

## الحرب والعنف والصدمة في مسرحية سارة كين

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## War, Violence and Trauma in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*

### War, Violence and Trauma in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*

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#### الخلاصة

يقوم هذا البحث بفحص وتقييم مفاهيم الصدمة والعنف في مسرحية "Blasted" لسارة كين، باعتبارها واحدة من أفضل الكتاب المسرحيين المثيرين للجدل في بريطانيا والذين تعتبر مسرحياتهم غير متوقعة وتهز الجمهور والمعلقين. يوضح هذا البحث كيف يؤثر العنف الحرب على حياة الناس وينتج عن الصدمات. العنف والصدمة يترددان ويوصفان بوضوح في مسرحيتها "انفجر" (1995). الحرب محيرة وغير عقلانية، وبالتالي من المضلل استخدام شكل يمكن التنبؤ به. يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على حدوث مفاهيم العنف والصدمة في شخصية كين والتي صورتها بوضوح كمثال للتأثير الراسخ الواسع للحرب والصدمة والعنف في شخصيتها الأدبية والحقيقية. تبحث الدراسة في الظروف المأساوية الشخصية لكين بالإضافة إلى الصدمة في المسرح البريطاني. إنه تحليل اجتماعي ونفسي. النقطة المركزية في هذه الدراسة هي الاهتمام بمفاهيم الصدمة والتورط في العنف وتمثيلها تمامًا مثل نطاق المسرح حتى في أعظم الظروف.

### Abstract

This research scrutinizes and evaluates the concepts of trauma and violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, as one of the best controversial playwrights in Britain whose plays are both unexpected and shaking to the audience and commentators. This research shows how violence of war influences the life of people's lives and resulted in trauma. Violence and trauma is concentrated, echoed and described clearly in her play *Blasted* (1995). War is bewildered and irrational, as a consequence, attempting to predict its course is misguided.

This research illuminates the occurrence of the notions of violence and trauma in Kane's character which she has portrayed obviously as an illustration of wide entrenched influence of war, trauma and violence in both her literary and real experience. The study looks into Kane's personal tragic circumstances as well as trauma in British theater. It is a social and psychological analysis. The central point of this study is look after concepts of trauma and violence involvement and its representation exactly as the scope of theatre even with the greatest circumstances. In this analysis and interpretation of *Blasted*, Kane attempted to concentrate on important topics in a way that was reminiscent of Artand's "Theatre of Gurley," which gave viewers the impression that they had actually experienced something. Additionally, the traumatic element of *Blasted* may be found in the themes of violence, suicide, death, and rape; these themes contribute to Kane's exceptional accomplishment and are a reflection of both his own difficult personal life and society at large. lastly, Sarah Kane aims to depict as well as grievances of a mind that has forget its perception of self. Moreover, the devastating belief that trauma is a result of the inability to cope with the outside society.

### Introduction

Trauma has begun to occupy a noticeable space in English theatre as a feedback to wars and disastrous events in the last three periods. Having this into consideration in trauma on English theatre as a beginning line, this study scrutinizes Sarah Kane's play *Blasted*, that trauma portrays as a consequence of modern trauma theories. The study's primary goal is to raise issues regarding the subjects that lie between the occurrence of trauma and how it is portrayed, as well as the function of drama. Furthermore, the current study aims to conduct a literary analysis of Kane's *Blasted*.

Sarah Kane (1971 – 1999) is broadly renowned to be one of the greatest honest dramatist who came out in 1999s in Britain. Despite the





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fact that her job is short; nonetheless, she is a really powerful dramatist. She wrote five plays: *Skin*, a short film, *Blasted*, *Paedra's Love*, *Cleansed*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*. Her pieces unquestionably depict Sarah as the woman who, in the end, committed suicide in 1999 as a result of psychological changes and problems. Her characters clearly exhibit this insane nature. The world she lived in encouraged revolutionary changes in all spheres of life, particularly in terms of status politics. These developments gave rise to violence, trauma, , which her plays best explain. However, the concept of trauma and violence will be investigated in drama and particularly in *Blasted* by Sarah Kane. Kane can be named as the dramatist of violence. She has earned such a name for she does not only approach with violence in terms of it's a familiar sense or by an unusual creation as believer have appreciated or made use of it, but she is mainly worried with it as a multi – faced an occurrence controlled by an internally psychological reasons and responded from implicit self – struggle. For this cause, it is feasible to declare that violence in *Blasted* is embedded and attached in Kane's inner desire that is definitely considered by the active direction of the first pronoun "I".

### 2. Trauma Theories:

Despite their differences, two separate phenomena that make up trauma are related. First, because the victim is not sexually mature enough to comprehend what happened, sexual assault is not traumatizing at the time it occurs. Secondly, the victim is reminded of the first occurrence by another, which might not be as distressing. According to Freud, abuse does not always correlate to child abuse at the moment it happens; instead, the victim's recollection of the abuse arises when they interpret the event and come across it again later in life. This concept is predicated on his ground-breaking notion linking childhood sexual abuse and trauma. This leads to the comprehension-based dialectic between two events.

