

The Monstrous Masculine: Gothic Horror and the Crisis of Male Power in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*

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Abstract:

This article analyzes Sarah Kane's *Blasted* as a modern Gothic horror masterpiece through the frameworks of Raewyn Connell's concepts of masculinity and crisis, Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, and Giorgio Agamben's theory of biopower and bare life. Focusing on key scenes—such as the toxic relationship between Ian and Cate reflecting the crisis of masculine identity, the escalation of violence and humiliation with the entrance of the Soldier, and the aftermath following the Soldier's suicide—the study reveals how power, violence, horror, and destruction intersect within the Gothic atmosphere. Kane's theatre reveals a double-edged structure of violence, in which the perpetrator becomes the victim and domination consumes all. In *Blasted*, Kane exposes the decay inherent in the existing order and evokes ethical responsibility amidst the ruins, transforming horror into a shocking form of catharsis that reawakens the possibility of renewal. Such an alternative form of life redefines what it means to be human after the collapse of order, turning the stage into a space where destruction and creation coexist.

Introduction

Gothic literature, dating back to the seventeenth century, has continually evolved to represent both the fears and anxieties of humanity, from the haunted castles of the past centuries to the so-called modern cities of the present. Therefore, it is inescapable that Gothic fiction has constantly redefined its boundaries by absorbing new forms of horror and uncertainty. Fred Botting (1996) highlights this continuity by underlining that “Gothic

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figures have continued to shadow the progress of modernity with counter-narratives displaying the underside of enlightenment and humanist values” (p. 1). Considering his claim that “Gothic signifies a writing of excess and appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality” (p. 1), the twenty-first-century representation of excessive violence and horror can likewise be read through the Gothic aesthetic of excess.

In classical Gothic the source of horror and anxiety lies in supernatural things or creatures. However, as exemplified by Sarah Kane, the modern form of Gothic situates terror and violence in the political and corporeal realities of modern existence, thereby transforming Gothic horror into a site of ethical questioning as well as reflecting the sense of fear and anxiety.

Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) functions as a site for the representation of power and violence on the human body and psyche through the counter-narration technique of Gothic horror and aesthetics within a modern and political context. By integrating Gothic motifs and elements into the language of terror, violence, fear, and destruction, Kane projects an ethical lens that fosters awareness in the audience. Kane's excessive use of violence and terror on stage reveals how a postmodern form of Gothic operates in the modern world. Therefore, such a dynamic reconfiguration of the Gothic tradition redefines Gothic as a medium of moral confrontation with contemporary issues. Accordingly, to examine the Gothic extremity and ethical tensions in *Blasted*, this paper is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Raewyn Connell's concepts of *masculinity* and *crisis*. It also resonates with Julia Kristeva's notion of the *abject* and Giorgio Agamben's concept of *biopolitics* and *bare life*.

Connell emphasizes gender as a social practice. He writes, “Human beings construct themselves as masculine and feminine. They claim a place in gender order—or respond to the place they have been given—by the way they conduct themselves in everyday life” (Connell & Pearce, 2009, p. 6). This dynamic shows the fact that both masculinity and femininity are forms of performance that are shaped by social norms and traditions rather than a concrete essence.

In this regard Connell & Pearce (2009) articulate that “one is not born masculine but has to become a man” (p. 5), echoing that masculinity is an ongoing process that intersects with social expectations. Both further assert that “most of the social arrangements that have been encountered daily include various unconscious behaviors and practices without any specific concern of their origins as socially predetermined patterns” (2009, p. 5, as

cited in Kuruducu, 2019, p. 8). This reveals that masculinity is constructed and sustained by socially constructed practices, yet it seems that it is natural and acceptable. However, there is always a tension between the performance of men and what is expected from them. Because it is not fully possible to fulfill social expectations.

This tension between performance and masculinity is underlined by Connell with these lines: “Men’s power and men’s lack of power in and outside the world, putting the men into the line of a paradoxical masculinity,” lead to recurring crises (Kimmel & Messner, 1992, p. 162). Such dynamic mirrors the ongoing crisis of masculinity. Thus, this notion resonates with domination and vulnerability simultaneously. As masculinity is a social performance built upon hierarchy and exclusion, when they cannot reach control and authority, or when they lose them, crisis becomes inescapable. Tim Edwards sharpens this tension when he writes (2006) that “the crisis of masculinity centers precisely on a perceived shift in men’s experiences of their position as men, their maleness, and what it means,” often resulting in “powerlessness, meaninglessness, or uncertainty” (p. 6). Therefore, as Kuruducu (2019) summarizes, masculine identity “emerges with a crisis and/or leads to a crisis” (p. ii). In this regard, while the portrayal of each character in the play *Ian and the Soldier*, on the other hand, embody the crisis of masculinity.

