside her house and the fairy women knocking on the door to be admitted’.

⁴⁵⁰ Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit., p. 39.

frame and need to be understood and constructed for the production to convey meaning.

The text prompts the production cast therefore to consider – which wall does the bomb blow a hole in, and what can we see through it? Is it another hotel room, like a *mise-en-abime*, a mirror of the one we're 'in', its opulence shattered by the rupture in its surface? Does it blast through to the outside, indicated by the window Ian looks through in scene 2, in which case, is wind blowing through? Is there noise from outside? And how unnerving could the reality of this be (given the room is on an upper floor)? Moreover, when Ian crawls beneath the floorboards – with his head poking out – where does the rest of his body disappear to? Is he curled foetally between the joists, or is he dangling down into the room below, about to fall at any minute?

Arguably, similar questions or visual promptings will arise or present themselves to the minds of any reader of the script, but it is those who stage the play who may consider this with more precision perhaps, and such are the questions that arise. When the human body is imagined within the architectural frame constructed by Kane, disconcerting images and associations reveal themselves, reinforcing the atmosphere of horror contained within the dialogue and actions between characters. What is clear is that the uses of architecture serve to effect a continuity and politics in the delivery of the play's content. The use of naturalist stage direction throughout serves to reinforce a precarious physicality and uneasy location of focus onstage. Unable to rest easy with a secure unity of place, and

buffeted by a disrupted unfolding of time and action full of violent exchange, questions, ambivalence and hope about the invisibility of the off-stage intensifies for the audience.

It is perhaps this presence of naturalism with its certainties removed that so 'spooked' the reviewers. That, and the inscription of the structure of the play being located clearly in the feminine:

The form and the content attempt to be one – the form is the meaning. The tension of the first half of the play, this appalling social, psychological and sexual tension, is almost a premonition of the disaster to come. And when it does come the structure fractures to allow its entry. The play collapses into one of Cate's fits.⁴⁵¹

Cate's fits, and the fracturing of the structure that they represent, are highly significant to *Blasted*. Her 'collapses' at key moments serve to 'fracture' and interrupt the action, in ways that stall or divert the dialogue in process. Her stutter affects a similar disruption. It creates a fracture in the rhythm and flow of dialogue between her and Ian throughout acts 1 and 2. Whilst Ian appears to be at an advantage through this, and seizes the opportunity to talk over and denigrate Cate further, a deeper investigation of the importance of fracturing shows how it locates itself as a source of agency for Cate.

Before examining the nature of Cate's fits, I would like to explore a moment of fracture that allows 'entry' to 'the disaster to come', but which also, effects a site of agency for Kane and for her female protagonist. Kane locates hope within Cate, and

⁴⁵¹ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit., p. 130.

signifies this in a transitional, magical, moment in act 2. Notably, the moment has clearly been created through an edit in Kane's writing, and we are left with a space that invites a question over disappearance.

It starts with an exit from the stage by Cate into the bathroom. The naturalism of the exit is supported by dialogue: '**Cate**. I'm having a bath and going home'.⁴⁵² It is also supported by stage direction, which recognises a continuity of action, Ian having previously turned one of the bath taps on:

*She goes into the bathroom, closing the door. We hear the sound of the other bath tap being turned on.*⁴⁵³

The soldier enters shortly afterwards and performs a predatory action. Attempting to smell Cate through her knickers, he enters the bathroom and, given the violent scenarios with Ian earlier, the fear is raised that the soldier may have the intention of raping her.⁴⁵⁴ The audience/reader perhaps prepare themselves for what appears to be an inevitability, compounding the rape of Cate by Ian earlier within a social realist frame. In an act of writing beauty, Kane effects an interruption to this narrative, and Cate disappears:

*The **Soldier** puts **Cate's** knickers in his pocket and goes to the bathroom.
He knocks on the door. No answer.
He tries the door. It is locked.
He forces it and goes in.
Ian waits, in a panic.
We hear the bath taps being turned off.
Ian looks out of the window.*

⁴⁵² Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴⁵³ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ Kane discussed the rape of Cate in *Blasted* and testified to misgivings about the dramatisation of rape onstage 'Sarah Kane Interview', [audio recording], 1998; also see Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit. p. 26. She also queried the idea that rape is an inevitability of war. See Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 48

Ian. Jesus Lord
*The **Soldier** returns.*

Soldier: Gone. Taking a risk. Lots of bastard soldiers out there.

***Ian** looks in the bathroom. **Cate** isn't there.*⁴⁵⁵

The conventional reading and rendering of this section is to interpret it as if Cate has climbed out of the bathroom window. But the script, precise in all other details of naturalist progression at this point, does not state this to be the case. It is perhaps inferred that Ian sees Cate's escape through the window, and this is a possible reading of this. Equally possible however is a reading that Ian has looked out of the window and only just noticed what the soldier tells him – that 'there are lots of bastard soldiers out there'.⁴⁵⁶ Cate had pointed his attention to the window in the bedroom earlier 'looks like there's a war on' and he had not bothered to look.⁴⁵⁷ And what of the sound from the bathroom? The sound of the taps is audible. Would we not hear a window opening, or Cate climbing out? And can we assume there actually is a window in the bathroom? Kane does not mention one. The naturalist analysis of this moment falls down under scrutiny in its lack of written detail – a notable absence in an otherwise precise dramaturgy.

I would argue that Kane has created a moment of magical realism by leaving space and therefore ambiguity around this moment. In creating an uncanny atmosphere through sound, knocking and disappearance, she enables us to conceive of an 'other-worldly' possibility, and one that offers hope to the female protagonist, but

⁴⁵⁵ Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit. p. 38.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 33.

also to the spectator.⁴⁵⁸ Cate's disappearance into another place through the fracture allowed by Kane's editing choices has a relationship to Cate's fits, and it is to this point that I now return.

Cate's fits represent a disappearance into a private, unconscious state, which is at some level hysterical and at another empowering. Whereas feminist theory has traditionally placed 'hysteria' as a conservative form of resistance, Cate's alignment of her *petit-mals* with masturbation posits her fits as a place of *jouissance*.⁴⁵⁹ In stating that the play 'collapses into one of Cate's fits' Kane subtly indicates to the reader to look beyond an image of female 'hysteria', and to read back into the text to find its more pleasurable connections.

Thus Kane places her writing in an intentional, bodily-centred (arguably, cunt-centred) site of female exploration and joy. The destabilising of Aristotelian unities by this method is deliberate and she connects the power of such formal working to the critics' outrage. Whilst maintaining the spectacle of a structural unity of place on the conventional stage, Kane's play actually takes the reader/audience to

⁴⁵⁸ There is insufficient space to write more on this here, but I note this use of magical realism as being something that places *Blasted* clearly in a tradition of women-authored plays from both Irish and British writers. See also Caryl Churchill and Sarah Daniels, particularly C. Churchill, *The Skriker*, London, Nick Hern Books, 1994, and S. Daniels, *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*, reproduced in S. Daniels, *Plays 2*, London, Methuen Drama, 1994. Notable with reference to Cate in *Blasted* is an association with fairy mythology and the trope of the changeling, which Roche argues with reference to Ní Dhhuibhne's *Dún na mBan Trí Thine*, emerges as part of a 'feminist exploration of the social roles of women in a society caught between tradition and modernity'. See Roche, 'Staging the Liminal', op. cit., p. 176.

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 22-23. H. Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, vol. 1, issue 4, Summer 1976, pp. 875-893.

‘another place’ where (in Cate’s words): ‘The world don’t exist, not like this. Looks the same but – Time slows down.’⁴⁶⁰

There are similarities between Kane’s depiction of Cate, and the representation of female figures in the work of other women working in a variety of media. In ways reminiscent of Francesca Woodman’s photography, Lucy Gunning’s performance art/video work, and Sofia Coppola’s film-making, the female figure in Kane’s construction does not occupy the centre of the room. Rather she forms an affinity with the architectural frames, seeking its edges, corners, hard to reach, private and ‘invisible’ spaces, disappearing into its structures playfully, mysteriously, or with trepidation and at other times ‘becoming it’ in ways that subvert conventional perception of boundaries and the limits of physical possibility.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ Kane, *Blasted*, loc. cit., p. 22. As with Cate’s fits, the disappearance of the female protagonist to the ‘Otherworld’ or the ‘Fairy Fort’ is psychically rejuvenating, it being a ‘seductive’ space of ‘unmediated creativity’, but [most importantly] a resource to be drawn on, a subconscious realm to be accessed, rather than a place in which to stay forever’. Roche in Sihra, ‘Staging the Liminal’, op. cit., p. 184. As with the return of Leiní to her children and husband in *Dún na mBan*, the return of Cate from both her fits, and from the ‘otherworldly’ outside/offstage is essential to survival and, ultimately to relational life with others. As Kane’s and Ní Dhuibhne’s plays show, however, the female characters develop agency, resourcefulness and strength from their disappearance ‘elsewhere’, beyond the patriarchal frame.

⁴⁶¹ P. Phelan, ‘Francesca Woodman’s Photography: Death and the Image One More Time’, *Signs*, vol. 27, no. 4, Summer 2002, pp. 979-1004. E. Gumpert, ‘The Long Exposure of Francesca Woodman’, *The New York Review of Books*, 24 January 2011, <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2011/jan/24/long-exposure-francesca-woodman/>, (accessed 12 May 2013). R. Fortnum, (ed.), ‘Lucy Gunning’ in *Contemporary British Women Artists in Their Own Words*, London and New York, I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2008, pp. 65-72. Of particular relevance to this discussion is Lucy Gunning’s work *Climbing Around My Room*, 1993, but also her video work *The Horse Impressionists* (1994), ‘which risks a collapse into hysteria, [whilst] it also opens possibilities for art practices to work towards corporeal philosophies which pay attention to gendered embodied subjectivity’. R. Jones. ‘Becoming-hysterical-becoming-animal-becoming-woman in *The Horse Impressionists*’, <http://www.ruthjonesart.co.uk/textsforprojects/becoming-animal.pdf>, 2003, (accessed 1 June 2013). Also relevant, particularly with regard to questions of female authorship, is Sofia Coppola’s 2003 film *Lost in Translation*. *Lost in Translation*, dir. Sofia Coppola, USA and Japan, Focus Features, 2003, [DVD].



Francesca Woodman – Read from left to right.
 4.a. *Untitled*, 1977-1978; 4.b. *House #3*, 1976
 4.c. *Bath*, 1980; 4.d. *House #4*, 1976
 4.e. *Space 2*, 1976; 4.f. *Untitled*, 1976



Read from left to right.

4.g-j. Lucy Gunning, *Climbing Round My Room*, performance/video art work, 1993

4.k-l. Sofia Coppola, *Lost in Translation*, film, 2003

In seeking the edges or 'background' to the limits of 'place', Kane's tactics, as expressed through Cate's 'gynocentric' shifting of time and space to 'another place', evoke resonance with the theories of radical feminists such as Mary Daly. In *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly argues that women, and feminism, should recognise and develop 'a gynocentric context' for their lives that 'unlearn' patriarchal teachings, associations and language, reclaiming the etymology of language and reference for ourselves:

The strength which Self-centring women find, in finding our Background, is our own strength that we give back to our Selves. The word *strength-giving* is only materially the same, only apparently the same, when used by women who name the sacred on our own authority [...]. There is a sense of power not of the 'wholly other' but of the Self's be-ing. This participation is strength-giving, not in the sense of 'supernatural elevation', through 'grace' or of magic mutation through miracle drugs, but in the sense of creative unfolding of the Self.⁴⁶²

In considering these associations, it is clear that the reviewers were not reacting directly to the subject matter of *Blasted*, but to its formal tactics.⁴⁶³ The reader/audience witnesses an 'unfolding of Self' in Cate's character-progression through the play, but also (remembering that form and content are one) in the 'unfolding of one's Self' within Kane's theatre – a re-shaping of conventional unities that shifts place through 'spinning' and gynocentric playing with time and action. Furthermore Kane uses the 'falling apart of Cate's fits' to comment pertinently on the nature of violence, locating it firmly in the masculine, and

⁴⁶² Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁶³ See Aston's discussion of Kane as a 'feminist witch' in 'Reviewing the fabric', in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., pp. 22-26. Coppola's work has often been similarly misunderstood by male reviewers due to her formal tactics. As Sharon Lin Tay notes: '[..These] female characters whose stories Coppola films have more ghostly attributes than psychological depth because of their isolation in the predicaments in which they find themselves. Yet, Coppola lovingly portrays these ciphers and the rooms they haunt. Audiences thus face the difficulty of putting the finger on the story or the *point*, of Coppola's films'. Lin Tay, 'On the Edge of National Cinema: Sofia Coppola' in *Women on the Edge*, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

(noting Cate's complete disappearance to 'another place' in scene 3) as being between men, and 'closer to home' than one might think.

Kane does not locate this violence (or its male gendering) unproblematically. Nor does she represent Cate's fits, and the collapse of 'self' and language' accompanying them as being representative of a pain-free utopia or an essentialist place of uncomplicated *jouissance*. Cate frequently 'loses' the battle with Ian, and her triumph at the end of the play is that she has learned to eat for herself first before feeding him, and to sit apart in her own space. This is important for it dramatically represents what Irigaray frequently refers to as the 'reserve' or 'dynamic reserve'.⁴⁶⁴ In finding a place of 'reserve', Cate's speech and agency strengthen, Ian slips through the cracks, the world as they once knew it has been blown apart, and Ian acknowledges his dependence on her with gratitude. She is a survivor, not a victor, and Ian remains broken, but alive to learn the new laws of exchange between them. The space of the stage is no longer the 'self-same' that it was – Ian has been physically pushed to its margins, and Cate has found a way of being in the centre of it in her own way. In effect they have reached a 'being-two', and a way of 'being in relation' to one another where difference is clear. The war outside, however, is still raging.

Kane has effected this 'being in relation' through a process of fracturing and destruction. Cate's disappearances (bodily and mentally) and her stuttering, babbling, challenge to the thrust and 'coherency' of Ian's speech, represent a

⁴⁶⁴ Irigaray, 'The Fecundity of the Caress: A Reading of Levinas *Totality and Infinity*, "Phenomenology of Eros"' Irigaray, *Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 185-217.

fracturing of patriarchal power and language in the text – an interruption enacted through dialogue, and through shifting movement of the female protagonist into and out of view/presence. By extension, Cate's fits (and Kane's play) 'blast' a space in the theatrical landscape to hear, form and perform something 'other' in response to violence. This process is not without loss or contradiction for the female subject, nor the female writer. It is one that involves painful recognition of the self as implicated in the process of violent display, particularly where 'writing' (and 'good writing') is concerned:

My main source in thinking about how violence happens is myself, and in some ways all of my characters are me. I write about human beings and as I am one, the ways in which all human beings operate is feasibly within my understanding. I don't think of the world as being divided up into men and women, victims and perpetrators. I don't think those are constructive divisions to make, and they make for very poor writing.⁴⁶⁵

That the trappings of language position men frequently in a violent and unquestioned disregard for the female figure, is dramatised most fully in *Blasted* through the character of Ian, a male journalist whose language from the outset frames him as vile (**Ian**: I've shat in better places than this).⁴⁶⁶ Kane parodies the detachment of Ian's journalism when narrated down a telephone line. This reveals the structural coldness inherent in constructing violent, sensationalist narratives, and underlines the uses of language as a weapon against women:

Ian: A serial killer slaughtered British tourist Samantha Scrace, S-C-R-A-C-E, in a sick murder ritual comma, police revealed yesterday point new par. The bubbly nineteen year old from Leeds was among seven victims found buried in identical triangular tombs in an isolated New Zealand forest point new par. Each had been stabbed more than twenty times and placed face down comma, hands bound behind their backs point new par. Caps up, ashes at the site showed the maniac had stayed to cook a meal, caps down point new par. Samantha, comma, a beautiful redhead with dreams of

⁴⁶⁵ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit., p. 133.

⁴⁶⁶ Kane, *Blasted*, loc. cit., p. 3.

becoming a model comma, was on the trip of a lifetime after finishing her A-levels last year point [...].⁴⁶⁷

The tightly drawn nature of Ian's violent text construction – a text devoid of space, its narratives forced together – personifies a patriarchal rigidity of language. In presenting us with a fractured female text/body, and a naturalist theatre scene gradually dissolving and fragmenting to allow spaces, cracks and falling, Kane arguably undermines the violence of such construction, meeting violence with violence in the body of the text, but a violence of intervention, unravelling and dismantling, ultimately leading back to a female (arguably feminist) *jouissance*/joy:

I [...] picked a moment in the play, I thought I'll plant a bomb and blow the whole fucking thing up. I loved the idea of it as well, that you have a nice little box set in a studio theatre somewhere and you blow it up. You know you go to the Bush Theatre and you go in and you see the set ... and there's always this longing for it to blow up, so it was such a joy for me to be able to do that.⁴⁶⁸

That the violence of such rendering/rendering is not without loss is underscored further in her analysis of the need to sometimes go to places that are painful – not for some abstract masochistic purpose, but in order to face the 'horror' of the world clearly:

The choice is either to represent it, or not represent it. I've chosen to represent it because sometimes we have to descend into hell imaginatively in order to avoid going there in reality. If we can experience something through art, then we might be able to change our future, because experience engraves lessons on our heart through suffering, whereas speculation leaves us untouched. I'd rather risk overdose in theatre than in life. And I'd rather risk defensive screams than passively become part of a civilisation that has committed suicide.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Interview with Sarah Kane', [audio-recording], 1998. Transcribed in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁶⁹ Stephenson and Langridge, *loc. cit.* pp. 132-133.

If Kane was more nuanced in her analysis of gender relations, and the necessity of theatre to explore violence through 'descend(ing) into hell imaginatively', it is clear her critics were less open to the risks of this. I would argue that the gendered nature of her technical approach, and the challenge in combining cunt-centred content and critique with form was a key factor in the juvenile and aggressive reaction to *Blasted*. Kane was clear on how her playing with unities caused 'offence':

it implied a direct link between domestic violence in Britain and civil war in the former Yugoslavia. *Blasted* raised the question, 'what does a common rape in Leeds have to do with mass rape as a war weapon in Bosnia?' And the answer appeared to be 'Quite a lot' The unity of place suggests a paper-thin wall between the safety and civilisation of peacetime Britain and the chaotic violence of civil war. A wall that can be torn down at any time, without warning.⁴⁷⁰

Kane's 'paper-thin wall' is an architectural imaginary that effectively collapses a binary. It represents a fold, and the fold marks a desire to close the conventional distance between peacetime Britain and violence 'elsewhere', to represent a 'truth'. The conjuring of a 'paper-thin wall' to represent the philosophical closeness encoded in Kane's exploration of violence, and its metonymic presence on her stage denoting a consistent 'unity of place' is interesting in its structural imagining, also in its architectural resonance. The metaphor holds echoes of the song 'Paper Moon' and through this association, we are returned to the visual world of the stage, and by extension, to the artifice of naturalism suggested by Kane's opening. The 'paper-moon and cardboard sea' type of scene-setting, so attractive to the average critic, and representative of the box-set of the Bush are being knowingly played with then pulled down in Kane's text. She warns us of this in the oxymoron

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*, loc. cit., p. 131.

of her opening stage direction, but provokes us to invest in it anyway.⁴⁷¹ The silent, subversive ‘told you so’ whispering through each ‘blow’ to the architecture (and naturalism) of the scene is punctuated by Ian’s final ‘thank you, and it is this that is arguably the most challenging feature of Kane’s formal method.

The ‘thank you’ is interesting and relates to time. A few moments before expressing it, Ian ‘dies with relief’. Cocooned safely in his grave in the floorboards, having exhausted the limits of his rage, despair and venom, he momentarily becomes the conventional tragic hero, entombed comfortably in a solitary end. At this point, Kane’s text metaphorically ‘plays God’ with naturalism and denies Ian this heroic end – the roof apparently ‘fractures’, allowing the rain through, bringing him back to life.⁴⁷² The moment of fracture is surreal and biblical – the roof does not crack, give way, fall-in – it literally and silently ‘parts like the Heavens’, resurrecting him. It is another example of Kane’s deft and subtle uses of magical realism to effect conditions for a ‘horizontal-transcendence’ in relations between the characters onstage. Kane swiftly restores the scene and its architecture to naturalism, and in doing so underscores the necessity of recognising reality in the final analysis, and (through language) in bringing the redemptive power of feminine intervention down to earth:

⁴⁷¹ Kane, *Blasted*, loc. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁷² The return of characters from the dead is a feature of much Irish drama, and arises from a rich oral and narrative tradition. The presentation of this theme onstage was developed by Yeats and was influenced by Japanese theatre practices, as noted by Roche in Sihra, op. cit., p. 177: ‘When he sought to stage the direct encounter between the living and the dead in the Otherworld, Yeats lacked any precedent in the English theatrical tradition, and instead turned to the Japanese Noh. Synge, when he visited the Aran Islands, heard many narratives hinging on the return of the dead or disappeared to visit those they had left behind’.

He dies with relief.
It starts to rain on him, coming through the roof.
Eventually.
Ian. Shit.
Cate. *enters carrying some bread, a large sausage and a bottle of gin. There is blood seeping from between her legs.*
Cate. You're sitting under a hole.
Ian. I know.
Cate. Get wet.
Ian. Aye.
Cate. Stupid bastard.
She pulls a sheet off the bed and wraps it around her.
She sits next to Ian's head.
She eats her fill of the sausage and bread and washes it down with gin.
Ian listens.
She feeds Ian with the remaining food.
She pours gin in Ian's mouth.
She finishes feeding Ian and sits apart from him, huddled for warmth.

She drinks the gin.
She sucks her thumb.
Silence.
It rains.
Ian. Thank you.
*Blackout.*⁴⁷³

The final image of rain breaking through concludes an increasingly expressive set of stage directions that play with time. 'The sound of spring rain' (sc. 1), "the sound of summer rain' (sc. 2), 'the sound of autumn rain' (sc. 4) 'the sound of heavy winter rain' (sc. 5), takes the reader through a chronology that extends the theatrical unity beyond its conventional 'day' to a seasonal year.⁴⁷⁴ In her extension of time beyond convention, Kane successfully reinscribes her working method in the feminine, and in the time-defying, 'spinning' and masturbatory space of Cate's fits.⁴⁷⁵ Ultimately, in the ending of *Blasted*, the rain (time) and the war (action) completes the erosion of the solid structure of place, yet with this destruction

⁴⁷³ *ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁷⁴ Kane, *Blasted*, *op. cit.*, see pages 24, 39, 50 and 57.

⁴⁷⁵ Daly, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

comes a change in relationship between its two (gendered) protagonists, and ultimately a space for hope and redemption – a space, (Kane's method proposes), not located in naturalism, watertight language or the rigid maintenance of Aristotelian unities. Rather she proposes a negotiation, and a playing of different elements that allow a leaking, implosion, bombardment and fracturing of the dominant structures.

5. Clean Bombs, Confrontations and Time - Gender, Violence and the Political Significance of the Perimeter Fence in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*.⁴⁷⁶

5.i Time, Gender and ... Oh how long have we got?!

And what matter if it be ebb or flow? As long as, at each moment, (I) move as a whole. And for me, ebb and flow have always set the rhythm of time. But (they) come at different hours. At Midday or midnight, at dawn or dusk. One moment is worth absolutely more than any other, for the whole is present in each.

And (I) rise and ebb twice a day. (I) have two middays and two midnights during the time your sun takes to complete his circuit. Twice (I) get up and go to bed, while he follows his course on the near side and the far side of the earth.⁴⁷⁷

Considering Luce Irigaray's principle of double-time, a double ebb and flow, I suggest it is useful to reconsider the time analysis given to Sarah Kane's work. She is rigidly positioned as synonymous with the 1990s and the analytical discourses attending that era. Hence it is common for her work to be configured as 'a-political', as overly concerned with masculinity, as pathological and nihilistic, as representative of a 'post-Thatcher' generation, as preoccupied with death and futility, and as 'quintessentially youthful'.⁴⁷⁸ I have never fully recognised Kane's work in such analyses; neither did the young women in the Sarah Kane Research Group, nor the cast of *Kamome-za*. I suggest therefore that a problem we have in Sarah Kane scholarship is a problem of time – specifically misconceptions of time – and its relevance to our reading of her work in a wider socio-political context.

⁴⁷⁶ Some of this chapter has been disseminated in the public domain under variations on the title: 'Clean Bombs and Confrontations' *Terror(ism) and Aesthetics Conference*, 2011 and *Sarah Kane Now*, 2012.

⁴⁷⁷ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁷⁸ A. Howe-Kritzer, *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing 1995-2005*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. p. 28. Sierz, 'Cool Britannia', op. cit.

Time is marked differently by gender, also by cultural experience, history and environment. As Judith Butler notes in her chapter 'Sexual Politics, Torture and Secular Time':

it might seem odd to begin with a reflection on time when one is trying to speak about sexual politics or cultural politics more broadly. But I want to suggest that the way in which debates within sexual politics are framed is already imbued with the problem of time, and of progress in particular, and with certain notions of what it means to unfold a future of freedom in time.⁴⁷⁹

Within contemporary Western culture, time is structured, as feminist analysis has demonstrated, to patriarchal and capitalist rhythms and agendas.⁴⁸⁰ A conscious project of feminist sociological and political thinking has long been concerned with 'thinking about non-existent ways of understanding and using time', and with opening up 'a range of radical alternatives outside the framework of patriarchal norms and the short-term logic of capitalist accumulation'.⁴⁸¹ It is therefore worth considering how Sarah Kane's work – and interpretations of her work – are structured with relation to systems of time, and to consider how applying different temporal modalities to reading her theatre could facilitate greater understanding of its intentions and underlying desires. Having noted some misgivings with the categorisation of Kane as a quintessentially 1990s writer, I turn to consideration of this first.

The time frame that the Tinker-Sierzian project works to accords conventionally with the numerical frame of the Julian Calendar, as established on 1 January 45 BC, with its organisation of time into hours, days, weeks, and 12 month-periods. Decades form

⁴⁷⁹ J. Butler, 'Sexual Politics, Torture and Secular Time' in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, 2nd edition, London and New York, Verso, 2010. pp. 101-135, this quote, p. 101.

⁴⁸⁰ V. Bryson, *Gender and the Politics of Time: Feminist theory and contemporary debates*, Bristol, The Policy Press, 2007.

⁴⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 169.

part of this patriarchal inheritance.⁴⁸² Temporal organisation around the number 10 is notably man-made, resolutely linear and detached from lunar and solar cycles. Favoured by the ancient Romans, it has strong military and materialistic associations. Ovid, in discussing why the mythical king Romulus organised the first calendar into 10 months, suggested that this 'erring warrior king' was 'better versed in swords than stars', and may have been trying to emulate 'the time that suffices for a child to come forth from its mother's womb.'⁴⁸³ The build-up to the Millennium – with all its anxiety about what would happen to the world's computers when the clocks changed from being in the 1900s to the 2000s – appeared to provoke an excess of focus on centuries, and by extension, decades in the Western world. This manifested itself in popular culture with *fin-de-siècle* (*fin-de-millennial*) retrospectives whereby memories, experiences and events became packaged by decade, creating 'eras'. A capitalist's dream, the late 1990s/early Millennium was marked by a sudden rash of CDs, films and books all grouped nostalgically by decade – 'Sound of the 60s', 'Greatest 80s hits' and inevitably 'Theatre of the 90s' has followed. It is with some ennui that one notes how this pattern has extended itself as an organising mechanism for scholarly theory, but where capitalist forces are driving production and dissemination of knowledge, it is hardly surprising.

⁴⁸² Established by Julius Caesar, "Caesar's calendar [...] injected a new spirit into how people thought about time. Before it had been thought of as a cycle of recurring natural events, or as an instrument of power [...] Now the calendar was available to everyone as a practical objective tool, to organize shipping schedules, to grow crops, worship gods, plan marriages and send letters to friends. Combined with the rising popularity of sophisticated sundials and water clocks, the new Julian calendar introduced the concept of human beings ordering their own individual lives along a linear progression operating independent of the moon, the seasons and the gods." D. Ewing Duncan, *The Calendar*, London, Fourth Estate Ltd., 1998, p. 50.

⁴⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

Elaine Aston's *Feminist Views* redresses the balance of this, and challenges the generalisations and clichés of the *In-Yer-Face* co-option of writers such as Kane, by providing a work of significant study focused on the period 1990-2000.⁴⁸⁴ Aston's text does not seek to define an era per se nor stamp it with a 'mood' or 'face'; rather it offers thoughtful reflection on a variety of theatre practices and makers, in difference, and gives significant attention to their plays in the context of wider scholarly thinking. In recognising continuities between women writers in the 1990s and those in earlier decades, it opens up directions for future thinking beyond the book and beyond the decade. When the book appeared in 2003, it offered a useful and very welcome perspective on the work of a number of female writers who came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and who continued to work through the 1990s and beyond. In this way it provided a much-needed counterpoint to a media hijack of theatre study, which sought – and still seeks – to reduce and trivialise the contribution of women to new writing.

In a discussion of BBC Radio 4's *Front Row* documentary on promising young women playwrights in 2009, Aleks Sierz takes issue with the inclusion of Lucy Prebble and Chloe Moss in the programmers' focus arguing that they were writing since 2002 and 2003 therefore can 'hardly be called "promising" – they've already arrived'.⁴⁸⁵ He lists the playwrights he thinks worthy of mention, and as is typical, gives a few cursory sound-bites about the supposed merits of a select few. He does not say anything that

⁴⁸⁴ Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit.

⁴⁸⁵ A. Sierz, 'From the Archive: New Women Playwrights', Sierz, [web blog], ND, <http://www.sierz.co.uk/wordpress/?p=443>, (accessed 21 February 2013). *Front Row* is a BBC Radio 4 programme, and the broadcast discussed by Sierz went out on 1 January 2009. BBC Radio 4, 'Front Row', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qsg5>, ND, (accessed 12 May 2013).

gives an insight into the works or playwrights mentioned, but instead reverts to overview and hyperbole:

This emergence of women playwrights, and their promotion by the Royal Court (London's new writing powerhouse), is surely reminiscent of the 1980s, when talents such as Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Sarah Daniels, Andrea Dunbar, April de Angelis and Clare McIntyre lit up the scene. But the most striking thing about these 1980s playwrights was not only their ability to recreate women's experience on stage, but their willingness to experiment with form [...]. Most contemporary female playwrights have abandoned the experiments with time that characterised the playwrights of the 1980s, and none can match Churchill for sheer imaginative vision. Most of them tell stories about "me and my mates" in a way that wouldn't be completely out of place on television... the question should be asked: why are they not more imaginative in their attitudes to form?⁴⁸⁶

His perception that these women belong to distinct eras, and that their connections to each other can only be read within genealogies of decade, limits and reduces the very real growth and expansion of the feminist and female frame of working established and marked by this emergence of new writing from women of varying ages and at varying stages of theatrical making and production. Also insidious is the suggestion that there is a divide between the playwrights of these decades. Sierz sets up an artificial and reductive distinction whereby the female playwrights of the 1980s receive a tick for 'good form', and the contemporary ones, so feted by the *Front Row* documentary, receive a cross for 'bad form'. Ultimately it denies the possibility that younger women have developed their work from the older women, also denies the reality of their shared experience of theatre-making in the present moment as women of different ages. Despite going on to give some brief examples of where the emerging female writers are experimenting with form, he ends, ultimately with a comment from David Hare that 'Women's writing for the theatre is stronger and more eloquent than

⁴⁸⁶ 'From the Archive', Sierz, [web blog].

it has ever been', before overturning this senior playwright's observation with the rather nonsensical dismissal:

While this is surely true, wouldn't it be great if it was also more experimental aesthetically and more radical politically?⁴⁸⁷

The appropriation and subsequent organisation of female playwrights into groups marked by time, reflects Sierz's typical McDonaldized strategy for making theatre containable, manageable, economically profitable and expedient. This way of thinking and ordering through rigid and artificial perceptions of time shuts down the possibilities of growth and 'becoming' in discourse.⁴⁸⁸ Where female playwrights are concerned, this absolutism attempts to inhibit the very real presence of Unfolding and Be-Longing that happens when women engage with theatre and writing.⁴⁸⁹ Such control disrupts processes of growth for women and for those men in theatre who want to breathe fresh air and find new ways of Be-ing with women in the field. Sierz fails to acknowledge such continuums and cross-currents, and instead puts expediency before genuine enquiry. Moreover, he uses such ordering of time to close down wider enquiry, and this is damaging for scholarship and theatre-making.

Sierzian time, is effectively 'tidy time' – an organisation of temporal rhythms that Mary Daly and Jane Caputi beautifully recognise as:

fathered time; measurements/divisions that cut women's Lifetimes/Lifelines into tidy tid-bits; dismembered time, surgically sewn back together to mimic

⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ For a consideration of the concept of 'becoming' in relation to love and flux, see Irigaray's essay on Diotima's Speech - 'Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato, Symposium, "Diotima's Speech"', in Irigaray, *Ethics*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁸⁹ M. Daly and J. Caputi, *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*, 2nd edition, London, The Women's Press, 1988. p. 98 and pp. 64-65. First published by the Beacon Press in Boston in 1987.

and replace Tidal Time; tedious time spent under the tyranny of tidy demons.⁴⁹⁰

I propose that theatre-makers – particularly young theatre-makers – are severely disadvantaged when they are obliged to swallow such notions of time and theatre-ordering in their research on contemporary texts. Seeing, as a lecturer, the regurgitation of reductive sound-bites in discussion of women's theatre, and indeed of Kane, I find myself wondering, like Professor Krempe in *Frankenstein*, 'in what desert' young scholars are placed by the constant return to such sources, and argue that they, with the scholarship on Kane as a whole, need to 'begin their studies entirely anew'.⁴⁹¹

The institutionalisation of time – and the relationship of time to institutions – was something cited by participants in the Sarah Kane Research Group as inherently patriarchal and oppressive.⁴⁹² Whilst investigating scenes 15-20 of *Cleansed*, the women spent 40 minutes 'brainstorming' their associations of 'time, repetition and counting' on a flipchart sheet, and linking their observations to *Cleansed*. Some of the words and associations were repeated, reflecting the pattern of discussion between them, each of them holding a pen and marking the discussion collectively in ebbs and flows on the sheet.⁴⁹³ Their overall perception was that the theme related to

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴⁹¹ Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴⁹² Sarah Kane Research Group, session 4, Wednesday 4th November, 2009. *Finding Repetition/Counting and Time (moments of) in 'Cleansed', scenes 15-20.*

⁴⁹³ Words listed (D. is for where a drawing was made). REPETITION – Ballet practice – Daily routine (weaker people) – exercise – scales – desensitisation – WWI – didn't care anymore... – Jobs, rhythm – how quickly time can pass. Not even looking (at what doing in repetitive tasks at work, e.g. packing) – trance – Literacy and numeracy – curfews. Time – Time of your life. Time is your life (good riddance) – Routine – obsession – medication – time signatures – That 4/4 beat – Dance – breakfast – random battles – depression – school / education – Robots Machines – desensitisation, traps – same walk to work, uni, home – Groundhog Day – stuck – endless – script – wake up at 6.00am every day – TIME – moon cycles – bed time – keeps kids or 'weaker' people in check or order – Chronology – LRPg=time

processes of institutionalisation and, with the exception of 'mooncycles', 'waxing and waning moons' and 'songs', which they viewed as empowering, 'time' was regarded negatively. Notably, their interpretation accorded strongly with Daly and Caputi's definition of Clockocracy:

society dead set by the clocks and watches of fathered time; the tidily Man-Dated world characterized by male-ordered monotony that breaks biorhythms, preparing the way for the fullness of tidy time, ie., doomsday.⁴⁹⁴

An interpretation of time as something controlled by patriarchy is something that Paul Ashton also volunteered, and he built this into his representation of the masculine body.⁴⁹⁵ In a key image from the workshop, Paul chose to carry a handless clock, noting: 'it is men who carry time and control time'. The absence of hands on the clock interested us, in the possibility it suggested of 'no time' and the space that represented for finding or imagining time in other ways. Time, according to Paul and the young women, was a potentially oppressive factor in institutionalisation, and one that is conventionally ordered by men. In *Cleansed* we see Tinker control time through watching, through the ordering of torture, abuses, surgical operations, and through his visits to put money into the automatic slot-machine controlling the peep-show booth.

sponges, I waste time on them – seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millenniums. *This list was written running backwards, in mirror, right to left across the page, with the word 'moments' written left to right, under the line of them* – This is your life – Having got enough or too much! – Time going back to the idea of 'institution' – Sands of time – (D - an egg timer) – represent life in disc world – death think (?) – Is an illusion. Lunch time douldeys – Ford Prefect (D Adams) – cannot be regained – is precious – Groundhog Day – stuck – endless – wake up at 6.00am every day – "our time is running out" – Sands of Time – waxing and waning moon – wasting – travel – Hydron Collider – Back to the Future – Time Bandits (Cool Word Time Bandits) video games – superstitions and beliefs – salt... – (D - a metronome) – Metronome – 'click', (D - of a timeline) 'Henry VIII – did it a thousand times' – (D - a jail cell with days counted on the walls in tally marks), (D - of a clockface with hour hands on pointing to 3 o'clock and a digital alarm clock with 12: 45 SNOOZE Please! written) - COUNTING – cunting - sheep (ing) – toes – pennies – Down – Insane – School / education – Religion – (eggtimer picture) – Sums + - ./. x – your blessings – 'sheeping, counting, cunting' – Songs.

