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Foucauldian Reflections of Authority in *Softcops* and *Cleansed*

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## FOUCAULDIAN REFLECTIONS OF AUTHORITY IN *SOFTCOPS* AND *CLEANSED*

### Abstract

This paper discusses how Churchill's *Softcops* and Kane's *Cleansed* delve deeply into Michel Foucault's ideas about power and authority by exploring literature's challenges towards authority, how society enforces control, and its impact on dehumanisation. With this purpose, it tries to analyse Foucault's ideas regarding authority and power intertwining with the themes of punishment and violence in these plays. In *Softcops*, Churchill dramatises the absurdities of authority and its more insidious way of punishment by turning public punishment into more invisible control through surveillance and normalisation that resembles Foucault's panopticon. *Cleansed*, meanwhile, is a sensory examination of the extreme violence that lies at the heart of contemporary discipline systems with its institution. It presents a microcosm of social control where authority is not just everywhere but in you too. *Softcops* and *Cleansed* become important critiques of the processes whereby contemporary societies exercise control over their human populations, highlighting these systems' dehumanising effects as well as how such authority builds up progressively within society. This paper emphasises how these plays continue to have such enduring significance of power, demonstrating their applicability, and reliability according to Foucauldian ideas in contemporary literature. It also encourages deeper reflection upon themselves within systems of governed powers by hinting at why they challenge audiences long afterwards.

**Keywords:** Foucault, *Softcops*, *Cleansed*, Power, Authority, Punishment, Panopticon.

### *SOFTCOPS* VE *CLEANSED* ESERLERİNDE OTORİTENİN FOUCAULTCU YANSIMALARI

#### Öz

Bu çalışma, Churchill'in *Softcops* ve Kane'in *Cleansed* oyunlarının Michel Foucault'nun iktidar ve otorite hakkındaki fikirlerini nasıl derinlemesine incelediğini, edebiyatın toplumun ve bu fikirlerin insanlıktan çıkarma üzerindeki etkilerini nasıl sorguladığını ve meydan okuduğunu tartışmaktadır. Bu amaçla, çalışma Foucault'nun otorite ve iktidarla ilgili fikirlerini, bu oyunlardaki ceza ve şiddet temalarıyla iç içe geçirerek analiz etmeye çalışmaktadır. *Softcops*'ta Churchill, Foucault'nun panoptikonunu andıran gözetim ve normalleştirme yoluyla kamusal cezayı daha görünmez bir kontrole dönüştürerek otoritenin saçmalıklarını ve daha sinsi cezalandırma yöntemini dramatize eder. Bu arada *Cleansed*, kurumuyla çağdaş disiplin sistemlerinin kalbinde yatan aşırı şiddetin duyuşal bir incelemesidir. Otoritenin sadece her yerde değil, sizin içinizde de olduğu bir sosyal kontrol mikro kozmosu sunmaktadır. *Softcops* ve *Cleansed*, çağdaş toplumların insan nüfusları üzerinde kontrol uyguladıkları süreçlerin önemli eleştirileri haline gelir ve bu sistemlerin insanlıktan çıkarıcı etkilerinin yanı sıra bu tür bir otoritenin toplum içinde nasıl aşamalı olarak inşa edildiğini vurgular. Bu çalışma, Foucaultcu fikirlere göre bu oyunların çağdaş edebiyatta uygulanabilirliğini ve güvenilirliğini göstererek, gücün bu kadar kalıcı bir öneme sahip olmaya nasıl devam ettiğini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, uzun süre sonra izleyicilere neden meydan okuduklarına işaret ederek, yönetilen güçler sistemleri içinde kendileri üzerine daha derin düşünmeye teşvik etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Foucault, *Softcops*, *Cleansed*, Güç, Otorite, Ceza, Panoptikon.