Julia Kristeva’s formulation of the *abject*, introduced in *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), provides a critical framework for understanding the ways in which identity is (de)constructed and functions. Kristeva (1982) defines the *abject* as neither “an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire” (p. 1). Therefore, as Kristeva (1982) writes, “The *abject* has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I” (p. 1). This idea suggests that identity—the Self—defines its borders within this process. It means that identity is never secure, as Kristeva (1982) highlights, but it returns to threatening Self.

In turn, the notion of *abject* provides the self being protected from the collapse of meaning and the identity, as Kristeva (1982) further notes: “On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture” (p. 22). Here, the concept of the *abject* converges not only with psychological but also with cultural and political mechanisms of exclusion. This dynamic operates not merely within the realm of the psyche but extends to broader systems that define the subject and the otherness. Such

a dynamic, conceptualized by Kristeva, provides a theoretical foreground for understanding how the exclusion is (de)constructed as it echoes in *Blasted*.

Giorgio Agamben's reformulation of Foucault's conceptualization of biopower in his well-known work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) offer a lens for examining how modern power operates. As summarized in Leitch's anthology, Foucault notes that "modern power can operate physically on bodies, but discursively it carves up the world" (Leitch, et al., 2018, p. 1619). In this light, the production of modern power is first demonstrated through its manifestations on bodily experiences, practices, and clothing in detailed ways. In contrast to Foucault, Agamben argues that modern biopolitics functions within the realm of sovereign power that operates on individual bodies, reducing them to a biological existence. Agamben characterizes this form of existence with the term *bare life*," where the law is suspended, leaving individuals or groups vulnerable to violence and the whims of authority" (Kuruducu, 2023, p. 20). He also asserts that in modernity "the interlacing of politics and life has become so tight that separating *bare life* and 'its modern avatars' becomes impossible (Agamben, 1998, p. 120). Therefore, the connection between bare life and politics, a link that secretly governs the modern ideologies seemingly most distant from one another, remains a crucial point (Agamben, 1998, p. 4).

In order to represent the being whose life was reduced to biological existence in the political realm, Agamben employs the archaic figure of *homo sacer*. For Agamben, modern power structures reshape human experience and sociopolitical meaning. *Homo sacer* embodies a life "situated at the intersection of a capacity to be killed and yet not sacrificed, outside both human and divine law" (Agamben, 1998, p. 73). This dynamic shows that *homo sacer* has a life stripped of political form.

Such a process is mirrored in *Blasted*, where the suspension of law and moral boundaries is eroded; therefore, the characters are exposed to violence and terror. They become both the victim and the victimizer within the very same dynamic that mirrors Agamben's conceptualization. Seen from this perspective, Kane presents the modern condition of the subject, echoing in each character, which becomes an object within the process, as a way to question or rethink ethical, cultural, and psychological boundaries of being.

Taken together, the conceptualization of *masculinity* and *crisis*, the *term object*, and the theoretical framework of *biopower* and the notion of *bare life* underline the fact that the construction of identity is not an absence but a process linked to power structures; therefore, there is always a double edge in which it forms the subject yet simultaneously haunts it, projecting

a Gothic landscape where identity becomes a site of vulnerability as well as destruction, violence, and excess, as the forces that construct the self also threaten to collapse it.

Kane's theater presents the dynamics of power and violence as well as reconfiguring power as a medium for ethical awareness. In this study, the initial focus is on the concept of violence, especially men's violence in the play. The issue of violence discussed here is not new in history, but what matters is the way it extends beyond personal into the socio-political arena. Violence has long been a subject on stage—for example, in King Oedipus, the king violently blinds himself as punishment for his own transgression. Traditionally, such acts of violence on stage, especially within the Aristotelian tradition, serve the purpose of catharsis: to evoke pity and fear and offer emotional release. This tradition has continued for centuries. However, in Kane's *in-yer-face* theatre, the function of on-stage violence shifts. It is no longer simply about catharsis but about confronting the audience, shaking them out of their comfort zone, and making them empathize with the characters' pain and trauma. The theater of this period aims to make the audience aware of the harsh realities of life and to provoke them to question and reflect beyond mere entertainment or education. With this perspective in mind, the following analysis will focus on how Sarah Kane, in *Blasted*, employs violence as a Gothic strategy in a contemporary context to challenge perceptions of power, suffering, and empathy.