⁴⁹⁴ Daly and Caputi, op. cit. p. 190.

⁴⁹⁵ 'Making a skin-suit: exploring gender and moments of touch in *Cleansed*', with Paul Ashton and David Nunney, Cast-Off Drama, 13 August 2011.

As can be seen with the scenes with Tinker and Robin in the peep-show booth, both men and women's time is regulated by and for economic systems. This concords with Bryson's observation that:

the dominant model of time in contemporary capitalist societies is the linear, goal-orientated, commodified time of the clock: time that can be individually owned, bought, sold, invested, spent or wasted, and that can be measured as a series of discrete activities.⁴⁹⁶

Where men control money or systems, they are in a position to control and direct women's time and activity, whilst also being controlled themselves by the limits of that automatic exchange. The relationship of time to gender within patriarchal capitalism is, however, complex and Bryson warns against over-simplification or generalisation where time, economics and gender are concerned. Her research indicates:

that any distinction between women's and men's time should not be understood in dichotomous terms, both because our experience of time is inherently fragmented, fluid and multi-layered and because women and men are not closed, unitary categories. However, they do not rule out the possibility that general differences in social and physical experiences often give women and men a different relationship to time; they also indicate that, if so, then men's time will be privileged, and women's claims for equality will require them to assimilate to male temporal norms. They further indicate that because the dominant time is also that of the capitalist market economy, any attempt to change the time culture cannot be isolated from wider economic and political issues.⁴⁹⁷

Kane's staging of the peep-show, with the slot-machine centrally controlling exchange and desire underlines this principle, and demonstrate a political consciousness by Kane which asked questions of how gender, sexuality, economics, freedoms, power and time intersect.

⁴⁹⁶ Bryson, *Gender and the Politics of Time*, op. cit. p. 121.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

Paul's male body-skin-suit became his costume for playing Tinker in the workshop on exploring gender through moments of touch, and he processed the dramatisation of this through an ink drawing of the figure in the body-skin-suit made later the same day. He latterly developed this into a monoprint, and in the course of the next year, developed and expressed his experience of exploring the character in a mixed-media portrait on board of Tinker called *Tinker, Sadist, Swallow, Die*.



5.i.a. Paul Ashton in male body-skin-suit, as Tinker, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, 13 August 2011.
 5.i.b. *Untitled*, Monoprint, 16 in x 20 in. Paul Ashton. From ink drawing done of his male figure (Tinker) 13 August 2011. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.



5.i.c.
Tinker, Sadist, Swallow, Die
Mixed-media on board, 24 in x 36 in
Paul Ashton, 2011-2012
Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

Paul's interpretation of Tinker and the masculine body reflected ideas of hybridity and evolution in relation to time. In discussing his 'making' choices, he suggested that 'man' in the twenty-first century is essentially both 'animal' and 'robot'; moving increasingly, through technology, into a roboticised, but increasingly bestial state hence he built a body-skin-suit that reflected this. Paul chose black tights for his skin-suit as it hardened the contours of the body making it opaque and impenetrable. He bulked out the chest 'pecs' and upper arms with excessive muscles. He made the feet and hair long to slow movement and emphasise weight, and lastly added a long and heavily weighted tail – implying the coccyx but also a phallus. This dragged on the floor. He described the tensions of carrying such masculine construction, and in maintaining the physicality demanded of such excess. In the analysis of touch, it emerged that Tinker lays hands on other characters in the play more than anyone else, usually in violence, and as such the physicality demanded of an actor playing Tinker is extreme and emotionally-draining.

Paul Ashton's mixed-media piece *Tinker, Sadist, Swallow, Die* expresses the tensions of masculinity maintained by Tinker through a layering of thick paint and competing colours, each building its surface over the surface of the last, with no clear end or rest. The inner body of the Tinker figure is seemingly transparent in sections, a mass of viscosity leaking out, and the boundaries between the figure and its environment are ambiguous. It is not clear where the contours of the figure end and where those of the environment begin. Words are layered into the surface of the work both on the body and in the space around it, with Tinker's directive 'Swallow' being a repeated phrase

painted visibly in.⁴⁹⁸ There is reference to both making and violence in the screwdriver. It occupies an ambiguous position, dominating the upper-right area of the picture and appears at a glance to be a light bulb, but on closer inspection is clearly crafted as a tool, with the sharp end disappearing abruptly in a vertical direction out the top of the picture. This disconcertingly recalls the pole: the instrument of torture used on Carl in scene 4. The abrupt severing of the top of the screwdriver references Tinker's acts of cutting. The Tinker figure looks out at us from the corner of his eyes, aggressive, defensive, but also – as highlighted by the intense colour of the cheeks – ashamed. Vertical strips of paint, evenly spaced on the window frame in the background, evoke cell bars and we see a figure trapped within his own institution, within his own frame. It is notable that Tinker never leaves the institution of *Cleansed*; his excursions to the grounds, marked by watching and violent acts, he appears neither to feel the mud, the air, or the pleasures of the outside world. Nor, it seems, can he hear the child singing through fence. His time – work and leisure – is dominated by the institution and its boundaries.

Ashton's image centrally relates to the male figure in flux, and draws the viewer into a cocoon of its own making. Yet, in a final gesture of promise, he inscribes in the top right-hand corner, the words 'Butterfly soon x'. This message offers an exit to the viewer from the tension of the work, and suggests that we read the work, its figure and its viscosity as a chrysalis. Ultimately it is a work of time and 'becoming'. What the figure becomes, however, is unknown. But there is an optimism for – in fact, an

⁴⁹⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., Tinker directs Grace to 'swallow' pills in scene 3 (p. 114), and forces Carl to 'swallow' Rod's ring in scene 4 (p. 118). A variation of his forcing of others to 'swallow' something can be seen in scene 15 where he makes Robin eat a chocolate - 'Eat it' - and then bullies him into eating the whole box, pp. 138-141.

expectation of – something different. This difference, he suggests in his accompanying exhibition text, can come about through seeing Tinker for who and what he is, and attempting to make sense of his logic in the wider picture of society and economics:

Considered here is Tinker, a sadistic figure in authority who administers a series of inhumane acts upon his charges. The shock and brutality of these acts when the initial impact is overcome, suggests a second reading and deeper consideration of his character. How these acts have come about, and why should these be Tinker's way of life and his understanding of logic.⁴⁹⁹

Time, and the logic of time, is an increasingly contested site in cultural and gender relations, and Butler, like Bryson, notes the 'fragmented, fluid' nature of how it plays itself out in our cultures and conflicts:

that there is no one time, that the question of what time is, already divides us, has to do with which histories have turned out to be formative, how they intersect – or fail to intersect – with other histories, and so with a question of how temporality is organised along spatial lines.

Considering these ideas, I now to turn to the question of 'theatre time'. Time in Western theatre practice is a highly conventionalised ritual, rigorously maintained. Rehearsals and productions run tightly to the clock. The timings of the foyer dominate its culture to the extent that foyer-lingering is a whole art-form in itself, and considered a part of 'being' in and of 'the theatre' – though, crucially, as Barker and those of us who truly practise theatre maintain, the foyer has nothing to do with 'the art of theatre', and is in many ways highly destructive to it:

The theatre resents the art of theatre, sensing its deeper intimacy with the public. All the lavish endowments of superficial skills and décor, the critical allegiance, the celebrity actors, the vulgar imprimatur of the patronage of the state with its palaces of art and its marketing bureaucracy (would you require to market a need?) cannot conceal the *unhealthiness* of the transaction.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹ 'Out of the Blue' Modelworks Exhibition, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Central Library Exhibitions' Space, UK, 3-31 October 2012.

⁵⁰⁰ H. Barker, *Death, the One and the Art of Theatre*, London and New York, 2005. Barker makes distinction between 'the theatre' and 'the art of theatre', pp. 40-41.

Critics, nevertheless, make their living in the foyer, and the extent to which money controls this operation can be seen in the legacy of Jack Tinker. Narratives of time in Jack Tinker's story testify to the status and power over the theatre in his lifetime. When he died, as his obituary notices and the Inverne book relate, the ritual of the theatre starting time was delayed as:

many theatres dimmed their lights as a mark of respect, an honour previously accorded only to the likes of Sir Henry Irving and Lord Olivier'.⁵⁰¹

He was also part, with David English, of a move to:

re-establish the great theatrical tradition where reviews are written at lightning speed with white-hot emotion [...] So [...] persuaded the theatre owners to put the opening nights start times back to 7.00pm.⁵⁰²

That theatre owners and managers were willing to alter the times of their opening nights to suit the needs of the journalists testifies to the power that the media represents to commercial theatre. Having an earlier start to the opening night is not something many theatre-makers would want, and represents a co-option of the privilege of audience at an important moment of delivery as a work emerges from rehearsal to public showing. Many precious moments of theatre ritual are potentially lost through this, and the liveness of a theatre-run reduced. The urge to dominate the opening night and deliver a verdict on it with 'white-hot' emotion marks a hallucinatory and narcissistic bombast on the part of the critics that takes the creative energy from the theatre-maker and gives it to the theatre critic through a reactionary and unyielding co-option and occupation of time.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰¹ Inverne, op. cit. p.xiii.

⁵⁰² *ibid.*, p. vi.

⁵⁰³ As English notes of their shared impulse to change patterns and timings of theatre reviewing: 'Both of us had similar tastes when we were growing up – we were seeing exactly the same films at opposite

The pressures of time and money have a significant impact on the possibilities of exploring a text in depth in rehearsal in the commercial theatre, and Kane's work frequently challenges this in that her plays require time and attention to the subtleties of language. They also require that a cast take risks. James Macdonald, in conversation with Gobert, talks about his work with Kane and the challenges both Kane and her work offered to the pattern of British theatre rehearsal conventions.⁵⁰⁴ Macdonald respects and works within the 4-week rule, but recognises that it is sometimes not enough, hence he frequently structures his work so that there are workshop processes set in motion before the rehearsal period starts so as to ensure that the production's needs are met. It is a strong strategy and clearly balances the work. Despite having done this with the rehearsals for *Cleansed*, Macdonald still found himself up-against-the-clock with this production, that it 'involved the most work' he'd ever done, and that it was 'exhausting'.⁵⁰⁵ The challenge to time in the rehearsal room came through the work on language. Macdonald conventionally starts from language, seeing it as a 'ground'. Notably, for an Irigarayan scholar, his discussion of the grounding nature of language, leads to an image of fluidity:

You begin to deduce what the play would want to be from the language. That's all we have and you have to excavate to see what's underneath. Very often

ends of the country. We were swept away by the classic scene from the MGM musicals where the cast of a show would all go to a hotel and wait for the papers to appear. It was that excitement which we sought to re-establish in London and we succeeded.' Inverne, loc. cit. p. ix. For deeper consideration of this comment, and to consider the hallucinatory dangers of 'white-hot emotion', see S. Žižek, 'Hallucination as Ideology in Cinema' in A. Asselin, J. Lamoureux and C. Ross (eds.), *Precarious Visualities: New Perspectives on Identification in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture*, Quebec, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008, pp. 227–244.

⁵⁰⁴ Gobert, *Finding a Physical Language*, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 146.

with a good play the language is only at the top, the tip of the iceberg. And you need to know what that big block of ice underneath is.⁵⁰⁶

With *Cleansed*, this process is not as easy as first appears, and establishing what the block of ice under the water is, can be a slippery and strangely unfathomable business:

Although it's not a long text, *Cleansed* is incredibly hard to get to the bottom of [...] Sarah was in the room, and we would go through the text trying to work out all the possible readings of every line, and the more readings of a different line we came up with, the happier she was. There were some lines for which we'd come up with six different readings, and she'd say: 'That's great.' And the actor playing it would say, 'Now which one should I play?' and she'd say, 'All of them.' That in itself took quite a lot of work.⁵⁰⁷

This insight into Kane's rehearsal process with text indicates a clowning approach. In many ways, the text is functioning as a mask or a red nose, and the message Kane gives to the cast in this instance is to 'play all directions' of the character and script at once.⁵⁰⁸ Recalling Bond's observation that the actor in role is a 'fiction-in-the-fiction in the structures of psychosis' and that 'the play's character shows the audience the reality of the actor in the fictions of his own drama', the playing of all possible emotional readings of a character at once opens up a certain *unheimlich* energy in a space, in which the actor's vulnerability and different sides are exposed.⁵⁰⁹ As multiple interpretations of character emerge, present themselves and are made alive through the actor with voice, breath and gesture, it can sometimes generate a resonance, not unlike that suggested by images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses with their avatars. It also

⁵⁰⁶ Gobert, op. cit. pp. 141-142. Macdonald's metaphor is interesting here. He discusses the importance of language in relation to his Le Coq training which taught him, he says, to work 'from the ground up'. See Irigaray's work on Heidegger for consideration of working from and with the ground. Irigaray, *Forgetting of Air*, op. cit.

⁵⁰⁷ Gobert, loc. cit., p. 146.

⁵⁰⁸ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 399. 'Truth is the central line of clown. There is no requirement that a clown be funny but theatre of clown usually is. If you can see yourself in all six directions, you will LAUGH at the beauty of your own ridiculousness [...] Seriousness and laughter, two halves of the same whole, one made richer by the presence of the other [...] both reverent and irreverent'.

⁵⁰⁹ Bond, loc. cit., p. xxxvii.

bears a relationship to the sea in Irigarayan terms – a sea centred irrevocably in the feminine:

And the sea can shed shimmering scales indefinitely. Her depths peel off into innumerable thin, shining layers. And each one is the equal of the other as it catches a reflection and lets it go. As it preserves and blurs. As it captures the glinting play of light. As it sustains mirages. Multiple and still too far numerous for the pleasure of the eye, which is lost in that host of sparkling surfaces. And with no end in sight.⁵¹⁰

The joy expressed in the unfolding and emergence of deeper swells of rhythm and meaning by Kane and Irigaray, resonates also with Berry's ideas on the importance of a language-centred rehearsal process:

The more texts we look at the more we will discover that there is just an infinite variety of play between that basic rhythm and the sense you want to convey. This variety is enriched by the very texture of the language [...]; that is what is so stimulating for it is like jazz, blues or reggae where the singer has endless freedom to play with the beat [...], the choice is with the actor. But, like the beat of the music, there is the basic time [...] which has to be honoured: that is what gives the language its bottom-line energy and suspense.⁵¹¹

Seeking and showing all sides of a character brings the depths of the actor to the fore, both within the fiction of the play and in the playing space of the rehearsal room. It empowers the actor to reflect and make decisions, also empowers the cast to debate and make meaning from and out of the script, offering potential for ethical discussion of staging and time to consider how best to take care of one another's vulnerability in performance. It essentially brings relational necessities and relational time into the production process.⁵¹² It requires that actors are willing to see the truth of themselves,

⁵¹⁰ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁵¹¹ Berry, *From Word to Play*, op. cit., p. 84.

⁵¹² 'Relational time' has long been recognised as located in and with women, and representative of the feminine and feminist. In her discussions of sexual difference, Irigaray argues that the polis recognise and restructure its frames (including time frames) to recognise and support a relational feminine in dialogue with and in difference to masculine modes of operation. Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous*, op. cit., pp. 39-44 and pp. 60-67. See also Bryson, *Gender and the Politics of Time*, op. cit., p. 171. 'The time culture needed in a feminist uchronia would not simply equate time with money [...] (or) [...] cost efficiency. Rather it would recognise that human relationships [...] have their own. Often slow, repetitious and

and in many ways are able to play out and laugh at the beauty of their own (and the play's) ridiculousness. This is the biggest challenge of *Cleansed* and is why applying a narrative to it too tightly does not work – for what is essentially revealed under the water is the cast themselves and the immediate time and space of the production's making. The tightness of the language and the spaces in the script demand that the actors and director stage what it is they find there. It is essential that the language and punctuation of the script are known well and followed to the letter, for that is essentially the breath that starts the journey – it is the actor and director's 'safety line'.

Cleansed exists in what Edward Bond astutely terms as 'accident time':

There is [...] in many Dostoevsky stories a moment when a character caught in high drama catches sight of their face in the mirror. It's what I call "accident time". It isn't a sudden elucidation but the questions change: and not merely concerning the face but also the hands – it's a moment of gesture. It's not a matter of solution but of understanding: the geography changes and you are in a different place because the *same* place is now different. I think something like this happens in *Cleansed*; the whole play is in accident time.⁵¹³

I agree very much with this observation, and suggest it is why rehearsals of *Cleansed* are always likely to bring the cast up against themselves and the clock, sometimes in extreme ways and with life-changing results. Recognising that *Cleansed* is a play that will never actually be closed or fixed, but will always open up space for changing questions and shifts of place to occur, is useful for production casts to understand.

unpredictable rhythms... the time culture would in many ways represent the 'women's time' [...] however, such a time culture can be oppressive, and clock time would retain an important place'.

⁵¹³ E. Bond, 'Letter to Sarah Kane, 15 September, 1997', in I. Stuart (ed.), *Edward Bond Letters: 5*, London and New York, 2001, p. 167.

The potential for question and shifting, and the ways in which *Cleansed* brings life and the present moment into view through its masks, are part of its attraction for Kamome-za. As noted, they are currently producing their fourth interpretation of *Cleansed*, and Kawaguchi says at this present time that they will continue to perform and rework the play indefinitely, finding and showing a different truth with each new production.

In this way, *Cleansed* as a play expands conventional notions of time and function in theatre. The play in this case is not so much an object – to be picked up, digested, consumed, cathected and cleared away by the cast to leave space for the next ‘show’; rather it is a practice, a lodestone. It enables us to view the present and ourselves as changing and relational, and when practiced with, always brings new questions. It is why an audience’s response to the work can never be anticipated, and why there will sometimes be apparently contradictory responses to it.

In witnessing Robin’s humiliation by Tinker in scene 15 during Kamome-za’s performance of *Cleansed* (*‘Be Cleansed’*), I found myself crying uncontrollably in the audience.⁵¹⁴ It was very exposing, as the performance was timed for 4pm on a Sunday afternoon on a hot, sunny day in Tokyo, and daylight streamed in through the plastic corrugated wall, showing openly my shame, and the shame of all who witnessed this moment. A gentleman in the audience in a similarly exposed state, laughed hysterically whilst the actress playing Robin dived painfully into the mud under Tinker’s direction to eat the chocolates she had bought ‘for Grace’. The action lasted

⁵¹⁴ *‘Cleansed (‘Be Cleansed’)*, Kamome-za, Tokyo, 27 May 2012.

through two layers of a chocolate box, and for all 24 chocolates scripted by Kane. By the time the last chocolate was eaten, she stood – soil, and a mass of melted chocolate in and around her mouth, on her shaved head, and on her face where her own tears flowed. It felt fine to cry, just as it felt ok that the gentleman laughed, or that others sat in silence, their faces respectfully still, then turned to each other after with pain, remorse, or sadness etched in their brows. The openness of this sharing came from the vulnerability of the actress Takimoto Naoko, who had entered into an opportunity for clown through the piece and was living each moment of the part through her own life. Takimoto had shaved her head for the part of Robin, and from the start of the 6-week rehearsal process had insisted to Tomoco Kawaguchi that they rehearse that scene with twenty-four chocolates, which she would eat. Takimoto's request meant that more rehearsal time was given to this scene than had been given on previous production processes. The cast committed time and emotional energy to engage each rehearsal with the reality of Takimoto eating twenty-four chocolates. This process involved them all – they needed to take responsibility for what sharing this reality did to them, to her, and as the weeks of the production period progressed, they had to help care for her and each other as part of the emotional challenge of this. For the actor playing Tinker (Tsuneo Kubo), this took the emotional engagement of his own relationship to this scene to a completely different level. Kawaguchi was initially highly reluctant to do this and would never have asked an actor to put themselves through it, but Takimoto insisted:

‘for myself, as an actor, for the truth of it. I had to do it to understand the part, to understand Robin, to live it.’⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Conversation with Takimoto Naoko, Tsuneo Kobe, Aki Tsujita and Tomoco Kawaguchi, Suiteganame, Tokyo, 22 May 2012.

Macdonald notes this moment in the play as significant in relation to the question of theatre time:

After the first production, before the play was reprinted, she got the idea to put in an extra box of chocolates. That wasn't in the first production. And I just saw a production in which they did two trays of chocolates, and I think it unbalances the play, because it becomes this whole performance art section in the middle of the play. It takes a quarter of an hour to eat a fucking box of chocolates. It's a good gag, but it just takes too long.⁵¹⁶

I am interested here in MacDonald's concern over time, also in his observation that the addition of the extra layer 'unbalances the play'. His throwaway comment about it being 'a good gag' reduces the intention of Kane's theatre, and he effectively steps back from further engagement with her and the play in this statement on it here. The rats in the script are one thing, but an extra layer of chocolates was a question, an impulse and a challenge too far for Macdonald. In Irigarayan terms, Macdonald effectively reaches a limit with the extent to which he will launch himself on Kane's sea, and turns the boat home:

Those wanderers in deep waters sometimes get closer to their destinations than voyagers who leave port better prepared. Prows slicing through the water, masts crowding the sky, sails cunningly set, a firm hand (they) go straight to shore. Such proud vessels keep their heading. And how they resist the sea! And always find the way home.⁵¹⁷

Notably, it is the pressure on time that occasions his distancing. The extension of time through image-structure is something that he had previously referenced in the 1998 *Independent* interview, that is that the play itself takes less than half an hour to read but that 'the latest running time is clocked at 90 minutes'.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Gobert, op. cit., p. 147.

⁵¹⁷ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit. p. 49.

⁵¹⁸ Christopher, 'Rat with hand', *Independent*. See also H-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, Oxon, USA and Canada, Routledge, 2006, p. 153: 'Theatre is familiar with the *time dimension of the staging* peculiar to it. While the text gives the reader the choice to read faster or slower, to repeat or to pause, in theatre the specific time of the performance with its particular rhythm and its individual dramaturgy

In truth there are many moments, beyond the eating of the extra layer of chocolates, where the images of the play can be pushed. It always surprises me to read reviewers or directors listing stage directions such as the sunflower growing above Grace and Graham's heads, and the rats carrying the feet away as 'problems'. These moments are a gift! They are essentially lyrical moments. It is perhaps not so useful to think of these as stage 'images'. They are theatre moments – each potentially has the time to be played out by various ways and means. Inevitably, they do also create variations in the temporal pacing of the play. How long does a sunflower take to grow? *Does* it take quarter of an hour to eat a box of chocolates? What are the implications of reducing and extending the time it takes for these images to unfold on the stage, and what meaning can be inferred by their presence? These are the questions that bring a pause for breath into a rehearsal period on *Cleansed*. They offer space to think about life.

At the heart of Kane's theatre is a playing, and she challenges time and gender through this. Her work creates conditions for relational values and clowning and through this she challenges temporal conventions and rituals of 'the theatre' in favour of making time for 'theatre art' to find truth, though as she says on more than one

(tempo of action and speech, duration, pauses and silences, etc.) belongs to the 'work'. It is a matter of the time no longer of one (reading) subject but of the shared time of many subjects (collectively spending time). In this way, a physical, sensual reality of the experience of time is inseparably interwoven with a mental reality, namely the aesthetic 'concretization' of what is indented in the performance.' The shifting of theatre time effectively shifts 'the collective' who witness it, and for critics who rely on speedily scribbling their response to witnessing a performance, extensions of this frame can be disconcerting. Where theatre directors earn their living in the London theatre, the idea that 'time is money' will always be uppermost in their minds, and at some point the balance inevitably tips against the play and its rehearsal experimentation. See J. Deeney, 'Workshop to Mainstream: Women's Playwriting in the Contemporary British Theatre', in M.B. Gale and V. Gardner (eds.), *Women, Theatre and Performance: New Histories, New Historiographies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 142-162. Hence there is a politics sitting under these tensions, and theatre time as a site of material as well as aesthetic contestation is one that merits further scholarly consideration.

occasion: 'Telling the truth is killing me.'⁵¹⁹ She was anarchic and questioning in her quest for truth, as Dominic Dromgoole relates:

Occasionally she would appear at the Bush, go in and see a show, then walk out at half-time. Instead of the usual discreet slipping away with head lowered, Sarah would sit on the stairs and lecture the theatre staff and anyone hanging around, including on one occasion the actors waiting to make their entrances in the second half, on what was wrong with the show.⁵²⁰

In the following section, I discuss the nature of the London theatre and Kane's passion for the play of (and with) football within the space of the British media. I consider the feminist and queer implications of this within the context of a specific time and place – Britain in the late-1990s. I reflect on the challenge Kane's work and approach posed to a theatre scene that is inherently conservative and maintained by the institution of critical reviewing.⁵²¹ In exploring this, I note the gradual progression of women into this arena over time.

⁵¹⁹ 'Sarah Kane' *Théâtre Français*, <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/thf/aujourd'hui/auteurscontemporains.html>, ND, (accessed 13 May 2013). A compulsion to reveal 'truth' in the moment, whatever that 'truth' is, is part of clowning.

⁵²⁰ D. Dromgoole, *The Full Room: an A-Z of contemporary playwriting*, London, Methuen Drama, 2000, p. 161.

⁵²¹ "There's a lot of right-wing people in theatre," says Lisa Goldman, artistic director of the Soho Theatre. "And it's very rare that theatre stands up to the authorities. It tends to be satisfied picking up the crumbs thrown down to it. Its attitude is: let's not rock the boat; let's be pragmatic; let's make this work." B. Logan, 'All the world's a stage: Brian Logan meets Lisa Goldman', *New Statesman*, 12 March 2009. <http://www.newstatesman.com/theatre/2009/03/soho-theatre-goldman-world>, ND, (accessed 18 October 2012).

5.ii. Football and the London Theatre

Historian Eric Hobsbawm argues in *The Age of Extremes* that from a socio-economic perspective, the twentieth century is best understood as operating between 1914 and 1991.⁵²² He names it 'the Short Twentieth Century' and argues that the early 1990s can be viewed as the end of a particular historical trajectory. In conversation with Antonio Polito in *The New Century*, undertaken in 1999, he elaborates on this, nevertheless underlining the arbitrariness of time classification and recognising its constructed and political nature:

I made a choice by identifying 1991 as the end of the Short Century (in a way, it was easier to set the beginning in 1914), but this was not the only possibility when I wrote my book in 1994. I chose that date for reasons of expediency. Exact dates are always matters of historical, didactic or journalistic expediency [...] singling out a particular date is a convention, and not something historians are ready to fight for. There is only one clear indicator for the end of the end of the Short Century: we know that since 1973, the world economy has entered a new phase. And if you believe, as I still do, in Kondratev's theory of long waves, that period was destined to end some time in the nineties, but exactly when is not so clear [...]. It is only possible to know when a period ended when that period has ended for a considerable period of time.⁵²³

As noted in the previous section, time and theatre are of particular interest to Kane, and in interviews, and through her writing, she demonstrates an ambivalence to the forms and rituals of both. As discussed in chapter 4, Kane's shift to 'gynocentric' time through Cate in *Blasted* represents a strategy for addressing questions of violence, and it is that relationship between gender and

⁵²² E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991*, Second Edition, London, Abacus Books, 2003, p. 3. First published by Michael Joseph in 1994. Hobsbawm makes an interesting reference in his opening to autobiography and historical periods, underlining a political importance to telling history from memory and from the experience of ones' own life as well in connection to the broader socio-political sphere. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, ibid. I write this section and the next with this ethos in mind.

⁵²³ E. Hobsbawm and A. Polito, *The New Century*, trans. A. Cameron, London, Abacus Books, 2003, p. 3. First published in Italian as *Inervista sul nuovo secolo* by Gius, Laterza & Figli spA in 1999.

violence that I turn to now. Recalling Kane's comment in Stephenson and Langridge that her main source for thinking about violence is herself, underlines the subtlety with which Kane addresses gender and its binaries in interview, and also the presence of feminism(s) within her texts.⁵²⁴

It is important to recognise that Kane was an ambitious and high-achieving woman, and first and foremost, a theatre-maker. Like many women of my generation, she took strength from the achievements of earlier feminist interventions, and entered her professional life with an optimism that she could progress with energy, enthusiasm and intelligence, and be judged on merit alone:

When people talk about me as a writer, that's what I am, and that's how I want my work to be judged – on its quality, not on the basis of my age, gender, class, sexuality or race. I don't want to be a representative of any biological or social group of which I happen to be a member. I am what I am. Not what other people want me to be.⁵²⁵

It is important to note Kane's awareness of contemporary discourses around gendering contained in this statement, and her desire for her work to be considered equitably, from a position of being beyond or outside of social classifications (arguably the invisible prerogative of the white, upper-class, male in

⁵²⁴ Stephenson and Langridge, loc. cit., p. 133. As Aston notes, this comment is often paraphrased and re-cited as suggestive of a notion that Kane did not consider herself to be a feminist. E. Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric', in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit., pp. 21-22. I concur with Aston that this is a distraction, and erroneously shifts the reader away from the subtlety of the points Kane is making here about the subject in question *vis-à-vis* connections between writing, gender and violence. Kane does not mention feminism in this comment at all – her lips remain notably closed on uses of the word in interview – but as discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, this 'closing of the lips' does not signify a rejection of something's existence or its principles. Even if Kane were to have considered herself a non-feminist, which I would refute, rejection of a label does not mean that the thinking or practical activism of it failed to touch or influence her. As Aston usefully analyses (ibid.) and as this thesis demonstrates, Kane was working with feminist strategies and concerns whether she considered herself to 'be' one or not, and this is of interest here.

⁵²⁵ Stephenson and Langridge, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

patriarchy). These statements, made after the *Blasted* controversy suggest that her desire for being 'beyond representation' in her acts ('judge me on what I do, not who I am') is an articulate political position. It is one that recognises politics in the structuring of the world, and one that desires for the potential of the body or 'being' in the world to be of itself, of its own nature in its most important life-choices (in this instance, in her choice to write and to be judged of 'quality'), whatever its morphological or cultural groupings 'happen to' represent.

Such a viewpoint does not suggest an antagonism to feminism, rather it indicates a resistance to being labelled in a gendered or political position that may bring binary trappings (and inferior judgements on the quality of her work) in its wake; a position shared by many women making theatre at the time. There is nothing in this to suggest Kane was uninterested in or unconcerned with feminism, nor does it suggest that her world view or theatrical vision did not militate for a fracturing and exposure of the destructive homogeneity of patriarchy, its binaries, representations and institutions.⁵²⁶

Whilst she desired a 'human being-ness' for herself, nominally beyond gender representation, Kane was remarkably adept at *playing at* and *playing off* gender in public and through her performances. This strategy has erroneously led to the

⁵²⁶ As Aston observes, in an excellent article progressing discussion of the 'misinterpretation' of Kane's comment in Stephenson and Langridge: 'From the mid-90s to the present, attachments to feminism are not explicitly made by contemporary women dramatists, and neither do they advocate a 'new' kind of feminism. Instead their work lays claim to a renewal of feminism through the adoption of various dramaturgies and aesthetics that work affectively on their audience, so that they might feel the loss of feminism and all [...] that this loss might entail.' E. Aston, 'Feeling the Loss of Feminism: Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and an Experiential Genealogy of Women's Playwriting', *Theatre Journal*, vol. 62, no. 4, December 2010, pp. 575-592.

categorising of her and her work as being that of an ‘honorary male’ – a reductive charge that ignores the subtlety of patriarchal critique in her actions, also the fluidity of her movement between binaries in a manner that was most definitely (and, I would argue, consciously) gender-queer.⁵²⁷ Take, for example, the oft-quoted references to football and theatre. The following was made in an interview with David Benedict in the *Independent on Sunday* published the weekend after *Blasted* opened in January 1995:

I hate the idea of theatre just being an evening pastime. It should be emotionally and intellectually demanding. I love football. The level of analysis that you listen to on the terraces is astonishing. If people did that in the theatre ... but they don't.⁵²⁸

Similarly, in her own writing for the *Guardian* whilst reviewing the Edinburgh Fringe in 1998, the Summer after *Cleansed* opened, she reiterates this:

I frequently walk out of the theatre early without fear of missing anything. But however bad I've felt, I've never left a football match early, because you never know when a miracle might occur.⁵²⁹

These statements reflect a genuine love of football by Kane, and an inference that frequent football attendance formed part of her life. Comments made by Kane about her football-watching are always upbeat, joyful and embodied. Her review of the Edinburgh Festival here begins with the irreverent line:

Bollocks to Edinburgh – I'm off to Old Trafford. First day of the season and the sun is shining on the Theatre of Dreams. But the first 85 minutes are a nightmare.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Aston, *Feminist Views*, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

⁵²⁸ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵²⁹ *ibid.*

⁵³⁰ The article is entitled 'Drama with Balls' and is reproduced in Saunders, *About Kane*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

This irreverence marks a clowning impulse that honestly expresses what is happening for her, whilst revealing truths about football and theatre in that moment to the audience of *Guardian* readers. For as Coburn and Morrison note:

the way forward is in the truth of the moment [...]. We must always have a relationship to what is happening even if the thing that is happening is that nothing is.⁵³¹

Whilst commentators were quick to ascribe a masculinity to her interest (noting the reductive and patronising media term ‘laddism’, so popular in the 1990s), Kane presents her personal interest in football with genuine commitment to the subject.⁵³² There is no real difference between the way she recounts her football-going and her references to attending other cultural events of interest to her – a Jesus and Mary Chain concert, visiting the Mona Hatoum or the *Sensation* exhibitions, attending a live sex show in Amsterdam, a rock concert at Edinburgh Castle or seeing the *Ladyboys of Bangkok* perform.⁵³³ This is not to say that she was not cognisant of how this would trouble those with an investment in the gender binary whose perception of football was first and foremost that it was, and should be, ‘a game for the lads’. I concur with Aston that Kane was acting on ‘mischievous’ impulses, and in the public space of the British press, set up a gender-play with the masculinity *ascribed* to football to tell truths about British theatre.⁵³⁴ How conscious and intentional this was, or how much of it was just innate and reflective of her own anarchic and highly intelligent clowning approach to life, is hard to

⁵³¹ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 120. Note also, ‘Survival is a delicate balance of respect and irreverence. Just like clown. To maintain what is good, what is sacred, about the work and not be afraid to be irreverent and change or develop that which should be changed, not that which merely can be changed but only to engage in change that is necessary’ Coburn and Morrison, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵³² Aston, *Feminist Views*, loc. cit., p. 80.

⁵³³ Saunders, *About Kane*, loc. cit. pp. 83-84. Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 18 and p. 24.

⁵³⁴ Aston, ‘Reviewing the fabric’, in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit.

discern; though there was clearly a bright and engaged challenge in these writings that was most definitely political. Reading her comments one can divine a Be-Laughing, a Laughing Out Loud, a Metafooling with the relationship between football, spectacle and gender.⁵³⁵ Her *Drama with Balls* review mirrors something of the language of theatre journalism back at its critics – and indeed her own.⁵³⁶ Kane's target, I would suggest, was primarily the patriarchal possession of theatre critics – both male and female – and the power over theatre (the art of theatre) that they enjoy. In analysing this further, it is important to look more closely at what Kane is actually saying in these statements.