## INTRODUCTION

French philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault has influenced the world with his revolutionary ideas on power, punishment, and authority as well as their association with violence in society. His works have been focused on how power is exercised through different institutions and discourses thus shaping individuals and populations. In this regard, Foucault explains that punitive measures have changed over time with sovereign powers ending overt practices that are harsh to disciplinary practices that are more subtle but pervasive. This movement reveals a transition from one form of punishment to another since power has been reconfigured. It is not only about how punishment is done but also about who punishes, and finally, the place where they punish. Literature is an ideal tool for exploring these issues from a Foucauldian perspective because it offers an opportunity to see what power dynamics are concealed within texts. It brings hidden dynamics of authority and control into view while enabling readers to question their assumptions regarding authority and violence. As a reflection of society, theatre also mirrors the depths of experience and societal norms. Some literary works are distinguished in the field by their examinations of human struggle with themes of power, authority, violence, and their consequences. Two notable plays that do this are Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* (1984) and Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* (1998). These plays with their portrayals of control and violence resonate with the ideas of Foucault as seen in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Foucault's examination of how punitive measures have evolved from punishment to subtle forms of surveillance and control provides an interesting perspective for analysing these impactful theatrical pieces. This study suggests that the plays *Softcops* and *Cleansed* provide criticisms of power, authority, violence, and punishment as discussed by Foucault. By examining the themes and structures of these plays from a perspective, the research uncovers how Churchill and Kane reveal the dehumanising impacts of power and emphasise literature's significant role in questioning and reshaping societal power dynamics. Through this examination, the study illustrates how both works reflect the changes in practices and challenge and push back against the pervasive influence of contemporary disciplinary systems. By examining these pieces of writing in detail, the study contributes to the knowledge that currently exists with the help of a nuanced insight into how Foucault's ideas on power relations can be put into practice in today's theatre scene. This ultimately emphasises the significance of literature in questioning and transforming standards. Such an examination helps to enrich discussions on how literature, philosophy, and the systems of power that influence society intersect and influence one another.

Foucault puts forward that authority is an active and directive force that moves through different societal structures. He argues that power is inscribed in practices and operates via surveillance and punishment. This view of this thesis threatens the idea that authority is something openly coercive and suggests it always works in more subtle, pervasive ways throughout different sub-structures within society. Power is not a personal possession but a network of relationships that permeates society so that no one can exist outside of this network (Kelly, 2009: 37). Additionally, power and knowledge influence each other with knowledge shaping power relations. This interconnectedness leads to the production of real effects on both individuals and communities (Ogden, 2017: 5). Foucault also emphasises the administrative aspects of power in punitive frameworks. He argues that the legal process, investigations, and public trials are nothing other than moments of an affirmation of rule-governed authority. For instance, confession plays a role where the accused acknowledges guilt and affirms the system's authority. Accepting the possessed guilt and signing what the preliminary investigation had expertly and implicitly created was the unique direction the process could employ "its unequivocal authority," change into "a real victory over the accused," and the unique direction the reality could exercise all its power (Foucault, 1995: 38).

Foucault also speaks of the idea of power which ultimately culminates in violence, it is hard for a ruler or authority to develop any form of compliance with his orders. He proposes that modern states stabilise their rule over subjects by combining a set of policy measures and the threat of force. In examining power relationships in punitive structures, Foucault reveals how authorities created and maintained their control. According to Foucault's perspective on truth, institutions frequently include the admission of guilt by the accused individual to uphold the power of legal frameworks and assert their control over individuals in punitive structures. He examines how truth is produced and synthesised within operations mixing questioning and confession of those under interrogation to produce yet admit legal authority. Here, the leader sees themselves as above the law and is the one who creates and enforces the rules, which often leads to excluding or ignoring others (Ogden, 2017: 5). This manner illustrates how authority is demonstrated and sustained through customs. Here, the creation of the "truth" through a process composed of two parts: the accused's ritualistic act and a hidden investigation conducted by the legal authority (Foucault, 1995: 39). Moreover, Foucault explains that punitive practices not only deter undesired behaviours but also support and strengthen the authority of laws. Their main roles are to prevent actions and reinforce the power of systems by implementing punitive actions to maintain social order

by discouraging future violations and presenting the strength of the law. He states that punishment has dual functions which prohibit acts and revenge any threat to the legal frameworks' authority. Hence, he suggests a dual authorisation constitutive of law. The first part of this authority is prohibitive that criminalises actions that are either damaging or harmful to societal order. This notion about prevention in law regulates conduct and preserves social norms. Nevertheless, there is another dimension of law besides prohibitionism. Punishment takes place in legal systems, and they do not just aim at correcting behaviour but at showing displeasure with outrage against its authority for such acts of transgressions. In a sense, this retaliatory element of punishment ensures a belief in the untouchability or invincibility of the law itself. The law tends to penalise those who disobey it to get revenge for their disdain for its authority (Foucault, 1995: 48). Punishment serves not as a deterrent but as a clear display of the law's authority highlighting both deterrence and symbolic retribution as key elements of power. Therefore, the punitive power of the law has two aspects: first, it stops future breaches by threatening punishment, and second, it reaffirms its dominance and legitimacy through vengeance for disobedience.