Blasted was written in the early years of the 1990s. It consists of five scenes. It is set in a luxurious hotel room in Leeds, and the story is based on the experiences of a middle-aged journalist, Ian, with his young lover, Cate. However, it is not merely a love story; indeed, it is a story of violence, murder, trauma, war, crisis, and suffering. The first half of the play is centered on Ian and Cate, whereas in the second half of the play, a soldier without a name appears. On the one hand, Kane manages to make the crime of violence more visible to illustrate issues beyond routine love experiences. On the other hand, she explores how the dynamics of power and violence shift direction yet are never eradicated.

In the opening scene of the play, Ian and Cate are in the hotel room. Cate rejects Ian's insistence on eating the piggy sandwich, responding, "Dead meat. Blood. Can't eat an animal" (Kane, 1995, p. 6). Within this interaction, Kane underscores the tension between them; through the lens of masculinity, this moment reveals how the patriarchal language they employ manifests domination and control, framing the dynamic between man and woman in terms of authority and resistance. In this way, Kane prepares the

audience for the broader power struggles that will define Ian and Cate's relationship.

As the scene progresses, Ian uses insulting comments about Cate's clothing, saying, "I don't like your clothes," and "You look like lesbos" (Kane, 1995, p. 7). This exchange indicates that the masculine ego manifests its power through sexual dominance. Such a dynamic gains further clarity when read alongside the comments in Kimmel and Messner's *Men's Lives* (1992), where the authors underline that male dominance and violence can only be understood through culturally imposed gender roles:

In order to understand physical violence, one must first understand male violence, since most acts of violence are committed by males and primarily against other males. Crucially, they maintain that male violence can only be understood through an analysis of the sex roles, or gender roles, into which males are socialized by the gender codes of their particular cultures (Kimmel & Messner, 1992, p. 553).

This suggests that Ian embodies hegemonic masculinity performance, which foregrounds cultural codes and expectations within the patriarchal power system.

However, as the following dialogue indicates, this dynamic is neither stable nor has a single direction—from man to woman. Ian's utterance—"You want to"—implies that Cate is not a passive counterpart in this interaction. The dynamic becomes clearer in the subsequent dialogue:

Ian That wasn't very fair.

Cate What?

Ian Leacing me hanging, making a prick of myself.

Cate I f-f-felt-

Ian Don't pity me, Cate. You don't have to fuck me 'cause I'm dying, but don't push your cunt in my face then take it away cause I cause I stick my tongue out.

Cate I-I-I- Ian.

Ian What's the m-m-matter?

Cate I k-k-kissed you, that's all. I l-l-like you.

Ian Don't give me a hard-on if you're not going to finish me off. It hurts.

Cate I didn't mean it.

Ian Shit. (He appears to be in considerable pain.)

Cate I'm sorry. I am. I won't do it again.

(Kane, 1995, p. 14).

This brief interaction dramatizes the vulnerability of the masculine body while also revealing Cate's micro-level aggression, as she uses sexuality as a site of subtle manipulation. Through such a relational tension, Kane shows how the power relations between Ian and Cate are unstable and fluid and leaking into every moment of their interaction. This dynamic of vulnerability, sexuality, and micro-power can be further illuminated through Foucault's comments in *Volume 1 of The History of Sexuality*:

Imbedded in bodies, becoming deeply characteristic of individuals, the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology. And conversely, since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior. The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, and dramatizing troubled moments (trans. Hurley, 1978, p. 1664).

Furthermore, the following scene in which Cate takes Ian's gun and turns it against him underlines not only the unstable nature of power but also mirrors the collapse of Ian's masculine authority.

Ian Don't worry, I'll be dead soon.

(He tosses the gun onto the bed.)

Have a pop.

Cate *doesn't move.*

Ian *waits, then chuckles and goes into the bathroom.*

We hear the shower running.

Cate *stares at the gun.*

She gets up very slowly and dresses.

She packs her bag.

She picks up Ian's leather jacket and smells it.

She rips the arms off at the seams.

She picks up his gun and examines it.

We hear Ian coughing up in the bathroom.

Cate puts the gun down, and he comes in.

He dresses. He looks at the gun.

Ian No? (Kane, 1995, p. 25).