Two key things mark her recounting of cultural events, and these are of particular feminist interest. Firstly, the events she enjoys and names do not include specific theatre productions of contemporary status. Whilst she was eloquent in discussing a range of playwrights in a *working* context, her leisure narratives do not include 'the latest David Hare play' or 'a recent production at the Lyric'.⁵³⁷ Her leisure interests are centred in a wider performance/performance-art world – and it is a world, arguably, unknown to (or outside the remit of critique) from the incestuous

⁵³⁵ Daly and Caputi, *Wickedary*, op. cit., see p. 64, pp. 142-143 and p. 81.

⁵³⁶ Kane's comment 'the first 85 minutes are a nightmare' recalls responses to the opening night of *Blasted*. Note Kate Kellaway's insidious and patronising attack on Kane in the *Guardian*, and its relationship to looking and looking away from the scene before her. Having commented negatively on the 'astigmatic wallpaper' used in the set design for the production, Kellaway remarks, 'if only it could stop us seeing altogether' before concluding her review with: 'Sarah Kane does know how to write. I hope she wakes up out of the nightmare of her own imagination.' Kellaway, 'Throwing Out the Blasted hatred bag', loc. cit. p. 009.

⁵³⁷ Ana Tasic from the University of Belgrade offered an interesting perspective on this with reference to Kane's love of pop concerts, at the *Sarah Kane Now* Conference. A. Tasic, 'Sarah Kane's Plays in the Context of Popular Culture: Contemporary Political Meaning of Extreme Physicality Onstage', *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, 2012.

coterie of newspaper theatre reviewers who maintain the hierarchy of London theatre and who validate its legitimacy.

Secondly, of feminist interest, is her critique of the timing and predictability of theatre, its repetition of routines and action. By critiquing the rigid evening timing of theatre, she (unwittingly perhaps) extends a point made by many female theatre practitioners that evening rehearsals and performances make a professional stage career difficult (and sometimes incompatible) with having children thus keeping its practical and economic bases largely in the domain of men and younger women. Her inference that the leisurely nature of its evening ritual makes it unemotional and intellectually light is a well-poised insult to the coterie of critics. If we note Saunders' reference to Brecht's 'we pin our hopes to the sporting public' it is also, arguably, a Marxist jibe which sets the 'astonishing [...] level of analysis' on the terraces (the traditional domain of white, working-class men) against a lazy and dull school of middle-class theatre.⁵³⁸ Kane does not present herself as an analyst of football action and performance, rather as an analyst and admirer of football crowds and democratic commentary, and in doing so deftly 'removes' her female body as a participant in the crowd and sets one traditional body of white male spectators against another.

⁵³⁸ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit. p. 15. There is insufficient space in this thesis to consider Kane's relationship to Marxism in any depth, but I note it as an area of scholarly study which may yield interesting findings. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Kane contributed to Marxist platforms within Britain. She is reputed to have given a talk on her theatre work in the Summer of 1995 at the annual Marxism conference organised by the Socialist Workers' Party and held at the University of London each July. I have not found any concrete evidence for this as yet, but have had this story from a reliable source who attended the talk.

The gendering of her framing is inferential, and of course, she *is* involved in the crowd, yet as a writer with an acute eye on the reactionary and discriminatory nature of the media, it would not take much to divine that her reference to football crowds and evening theatre-goers would have instinctively evoked the white-maleness of both to critical readers in the theatre press. Thus Kane presents 'herself' and her female presence in the football crowd in one instance as invisible and tokenistic, and at another level as a strong woman, very present and a strong player (contender) for the game. Note her enthusiasm for the 'astonishing analysis' going on around her. In observing the (men's) focus on the game (rather than focusing primarily on the 'play' herself) she is not so much an honorary male, but a woman dressed in a man's role and football colours, passionate about the game but mischievously subverting its gender hegemony by ducking out of its key action and marking herself as different from its crowd. Such 'performance' is not unlike a familiar trope found in lesbian cabaret of the 1980s and 1990s where a woman dressed as a boy or man monologues with the audience playing off masculine stereotypes and clichés.⁵³⁹ It is also a familiar aspect of some Drag King performance and theatre workshops. In many (though not all) of these cabarets, the performer is self-identified as a woman dressed in boys' clothing accessing

⁵³⁹ Notable examples of this form of performance can be found in the work of companies Split Britches and Spare Tyre Theatre Company, also in that of writer / performer Claire Dowie and the Drag King / gender-queer cabaret of Joey Hateley. See: E.L. Sisley, 'Notes on Lesbian Theatre', in *The Drama Review: Sex and Performance Issue*, vol. 25, no. 1, March 1981, pp. 47-56; T. Helbing, 'Gay Plays, Gay Theatre, Gay Performance', in *The Drama Review: Sex and Performance Issue*, vol. 25, no. 1, March 1981, pp. 35-46; S. Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988; S. Case, *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Practice*, Baltimore and London, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990; L. Goodman, *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own*, London and New York, 1993; C. Dowie, *Why is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt? and Other Stand-Up Theatre Plays*, London, Methuen Drama, 1996; S. Case, *Split Britches: Lesbian Practice / Performance Practice*, London and New York, Routledge, 1996; 'Spare Tyre: Theatre Without Prejudice', <http://sparetyre.org/>, ND, (accessed 15 May 2013), 'Split Britches: 32 Years of Queer Performance', *Wordpress*, [web blog], ND, <http://splitbritches.wordpress.com/>, (accessed 15 May 2013); 'TransAction Theatre Welcomes You', <http://www.transactiontheatre.co.uk/>, ND, (accessed 12 October 2012); McNamara, PhD Thesis, 2009.

men's spaces subversively in critique, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the female and lesbian audience gaze (playfully and seductively) on the self as an object of desire/acceptance. It is a lesbian, feminist performance strategy, and highly subversive. With Drag King and Transgender performance, the binary is queered further, with many performers performing male to access and express their own maleness within a female or transitioning (FTM) body; but the reinforcement of the queer gaze of the audience and the challenge to heteronormativity is the same. The tone of Kane's commentaries on football and theatre have a similar resonance to both lesbian and transgender performance.

At another level, and in the second instance, whilst distancing herself as a spectator on the action to the more familiar female position of watching others (the men) talk about it, she reinforces her own position as a woman at the game, enjoying the game, able both to participate fully both in its action *and* in the analysis, sharing with the other members of the crowd in enthusiasm and close analysis. In doing so, she reclaims her right as a woman to attend, enjoy, understand and participate fully in what was traditionally seen as 'a man's game', furthermore her right as a woman and theatre worker to criticise, reject and walk out of theatre she sees as dull. In using the analogy of football-watching to analyse the theatre, she dissolves the traditional separation of 'work' and 'leisure' so valued as a tool in maintaining conventional masculine roles under a Capitalist patriarchy. She asserts the total nature of her own professional commitment and focus on theatre (like many women, fusing work and leisure interests) and intelligently advocates the benefits of one spectator activity over another, drawing

connections between them and dissolving the autonomy of their relevant spheres.⁵⁴⁰

Kane's love of football finds interesting reference in Saunders' recounting of the differences between the original unpublished scripts of *Blasted* performed whilst Kane was a Masters' student at Birmingham (1993), and its later professional (published) version. Love of football is located by Kane, again, without complication or apology, in the figure of Cate. Saunders' juxtaposition of this particular example of cut material with Cate's line, 'it's like that when I have a fit/orgasm' extends my earlier analysis of the cunt-centred playing of time, action and place in Kane's text to the theme of football:

In both the Birmingham drafts of *Blasted*, the line, 'It's like that when I have an orgasm' is substituted for 'It's like that when I have a fit' (1:22). There is also an analogy made to time standing still and the game of football. This material was cut by the time of the Royal Court production – 'Straight after someone equalises, or even if they don't I feel sick and certain that it won't be safe till we've got another [goal] ... But for one moment I'm not thinking of anything else.'⁵⁴¹

Thus in her earlier versions of *Blasted*, Kane writes emotional, orgasmic and spoken anxiety and passion for football into her text through Cate – again, an emotional prerogative traditionally reserved for men, and for male expression in British culture.

⁵⁴⁰ The suggestion that theatre would flourish under a more expansive time frame is gynocentric and subversive. As noted in the previous section, ritual of theatre time is sacrosanct to theatre critics and forms part of Jack Tinker's legacy. In suggesting that theatre move its activity to another time frame – and that its viewing structures adopt a frame that enable an opening-up of spontaneous, engaged and democratic discourse on proceedings (such as those demonstrated in football crowds, concert-goers and exhibition visitors) – Kane was striking a blow at the heart of the critics' power and prerogative.

⁵⁴¹ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 48.

In *Drama with Balls*, Kane similarly relates football performance to virility and sexuality, whilst inscribing her own physicality and passion (and that of Vincent O'Connell's) into the commentary:

The crowd starts to leave. Sheringham scores, but with only a minute left I'm on the verge of saying, 'Bollocks to football – I'm off to the festival'. Then a miracle occurs. In the last minute, we're awarded a free kick 30 yards out. David Beckham steps up and curls it into the back of the net. A stiff two fingers to everyone in this country who hates him for being rich, talented and shagging that bird. The talents of myself and writer-director Vincent O'Connell are very nearly lost to the nation as we disappear through the roof of the North stand [...]. The sexual connotations of 'performance' are not coincidental. Liverpool's Paul Ince publicly admits that he finds tackling more enjoyable than sex. Performance is visceral. It puts you in direct physical contact with thought and feeling. When I write about United's performance, I can't help but write in the present tense.⁵⁴²

These comments reflect a full circle of mind-body passion for 'the game' which Kane centres clearly in the feminine in her theatre work, but also, gender-queerly, (through identification with Ince and Beckham), with relation to herself, in the masculine too. Through language and structure in playtext and public interview, Kane uses sex, gender and football politically to challenge theatre and its critics.

It is important to note a political consciousness in Kane's work and her connection to a range of contemporary ideologies and cultures – anti-establishment, feminist and queer. These are apparent in her statements and theatrical practice, and can be contextualised with reference to the social and material conditions of Britain in the late twentieth century. Sarah Kane was born in 1970. Social conditions in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s were marked by poverty, despair and a growing gulf

⁵⁴² Saunders, *About Kane*, loc. cit., p. 83.

between rich and poor. Discontent was expressed in a huge groundswell of political activism on all sides of the political fence and activity expressing a range of political positions and debates.⁵⁴³ There was volatility, intense conflict and some marked fears about the future of the planet. Within this there was also a healthy capacity for articulation of concern, the growth of community, discussion in public spaces and the development of resistance and protest strategies at a grass roots' level. By the time Sarah Kane was at university and making her professional debut in the early 1990s, a highly literate, articulate, politicised generation of state-educated young people were engaged in questioning the world. Kane was similarly anarchic, intelligent and outspoken, and made work that challenged boundaries and threatened to destabilise conditions.

Kane's criticisms of the culture of London theatres of the 1990s represented the opinion of many more theatre-makers, particularly women, than has been formally recorded, and it is important to remember that whilst the media and certain key commentators within the theatre establishment may have regarded her as an 'enfant terrible', there were many more of us who did not consider her to be so. She is sometimes configured as being 'hard to handle' and conflictual. Take for example Sierz's account of a conflict with a university lecturer at Bristol:

⁵⁴³ Helen Iball usefully lists a number of key political events and gives a good overview of the period in her book on *Blasted*; Iball, *Sarah Kane's Blasted*, op. cit. Other key events and movements of note include: the Winter of Discontent, National Front activities in the 1970s and the development of the Anti-Nazi League; 1980s Peace movements, CND, rhetoric of the Cold War, growing concern about American Imperialism and the proliferation of the nuclear industry, feminist actions, queer movements against section 28 and the hounding of gay men with the advent of HIV /Aids, birth of Amnesty International, urban riots (Brixton, Toxteth, Chapeltown), the Miner's Strike, Greenham Common, football hooliganism; moving into the 1990s, Poll Tax Riots, environmentalism, anti-McDonalds and the growth of consumerism, political action against the Criminal Justice Bill and Child Support Act, the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and road protests, to name a few.

at university she took a confrontational attitude to some of her tutors. When one accused her of writing a pornographic essay, she threw porn mags at him in the next tutorial.⁵⁴⁴

Consider also the following from Mel Kenyon on the showing of the first half of *Blasted* on the MA at Birmingham:

After the first half finished you could hear a pin drop. Sarah then got up and passionately defended the play from the detractors in the audience. I thought, 'God she's talented but she's going to be a handful'.⁵⁴⁵

Dominic Dromgoole expresses similar ambivalence towards Kane. He praises her passion and intelligence, but, as noted in the previous section, is also wary of her agency, and her anarchic approach to the institution of theatre:

Sarah first hoveled into view when she applied for the assistant director job at the Bush [...] she sent in a four-page essay about the future of British theatre and hence the world [...] original, unremittingly bleak and highly compelling [...] we liked her [...] but couldn't offer her the job. Her intelligence and judgement were clearly extraordinary, but we worried that her non-stop intensity might drag a little in rehearsal.⁵⁴⁶

The Bush gave her a post as the Literary Manager, but she walked out of the job within a month, bored with the 'sameness' of the theatre scripts sent to her to read.⁵⁴⁷ Dromgoole concluded: 'She had adopted us as parents to rebel against.'⁵⁴⁸ His subsequent comment that they would have liked to have welcomed her into 'the fold' testifies to the close-knit, familial, almost incestuous nature of the Bush. Whilst there was an age-gap of less than ten years between Kane and some these commentators,

⁵⁴⁴ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, p. 90. This sort of conflict was actually very common within university departments at the time. Politically it bears relevance to 'Off-the-Shelfing'; a feminist activity in the 1990s where groups of women (and some men) would go into shops such as W H Smiths and pull all the pornographic magazines off the top shelves, throwing them on the floor to protest against the exploitation of women in them, and to persuade the shop to stop selling them.

⁵⁴⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵⁴⁶ Dromgoole, *The Full Room*, op. cit. p. 162.

⁵⁴⁷ Kane started the job at the Bush Theatre in March 1994. Sierz, PhD Thesis, 2005.

⁵⁴⁸ *ibid.*

inferences of immaturity were instrumental in infantilising her behaviour, thus denying the political integrity and intelligence of her critiques. The negative and reductive response to her intensity and intelligence reflect a form of institutionalised violence.

Elana Greenfield offers a useful analysis of why Kane may have attracted such sly bile in her consideration of the *Blasted* hysteria. Her conclusions were drawn after witnessing what she describes as the ‘inappropriate [...] incredibly odd and defensive ways people [...] acted towards her during her Exchange in NYC’.⁵⁴⁹ Greenfield relates a story Kane told to her about a man who had given up smoking after many years and a week later dropped dead. The conclusion was that the sharp withdrawal of toxins was a factor in his demise. Reflecting on this in relation to the negative reactions to *Blasted*, Greenfield then notes:

What she had done was written a genuinely great play – formally breathtaking, showing a deep understanding, showing a deep understanding (and a compassion [...]) of how certain kinds of violence, abuse and disrespect for the individual’s sense of her/his own humanity [...] eventually turns into horrific violence on a mass scale [...]. She took the glamour and titillation out of the construct, out of the relationship as it’s often presented, between sex and violence, and showed it for what it is, a horror, and even more impressively in her play, she managed to present the linking of sex and violence as a lamentable and pathetic perversion of the longing for kindness and perhaps love.

She deprived people point blank of their daily poison and I guess they were afraid they were going to die.⁵⁵⁰

Greenfield gets to the heart of the issue with clarity and precision. In discussing the ‘construct between sex and violence’ challenged by Kane, and her clown-like and

⁵⁴⁹ E. Greenfield, ‘Kane in Babel’, *The Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Arts, Politics and Culture*, Dec 2008-Jan 2009, pp. 76-77.

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid.*

vulnerable exposure of 'the human longing for kindness and perhaps love', she recognises how:

anger was turned against her, she was accused personally of being a moral deviant, her work of being filth – not the construct.⁵⁵¹

Kane left many within the theatre and reviewing establishment feeling exposed and scared. Theatre is a hard business, and many within it, by necessity, must grow thick skins to survive. As Greenfield notes, 'Sarah was not thick-skinned' and her work, 'so misperceived' was 'her heart'. The response to having that shell penetrated by the truth of what Kane's work showed them:

seemed to make many people [...] lose their boundaries, their balance, and project onto her like mad [...] peoples' defenses were on parade – whether expressed as a sort of hostile indifference, a bizarre "buddying up", or a supposed, slightly creepy intimacy [...]⁵⁵²

The passive-aggressive nature of some of this response, and the 'supposed, slightly creepy intimacy' of 'buddying up' with all the laconic toxins this releases recalls Barker's analogy of 'the theatre' as a kind of Dracula:

Dracula – the fear of the *known*. He must come in the night to the sleeping (unspeaking) one, when she can be imagined, when she cannot reveal her *appalling familiarity* by utterance. Is Dracula not characterized by fatigue? Is he not the epitome of the lover who has heard it all, and for whom the one can be contemplated only as mute? Dracula – the exhaustion of the erotic repertoire.⁵⁵³

It is this 'fatigue' that Barker challenges through his own work, and in his approaches to directing, he encourages actors to explore 'the element of the irrational in

⁵⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵⁵² *ibid.*

⁵⁵³ Barker, *Death, the One and the Art of Theatre*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

transgression', thus allowing themselves to feel emotion, and to play out the extremes of it without apology.⁵⁵⁴ As actress Claire Price describes of working with him:

It was the first time as an actor where the quantity of emotion I have to give to a part is welcomed and I was never told to edit. Working with Howard, no extreme is too extreme. Any extreme you've gone to, you can always go further.⁵⁵⁵

Risk and exposure is a necessary part of this, and Barker notes this as a principle of the 'art of theatre'. Price's comment that the quantities of emotion she has to give to a part have not always been 'welcomed' in other rehearsal rooms, and it is this anaemia of human expression that so often reduces the potential of theatre to tell human truths as Barker knows and as Kane knew.

Jeremy Weller shares Barker's criticism of conventional theatre, and argues that theatre should be made from the life stories of performers – notably the start of his process involves a focus on the words of his actors. He films their faces telling their life stories – a process that inevitably leads to a focus on mouths, lips and the movement of emotion across the face and body as the teller tells his or her tale. This is Weller's starting point for theatre. In the process of weaving productions from fragments of the stories, also from random occurrences in rehearsal, he puts his own painful stories into the mix, returning again to certain themes – such as his relationship with his absent father, the murder of his sister – and working and retelling them with others. Weller's methods challenge the notion that a theatre of masks, fictional characters, unlived stories, can tell us much about life. Life, he argues is already there, within individual experience, impulse, testimony and sharing, and provides plenty of drama once people

⁵⁵⁴ K. Gritzner and D. Rabey (eds.), *Theatre of Catastrophe: New Essays on Howard Barker*, London, Oberon Books, 2006, p. 55.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 58.

are asked about themselves. In his work with young people he notes that the more they work with their real lives to make drama, the more they conversely understand the drama of their everyday lives.⁵⁵⁶ When one considers the comments made by Daniel Evans on Kane's approach to acting on *Cleansed*, also Michael Shannon's discussion of her directing processes for *Woyzeck*, it is clear that she shared these principles.⁵⁵⁷

What theatre commentators, distancing themselves from what they view as Kane's 'excessive' or 'explosive' or passionately 'intense' nature, fail to take account of, are the many excellent experiences of theatre that state-school-educated, university-leavers of this generation witnessed in the 1970s and 1980s; and the richly discursive, opinionated, open-minded, and self-motivated working class culture that existed around it. Many of us had contact with community and political theatres – youth theatre, Theatre-in-Education – and publically funded fringe venues offering opportunity to see engaged and experimental work, and to throw ourselves into things. Schools largely managed their own curriculum, and the preference for humanist, radical and creative education methods by teachers of the post-war generation meant that there was an emphasis on the arts and humanities. We were very well-educated; the opportunity to make theatre, build knowledge and immerse oneself in passion, was all around. Encountering the hierarchies and narcissism, the

⁵⁵⁶ BBC, 'Imagine... A Play for Today', dir. C. Lockhart, writer A. Yentob, [DVD], 2006. Broadcast on 31 October 2006. This thesis suggests that there are further similarities of intention, theme and practice in Weller's and Kane's theatre processes than has previously been explored, and suggests further research into the Grassmarket Project and Weller's approach to theatre-making to better understand this. Conversation with Jeremy Weller, Edinburgh, UK, 7 March 2013.

⁵⁵⁷ 'Daniel Evans' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit.; Lyons, Honours Thesis, 2008.

vampiric *sang froid* and posturing of the Ox-Bridge-heavy London theatre scene and critics in our early 20s was something of a shock. It was such an anachronism.

Kane's misgivings about the negative and patriarchal culture of the London theatre were shared by many young people of the time, and whilst outside the scope of this thesis, I would say that there is some useful academic scholarship to be done on this particular generation of British theatre-makers, and why so many of us – particularly women – stepped out of the formal venue scene, and into crossover areas such as performance art, cross-art form, teaching, community arts, university work, drama therapy and so on. Kane herself showed signs of moving into these areas, through her work as a writing mentor, and it is worth recalling Rebellato's comment in his 1999 *Appreciation* that there were:

many testimonies to her inspiring presence as a teacher of playwriting, in rehearsal, and as an actor and director.⁵⁵⁸

This sentiment was one shared by Vicky Featherstone, the then Artistic Director of the London-based Paines Plough Theatre Company:

I think above everything else Sarah was a writer. [..She] was incredibly literate in all aspects of theatre, and so her interest in other writers came out of that. She had an extraordinary ability to help other writers develop work. And even though she had a very strong voice in her own writing it was interesting that she could make that voice secondary to what other people wanted to say. Her work on scripts came at an early stage of her career to try and earn money as a script-reader.⁵⁵⁹

In occupying positions as a Literary Manager (Bush Theatre, 1994) and Writer-in-Residence (Paines Plough Theatre, 1996-1998), Kane was part of a growing movement

⁵⁵⁸ Rebellato, 'An Appreciation', op. cit.

⁵⁵⁹ Vicky Featherstone' in Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit., p. 128. Mark Ravenhill was Literary Manager at the company at the same time and approached Kane on the suggestion of Mel Kenyon. See 'Mel Kenyon', *ibid.*, p. 149. See also, M. Ravenhill, 'Suicide art? She's better than that', *Guardian*, 12 October 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/oct/12/theatre>, (accessed 1 June 2013).

of dramaturgy, new writing, literary management and devising projects in the late 1990s that worked at an interface between the commercial theatre venue and community arts and education arena.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a steady proliferation of appointments of both full-time and part-time literary managers [...], the current pattern indicating that theatre in the regions are embarking on ambitious and progressive experiments in literary management and dramaturgy [...]. An equally important part of the changes in the national development is the significance of the regional new playwriting organisations.⁵⁶⁰

This growth had its roots in the Community and Theatre-in-Education movements from the 1960s onwards – something that Kane encountered as a member of Basildon Youth Theatre – and Luckhurst recalls this emerging field as being one of ‘energy and political articulacy’.⁵⁶¹ The development of these posts in venues relied on working partnerships with national and local arts funding infrastructures and frequently worked to an ethos of accessibility and widening participation in the arts. Kane’s early career was clearly centred, very successfully, at that interface, and her involvement with this points to the possibility of an as yet unexplored fourth discourse on Kane’s work – one that could investigate the influence of her work on other writers, her participation in international exchanges and her contribution to this emerging field of theatre development.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy*, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

⁵⁶¹ ‘In 1997 literary managers, dramaturgs and others involved in selecting, developing and staging new performance works held a colloquium, ‘Commissioning the Future’ [...]. The energy and political articulacy of delegates testified to the rapid spread of literary management strategies, and the conference revealed the burning topicality of play selection and development issues.’ *ibid.*

⁵⁶² Kane nurtured new and upcoming new writers through workshops and in the development of the Wild Lunch series. Paines Plough Theatre, ‘Wild Lunch’, www.painesplough.com/past-productions/1998, (accessed 15 May 2013). She received a Jerwood Foundation Young Playwright’s Award in 1998 for the writing of *Cleansed* and participated in exchanges with New York, Berlin, Amsterdam and Eastern Europe. See Jerwood Charitable Foundation, ‘Royal Court: New Playwrights’, <http://jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org/royal-court-jerwood-new-playwrights>, ND, (accessed 12 March 2013).

At the time of writing, Vicky Featherstone is in the process of taking up the Artistic Directorship of the Royal Court Theatre, at the age of 45 – the first woman to do so – having spent a highly-successful 6 years as Executive Director of the National Theatre of Scotland. Notably, this was a role Featherstone helped build – as is so often the way with female artistic directors – having been closely committed to and involved with the development of Scotland’s first-ever national theatre.⁵⁶³ She has set the bar high for the next person coming in, and her repertoire there was notable for its community engagement, new writing, devised and site-specific pieces:

Her tenure at the National Theatre of Scotland has been a great success, creating a model for a "theatre without walls" whose education and participatory work and productions for schools and family audiences have been as important as its flagship projects, including the worldwide hit *Black Watch*, or the verbatim play about the press, *Enquirer*, which is currently running in Glasgow.⁵⁶⁴

Described as a woman who is ‘not afraid to be a strong leader’, Featherstone is bringing Lucy Davies of the National Theatre of Wales in with her as Executive Director. This is a significant appointment from a gender perspective and an unprecedented one, in that it places two women working closely together in top positions full-time at the heart of the London theatre industry.⁵⁶⁵ It also marks Featherstone as a woman who values the professionalism of other women, is sufficiently networked, and happy to share power with, other women in an industry

⁵⁶³ D. Pollock, ‘Vicky Featherstone: London Calling’, *Independent*, 8 January 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features-vicky-featherstone-london-calling.8441751.html>, (accessed 9 January 2013).

⁵⁶⁴ L. Gardner, ‘Vicky Featherstone can help the Royal Court keep its edge’, *Guardian*, 11 May 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/may/11/vicky-featherstone-royal-court-edge>, (accessed 15 May 2013).

⁵⁶⁵ A similar collaboration of note is that of Natalie Abrahami and Carrie Cracknell who from 2007 to 2012 jointly held the role of Artistic Director at the Gate Theatre on a job-share basis. They stepped down together in January 2012 to pursue freelance work. Featherstone has also just appointed Cracknell as an Associate Director for the Court. Gate Theatre, ‘Press Release April 2011’, <http://www.gatetheatre.co.uk/about-the-gate/press-release-april-2011.aspx>, ND, (accessed 18 October 2012).

conventionally dominated by men, male networks and 'old-school-tie' associations. When Featherstone was appointed Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland in 2004, Lyn Gardner wrote in the *Guardian* that, 'her appointment comes at a time when women are more underrepresented as artistic directors in British theatres than at any point in the past 20 years', ⁵⁶⁶ and a fascinating work by Justin Mortimer painted the same year shows something of the tensions within the field, with artistic directors of both genders occupying close, but fluid positions.

⁵⁶⁶ L. Gardner, 'Well-liked director with an eye for the new. Profile: Vicky Featherstone', *Guardian*, 30 July 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/jul/30/arts.ourcritics>, (accessed 3 July 2009).



5.ii.a. 'Three Royal Court Theatre Directors: Katie Mitchell; Stephen Daldry; Ian Rickson', oil on canvas, 2004, 70 in x 80 in, Justin Mortimer (b. 1970).

'Three Royal Court Theatre Directors: Katie Mitchell; Stephen Daldry; Ian Rickson' shows Stephen Daldry reaching across, somewhat homo-erotically to Ian Rickson, placing his hand on his arm.⁵⁶⁷ It is a gesture of transition (Rickson succeeded Daldry at the Court in 1998 and *Cleansed* was the first work programmed under him); but it is also a gesture of intimacy, play, reassurance and perhaps, secrets and confidences. Daldry and Rickson are positioned so that their legs are almost – or perhaps actually – touching. In the space between Daldry's open legs, an effusion of green and black paint, mixed with white, gushes forth, marked by large and swirling brushstrokes on the canvas. This fluid build-up occupies the space between the men's legs, linking them physically within the frame. They are twinned comfortably, each man holds his frame in balance to the other and their faces exchange frank, comfortable smiles and eye-contact.

Behind them, linked physically by proximity, but occupying a vertical trajectory, is Katie Mitchell. She is set outside the circle of the two men, somewhat in her own world, with her eyes looking off to the left, somewhat troubled and uncertain, or perhaps ambivalent, but clearly occupied with her own thoughts and concerns. Her body turns to the left as if she is considering something in the far distance, and in a gesture that suggests she may just step away, out of the frame, leaving the men to their dance. She is playing the pipes and is somewhat absorbed in her own music. And

⁵⁶⁷ *'Three Royal Court Theatre Directors: Katie Mitchell; Stephen Daldry; Ian Rickson'*, oil on canvas, 2004, Justin Mortimer (b. 1970). The work is held in the National Portrait Gallery in London. <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp08056/justin-mortimer?search=sas&sText=Justin+Mortimer>, ND, (accessed 9 March 2013).

yet the three hang together easily enough, and there is a lightness to their presence in the space.

The direction indicated by Mitchell's placing in the composition is the darkness rising up above the trio and back into the main body of the picture – the 'background' – a dense, velvety fog of black and dark-green, getting lighter towards the top, evoking smokey theatre lights, dark backstage areas, and all those corners of the theatre where a 'beetle' may 'scuttle [...] along the backs of their chairs'.⁵⁶⁸ The contours of the painted figures where the darkness touches is somewhat fluid – in fact the black appears to have been painted over and over them, enveloping them – a thin aura of misty white paint protects the figures from being swallowed up into, and obscured by, the darkness. It is an image reminiscent of old photographs – it already feels older than its time – but the three directors occupy their corner and their separate spheres with strength and calm. It is a complex, ghostly and candid image. There is potential and breath in the darkness. What happens or will happen there is as yet unknown. From a gender perspective, Mortimer's work is fascinating, and demonstrates something of change – the men are seated in relationship, occupying the horizontal (and sitting) position conventionally the reserve of women in portraiture and philosophy; whereas the woman in the work occupies the vertical (conventionally reserved for men); her body signifying difference, and a turn towards something other.

Whilst women in the arts tend to predominate in administrative jobs, with men under-represented yet still occupying the key executive and artistic roles at the higher levels,

⁵⁶⁸ Kane, *4.48 Psychosis*, op. cit., p. 206.

(particularly in the theatre), there has nevertheless been a steady trickle of women obtaining some of the main artistic director posts of London theatres in recent years.⁵⁶⁹ Notably, many are women of Kane's generation and younger.⁵⁷⁰ It is potentially a promising picture signifying change, but more analysis is needed to determine what the experiences of such women are, how their careers develop in this industry in comparison with men's, and what sort of conditions are required to ensure that this growth continues.

Featherstone's appointment at the Royal Court is nevertheless an exciting one and offers the potential for change and innovation in the London theatre scene. In her first Summer season she has marked a commitment to New Writing and to the value of playwrights by announcing that she will:

hand over the building to the playwrights in *Open Court* – a six week festival of plays, ideas and events chosen and suggested by a group of over 140 writers.⁵⁷¹

It is an artistic decision that bodes well for innovation and breath, and heralds a new era which could constitute a major shift in the culture and priorities of London theatre, and its relationship with theatre critics.

⁵⁶⁹ 'Gender Equality Scheme, 2009 -12' The Arts Council of England, ND, http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Gender_Equality_Scheme_2009.pdf, (accessed 3 July 2011).

⁵⁷⁰ To name a few of these: Josie Rourke (Donmar Warehouse, Bush Theatre), Jenny Topper (Bush Theatre, Hampstead Theatre), Indhu Rubasingham (Tricycle Theatre), Lisa Goldman (The Red Room, Soho Theatre), Toni Racklin (The Barbican), Natalie Abrahams and Carrie Cracknell (The Gate), Thea Sharrock (Southwark Playhouse), also of note is Katie Mitchell's long-running relationship with the Royal Court in the past ten years.

⁵⁷¹ Royal Court Theatre, 'Vicky Featherstone Announces Summer 2013 at Royal Court', <http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/news/articles/vicky-featherstone-announces-summer-2013-at-royal/>, (accessed 15 May 2013).

5.iii. The Political and Gender Significance of the Perimeter Fence in *Cleansed*.⁵⁷²

I will now turn to an earlier period of recent British history, and one very relevant to Sarah Kane's life and theatre – the 1980s. To address this, I consider the aesthetic device of the perimeter fence employed by Kane to signify the boundary of the institution, and recognise in Kane's use of this device, reference to two key phenomena in British political life from the 1980s, which became synonymous with this symbol. The first is the hooliganism of English football fans (identified as exclusively male); the second is the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (identified as exclusively female). When one looks back at documents from the period, it becomes clear that the perimeter fence – where presented through photograph, writing, cartoon or televisual image – frequently indicated debates on violence, anger, social unrest, protest and gender struggle in the public space. Pertinent to this study of gender is the strength of binary associations configured in the symbol as it relates to narratives of unrest, and the recurrence of notions of containment, storming and siege associated with this. I am particularly interested in the gendering of these references, and the emergence of an economy of spheres that equates masculinity with interiority and femininity with exteriority. Recognising the fence as a binary divider within an ontology of gender relations that puts men on the inside of the fence and women on the outside, I argue that in placing us fully within the fence (the masculine sphere) and in her playing with an

⁵⁷² Parts of this section have been disseminated in the public domain through 30-minute papers given at a conference in Hungary, and then later in the UK. See N. Kane, 'Gender, Violence and the Explosive Significance of the Perimeter Fence in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*', *Terror(ism) and Aesthetics Conference*, Department of Comparative Literatures, University of Szeged, Hungary, 22–24 September 2011. See also N. Kane, 'Clean Bombs and Confrontations: Gender, Violence and the Political Significance of the Perimeter Fence in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*', *Sarah Kane Now*, Lincoln, UK.

apparently crude 'inter-sexing' of bodies, Kane ultimately enacts a transgressive spectacle of gender violence and intervention in *Cleansed* that inherently militates for a queer reading of the work. I therefore argue that the motif of the perimeter fence locates Kane, through geography and history, in a particularly British political context, and that this context informs her representation of violence and the gendered body in *Cleansed*.

Cleansed questions the nature of gender and institutional violence but leaves enough space in its deletions for directors and actors to make their own decisions about how to enact violence, and to debate. At every stage of the text, we are effectively asked to consider 'how best to stage this?' by the intricate mesh of text and the spaces it leaves within itself. When worked with integrally, this play can help people consolidate ideas, develop an ethos to their performance making, think philosophically and politically about the world, and generally 'face all sides' of themselves. In this way it is provocative and challenging. This is not, however, an easy process. In exploring the dramaturgy of *Cleansed* as a theatre director, performer and lecturer, I have noted a recurring phenomenon of volatility emerging from it, which can significantly destabilise a situation. I have witnessed outrage, rows, disruption, explosions of petulance and temper, sudden movement in and out of spaces with people sharply deciding to sit away from others or exiting the room to get air, and deep-rooted hostility and tensions manifesting themselves with unexpected force. This behaviour initially appears 'out of character' for the individuals concerned, and people involved in confrontations later testify that the rows appeared to have 'come out of nowhere'. On returning to the script, it is rarely apparent (initially) what triggered the chaos.

This volatility can be unnerving for a director or lecturer, notably as it can often be attended by a degree of sabotage in the working process from an individual or individuals in a group. There are frequent apologies and sometimes tears. But sabotage and self-sabotage emerge as part of the interpersonal collateral of working on *Cleansed*, and I have found that a necessary destruction of expectations, ideas and environments frequently attend its processes. Actors and students will often testify to the transformative potential of it later – ‘this play changed my life’ – but realising its potentials does not come easily.

Reading the script, and examining images from productions does not prepare one for the volatile chaos that frequently attends working on *Cleansed*. It is through exchange with others in practical dramaturgy or working rehearsal that such elements appear. However clean, measured and precise the directorial or seminar approach is, in the course of engaging with *Cleansed*, people quickly swing to extremes and rooms are left literally ‘looking like a bomb hit it’. One way or another, the process somehow ‘wrecks the room’.⁵⁷³ In rehearsal, it is not uncommon, for there to be a chaos of ‘bits’ strewn about the space, a deterioration of structures first built up, an unravelling, a knotting of materials, an erosion of the boundaries of the initial set design, and a preponderance of circling, twisting, labyrinthine, atomised forms.

⁵⁷³ Tony McCleane-Fay noted a similar phenomenon in rehearsals on *Cleansed*, also in his rehearsals for *4.48 Psychosis* in 2004. Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.