Foucault argues that discipline is one of the most essential structures through which authority operates. He mentions how disciplinary practices filter through the societal institutions that stretch from prisons to schools, military encampments, factories, and shop floors through "a carceral continuum" (Foucault, 1995: 303). This continuum is one upon which authority never disappears - it is always there as a standard of behaviour that must be met constantly and consistently, only now through a combination of surveillance and normalisation: "through innumerable mechanisms of discipline" (Foucault, 1995: 303). Discipline operates not just through punishment but also via other subtler mechanisms of regulation and control. This kind of power operates without breaks and automatically affects the conduct and the subjectivity of those over whom it is exercised. Thus, "the authority" that imposes penalties permeates "other authorities" that oversee, change, rectify, and advance (Foucault, 1995: 303). It is the contrast between disciplinary power and sovereign authority which previously operated through direct and visible domination based on coercion in forms like public execution or corporal punishment. Foucault also contends that whereas sovereign power relates to the decision to kill or let die, discipline engages in supervising life with perpetual oversight and ensuing normalisation. He strongly believes that "the sovereign authority with the right to punish, possibly with death, on the other" (Foucault, 2008: 46).

Foucault's perspective on power goes beyond ownership to view it as a strategic force that influences all aspects of society. He explains that power enacted on individuals is not a fixed attribute but a calculated approach resulting in effects influenced by the positions of those in control. This concept portrays power as a contest, a web of connections that surpass hierarchical arrangements. Additionally, Foucault delves into the interconnectedness of power and knowledge highlighting how they are intertwined; one cannot exist without the other (Foucault, 1995: 26-27). Hence, knowledge and authority prioritise experience and existentialism particularly through emphasising responsibility (Managhan and Bulley, 2022: 4). This fusion is essential in comprehending the construction and perpetuation of norms and truths. Foucault contends that contemporary societies exert control through methods aimed at creating efficient citizens (Foucault, 1995: 27). By scrutinising institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals, he uncovers how surveillance, standardisation, and internalisation of regulations are employed to regulate behaviour. Moreover, punishment emerges as a tool in this system of authority. He examined how punishment has evolved over time moving away from displays of torture towards subtler methods aimed at reforming individuals. Prisons have emerged as establishments for enforcing discipline using tactics such as the panopticon useful in enabling monitoring. Foucault provides an analysis of punishment in which the earlier centuries saw physical and public acts of retribution while more recent centuries have turned to psychological methods for control. This transformation he calls an evolution toward punishment on the order of forced labour or even incarceration - meaning simple liberty loss has never been more than efficient unless supplemented by some actual additional element of physical contrition which traditionally means "rationing of food, sexual deprivation, corporal punishment, solitary confinement" (Foucault, 1995: 15-16). This form of punishment that is multilayered in scope echoes the transcendental method of domination where both body and spirit are disciplined. For Foucault, the technologies of punishment are always in excess with punishing the crime, but they also shape -and even more- an individual. In this process, "they provide the mechanisms of legal punishment with a justifiable hold not only on offences, but on individuals; not only on what they do, but also on what they are, will be, may be" (Foucault, 1995: 18). Thus, the goal of punishment's widespread influence is to make the person a submissive and cooperative subject. Expanding Foucault's ideas to a scale reveals that conventional legal notions of power may fail to struggle with governance dilemmas and frequently result in an overreliance on force to maintain control. Exploring how Foucault delves into the formation of individuals as obedient subjects offers insights into various types of governing structures and relational authority. Instead, they propose a concept of relational authority, in which in return for following the rules, a prominent individual adds value to the community, thus unifying and understanding various forms

of global governance (Lake, 2010: 587). The change towards authority reflects Foucault's focus on the diffusion of power through interconnected networks in which obedience is developed through relationships rather than forceful methods.