Through this symbolic scene, Kane reveals how masculine power and authority can unravel almost instantly, exposing the fragile core of the hegemonic masculine subject whose symbolic potency is momentarily castrated by the formerly subordinated and objectified figure. Read through this lens, the moment also functions as a Gothic inversion in which roles shift, and the force of power and violence returns to Ian himself—now destabilized, vulnerable, threatened, and literally powerless.

Taken together, the highlighted scenes generate a Gothic tension in which intimacy and threat unfold simultaneously between Ian and Cate. Through these scenes, Kane creates a haunting atmosphere in which power and vulnerability collapse into one another through the shifting interplay of sexual desire and performance.

With the explosion of the hotel room, Kane crafts a distinctly Gothic horror atmosphere, turning the once domestic space into a violent battlefield—a Gothic ruin. This moment, therefore, recaptures the shifting nature of power from Ian to the Soldier, who represents a hierarchy positioned at the top of sovereign authority.

The hotel has been blasted by a mortar bomb.

There is a large hole in one of the walls, and everything is covered in dust, which is still falling.

The **Soldier** is *unconscious, rifle still in hand.*

He has dropped Ian's gun, which lies between them.

Ian lies very still, eyes open.

Ian, Mum?

Silence.

The Soldier wakes and turns his eyes and rifle on Ian with the minimum possible movement. He instinctively runs his free hand over his limbs and body to check that he is still in one piece. He is.

Soldier The drink.

Ian looks around.

There is a bottle of gin lying next to him with the lid off.

He holds it up to the light.

Ian Empty.

The **Soldier** *takes the bottle and drinks the last mouthful.*

Ian (*chuckles*) Worse than me.

Soldier (*holds the bottle up and shakes it over his mouth, catching any remaining drops*)

Ian (*finds his cigarettes in his shirt pocket and lights up*)

(Kane, 1995, p. 37).

Through the lens of Kristeva, this dynamic reveals how the explosion transforms the hotel room into a modern Gothic castle overtaken by a modern monster, the Soldier. In this way, Kane dramatizes how meaning collapses within an instant. As Kristeva (1982) notes, when “the boundary between subject and object is shaken” and “the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain,” the narrative itself begins to collapse, yielding what she calls “the theme of suffering-horror,” the ultimate evidence of abjection within representation” (p. 141). In this scene, Kane exposes the collapse of meaning and subjectivity.

This scene can also be interpreted through Botting’s point of view. As Botting (1996) highlights, echoing Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977):

An old, deserted, and isolated hotel is the site of terror while a family are its victims. As a place of shining, projections of violent disturbances in the past or future, the hotel acts as a magnifying glass or mirror for psychic energies and psychotic impulses of certain events and individuals. In an uncanny movement within the isolated hotel, the father becomes more and more psychotic while his son glimpses the spectral returns of past scenes of violence (p. 14).

This intertextual resonance foreshadows Botting’s later conceptualization of modern Gothic as a new domain for the encounter with dark powers, now secular, mental, and animal rather than supernatural” (p. 13). He highlights a critical transformation whereby horror and violence no longer arise from external or supernatural forces but instead emerge from within the modern, so-called rational power structures—a condition disturbingly exemplified in the highlighted scene.

As I have previously argued in my discussion of Bond (see Kuruducu, 2023, p. Chapter 2). Certain urban spaces, such as the town, the hotel room, etc., are the areas that generally function as insecure places surrounded by

destruction, violence, and terror that “destroys the rational ordering of a society” (Khatoon & Khatoon, 2023, p. 438). In much the same way, in *Blasted*, the hotel room, once a domestic place, becomes a zone where the biopolitical power materializes through violence, destruction, humiliation, and tragedy. Likewise, both the hotel room and the world outside are not simply spaces of shelter but rather places where sovereign power is enacted and maintained through threats, risk, and extreme violence. Whether these spaces are constructed as secure or threatening, it is evident that biopower establishes itself via various power management technologies that persist throughout the narrative. The dialogue between the characters reveals the process vividly.

CATE: Everyone in town is crying.

IAN: Touch me.

CATE: They can't stop. Soldiers have taken over.

IAN: They've won?

CATE: No.

SOLDIER: You never fucked by a man before?

IAN: *doesn't answer*

SOLDIER: Didn't think so. It's nothing. Saw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town. Women threw their babies on board, hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death. Inside of people's heads came out of their eyes. Saw a child most of his face blown off, young girl I fucked hand up inside her trying to claw my liquid out, starving man eating his dead wife's leg. Gun was born here and won't die. Can't get tragic about your arse. Don't think your Welsh arse is different to any other arse I fucked. Sure, you haven't got any more food, I'm fucking starving. (Kane, 1995, p. 47).