Read from left to right (2 pages)

5.iii.a. Photographs taken post practical working on *Cleansed*, Cast-Off Drama.
Leeds Art Gallery Education Studio, 26 February 2011.

The photographs overleaf, taken after a day's work on *Cleansed* and on scene 9 of Edward Bond's *Saved*, show discarded clothing, burst balloons, trails of knotted string, spilled paint, grotesque and placenta-like bundles of tights, stuffed fabric pieces scarred by a 'crude stitching', powder paint stains, remnants of natural substance such as banana skins or apple cores, and rather disconcerting traces of wig hair, all of which cover the space in a repeated pattern of disintegration, degrading and scattering. The destruction is often surprising, sometimes disconcerting, to those involved in working once they step out of it. Leaving the rehearsal space usually involves a protracted period of cleaning to restore rooms to their neutral state with participants expressing surprise at what they find in the detritus. The recurrence of this phenomenon lends itself to the question: where is this volatility coming from? Moreover, what is it expressing and how can this energy be realised theatrically?

For a theatre practitioner or a clown, the hidden volatility of *Cleansed* is intriguing. In *Blasted* the bomb is placed overtly within the script; the explosive material disintegration of structures and rooms is encoded centrally in form and theme. This is not so with *Cleansed* for the bomb in this play is silent, insidious, and subversive. Its wrecking quality 'takes one out' in sudden and unexpected ways; one does not see it coming. Like chemical warfare, a landmine or a suicide bomber, the destruction of emotional states, identity, surroundings, material objects, belief systems and intentions occurs without warning when working on this play, and it is not always obvious why until later on. Once 'exploded' in obvious form in rehearsal or seminar, its fallout apparently disappears. People 'recover' (at least outwardly), move on quickly, wonder what it was all about, and yet there is a pervasive sense that

something has occurred – a shift has happened. As Bond says, it places everyone in ‘accident time’.⁵⁷⁴ A challenge for a cast working on *Cleansed* is to make sense of its silent bomb and to elicit meaning from it, both for the purposes of production, but also for themselves as individuals.

The silent bomb which takes everything out in its path recalls the fantasy/phantasm of the Clean Bomb. The Clean Bomb originated in the Cold War era of the 1950s, so-called because it was designed to be a pure fusion or neutron bomb which would leave no radioactive debris. Whilst never built or used, the existence of it as an idea held political weight for proponents of both sides of the nuclear debate, and was commonly referenced in the 1980s. As Carol Cohn notes in her 1987 article ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals’:

Clean bombs may provide the perfect metaphor for the language of defence analyst controllers. This language has enormous destructive power but without emotional fallout; without the emotional fallout that would result if it were clear one were talking about plans for mass murder, mangled bodies and unspeakable human suffering.⁵⁷⁵

I believe that *Cleansed* is a Cold War script rooted in the terror of potential nuclear holocaust and that to better understand it we should consider the climate of Britain in the 1980s – the era of Kane’s adolescence. I propose that the disruptive effects of the script in practice stems from the embedding of a dialectic on gender and violence at the heart of *Cleansed*, a dialectic which is rooted in the ironic ‘abstraction’ and

⁵⁷⁴ Bond, *Letters 5*, loc. cit. p. 167.

⁵⁷⁵ C. Cohn, ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals’ in M. Wyer, M. Barbercheck, D. Giesman, H. Orun Ozturk and M. Wayne (eds.), *Women, Science and Technology: A Reader in Feminist Science Studies*, Second Edition, New York and Oxon, Routledge, 2008, pp. 101-117. First published in 2001.

euphemism of its title from the outset.⁵⁷⁶ Arguably there is something of Kane's own intelligent, anarchic and challenging energy sitting under *Cleansed*, which at a very immediate level touches us through the dramaturgy. To better illustrate this, I enter into a narrative reading of *Cleansed* here, using the available information in the text to understand its 'ground'.

The chain-link perimeter fence was a familiar feature of 1980s Britain. As an everyday marker of property, land ownership and boundaries and frequently erected by local authorities or other establishment figures, it signified permission and prohibition, inclusion and exclusion; it mapped the land, defining public and private space for specific uses and activity. The perimeter fence as a symbol became synonymous with two key debates in Britain during the 1980s: the first was the issue of English football hooliganism; the second was the protest by the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp against the keeping of 96 ground-launched American Cruise Missiles on common land. My interest in selecting these examples is concerned largely with their gendering and the associations this held at the time. As Bill Buford's *Among the Thugs: Face to Face with English Football Violence* illustrates, the fencing-in of football hooligans represented the detainment of a violent masculinity, monitored through surveillance, but allowed to exist and express itself within its 'cage'.⁵⁷⁷ The Greenham

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 102.

⁵⁷⁷ B. Buford, *Among the Thugs: Face to Face with English Football Violence*, Second Edition, London, Arrow Books, 2001. First published in the UK by Martin Secker & Warburg. 'The fence itself is a high one – taller than a tall man – and is made of chain-link steel and bent backwards towards the terraces to stop people from going over the top. Each 'pen' has a small, locked gate. I have mentioned elsewhere that the experience of standing in the terraces is a herd experience but I had not known, until watching this police video, that the accepted language used to describe the supporters' arrangements – pen, pit – is borrowed from livestock farming. I also hadn't known that the accepted word for the fencing is 'caging' or 'the cage'. p. 253. See also pp. 167-168.

Common Women's Peace Camp with its expressed politics of non-violent activism represents the perimeter fence as a site of potential agency, of feminine (and feminist) questioning, resistance, restraint and making (unmaking). Thus in considering the perimeter fence and questions of bodies on the land within and without it, we open up a discursive site of both detainment and questioning predicated on notions of gender, and of binarised positions and functions. In considering the example of football hooliganism and peace activism together, I hope to construct and then stress the relative truth and tensions of such a binary, and reach a queer position that I believe is most pertinent to Kane's vision. For through *Cleansed* Kane enacts a spectacle of gender violence on the bodies of her protagonists which militates for a queer and feminist space of social critique pertinent to the moment of its making.

The fence in *Cleansed* maintains a unity of place, and whilst action occurs at different sections within it, none of the characters in the play actually pass back out of it once they enter the institution. The institution in *Cleansed* belongs to the Cold War era and this is indicated through language used to name its first interior space: the 'sanitorium'.⁵⁷⁸ Nominally a university, but shifting in inference, to suggest also a psychiatric hospital, military base, prison, detention centre or concentration camp, Kane achieves a coherent and stable topography for the site through constant return to the fence. Within this fence, we encounter the interior and exterior spaces of an institution where violence, repression and watching occur. Power is centred in one place and in one man, but there is an inference that Tinker is working for a higher authority – one that is invisible, and 'outside' or possibly hidden somewhere 'inside'

⁵⁷⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 112.

our frame of reference. Tinker's power is not absolute. He constantly negates reference to himself as an authority figure in relationship to the other characters, and in doing so denies complicity in the power of his actions, eschewing responsibility for them: 'I'm a dealer, not a doctor' (scene 1), and later in scene 3, 'I can't protect you' and 'I'm not responsible, Grace.'⁵⁷⁹ This negation allows him to remain detached from others, and maintain status and autonomy within his own sphere.

Whilst asserting the limits and boundaries of his responsibilities to others with a definite use of the first-person singular, Tinker's 'I' is less fixed a signifier than first appears. He is a roaming, mercurial, unstable character who appears into view and disappears again with no apparent coherency or intention. He is the central link between the other characters and is frequently the third person in each scene. With the possible exception of a female character named, significantly, Woman, he has no relationship with them other than in his 'role' – which is primarily to enact the violence of the institution on them and to watch.

A state of constant watching within the institution recalls Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which, like the Clean Bomb, was never actually built, but which retains currency as a political and philosophical model – one configured architecturally.⁵⁸⁰ This model is frequently evoked in considering or analysing scopic-centred methods of social control and the corrective detainment of people within institutions. The key analyst of the panopticon continues to be French philosopher Michel Foucault, who

⁵⁷⁹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 107 and p. 114.

⁵⁸⁰ J. Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, London and New York, Verso, 1995. First published as a series of letters in 1787.

introduced discussion of it in 1975 through his text *Discipline and Punish*, and who analyses it primarily in relation to power and the regulation of the disruptive or transgressive body by the state.⁵⁸¹ In his essay *Docile Bodies*, Foucault notes the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the time when ‘disciplines’ of physical regulation and ordering ‘became general formulas of domination.’ He goes on to describe how:

A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’ was being born; it defined how one may have hold over others’ bodies, not only so they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies.⁵⁸²

As with the institution in *Cleansed*, the panopticon represents a utilitarian ‘construction’ that is potentially fluid in its application, as the front page of the original 1787 publication describes:

Panopticon or Inspection House, containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection: and in particular, Penitentiary Houses: prisons, houses of industry, work-houses, poor-houses, manufactories, mad-houses, Lazarettos, hospitals and schools; with a plan of management attached to the principle.⁵⁸³

Recalling my observation that *Cleansed*, despite its shifting inferences, is nominally set in a ‘university’, it is notable that Kane anchors this association through the inclusion of a university library: ‘*Round Room - the university library.*’⁵⁸⁴ In naming this room the ‘Round Room’ she encodes a central architectural principle of the panopticon at the

⁵⁸¹ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London, Penguin, 1991, pp. 3-6. First published in French as *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison*, by Éditions Gallimard in 1975.

⁵⁸² M. Foucault, ‘Docile Bodies’, in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1984, pp. 181-182. There is insufficient space to extend an analysis of Foucault’s ideas in relation to *Cleansed* here, but I note it of relevance to Kane scholarship and suggest that further work can usefully be undertaken in this area.

⁵⁸³ Bentham, op. cit., p. 29. Bentham elaborates on the flexible utilitarianism of this model in his first letter.

⁵⁸⁴ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 123.

heart of *Cleansed*'s interior.⁵⁸⁵ This space is introduced in scene 7 – a scene already discussed as having significance for Kane's exploration of love, ghosts, fictions, writing and gender, and one in which the act of looking becomes schismatic; desire, intention, address and focus experiencing a split. I note the correlation of the panopticon in *Cleansed* here as having particular importance for analysing Tinker, and questions of scopic domination.

Referencing Bentham's ontology of fictions, (usefully brought into dialogue with *The Panopticon Letters* by Božovič in the 1995 edition), I suggest that Tinker evokes Bentham's consideration of the 'inspector-manager' in the panopticon.⁵⁸⁶ I further note that Bentham constructs the role of the inspector as an 'ethical fictitious entity' – one whose invisibility plays on the prisoners' paradoxical fear of ghosts and the fictitious occupation of 'the place of God' within the 'dark spot' of the construction.⁵⁸⁷ As Božovič notes, this fiction (in itself, a theatre or performance of omnipresence through ghostly presence-absence), can only be maintained by the inspector-manager maintaining invisibility and watching sporadically, coming and going at will:

The inspector can sustain the smooth functioning of the panopticon prison only insofar as he appears to be God, that is, only insofar as he is, in the eyes of the prisoners, endowed with divine attributes (apparent omnipresence, an all-seeing gaze, etc.) – in a word, only insofar as he is a fiction in the imaginations of the prisoners. It is thus through his non-existence that God sustains the universe of the panopticon [...]. The inspector certainly knows that, *qua* God, he does not really exist; *qua* God, the inspector only exists through an artifice, only as a fiction [...] he must always hide himself from the eyes of the prisoners; he lives in constant fear that the prisoners will find out that he really does not exist. If Bentham's idea had been realized [...], and if he had become its inspector-manager – Bentham reserved the place of the dark spot, the place

⁵⁸⁵ Bentham, op. cit., p. 35. Bentham's design relies centrally on the premise that 'The building is circular'.

⁵⁸⁶ J. Bentham, 'A Fragment on Ontology' in Bentham, op. cit., pp. 115-158.

⁵⁸⁷ M. Božovič, 'God as a Non-Entity', in Bentham, op. cit., pp. 19-24.

of God in the panopticon for himself – then he would, [...] most likely himself fall victim to a fantasy of not existing.⁵⁸⁸

Tinker appears to express the tensions of an individual who is falling prey to a fantasy of 'not existing'. His constant and contradictory negation of role or position testifies to someone who does not really know who he is or what he is doing.⁵⁸⁹ He never achieves the omnipresent invisibility of a non-existent God, rather (as noted earlier) he achieves the insubstantial presence of the corporeal ghost, like most of the other male characters in the play. When he reveals himself to other characters, his recourse is always to the suppression of love and touch by others through violence and dismemberment. In this he recalls Irigaray's man-god who:

lacks boundaries, limits – a skin [...]. This man-god survives in drunkenness. When he is not going back for refuge in the darkness of the great depths [...]. By day, he shows himself only under a mask, and in ecstasy. Outside of the harmony of the body in which he cannot linger [...]. He is endlessly incarnate and discarnate. His appearance lasts no more than the wink of an eye. Made of light or of sound, wave strengths, no sooner spotted than gone. Always arriving, never coming. Refusing to come close for more than a moment: the moment needed to implant himself in a body and go off again, carrying away/leaning behind the appearance, tearing off/covering over the skin. When he touches from close up.⁵⁹⁰

Tinker evokes, less Bentham's utilitarian vision of an orderly institution, regulated carefully by scopic power, lack of touch and distance; and more the brutally physical world of the 17th-century executioner where punishment was meted out in public and bodies were dismembered in systematised spectacle, frequently chaotic and inefficient; as Foucault illustrates in the opening chapter of *Discipline and Punish*.⁵⁹¹ He is a 'half-arsed' torturer, stuck between brutality and utilitarianism, visibility and

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁸⁹ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit. Examples of this are: 'I'm a dealer not a doctor' p. 107, followed by 'I'm a doctor' p. 122, then 'I'm not really a doctor', p. 146.

⁵⁹⁰ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., p. 124.

⁵⁹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, op. cit.

invisibility, touch and distance, in competing systems of scopic dominance, the power of which he fails to fully maintain. Being human not God, he seeks recognition of himself and his physical existence in his visits to the peep-show booth. In asking Woman to show him her face in scene 6, he ultimately seeks the love that Bentham's God in his existent non-existence does not need to seek. In this scene, Tinker plays with the power of not looking back at her, until Woman finally challenges him: 'Won't face me either'. He then '(Looks at her face for the first time)'. This is one of the moments where Kane breaks the frame of the fourth wall through the gesture of actions spoken as words, and underlines the significance of this very human look and promise.⁵⁹² Tinker is therefore, not so much an epitome of the Bentham God-Overseer of Enlightenment fantasy; rather a modern man stuck rather ineffectually, yet able to exert extreme violence in decaying institutions of masculine power and abuses. I will discuss the implications of this further on in this chapter.

The ghosting of inhabitants through the panopticon's construction is effected not only by (invisible) gaze, but by a disembodied voice, and this, as Božovič notes, relates to violence:

The panoptican is governed by a gaze and a voice which are desubjectivised, detached from their bearer – in a word, by word and voice *qua* objects [...]. A gaze and a voice that cannot be pinned down to any particular bearer tend to acquire exceptional powers, and by themselves as it were constitute divine attributes [...] although the God of the panopticon nevertheless always remains *Deus absconditus*, a God who jealously hides his face [...]. This bodiless, unlocatable voice functions as a shapeless threat lurking everywhere in the background.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹² Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 121.

⁵⁹³ Bentham, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

As I will shortly discuss, the bodiless Voices in *Cleansed* represent aspects of institutionalised male violence configured in reference to the symbol of the perimeter fence and it is this construction of an interior masculinity that I now address.

The construction of the institution as a male-only, or male-centred space is indicated by Robin's comment 'What you doing here, don't have girls here. Staring at me.'⁵⁹⁴ The cast of inmates, overseer, ghosts and Voices inside the perimeter fence is almost exclusively (and nominally) male. The presence of Woman, kept naked and dancing in a makeshift peep-show booth located in the showers of the university sports hall, calls to mind the prostitutes kept for rape and sexual gratification by SS soldiers in Nazi concentration camps and also the proximity of brothels in garrison towns.⁵⁹⁵ It also calls to mind the presence of women and children living within the military compounds at Greenham Common – women whose lives were bound up with the functions of the base, and whose sleep and well-being was frequently disrupted by emergency drills for a nuclear attack; never sure whether it was actual or real. In her book, *On the Perimeter*, journalist Caroline Blackwood notes how:

A green flag would be put up and a siren would go. This was all-practice for the 'Red-Alert'. Once the siren wailed, the American wives and children were rushed from their military quarters [...]. They had to be hurried into nuclear bunkers within the base.⁵⁹⁶

She quotes a protestor as saying:

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁵⁹⁵ Cast-Off Drama session with Kerry Ely on 'Stockings, Tights and Stitching' (26 February 2011) clarified the differences between strippers, lap dancers, life-models and burlesque artistes. Being in a peep-show booth, Woman would be naked the whole time but as yet few productions have staged her this way, and she is usually configured, erroneously as a burlesque or lap dancer.

⁵⁹⁶ C. Blackwood, *On the Perimeter Fence: Caroline Blackwood at Greenham Common*, Great Britain, William Heinemann Ltd and Fontana Paperbacks, 1984. p. 83.

I think those exercises are so cruel [...] those poor little kids look terrified. They hear the siren and then they are dragged out of bed. They look white. You see them all crying as they are rushed by coach to the bunkers. They are still in their night clothes. They don't believe it is only practice. They think the end has come.⁵⁹⁷

Attempts made by Greenham women to reach those women, by all accounts, met with little success – the wives, despite their terror, accepted it as part of their lives with their partners, their country, their military, and presumably also their own political and moral belief systems, and played their role.⁵⁹⁸ Woman and Grace never meet within the script of *Cleansed*, as I will now go on to discuss.

As noted in Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins' classic text *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, Greenham women politically reached out to other women around the base who were ostensibly in disagreement with the peace protestors' aims or methods.⁵⁹⁹ These included not only the US wives within the military complex, but British policewomen, and the residents within Newbury angered by the peace camp's presence; some of whom were central to the development of RAGE (Ratepayers Against the Greenham Encampment).⁶⁰⁰ This often brought conflict between the different groups concerned and some strong maintaining of territory and position/space on both sides. Take, for example, the account of a protest made by Greenham women at a homecoming parade marking the return of soldiers from the

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ I will use the phrase 'Greenham women' in this thesis to indicate the multifarious and shifting groups of individual women who at some point visited, or stayed at, the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, and who have spoken about it in the texts cited. I have chosen not to capitalise the word 'women' as to do so would suggest a closed or fixed group, and this is not in the spirit or the ethos of Greenham. Although some women had a more permanent presence and at times constituted a core group, the essence of the Peace Camp – and its strength – was its inclusiveness of any or all women who participated in its struggles however light or heavy their individual engagement.

⁵⁹⁹ B. Harford and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, London, The Women's Press Ltd., 1984.

⁶⁰⁰ Blackwood, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Falklands War. Doctor Lynne Jones, a Greenham woman, notes the anger, pain and sense of betrayal voiced by the mother of a returning soldier on realising that the women whom she had been befriending in the crowd, were actually opposed to the military ceremony and were there to make a protest. Whilst holding her own position and intentions in her debate with the mother of the soldier, Jones clearly mourned the pain and tensions of the gulf between them:

That was when it hit me. How really difficult, almost impossible it was, what we were trying to do. Here you were, in your best clothes, come a long way with your husband to see your son, who'd got home safe from the war, have his moment of glory. Little enough reward for having put up with the horrors of the South Atlantic. And here was I, equally glad your son was safe, and wanting to deprive him of that moment – seeing in it the seed of other wars, from which he might not come back.⁶⁰¹

Whilst those at the Peace Camp strived for a collective unity with other women, the respect for difference, and an acute understanding of how women's lives are governed by a patriarchy that shapes our choices, meant that incidents such as those at the Falklands homecoming parade were recognised as important to record. Although conflict between these separate camps brought pain, the strength with which individual women held true to their beliefs, and maintained their own sphere reflected agency and autonomy, albeit framed by institutional or economic demands.

This depiction of different women as separate but strong in their own sphere finds some resonance in *Cleansed*, where Grace and Woman exist within the parameters and perimeters of the institution, but never meet. Both are active characters in the play and each strives for agency and articulation of desire within the confines of her

⁶⁰¹ Harford and Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

sphere; but they are female characters whose interactions are totally with men. However, questions of ontology, and the significance of naming provoked by Kane's construction, raise issues of interest to a feminist or gender enquiry, and point to open readings. A common reading of *Grace* and *Woman* sometimes offered in undergraduate seminars is that of a potential conflation of the two into one character – essentially concluding that they are 'the same person'. This is based on the moment in scene 19 where the *Woman* names herself as *Grace*:

Tinker. What's your name?

Woman. Grace.

Tinker. No, I meant –

Woman. I know. It's Grace.

Tinker. (*Smiles.*) I love you, Grace.⁶⁰²

This reading is often a fleeting consideration of directors and actors working on *Cleansed* too, but rarely develops into production as it does not hold up easily to close textual scrutiny; nor does it account for the transitioning of *Grace* into *Grace/Graham* in scenes 18-20 sufficiently. I suggest from a dramaturgical position that there is more theoretical and performative value to keeping these characters as two distinct women when interpreting this work.

Another popular reading – and one that brings questions of women's autonomy and agency to the fore – is that they are separate women, but that *Woman* chooses to keep her real name hidden from *Tinker*, and names herself *Grace* here to continue to be that ('she') who he has named, and not disrupt him (or the deepening relationship) with the truth of her difference from that/she which/who he had projected as the

⁶⁰² Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 149. Noted in seminars and lectures given on Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* with Drama undergraduates at universities in the North of England, from 2007- 2011; Sarah Kane Research Group, 2009; Cast-Off Drama workshops, 2011; Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012, and Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

original object of desire: ‘**Tinker**. I’ll give you whatever you want, Grace.’⁶⁰³ This arguably maintains a fiction, whereby Woman does not reveal herself (or perhaps properly know or ‘own’ herself, at least not in speech). Like the woman of Plato’s Hysteria:

She herself knows nothing (of herself). And remembers nothing. Providing the basis for the wise man’s auto-logical speculations, she lives in darkness. At/as back of the scene of representation which she props up by not/without knowing it.⁶⁰⁴

It indicates an economic power-imbalance to the relationship, and an essentially unchanging one, where she chooses to remain as Tinker’s property – for it is the economy of power regulated by the peep-show booth that has allowed him to name her in the first place. Noting that this places Woman in a subordinate position to Tinker, there is nevertheless something of a ‘reserve’ in this strategy in that it allows Woman to keep something back (and protect herself) from Tinker and his unpredictable nature.⁶⁰⁵ Released from the peep-show booth, she is perhaps free to roam further and, (in keeping her true name from him), can perhaps take what she needs and disappear when she chooses to, becoming (and named as) someone else. This latter reading was one performed by Kamome-za. In *Cleansed* (‘*Be Cleansed*’), Woman roamed the institution quietly taking books from the shelves and reading them – this constituted a private reserve of knowledge and self, slowly building throughout. At the end of the play, a book clasped over her naked breasts, Woman walks free from the institution – the only character to do so.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 123. Tinker addresses Woman as Grace in scene 6.

⁶⁰⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum*, op. cit., p. 345.

⁶⁰⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 136-138. As the violence of this scene indicates, Tinker can move from nurturing to abusive without warning.

⁶⁰⁶ Kamome-za, *Cleansed* (‘*Be Cleansed*’), 27 May 2012 and Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

Whichever way one reads it, whether they are subsumed into a phallic one-ness (self-same) or kept separate in spheres as two characters (perhaps ironically referencing a patriarchal Virgin/Whore dichotomy); the isolation of Grace and Woman from one another within the institution is to be observed as having relevance for a feminist and gender reading of this play. Whilst Grace and Woman exist separate from each other, playing different roles, having differing experiences of the institution, they nevertheless challenge Robin's contestation 'don't have girls here' by their physical, vocal, emotional presence and agency.⁶⁰⁷

Gender is central to Bill Buford's account of violence in *Among the Thugs* and he describes the ontological features of the form of masculinity he encounters, and its peculiar tensions, with brutal honesty. Documenting his own slide from critical observer to active and increasingly willing participant, Buford demonstrates acutely how this 'bloated' code of maleness can continue to flourish and shape itself into patterns of repetition and sameness.⁶⁰⁸ He describes the culture of the terraces as one of intense, uniform physicality where agency was restricted and an animalistic, herd-like mentality dominated:

It is an experience of constant, physical contact and one that the terraces are designed to concentrate. The terraces look like animal pens, provide only the most elementary accommodation: a gate that is locked shut after the spectators are admitted; a fence to keep them from leaving the area or spilling onto the pitch; a place for essential refreshment – to deal with elementary thirst and hunger; a place to pee and shit [...].⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ Kane, *Cleansed*, loc. cit., p. 115.

⁶⁰⁸ Buford, op. cit., p. 202.

⁶⁰⁹ *ibid.*, loc. cit., pp. 167-168.

The routine of the match, the institutionalisation of the pens, and the supporters' apparent insensate response to their environment, recalls Tinker. Within the frame of his ghostly man-god failings and vacillations, Tinker maintains a certain routine to his watching; and regulates his visits to the peep-show booth, the care of his suit, and his direction of the invisible torturers. The inference that he himself is subject to an external – albeit invisible – authority, is underscored by the clean-cut, emotionally-detached way in which he executes his tasks. It suggests that he is working to a system whose parameters have been set by others, and whilst watching others to regulate their actions, is watched and regulated himself.

The role of the institution is one of punishment and correction – its targets, it appears, are women and men who do not conform to a hetero-patriarchal normative standard. Hence we have Grace, an active, articulate young woman who questions Tinker and the institutions handling of her dead brother's clothes and who is drugged and incarcerated, Rod and Carl who are tortured for their homosexual practice and love for each other in methods reminiscent of aversion therapy, and Robin who is described as 19 but who appears to have been there forever. Robin is a virginal figure, attached to his mother, and could be said to have learning disabilities, indicated by the fact that he cannot read or write. This point was raised a number of times by participants in the Cast-Off Drama sessions working on scenes 3 and 7 of *Cleansed*, also in the Sarah Kane Research Group. Another idea discussed was that Robin is actually older than the 19 years stated in the script. In dramaturgical practice enquiry, I have investigated Robin played by a 47-year-old man (Paul Ashton). This worked surprisingly well and conveyed something of the questions of how institutionalisation can affect emotional

development and communication. We concluded that it was possible to read Robin's age as being indeterminate – he has the emotional age of a youth, but could in fact be much older.

Where Foucault delineates a historical progression from the regulated spectacle of torture and mutilation of the body, to the silent, invisible correction of the body and possession of the soul by the State, Kane's world includes all these elements, collapsing history into an uncertain and relentlessly punitive unregulated present.⁶¹⁰ Her play raises questions about how institutionalisation affects those who run them, as much as those who are there to 'benefit' from their services, and how isolation and violence can result from this. Her treatment of this theme in *Cleansed* offers useful thinking on the formation of masculinity through institutionalisation and work under Capitalism in a late Modern context.⁶¹¹ The scenes of Tinker in the peep-show booth show us a man alternating between his 'regular work' and his 'leisure time' – a split identified by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford in *The Authoritarian Personality* as concomitant with the image of 'the modern man', and one that is desired most actively by the state to maintain control of its citizens and to regulate all

⁶¹⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, op. cit.

⁶¹¹ M. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Second Edition, London and New York, Verso, 1983. 'To be modern [...] is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air. To be a modernist is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own, to move within its currents in search of the forms of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows', pp. 345-346. Note also Berman's comment that in the late modern period, 'we find ourselves looking back for something solid to lean on, only to find we are embracing ghosts', *ibid.*, p. 333. Berman's work offers some useful perspectives on Kane's depiction of institutions and time.

areas of their lives.⁶¹² The authors of the research conclude that this is the type of personality most likely to be drawn to fascism. Tinker is a well-spoken man, able to compartmentalise and deny knowledge of the violence in which he participates. Denial or trivialising of violence was a phenomenon encountered by Buford in his experience of football hooliganism, as he reflects:

I was the 'repoyta'. I was given instructions, imperatives, admonitions. I was told: That they weren't hooligans. That it was a disgrace that there were so many obstacles keeping them from supporting their team properly. That they weren't hooligans. That the management of Manchester United was a disgrace. That they weren't hooligans. Until finally I was telling them, yes, yes, yes I know, I know. You're just here for the drink and the laugh, and for the first time, despite myself, I wanted to believe it [...]. It was conceivable that there would be no violence, that this was simply how normal English males behaved. It was a terrifying notion but not an impossible one. After all the domain of the male spectator has always been characterised by its brutish masculine excesses. Maybe these people were just a bit more excessive than what I was used to.⁶¹³

Whilst clearly drawn into the violence himself and whilst there is a tacit suggestion in parts that he may have crossed that line and actively practised it, Buford stops short of confessing to any acts he may have executed. He dwells instead on observations of violence meted out by fellow fans, and towards the end of the book, violence experienced by himself at the hands of some Italian policemen. Where some of the supporters Buford encounters undoubtedly fit the young working-class skinhead type depicted in Kane's film *Skin*, his book is focused more intently on those like John, the protagonist in Philip Davis and Vincent O'Connell's 1994 film *I.D.*⁶¹⁴ These are men

⁶¹² T.W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswick, D.J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality: Studies in Prejudice*. USA, Norton Library, Harper & Row and Canada, George J McLeod, 1969.

⁶¹³ Buford, op. cit., p. 67.

⁶¹⁴ *I.D.* dir. by Philip Davis, UK, Universal, 1995, [DVD]. Screenplay by Vincent O'Connell. Based on the real-life experience of James Bannon, the original writer, who worked as an undercover police officer infiltrating Millwall fans, only to later leave the police force in disillusionment at the lack of support given him after the job finished. WUWO Magazine, 'The Real I.D. James Bannon', <http://www.whatsupwhatson.com/the-real-i-d/>, 23 September 2012, (accessed 1 June 2013). Bannon is

whose profiles reflect a suburban type epitomised by Tinker – almost uniformly white, male and lower-middle class, but in regular employment, and solvent. Buford again:

If the *Daily Mail* had been asked to create a twenty-two year-old working class lad with his life sorted out, it could have presented Steve. I went out of my way to spend time with Steve, if only because, being articulate and intelligent, he was good company, and because I always believed that he would be able to reveal something about why he, of all people, was attracted to violence of this kind. Every now and then I would butt in with a ‘why’? Or a ‘how’?, but Steve would simply say something like, ‘It’s human nature I guess’ or ‘I don’t know, I’ve never really thought about it.’⁶¹⁵

Buford notes that ‘(his) phrases were an old man’s’.⁶¹⁶

Topographically, there is much in the ‘landscape’ of *Cleansed* that connotes Greenham Common or somewhere similar, and this environment is repeatedly evoked in the set design and marked by the trope of the perimeter fence at recurring points in the play. Integrated with its establishing of landscape is the situating of the action inside an institution, hence in the opening stage directions for the play we have the words: ‘Just inside the perimeter fence [...] It is snowing’.⁶¹⁷ This is followed by a shift in time and location to another section of the fence in the opening of scene 2:

Rod and Carl sit on the college green just inside the perimeter fence of the university. Midsummer – the sun is shining. The sound of a cricket match in progress on the other side of the fence.⁶¹⁸

What these opening stage directions do is set the scene for Kane’s themes – institutions and what happens to people within them – and this is marked through a constant return to land just inside the perimeter fence. The reference to sun and ‘the

due to release a book about his experiences, Summer 2013. Given the importance of Vincent O’Connell to wider discussions of Kane’s work, I will discuss aspects of the film that I feel offer an opening to further enquiry into their working relationship and their influence on each other. For the sake of expediency I will reference the film as ‘Davis/O’Connell’s I.D.’ in discussion.

⁶¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

⁶¹⁶ *ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁶¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 20.

sound of a cricket match' resonates contemporaneously with former Conservative Prime Minister John Major's comment in 1993 that configured Britain as:

the country of long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers.⁶¹⁹

This vision of Britain, popular with middle England, finds some expression in the Newbury landscape around Greenham Common and the peculiar juxtaposition of that world alongside the military base was noted by many commentators at the time. As Blackwood notes the Women's Peace Camp was set in a vulnerable place at the centre of this harsh contrast:

The women's camps were squeezed up on the muddy verge of the road which encircles the base, and the multi-coloured plastic of their benders made a colourful and defiant contrast to the menacing grey of the huge perimeter fence ... On the one side they had the grey teeming world of the Cruise missile base with its values of police and military. On the other side, they had the prosperous world of Newbury with its English gardens, and thoroughbreds and its values of wealthy shopkeeper [...].⁶²⁰

In its occupation of the space 'between' these communities, the Women's Peace Camp effected an intervention into the social and environmental space of this 'prosperous' and militarised landscape, that was transgressively and resolutely women-centred in its self-definition:

The Peace Camp is a remarkable manifestation of women's determination and vision, an inspiration to many thousands of people in this country and abroad. As well as being a round-the-clock protest against cruise missiles, it is also a resource – a women's space in which to try to live out ideals of feminism and nonviolence, a focus for information and ideas, a meeting place, and a vital context for women to express their beliefs and feelings.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ 'Leading Article: What a lot of tosh', *Independent*, 25 April 1993. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices-leading-article-what-a-lot-of-tosh-1457335.html> . Major was paraphrasing from George Orwell's work *The Road to Brighton Pier*.

⁶²⁰ Blackwood, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶²¹ A. Cook and G. Kirk, *Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas and Actions from the Women's Peace Movement*, London, Pluto Press Ltd., 1983, p. 5.

Rooting itself in the land and claiming its vegetal materiality as its own, the Women's Peace Camp asserted its space as one of growth, battle, recognition and change. These values grew as women encountered the challenges of living in the landscape; challenges environmental, physical, emotional, economic and political.

Blackwood notes two other features of the Greenham Camp that find echo in the landscape of *Cleansed*. One is the constant, inescapable mud, which proved a daily battle to manage, particularly when it rained; the other is the reference to colour.⁶²² As more women arrived and the complexities of living and protesting together in difference developed, camps with distinctly different communities emerged at different sections of the 9-mile fence, and these were identified by colour. For example Yellow Gate was the Main Gate where there was a postbox, Blue Gate had a working-class and anarcho-lesbian identity and Green Gate was a quieter gate, which had certain values of eco-feminism and matriarchal spirituality attached to it.⁶²³ These processes of self-definition, space and breath extends to the geography of the fence and was marked by journeying and transition. Women tended to move between the gates and would visit different points before settling on one, and this symbolic movement around the fence – albeit outside at Greenham and inside in *Cleansed* – has some resonance with the movement of location in Kane's text. However, by scene 8,

⁶²² Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., Within the institution, rooms are defined as white, black and red rooms. 'The White Room – the university sanatorium', p. 112; 'The Red Room – the university sports hall', p. 116, and 'The Black Room – the showers in the university sports hall converted into peep-show booths', p. 121. Whilst contained as part of the regulating order within the masculine institution, white, red and black are significant colours within various feminist and goddess mythologies as practised at Greenham; thus constitute something of a feminist code within the fabric of the text.

⁶²³ See Sahsa Roseneil's account of the cultures of Greenham for a more extensive exposition of this. S. Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham*, London and New York, Cassell, 2000, pp. 76-85.

the action settles in one section of the fence, and it is to this that the script constantly returns:

A patch of mud just inside the perimeter fence of the university.

It is raining.

The sound of a football match in progress on the other side of the fence. A single rat scuttles around between Rod and Carl.⁶²⁴

⁶²⁴ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 129.



5.iii.b. Image from *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*') by Kamome-za Fringe Theatre, Space Edge, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan, May 2012.

5.iii.c. Image from *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*') by Kamome-za Fringe Theatre, Kyoto Arts Centre, Tokyo, Japan, June 2012.

The set design for this production took place on a 20-ft long rectangular stretch of mud. In the performance witnessed by myself at Space Edge, Shibuya at a daylight showing, the stretch of mud strongly evoked a cricket pitch. Reproduced with kind permission of Tomoco Kawaguchi.