Foucault suggests that sovereign power is consistently demonstrated through authority backed by force or the fear of it to ensure obedience from the population under its rule. Modern governments uphold their authority by using a combination of measures and the threat of violence to maintain order and compliance among citizens. This approach presents that structure within society ensures adherence to established norms. The use of force often associated with sovereign power highlights the government's jurisdiction over matters concerning life and death. According to Foucault's observations, such extreme measures are often employed against groups perceived as challenging unity like minority groups or individuals with opposing political views. Foucault emphasises the role of violence not only as a means of exerting control and domination but also as a way to demonstrate authority through its actions and exhibitions (1995: 26). The philosopher elaborates on the concept of violence being used strategically to wield power without acts of violence; instead through organised and deliberate actions aimed at preserving social order. In earlier times, punishment methods involved violence to emphasise the ruler's dominance by turning suffering into a public show (Foucault, 1995: 34). According to Foucault's perspective, the extreme nature of this violence played a crucial role in presenting authority through public views of justice.

### **1. OBSERVING THE LIMITS OF AUTHORITY IN *SOFTCOPS***

As an influential British dramatist, Caryl Churchill has consistently challenged the boundaries of modern theatre with her innovative approaches to narrative and exploration of complex themes. Described as the dramatist of the postwar era who has been constantly inventive, Churchill's writing is marked by a deep social, political and gender consciousness (Sierz, 2011: 25). Her plays usually reflect a profound anxiety about power behaviour in each society at a particular moment delving into different viewpoints on authority, superiority, and subjection (Gilman, 1983: 186). As a female writer, she has written about issues around gender, sexuality, and socialist themes. The theatre could be seen as a place of art being its essence and she suggested that the theatre may be the setting where art could realise its primary purpose, which is to fully convey and "live in the actual present" (Gobert, 2014: xiv). This approach is central to much of her work where she uses the stage as an arena in which to examine and question prevailing norms by dealing with "the power relations within society at a given time in history" (Kritzer, 1989: 125). Her plays reflect current global concerns and provide an in-depth analysis of how a person relates to "the ideologies" ingrained political and societal institutions (Luckhurst, 2015: 5). She reflects on her ideas on how people can be controlled without violence through various systems, inspired by Foucault's work *Discipline and Punish* and *Softcops* explores the impact of institutions like hospitals, schools, crime, and prisons on individuals and society (Fitzsimmons, 1989: 73). Her beliefs draw attention to the immediate source of inspiration for *Softcops* and lay the groundwork for a more thorough examination of how Churchill's play interacts with Foucauldian concepts.

In partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company, *Softcops* is a play written by Churchill that critiques the methods and rules of crime, policing and punishment, while also along the way making this connection between humorous yet deeply serious poverty on one hand and life under an enforced disadvantage as seen in certain areas of London (Luckhurst, 2015: 87). Firstly, written in 1978, the play was revised and performed by "the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican Pit" in "1984," so reflected Churchill's close involvement with the political and social issues of her era (Diamond, 2009: 131). The play full of scenarios of dark humour gives fresh insight into the exercise of power and its arbitrary nature. The play is set in France during the 1800s a time of great social and political chaos. It creates an extraordinary version of French law enforcement as a background for putting into relief power dynamics via force. To analyse the play using Michel Foucault's approaches to power, punishment, and violence in prisons, Churchill examines the changing forms of power in *Softcops*, mixing historical and fictional elements to question control mechanisms, taking a closer look at who wields authority and how it can be used but also repelled.

*Softcops* opens with a scene of public execution, staged as a spectacle by the state to reaffirm its authority and act as a deterrent against crime. The scaffold is decorated with "red ribbons" and accompanied by music to make it more appealing for students and society members to take a lesson (Churchill, 1990: 6)<sup>1</sup>. This spectacle turns into a parade with music and the organisers stall the public while they wait for the minister. Thus, punishment should be witnessed by the minister as a representative of the authority and "the power of the law" (8). Creating and preserving discipline in society is succeeded through educational institutions and a headmaster brings his students to experience this spectacle for "the use of punishment as education" (8). In this festival

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<sup>1</sup> From now on, only page numbers will be given for the citations from *Softcops* by Churchill 1990.