In this scene, Kane's narration of the events and the depiction of the setting resonate with the Gothic framework of violence, terror, and manifestation of sovereign power that reduce the human beings into mere *bare life* in Agambenian terms. This is evident in the scene of the explosion, which recalls Agamben's thesis on concentration camps as testing grounds for experiments in total dominance and, “in some ways, as the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space” (Agamben, 1998, p. 166). Accordingly, the ruined hotel room, which exposes the *nomos* of political space, recaptures a Gothic scene marked by architectural ruin and decay alongside bodily horror and disgusting in other words, what Kristeva terms the *abject*.

As in Bond (see Kuruducu, 2023, p. Chapter 2), Kane's narration of the events and the presentation of the setting also resonate with the "Gothic discourse of monstrosity and barbarity underlying the veneer of civilization" (Khatoon & Khatoon, 2023, p. 435). Here, the body and the environment also stand as a site of ethical contestation. By using the characters and the environment within a gothic atmosphere, Kane posits a "counter-discourse that creates its macabre reality" (Khatoon & Khatoon, 2023, p. 435).

The soldier's presence is a turning point because it marks a shift in the play's power dynamics once again. His mode of being evokes Agamben's analyses of *bare life* and *biopower*. As Agamben (2004) portrays, the soldier embodies the figure produced by a new order that "radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being" (p. 3), a body tortured both physically and psychologically, deprived of a name—a condition that signifies the erosion of identity left. Therefore, in Agambenian terms, the soldier embodies the condition of *homo sacer*.

As the play progresses, the subsequent scenes further reveal and echo the relationship, especially between Ian and the Soldier, as articulated by Zeynep Sayın (2016):

Torturers become the masters of life and death by reducing the human being before them to a whimpering heap of flesh. Yet what they fail to see is that at the very moment they objectify others, they too can be objectified by others. Hence, the purpose of destruction is not to transcend torture but to return to itself (Kötülük Cemaatleri, p.78).

This dynamic becomes visible in the pivotal scene below, where the Soldier's rape and torture of Ian by sucking his eyes and eating them expose the fluid, vulnerable, reversible nature of power.

He puts his mouth over one of Ian's eyes, sucks it out, bites it off, and eats it.

He does the same to the other eye.

SOLDIER: He ate her eyes.

Poor bastard.

Poor love.

Poor fucking bastard.

Blackout.

(Kane, 1995, p. 48).

Kristeva (1982) defines abjection as “what disturbs identity, system, order” (p. 4). The soldier’s suicide illustrates this assertion. Kane represents the Soldier as an abject figure, as previously highlighted, whose body embodies decay, trauma, and violence that destabilize the boundary between the human and the inhuman. Therefore, soon after his ultraviolent act against Ian, “the Soldier lies close to Ian, the revolver in his hand. He has blown his own brain out” (Kane, 1995, p. 48). As a monstrous being, the Soldier turns sovereign violence inward, becoming once again both the perpetrator and the victim. This logic aligns with Botting’s (1996) observation that Gothic becomes “a world of individual transgression interrogating the uncertain bounds of imaginative freedom and human knowledge” (p. 11) and foregrounds Kane’s depiction of the Soldier’s mind.

Ian’s distorted body can be read as a Gothic body that reveals the body’s entanglement with politics, parallel to Agamben’s (1998) claim that “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (p. 5). This biopolitical reduction reaches its culmination in the final scene, which has already embodied multiple and conflicting layers of meaning. In the closing moments of the play, Cate gives water to Ian, who has been reduced to a mere biological body. Although some readings of the play interpret this gesture as a sublime act of compassion—an ethical awakening achieved through horror—Botting’s (1996) notion of the sublime terror offers a more complex frame for this moment:

Terror, in its sublime manifestations, is associated with subjective elevation, with the pleasures of imaginatively transcending or overcoming fear and thereby renewing and heightening a sense of self and social value: threatened with dissolution, the self, like the social limits which define it, reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror (p. 131).

This sense of sublimity is dramatized in the play’s final moments:

Ian That wasn’t very fair.

Cate What?

Ian Leaving me hanging, making a prick of myself.

Cate I f-f-felt-

Ian Don’t pity me, Cate. You don’t have to fuck me ‘cause I’m dying, but don’t push your cunt in my face then take it away cause I cause I stick my tongue out.

Cate I-I-I- Ian.

Ian What's the m-m-matter?