According to Freud and Breuer, suppressed and forgotten events, in contrast to conscious memories, persist in the unconscious and reappear as bothersome thoughts, psychosomatic symptoms, or other behaviors. By the 1890s, Freud, Breuer, and Janet had all come to the same conclusion: altered states of consciousness caused by traumatic experiences and psychological distress were the root cause of hysteria. Janet refers to this most fundamental mental reaction to such a severe traumatic occurrence as "dissociation," while Freud and Breuer refer to it as "double consciousness" (Freud, 1999: 284).



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The viewer is exposed to the everyday trauma overload in modern media nearly simultaneously with the event itself. Reporters and camera crews now swarm the sites of school explosions, train and plane catastrophes, and suicide bombings as soon as they happen. The audience is frequently astounded by the perceptions presented by the various channels such as the internet, radio, television, and newspapers. It is rarely the general interest of the media to remove the long-term consequences of such traumatic experiences. Therefore, if additional horrific occurrences happen, the media quickly loses interest. There are other instances of similar trauma exploitation; the most recent one involves Cassandra, who was imprisoned in a 14-year-old boy's gully.

Following a week of coverage on the victim and the offender, the subject was swiftly dropped, and images of the tsunami victims in the Pacific gained widespread media attention. Scientists are coming to view trauma as an essential occurrence for humans in the twentieth century, which may also be equated to the beginning of the twenty-first century, given the frequency of both individual and collective traumatic experiences (Kaplan, 2005:24). Thankfully, a number of other scholars employ the phrase "culture of trauma" to accurately express the extent of contemporary culture's fixation on trauma-related subjects (Wald, 2007: 2).

As far as, films, and other forms of art to paint a complete picture of the phenomenon of trauma, even when the media frequently leaves its viewers with horrifying images of traumatic occurrences. These representational philosophies usually center on events that either don't seem to have the capacity to be traumatic or seem to happen too frequently. Thus, the topic of this research is British playwright Sarah Kane's play *Blasted*.

Aggression, violence, and traumas are intrusive, overwhelming components in Sarah Kane's theater. Conventional dramatic forms cannot and will not contain or address their strong imagery. Starting with *Blasted* and concluding with *4.48 Psychosis*, and presenting plays that range from fragmentation to personalism, conspiracy to realistic societal portrayal. In order to examine human violence and its self-observation as a painful shock and self-depression, this study focuses on Sarah Kane's theater. It also talks about the dramatic frameworks that the author chooses to represent stories of melancholy and aggression. The researcher makes the case, supported by theories of traumatic psychology, that Kane is victimizing her audience and using her theater to arrange horrific occurrences and prepare her for the situation, ultimately forcing them to





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rearrange their morals, beliefs, and manner of thinking. Otherwise, she offers the world a painful yet remarkable road to recovery from tragedy.

According to Sigmund Freud, each shock starts with an incident that presents the psyche with an excessive amount of unpleasant and painful information in a brief amount of time. A person experiences an energetic disequilibrium as a result of their psyche's inability to process this volume of an important knowledge in such a short length of time and in an ordinary way (Freud, 1999: 284). Depending on the individual's level of sensitivity, an event can present an overwhelming amount of information to them (Breuer, 2004: 9). Therefore, the inability of the psyche to analyze the ongoing cognitive circumstance in accordance with typical procedures is what distinguishes a traumatic incident in any case. Therefore, the inability of the psyche to analyze the going on cognitive circumstance in accordance with typical procedures is what distinguishes a traumatic incident from any other event. This idea that the traumatic experience focuses on a neurological explanation for the disturbance in the human psyche alludes to Freud's training in medicine. As a practicing physician, Freud was particularly interested in the mental illness known as hysteria. Freud's observations and documentation of hysteric patients led him to conclude that neurosis resulted from one or more childhood sexual traumas. Afterwards, Freud gave up on the seduction theory and concluded that the trauma could have resulted from an actual experience or from a fantasy from childhood (Freud, 1999: 152). According to Caruth (Caruth, 1996: 101), a traumatic occurrence "takes place too soon, too suddenly, too unexpectedly, to be fully grasped by consciousness. "A modified explanation for the uniqueness of a traumatic experience is provided by Judith Herman. Her reasoning takes a deeper psychological tack and allows the painful experience to outweigh a person's natural capacity for life adaptation (Suleiman, 2008: 276).

In addition, she says, "Traumatic events call into question fundamental human relationships". They breach bonds with loved ones, friends, family, and the community. They destroy the identity that is built and preserved in relation to other individuals. They undermine the ideas that give meaning to the human experience. They expose the victim's trust in a natural or divine order and induce an existential crisis. (Hernandez, 2001:51). Unlike Freud Herman, this suggests reassessing a person's idea of self in relation to others and their relationships with others. Thus, traumatic experiences cause an individual to become unstable and leave them unable to process or evaluate what happened. This enables someone to come to the conclusion that nothing is the same as it once was. The event must be unfamiliar according to current trauma



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clinical practices. In her paper, not out of scope, professional psychiatrist Laura Brown presents the opposing viewpoint. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III's (DSM III) criteria for a traumatic incident as it relates to the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are criticized by the author of "One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." Common experiences cannot be traumatic, regardless of their individual significance, according to the clinical definition. However, a lot of things that seem terrible really happen rather frequently. According to Brown's report, up to one-third of females experience sexual assault before turning sixteen. "Incest was not unique; it did not fall 'beyond the realm of human experience.' (Brown, 1995: 101). This supports Freud's theory that an incident doesn't have to be rare in order to have traumatic power because it might originate from an individual's sensitivity.