atmosphere, authority makes the first criminal Duval praise the punishment system by forcing him to repeat their words. His repetitions are accompanied by music while his hand is cut off due to his act of theft in front of the public (10-11). The second criminal Lafayette is a murderer, and he resists this ceremony by striking. Defying authority, the condemned man transforms his execution into a spectacle that inspires rebellion in the crowd. The disruption illustrates a governmental dependence on the display of force to retain its status, evocative of Michel Foucault's concern with power. For Foucault, these public executions work entirely to penalise and reestablish state electricity around the imagination in addition to a human body, by handling the population outside as a living spectacle. For instance, Pierre imagines a place called the "Laws Garden" presenting crimes and their corresponding punishments to educate and maintain discipline in society echoing Foucault's idea that punishment serves as a mechanism for normalisation of being an external form of control (14). Pierre believes that punishment does not cause pain but strengthens the ruler's power by creating a psychological impression on society (Foucault, 1995: 34). For this reason, the playwright constructs the minister longing for the previous violent methods as a representative of the older form of authority (6). He remembers that punishments lasted for hours in the past and people watched them from noon till midnight (11) by burning the criminals, torturing them (20), or being "torn apart by horses" (41) defined as festivals (12), for pain was accepted as a necessity (16). Pierre criticises modern methods of punishment by expressing concern over their lack of transparency and asserting that when punishment is concealed from the eye, it loses its ability to maintain social order efficiently (32). Thus, the authority needs to punish its people "like a father" to create an effective example for others (8). Churchill connects systems and the integration of power by portraying Pierre and other male characters as figures of authority. To challenge and change the current power structures, it is necessary to identify, accuse, and target the institutions and individuals responsible for maintaining them as the first step towards creating new movements and strategies to oppose existing power dynamics (Godiwala, 2003: 72). Churchill uses Pierre's changing views to examine the shift from displays of power to forms of punishment in the modern era and highlights the ongoing desire for those in charge to maintain control by asserting their authority.

Foucault's emphasis on disciplinary power is central to *Softcops* which illustrates how power in modern times operates less through the visible exertion of force but by a more diffuse system of surveillance and normalisation. Foucault uses the panopticon metaphor to explain how modern power works by making people feel like they are always being watched. This makes individuals feel responsible for following the rules and constraints of power on their own (Foucault, 1995: 202). In the play, Pierre tries to find the worst punishment such as a public scaffold and chain gang, but he always goes back to his Garden of Laws which will be constructed as a park and people with their children can wander around while the criminal hanging up in "an iron cage" (14) as a "solitary confinement" to educate people and to keep discipline (30). He discovered that it is not necessary for someone to suffer, but rather for others to see them suffer as "an optical illusion" to discourage crime and create authority is demanded social order (38). This fictional character encounters the real person Jeremy Bentham who is the inventor of the idea of the panopticon. Bentham discusses his scheme of using an iron cage to control workers with the central tower watching them. Pierre experiences being a prisoner in this system and realises that the illusion of being watched is enough for control without the need for constant surveillance. The system works more effectively than physical chains or pain. Pierre ultimately agrees that this method of control is more reasonable than a traditional theatre spectacle (38-40). Hence, Churchill compares prisons and other institutions to cages or panopticons to show how they are used to control and discipline people in society. She argues that this type of structure extends beyond prisons to places like schools, "hospitals, factories, and social services" (Barranger, 1984: 418). The deep effect of the panopticon on society can be observed at the end of the play. In the final scene, Pierre observes various individuals at the beach leading to confusion as to whether they are criminals, patients, or students. There is a mix-up in how different social misfits are treated with the ignorant being normalised, the sick being punished, the insane being educated, the workers being cured, the criminals being normalised, and the unemployed being punished. This system of control is solidified when one of them attacks Pierre and is shot proving to The Holidaymaker that this protection is necessary (46-49). Thus, as Foucault mentions, through "a single gaze to see everything constantly," (1995: 189) "power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power" (1995: 187). Additionally, Foucault compares the cells of the panopticon to small theatres with each person constantly visible and individualised, suggesting that theatre plays a role in societal control and Churchill shines in it. The punishment becomes softer than in the past, creating a social order since society turns into guards and the entire world becomes a panopticon through the interactions between the characters and the authority. The characters in the story follow the rules imposed by authority and regulate their own behaviour, reflecting Foucault's theory that disciplinary power operates by making individuals self-monitor and control themselves. As suggested by Pierre at the beginning of the play, society can "look at the illegal act in the perspective of the operation of

society" (12) and adopt the "modern educational method, [...] Bentham's panopticon" (40) as a control mechanism. So, the idea of a panopticon serves as a soft but effective tool for discipline, social order, and authority.