Cate I k-k-kissed you, that's all. I l-l-like you.

Ian Don't give me a hard-on if you're not going to finish me off. It hurts.

Cate I didn't mean it.

Ian Shit. (He appears to be in considerable pain.)

Cate I'm sorry. I am. I won't do it again.

(Kane, 1995, p. 14).

From this perspective, Cate's gesture may at first seem to suggest transcendence or renewal. However, Kane's vision resists such an interpretation. Cate's act does not restore meaning or rebuild any moral order; rather, it simply acknowledges Ian's *bare life*—his presence stripped to biological survival. Thus, her compassion is not redemptive; it is administrative, functioning as a biopolitical response to the body's need for survival.

At this point, Cate can be seen as assuming the role of the new power. Ian, once the embodiment of masculine dominance, is now rendered powerless and dependent, and Cate becomes the agent who governs life at its minimal threshold. As Zeynep Sayın (2016) notes, "Arendt denied that evil could possess an ontological status; figures like Rudolf Höss and Adolf Eichmann were merely obedient instruments, and to call them 'radically evil' would mean taking them seriously as moral subjects" (p. 42). Yet, as Sayın continues, "Such people had ceased to be subjects whose intellect we could trust; they had turned into objects from which we needed to protect ourselves" (p. 42). Such an observation redefines the landscape of evil as a relational process rather than an essence—a process of de-subjection that aligns with Ian's final condition. Sayın (2016) deepens the discussion by arguing that "evil has lost its absoluteness—it becomes relative, and with it, the philosophical subject loses its centrality.

Following Ebeling, such relativization, she Sayın (2016) articulates, "reduces humans, cows, pigs, and dogs to the same level," casting humanity into a moral void where judgment collapses and barbarism begin" (pp. 42–43). However, when Ian asks her to pray that she recalls her earlier prayer for the dead baby, Cate refuses. This refusal is crucial: it marks her withdrawal from transcendence and any illusion of moral restoration. She provides food but not grace; biological continuation but not meaning. At this

point in the dialogue, the shifting dynamics of power and violence become visible, revealing their fragile and contagious nature—how domination and vulnerability continuously exchange positions.

Ian Cate?

Cate Shh.

Ian What you doing?

Cate Praying. Just in case.

Ian Will you pray for me?

Cate No.

Ian When I'm dead, not now.

Cate No point when you're dead.

Ian You're praying for her.

Cate No point when you're dead.

Ian You're praying for her.

Cate She's a baby.

Ian So?

Cate Innocent.

Ian Can't you forgive me?

(Kane, 1995, p. 55).

Through this gesture, the play enacts what Sayin (2016) describes as the continuity of “micro evil”—the transfer of power, not its resolution. Violence in Kane's play does not end; it merely changes hands. Cate's silence at the end is not a moment of enlightenment but an acceptance of the same biopolitical order she once suffered under.

As Botting (1996) notes, Gothic fiction “is not subjected to a singular, restricted, and politically interested meaning” (p. 116). In this sense, Kane's conclusion resists any stable or comforting interpretation. The scene remains open, oscillating between compassion and domination, between the ethics of survival and the persistence of violence. Rather than offering moral closure, Kane leaves the audience in an uneasy position, confronting the limits of empathy and the ambiguities of power.

Conclusion

Art and literature once again affirm their critical function by revealing the violence and danger sustained through social, cultural, and political apparatuses. In this regard, Kane's *Blasted* operates as a tool that shakes the social consensus and destabilizes the moral and political order. Through the Gothic aesthetic, her theater transforms art into a mode of critique that unveils the hidden mechanisms of power and control. As Botting (1996) argues, Gothic terrors threaten "not only the loss of sanity, honor, property, or social standing but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms" (p. 5). Kane's dramatization of violence through the Gothic aesthetic functions as a force that unveils the ferocity operating within the very system in which both the oppressor and the oppressed are simultaneously crushed. Her theatre therefore unveils a double-edged structure of violence, where the perpetrator inevitably becomes the victim, and the cycle of domination ultimately consumes all who participate in it. In *Blasted*, Kane not only projects the decay and corruption inherent in the existing order; she also evokes a renewed sense of self-consciousness and ethical responsibility amidst the ruins of decay, transforming horror into a shocking form of experience that reawakens the human potential to imagine and act toward something different—an alternative form of life grounded in compassion, awareness, and the possibility of renewal. Such an alternative way of life may not assure salvation but reminds and redefines what it means to be human even after the entire collapse of law.

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