Because the study of trauma in literature and society involves philosophical theory, rhetorical analysis, and social issues, the development of trauma theory in literary criticism can also be understood in terms of the dynamic psychiatric definitions of trauma. The classic model's appeal lies in its combination of semiotic theories about language, associations, and symbolization with biological science beliefs about the workings of the mind and memory. However, upon reexamining the psychological underpinnings of trauma, the classical model deviates from the rules of structural and post-structural studies. That is to say, this strategy will only be effective if the psychological definition of trauma fits a specific theoretical model that Freud developed, which views traumatic incident as a pre-linguistic incident that triggers general dissociation. The traditional paradigm of a clear union between the semiotic principles that determine linguistic meaning and the psychological laws that control how trauma functions is found to be true in many respects.

### Trauma in English Drama

In English theater, the 1990s are regarded to be among the greatest thrilling decades, at least since John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* premiered in 1956. Playwrights who foresaw the start of a new theatrical revival included Anthony Neilson, Mark Ravenhill, Martin McDonough, Martin Crimp, and Sarah Kane. Following their new plays, a new generation of irate youths in British theater arose in the 1990s. Their works were characterized as dark, sacred, confrontational, provocative, speculative, disturbing, and gloomy. These writers talk to young readers in a modern style, blending elements of market culture and British society. One of the most significant authors who contributed to a political





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drama in the 1990s was Sarah Kane, who contributed significantly to experimental theater with her use of extremely graphic imagery

Sarah Kane, who was born in Brentwood in 1971 and died by suicide on February 20, 1999, when she was 28 years old, made significant and inventive contributions to British theater that were influenced by her philosophical upbringing (Kane and Rickson: 2007).

Victims of violence frequently experience stigmatization and social exclusion. They experience social exclusion, misinterpretation, and marginalization from their environment and society. The only way to treat and partially resolve these issues is through personalized trauma care. Through the act of telling their own stories on stage, traumatized individuals and groups are able to resolve disagreements and problems creatively, which also helps to accept differences and fosters a sense of association and belonging. Narrative theater may provide victims and oppressed groups a voice, end their seclusion and silence, and create a support system. Through a process of deconstruction, it is a strategy that helps people withdraw and distance themselves from issues so they may disassociate themselves from authority and self-regret. As a psychosocial resolution technique that aids in overcoming and lowering fear.

Unfortunately, war and terror attacks make headlines almost every day in this world. As a result, we are resolved exposed to traumatic events via the dissemination of distressing reports and graphic photographs. As a result of the ongoing media coverage of the suffering endured by victims of major tragedies like wars and terrorist attacks, as well as rape victims and political terror victims, trauma has permeated our culture and greatly impacted our day-to-day activities. It is not shocking to observe a matching concern in literature that depicts the effect of war on both troops and civilians who return from fighting, given the spike in interest in trauma studies due to the same conditions and climate of the era. From this angle, as the title also suggests, the main focus of the present study is the interaction between the dynamics of trauma and conflict in contemporary British theater. (Saunders 2002: 178).

Given the foundations of both theater and trauma, as well as the description of trauma provided by a trauma philosopher, it is essential to draw parallels between the two disciplines. This is so because trauma symptoms are inherently formative. The symptoms are late repetitions and reenactments of a terrible incident, similar to recollections of the past, rejecting back to be ordered. It goes without saying that there are two crucial components to trauma theory and theater when repetition occurs. According to Caruth (1995: 4), trauma cannot be comprehended





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or characterized, but it can be frequently "re-enacted" through intrusive returns that occur after the traumatic experience. Conversely, testimony is described by Felman as "the performance of a story." LaCapra, a prominent figure in trauma theory who emphasizes the pre-forming aspects of trauma, notes that recurrence is a necessary byproduct of the traumatic experience that cannot be avoided only through "working through which is also undoubtedly a repetition." It is impossible to ignore how much trauma depends on theater and performance, especially in light of these definitions and remarks. Given theater's innate ability to mimic and reenact, it would not be incorrect to argue that theater provides the greatest and most fruitful environment for representing and communicating trauma. Looking back at the trauma genealogy's inception, we can observe that the theatricality and formability of trauma theory have always been prominent features of its history. It is a regrettable reality that Charcot, one of the finest neurologists of all time, delivered his lectures through practical exercises, which produced a highly unsettling sample for the discussion of the theatricality of trauma (Daniel, 1994: 160).