## **2. CLEANSED BY AUTHORITY: A FOUCAULTIAN ANALYSIS OF KANE'S PLAY**

Referred to as "the most notorious playwright in Britain," Sarah Kane emerged as a significant figure in modern theatre challenging traditional narratives and structures (Stephenson and Langridge, 1997: 129). Her works renowned for their portrayals of violence and pain aim to address the savage sides of human existence, especially within oppressive power systems. Kane's plays stand out for their exploration of human experiences often depicted in minimalist settings that remove familiar comforts. Critics view her writing as an "examination of societal problems" touching on issues like "excessive materialism, pervasive violence, sexual abuse and exploitation" (Armstrong, 2015: 16). In *Cleansed* (1998), Kane delves into themes of authority, power dynamics, punishment, and brutality influenced by Michel Foucault's philosophy that reflects the 1990s era marked by uncertainty and discord. Kane's plays also underline "the pointlessness of adhering to structures in a world where disorder masquerades as [an] order" (Biber Vangölü, 2017: 275). The arrangement of the play, which challenges storytelling formats, reflects the uncertain power struggles it depicts. This disorder in the play's structure mirrors Foucault's criticism of how established institutions enforce control using systems and standards.

In *Cleansed*, Foucault's view that power functions as a web of connections rather than a singular force is well depicted through Tinker's role in the play (Foucault, 1995: 94). Tinker exerts authority using both aggression and mental coercion while also being influenced by an unseen system of control. Tinker exerts his power not only with physical aggression, but a whole surveillance system that has the inmates living in constant terror and subjugation. Kane also confuses our understanding of Tinker's authority with the suggestion that he is also a pawn to an even higher but unseen power. Stuart McQuarrie, who played the role of Tinker, pointed out that his character appears to be "incarcerated but was given certain powers within the institution" overseen by an even higher authority, a type of pyramid scheme in which power is parcelled out but never retains its full purity (Saunders, 2007:184). This mirrors Foucault's notion that within the intricate mechanisms of power, some who exercise it are also being subjected to its very constraints and requirements of a bigger mechanism.

The institution in the play combines elements of a prison, hospital, university, and brothel and reflects Foucault's idea of spaces that limit freedom and regulate authority in a controlled manner. The play starts "inside the perimeter fence of a university," (Kane, 2000: 1)<sup>2</sup> "sanatorium," (6) "sports hall," (10) "showers" (15) and "library" (17) of the university. Through the help of the different facilities as a setting, the play implies violence, help, and learning by reflecting the author's insidious perspective of society. The characters in these settings are depicted as prisoners' pendants of external powers in society. Foucault defines docile bodies as being "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (1995: 136). This body is being controlled and manipulated as a form of power in society. A political anatomy is emerging that dictates how one can control others' bodies to make them operate as desired. This discipline creates obedient and efficient bodies, increasing their utility while decreasing their political power. Power is being separated from the body, turning it into a skill to be enhanced and a means of control (Foucault, 1995: 136). Thus, the underlying metaphor in the play is that society is like a jail that serves as a university. This implies that social institutions can strip away an individual's autonomy over themselves, comparing the world to a prison for the mind and body. *Cleansed* thus supports Foucault's perception of the birth and dominance of modern disciplinary society through controlled environments and docile bodies designed to comply with certain norms. Deprived of all autonomy, the characters are left to follow a trail that inevitably leads them in circles as Tinker exerts his will and they struggle against omnipresent surveillance. It is more iconically represented in the play through the character Tinker who forces his savage will on other characters and incorporates forceful physical violence. Thus, it serves as a piece of extreme discipline or demonstration of the total authority he has. At its most explicit, this comes with the visceral horror when Tinker has some of Carl's limbs amputated as punishment: it is not an act intended simply to deter future transgressions, nor even an antisocial camp turning against one camper who does not follow their rules by extension if nothing else, but also directly speaking at another juncture. This echoes the argument of Foucault that in contemporary society punishment is not only a matter of retribution but also about manifestation and demonstration of power. The "public execution" does not bring back justice, but instead reinforces power and control. The ruthless and violent nature of the executions along with the elaborate ceremonial aspects are all part of how the penal system maintained its authority (Foucault, 1995:49).