In contrast to the containment of a violent and bestial masculinity within the fences of the football crowds, and the containment of military violence on the US Base, the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, with its expressed politics of non-violent activism, represents the perimeter fence and its 'exterior' demarcation as a site of potential agency, breath and fluidity. The intentional integration of form with content is a political choice in arts making and is one that the women of Greenham Common made in their impulse to make the fence that housed the military base and its nuclear weapons an ever-evolving site of creative expression and joy in contrast to the grey menace of the base. As Chris Mulvey notes:

There it was in front of me: the fence, three times as tall as I and stretching further than my eye could see. I wanted to decorate it. I wanted to fill its holes with colour and with life, to transform it; so that when I looked again i would see Life and Beauty, not threat and cold sterility.⁶²⁵

The arrival at the fence is significant in many of the narratives of Greenham women, and the choices made in their processes of adornment and intervention testify to the physical and emotional presence of each woman there. It was an expression, not just of Life and Beauty, but of a being there/having been there, and the fence was frequently decorated with symbols, photographs and materials of particular resonance to the maker. The fence became a site of female authorship, and when one revisits the fabric of Greenham documented in writing, photographs and film, powerful expressions of authorship emerge which expand the field of representation for and of the female subject.⁶²⁶ As such the fence developed both

⁶²⁵ Harford and Hopkins, op. cit., p. 91.

⁶²⁶ Carry Greenham Home, dir. by Beebon Kidron and Amanda Richardson, London: National Film and Television School, 1983, [Video]. See also Lizbeth Goodman's discussion of Common Ground women's theatre collective and their work *The Fence* in the section entitled, 'Common Ground to Meeting Ground' in L. Goodman, *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own*, London and New York,

a site of individual making balanced with collective ritual actions – such as the linking of hands by 50,000 women in 1983 around the fence.

The physical experience of the landscape constantly referenced in accounts of protestors was the inescapable mud, and whilst it was frustrating, it enabled women to relax into what Sasha Roseneil defines as ‘a deprioritizing of domestic labour (and) the mundane chores of daily life’ and instead:

considerable energy and imagination were expended on activities which were less traditionally designated as female [...].⁶²⁷

Mud becomes central to *Cleansed*, and forms horizontal terrain where characters battle for freedom, autonomy and self-definition, away from the interior spaces of the institution. This patch is continuously inhabited by Rod and Carl as a site of struggle and frustration, but also of agency and expression eg. love-making and writing. It is a queer and transient space of hope within the institution – a space where breath and the sounds of the outside come through the mesh of the fence, for example in the form of a child’s song, and is the site of the final scene between Grace and Carl.

Despite these reserves of queer and feminine-identified space, the institution in *Cleansed* remains violently heteronormative and patriarchal. Likewise, whilst the fence at Greenham was ostensibly a site of love, the fact that it housed a site of potential destruction raised questions about how to negotiate its existence. One collective strategy was to ‘embrace the base’, to collectively banish the evil within

Routledge, 1993, pp. 104-107. See also Sigrid Møller’s photographs, grouped under the heading ‘A Day In December 1982’, on the following website: The Danish Peace Academy, ‘Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camps Songbook’, <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/abase/sange/greenham/sigrid.htm>, ND (accessed 1 June 2013).

⁶²⁷ Roseneil, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

it – and arguably, Kane’s own philosophy that characters such as Ian in *Blasted* and Tinker are looking for love has some resonance with such a strategy of tackling the presence of violence. However, when the question of entering the base arose, the discourse turned to the question of violence within women. Having reclaimed it somewhat as a living entity for themselves and for the camp, many women could not countenance the idea of cutting the fence and in long, considered debates, questioned whether cutting it was a destructive act that contravened the principle of non-violence. Many women chose to scale the fence for political actions using ladders rather than engage in what they considered to be a destructive act of cutting. Others however believed that cutting the fence was a necessary destruction, and one that broke the sheath around the base of militarism and masculinity, allowing female bodies, energies and political acts through and into its space with the purpose of removing the fence entirely. One such woman was Theresa who said:

Taking down the fence was for me a most powerful celebration and expression of ‘No’. ‘No’ to the machine and the barriers it creates, the fence being a visible, physical barrier, but ‘No’ also to those invisible ones that keep us so alienated, East from West, black from white, heterosexual from homosexual, barriers of class, religion, of privilege and deprivation. The strongest realisation I had before breaking away their barrier of chainlink fencing was that we had entered a time of massive irreversible change and that this action would somehow be the seal of this change.⁶²⁸

What this extract underlines is a clear dichotomous ordering in reference to violence common in the Greenham story, with gender sitting firmly at the centre. There is the ‘us’ outside the base – female, activist, non-violent, working with and for agency, life and beauty and ‘them’ inside – male, violent, deathly, sterile. This

⁶²⁸ Harford and Hopkins, op. cit., p. 159.

mirrored a certain living reality played out daily in exchanges at the fence between the women of the camp outside and the American military personnel, all male, inside. Breaking through the fence frequently brought tensions around this to a crisis, precipitating action by British male police officers outside the base also who enacted violence on the women's bodies physically, as is documented variously.

Chris Mulvey again:

I watched as friends were dragged along the road and flung into the mud at the side of the banks. The clash between women and police began in earnest now. It terrified me. There was fear and violence in the air, shouts and cries, harsh orders and banshee wailing, a woman's scream and the thud of bodies flung onto the mud. Behind the fence a woman fell to the ground and two policemen rushed towards her. One, twisting his fingers into her hair, began to drag her through the gate. I saw his boot and heard the thud and suddenly I had to vomit.⁶²⁹

Women camped at Greenham were also subject to violent harassment from US military personnel inside the base and vigilante attacks on tents and clothing by groups of angry ratepayers from the Newbury area – attacks that Pat, a longstanding member of the camp interviewed by Blackwood, identify as being sexual:

"I am so tired", Pat said. "We had such an awful night with the soldiers. They abused us all night. They just wouldn't stop. It was sexual of course, it's always sexual."⁶³⁰

Maggots, dog excrement, offal and on one occasion pig entrails were thrown into the camp. Streams of verbal abuse, threats of rape and grotesque elaborations of mutilation were 'bellowed' at the women from outside their tents on a nightly

⁶²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶³⁰ Blackwood, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

basis.⁶³¹ The framing of violence heard but not seen coupled with real physical violence finds expression in scene 10 of *Cleansed* where Grace is:

beaten by an unseen group of men whose VOICES we hear. We hear the sound of baseball bats hitting Grace's body and she reacts as though she has received the blow.⁶³²

The Voices attack Grace with words – an attack syncopated by unseen cracks and which result in physical pain and terror. They are spoken as a cacophony of dialogue and recitation:

Voices. Dead, slag
She was having it off with her brother
Weren't he a bender?
Fucking user
All cracked up
Shit no
Shit yes
Crack crack crack⁶³³

They continue talking through the rape:

Voices. Do it to me
Shag the slag.
[...]
Gagging for it
Begging for it
Barking for it
Aching for it
She gone?
Not a flicker
[...]
Kill them all

A similar dramatic device is used in the torture of Carl, and in doing so Kane presents us with a landscape where the power of an institutionalised heteropatriarchal norm can violate, brutalise and control men and women in both

⁶³¹ *ibid.*

⁶³² Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 130-133.

⁶³³ *ibid.*, pp. 131-133.

seen and unseen ways.⁶³⁴ The beatings are overseen and controlled by Tinker in both cases. The repetition of his controlling gestures recall Foucault's observation of the 'mechanics of power' sitting under modern institutions.⁶³⁵

The institution in *Cleansed* is a place where 'anything goes' and in this there are echoes of the experiences of women at Greenham, for as the 'community policeman' for the camp was oft quoted as saying: 'There isn't anything anyone can do to you lot that I would consider criminal'.⁶³⁶ This violence extended to the institutional incarceration of Greenham women, often on trumped-up charges, and the association of Tinker and stitching in scene 18 finds interesting metaphorical association in considering the figure of 'Stitcher Williams', one of the many MOD personnel whose narratives became intertwined with those of the Greenham women, living and fighting against and alongside each other – a phenomenon that bears interesting relation to Irigaray's *corps-a-corps* in terms of the original conception of the term (hand-to-hand fighting).⁶³⁷ These relationships illustrated the conflicts of the time as being both personal as well as political, resulting in a certain kind of dry humour which worked as both a defence or protection, and as a weapon of straight-talking and open resistance, as Katrina Howse illustrates:

We continued – we could not walk off that road running down Larkhill Artillery Range because on either side there are unexploded bombs. As we stopped for lunch, who should come down the road, in what I thought looked like a tea van, but was actually some Property Services Agency vehicle, but "Stitcher Williams", Sargent Williams who had stitched me up on that Criminal Damage charge (he was calling himself "Stitcher Williams" by this stage). I think he was sent down to identify which camp women

⁶³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 116-118.

⁶³⁵ Rabinow, *loc. cit.*, p. 182.

⁶³⁶ Hipperson, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁶³⁷ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, *op. cit.* p. 7.

were on the walk. As he came past, I shouted at him “Three black teas and no sugar!”⁶³⁸

The experiences of incarceration were nevertheless brutal, extreme, and often illegal, and testimonies of prison in many of the books on Greenham reflect the effects of this particular form of institutional violence, not just on Greenham women, but on all female prisoners who they encountered ‘serving time’.⁶³⁹

Sarah Hipperson’s book *Greenham: Non-Violent Women – v – The Crown Prerogative* offers a brilliantly incisive and detailed account of a number of legal cases involving Greenham women who gradually began representing themselves in court.⁶⁴⁰ It is a useful text for anyone involved in a political action who may consider representing themselves if arrested, and it is notable that in the recent Occupy demonstrations in 2011 and 2012, former Greenham women gave workshops on such strategies.⁶⁴¹ The speaking of women to defend themselves recalls the myth of Antigone, a figure often associated with Grace in *Cleansed* and also with women at Greenham.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁸ B. Junor, *Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance, 1984-1995*, Working Press, 1995. London, p. 46.

⁶³⁹ See ‘Who is Breaching the Peace?’ in Harford and Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 78-88 for an in-depth account of this.

⁶⁴⁰ Hipperson, op. cit.

⁶⁴¹ Conversations with protestors whilst attending camps at Occupy Manchester, Occupy St. Paul’s London and Occupy Bristol, October-December 2011. Though not a direct focus for this research, I was interested in the parallels with Greenham and visited various occupations during the Autumn of 2011 with a particular interest in participating and supporting their aims, but also with a view to exploring how gender relations played themselves out in those camps. Of particular note was the encountering of young protestors in their early twenties whose mothers were at Greenham and were brought up with stories of this.

⁶⁴² Associations between Greenham Women and Antigone were also made at the time of the Greenham protests and later. See C.J. Arthur, ‘Hegel as Lord and Master’, in P. Osborne and S. Sayers (eds.), *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, p. 37. For references to *Cleansed* and Antigone, see: F. Decreus, ‘Between Lack and Desire. From Jean Anouilh’s Modernist Antigone (1944) to Sarah Kane’s Postdramatic Cleansed (1998), her “Antigone Revisited”’, *Interrogating Antigone Conference*, School of Drama and Theatre Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. 6-7 October 2006.

In 1998, the theorist Judith Butler gave a series of lectures at the University of California on the myth, later publishing the lectures in her text *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*.⁶⁴³ I note the concurrence of this date with the première of *Cleansed*, and suggest that it indicates the currency of the Antigone myth in feminist and queer discourses of the time. In drawing a connection between Kane's play and Butler's text, I underscore the importance that theatre and performance played in the development of critical feminist and queer theory in the 1990s; and conversely, the importance that feminist and queer theory played in theatre-making at this time, situated, as each was, at an interface of classical models and contemporary society. Butler's text offers a useful frame by which we can unpack both the cultural significance of Greenham Women representing themselves in court, and the political construction of institutions, kinship, family, incest, sex and death in Kane's play.⁶⁴⁴

In Sophocles' tragedy, Antigone twice buries her brother against Creon's official decree that he be left unburied.⁶⁴⁵ Butler notes that in her use of the 'language of sovereign authority and action' Antigone 'assume[s] authorship of her act' by 'refus[ing] to deny that authorship'; in short she says, 'I say that I did it and I do not deny it.'⁶⁴⁶ Butler suggests that through both the act and her verbal refusal to deny that she has done the act, Antigone:

⁶⁴³ J. Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, New York and Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2000.

⁶⁴⁴ For a useful discussion of Kane's gender-informed approach to reworking Greek myths, see Frances Babbage's chapter 'Sites of Experience: myth revision at the end of the century' in F. Babbage, *Re-visioning Myth: Modern and Contemporary Drama by Women*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011, pp. 187-228.

⁶⁴⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannos, Oedipus at Kolonos, Antigone*, trans. T. Wertenbaker, Third Edition, London, Faber & Faber, 1997.

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 8.

marks the illocutionary failure of Creon's utterance, and her contestation takes the verbal form of a reassertion of sovereignty, refusing to dissociate the deed from her person.⁶⁴⁷

Butler notes how within this particular economy of power relations, Antigone becomes viewed as 'manly':

not only because she acts in defiance of the law but also because she assumes the voice of the law in committing the act against the law. She not only does the deed, refusing to obey the edict, but she also does it again by refusing to deny that she has done it, thus appropriating the rhetoric of agency from Creon himself. Her agency emerges precisely through her refusal to honour his command and yet the language of refusal assimilates the very terms of sovereignty she refuses [...]⁶⁴⁸

In this act of agency through deed and speech, Antigone becomes 'manly' and Creon 'is unmanned, and so neither maintain their position within gender.'⁶⁴⁹ In short, Antigone's act of 'language' is an act of 'defiance' that nevertheless recognises the authority Creon holds. As Butler notes:

The claiming becomes an act that reiterates the act it affirms, extending the act of insubordination by performing its avowal in language. This avowal, paradoxically, requires a sacrifice of autonomy at the very moment in which it is performed: she asserts herself through appropriating the voice of the other, the one to whom she is opposed; thus her autonomy is gained through the appropriation of the authoritative voice of the one she resists, an appropriation that has within it traces of a simultaneous refusal and assimilation of that very authority.⁶⁵⁰

The defiance of Antigone's position is made radical by an inner conviction of her right to sovereignty of action and speech, albeit with a deference to existing frames of patrilineal destiny, kinship and authority. A notable transgression that challenges

⁶⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 10. In recognising this movement between genders, Butler is extending on premises of gender performativity initiated through her text, J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Oxon and New York, 1990.

⁶⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 11.

Creon is Antigone's lack of guilt in delivering her refusal to deny that she has done the prohibited deed. Butler analyses Hegel's discussion of this incisively and notes:

Antigone [...] acknowledges her deed, but the verbal form of her acknowledgement only exacerbates the crime. She not only did it, but she had the nerve to say she did it. Thus Antigone cannot exemplify the ethical consciousness who suffers guilt; she is beyond guilt – she embraces her crime as she embraces her death, her tomb, her bridal chamber.⁶⁵¹

One can read Antigone's strategy as having some parallel with those adopted by women at Greenham Common in their dealings with the law. This was most notable in the much-publicised accounts of their appearances in court on charges of trespass or criminal damage. The Peace Camp's approach to the Law at the time was highly strategic, in many ways reflecting its values of non-violent direct action, and informed engagement with the state from a point of inner certitude on the validity and rectitude of its activists' arguments and actions.

Greenham women quickly adopted the practice of representing themselves, and as such were able to use the 'theatre' and public space of courts to articulate intelligent, well-informed, lengthy, political justifications for their actions, thus heightening the profile of the peace camp and its reasons for existence. As Hipperson notes:

Women transformed each court into a forum for challenge and equity by insisting on conducting our defence according to our own understanding of justice rather than the dictates of the Bench. One of the many things that Greenham was about was not getting bogged down in rituals simply because they had been going on unchallenged for years...It became evident to us that women were ourselves better placed to take on the courts and the legal system...We presented our own defence against the charge – even when the outcome seemed a foregone conclusion. We had to be listened to. On almost every occasion, the prosecutor and the judges would agree that nuclear

⁶⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 34.

weapons were either an abomination, or an evil, yet women were found guilty for taking action against them.⁶⁵²

The Greenham Women's engagement with the courts frequently drew attention to the legitimacy of the values held by the women and brought into question the values held by the law, even whilst the law continued to exercise its authority according to its conventional parameters.⁶⁵³ In many cases Greenham Women were able to prove the legal system in error, or at least contradictory, partial and chaotic. Notably, in the Byelaws case of 1985-1990, they were able to prove that Michael Heseltine, the then Secretary of State for Defence had illegally introduced a new set of byelaws for Greenham Common for trespassing – ones that could not be upheld legally, and as such, arrests and convictions of women made under these byelaws were overturned by the Law Lords in 1990.⁶⁵⁴

This process involved women educating themselves and each other on fine points of law and on legal strategies, also women individually experienced teaching themselves whilst on long stretches in prison. The phenomenon of reading whilst incarcerated and empowering the community through teaching and learning is something dramatised by Kane in *Cleansed* through the relationship between Grace and Robin in scene 7.

⁶⁵² Hipperson, op. cit., p. 63

⁶⁵³ Harford and Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

⁶⁵⁴ See Byelaws Case (criminal), Director of Public Prosecutions (Respondent) -v- Jean Hutchinson (Appellant) and Georgina Smith (Appellant), in Hipperson, op. cit., pp. 95-104.



5.iii.d. Greenham Common, UK, 1982. Photographs of the perimeter fence decorated by women at Greenham, taken by Sigrid Møller, Danish Peace Academy.

In many ways, Grace's entry into the institution in scene 3 of *Cleansed* has a resonance with accounts of Greenham Women in court. She enters with confidence, and demands Graham's clothes, asking awkward questions of Tinker and interrogating the institution's values. Tinker aligns himself strongly through use of the first-person plural to the institution and its protocols:

Tinker. He's been dead six months. We don't normally keep the clothes that long.⁶⁵⁵

The use of a generic 'the' in this sentence signifies an emotional distance from the deceased, and also (in this context), a lack of sensitivity to Grace and to the emotional investment that she has in retrieving her dead brother's clothes. The deferral to the protocols of the system, and his compliance (and apparent agreement) with its practices is demonstrated in the ensuing dialogue between them:

Grace. What happens to them?

Tinker. Recycled. Or incinerated.

Grace. Recycled?

Tinker. Most likely incinerated but –

Grace. You give them to someone else?

Tinker. Yes.

Grace. Isn't that very unhygienic?

Tinker. He died of an overdose.

Grace. Then why burn his body?

Tinker. He was an addict.

Grace. You thought nobody cared.

Tinker. I wasn't here at the time.⁶⁵⁶

As Grace persists in the matter he employs a formal, polite, empathy – 'I'm sorry' – and tactical silence (given emphasis in the text by Kane's directorial use of voiced stage directions) – **Tinker:** (*Doesn't respond*). When challenged directly by Grace, he

⁶⁵⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 112.

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

falls back on institutional protocol in a disavowal of his own power in the matter:

‘Tinker. I’m not allowed to let anything leave the grounds.’⁶⁵⁷

Whilst speaking with clarity and assurance, Tinker’s position is nevertheless evasive and destabilising. To use a phrase drawn from *Revenge Tragedy*, Tinker is the institution’s central ‘intelligencer’ constantly observing the inhabitants around him – note the oft-repeated stage direction: ‘Tinker is watching’.⁶⁵⁸ He is also the soldier, the executioner, and the sexual aggressor incapable of distinguishing one woman’s identity from another. He is a character capable of extreme violence, but also a man who is sexually and emotionally dependent on his visits to (the) Woman in the peep-show booth. Through this, we see that he is subject to the economic restrictions of Capitalism and the arguably redundant deterioration of imagination and empathy that results from constant watching and the rituals of voyeurism. The institution within the perimeter fence of *Cleansed* remains a patriarchal institution, and one in which the mother is apparently absent, in which the familial dyad of father-son is somewhat configured in shifting and ghostly measure through Tinker and Graham, and in which women were separated.

Butler notes that in Heglian terms, and within the economy of the Oedipal or patriarchal frame, ‘to exercise that speech, in precisely the way she does, is to commit a different kind of offense, the one in which a prepolitical subject lays claim to a

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ J. Webster, ‘The White Devil’ in *Three Jacobean Tragedies*, London, Penguin, 1985. Saunders analyses this idea further in relation to Webster’s play *The Duchess of Malfi*. See Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

rageful agency within the public sphere.⁶⁵⁹ 'Rageful agency', a state generalised negatively by Hegel as pertaining to 'Womankind',⁶⁶⁰ in which the personal is politicised, and the political brought into the domestic, emotional and sexual sphere to be scrutinised and challenged with diverse voices, eyes and hands, recalls much of the energy of political movements over the latter decades of the C20th.

In *The New Century*, Hobsbawm notes an emergence of 'rageful agency within the public sphere' amongst women and men, arguing that whilst surveillance has increased in Western societies, the state has:

lost to some extent its monopoly over the means of coercion [...]. The change is that citizens are less willing to obey the laws of the state than in the past. I think that one of the first examples of this phenomenon was '68. If you compare the behaviour of the New Left students and radicals in the American courts with the previous attitudes of the communist defendants, you'll notice that, although the latter refused to provide information against themselves and appealed to the Fifth Amendment, they behaved more or less in accordance with the rules, which ultimately they accepted. The New Left, on the other hand, did not conform to the rules, rejected the whole procedure, and acted as though they no longer recognized the fundamental principles that uphold the conduct of public affairs, which had previously been considered the duty of every citizen.⁶⁶¹

The politics of Greenham posited that differences between individuals – whether that be women and other women, or women and men – were secondary to the wider battle, which was to challenge the fundamental operations of patriarchal power and its institutions. As Hipperson notes:

Greenham's quarrel was not with the man next door and his 'privileged' life within the hierarchy/patriarchy. Greenham challenged the State at its highest level. It struck at the heart of HM Government, at the politicians, the military,

⁶⁵⁹ *ibid.* pp. 34-35.

⁶⁶⁰ Butler quotes Hegel: 'an internal enemy – womankind in general. Womankind – the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community', Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶⁶¹ Hobsbawm, *The New Century*, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

the law, courts and prison system. Women were willing to take these on wherever we encountered them, in defence of life itself. We were not interested in fighting for personal power wrenched from the patriarchy – we wanted much more than that – we wanted to live in a world that is governed by justice for all without the threat or use of nuclear weapons.⁶⁶²

The relationship of the ‘man next-door’ to the institution is frequently more complex than can first appear. Within the economy of the English football match in the 1980s, all of the ‘men next-door’ became the ‘one’ man-next-door in a configuration that was at once bestial, brutal and unthinking. As the character of Marie in *I.D.*, losing patience with her policeman husband-turned-hooligan and says:

Marie: You don’t look different to me John. I see it every Saturday night.
Millions of you. Men on the march, beating each other up, “show us yer tits love” or a fist in the face! Is that you?⁶⁶³

In *Among the Thugs*, Buford raises questions about the institutional nature and homogenising effects of being incarcerated within the perimeter fence at football matches, also about the complicity of watching in maintaining violence. One senses a real dilemma for Buford as he begins to note the political apathy and anticipatory glee of the media in watching for violence to occur and in sensationalising it. In Buford’s movement from detached journalistic observer to a player in the mob, there is a clear crisis of identification in relation to his own masculinity.

This crisis is dramatised effectively in *I.D.*. John’s undercover colleagues gradually express concerns at his behaviour, but it is only when he kills someone and cannot remember doing it, that they confront him. Even so, they conspire to cover up for him by destroying the video evidence. This fraternal collusion not only means that John cannot fully face up to the consequence of what he has done, but also means that he

⁶⁶² Hipperson, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

⁶⁶³ *I.D.*, Davis/O’Connell, 1995, [DVD]. See: 1:07.29-1:07.38.

remains ignorant, and in a state of amnesia, knowing that something is very wrong but unable to fully 'see' himself as others can. In the following exchange, it becomes apparent that John no longer distinguishes between himself and the gang of hooligans he has successfully infiltrated, and that he has assimilated their moral codes, ethical values, belief systems and ways of behaving into his own world view without question. In short, the football fans and John share the same horizon, and the film perhaps suggests that they did all along:

John:	I walk in and it's like I've got some fucking disease. What am I, a Gooner? Some leper? What the fuck is it, what's wrong with me?
Charlie:	We have been wondering ... [...] You've gone too far.
John:	What?
Charlie:	Saturday. You know what I'm saying, you overstepped the mark.
John:	You know where the fucking mark is, do ya?
Charlie:	Yeah, I do.
John:	Show me. Here. Fucking show me! [...] Give me my marker. Let me know where I stop. Is this the place? (Steps towards Charlie menacingly) Or here? (Steps closer) Surely, this is it. The edge, isn't it? Surely. (Stops directly in front of Charlie, almost nose-to-nose) Tell me when I've touched the bone. ⁶⁶⁴

When John is told that his violence was recorded on a video tape that his colleagues watched then destroyed, he gathers the seriousness of his actions, and appeals to the others to recognise him as one of them:

John:	I can't remember nothing, I swear [...], I'm still a fucking human being [...]. Can't you look at me? ⁶⁶⁵
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⁶⁶⁴ *ibid.* See 1:19.42-1:20.57.

⁶⁶⁵ *ibid.* See 1:37.10.

When he begs to be told what they saw on the video tape, Charlie says: 'You can live without it'. Inevitably, John finds that he cannot.⁶⁶⁶

The effects of the work on his personal and professional life, and his seeming inability to return to his old values and stop the cycles of drinking, violence and addiction to the 'game', leaves John screaming for a limit, a 'marker' – in Irigarayan terms – an 'envelope'.⁶⁶⁷ Fearing the 'abyss', feeling and sensing the death of his 'God', even in the pursuit of him, he projects himself further out, with ever-increasing rage and destruction, seeking something to provide the limit and stop the fall.⁶⁶⁸ The end of the film shows him marching with a group of fascists, stuck in a cycle of destruction, self-deception and repetition, venting his rage and loss like a small, angry, child.

Buford undergoes a similar dilemma, and asks questions of where the 'limits' are, also who is culpable in over-stepping them, as he struggles to place himself in relation to the violence:

I remember thinking: if the day becomes more violent, who do you blame? The English, whose behaviour could be said to have been so provocative, they deserved what they got? The Italians, whose welcome consisted of inflicting injuries on their visitors. Or can you place some of the blame on those men with their television equipment and their cameras, whose misrepresentative images served only to reinforce what everybody had come to expect.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ There is insufficient space to discuss this further here, but I suggest that there may be connection between the interrogations of violence and masculinity in *I.D.*, *Blasted*, *Cleansed*, and the Grassmarket Project's 1998 work *Soldiers*. Kane reviewed *Soldiers* for a national newspaper, and took great interest in the production. I have been unable to locate a copy of this review (which may have been cut at editorial stage), but note it for further enquiry. The Grassmarket Project, 'Past Productions: Soldiers', <http://www.grassmarketproject.org/index.php?pid=42&plid=11>, 2006, (accessed 8 March 2013). Conversation with Jeremy Weller, 7 March 2013.

⁶⁶⁷ Irigaray, 'The Envelope: A Reading of Spinoza, *Ethics*, "Of God"', *Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 83-94.

⁶⁶⁸ Irigaray, Marine Lover, op. cit., pp. 7-8. 'And the further out you project yourself, the farther you fall. There is nothing to stop your penetration outside yourself – nothing either more or less. Unless I am there. [...] your God dies, how keen is your distress. Endless is your despair and your rage to destroy even the very beginning of this nothingness'.

⁶⁶⁹ Buford, op. cit., p. 71.

The laissez-faire expectation of violence from England fans in the 1970s and 1980s, the submission of the crowd to its bestialising incarceration, and the short-sightedness of the authorities in 'containing' violence through penning and supervision, found its nemesis in the events of Hillsborough in 1989.⁶⁷⁰ With the deaths of 96 football fans, crushed fatally into the fences, and the many more injured and traumatised through lack of space and air, questions were asked about the suitability of the authorities' methods. The slow response from the authorities, their inability or unwillingness to actually 'hear' the voices of individuals in the crowd, and their determination to keep the gates locked further indicted their methods but also revealed something seriously flawed in their perception of the human beings within the pens. Recognition of the dehumanising effect of the pens were brought to a head by the *Sun* newspaper's disgraceful bestialising of Liverpool supporters as animals who 'urinated' on those trying to escape.⁶⁷¹

The Hillsborough Disaster brought a sea-change to the masculinised and incarcerated sphere of the football terraces in a number of ways. Firstly, it indicted the very practice of containing violence in a collective space, and proved that a detached and unfeeling surveillance does not readily convert itself into effective or humane action. Secondly, it challenged the binarised perception of football fans as uniformly male and adult, and raised questions about the invisibility of women and children in that

⁶⁷⁰ Home Office, UK Government, 'Hillsborough Independent Panel: Disclosed Material and Report', <http://hillsborough.independent.gov.uk/>, 2012, (accessed 1 June 2013).

⁶⁷¹ *ibid.*, see chapter 12, 'Behind the headlines: the origins, promotion and reproduction of unsubstantiated allegations'.

sphere.⁶⁷² The tragic sublimation of women and children's bodies and voices in a masculine one-ness evidenced by the significant numbers of them appearing on fatality and injury lists at Hillsborough raised questions about the fallacy of 'football for the lads', and people began to consider ways to make the terraces more diverse and open. Thirdly, the tragedy effected the removal of all perimeter fences at football matches thus dissolving the incarcerating effects of that particular mechanism and its significations. Individual seating was introduced breaking up the physical sublimation of the bodies of the crowd into one, allowing space, breath and clear views between. Fourthly the Hillsborough Disaster brought grieving to the terraces – where before there had been anger, hostility, neutrality, violence and euphoria, there was a softening of emotions and a diversification of emotional expression. The 'man next door' suddenly *became* 'the man next door' and in its images of men holding their bereaved loved ones in grief, crying on the terraces, cradling scarves and photographs, the media began to reflect a different ontology of masculinity on the terraces – one that was strong, tender, still and soft, and one that readers and viewers began to connect to with empathy.

Where the Hillsborough Disaster resulted in the dissolution of a sphere configured by and largely enacting of patriarchally-sanctioned violence, the continuing reluctance of the authorities to hold a proper enquiry into their handling of events on the day, has effected a further phenomenon – that of protest and political unity between women and men. The Hillsborough families have been united at the site of the terrace, and

⁶⁷² Davis/O'Connell's I.D. also reflects this reality, and challenges the binarised notion of the football terraces as exclusively male with long panning shots of football crowds with women in them. See Davis/O'Connell, I.D. [DVD], 15:22-15:45 for an example of this.

the bringing to the fore of mixed voices in a challenge to the institution and its value systems. These voices emerge at the point at which the bereaved go to collect their loved ones' bodies, and there are similarities in accounts of this and in Grace's arrival at the institution in scene 3 of *Cleansed*. Take the report of Mrs Delaney, whose 18-year-old son James was killed in the crush:

we were led into the sports hall and when we walked in our son was lying on a trolley, inside this green zipped-up bag, number thirty-three, so his dad and I bent down to kiss and talk to James, and as we stood up, there was a policeman who came from behind me and was trying to usher myself and my husband out, straight out of the hall. The total attitude was, you've identified number thirty-three so go! So unfortunately I went hysterical [...]. I had to ask if I could take our son away from the public's eye [...]. I also had to scream at these officers and ask them please to allow us privacy for the three of us to be together [...]. I started to examine my son's body, he had blood in his nostrils, blood in his teeth, his poor face was hardened with blood on the side of his cheek. His face was dirty, his hair was very, dusty and dirty [...]. And in the meantime, I was examining our son [...] my husband was ushered to a table to be asked questions. At which again I started to scream [...]; there is a time and a place for everything [...]. I thought it was only right that his dad should be with him – we went together to look for our son James, and that was time that was owed to us, because at the end of the day, when you carry a child for nine months, and you bring them into the world, it is your right to be with your child. We asked if we could possibly – we wanted to stay with James – we were told 'no' that we couldn't. So I asked if I could be allowed to come back and see James – we were told 'no' it was for identification only.⁶⁷³

In the Millennium years, British society witnessed a shift by which the football terraces became referenced not as the site of a caged and violent white masculinity, but as a

⁶⁷³ Hillsborough Justice Campaign, 'The Immediate Aftermath – The Gymnasium' <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/gym.shtml>, ND, (accessed 4 April 2012). The 'Gymnasium' was the Hillsborough ground's designated First Aid point, and the bodies of the deceased were taken there for identification. Much criticism was levelled at the treatment of the bereaved in this area. The 'sports hall' is a key area in *Cleansed* and is introduced and maintained as a site of violence in scene 4: 'The Red Room – the university sports hall. Carl is being heavily beaten by an unseen group of men.' Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit. pp. 116-117. Grace is later beaten and raped in the same space. There is much volatility sitting under this construction of the Red Room. On one teaching occasion, a Foucauldian reading of violence connected to gymnasiums by a group of students declaring sports halls a possible site of oppression and bullying, provoked an extraordinarily fierce debate leading to enraged walk-outs from the room by others. There is more that could be usefully explored with regard to the significance of interiors in *Cleansed*, also of the connections between Kane's work and football.

site of family activity and (in a number of high-profile campaigns tackling racism from both fans and players) as a site of multiculturalism. In gender terms, this process was accompanied by some interesting divergence in notions of masculinity where old norms competed with models of new expression – notably ‘feminine’ or ‘feminised’ in reference and located in players like Beckham – and the heteronormativity of the game challenged further by a number of high-profile players ‘coming out’ as homosexual.⁶⁷⁴

Greenham queered notions of family, kinship, community, organisation, agency and political discourse in ways that are still playing themselves out in space and time within the fabric of British society through peoples’ lives. As Roseneil notes in the final chapter of *Common Women, Uncommon Practices*:

Greenham developed its own peculiar set of common values and ethics and its distinctive mode of doing politics within the particularities of its historical and geographical situation – in Britain at the height of the Cold War. It was never the intention of those involved that Greenham should become a universal, unchanging blueprint for how to build a community, a movement, a politics. Greenham was experimental, exceptional, and liminal, located physically outside ordinary life, and many of its routines, structures and norms. Greenham was the radical, anarchic edge of feminism [...]. Greenham’s uncommon-ness should perhaps be what is carried into other spaces [...]. It employed a symbolic, strategic essentialism which mobilized women on the basis of their lived experiences of gender whilst questioning, destabilizing and transforming gender and sexual identities. It queered lives, and just a little, queered the world.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁴ The configuration of football as a family game is not without its issues. Arguably what has been enacted in many ways is a huge display of heteronormativity and consumerism – particularly with the development of a role for footballers’ partners commonly referred to as ‘WAG’s’ (‘Wives and Girlfriends’). There is insufficient space, and it is outside the scope of this research, to address this further but I note it as an area that merits further scholarly investigation and thinking.

⁶⁷⁵ Roseneil, op. cit., pp. 320-321.

Whilst I concur with this premise and observation, I note that there is a curious amnesia in British society when it comes to remembering the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham, its innovations, achievements and the memories thousands of women and men in Britain and beyond have who in some shape or form 'were there'. This warrants further scholarly enquiry and thinking to unravel. In the course of this research, I have noted a shift in this and suggest that there is a re-emergence of discussion and remembering of Greenham.

To conclude this chapter, I consider the symbol of the web, and how this relates to both Greenham Common and Sarah Kane's writing. In 1989, artist Margaret Harrison visited the Peace Camp at Greenham Common and made a number of reconstructions of the perimeter fence for exhibition in gallery spaces in New York. The series was entitled *Common Land/Greenham* and formed part of Harrison's ongoing investigation of gender and female creativity.⁶⁷⁶ In 2013, she revisited this work and her experiences of Greenham in relation to an exploration of John William Waterhouse's work *The Lady of Shalott*. The works – collectively titled *Reflect* – form part of the 2013 Northern Art Prize selection, and at the time of writing are being exhibited in Leeds Art Gallery, UK.⁶⁷⁷ One of the pieces is a reconstruction and reworking of her earlier 1989 section of the Greenham Common perimeter fence. By wonderful – clown-time – fortuity I was asked to make work from this, and took the opportunity to use workshop and

⁶⁷⁶ Manchester Metropolitan University, *Margaret Harrison: Moving Pictures*, Manchester, Faculty of Art & Design Manchester Metropolitan University, 1998.