The lectures at Salpêtrière took the shape of theatrical performances, wherein a vast audience was hypnotized by naked, hysterical women who served as models. In order to study, comprehend, and treat hysteria, Charcot was causing hysterical episodes during those theatrics by employing methods like blowing up packages beneath patients' noses and making them feel uncomfortable. But these kinds of procedures went beyond simple repeats; they were more like torture than therapy, and for the patients, they represented fresh traumas. These instances highlight how theater has been a part of the trauma field from its inception, highlighting the relationships and linkages between trauma and theater. Duggan asserts that the invasive repeats following a traumatic incident "amount to an internal mimetic, representational restaging of the trauma-event," focusing on the similarities between performance and trauma. "Therefore, trauma can be observed to practice, repeat, and re-present itself in performed 'ghosts' that haunt the sufferer," according to Duggan. Every nightmare reenactment is formatively performed and seen by those who actually went through the horrific experience. Duggan argues that "theatre/performance, more than any other art form, is perfectly placed to attempt a dialogue with, and even a representation of, trauma" because of these similarities. (Baltimore, 1996: 3).

Treize and Wake also evaluate "performance studies as a lens for trauma, trauma studies as a lens for performance," recognizing the mutual relationship between the two. Similar to an individual who reenacts the





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incident that affected and plagued his life, theatrical work has ghosts that return to be enacted. Theater offers an ideally appropriate area for trauma delineation and conversations also a chance to get out from it because of the commonality between trauma and theater and because of its immediate portrayal (Caruth, 1996:4). While a number of trauma theorists acknowledge the significance of narrating traumatic pain and the necessity of verbalizing it, survivors of catastrophic events maintain that words alone cannot adequately capture the horror of their experiences. Putting trauma into words has long been a source of discussion among academics, therapist, and victims of brutality due to the danger of underestimating the terrible episode, in addition to the conundrum that victims endure. Some victims feel that the recounting of horrific incidents does not really honor them. Some, on the other hand, would rather talk about such situations in order to provide a cathartic effect, inform others about what happened, and prevent similar incidents in the future (Saunders, 2002: 179).

### **Discussion how do war, violence and trauma manifested in *Blasted***

Even if the audience, readers, and reviewers generally accept and are satisfied with Kane's works, they are generally enthusiastically read, watched, and received favorable reviews. Next, Kane's portrayal of violence is sometimes linked to the negative effects of the Serbian War, which are surely perceived as an outside factor that intensified her pain. Kane dedicated the second part of *Blasted* to revealing the war diaries because of the devastating images of battle and the scenes of devastation.

In her works, Kane has achieved an unparalleled feat in addressing and implementing the 'give-and-take' approach towards the subject of violence. Violence has been Kane's fuel to operate "the machines" of writing, but it has also been her suicide instrument, ultimately leading her to take her own life. For example, the plot conventions do not call for the violent action in *Blasted*, and the strong physical effect is not really necessary. Critics delivered infamously harsh criticisms at what begins as a psychological conversational drama that abruptly transforms into a nightmare without any logical constraints. *Blasted*, nevertheless, makes perfect sense. Dreams and imaginative reality coexist with life in the Theatre of Cruelty. The events of *Blasted* defy logic and instead offer the audience authentic distillations of dreams in which the protagonist's inner sense of reality—rather than emanating from an illusory, make-believe world—is what drives his taste for crime, erotic obsessions, savagery, fantasies, utopian sense of life and objects, and even cannibalism.

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Kane is equally fixated on abuse, trauma, and violence. This is not, by any means, an unhealthy infatuation; rather, it is an artistic presentation of a compelling subject with a clear moral message suggested. She recognizes and finds alarming the society in which viewers are routinely exposed to and have become numb to violent or sexually explicit content in other media. Her use of formal methods is intended to assist the audience recover from the state of shock caused by regular acts of aggression and become receptive. The goal of presenting difficult, painful things is to arouse powerful emotions in the viewer rather than to demonstrate that “anything goes.”

Characters—or, more precisely, characterization—are usually meant to serve as a yardstick by which a playwright can impartially assess whether or not his or her psychological, intellectual, and mental stock of events and experiences are successfully expressed and explained—that is, whether or not they are deftly positioned to find their way into the readers' and audience's minds and cultures. It is not at all fantastical to argue that Kane has employed this parameter or compass to keep an eye on the harmonic directions of her characters in addition to *Blasted*, and to illustrate—through those characters—how the boundaries between violence and reaction, suffering and patience, and fear and security are all hazy.

Kane has created plays where the plot moves in tandem with the emotions, language, and personalities of the characters. In other words, the characters in the plays have replaced the plot with a quite abrupt change. The main purpose of the plot is to highlight the instability and restlessness of Kane's characters, who are always at odds with one another. Thus, this balances the psychologically grounded violence that Kane tries to reveal, whether overtly or covertly. Since Kane is more interested in the psychological surroundings than the social settings while creating her characters, her characters don't really touch on societal issues. Characters in *Blasted*, for instance, are meant to represent the moral aspects of violence, trauma, and apathy.

Characters can depict violence in a variety of ways that are emotive. In *Blasted*, Kane has chosen a satirical portrayal of Ian's work as a war correspondent in Bosnia, in which the soldier expresses his personal distaste, jeers, and hatred of the man and his profession:

“SOLDIER: that’s your job.