It can be suggested that the institution consolidates its power by manipulating through mass psychological terror as Tinker does when he uses human vulnerability to dominate in *Cleansed*. In this regard, Foucault's

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<sup>2</sup> From now on, only page numbers will be given for the citations from *Cleansed* by Kane 2000.

reflections on the psychological component of authority become crucial in the distribution of modern power not only through classic physical force but also via moulding desires, thinking and behaviours as well. In Scene Three, Grace comes to the university, for her beloved brother died there due to an overdose. She is so lost in her pain that she insists on staying there by replacing him. The shocking situation is that Tinker is eager to accept her offer and has started to treat her with medication. This type of power is common in everyday life and labels individuals, connecting them to their unique identity. It enforces a standard of truth that the individual must accept and that others must acknowledge in them. This power structure turns individuals into subjects (Foucault, 1982: 781). Therefore, it is a totalising power, attempting to govern both the bodies of those inside and their identities. The change in the character of Grace is recognisable scene by scene. With drugs, she lives in a world of dreams and imagination, even her voice begins to sound like Graham and finally wearing his clothes is not enough and she makes the doctor stitch her brother's penis on her body (39). Hence, her body is now controlled by power structures and used for practical purposes rather than being seen as a vessel for energy or rational mechanics. This shift has led to the emergence of new expectations and limitations on the body (Foucault, 1995: 155). The way Tinker controls things demonstrates how the panopticon goes beyond watching people and alters who they are deep inside themselves. This is clear in how Grace changes by losing completely her independence at the end of the play. This idea reflects one central aspect of Foucault's thought: modern power not only acts through the visible enforcement of rules but is also present in the formation of habits, thoughts, and ideas.

Although Foucault turns his attention to the maintenance of discipline, this transition from punishment as a public spectacle into disciplinary control is also central. Modern punishment centres far less on the physical and more on enforcing correct behaviour and inducing obedience. Yet, in *Cleansed*, Kane seems to return to a mode of punishment that is more brutal physical violence employs itself directly as control. Kane's portrayal of violence in criticising disciplinary techniques reveals how resorting to physical violence highlights the ongoing dehumanisation embedded within power structures. Hence, her *Cleansed* can be presented as a putative example of Foucault's theory; her depiction of punishment enforces the power structure and authority that requires retribution because it avoids an interrogation about what causes crime. Foucault argues that the function of punishment is not just to restore justice but instead, it serves as a mechanism to "reactivate power" (1995: 49). In *Cleansed*, Tinker uses extreme violence to show his power and control over others. This emphasises how power can dehumanise and reduce people to objects to be manipulated and punished. Rod and Carl are represented as a couple in Scene Two and Tinker constantly watches them. Carl is passionate about Rod, and he says he can die for the sake of him. However, love is not appreciated by the authority, and he is punished by cutting his tongue off (12). Despite his pain, he continues to present his love by writing words for Rod on the ground, but Tinker cuts off his hands (23). He never gives up and shows his love through dancing and Tinker cuts off his feet to punish this disobedient lover and feeds mice (30). There is a really intense part where Tinker hurts Carl to try and make him stop caring about his friend Rod in *Cleansed*. It is a violent scene and shows how much power the people in charge have over everyone else. When Carl gets hurt, it is like a warning to everyone else that they do not have control over their own bodies or minds. The author is trying to show how in societies where people are controlled, the people in charge use violence to make everyone follow their rules. Carl's injuries caused by Tinker show Foucault's idea that punishment is a way to demonstrate power because each violent act aims to establish authority and destroy uniqueness. Hence, violence plays a leading role in both *Cleansed* and Foucault's ideas on power. Foucault believes that violence is used as a tool of power, not just physically but also psychologically and institutionally (2006: 14). In *Cleansed*, violence is used by Tinker to control and manipulate characters, both physically and emotionally. The play critiques how power operates through the body, with bodies being subjected to mutilation and destruction, symbolising the consequences of unchecked authority. This exploration of violence exposes how power dehumanises individuals, reducing them to objects to be controlled.

The play is set in an institute and behaves as a panopticon; the space where characters are under constant watch and control. This concept of the panopticon is at its heart in Foucault's study on modern disciplinary societies where surveillance apparatuses are placed on individuals to regulate themselves. The efficacy of the panopticon is that inmates believe they are constantly being watched whether they can actually see their observer. An alert, calculated gaze and the unceasing visibility of power assure its automatic functioning even in the panopticon prison as prisoners regulate their own behaviour because they believe to be watched. Kane has subtly woven the idea of the panopticon into her play based on Foucault's theories about observation and power. The university in which the play is set acts as a panopticon within its walls characters are always under surveillance and being monitored by Tinker. Foucault postulated that in modern disciplinary societies, power is no longer manifested through the physical violence of a sovereign monarch or dictator; rather discipline ensures order by rendering a controlled male identity, passive subjects who subscribed to self-imposed restrictions on