⁶⁷⁷ 'Margaret Harrison', Northern Art Prize, ND, <http://www.northernartprize.org.uk/2013-prize/shortlist/margaret-harrison>, (accessed 6 May 2013). Harrison won the Northern Art Prize for this work. BBC News, 'Margaret Harrison wins Northern Art Prize', 24 May 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-22647661> (accessed 24 May 2013).

performance with community groups and gallery visitors to explore memories and creative practices of Greenham with a view to furthering this particular work on *Cleansed*.⁶⁷⁸

There is insufficient space to detail all the findings here, but what was notable was the testimony to amnesia and the shock of remembering Greenham by visitors over the age of 40, followed by an outpouring of memories and associations when presented with an opportunity to engage and spend time with artwork related to it. As part of my work I invited visitors to informally weave a web in the gallery space, and this served to bring memories and emotions strongly to the fore. One woman, aged 40, visiting with her two daughters, described the process of encountering the web-building as ‘uncanny’. She related that she had been taken to Greenham by her mother at the age her daughters now were and the first thing they did when they arrived was weave a web over some bushes. As her daughters jumped into circling the wool around stools and pillars, she recounted a familiar 1980s childhood tale of parental conflict over feminism, the growth of her mother’s agency in challenging the father in her support of Greenham, and the effect this subsequently had on the dynamics of gender within the family. As she talked she watched her daughters and kept repeating the words ‘it’s uncanny’, whilst showing me the goose-bumps on her arms (that by that point, I too was catching)! The reference to the uncanny – *unheimlich* – as noted earlier has a relationship to the re-emergence of that which is known and close to home, and this is significant in the phenomenon of re-membering that I believe is beginning to happen in relation to the Greenham story and its gender politics.

⁶⁷⁸ N. Kane, Evaluation of *Elements Project*, Audience Development at Leeds Art Gallery, Cast-Off Drama, for Leeds Art Gallery Education, Arts Council of England. June 2013.



5.iii.e. Web-building, singing and talking about Greenham with gallery visitors, in response to *Reflect* by Margaret Harrison (2013) and *The Lady of Shalott* by John William Waterhouse, (1894). *Wolf* performance, Cast-Off Drama, as part of the *Elements Project*, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 14 April 2013.



5.iii.f. Weaving webs in the gallery space: a response to *Reflect* by Margaret Harrison (2013) and *The Lady of Shalott* by John William Waterhouse (1894). Community workshop with Adult Group. *Elements Project*, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 19 April 2013.

Web-building in anarchic, disruptive ways represents a reclamation for women of spaces conventionally reserved for the transactions of patriarchy – commodification, utilitarianism and sexual exchange. Freud stated that women's only contribution to the development of civilisation was weaving – an activity that developed from women's need to invest in fabrics and cloths to cover the 'shame' of their lacking genitals. Irigaray explains and refutes Freud's ideas thus:

Weaving [...] is however, more or less, an "*imitation*" of the "*model*" Nature gives in the pubic hair. Woman can, it seems, (only) imitate nature. Duplicate what nature offers and produces. In a kind of *technical* assistance and substitution. But this is paradoxical. Since Nature is all. But this 'all' cannot appear as no thing, as no sex organ, for example. Therefore woman weaves in order to veil herself, mask the faults of Nature, and restore her in her wholeness. *By wrapping her up*. In a wrapping that Marx has told us preserves the "value" from a just evaluation. And allows the "exchange" of goods "without knowledge" of their effective value. By abstracting "products", by making them universal and interchangeable without recognising their differences. In a wrapping that Freud tells us serves to hide the difference of the sexes from the horrified gaze of the little boy and the man.⁶⁷⁹

In transferring the art of weaving from clothes-making to anarchic, chaotic, messy and idiosyncratic collective web-building over trees, bushes, across paths and roads transporting nuclear weapons the women at Greenham overturned the conventional associations of weaving and the feminine and used it as a weapon that revealed the phallus at its most destructive. By making webs with looping holes, strange tangled shapes, amorphous lumps caught up with signifiers of the personal and whatever was close to hand – quirky, whimsical or political – they effectively 'undid' the wrappings of patriarchy, through monstrous rambling and woolly effusion.⁶⁸⁰ Through weaving

⁶⁷⁹ L. Irigaray, 'The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry' in *Speculum*, op. cit., p. 115.

⁶⁸⁰ Harford & Hopkins, op. cit., p. 91. 'But I had nothing. All around me women were at work. With bits of wool and twine, tying up balloons and posters, sticking babies' clothing, photos of their children and

webs, not clothes, in such acts of collective divestment (and divertissement) they put the tangle of threads away from their bodies and into the public and political space. In stalling, trapping and bamboozling the military officials, angry ratepayers and local 'plod' into confrontation with woven space, they made themselves symbolically naked, showing their 'lack' without shame like bawdy sheela-na-gigs.⁶⁸¹ Essentially through the *act* rather than the *product* of weaving they sought to 'weave again the strands of true existence' and

remove whatever lies of force and violence have got caught [...] unravel them and weave again where holes were torn, until with truth and love and gentleness the web is whole and strong.⁶⁸²

The symbolism of weaving gained a central, deeply-ritual and empowering significance for many Greenham women, and became synonymous with the camp, and with mythologies of spider-goddesses and of Penelope, weaver of Fates:

I saw again the web, the symbol of the Greenham women, woven in wool, into the fence and on to the grass, drawn on posters and on garments. Everywhere the web, and questions of its meaning were stilled as somehow from within understanding grew. We are all interdependent, we are all responsible for each other, how delicate the strands, how strong the web. The ancient spider goddess weaving tirelessly the web of life again and again and again, as often as is needed.⁶⁸³

Experience of web-building is that it gains and expands in its own time.⁶⁸⁴ Individuals lose themselves in the rhythms and flux of winding, unwinding, journeying in and out

pictures of their loved ones into the coldness of the wire. I was standing in a mass of knotted grass. Grass, weeds and gorse, intertwined were growing live up the fence.'

⁶⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 97. See Aggie Jakubská's photograph of the Sewage Pipes action, 5 October 1982. The caption, with characteristic Greenham humour parodies the policemen standing in the middle of the web with the words, 'I can't find the instructions for unwinding this, guv.'

⁶⁸² *ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

⁶⁸³ *ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ Cast-Off Drama, *Wolf* performance and workshops, *Elements Project*, Leeds Art Gallery, April 2013; Kane, Evaluation of the *Elements Project*, 2013. See also, *Keen* performance on *The Lady of Shalott*, Leeds Art Gallery, 7 May 2011, Cast-Off Drama, 'Summer 2011: Modelworks', [web blog]; see also,

of each others' threads, cutting, tying, knotting, choosing a different ball, a different colour or texture, tying the end to whatever is close to hand and starting again. People use the floor and increasingly become emboldened occupying the horizontal, remembering in many ways the freedom of childhood to roll, crawl on their belly, wriggle, lie on their backs, get caught and uncaught. It essentially takes people into a ritual of no time, and ever-moving rhythm – all the while the structure of threads builds and resonates as bodies brush against it, step over it, move their way delicately through it with careful fingertips and tiptoe. In the web-building on the Elements Project, the impulse to weave more and more of the gallery space, using horizontal and vertical planes, became an ever-circling, expansive activity, with the core group of participants happy to play in the space indefinitely, and gallery visitors taking time to join in.⁶⁸⁵ The web, in the process and rhythms of its building, and in the emergence of a material gift-space/object collectively wrought, is essentially a manifestation of a kiss⁶⁸⁶ and at Greenham this kiss of the web-building was essentially that of a kissing between women:

Our all cannot be projected or mastered. Our whole body is moved. No surface holds. No figure, line or point remains. No ground subsists. But no abyss either. Depth, for us, is not a chasm. Without a solid crust, there is no precipice. Our depth is the thickness of our body, our all touching itself. Where top and bottom, inside and out, in front and behind, above and below are not separated, remote, out of touch. Our all intermingled. Without breaks or gaps [...] we are at home on the flatlands. We have so much space to share. Our

Kane, *Encountering the Other*, op. cit. p. 34. I have repeated the exercise of building webs with wool and mirrors in workshops with women and men on Waterhouse's *Lady of Shalott* for many years, in Cast-Off Drama projects and through *The Art of the Life-Model*. This exposition of the process and rhythms of web-building and weaving comes from this.

⁶⁸⁵ In one lovely moment, a woman on her lunch break passing through, whipped out a crochet needle from her handbag and spent half an hour crocheting a beautiful, soft, winding of mint-green wool to a pillar as an anchor for others' threads. The sudden appearance of the crochet needle from the handbag delighted other people present, precipitating much laughter and some chatter; her woven work being much admired, stroked and gently touched for some time after.

⁶⁸⁶ See Robinson's useful exposition of how artwork by women can constitute an expression of Irigaray's philosophy of the gift-space/object. Robinson, *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray*, op. cit., pp. 85-88.

horizon will never stop expanding; we are always open. Stretching out, never ceasing to unfold ourselves, we have so many voices to invent in order to express all of us everywhere, even in our gaps, that all the time there is will not be enough. We can never complete the circuit, explore our periphery; we have so many dimensions.⁶⁸⁷

This energy is within *Cleansed* and finds its expression within a structure that essentially circles and weaves itself. There is always a moment during a rehearsal for *Cleansed* when people feel like they will never stop working on it – a feeling that they will live in this particular play for life. Theatre directors and casts encounter a conundrum with *Cleansed* where they feel compelled to re-order the scenes, or overlay actions. In watching both Kamome-za and Bare Cheek Theatre's productions I was aware of a particular intensification of layering and circling, from the performance, particularly of the scenes between 8 and 16.⁶⁸⁸ It is essentially a weaving dance, and when casts allow themselves to fall into the rhythm and 'music' of those scenes, an inner understanding of what the play *is, in that space and time*, is formed.⁶⁸⁹ Kane herself never entirely resolved the order of scenes, and as such we find ourselves up close to her circling in this:

Cleansed is structurally based on *Woyzeck* [...] I'd actually finished *Cleansed* when I directed *Woyzeck*, and I was playing around with all the different versions. I moved them around and thought, "When have I done this before?" And I remembered *Cleansed* [...].⁶⁹⁰

Recognising that Kane's writing processes reflect a strong affinity with embodiment, the scripts further carry the marks of Kane's experience within them, not only of her

⁶⁸⁷ Irigaray, 'When Our Lips', op. cit., pp. 214-215.

⁶⁸⁸ 'Cleansed ('Be Cleansed')', Kamome-za, Tokyo, 27 May 2012; 'Cleansed', Bare Cheek Theatre, Cork, 6 December 2012.

⁶⁸⁹ As Kawaguchi noted in our early correspondence on the play: 'Cleansed text itself is very danceable and has got music inside'. E-mail from Tomoco Kawaguchi to Nina Kane, 17 May 2012. Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

⁶⁹⁰ Kane talking about structural links between the writing of *Cleansed* and the direction of *Woyzeck*. Saunders, *About Kane*, loc. cit. p. 43.

life – ‘heart and mind’ – but of her working practice as a writer, director and performer.⁶⁹¹ Kane’s process of extending and re-crafting her scripts through production make them all the more powerful for actors and directors in that we are essentially working with a live art document that bears the traces of the author’s own centrality to its realisation at all stages of making. McCleane-Fay encountered the traces of this energy during rehearsals, and found himself swapping and rearranging the order of scenes constantly, eventually using an inter-textual – arguably web-building – strategy of cutting text from *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* and tying these into points in *Cleansed* where he felt they would help the overall weave of the story. He was unaware that Kane had played around with the text in this way, but at a moment towards the end of scene 17 in the Bare Cheek production, Grace sits at the front of the stage and begins to collect and assemble scraps of paper from the books torn by Robin, repeatedly arranging and rearranging the order of them on the floor like a dance.⁶⁹² In Irigaray terms, encountering Kane’s work in rehearsal, we are entering into a *corps-a-corps* relationship, which is intense and intimate. The spaces within the text are arguably where the *corps-a-corps* relationship is at its strongest.⁶⁹³

Kane managed the intensity of her own writing process through different methods. The long-write and subsequently joyful edit was one. The involvement with production (a space where the meaning of her own vision was possibly made manifest in that space and time with those particular actors) was another. Uses of structural form was

⁶⁹¹ These extend the editing process through rehearsal to further final edits, as reflected in the changes to published versions of the text in the posthumous *Complete Plays*.

⁶⁹² ‘Cleansed’, Bare Cheek Theatre, Cork, 6 December 2012. Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.

⁶⁹³ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, op. cit., p. 7.

another, and it is through form that we discover a boundary to the body of the text, that assists a playing with it. I would suggest that approaching the script with an awareness of its weaving energy and web-building capacity is an important dramaturgical consideration.

In a particularly tense, painful and conflictual session on mirrors and mirroring, young women in the Sarah Kane Research Group took particular interest in this extract from Irigaray's *Marine Lover*:

Yes, I am coming back from far, far away. And my crime at present, is my candor. I am no longer the lining to your coat, your – faithful – understudy. Voicing your joys and sorrows, your fears and resentments. You have fashioned me into a mirror, but I have dipped that mirror in the waters of oblivion – that you call life. And farther away from the place where you are beginning to be. I have turned back. I have washed off your masks and make up, scrubbed away your multicoloured projections and designs, stripped off your veils and wraps that hid the shame of your nudity. I have even had to scrape my woman's flesh clean of the insignia and the marks you had etched upon it.⁶⁹⁴

The reference to scrubbing here recalls the actions of Marcia in Kane's and O'Connell's 1995 film *Skin*:

MARCIA is scrubbing BILLY's tattoos with a stiff brush and bleach. The skin is raw and bleeding, and BILLY is screaming in pain. MARCIA removes the swastika, then kisses his hand.⁶⁹⁵

In scrubbing off the insignia of fascism on Billy's body, and in putting some of the abuses experienced by black women at the hands of white men,⁶⁹⁶ Marcia (by inference, already in a lesbian relationship with Kath), makes a mirror of her (black) body and the (heterosexual) sex act to show Billy the effects of his fascism and

⁶⁹⁴ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, op. cit., p. 4. Session on *Mirroring and Sameness*, Sarah Kane Research Group, 11 November 2009.

⁶⁹⁵ Kane, *Skin*, op. cit. p. 262. *Skin*, O'Connell, 1995, [short film], see 06:59-07:23.

violence.⁶⁹⁷ It deflects the violence he expresses towards her and puts the pain and practices of degradation back onto him. Yet it is destructive, painful and draining – it is a necessary conflict – there are no victors. Both Marcia and Billy are left wounded by the exchange, and yet there is something of purging, progression, exorcism and cleansing achieved through it. Kane, as ever, structures support and nurturing into the script, and these come in the form of the young white woman with ‘shaven head [...] and cherry red docs’ and the ‘old black man [...] tending a large pot of thriving cannabis plants’.⁶⁹⁸ What Kane encodes in both Kath and Neville is an economy of nurturing watching – a *watching over*, a *looking out for*.⁶⁹⁹ This is dramatised most centrally through Neville, in whom there is the energy, wisdom and patience of the survivor: the reassurer. From the opening scene, with his measured eye-contact, his ‘half-nod of recognition’ and the shaking of his head at Billy’s aggressive gesture, Neville is recognisable as a character who has been through a lifetime of human experience and emotion, and reached a point where he can see people as people, stand his ground, respect himself, and maintain love and openness for humanity in the face of violence and degradation. His permanent presence and watching of the comings and goings of the street represents a ‘being-in-readiness’, a relational, politically cognisant and humanistic outlook that can foresee trouble and is willing to step in and help where required.⁷⁰⁰ He essentially configures the healing and nurturing essence of clown theatre in his actions:

⁶⁹⁷ Kane, *Skin*, op. cit., p. 261: ‘What’s it like? What’s it like? What’s it like?’.

⁶⁹⁸ Kane, *Skin*, op. cit., p. 267: ‘KATH comes in. She watches MARCIA’s back for a moment. MARCIA doesn’t move. KATH gets into bed with MARCIA fully-clothed, and wraps her arms around her from behind. A silence.’ *Skin*, O’Connell, 1995, [short film], see 10:16-10:22.

⁶⁹⁹ O’Connell’s film direction brings this quality of ‘nurturing watching’ strongly to the fore. *Skin*, O’Connell, 1995, [short film].

⁷⁰⁰ Bryson, *Gender and the Politics of Time*, loc. cit., p. 121.

23. INT. DAY. THE HALLWAY.

NEVILLE is dragging BILLY along by the ankles. BILLY is naked and unconscious. His head bangs on the door frame and bumps down the steps.

cut to/

24. INT. DAY. THE BATHROOM.

BILLY is vomiting violently down the toilet. NEVILLE kneels beside him, patting his back.

NEVILLE

You're all right, white boy, you're all right.

BILLY vomits some more.

NEVILLE

That's it son, better out than in, you're all right.

BILLY looks into the old man's face and smiles weakly. He begins to sob. Then rests his head on the toilet seat and cries his heart out.⁷⁰¹

In the final analysis, in both *Skin* and *Cleansed*, Kane presents us with a queer vision of hope. In the last scene of *Cleansed*, Grace and Carl sit in the patch of mud inside the perimeter fence. Carl is crying. Both are mutilated, but they survive to reflect, to reason to challenge, to strategise and to understand. They reach out their arms and touch. There is an Irigarayan breath in the space between them. Their touch is not informed by the all-consuming desire of Carl for Rod, that Sartrean-like destroys and burns Rod in the final analysis; nor is it the incestuous, ghostly coupling of Grace and Graham, nor the power-imbalanced, ultimately impotent patriarchal love between Tinker and Woman. It is a contract; there is an equality (of shifting sexual difference) engendered through the experience, and a responsibility to work together to look at

⁷⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

the wounds honestly and to see the future. Through this Kane's work continues to offer us a way forward.

In the following chapter, I will apply queer, clown and ficto-critical readings, based on dramaturgical and body-centred practical enquiry, to explore *Cleansed* as a transgender text.

6. Wearing My Brother's Underpants, and Other Queer Clown Explorations: The Importance of Clothing to a Gender-informed Dramaturgy of *Cleansed*

At a moment in the process of exploring the dramaturgy of *Cleansed* I recalled a story from my childhood. It is a tale from the early 1980s, and I offer it here as an introduction to this discussion of transgender, family and questions of clothing and sexuality emerging from performative work on the body in *Cleansed*.

My parents divorced when I was young, and the post-divorce relationship, like so many in that era, was marked by conflict and anger between the adults involved. In my parents' case, the anger was often expressed with reference to the ongoing debates around gender in the wider society of the time. My mother – in my father's terms – was a selfish, irresponsible bloody feminist, who had left a perfectly good marriage, to go off, get educated, and join 'man-hating women's groups with a load of hippies and lezzies'. My father – in my mother's terms – was a selfish, irresponsible, 'male-chauvinist pig with outdated views on women'. There was no – or perhaps plenty – of love lost, and my younger brother and I, like many children in divorce cases, were sent back and forth between them, often packed with some sort of explosive to enrage or even destroy the other parent, like miniature cannon balls across a firing range. Such were the times, such things were necessary, and nobody is perfect.

The story – which I name here simply as 'Wearing My Brother's Underpants' – is a clown tale from the early 1980s. Whilst on a holiday visit to a seaside town with my father's side of the family, the men and boys in the party returned from an excursion

to the 'kiss me quick' outlets along the pier with a hilariously hideous (but also, to me, highly desirable) pair of boy's underpants for my brother. The pants were a bright sunflower yellow, made of the heavy polyester common at the time, and were decorated with a 'saucy seaside' cartoon image of Adam and Eve holding an apple from a tree, naked bar the inevitable fig leaves, and ogled knowingly by a chirpy, gap-mouthed snake.

My brother raced upstairs to change into the pants and then bounced, naked but for them, into the company of assembled holiday makers in the living room of the guest house, with a great 'Tarzan' yell. He proceeded, clown-like, to pose with his skinny, eight year old body, performing a range of 'macho' body-building postures, flexing his muscles and biceps and sucking his belly in. The performance was greeted with much laughter – most of the audience were family, or friends of my grandfather and who had been going to the guest house for years. As my brother was packed off upstairs, to riotous applause with praise for his 'laddishness', and told to change out of them, my father made a point of saying 'make sure you show them to your mum when you get home!' which, of course brought more laughter – the rules of battle being generally accepted.

My brother and I could recognise this for the cannon-ball it inevitably was, but when we returned home, my brother dutifully dressed in the pants and leapt again into the centre of the living room where my mother, stepfather and I were gathered. My mother's understandable response was one of outrage and disgust at the pants, and fury at the gesture, which she knew had been sent from my father to insult her. My

stepfather's quieter response concurred. They told my brother to go back upstairs and take 'those disgusting, sexist, degrading pants off IMMEDIATELY and throw them away'.

This was my chance. As my brother went and changed, discarding the pants carelessly on a heap of clothes on the floor, I picked them up and told him I was having them, but not to tell the parents. He was more than happy to let me have them. He had no real desire or attachment to them, and wouldn't tell. The unwritten rule of close siblings, particularly where the adults are raging like Gods in the skies above your lives, is to keep secrets and have your own little world of codes, signs, symbols, rituals, rebellions and agreements.

Whilst he was (and is) a born performer, and happy to do anything for a laugh, my brother was also a shy, sensitive, gentle and highly intelligent boy. Frequently accused of being 'made soft by his mother', he did not recognise himself in the model of manhood set out for him, and so prioritised, in the strictly-regulated gender codes of my father's family where men were expected to behave in particular ways, to bond and to pass status and heritage from one generation to the next. My father's family, desperately sad at the terms of the divorce which meant they only saw us twice a year, considered my brother and I to have been 'stolen from' them by the Courts. As such they made every effort when we were present to instill the codes of belonging necessary to be recognised as part of the clan. Values such as gregariousness, respect, tradition, duty, kindness, loyalty and generosity formed part of this – as they did with

my mother's family – but the gender codes of the paternal clan were more rigorously insisted upon and constantly marked symbolically, as was cultural and expected.

My brother's performance in the guest house had secured him a victory, and a breathing space from the moulding and accusations of 'girlyness' on that particular holiday. He had proved himself as a cheeky lad – daring, naughty, reckless, charismatic, loud, lively, at the centre of things, and also plain silly and self-deprecating – a born fool! But a smart fool too. Such values bonded and defined the men on that side of the family, and as such, with his Tarzan leap and yell, my brother had behaved well, and proved himself on that day. He was 'a lad's lad'. But he held little store by it, found it complex, stressful, sometimes painful to maintain, and was more than happy to divest himself of this particular role – and its costume – when he got home.

In my own quiet way, watching from the sidelines, whilst the lads played the clever fool and my mother skilfully argued the house down, my steely ten-year old intentions were directed, without question, towards the possession of those pants. They utterly intrigued, delighted, obsessed and repelled me, and I found it grossly unfair that they had been bought for my brother to show off in, with no thought to the idea that they might suit me more. I argued to myself that they were in fact knickers so I should have them. Called 'Y-fronts' on the label, they actually had no 'Y' in them, but were seamlessly shaped like swimming trunks, to allow the cartoon picture an uninterrupted canvas. So it was with some satisfaction that I could finally claim them as my own.

They were truly hideous, in the best of British saucy-seaside, tourist-tat tradition. They were also hilarious. I understood and shared my mother's view that the underpants were sexist. The Adam character had a huge fig-leaf, bombastic hairy chest, and a lascivious mane-like quiff. The Eve character had a luxuriant mane of long, auburn hair swept above her forehead and coiled coquettishly at the shoulders. She had a much smaller fig-leaf but excessively large, rounded, bared breasts, on which I fixated with a certain mix of curiosity, shyness and feeling of alienation. I was familiar with the feminist response to such images, and understood the logic of it. In a direct, child-like way, I could ask the questions and wonder. Why did Eve have long hair and not short hair? Why was Adam's fig-leaf bigger? Why did the picture show Eve's breasts and not cover them with more fig-leaves? Why was Adam taller than Eve in the picture? Why did Eve have long eyelashes and bigger eyes and lips than Adam? There was also a tackiness to the rendering that made both figures and their naked bodies look grotesque. In short, the image was degrading.

Yet I loved the pants and the potential they held for achieving my ten-year old objective – to be as 'tomboyish' as possible (a word often attributed favourably to me, or so it felt) and to be able to feel and dress like a boy. As such, I took to wearing them secretly, and for hours, when other members of the household were out, wandering around in them and nothing else. I spent many hours looking at myself in the mirror wearing them. My pre-pubescent body, I noted, was a little taller, but no different really from that of my brother's. I spent time poring over the picture, looking from Adam to Eve and back again, comparing their body-parts with mine, wondering which I

was more like, the wide-eyed, gap-mouthed snake laughing at me, from the centre of my crotch, all the while. I cannot recall how long I kept the underpants, before they were discovered by my mother, and dramatically, with excessive gestures and vocalisations of disgust, deposited firmly in the dustbin.

Recalling this as a queer feminist some thirty years on, I read a number of factors related to performance, gender and desire within it. I recognise the importance of the garment in question to gender expression and to the inscription of hetero-patriarchal gender norms through clothing – particularly the clothing covering genitalia. I acknowledge my own inclination to wear them as expressive of a nascent desire for masculine visibility and self-affirmation in viewing (and re-viewing) my pre-pubescent body. I recognise the desires and manipulations of the adults involved in their respective attempts to regulate and mould my and my brother's gender identities to their particular conceptions of appropriateness – what they chose to see and not see, what they chose to reward and discourage, where agency was encouraged and where inhibited. I also note the regulation of performance and humour in the story within the social context of the time – the coding of humour through gender – what was permissible to laugh at and what wasn't, who was given agency to perform humour and parody gender and sex, and who was not. In writing the story, I recognise that it is a story about family and siblings – a story that finds its expression through clothing – and this is highly pertinent to Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*.

I had forgotten this incident for many years. I note the significance of recalling it now. Having spent some days preparing to write on *Cleansed* and gender, I settled to sleep

one night and dreamed that I was back, alone, on a sunny day in my parents' bedroom, with the curtains closed and the wardrobe and mirror as it was in that era. On awakening, the memory of the story came back to me in full. I include it to indicate the power of *Cleansed* as a text to reach through to the subconscious and bring things to light. As discussed in the previous section, this 'touchstone quality' is a feature of its way of working that has been noted by actors and directors rehearsing it, and is something that accounts for its disruptive effects in rehearsal. It is also indicative of the way Kane's work stayed close to what she witnessed of the Grassmarket Project, and the transformational qualities of the work. Gender, gender experiences, sex and sexual orientation are central to *Cleansed* and as such revelatory incidences often find their root there when working on the play.

As noted in the previous section, it is conventionally held that the Antigone myth finds some resonance in *Cleansed*. This receives little scrutiny and is treated rather superficially in extant scholarship on Kane. When read in relation to *Cleansed*, the Antigone myth is generally reduced to a story about a woman's obsessive, incestuous love for her dead brother, a love that, in Kane's play results in her 'becoming him' (an equally reductive reading of the play).⁷⁰² As noted earlier, the idea that Grace 'becomes' Graham is centred on the penis, and the erroneous idea that Grace has Graham's penis stitched onto her. Not only is this a literal misreading of the text – Graham's body, as we are told in scene 5, has been burned, and the clear inference of

⁷⁰² It is Tinker who names the post-operative Grace, 'Graham': 'Can't call you Grace anymore. Call you... Graham. I'll call you Graham.', Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 146. Kane, in scene 20, however, scripts the character as Grace/Graham – an identifier that more appropriately references the character's transitioning state, and is perhaps a 'holding' name, that will maybe pass when the character has found a name for himself or 'hermself'. Kane, *4.48 Psychosis*, op. cit., p. 205.). Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 149.

scene 18 is that it is Carl's body matter and possibly her own that have been used in Grace's phalloplasty – but it is also a narrative that denies, and fails to question, the complexity and ambiguity of the Antigone myth, and the questions of gender, kinship, love, sex and power it poses.

As Judith Butler skilfully delineates in her work *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, there are a number of possible interpretations of Antigone, all of which pose different questions to a feminist and queer analysis and politics.⁷⁰³ Examining accounts in the scholarship of Irigaray, Hegel, Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, Butler suggests that:

In some ways, Antigone figures the limits of intelligibility exposed at the limits of kinship [...] she [...] appropriates the stance and idiom of the one she opposes, assumes Creon's sovereignty, even claims the glory that is destined for her brother, and lives out a strange loyalty to her father, bound as she is to him through his curse. Her fate is not to have a life to live, to be condemned to death, prior to any possibility of life. This raises the question of how it is that kinship secures the conditions of intelligibility by which life becomes livable, by which life also becomes condemned and foreclosed [...]. [Antigone's] death signifies the unlive life [...]; as she approaches the living tomb that Creon has arranged for her, she meets the fate that has been hers all along.⁷⁰⁴

Butler's view that Antigone 'figures the limits of intelligibility exposed at the limits of kinship'⁷⁰⁵ notes a 'crisis' in 'the representative function [...] (and) very horizon of intelligibility in which she operates and [...] remains somewhat unthinkable' (the Oedipal scene so favoured by classicism and structural psychoanalysis).⁷⁰⁶ Butler posits that:

Antigone is one for whom symbolic positions have become incoherent, confounding as she does brother and father, emerging as she does, not as a

⁷⁰³ Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 23

⁷⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 22.

mother but – as one etymology suggests – “in place of the mother”. Her name is construed as ‘anti-generation’ (gone [generation]).⁷⁰⁷

Butler observes this with reference to changes and tensions in the socio-political experience of family in the Western world of the late 1990s. Her questioning of the stability of the Oedipal scene as a model of kinship occurs, as she notes:

during a time in which family is at once idealized in nostalgic ways within various cultural forms, a time in which the Vatican protests against homosexuality not only as an assault on the family but also on the notion of the human, where to become human, for some, requires participation in the family in its normative sense.⁷⁰⁸

She goes on to define the time as:

a time in which children, because of divorce and remarriage, because of migration, exile and refugee status, because of global displacements of various kinds, move from one family to another, move from a family to no family, move from no family to a family, or in which they live, psychically at the crossroads of the family, or in multiply layered family situations, in which they may well have more than one woman who operates as the mother, more than one man who operates as the father, or no mother or father, with half-brothers who are also friends – this is a time in which kinship has become fragile, porous and expansive. It is also a time in which straight and gay families are sometimes blended, or in which gay families emerge in nuclear and non-nuclear forms.⁷⁰⁹

Anglo-American theatre, from the late-1980s to the turn of the Millennium, frequently exemplified these tensions with plays depicting a negotiation of orthodox and emerging models of kinship in their representation of ‘family’. Whilst the formal structure of plays differed, a thematic focus on the nature of kinship emerged in many plays of this period. A brief set of notable examples includes Winsome Pinnock’s *Leave Taking* (1988), Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes-Millennium Approaches* (1991) and *Perestroika* (1992), Claire Dowie’s *Death and*

⁷⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

Dancing (1992), Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* (1994), Sarah Daniels' *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994), Phyllis Nagy's *Butterfly Kiss* (1994), Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* (1996), Mark Ravenhill's *Handbag* (1998) and Rebecca Prichard's *Yard Gal* (2001).⁷¹⁰

I suggest that *Cleansed* can be read thematically as part of the wave of new writing in this period, that reflect shifting viewpoints on and structures of kinship as outlined by Butler. I suggest that Kane negotiates this through indirect and structural reference to the Antigone myth and that the relationship of Grace and Graham can be read in a number of ways when considered in feminist, queer and practice-centred contexts. At one level, *Cleansed* reflects notions of Oedipal kinship. In analysing Antigone's position within this frame, Butler notes that Antigone finds herself:

devoted to an impossible and death-bent incestuous love of her brother[...] where [...] her actions compel others to regard her as "manly" and thus cast doubt on the way that kinship might underwrite gender, how her language, paradoxically, most approximates Creon's, the language of sovereign authority and action.⁷¹¹

At another level, and again, recognising Butler's analysis as useful to understanding this, *Cleansed* problematises the boundaries of kinship, largely through the play's invocation of the incest taboo. In its staging it problematises boundaries of the body and raises questions of 'permission' and 'what will be or is permissible'? The question of 'permission' is asked of the actors, the director, the rehearsal room, and the institutions hosting a production. On a wider scale it also questions 'what is permissible?' of the society and country in which the play is staged.

⁷¹⁰ See 'Playtexts/Filmscripts/Fiction' in Bibliography.

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

Kane's dramatisation of the moment of incestuous coupling between Grace and Graham is both viscerally sexual, and abstract and philosophical in the questions it asks of its audience or reader. The stage directions, as noted earlier in my discussion of ghosts, are explicit, and if followed to the letter by a cast would constitute a performance of a live, penetrative, sex act onstage:

*He sucks her right breast.
She undoes his trousers and touches his penis.
They take off the rest of their clothes, watching each other.
They stand naked and look at each others' bodies.
They slowly embrace.
They begin to make love, slowly at first, then hard, fast, urgent, finding each others' rhythm is the same as their own.
They come together.
They hold each other, him inside her, not moving.
A sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their heads.
When it is fully grown, **Graham** pulls it towards him and smells it.
He smiles.*

Graham. Lovely.⁷¹²

The rehearsing of this set of stage directions poses an immediate emotional and ethical challenge to a cast, and to the actors playing Grace and Graham. The question literally arises: 'how far do you want to go with this?' The playscript, subversively and provocatively, offers tools by which a cast could depict live sex onstage. Kane, through her authority as the playwright and author of the sex act, effectively gives consent for a cast to render this theatrical moment in full explicitness. It is both a gift and a challenge. There was a generosity and a bravery in this on Kane's part. It marks a solidarity with actors in that she recognises the emotional impact of theatricalising sex and love and sees the value of giving actors license to explore a range of physical and

⁷¹² Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

sexual gestures, that at each stage offer a frame for saying 'yes' or 'no' in the rehearsal room. In presenting a full act, Kane entertains, and allows the cast the possibility of entertaining, the idea of having sex onstage. This possibility not only opens up discussion in the rehearsal room between actors on what is comfortable and permissible between them, but also opens up legal questions about the law of the land and censorship, and the often unspoken rules governing the theatre scene the play is shown in.

Scene 5 marks Kane as a highly political and radical theatre maker who uses the frame of the text to open space for possibilities and debate amongst directors and actors engaged in producing images and experiences of sex and the body. It also underscores the culture of theatre that Kane herself valued. In writing in the *Guardian* in 1998, she comments that the two best productions she had ever seen were firstly 'Jeremy Weller's 1992 Edinburgh Grassmarket Project [...] a devised play with professional and non-professional actors who all had first-hand experience of mental illness', and that the second was 'a live sex show in Amsterdam about a witch sucking the Grim Reaper's cock.'⁷¹³ Both these experiences of theatre are contained in the description of the sex act between Grace and Graham in scene 5, and bring the tangible, practical, ethical questions sitting under those performances into the rehearsal room.

Whereas the question for actors is primarily physical and emotional, the function of the incest within the wider signification of Kane's play is more abstract and philosophical, in that it is the ghost of Graham that Grace makes love to. The question

⁷¹³ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, op. cit., p. 18.

arises therefore – is the sex between Graham and Grace actually incest? Is incest primarily physical or emotional? What is permissible and what not? Can ghosts be legislated for? Essentially, what are the boundaries of incest and how is it constituted and policed? In raising these questions, Kane's play indicates wider debates about incest in the philosophical, psychoanalytical, legal and political sphere.

Butler notes Claude Lévi-Strauss's work on the subject, which concludes that the incest taboo:

is not exclusively biological (although partially), nor exclusively cultural, but exists rather 'at the threshold of culture', part of a set of rules that generate the possibility of culture and are thus distinct from the culture they generate, but not absolutely.⁷¹⁴

As such, Kane's inclusion of an explicit act of incest as part of *Cleansed* take cast, institution, and audience or reader deep into the heart of its own culture, asking questions about the 'threshold', rules and possibilities of that culture. Antigone is again configured within this. Whereas Antigone, for Hegel, represents 'precisely what remains unconscious within public law' and 'exists [...] at the limit of the publicly knowable and codifiable'. She represents also:

another law [...] a law that leaves only an incommunicable trace, an enigma of another possible order. If she 'is' anything, she is the unconscious of the law, that which is presupposed by public reality but that cannot appear within its terms.⁷¹⁵

This reference to 'incommunicable trace' and the indication of 'another possible order' existing outside law recalls the presence of ghosts in the institution. I suggest that the incestuous love, and spectral sex act performed between a ghostly Graham and physical Grace in *Cleansed* signify desire for that other 'possible order' within law, and

⁷¹⁴ Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁷¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 39.

that Kane's focus on this moment through the detail of the sex act is a politically queer statement on such. The ghost of incest and its referents are most commonly raised in relation to legal discussions of queer sexualities, and indicate a history in which 'inversion' in its many forms, does not receive legibility within the law and becomes associated with transgression and taboo.⁷¹⁶ In a recent televised House of Commons' debate on legalising gay marriage in the UK, a number of MPs raised the spectre of incest in relation to this theme as reasons to oppose the Bill.⁷¹⁷ Eschewing again the idea that Kane's work lacks ideology and political intent, therefore, I consider Mel Kenyon's observation that:

In the 90s it became harder to write a committed political play. Sarah was the first writer to solve that by changing the rules and writing about the political entirely through the personal.⁷¹⁸

The politics that Kane was writing from – and the discourses she was progressing through her theatre – were undoubtedly queer, and this view is beginning to be investigated more rigorously in emerging scholarship on Kane.