IAN: What?

SOLDIER: Proving it happened. I’m here, got no choice. But you. You should be telling people.





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IAN: No one's interested.

IAN: I write...stories. That's all. Stories. This isn't a story anyone wants to hear.

Out of the three main protagonists in *Blasted*, Ian, the white male character from the middle class, appears to be at the core of the story. But the play rapidly turns inward, questioning and criticizing itself, upending what at first seems to be a story about the impact of male aggression on delusional women. Put another way, *Blasted* emphasizes the possibilities of an unusual form of narrative trajectory for the insane lady by denying a clear connection between violence and handicap through the play's hysterical character Cate and her relationship with Ian.

Several earlier theatrical traditions are also put to the test by Cate's alternate narrative path. Numerous theatrical genres have been compared to *Blasted's* style, such as "kitchen sink" realism, Ibsenite drama, social realist theater, tragic drama, 1990s plays about masculinity in crisis, and postdramatic theater. "The play collapses into one of Cate's fits, putting the audience through the experience they have previously only witnessed," as Kane herself stated in a 1999 letter (qtd. in Aston 2010)

Consequently, the play text's inherent insanity, a hystericization resulting from rejecting linear progression, and the theatrical forms that take linearity for granted are all represented in the play's last scene, in which Ian dies but continues to speak on stage. *Blasted* is linked to the radical form of Kane's last two plays by its rejection of linearity, or what I contend is the play's postdramatic structure. *Blasted* is more postdramatic than one may first think, while having many of the formatting elements of a standard playtext, such as character descriptions and stage directions. This is because of the play's formal and contextual insanity.

One of Sarah Kane's five written pieces, *Blasted* was originally presented at the Royal Court Theatre in 1995. It stars a young, emotionally fragile woman named Cate and her ex-partner, an older, racist and sexist tabloid journalist named Ian. The play opens with talk between the two as they meet up in a hotel room that appears to be located in Leeds. Ian publicly boasts about his bigotry and misogyny before making a failed attempt to woo Cate. There are moments when Cate loses consciousness and bursts into convulsions of uncontrollable laughing. Throughout the performance, Ian takes advantage of these occasions by sexually abusing her when she is helpless.

A soldier then shows up at the door, shattering the play's authenticity, and the set is literally "blasted" to shreds. Now helpless, Ian confronts the frightening Soldier through the bathroom window, and Cate



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flees through it before the Soldier anally rapes him. The soldier tells about the horrors of combat he has witnessed and experienced, including as the rape and killing of his girlfriend Col, before taking his own life. After the Soldier sucked Ian's eyeballs out during the sexual assault, Ian is left alone and blind. Returning to the chamber with a baby in tow, Cate tells of the fighting that's currently going on outside. She buries the infant after it dies and then departs once more. Once more by himself, Ian lets his pitiful frailty show through by sobbing and masturbating.

Despite the fact that the directions suggest he is dying, he talks on, as if unable to pass away: “ (Kane, 1995: 60) At last, Cate reappears with food and blood on her crotch, indicating that she was either sexually assaulted or had traded sex for food. Ian answers her hand-fed meal with a straightforward but heartfelt "Thank you." (Kane, 1995:61).

Ian has been attempting to tempt Cate from the first scene; the more times she turns him down, the further aggressive he gets. Armstrong attributes this to Kane's portrayal of sex as a violent act, arguing that sex is a weapon in battle and that institutionalized violence is a part of war. Although most sexual actions are sensual in nature, in *Blasted*, sex is employed as a tool for aggression (Armstrong, 2003:62).

Ian tries several procedures to assure Cate to have sex with him throughout the performance. He refers to her as a "lesbos," a pejorative term that suggests that being a lesbian is unnatural, after the lovely hotel suite, champagne, and flowers fail to make her feel better.

Armstrong makes clear that, in his sexist mind, a lesbian is a woman who rejects a man's advances, especially when they are sexual, in a way that is not typical of a heterosexual woman. He is unsure of how to react to this kind of abnormal sexuality. Armstrong goes on to say that Ian is a man who lives by the strict rules of his gender and is unable to comprehend a woman who does not conform to her well-defined sexual role. Additionally, it is revealed that Ian despises lesbians because his wife left him after realizing she was gay. Armstrong accurately characterizes Ian as a man who views lesbianism as an affront to his masculinity and a threat.

By attempting to control and denigrate Cate, Ian expresses his masculinity throughout the play. He refers to her as a "Joey," a colloquial term for "stupid" in Britain, and says she is too intelligent for her own good. Nevertheless, he finds her domination over him sexually