their behaviour; a prison without bars where inmates willingly collude with wardens and each other lest they draw unwanted attention. The effectiveness of the panopticon stems from the perception it creates in inmates that they are always under observation even if an observer is invisible. It is a structure where the condition of permanent and conscious transparency guarantees that power will operate automatically, an order submission since one has been made aware that he or she may be observed with everyone realising how they behave out of fear (Foucault, 1995: 201). In *Cleansed*, Tinker takes up the role of the eye in the panopticon system and influences the characters' behaviour both directly and indirectly. The characters in the play may not always see Tinker around them, but Kane constantly warns readers that "Tinker is watching" (6). Characters feel perpetually monitored and this awareness makes them conform to the rules of the institution. Moreover, Grace's decision to reach out to her deceased brother, despite knowing the risks involved, reflects how Tinker's influence impacts their choices. This supports Foucault's theory that the prisoner in the panopticon is observed but cannot notice, the criminal is always "the object of information and never the subject" of conversation (Foucault, 1995: 200). The building design also embodies the concept of the panopticon by emphasising surveillance and control measures throughout the space. The location is characterised as a mix of a prison structure with elements of a hospital and university setting that blend seamlessly to create an all-encompassing atmosphere of scrutiny and regulation. This highlights how the panopticon symbolises a power that is always there but not always seen by forcing people to adjust their behaviour due to potential surveillance (Braidotti, 1991: 118). This concept is clearly depicted in the play as we see how the characters are under physical and mental scrutiny and influenced by the institution's widespread control. *Cleansed* emphasises how power and widespread violence impact individuals' bodies and identities in line with Foucault's theory on control systems through both apparent and concealed methods.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has analysed the connections between Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* and Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* by examining Michel Foucault's theories on authority and power dynamics regarding punishment and violence in society. Both plays delve deeply into the mechanisms of control and provide various viewpoints on how modern disciplinary systems strip individuals of their humanity. *Softcops* portrays the shift in punishment methods from violent displays of authority like public executions to subtler surveillance and normalisation tactics that resemble Foucault's panopticon concept. *Cleansed* also explores the rooted impact of authority on individuals' minds and bodies by portraying a setting where power deeply affects individuals by shaping who they are and how they behave in society. These plays encourage readers to think about the effects of systems of control and the moral dilemmas associated with their enforcement in line with Foucault's view that contemporary power functions through visible and deeper methods. Moreover, these plays contribute to the discussion of control, resistance, and authority. This paper shows how theatre serves as a tool for challenging authority and empowering readers to search for ways to discover alternatives to repressive systems by blending Foucault's ideas with these plays.

In *Softcops*, Churchill confronts Foucauldian concepts by showing how authority is enforced and preserved in ridiculous sometimes horrific ways. The play reinforces the image of public punishment as a spectacle, consistent with Foucault's depiction of sovereign power, where punishment operates in opposition to regularity to make manifest the state's authority. But as the play goes on, Churchill shifts towards a more Foucauldian understanding of power in which discreet forms of surveillance and normalisation come to replace outright acts of violence. The importance of the panopticon as a symbol lies in its capacity to illustrate how current societies are permanently controlled and designed by society ordering even beyond places where these technologies could be expected such as police stations. Similarly, Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* explores authority on its darkest terms and what happens when it turns dehumanising. Kane equates the institution as a model of regeneration within societal constraints, resembling Foucault's panopticon where constant surveillance results in discipline so practical transparency ensures they both monitor and police their own behaviour. The violent acts within the play combined with Foucault's claims about modern power as visibly less brutal yet equally effective in disciplining the body and mind are reflected literally but also metaphorically. Examining these ideas in both plays underscores the enduring importance of Foucault's theories in grasping the complexities of power dynamics and regulation in today's society by depicting sometimes unsettling illustrations of authority figures. *Softcops* and *Cleansed* prompt viewers to contemplate how power operates in their individual experiences encouraging a thoughtful review of the systems that shape human conduct.

Concluding these reflections reveals the depth of insight in both *Softcops* and *Cleansed* as they delve into themes aligned with Foucault's perspectives on authority and its effects on individuals. Within these works lie reminders of how power influences our society while appearing to uphold structure and regulation. The plays not only represent Foucault's concepts but also prompt us to ponder the moral consequences tied to such mechanisms of regulation. Churchill and Kane shed light on the workings of authority to urge us to challenge and

oppose the influences trying to control and shape our lives. Their plays spark discussions about power dynamics and defiance in both literature and society creating a lasting impact on those who engage with their compelling and reflective stories.

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