In their excellent article Selina Busby and Stephen Farrier focus attention on critics' dismissal of Kane's work as lacking an ideological frame and argue instead that it:

echoes the 1990s queer movement in the UK. This movement refocused ideas about sexuality, ideology and subjectivity.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁶ 'Tales of Inversion', Chambers, *Gendered Intelligence*, 2013.

⁷¹⁷ Live Parliamentary Debate on Gay Marriage, streamed live, from 1.45 – 7.30pm, 5 February 2013, BBC News, 'Politics', www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics, ND, (accessed 5 February 2013).

⁷¹⁸ Little and McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 304. Whilst I would argue that feminist writers had been 'changing the rules and writing about the political [...] through the personal' for a much longer period, Kenyon's observation notes a tension in this trajectory, or the continuation of that particular trajectory, and indicates that at this moment in the 1990s, that Kane was solving this problem by doing something different.

⁷¹⁹ Busby and Farrier, in Godiwala, *op. cit.*, p. 143

They note that the ‘rootlessness’ often attributed to Kane’s use of form ‘reflects exceptionally well the rootlessness of queer identity, an identity that resists foreclosure’,⁷²⁰ and in a statement that recalls Irigarayan philosophies of ‘becoming’ note that ‘queer as an identity is always in a state of becoming’,⁷²¹ citing Sedgwick’s analysis of queer subjectivity and arguing that there is a ‘striking resemblance when looking at Kane’s work’ with Sedgwick’s description of:

the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning, when the constituent elements of any one’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.⁷²²

The authors note that it is ‘the resistive nature of the work that marks it most fundamentally as queer.’⁷²³ They outline some of the key aspects of *Cleansed* that mark it as a text concerned with queer issues. Key issues of note are its formal qualities:⁷²⁴ the ‘mutability of bodies [...] gender and sexuality’ indicated through both Grace and Carl’s physical experiences,⁷²⁵ the relationship between Rod and Carl and:

the articulations that were going on in the mid-1990s about the status of homosexual relationships [...] gay marriage [...] the status of visibility; issues of ‘erasure’ when the queer subject is assimilated into hetero-normative structures and institutions.⁷²⁶

The journeying/movement of queer subjects was also highlighted. Similar features are noted, and defined as queer, in Francesca Rayner’s equally excellent article, on *Cleansed* recommends exploring this play for:

precisely its double interest in questions of gender and of queer sexuality and the ways in which both intersect [...] (and) the connections it forges between

⁷²⁰ *ibid.*

⁷²¹ *ibid.*

⁷²² *ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷²³ *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

⁷²⁵ *ibid.*, loc. cit., pp. 147-148.

⁷²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 150.

the performative processes that construct gender and sexual conformity and acts of violence.⁷²⁷

Rayner notes that the institution in *Cleansed* 'appears to be a men-only preserve' and elaborates further on the 'resistive' quality of Kane's work in its treatment of violence and queer experience:

In *Cleansed*, the compulsion to perform one's gender or sexual role is [...] explicit throughout, as are the severe consequences for those who fail to perform gender and sexual roles correctly. The linkage between violence and the assumption of a gendered and sexed identity in the play thus resists commodification and consumerism in its savage dismemberment and remembering of the body. Such processes are definitively queer, for they literally construct clear boundaries between male and female or homosexual and heterosexual through acts of bodily destruction and reconstruction.⁷²⁸

I would like to turn to consider practical work on *Cleansed* at this point. I note that prior to reading Busby and Farrier or Rayner, I had come to similar conclusions about the queerness of *Cleansed* from dramaturgical and cross-artform enquiry in the studio. I concur with their delineation of the play's queer features, moments, intentions and of the questions it raises for queer enquiry. I greatly welcome the wider contextualisation and insights offered by their research in deepening understandings of *Cleansed's* queer construction, and the support such readings offer to theatre-makers entering into the world of the play. As someone who identifies as transgender (or gender-queer) as for many other queer readers and practitioners, the queer layers of *Cleansed* do not take too long to discover, for as Catherine McNamara notes:

gender variant readers of norms are far more perceptive of the regulatory structures of gender, which maintain gender norms as intelligible. Gender variant readers of gender are far more gender-intelligent.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁷ Rayner, op. cit., pp. 55-64.

⁷²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷²⁹ McNamara, PhD Thesis, 2009, p. 12.

And yet despite the very clear indicators to the queerness of *Cleansed*, there is still relatively little written on this in the dominant discourses of Kane scholarship. It is in the practice-arena that the queerness of *Cleansed* is being expressed and this is good to see. In the separate productions of *Cleansed* presented by Kamome-za and Bare Cheek Theatre in 2012, casts and directors drew similar conclusions about its status as a queer text through practice, and it is notable that the theme of transgender, and the abuse of the transgendered person with institutions, was central to both productions. As is typical of presentations of Kane's theatre, the spaces in the text leave ample opportunity for 'back-story' to be developed, and these are interesting in what they reveal of both experience or anecdote recounted in rehearsal and fantasy/desire – what actors and directors believe the 'missing' parts of the story should or would be. Cultural concerns or subjects come into that space also, hence it is of interest that stories/fantasies of the transgender subject have emerged from these separate casts – one based in Japan, the other in Ireland – at this time. Whilst this is played out according to the script with an act of surgery on Grace and Carl, both companies found a third site of transgender experience emerging from their work on the play – one that was located (and in some ways projected) onto Robin.⁷³⁰ Robin was played by an actress in both the Tokyo and Cork productions.

In the Kamome-za version, they built a story that Robin was a child of the institution who, because that institution is all-male, thinks she is a boy. When Grace arrives she is at first confused and territorial, but subsequently intrigued and attracted to her. In declaring love for Grace, Robin is acting not on a lesbian impulse, but in the sincere

⁷³⁰ The Sarah Kane Research Group similarly concluded that Robin was a woman in the 2009 project.

belief that she is a heterosexual male. The exchange of clothes and the observation of Grace's naked body during the clothes' exchange of scene 3 offer a first glimpse of femaleness and femininity for Robin, and she begins to explore the feminised way the clothes make her feel. Robin believes that there are no other women in the institution, but when Grace arrives it stirs something in her, and like *Sleeping Beauty*, she begins to explore the place she has always lived in, seeking out something she cannot quite name. When she sees the naked body of Woman in the peep-show booth, it is a moment of recognition – a heightening of 'accident time' to use Bond's phrase – and she realises that she is in fact a woman but condemned to live as a man. The shock – akin to *Sleeping Beauty* pricking her finger on the witch's needle or perhaps the Lady of Shallot turning and looking at the outside world for the first time – is too great for her to bear. She feels out of place, uncertain, ashamed in the recognition of her true self. Unable to deal with the dysphoria, and with Grace no longer responding to her (and helping her find herself – as illustrated by the reading/writing of her name) – Robin hangs herself.⁷³¹

Bare Cheek Theatre's production took a similarly queer journey with Robin's story. In scene 3, the actress playing Robin undresses and stands naked with her back to the audience, while Grace faces front. Before Grace dresses she takes a swift look at Robin's naked body and snaps defensively, 'Do you think it's possible for a person to be born in the wrong body?'⁷³² Robin dresses quickly, keeping her back to the audience. This Robin occupies the edges, corners and shadows of the stage, rarely

⁷³¹ Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012.

⁷³² Kane, *4.48 Psychosis*, op. cit. p. 215. Bare Cheek Theatre made sense of the gaps in Kane's text by borrowing lines from her other plays to complete the picture they inferred from it in the rehearsal process.

coming to the centre or into a full spotlight. In the scene where Robin kills herself, the body that she has kept carefully hidden is revealed. It is scarred in the chest and breast area, and there is a fleshy scar running down the inner thigh. She is standing in a tin bath tub, and when Grace fails to respond, begins to stab herself. The story for this is that Robin was a boy who wished to become a girl. Tinker agrees to perform an operation on her, but it doesn't fully work – he has done a 'botch job' – and she is left in a gender-indeterminate, semi-transitioned state.⁷³³

⁷³³ Conversation with Tony McCleane-Fay, 7 December 2012.



- 6.a. Robin (Jill Harding) cutting her body before committing suicide in Bare Cheek Theatre's *Cleansed*, Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland, December 2012.
- 6.b. Graham (James Brown) holding Robin as she dies. Bare Cheek Theatre's *Cleansed*, Granary Theatre Cork, Ireland, December 2012. Photographs reproduced with kind permission from Tony McCleane-Fay.



- 6.c. Kerry Ely exploring Robin in Cast-Off Drama workshop on Stockings, Tights and Stitching in *Cleansed*, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 26 February 2011.
- 6.d. Recognising Robin (Penitent Magdalene). Nina Kane, *Faun* performance, York Art Gallery, UK, 16 November 2011.



- 6.e. Kerry Ely exploring Robin in Cast-Off Drama workshop on Stockings, Tights and Stitching in *Cleansed*, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 26 February 2011.
- 6.f. Grace teaching Robin to read and write, scene 7, Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*. Paul Ashton and Nina Kane in Cast-Off Drama workshop on cross-dressing and gender; Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 6 February 2011. Exploring an older Robin.

Presenting Robin as a figure experiencing gender dysphoria opens up a number of themes related to gender transitioning and also sexual orientation.⁷³⁴ The ambiguity around Robin's gender raises the possibility that she is expressing a lesbian love for Grace, but this is not resolved. Nevertheless it is suggested, and the playing between actresses in rehearsal with this opens up the possibility of lesbianism being explored as a theme in rehearsal and performance. In the Sarah Kane Research Group, I was surprised at how little lesbianism was raised as a subject of discussion with the women present. Whilst discussions ranged on a number of feminist themes and experiences relating to sexuality, power, work, love, family, friendships, straight and gay men, there was a curious and ambivalent silence on the subject of lesbian experience or desire. On one occasion I used the word 'dyke', and there was a noticeable pause, and a slight, gentle pressing together of the lips by the young women present in response.⁷³⁵ This was intriguing from an Irigarayan perspective, as Irigaray notes:

It could be that girls keep their *lips closed* as a positive move. The positive meaning of closed lips does not rule out singing or talking. It expresses a difference. Girls have less need to master the absence of the mother. But they may still choose to be silent and close the lips, keep the lips, as threshold to the mouth, the labials as opposed to the *dentals*, using the whole of the lips, not just the corners. If women sing, they generally use the whole of the lips, and not just the corners as in fort-da, ici or la...The importance of the lips corresponds to that of the generation of the universe, but already in silence.⁷³⁶

⁷³⁴ Gender-indeterminate or gender-neutral names like Robin are often a choice for people transitioning from one gender to another, whereas others opt for a name that is irrefutably gendered on one side of the binary as part of 'passing'. See Heather Findlay: 'He's happy to have "John", much more definitively male than the names of some of the transgendered men we know, Loren, Shannon, Jay'. H Findlay, 'Losing Sue' in S.R. Munt (ed.), *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender*, London and Washington, Cassell, 1998, pp. 133-145, this quote, p. 139.

⁷³⁵ I noticed some of the women making this gesture on a discussion of 'mother love'. Sarah Kane Research Group, 'Scenes 5-9: Finding Love (a Moment of) in *Cleansed*', 21 October, 2009.

⁷³⁶ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, op. cit., p. 100.

Silence on the subject of lesbianism is something noted by Ussher and Mooney-Somers as problematic and in need of addressing in studies of sexualities. As they argue:

There is a need for more research on the subject of sexual desire in young women to redress the 'missing discourse of desire' in research on girls' sexuality [...] lesbian desire is arguably still a silent subject [...] it is time that this silence was broken.⁷³⁷

Whilst I agree with Ussher and Mooney-Somers on this, I believe there is something significant about the ambivalent silences around lesbianism arising from practice and discussion of *Cleansed*. I note the interruption occasioned by Tinker in the opening section of the play:

Graham. My sister, she wants –
Tinker. Don't tell me.⁷³⁸

Acknowledged but unspoken female desire pervades the play – it is apparent and emerges in traces and gestures. Lesbianism is the silent ghost in the room where Sarah Kane's work is concerned, and this manifests itself in varying ways when casts work on *Cleansed*. Moments of lesbian exchange, attraction and theme were definitely present and played out between certain women in the group in connection to the work. Rayner rightly notes the setting-up of hetero-normative binaries for contestation by Kane in *Cleansed*. One such example of this is in the sex scenes. Recalling scene 5, the detailing of the sex act 'step-by-step' is almost ridiculously hetero-normative and prescriptive – not unlike the sex advice given to young women at the time in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Glamour* – an A-Z of the heterosexual sex act leading inevitably to mutual orgasm (arguably an example of patriarchal sameness).

⁷³⁷ J. M. Ussher and J. Mooney-Somers, 'Negotiating Desire and Sexual Subjectivity: Narratives of Young Lesbian Avengers', *Sexualities*, vol. 3, issue 2, May 2000, pp. 183-200.

⁷³⁸ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 107.

The sex between Tinker and Woman appears to be caught up with a clichéd language of porn, which struggles for intimacy, and cannot yet name itself or talk to the other in difference. The love making between Rod and Carl is undirected by Kane. It is an exchange that a woman is not part of, and there is distance and a certain privacy given to it in the script, which heightens its tenderness, albeit with a certain wistfulness. The lesbian subject remains the rover in the play – uncoupled, and apparently unpleasured. Her absence in the sexual schema paradoxically makes her more present, and in this way Kane does indeed contest and reveal the limits of heteronormative binaries through this, and ask that we recognise her absence and her silence. In this, Kane arguably ‘keeps her lips closed as a positive move’ and expresses a ‘difference’, allowing for the possibility of lesbian love, sex and desire to find itself beyond the modes of coupling witnessed (and recognised or determined) in a scopic frame.

Lesbianism is present in discussion of Kane’s work, and raises questions of the possibility of lesbian or bisexual authorship. It must be noted, however, that Kane never directly referred to herself as lesbian or bisexual in any public discussion of her work, and beyond talking about ‘being in love’ when she wrote *Cleansed*, does not divulge any details of her private life in interview.⁷³⁹ She does talk openly, however,

⁷³⁹ Her brother Simon Kane notes: ‘One of the things Sarah said in her last instructions was “no biographies” [...]. What she wanted to leave behind was her work. That’s all Sarah was interested in people seeing, rather than a fairly uninteresting story of her life. Growing up with a journalist, you pretty soon realise you have to be careful what you say to people ... Sarah was a very private person.’ Hattenstone, *A Sad Hurrah*, op. cit. It is common, however, for people who knew Sarah Kane personally, to talk of her as lesbian or bisexual, and Saunders and Sierz reference this in their audio-recorded discussion, ‘Academic Graham Saunders’, [online audio-recording], 2009. Noting Kane’s request for privacy in relation to her biography, I suggest that questions of lesbian or bisexual authorship are best addressed through a focus on the work, on the political strategies and aesthetics inherent in its construction, and not on Kane herself.

about the satisfaction and joy of writing lesbian characters and stories. Take for example, her discussion of writing the original script for *Blasted*:

I suppose what I was writing was subtext – great reams of it. Everyone having these huge monologues. It started off literally with what everyone feels and thinks. The whole thing about Stella – there was fucking reams of it, absolutely reams of it, but I thought it was more interesting because it's not everybody's wife who leaves them for another woman! And I thought, 'now that I know what they think ... and then it was no we don't want any of that'.⁷⁴⁰

Lesbian relationships therefore exist in the subtext of *Blasted* through the absent 'witch' Stella, and as previously noted, can also be discerned in the unspoken, private, nurturing and tactile spaces of *Skin*.⁷⁴¹ The complexities of lesbian and bisexual relationships are explored in depth in Kane's unpublished monologue, *What She Said*.⁷⁴² The monologue is essentially predicated on conversations between the speaker Woman, and an older woman, Deb about lesbian and bisexual identities, about polyamory, about language, about love and about sex and power in relation to sexual activity and choices. It also references intergenerational dialogues common in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s between older and younger women about lesbianism and the politics of lesbianism, honestly revealing both joys, tensions, discoveries, passions, processes of education and shared and different horizons.⁷⁴³ It concludes with the speaker recounting the first time she makes love with the older woman – an experience of deep warmth, joy and pleasure for her.

⁷⁴⁰ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit., p. 44.

⁷⁴¹ Kane, *Blasted*, op. cit., pp. 18-19. Also, relationship between Marcia and Kath in *Skin*; Kane, *Skin*, op. cit., *Skin*, O'Connell, 1995, [short film].

⁷⁴² Women's Theatre Collection, Bristol, accessed 25 August 2009; Aston, 'Reviewing the fabric' and Rebellato, 'Sarah Kane before *Blasted*' in De Vos and Saunders, op. cit.

⁷⁴³ On this point it bears some similarity to Claire Dowie's *Drag Act*, 1993. Reproduced in Dowie, *Why is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt?*, op. cit.

An indicator of lesbian culture rarely discussed in *Cleansed* is the clear reference to butch-femme practice in the clothes-swapping activity of scene 3.⁷⁴⁴ Alison Eves usefully outlines the importance of butch-femme in ‘establishing lesbian visibility and space’ – an important point to consider when discussing butch-femme practice or reference in the theatre:

[...T]he construction of specific butch and femme subject positions [...] are part of the construction of subcultural sites within which lesbian genders can be enacted and read in a specifically lesbian way. The status of butch/femme as the most recognisable lesbian archetype is important in establishing lesbian visibility and space which in turn can be seen as part of a claim to entitlement.⁷⁴⁵

As noted by Judith Roof in her 1998 article ‘1970s Lesbian Feminism Meets 1990s Butch-Femme’, the emergence of butch-femme in the Anglo-American queer scenes of the 1990s was frequently a point of debate and difference between older and younger lesbians:

It is still difficult for those lesbian feminists who came out in the 1960s and 1970s to understand the appeal of butch-femme, accustomed as many are to the insistent alignment of sex and gender. But the visibility of younger lesbians for whom butch-femme is not such an anathema provides a new and different model of queer politics, whose object is no longer so much the correction of gender oppression, as the enlargement of political freedoms in relation to personal choices [...]. This opens gender up to more multiple readings (there are more than two genders), and envisions a very different relation between genders and political possibility.⁷⁴⁶

In using a butch-femme aesthetic in the dramaturgy of *Cleansed*, Kane reflects her participation in emerging lesbian politics of the 1990s that sought to reclaim it positively. In this, Kane creates a ‘subcultural site within which lesbian genders can be enacted and read in a specifically lesbian way’ as a central part of the play. She uses

⁷⁴⁴ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., pp. 112-115.

⁷⁴⁵ A. Eves, ‘Queer Theory, Butch/Femme: Identities and Lesbian Space’, *Sexualities*, vol. 7, issue 4., 2004, pp. 480-496.

⁷⁴⁶ J. Roof, ‘1970s Lesbian Feminism Meets 1990s Butch-Femme’ in Munt, op. cit., pp. 27-35, this quote, p. 35.

‘visibility’ to ‘disrupt heteronormative hegemony’ and challenges us to see the characters on stage through both a lesbian and a ‘gender-different’ or ‘gender-transitioning’ lens.⁷⁴⁷ Important to this emerging lesbian politics is an openness to ‘multiple readings of gender’, and Kane touches on this with reference to her own gender identity and writing politics in the *Rage and Reason* interview. When asked, ‘What do you feel your greatest responsibility is as a writer, and as a woman writer?’, Kane replied:

My only responsibility is to the truth, however unpleasant that truth may be. I have no responsibility as a woman writer because I don’t believe there’s such a thing. When people talk about me as a writer, that’s what I am, and that’s how I want my work to be judged [...]. I don’t want to be a representative of any biological or social group of which I happen to be a member. I am what I am. Not what other people want me to be.

As previously discussed, this statement has erroneously been taken to suggest that Kane was not a feminist – a charge that this study and others have challenged by offering evidence of significant feminist political strategy and thinking in Kane’s work. I would go further and suggest that this statement offers useful thinking on questions of gender and authorship, and note that Kane does not in any way mention or dismiss feminism here. What she takes issue with is the labelling of herself and her writing with the binarised signifier ‘woman’ – a signifier she notably gives accent to through its use as a character name in the *Sick folio* and in *Cleansed*. In discussing biological and social groupings, she does not use a female indicator, but rather leaves the gendering open. The phrase ‘of which I happen to be’ is marked with an ambivalence, and a laissez-faire that suggests that she does not consider her ‘membership’ of any biological or social group to be immutable. I suggest that what Kane articulates here is

⁷⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 482.

a relation to gender and writing that is potentially gender-queer. Furthermore, I suggest that Kane's work offers a rich and political interplay of shifting and 'multiple authorship' positions – dialectical, contradictory and complementary – at once female, lesbian, gender-queer, feminist, transgender, male, straight, bisexual. This is born of an embodied, dramaturgical, performative and deep-thinking quest for 'truth' on Kane's part at all stages of her working process.⁷⁴⁸

Recognising *Cleansed* as a text that is both lesbian and gender-queer, I return to the dramatisation of butch-femme practice initiated in scene 3 of the play. Kane's structuring of this activity is precise, and if followed exactly, challenges the actors to address questions of gender in rehearsal. The focus on genitalia (and the possibility of fluid transference from swapping underwear) asks that the actors pay attention to their own body boundaries, work instinctively and with assertion to articulate what is comfortable and what is not, and respect others' needs in relation to this.

Kane indicates that both Grace and Robin strip to complete nudity – instantly placing questions of anatomical recognition, determining and exposure early on in the play. A specific code of clothing is structured by Kane into this moment. She does not suggest a whole wardrobe for the actors, rather she signifies a very definite ordering of gender through the two pieces of clothing mentioned. Robin (designated male) 'removes his underpants' whereas Grace (designated female) is wearing tights, which Robin later

⁷⁴⁸ In relation to 'multiple authorship models', also 'authorship as performance' model, see R. Dwyer, 'Believing in Fairies: The Author and the Homosexual' in Fuss, op. cit., pp. 185-204. Dwyer notes: 'All authorship and all sexual identities are performances, done with greater or less facility, always problematic in relation to any self separable from the realization of self in the discursive modes available', p. 188.

hangs himself with.⁷⁴⁹ The significance of this exchange is that the actress playing Grace is invited to strip naked and dress herself, first and foremost, in the underpants, and that Robin will, in the same scene dress himself in tights. Notably these are both items of clothing that draw attention to the genitalia and the torso. As with the eating of the box of chocolates, if followed specifically as Kane directs, these activities take a variable length of time to perform, and illustrate how gender norms are reinforced through the learnt and ritual everyday acts of dressing. That gender signification is inherently a set of learnt behaviours rather than something innate was indicated through this in rehearsal – extended exploration of this can yield interesting insights, and build trust and empathy between actors.⁷⁵⁰

A third item of clothing referenced – one that is potentially gender-neutral or perhaps gender-queer – is a shirt that Graham later removes in scene 5 to look at Grace's breasts.⁷⁵¹ Clothing as a motif recurs at key moments in the play to underscore Kane's investigation of gender, sexuality and death. She structures these tightly, clearly indicating that there is a relevance to the transitioning of clothes between people and between genders. Hence in scene 17 she directs '**Robin takes off his tights (Grace's) and makes a noose**', and later in the final scene (scene 20):

**Grace now looks and sounds exactly like Graham. She is wearing his clothes.
Carl wears Robin's clothes, that is, Grace's (women's) clothes.**

⁷⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 113 and p. 144.

⁷⁵⁰ When exploring scene 3 with Paul Ashton playing Robin, his initial instinct was to pull the tights on quickly as if they were a pair of trousers. They instantly ripped. Women present in the workshop then showed and directed Paul in how best to put tights on without them ripping, and he spent significant time practising this to be able to manage it. Much discussion about the reinforcement of gender norms and habit through clothing ensued. Workshop on Cross-Dressing and Gender, Scenes 3, 7 and 18 of *Cleansed* with Paul Ashton and Cast-Off Drama participants, Education Studio, Leeds City Art Gallery, UK, 5-6 February 2011.

⁷⁵¹ Kane, *Cleansed*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

From this point on Grace is referred to as **Grace/Graham**, and it becomes apparent that what Kane offers, through the lesbian trope of butch-femme performative play is a narrative of transitioning for the transgender subject and a narrative that interrogates the silencing of queer experiences and lives. With this in mind, it is worth revisiting the question of the invocation of the incest taboo. The Oedipal reading of the Antigone myth is invoked in scenes 1-5 by certain indicators, which clearly mark Tinker as the authority figure, but also, stand-in 'father-figure' of the piece. Whilst chained to the bed, Grace says to Robin: 'Write for me [...]. I need you to tell my father I am here', thus reinforcing a patriarchal frame whereby men control and oversee her movements, wherever she is, and where her brother is the focus of desire.⁷⁵² Grace's desire for Graham is expressed initially in her challenge to Tinker that the institution has not dealt with Graham's clothing or body appropriately after-death, nor his emotional well-being when he is alive. The force of her desire drives her to overstep and disregard Tinker's authority, and she assumes sovereignty quickly by insisting that Robin undress. Whilst she is, apparently, briefly in control of the immediate situation, her emotions overwhelm her and she collapses into a bittersweet relief with the same passion and strength of desire with which she made demands of Tinker and Robin when dressed in the clothes. Tinker seizes this moment of physical and vocal collapse to chain her to the bed. It is the strength of her passion for Graham that drives her to step beyond her proscribed limits within the institution – that, and the fact that Grace and Tinker are clearly working to different laws, value systems and 'orders' within themselves. Within Tinker's frame, her desire is deemed unnatural, dangerous and excessive and she is restrained.

⁷⁵² *ibid.*, p, 115.

The chaining of Grace to the bed, dramatises the incest taboo and indicates the patriarchal desire to suppress 'unnatural' feeling that disrupts lines of blood and kinship. In this way the character recalls Butler's observation of the Heglian reading of *Antigone*, whereby the suggestion of female desire is suppressed, negated, denied and written out of existence by patriarchy. In the case of Grace, desire is suppressed and corrected by enforced incarceration; in *Antigone's* case, it is suppressed and corrected by philosophy:

Antigone finds no place within citizenship for Hegel because she is not capable of offering or receiving recognition within the ethical order. The only kind of recognition she can enjoy [...] is of and by her brother. She can gain recognition only from the brother (and so therefore refuses to let him go) and because, according to Hegel, there is ostensibly no desire in the relationship. If there were desire in the relationship, there would be no possibility for recognition. But why? [...] Implicitly, Hegel appears to understand that the prohibition against incest supports kinship, but this is not what he explicitly says. He claims, rather, that the 'blood' relation makes desire impossible between brother and sister, and so it is the blood that stabilizes kinship and its internal dynamics of recognition. Thus Antigone does not desire her brother, according to Hegel [...]⁷⁵³

The strength of the taboo, and the active maintenance of its boundaries and thresholds, however, implicitly indicates the existence of that which the taboo prohibits in strength equal to that which contains it. In *Cleansed*, Grace's desire for something is clearly in evidence, despite her incarceration, and is indicated from the outset through Graham in the opening scene: '**Graham.** My sister, she wants – '⁷⁵⁴ It is a queer moment that necessarily resists foreclosure. Right from the start Kane is setting up a conflict between the articulation and naming of the object of female (or feminised) desire, and the prohibition of that desire being named and heard by the

⁷⁵³ Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, op. cit., p. 13.

⁷⁵⁴ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 107. I will discuss this in more depth later in this chapter.

patriarchal authority figure. We do not find out what Graham wishes to tell Tinker as the conversation moves on. But it indicates a space, an absence, a gap that needs to be understood. Kane indicates to us that we can seek to understand unspoken and unnamed desire through Grace.

The challenge of this moment was brought home to me in an exchange of e-mails with Yuki Ishida.⁷⁵⁵ She was experiencing conflict over a translation issue with another translator on the wording of this exchange, and on reading the implications of the space. Apparently, the requirements of the Japanese language necessitated that something be put in the space, but what? Their question was 'What does Grace want?' Frustrated with the gap, her male colleague had decided that Graham at this point is referring to the heroin that Tinker is cooking, and concluded that Grace, like Graham is an addict. He decided to translate his version of the text with a translation equivalent of 'My sister, she wants drugs.' The resultant performance of the translation had apparently marked Grace with this characterisation, intention and drive, and obliged the actress to interpret the role with this particular 'want'. Yuki expressed some frustration with this, which I shared.⁷⁵⁶ Whilst languages will require different forms of resolution in translation and have their own limits, it was an example of a tendency and desire common in Kane criticism and interpretation to:

⁷⁵⁵ E-mail correspondence between Yuki Ishida and Nina Kane, 29 and 30 May 2012.

⁷⁵⁶ Yuki's original premise was that the line somehow indicated Grace's desire for Graham to 'go out' – to leave the institution, to escape. That her desire was to free her brother. Notably, this is a relational rather than object-based desire. I found the difference between Yuki's translation and that of her male colleague interesting in terms of considering Irigaray's work on the difference between boys' and girls' entry into language i.e. boys supplanting absence with objects, girls entering into the space to make a relational gesture concerning herself and another. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, op. cit., p. 99. Our discussion concluded that leaving the space of Kane's text open on this point as it is written in English, enables greater opportunity for discussion, and, given the relationship of space/absence to the imaginary, an opportunity for gender to be investigated once a cast or reader seek to fill that space with language.

hegemonise the plays' fluidity and push them towards a more solid state where we might know what these plays are about.⁷⁵⁷

Yuki and I concurred that the ambiguity of that piece of dialogue needs somehow to be retained in translation. In short, it is not important at that moment in the play to know *what* 'she wants', but to know, and recognise, *that* 'she wants' – to feel the frustration of that 'want' being denied, and to allow the question to remain: 'what does she want?'

Thus Kane's text alerts us to the presence of desire, and locates desire in Grace. In considering the space, and the question of desire, I return again to Graham's ghost and the significance of the incestuous sex act, partly physical, partly spectral. Whilst theatrically real and physically significant for the actors playing the roles, prompting consideration of their own approach to sex, boundaries and questions of incest, the philosophical significance of Kane's construction is potentially more abstract and fluid. In considering another interpretation of the Antigone myth, it is possible to read a Lacanian significance in Graham's ghostly love-making. Lacan, like Hegel, reads Antigone within prevailing forms and interpretations of kinship and bloodline, but his interest in her is as an 'image', a representation of beauty and of significance to understanding the human's capacity to self-destruction through the death-drives:

Antigone is already in the service of death, dead while living, and so she appears to have crossed over in some way, to a death that remains to be understood. Lacan takes her obstinacy to be a manifestation of this death drive, joining with the chorus in calling her 'inhuman.'⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁷ Busby and Farrier, in Godiwala, loc. cit., p. 158.

⁷⁵⁸ Butler, *Antigone's Claim*, op. cit., p. 47.

In many ways his reading underscores a notion of Antigone as being emblematic of ‘a certain heterosexual fatality,’⁷⁵⁹ driven by predetermined fate through patrilineal dictate to certain death:

Lacan [...] establishes Antigone at the threshold of the symbolic, understood as the linguistic register in which kinship relationships are instated and maintained; he understands her death as precipitated precisely by the symbolic insupportability of her desire.⁷⁶⁰

As discussed in the previous section, in her services to the dead (father, brother), Antigone becomes conflated with the masculine, and referred to as manly. Kane notes the ‘symbolic insupportability’ of ‘her desire’ within the Oedipal economy, and locates this within Robin, in a dramatisation that indicates lesbian notions of ‘languor’ or ‘*languueur*’ in the frustration of desire.⁷⁶¹ Understanding of Robin’s languor can be accessed through clothing play in rehearsal of *Cleansed*, particularly in the use of tights; this playing is useful for deepening engagement with themes of the feminine and the processes of feminisation in Kane’s text.

An investigation of the gender significance of tights was an important aspect of the practical process in this thesis. It was identified in the first *I Love To You* session (27 July 2009) as a clothing item that, the women present argued, was patriarchal and oppressive; this was a theme picked up later by the Sarah Kane Research Group and women in Cast-Off Drama workshops. There was a general dislike of tights expressed with reference to notions of sheathing, restriction and discomfort, and the idea that it

⁷⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 72

⁷⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 29

⁷⁶¹ For consideration of ‘*languueur*’ in connection to the cultural representation of lesbianism, see N. Hallett, *Lesbian Lives: Identity and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century*, London, Sterling, Virginia, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 188.

formed a 'second skin'. Following work with stockings with Kerry Ely on the Burlesque practice of 'Peel and Reveal', I initiated a dramaturgical process whereby actors would make themselves a 'skin-suit' of tights as part of developing their character, to be designed by themselves and made on the body.⁷⁶² Through this I explored the idea of tights as a costume aesthetic for *Cleansed*, the material forming a second skin that could be stitched and used to conceal, or cut to peel and reveal. The work was one of the most challenging aspects of the practical project, the tights provoking familiar tensions of eroticism and death in relation to the feminine depressingly encoded within the construction of its material and potentials. Its flexibility as a medium to explore skin, mutability and change, was, however, powerful.

The research indicated that clothing within Kane's text reveals far more politically than is apparent on first reading and can both liberate and suffocate the wearer/player. In the case of Robin, the tights have some connection to 'languor' and like Werther's blue coat, 'imprisons him so effectively that the world around him vanishes'.⁷⁶³ Considering Antigone, and recognising there are limits to the supportability of female desire and agency within an Oedipal economy, the female subject finds its desires in

⁷⁶² Cast-Off Drama, 'I Love To You'; 2009, Sarah Kane Research Group, 2009; Cast-Off Drama sessions at Leeds Art Gallery: 'Tights, Stockings and Crude Stitching' with Kerry Ely, 26 February 2011; 'Making a Skin-Suit of Tights – Peel and Reveal?', 27 February 2011; 'Oi Moonface! You wanna know me, you gotta look close' 12 March 2011; 'Exploring Touch in *Cleansed*: Making male and female skin-suits' with Paul Ashton and David Nunney, 13 August 2011; 'Making a Female Skin-Suit/Exploring a Female Tinker/Cutting/Peel and Reveal', 14 August 2011; and 'Tinker and Grace's Big Day Out (From the Institution)/The Landscape of *Cleansed*', with Kerry Ely, 28 and 29 January 2012. See also, 'Weekend Working with Nina Kane', *Kerry Charlotte Ely: A blog to collect together my doings in theatre and acting*, [web blog] 29 January 2012, <http://kerrycharlotteely.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/experimental-theatre-exploration.html>, (accessed 30 January 2012).

⁷⁶³ R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 128., reproduced online at <http://www.haraldpeterstrom.com/content/s.pdf/Roland%20Barthes%20A%20Lovers%20A%20Discourse%20fragments.pdf>, (accessed 1 June 2013). The research found similar frustrations for Grace in connection with tights.

need of space, a home and perhaps a room of one's own if she is to survive. She finds this necessarily in gaps, absence and space, and what Kane constructs in her use of the Antigone myth, is a scenario whereby her characters can transgress, through a theatrical invocation of the incest taboo, to a point of ghostly joy where gender becomes destabilised.

So what does Grace want? What does Woman want? And perhaps for once it is worth asking, what does (or did) Kane want from us, the reader or theatre-maker, in our engagement with the script? Kane restages the question in scene 14, and this time it is articulated directly through a female – or perhaps nominally-female – character, Woman. Again, Tinker interrupts and represses the expression of desire. He does so in an exchange of extreme violence and abuse, centred on gender:

Tinker. Open your legs.
Woman. I'm confused.
Tinker. OPEN YOUR FUCKING LEGS.
Woman. (*Does.*)
Tinker. Look.
Woman. (*Does.*)
Tinker. Touch.
Woman. (*Sobs.*)
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.
Woman. I want –
Tinker. Don't say that.
Woman. You said –
Tinker. I lied. You are what you are. No regrets.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁴ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 137. Note again, Kane's use of the technique whereby 'stage directions in brackets function as lines' focused on the words 'does' and 'sobs'.