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stimulating, as Armstrong implies. Although Kane does not explicitly say so, the stark differences in strength charismatic between the two make this inclination morally dubious (Armstrong, 2003: 67–68). Cate is impoverished and somewhat naïve, but she had real concern for Ian and consented to see him since he seemed miserable. Cate is half Ian's age. She is not as experienced as Ian claims to be, which is why what happens to her is so startling. The idea that Cate's mind is unimportant to Ian is supported by his mistreatment of her body and the rape that follows. Kane's characterization of Cate as somewhat simple-minded is also a lucky happenstance for Ian, who objectifies women. Cate, a 21-year-old Southerner from the lower middle class, with an accent from South London and stutters when under pressure (Kane, 1995:3). Early in the play, we find out that she has a tendency to fits, which the doctors predict she will outgrow. "I just go, I don't know much about it," she says. Sometimes it seems like I leave for minutes or months at a time, only to return exactly where I was (Kane, 1995:10). Solga notes that Cate's disease manifests itself as a type of trauma on her body early on in the text and repeatedly, leading readers to wonder why they started. The connection between Cate's fits and her father, which maintains that the fits are a psychosomatic reaction to Cate's tolerance of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, is the closest explanation Solga offers (Solga, 2007:361). Cate has already been put up as a victim on numerous occasions in this way. She suffers as a result of her father, her outbursts, Ian, and ultimately the resulting conflict. She is used as a target for abuse and as a stage for other acts of violence.

On another level, it appears that Cate uses these fits as a coping technique; she triggers them whenever she is anxious or unhappy, giving her a moment of "respite" from whatever is going on in her life. I agree with Armstrong's assessment that Cate is too helpless to defend herself or escape the precarious predicament she finds herself in with Ian; instead, her reaction to being threatened is stupefied. This, according to Armstrong, is a type of catatonia, and he speculates that this is where Cate got her name (Armstrong, 2003:69). Another crucial aspect of Cate's persona is her tendency to suck her thumb like a little child when in need of solace. This reinforces her impression of innocence and highlights the disparity in power dynamics between Cate and Ian. And lastly, there's the figure of the Unknown Soldier, who, in contrast to Ian or Cate, has no given age or accent save the fact that he carries a sniper rifle. She goes on to say,

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"The soldier is a kind of personification of Ian's psyche in some sense, and it was a very deliberate thing" . According to Kane, Ian is reflected in the Soldier. The person that bursts through that door, in my opinion, should be able to effectively make Ian look like a baby in terms of aggression. It is difficult because, even in light of how horrific what Ian does to Cate is, you find yourself thinking, "I can't imagine anything worse," until something even worse happens. (Kane is referenced in Saunders, 2002:46).

The Soldier has two important roles in the play. First, he brings about the crucial shift in the play's focus. The disintegration of realism is the result of The Soldier's aggression towards Ian, who was the target of horrific abuse throughout the play's first half (Saunders, 2002:45). To make matters worse, he is far worse than Ian, as Kane planned. Ian's opponent is a soldier who is supposed to be further "masculine" and has a larger rifle. This puts Ian at a disadvantage. Suddenly, the two men are taking part to see who can commit more crimes. The dialogue that comes next is repulsive and filthy. The Soldier mentions that a member of the opposition force killed his fiancée. She never supports the Soldier's retaliatory actions; instead, she highlights how ridiculous everything is. Kane uses this occurrence as justification for the Soldier's own horrific deeds. The Soldier, acting without moral remorse or hesitation, has turned into a partner in the same heinous deed against his lover. He tells Ian a little about his fiancée first, then proceeds to narrate the following tale: "Went to a house just outside town. All gone. Apart from a small boy hiding in the corner. One of the others took him outside. Lay him on the ground and shot him through the legs. Heard crying in the basement. Went down. Three men and four women. Called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there. Turned her over and – then she cried. Made her lick me clean. Closed my eyes and thought of– Shot her father in the mouth. Brothers shouted. Hung them from the ceiling by their testicles" (Kane, 1995:43).

Ian is shocked to hear the soldier's testimony when he says, "Never done that?," The soldier asks him again, "Are you sure?" when he responds negatively. In response, Ian says, "I wouldn't forget." The soldier replies, "You would," to Ian's sarcastic remark that he couldn't sleep with himself (Kane, 1995:43). Ian seems to be downplaying or failing to acknowledge the gravity of his actions against Cate based on his response. He didn't seem to remember or understand the irony in his response, despite the fact that he had recently sexually attacked her.





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Though I don't think they are unnecessary, Kane's introduction of the Soldier character and the gory stories he tells are startling and disgusting. As was previously indicated, Kane presents the Soldier as a more violent and harsher version of Ian; this is corroborated by the atrocities he claims to have witnessed and taken part in, as well as by his own acts. Beyond what had seemed to be a secure hotel room, the soldier emphasizes the harsh realities of war. Once more, Kane brings out equivalent between sex and violence in this scene as the Soldier and Ian get more violent and intense until the Soldier rapes Ian at gunpoint. This is similar to the second time he raped Cate, simulating sex and having a gun pointed at her head. In this act of simulated sex, the gun serves as an attractive stand-in for the real phallus; sex is violence, sex is a gun that alternates between being a literal/figurative gun and a penis put to Cate's head in a society where heterosexual norms are forcibly imposed and enacted. (Armstrong, 2003: 85).