In this moment, the question of 'wants' is located in a dialectical tension between Woman's desire 'not to be' something, and Tinker's assertion that she can 'only be' that thing that she desires 'not to be' – the very 'beingness' she rejects. It is also caught in a tension whereby Woman's desire to change her 'beingness' – expressed as 'I want' – conflicts with Tinker's negation of the possibility of change. The relational dialectic dramatised by Kane here centres around gender, and the central tenet of Tinker's argument is that change is not possible because Woman (who he has named Grace, something she later names herself as) is a woman. 'You're a woman, Grace [...] You are what you are. No regrets.' The gendered nature of the dialectic is underscored by Tinker's insistence that Woman opens her legs, looks at and 'touches' herself (genitalia implied). In the act of co-erced self-touching, the actress playing Woman breaks the fourth wall, and through scripted gesture, implicates the audience in both doing and sobbing. This act of touching prefigures the moment four scenes later where '**Grace.** (Touches her stitched-on genitals)' – an act that I have previously argued, is a gestic moment.⁷⁶⁵ I suggest therefore, that scene 14 dramatises the desire for a person nominally designated female to 'be' other than that, and that what we are witnessing in this scene is the denial of that desire, and a negation of the possibility of change, expressed through sexual violence and a withholding of assistance by a patriarchal 'doctor' figure.⁷⁶⁶ I therefore conclude that what Kane wants to express through *Cleansed* is fundamentally an understanding of and empathy for the transsexual within the medical institution, and if this play, with its gender-bending and queer bodies can said to be 'about anything', my research suggests it is

⁷⁶⁵ Kane, *Cleansed*, loc. cit., p. 145.

⁷⁶⁶ The reference to lying appears to overturn Tinker's promise of assistance in scene 6. '**Tinker.** I can help. **Woman.** How? **Tinker.** I'm a doctor.' Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 122.

about that. The reference to ‘doctor’ and Kane’s setting of the play in a university similarly implies institutions of knowledge and education, and through this, I argue, Kane militates for a recognition of the experiences of transsexual people in medicine, in places of learning and on the stage.

Cleansed is rich in references to experiences of transgender and transsexualism. Examples might include the experimentation with clothing necessary to express gender, and the importance of dressing to ‘pass’ invisibly (‘Say you thought I was a man’);⁷⁶⁷ to the psychiatric experience of accessing medical services and the need to persuade doctors of the ‘genuineness’ of your desire for surgery (scene 3).⁷⁶⁸ Other examples may include the negative and corrective histories of inversion, to the pain of botched operations, and the simplistic binaristic notion that the swapping of body parts is sufficient to address the complexity of gender dysphoria (scene 18 – ‘Felt it’).⁷⁶⁹ One can also see traces of transgender experience in associations of naming and renaming in *Cleansed* (‘Grace’), and the need to learn to move and speak differently to ‘pass’ (dramatized most effectively where Graham dances with Grace mirroring his movements),⁷⁷⁰ from experiences of rape, murder, ostracisation, demonization (Tinker’s violent acts, the Voices), to the leaving behind of places and journeying to

⁷⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷⁶⁸ J.M. Sloop, ‘Disciplining the Transgendered: Brandon Teena, Public Representation and Normativity’ in K.E. Lovaas and M.M. Jenkins (eds.), *Sexualities and Communications in Everyday Life: A Reader*, Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi, 2007, pp. 195-215. H. Garfinkel, ‘Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sex Status in an “Intersexed” Person’ in Stryker and Whittle, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-93.

⁷⁶⁹ J. Meyerowitz, ‘A “Fierce and Demanding” Drive’ in Stryker and Whittle, *ibid.*, pp. 362-386.

⁷⁷⁰ Kane, *Cleansed*, sc. 5, *op. cit.*, p. 119. C. McNamara, ‘Re-inhabiting an uninhabitable body’, *op. cit.*, Helvie, S., ‘Willa Cather and Brandon Teena: The Politics of Passing’, *Women and Language*, vol. 20, no. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 35-40.

another.⁷⁷¹ Transgender experiences of life may include the negotiation of queer love relationships in a heteronormative society⁷⁷² (Rod and Carl); the necessity of cutting and dismemberment in transitioning, the medicalisation of the body, and the endless taking of pills⁷⁷³ (Tinker: 'Swallow'). The presence and experience of suicide and depression is also in evidence amongst people living with gender dysphoria, and also the keeping of 'ghosts'.⁷⁷⁴ I would argue that in its violences *Cleansed* fundamentally expresses the abuses experienced by the transsexual both historically and today to varying degrees of extremity in many cultures. In its final scene, however, I argue that we can trace a more positive experience of transsexualism within the institution and the promise of touch, change and healing through time.

Ultimately the play is about breaking silences. As Busby and Farrier note:

To our reading, the loss of his (Carl's) genitals is not only about a form of silencing that can be mapped across a cultural debate at the time of Kane's writing. It is important to the narrative to recognise that Carl's genitals are supplied to Grace in order for her to assume the physical attributes she needs to become Graham. Shortly after the point where Carl sees his genitals are missing he puts on Grace's clothes. Not only does this create a kind of image symmetry (they both change) but also focuses on the mutability of identity and the primary sex indicators of genitalia. It is almost as if Grace has become Graham, thereby leaving space for another Grace (in the dyad of Grace and Graham) – and indeed at least one other Grace in the form of Robin has been present in the play.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷¹ J. Halberstam, 'The Brandon Archive' in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York and London, New York University Press, 2005, pp. 22-46; S. Stryker, 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein', loc. cit., pp. 244 – 256.

⁷⁷² D. Valentine, "'I Went to Bed With My Own Kind Once": The Erasure of Desire in the Name of Identity' in Stryker and Whittle, op. cit., pp. 407-419. B.L. Hausman, 'Body, Technology, and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies', in Stryker and Whittle, op. cit., pp. 335-361.

⁷⁷³ 'Gendered Intelligence', [website], 2009. J. Butler, 'Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality' in Stryker and Whittle, op. cit., pp. 183-193.

⁷⁷⁴ C. Chase, 'Hermaphrodites with Attitude', in Stryker and Whittle, op. cit., pp. 300-314; J. Halberstam, 'Unlosing Brandon: Brandon Teena, Billy Tipton, and Transgender Biography', in *In a Queer Time and Place*, op. cit., pp. 47-75.

⁷⁷⁵ Busby and Farrier in Godiwala, loc. cit., p. 150.

This analysis is useful in what it illustrates of Kane's focus on 'queer bodies and fluid identities,' which so frequently disorients and even bamboozles 'the straight mind' of the first night reviewing audience. It is also useful in what it demonstrates of the mutability of gender in representations of theatrical characters in *Cleansed*. Awareness of this mutability breathes life into the rehearsal space and opens up the possibility of actors playing roles conventionally designated for members of the opposite sex. *Cleansed* effectively progresses use of the gender binary to enable it to provide what Erin McCarthy describes as:

a framework that allows for difference without being dualistic, that provides equal space to *parler-femme* without silencing other voices; a framework that disrupts the traditional notions of what is masculine and what is feminine and that allows for dialogue between the sexes that supports their mutual growth.⁷⁷⁶

Notably, in the work by Cast-Off Drama, Kamome-za and Bare Cheek, the options for women of playing men's characters has emerged as a primary choice amongst casts. Interest was expressed in exploring a female Tinker from young women on the Huddersfield research, which offered an opportunity for discussion of sexuality, spectacle and questions of power in relation to desire and voyeurism.⁷⁷⁷ In Kamome-za's production of *Cleansed* ('*Be Cleansed*'), the role of Voices was played by 78 year-old poet and Butoh performer Hana Sawako. Scene 10 was performed powerfully by the cast as an ensemble. The violence and terror of Grace's beating, rape and death

⁷⁷⁶ I am particularly interested in McCarthy's advocacy of Watsuji Tetsurō's philosophy of *ningen* in relation to this. 'Watsuji Tetsurō's notion of self and ethics as *ningen* – the Japanese word for "human being" which, however, literally means "between persons" – points us to a framework that can be used to re-imagine and support such growth and a non-dual subjectivity.' E. McCarthy, 'Beyond the Binary: Watsuji Tetsurō and Luce Irigaray on Body, Self and Ethics' in B.W. Davis, B. Schroeder, and J.M. Wirth (eds.), *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, Indiana, USA, Indiana University Press, 2011, p. 217.

⁷⁷⁷ Kerry Ely subsequently developed her work on the female Tinker into a Burlesque performance exploring cross-dressing, sexuality and whimsy – *Rip-Roaring Twenties Night* hosted by Sukki Singapore and Cherry Kiss Kabaret, Salford, UK, 28 April 2012.

was conveyed through a cacophony of raucous voice-work and repetitive choreography performed in group formation.⁷⁷⁸ Sawako – who from the opening scene had been sitting on a chair at the back of the performance space where she had held the spoon for Tinker’s heroin cooking – emerged at this point. She made a journey with her body around the perimeter of the rectangular playing space with her hands upturned. Kawaguchi’s explanation of this moment was that Sawako’s Voices represented ‘man’ and the evils of ‘man’. The journey with the upturned hands was a Butoh gesture of shame and responsibility for the violence – literally ‘it is the hand of man that has made this mess’. The Voices literally have blood on their hands at this point and the female performer – stepping into a male physicality and voice and gesturing the hands in shame – acknowledges this.⁷⁷⁹

Recognising that there is a mutability at the heart of *Cleansed*’s lesbian performance text that queers boundaries and binaries, and challenges heteronormativity through a play with butch/femme, and clothing and bodies, I would like to conclude with a specific gender reading for Grace. My specific gender reading locates her as a nominally-designated female character (woman), who expresses a desire to transition to a male body, feeling herself to be male, and wishing to look anatomically on the outside as she feels on the inside. I would suggest that within *Cleansed* it is possible to trace (through Grace) in a very concrete and material way, the figure of the transsexual within the medical institution and something of the experience of the transitioning FTM transsexual. Extending on Busby and Farrier’s noting of the importance of recognising that it is Carl’s genitalia that are (by implication) and

⁷⁷⁸ The voice and music work on ‘Cleansed (*Be Cleansed*)’ was directed by Kosuke Suzuki, who also played the part of Rod in this production.

⁷⁷⁹ Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 27 May 2012.

symbolically (within the fiction) grafted onto Grace, I would add that it is important to recognise that some of Grace's own body has by implication (and symbolically) been used to build the penis. The stage directions note the presence of bloodied bandages around Grace's chest and 'the space where her breasts should be'. Whilst these suggest double mastectomy and the binding of breasts common to many FTM transsexuals, the bandages also potentially signify or reference the cutting and scarring of other parts of the body necessary in phalloplasty.⁷⁸⁰ The process known as free flap phalloplasty is a microsurgical procedure that involves cutting and moving skin from one part of the body to the genital area for the penis to be constructed. It is a highly delicate operation as the surgeon must ensure a constant supply of blood to the live tissue. There is inevitably scarring in this process, and the process of transsexual surgery and transitioning takes place over a long period of time. The change of mood and pace in scene 20 of the play relates powerfully to this indeterminate period of recuperation with all its pain, loss, grief, release and relief.

It is possible in this final evocation of moving skin arising from the sight of Grace's bandages and the touch of the stitched-on penis (with all the movement and transitions that represents) that we feel most powerfully the 'accident time' and *unheimlich* touch of *Cleansed*. For as Jennifer M. Barker, citing Merleau-Ponty notes:

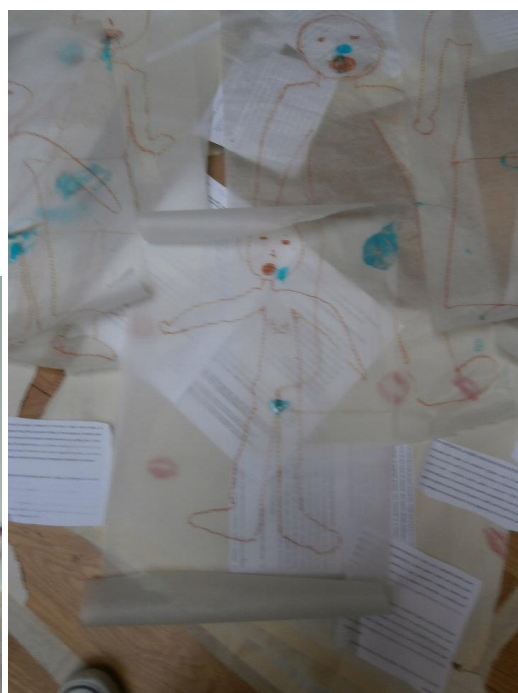
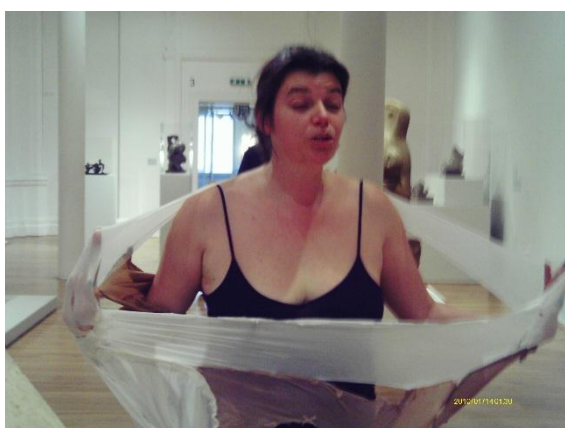
the uniqueness of skin lies in its location at (and constitution of) the boundary between the body and the world. "where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?" Merleau-Ponty asks. That limit is the skin, which is not actually a skin at all but a place of constant contact between the outside and the inside. Two-layered the skin's dermis connects with the blood and muscle of the inner body, while its epidermis connects with

⁷⁸⁰ 'History of Phalloplasty': talk given by Nim Christopher at the *Gendered Intelligence Anatomy Project*, 16 March 2013. Parts of the body commonly used as flaps during phalloplastic surgery include the forearm, lateral thigh, side of chest, inner thigh and upper arm.

the surfaces of the world [...]. Skin alone constitutes the objective texture of the body, those surface qualities that are touchable by the world with which it comes into contact [...] (and) [...] functions always as both a covering and an uncovering, because of its simultaneous proximity to the world and the secretive inner body. It covers the body's secrets by clothing us in a placid smoothness that hides the murky movements within. But the skin displays those secrets as well, expressing them on its surface so that we are also always naked in it.⁷⁸¹

Recognising, in the final analysis, that there is a haptic quality to *Cleansed* makes the text highly charged, in that we are left with an image of bodies bleeding, irresolute and open to further change. We understand that these changes may involve further pain and incarceration. The bodies remain visible, open, scarred and marked – they do not ‘disappear’. The subjects remain marked by transitioned gender. Grace and Carl have undergone a form of bodily and gender reassignment but they are not as yet ‘invisible’ – neither could ‘pass’ as male or female and as such we do not witness a neat or symbolic exchange of gender, but a ‘becoming’ – a slow transition between gender, rich in its mucosity, pain and flux.

⁷⁸¹ J.M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 2009, p. 28.



- 6.g-i. The Struggle to Make Form from Matter – Exploring Skin and Finding Voice in response to Henry Moore's Work. *Oi Moonface! You wanna know me you gotta look close!*, Cast-Off Drama, Exhibition: Henry Moore at Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 12 March 2011.
- 6.j. Unlocking the Silent Screams in the Institution through Breath and Fluid Play: mixed-media installation and performance intervention in the Ziff gallery space, *mother bird* residency, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 2-8 July 2012.

7. Afterword: 'A life and voice of its own'



7. a 'It is pleasant to rest in the still light'. Detail from Christine Smith's, *To Be Two*, Cast-Off Drama, *I Love To You*, 27 July 2009.



7.b. Cleaning Actions: Exorcising the '90s, Kitchen Dancing for All Greying Grievors, Saying Goodbye to a Loved One, Mourning Those Who Were Lost in the '90s, (Forever and Ever). Nina Kane, *mother bird*, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, in response to the Fiona Rae Exhibition: *Maybe you can live on the moon in the next century*, 3 July 2012.



- 7.c. Lullaby for All Who Have Lost Their Children. *Song*, Nina Kane, Emily Kane-Horsler and Dante Hall, video work, 2012. For Mothers Everywhere: Imagining a Daughter. *Young and Cute*, Bai Ni (Yun Yang), Chinese Xuan paper and ink, 2009, 45 x 50 cm. Both works exhibited in the *Out of the Blue Exhibition*, Modelworks, Cast-Off Drama, Leeds Central Library Exhibitions' Space, UK, 3-31 October 2012

Sister ... Reh.

Shoes on in the front room.
They better be Police.
Boots on in the front room.

They better be brave dred.

Smell Dad's too-sweet tea a mile off
muss be poisonin them
with sugar.

Mum sat –
lookin shook.

Dad standin
lookin like he have to.

Su'un too quiet bout the house
su'un not right.

Step in – sock-foot
and see two uniforms
and a plain clothes
sippin their too-sweet somethin.

[...]

Why you here?

Why you sittin here?

Why you sittin here on *my* mum's good
sofa –

in *your* outside shoes –

drinking *my* dad's sweet tea –

an' askin bout my *brother* –

why you here? Why you – why you *here*?⁷⁸²

I have no desire for death
no suicide ever had⁷⁸³

Sarah Kane was found dead at King's College Hospital, London, UK, at approximately 3.30am on the 20 February 1999. It was her local hospital, located in an inner-city area of South London near her flat in Brixton. She had been admitted a couple of days previously having taken an overdose of 185 sleeping tablets. She was found hanging by a bootlace from a hook on the door of a lavatory, having not been seen by any staff

⁷⁸² d. tucker green, *random*, London, Nick Hern Books, 2008, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸³ Kane, *4.48 Psychosis*, op. cit., p. 244.

member of the hospital for over 90 minutes. An inquest held in late September of the same year ruled a verdict of suicide.⁷⁸⁴

I wish to say again 'I am sorry for your loss' to anyone who loved and knew Sarah Kane. There are many people still grieving for her, and it is not said often enough.

As someone who never knew Sarah Kane, and as a scholar, clown and dramaturg, I can only make sense of her death through considering the wider questions that it poses to questions of agency, gender and theatre. In doing so I hope to engage with cultural discourses to better understand what happened with Sarah Kane, and to ensure that other young women and men do not find themselves compelled to end their lives in such a tragic way. I can also honour her life and work by opening up space for the staging of her works, through furthering knowledge and thinking of their social, political and theatrical significance to people's lives today. This work of dramaturgy is offered in this spirit: with deep respect to Sarah Kane, and with the desire to see the plays out there in the world, giving 'life and voice' to society and to those who work with them.

Constituting a culture of breath when undertaking practical and theoretical study of Sarah Kane's work is important, however, as the legacy of her suicide is constantly

⁷⁸⁴ Youtube, 'The Death of Sarah Kane', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueQt7ENn9fI&list=PL8ED2FEFE80740C09>, ND, (accessed 18 June 2010). S. Boggan, 'Hospital Let Playwright Repeat Her Suicide Bid', *Independent*, 23 September 1999, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/hospital-let-playwright-repeat-her-suicide-bid-1121161.html>, (accessed 18 June 2010).

present. In considering the responsibility this leaves those of us engaging with her plays, I recall Edward Bond's comments on her death:

Sarah Kane had to confront the implacable. You can postpone the confrontation only when you are certain that at some time it will take place. Otherwise it will slip away. Everything Sarah Kane did had authority. If she thought that perhaps the confrontation could not take place in our theatre, because it is losing the understanding and the means – she could not risk waiting. Instead she staged it elsewhere. Her means to confront the implacable are death, a lavatory and shoelaces. They are her comment on the meaninglessness of our theatre and our lives, and on our false gods.⁷⁸⁵

Theatre teaches us that the human being is capable of any emotion or action, and we are still, in theatre, seeking ways to make life meaningful and to 'confront the implacable'. To be able to do so, it is important to remain open to life, and not become caught up with cultures of death and suturing that close possibilities down. Untangling the plays from the legacy of Kane's suicide is an important aspect of this, as is, I have argued in this thesis, freeing her legacy from cultures of mourning that can inhibit new readings.

There are references to suicide in much of Kane's work, and as a theme it is never far from the actor, director or dramaturg's mind. There have been moments whilst undertaking this research where I have found myself overwhelmed with suicidal preoccupations and images. Suicide is embedded fully within *Cleansed* and like the clean bomb discussed in chapter 5, pervades the experience of working with the play, presenting us openly with the existential truth of the depressive who can recognise and name nihilism:

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

⁷⁸⁵ Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me*, loc. cit., p. 191.

Think about getting up it's pointless.
Think about eating it's pointless.
Think about dressing it's pointless.
Think about speaking it's pointless.
Think about dying only it is totally
fucking pointless.⁷⁸⁶

The beauty of this particular speech is to be found in the regularity of rhythm: its repetition – which takes its strength and origin from the word 'Think' – and the smooth flow of breath enabled through its utterance. It is a 'holding' speech. It communicates despair, and yet there is touch and relief in the time it takes to speak it, also in the rhythms that support it. The importance of this speech is that it takes us close to the edge of despair – well into the terrain of suicidal feelings – yet it holds and soothes us, reminds us of the value of telling things as they are in the moment honestly and crucially invites us to 'think about' the things that govern everyday life.

The invitation for 'thinking about' the suicidal terrain and the importance of this are rarely addressed in Kane scholarship. This is hardly surprising as to begin to think about suicide in Kane's work inevitably brings the spectre of her hanging from a toilet door instantly to mind, and it is not easy to stop oneself from looking too closely (morbidly so) at the imagined image, or running away from the spectre in terror and guilt. This is a loss, and if anything can be salvaged from the tragic state of her fate, I would argue that it lies in the legacy her work offers to thinking about suicide. To peer morbidly on the image of death to a point of paralysis or to turn and run away are cowardly and impotent actions that do not do justice to the complexity of Kane's work and life and what they teach about the place of suicide in human communities. Her

⁷⁸⁶ Kane, *Cleansed*, op. cit., p. 150.

plays testify to the many silences around suicide alongside the assumptions and euphemisms. They indicate a social and political truth: that the ontological status of suicide as a philosophical concept and as something that can be regarded and considered in itself as real and functioning is still a point of ambivalence and ambiguity in Western culture.

Margaret Higgonet observes, in 'Speaking Silences: Women's Suicide', that suicide is a death that one chooses and controls, and is an act of authorship and reclamation:

To take one's life is to force others to read one's death [...] Women's voluntary deaths are even more difficult to read than men's because women's very autonomy is in question and their intentions are therefore opaque. To embrace death is at the same time to read one's own life. The act is a self-barred signature [...] When women represent the death of self on their bodies, they do so in a gesture that remains open ended.⁷⁸⁷

Those who knew Kane will form their own opinions when trying to 'read' the gesture of Kane's death. As someone who did not know her I can only read the gesture of her final moment through a lens of theatre and gender. In considering it, I see a gesture connected to boots – her own boots – whose shoelaces she uses to make her final act. I also see a lavatory – a women's lavatory, in an all-female ward, in a British hospital. Boots, as debbie tucker green's protagonist notes in the extract that opened this Afterword, relate to authority and, in many ways, to a male or patriarchal authority. They also relate, in many cultural referents, to death. In Kamome-za's second production of *Cleansed*, 'Purification', the cast stockpiled shoes in the centre of the stage to represent the lives lost in the Holocaust.⁷⁸⁸ In this way, the company gave

⁷⁸⁷ S.R. Suleiman, *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, Harvard University Press, USA, 1986, pp. 68-69.

⁷⁸⁸ 'Cleansed ('Purification')', Kamome-za Fringe Theatre, Space Edge, Shibuya, Tokyo, 22-25 December 2011. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KH9vqg9Gdg>.

voice to those who never had a chance to say goodbye due to the violence of others, and recognised the responsibility we all have to ensure that such systems of violence are challenged. Boots also signify, for me, a moment from Sarah Kane's unpublished monologue *Starved*.⁷⁸⁹ In this moment, the speaker recalls an incident from when she was two years old. She is eating a bag of crisps that the father does not wish her to have. He attempts to snatch them from her but she holds onto them and in the ensuing struggle, the bag bursts, scattering the crisps to the floor. The little girl pounces to the floor and begins eating the crisps, and as the speaker notes, finds herself face-to-face with her father's boots, crushing the crisps to dust so she cannot disobey him. The speaker recalls her tiny fingers reaching for the crisps as they disappear down cracks in the pavement, her father's boots crushing them all the while.

For me, the gesture of this moment of theatre, and the gesture I take from Sarah Kane's suicide, relates to desire. It relates to the moment where a character says, 'My sister. She wants – ' or a female/female-identifying character says 'I want – ' and has her voice silenced and her desire crushed. It relates to the struggle to find and make meaning within heteronormative, patriarchal and Capitalist hegemonies, and indeed, with our theatre.

Lian Amaris Sifuentes' text 'Biting off the Tongue of Discourse' raises complex questions about Kane's engagement with patriarchal language and the destabilising reinvention of a self-authoring (feminine) language through the speaker of 4.48

⁷⁸⁹ Kane, *Sick folio*, Women's Theatre Collection, Bristol, accessed 25 August 2009.

Psychosis. Sifuentes suggests that in this, Kane goes beyond Cixous to not only bite off patriarchy's tongue but her own. This act is arguably both freeing and self-de(con)structive and Sifuentes extends on this to comment on Kane's suicide:

Kane's Medusa is not just laughing she is screaming. And while I have previously relegated Cixous' language of death only to metaphor, avoiding the actual death of Kane, it is at this moment that I too turn to face Kane's speaker and perhaps Kane herself – she is not deadly, but, perhaps Kane is halted by her own gaze, and upon finally opening the curtains and meeting herself, there is nothing more to see and nowhere to search. When those curtains are opened, she is forever solidified.⁷⁹⁰

Recognising that suicide and attempted suicide features as a theme in all of Kane's plays, I suggest there is scope for useful enquiry focusing on the questions raised by Kane's death and on how she develops an ontology of suicide in her work that is potentially gendered, ambivalent and political.

To conclude, this thesis is offered as a feminist, queer and clown-based contribution to dramaturgical studies of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*, which gives some significant theoretical attention to *Blasted* with a conscious intention of further weaving and untangling the feminist fabric of this. This thesis uses studio practice, scholarly research, close reading of text, performance observation and conversation with practitioners to establish diverse readings of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*. It includes original material from the 2012 productions of *Cleansed* in Japan (Kamome-za Fringe Theatre), and in Ireland (Bare Cheek Theatre). It notes practice on *Cleansed* in gallery spaces (Cast-Off Drama, UK). It offers a dramaturgical approach to workshopping the play from a feminist and queer position, informed by theories of gender and transgender, and the marginalised, loving and delinquent practice of clowning. The research

⁷⁹⁰ Sifuentes, op. cit.

discusses principles of breath, voice and sexuate difference drawing primarily on the philosophies of Luce Irigaray, on the voice practice of Cicely Berry and the clown teaching of Sue Morrison.

The work challenges the 'in-yer-face' theatre and media discourse on Kane arguing that it represents a McDonaldization of its subject matter, and an insidious trivialisation of her texts. It offers new thinking on the opening night of *Blasted* (1995), suggesting that the furore was fuelled by collective male hysteria and superstition, with its roots centred in mourning. Analysing *Cleansed* in relation to Edward Bond's *Saved* and *Lear*, it explores tropes of ghosts, stitching and the silent scream, and argues that Kane militates for gynocentric time and becoming. It analyses the symbol of the perimeter fence as a feature of 1980s Britain, noting the strength of binary associations configured in it with reference to both English football hooliganism (male) and the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (female). It argues that Kane sets up heteronormative binaries in *Cleansed* to debate and contest them.

A key conclusion of the thesis is that *Cleansed* politically addresses and dramatises issues of transgender experience presenting accounts of gender violence, mutability, transitioning, the sharp fractures and silences of gender dysphoria, but also, ultimately, queer desire, love and optimism.

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- Interdisciplinary Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences conference, California State University, San Marcos, 10–12 June 1993
- In-Yer-Face? British Drama in the 1990s - Conference held at the University of West England, 6-7 September 2002. For a useful account of this, see Hanna Slattne's report, 'In-Yer-Face Conference: A Dramaturg's View' on the Dramaturgs' Network website: http://www.ee.dramaturgy.co.uk/index.php/site/comments/reporting_from_the_in_yer_face_conference, (accessed 23 January 2013).
- Women's Writing for Performance: Process and Practice Conference, LICA – Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, UK, 28-30 April 2006.
- Interrogating Antigone Conference, School of Drama and Theatre Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. 6-7 October 2006.
- Acting in Film: Concepts, Theories, Philosophies: An International Conference, University of Potsdam, Berlin, Germany, 2-4 September 2010.
- Sexuate Subjects: Politics, Poetics and Ethics, Luce Irigaray Circle, UCL, London. 3-5 December 2010.
- Postgraduate Research Conference, English Department, University of Huddersfield, 9 June 2011.
- Terror(ism) and Aesthetics Conference, Department of Comparative Literatures, University of Szeged, Hungary, 22-24 September 2011.
- Sarah Kane: A Reassessment, Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, 16 February 2008.
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- Bond@50: The Work of Edward Bond, English and Theatre Studies Departments, University of Warwick, UK. 2 November 2012.

Live Performances, Exhibitions and Projects

- 'Introduction to Baby Clown' Sue Morrison with Yellow Belly Theatre, Workshop Theatre, University of Leeds, UK, June 2004
- Cast-Off Drama, 'I Love To You' workshop programme, 8 'drop-in' sessions of life-model performer-led readings of the philosophies of Luce Irigaray for life-drawing participants, Artspace 1, Bates Mill, Huddersfield, UK, July-August 2009.
- Sarah Kane Research Group, 'Feminist and cross art-form explorations of *Cleansed*', Studio 3, Milton Building, Drama Department, University of Huddersfield, UK, 14 October-9 December 2009.
- 'Young and Cute', Bai Ni (Yun Yang), Chinese Xuan paper and ink, 2009, 45x50 cm.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Workshops on *Cleansed*', Education Studio, Leeds City Art Gallery, UK, January 2011-February 2012.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Workshop on Cross-dressing and Gender', Scenes 3, 7 and 18 of *Cleansed* with Paul Ashton and life-drawing participants, 5-6 February 2011.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Workshop on Stockings, Tights and Stitching', Scenes 3, 7, 17, and 18 Of *Cleansed*, and scene 9 of *Saved* by Edward Bond; with Kerry Ely and life-drawing participants, 26 February 2011.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Making a Skin-Suit of Tights – Peel and Reveal?', Nina Kane and life-drawing participants, 27 February 2011.
- 'Oi Moonface! You wanna know me, you gotta look close!', Cast-Off Drama, solo Performance by Nina Kane, in response to the Henry Moore exhibition, Leeds Art Gallery, 12 March 2011.
- 'Keen', Cast-Off Drama, performance on Greenham Common, weaving webs, masks, playing with mirrors and keening in response to John William Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott* (1894), Leeds Art Gallery, 7 May 2011; see Cast-Off Drama, 'Summer 2011: Modelworks', [web blog].
- 'Padre/Sounding Out Bacon', Cast-Off Drama, solo performance by Nina Kane in response to *Painting* by Francis Bacon (1950) and *Head VI* by Francis Bacon (1948/9), Leeds Art Gallery, 25 June 2011.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Making a Skin-Suit: Exploring Gender and Moments of Touch in *Cleansed*' with Paul Ashton and David Nunney, 13 August 2011.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Making a Female Skin-Suit / Exploring a Female Tinker/ Cutting / Peel and Reveal', Nina Kane and life-drawing participants, 14 August 2011.
- 'Saved', Lyric Hammersmith, London, UK, Lyric Theatre, Thursday 3 November 2011.
- 'Faun', Cast-Off Drama, solo performance by Nina Kane in response to the *William Etty: Art and Controversy* exhibition, York Art Gallery, UK, 16 November 2011.
- Cast-Off Drama, 'Stepping into the Picture' day-workshop, in response to the *William Etty: Art & Controversy* exhibition, York Art Gallery, UK, 23 November 2011.
- 'Cleansed (*Purification*)', Kamome-za Fringe Theatre Company, Tokyo, Japan, Space Edge, Shibuya, December 2011. See also Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KH9vqq9Gdg>, (accessed 24 May 2013).

Cast-Off Drama, 'Exploring the Landscape of *Cleansed*/Tinker and Grace's Big Day Out (From the Institution)', Kerry Ely and Nina Kane, in response to the *United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s* exhibition, and *Exit the Model* by Bruce McLean (1982), Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Institute, UK, 28 and 29 January 2012.

'Rip-Roaring Twenties Night' hosted by Sukki Singapura and Cherry Kiss Kabaret, Salford, UK, 28 April 2012.

'Crave', Actors Touring Company, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012.

Actors Touring Company. After-show discussion, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012.

'Cleansed (*Be Cleansed*)', Kamome-za Fringe Theatre Company, Tokyo, Japan, Space Edge, Shibuya, Sunday 27 May 2012. See also Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3UMYtlvXAA>, (accessed 24 May 2013).

'*mother bird* residency: A Gallery Interpretation of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*', Cast-Off Drama, 2-8 July 2012, in response to gallery spaces and exhibitions, in particular, Fiona Rae: *Maybe you can live on the moon in the next century*, and the C19th collection in the Ziff Gallery.

'Out of the Blue Exhibition, featuring the first UK showing of works by Chinese National Painter, Bai Ni', Modelworks, Cast-Off Drama, UK, Exhibitions' Space, First Floor, Leeds Central Library, 3-31 October 2012.

'Song', Nina Kane, Emily Kane-Horsler and Dante Hall, video work, October 2012.

'Cleansed', Bare Cheek Theatre Company, Cork, Ireland, Granary Theatre, Thursday 6 December 2012.

'Anatomy: Drawing Gender, Drawing Sex, Drawing Bodies', Gendered Intelligence, Central School of Speech and Drama, London, UK. Held on the 9 and 16 February, and 2 and 16 March 2013. See <http://genderedintelligence.co.uk>, ND, (accessed 27 January 2013).

Cast-Off Drama, 'Elements Project', Leeds Art Gallery, UK, August 2012-April 2013.

'Wolf', Cast-Off Drama, solo performance by Nina Kane, in response to *Reflect* by Margaret Harrison (2013), *The Lady of Shalott* by John William Waterhouse (1894), *Lovely Young People (Beautiful Supple Bodies)* by Rosalind Nashashibi (2013), and exhibitions of landscape paintings in the Ziff and Sam Wilson gallery spaces, Leeds Art Gallery, UK, 14 April 2013.

Personal Communications: conversations, correspondences (private letter, e-mail, Facebook message), rehearsal attendance

E-mails: Yuki Ishida and Nina Kane, April-October 2012.

E-mails: Graham Saunders and Nina Kane, April 2012-March 2013.

E-mails: Tomoco Kawaguchi and Nina Kane, May 2012-June 2013.

E-mails: Tony McCleane-Fay, December 2012-June 2013.

E-mails: Mahmood Sowdaee and Nina Kane, 2 August 2011, 11 February 2013.

Facebook: Adrian Buckle and Nina Kane. November 2012-March 2013.

Rehearsal: Kamome-Za Fringe Theatre Company. Attendance at 3-hour run-through followed by 4-hour conversation with cast members, Suiteganame, Tokyo. 22 May 2012.

Private letters: Edward Bond and Nina Kane, 8 November 2012, 21 December 2012.

Conversations with protestors whilst attending camps at Occupy Manchester, Occupy St Paul's London and Occupy Bristol, October-December 2011.

Conversation with Yuki Ishida, Lincoln, UK, 31 March 2012.

Conversation with Tomoco Kawaguchi, 22 May 2012, 27 May 2012.

Conversation with Takimoto Naoko, Tsuneo Kobe, Aki Tsujita and Tomoco Kawaguchi, Suiteganame, Tokyo, 22 May 2012.

Conversation with Hiroyuki Kondo, Shibuya, Tokyo, 27 May 2012.

Conversation: Tony McCleane-Fay, Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland, 7 December 2012.

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