The scene builds to a climax when the soldier takes the rifle from Ian by pushing it up his ass. It's a gory and terrifying scene, and Kane keeps asking himself, "Is this real? Cate can escape during her outbursts, but she always returns; it's like having a nightmare you can never wake up from. Ian pauses speaking in the middle of his statement, confused and bewildered, just before the Soldier rapes him. Even when he adds, "Think I might be drunk," there is no comfort, as the Soldier quickly dispels his suspicions by responding, "No." Indeed, it is genuine (Kane, 1995:40).

One could argue that Kane's decision to show such horror on stage devalues the work and makes it more akin to television news; yet, I think Kane purposefully staged this degree of brutality to elicit an emotional response from her audience. Such a depiction is extremely uncomfortable because this is being presented "live" on stage, with very little space between the audience and the actors. Unlike a television that can be turned off with a single button push, the little theater where *Blasted* was originally presented was difficult to leave due to its compact size and the intimate distance between the audience and the performer. Moreover, I agree with Solga that Kane's choice to stage Ian's rape highlights the fact that Ian did not rape Cate (Solga, 2007: 59).

As if things couldn't get much worse, the soldier keeps recounting the most horrible crimes; following Ian's rape, he asks Have you never had sex with a man before? Ian stays quiet while the Soldier keeps talking.



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Didn't believe so. It's meaningless. Large numbers of individuals were crammed onto traces, attempting to flee the town like pigs. Hoping that someone would take care of them, women put their babies on board. killing each other by crushing. People's eyes revealed the insides of their heads. I saw a starved man eating his dead wife's leg, a youngster with much of his face blown off, and a little girl with my hand stuck within her attempting to claw my liquid out. Gun was born here and will always be here. Not gonna get sad over your ass. Never assume that the Welsh ass is any different from any other ass I've fucked. I know you're out of food, but I'm fucking starving. (Kane, 1995: 51).

Armstrong discovers another significant function that his character performs in the play through the Soldier's account of what happened. She suggests that he tells stories and uses them to portray rape as a common aspect of warfare. I've already mentioned two of these tales in which the soldier, totally aloof and occasionally even gloating about his exploits, revealed horrible and horrifying acts of violence.

His haughty yet detached descriptions of the atrocities he has experienced and participated in imply that the Soldier is also traumatized and shocked. His incapacity to convey any semblance of humanity is evidence of his personal "depatterning" that happened when he was engaged in combat. Armstrong attributes the soldiers' stories of ritual and symbolism to the female form's erotization and fragmentation, which has reduced the body to little more than fetishized bits (Armstrong, 2003:77–78).

After experiencing such horrific violence, the soldier became utterly desensitized and told his horrible tale before asking for food in the same breath. Shortly later, Kane shows off another startling and extremely unsettling image: the Soldier suddenly grabs Ian's head in his hands. He covers one of Ian's eyes with his tongue, sucking it out before biting it off and consuming it. He treats the second eye in the same way (Kane, 1995:50).

Ian is seen lying next to the soldier who killed himself in the scene that follows. When Cate comes back, she shouts, "You're a nightmare," upon seeing Ian (Kane, 1995:51). This statement alludes to the play's hallucinatory and nightmarish elements, which are reflected in both its structure and Cate's outbursts. Ironically, Cate, a victim who has grown and is capable of understanding her own victimhood, is holding the infant, an virtuous victim too young to comprehend its own sufferer. It seems as though the war and the baby have given her a sense of purpose





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because she looks stronger and more in control than in previous scenes. Ian begs Cate for comfort and mercy, and when he asks for his gun to end his life, she says no, saying God wouldn't approve (Kane, 1995:55). In response, Ian says that there is no God and that there is a scientific explanation for all the mysteries surrounding life after death scenarios that Cate mentions. By emptying the revolver of its bullets, Cate actually takes away Ian's ability to control his own life and refuses to show him the mercy he expects (Armstrong, 2003:96). This symbolic moment is described by Armstrong as a metaphor for taking the seed from the phallus. Ian takes the rifle that Cate is holding in his mouth and squeezes the trigger.

When his attempt at suicide is foiled, Cate says that it is fate and implies that God may have had a role. Ian interrupts her, saying that he finds the term "God" offensive (Kane, 1995:57). Through its use in the play, a potent taboo word that Kane introduced has taken on a twofold meaning. a derogatory term for female sex that is used as an insult against God, whom Ian has referred to as a "cunt," and which closely connects with Ian's character, who represents everything that is violent and sexist and has perpetrated crimes of a sexual nature against Cate. When Ian later in the play, at his lowest point, masturbates to the word "cunt," which is repeated eleven times, the term takes on new significance. Sierz insists that the purpose of this scenario was to shock, saying that if the word "cunt" is still frowned upon, then While masturbating, Kane forces Ian to utter it eleven times (Sierz reported in Saunders, 2002:63). Like Sierz says, the sequence is disturbing, but it also accomplishes her goal of showing a man at the pinnacle of depravity. Moreover, the word "cunt" brings to mind Ian and the Soldier's eroticization of violence.

After Cate has buried the baby, the hotel room's scenery changes once more from bomb shelter to grave. The floor planks are hammered together to form a cross, and the flowers from the first scene are scattered over the baby's grave. Here, beneath the floorboards, is where Ian has set up shop, waiting to die. In this moment, Ian's anguish is prolonged because to the use of time, a potent destabilizing device employed by Kane throughout the play. The usage of lights that alternate between light and darkness helps to depict the passage of time. Once more, Kane's instability of form heightens the shock and trauma depicted on stage. This is made possible by several gadgets, in addition to the one which is described, which combine to produce a terrifying visual. The drama transitions from realism to surrealism, with the bomb blast, which is the first example of this destabilization of form. Kane's stage directions serve

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as a textual representation of the passage of time, which becomes a significant device. Since the play breaks with normal time in an attempt to alienate the audience and keep them from coming to a coherent understanding of the play, Armstrong says that this helps to clarify further meaning from the play (Armstrong, 2003:58).

He tries to strangle himself at the beginning of the action, but then he starts laughing hysterically, has a nightmare, and sobs copiously while he tends to the deceased soldier's body. He then starts "shitting" and tries to clean it up with paper towels. Another horrifying vision from the scene closes it: Ian, famished, breaks up the floorboards, tears up the crucifix, and then eats the dead infant. Kane admits that this scene sparked the most outrage and mockery. Kane expressed her displeasure with the critic's literal reading, but she was also concerned about how the sequence would seem on stage after it was translated from paper: Before it was done, a lot of people read it to me and said, "We're not sure about the infant eating," so I kept glancing and thought, "Is this gratuitous? Anyway, what exactly is meant by gratuitous? Is it getting better than it seems? When you look at the baby, you can see that he is not feeding it. It's so obviously visible. This image is dramatic. He's not even trying. It's more hard in that sense since it forces you to rely more on your own creativity. However, reading the scene makes it seem more realistic because you only see the act, I'm not sure why". (Kane is referenced in Saunders ,2002:66).

One of the play's most potent scenes, in my opinion, is the one where Ian is eating the infant. It represents the depths of his depravity and trauma that lead him to do this act of cannibalism. It's also been said to be Ian's last act of hope before passing away. It may also represent the consumption of something innocent and pure, as well as the start and finish of existence.

When Cate reappears in the play's last moments, we have learned from the previous scene that she has gone in search of food and that she will probably exchange her body for it. As I've already stated, Cate has changed significantly from the previous version of herself, who uses her fits to escape suffering; despite the abuse she has experienced, she now seems more self-assured and independent. According to Kane's stage directions, there is blood dripping down her legs, and she is carrying a bottle of gin and food.





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Again, rape and sexual violence are brought to the fore as Cate becomes a victim once again, this time as a result of the war outside where rape is an „acceptable“ side effect. As Armstrong points out, the rape in the play reflects most strongly that rape is a tactic of war used as a means to exert power over the enemy's women and the enemy themselves. We have seen this brutality time and time again, not only in Bosnia but around the world, where rape is a powerful and effective form of “terrorism against women” (Armstrong, 2003:81).

In *Blasted*, Kane discusses two types of social violence: rape, another male-dominated activity, is a private, typically occurring act that is much harder to regulate, while war, a largely male activity, is publicly sanctified and therefore easier to regulate. Kane highlights potential prejudices in her audience by dramatizing these two types of violence. Armstrong highlights that in cases of private crimes like rape, the focus tends to be more on the victim and their involvement in the crime than on the offender. Armstrong argues that Kane purposefully chose to use Cate as a cliché in *Blasted* in order to trap the audience, saying that Cate is too much of a stereotype to be held responsible for what happens to her. Armstrong also says that Kane's "obscene" rape scene is an attempt to raise awareness of gender abuse in society. Even though Kane maintains that her work lacks morality, she utilizes shock value to highlight topics that she finds troubling. As previously said, Kane is in favor of using artistic creations to bring about social change, as evidenced by the way she personally brings attention to causes that are important to her (Armstrong, 2003:72–73).

Overall, *Blasted's* characterization is well-shaped, well-organized, and well-constructed in order to highlight the idea of a consensus between pain, violence, and conflict. Kane would merely like to inform her readers and audience—in support of the scene in one of her plays—that trauma and violence resulting from war can be peacefully abandoned and even embraced.

### Conclusion

Considering that Sarah Kane's plays depict a variety of brutality and suffering, it is reasonable to assume that she is regarded as one of the most important English dramatists of the twentieth century. Her plays portray the agonizing interior lives that people had to lead after refusing to fight in the Great War. Expressionist dramatist Sarah portrayed on stage themes of physical and psychological suffering as well as acts of



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violence. Furthermore, Kane was interested in showing the unintended effects of the emotions we hold inside, leading to trauma and the gradual destruction of our life.

In this analysis and interpretation of *Blasted*, Kane attempted to concentrate on important topics in a way that was reminiscent of Artand's "Theatre of Gurley," which gave viewers the impression that they had actually experienced something. Additionally, the traumatic element of *Blasted* may be found in the themes of violence, suicide, death, and rape; these themes contribute to Kane's exceptional accomplishment and are a reflection of both his own difficult personal life and society at large. lastly, Sarah Kane aims to depict as well as grievances of a mind that has forget its perception of self. Moreover, the devastating belief that trauma is a result of the inability to cope with the outside society.

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