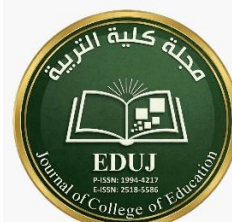


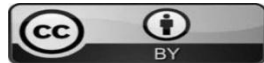


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Available online at: <https://eduj.uowasit.edu.iq>^{1*}Hogir Hashim Abdi² Prof. Sherzad Shafie Barzani, PhDCollege of Languages,
Salaheddin University,
Erbil

Email:

hogir.abdi@su.edu.krd
sherzad.barzan@su.edu.krd**Keywords:**Fragmented reality,
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**Postmodern Fragmented Reality: Echoes of War and Cannibalistic Humans in Sarah Kane's Blasted****A B S T R A C T**

The shock or the In Yer Face Theatre of the 1990s deals with devastating, horrendous, taboo, and violent subjects for the postmodern British spectators. Hence, Sarah Kane is one of the most influential leading dramatists and has her most daring and psychologically intense plays. Her play Blasted (1995) explores various aspects of the In Yer Face Theatre; hence, this study delves into the human psyche in the most appalling and war-like situations, albeit the postmodern dramatic and fictional technique "fragmentation" is used to unleash the human condition. Thus, the reality the characters try to describe becomes shattered and split as their psychological states deteriorate in war. This paper investigates how, under the shadow of war, characters change, and the violence they show becomes unpredictable, and women unleash their suppression; men, in their attempt to escape war, are forced to be cannibalistic.

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الواقع المجزأ في أدب ما بعد الحداثة: صدى الحرب و وحشية الإنسان في مسرحية المدمرون لسارة كين

الباحث: هوكر هاشم عبيد أ.د. شيرزاد شفيع بارزاني

كلية اللغات - جامعة صلاح الدين، أربيل / العراق

الخلاصة

شهد مسرح الصدمة في فترة ما بعد الحداثة، لاسيما خلال تسعينيات القرن الماضي، اهتماماً ملحوظاً بمواضيع التخريب، والخوف، والعنف، والقضايا المحظورة أمام جمهور المسرح البريطاني. تُعد سارة كين من أبرز الكاتبات المسرحيات اللواتي ساهمن في طرح موضوعات جريئة ونفسية معقدة. تتناول مسرحيتها *المدمرون* (1995) جوانب متعددة من أدب الصدمة. تتركز هذه الدراسة على الجوانب النفسية في المواقف المرعبة والظروف الحربية. كما تلجأ الدراسة إلى استخدام أسلوب التجزئ الذي يتسم بالبعد السردي والدرامي لإطلاق العنان للظروف البشرية في

تلك الفترة، مع ذلك، أصبح الواقع الذي تحاول شخصيات وصفه متحللاً ومنقسماً مثل حالتهم النفسية أثناء الحرب، حيث تقدم كل شخصية صورة غامضة لهذا الواقع. لذلك تسعى الدراسة الى تحقق عن كيفية تغيير الشخصيات في ظل الحرب، ولا يمكن التنبؤ بأعمالهم العنيفة. النساء يطلقن كبتهن، والرجال، في محاولتهم الهروب من الحرب ويصبحون مثل الوحوش في سلوكهم.

الكلمات الدالة: الواقع المجزأ، الحرب، العنف، المدمرون، الوحشية.

1. Introduction

According to Naishtat (2025), the term fragment 'Frangere ' (fragment) is Latin; it denotes the act of breaking violently. However, first, the idea of fragmentation lies within the fact of finding an unfinished work of art that has been ruined after it was completed; only its parts or pieces remain to be considered. Second, and more importantly, fragmentation is a literary technique that embodies concrete and intended ideas of the authors through the approaches of breaking down, ruination, catastrophes, memories, dreams, and illusions. Thirdly, philosophically or thematically, the notion of fragmentation is that the whole universe is broken into pieces, and no parts are merging; therefore, the entire world seems fragmented. Fourth, the fragmentation technique views texts as having multiple functions and meanings. (pp. 4-6)

In terms of narrative techniques, the stories have a disjointed structure; in other words, they are loosely interwoven, and the end is inconclusive. This narration technique starkly contrasts with the traditional and chronological storytelling approach.

Sarah Kane's most debatable play, *Blasted*, pictures a fragmented, dystopian world experience where violence and war destroy and annihilate human moral values as they undergo the yoke of war. This postmodernist work deliberately tends to unfollow traditional storytelling approaches and a succinct structure or form. Instead, the play delineates a fragmented and dishevelled sense of reality in which such reality succinctly mirrors commotion and havoc. Through the random exchanges, bellicose images of physical and psychological violence are shown. Kane shows the aftermath of war and its horrendous and detrimental effects on the human psyche. Her way of exposing sheer violence is to provoke the audience to consider the perpetuation of violence in the postmodern era in which they live.

2. Literature Review

Sarah Kane is one of the most prolific postmodern playwrights whose literary works were shaped at the In Yer Face Theatre in the 1990s and early 2000s. Her works have been translated into many languages, including German, Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, and so forth. Her plays are extremely shocking owing to the projection and evocation of intense emotions dramatised on stage. *Blasted* was written in 1995, and it reflects a historical time, a wartime that affected European citizens; even the British people were severely affected by it. As a postmodern play, it displayed the problems of the age as far as the postmodern man is concerned; its deep psychological turmoil is being ostensibly dramatised. As a phenomenon of the 1990s, numerous studies have been conducted to explicate several related issues.

Accordingly, Mahdi (2020) studies the play through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis; She asserts that *Blasted* can best fit in the theory of Psychoanalysis as there are various complicated psychological relations between her characters; for instance, Ian and Cate seem to be deeply related to one another as their relationship instigate changes in the play's actions. Mahdi (2020) adds that Ian, who was estranged from his spouse because she was a lesbian, was deeply tormented for having a wife who is not heterosexual. Ian, due to the burden of his marriage, was heavily repressed and under intense psychological pressure. Ian could not openly divulge his frustration and wrath with his wife; he kept his anger, fears, and desires in his unconscious mind. The suppression he holds makes him heavily loaded with uneasiness and bitterness. Throughout Cate, he comes to terms with his frustrated self and becomes capable of unleashing his inner turmoil and rage. Furthermore, Othman (2020, p.15) states that she cares about the psychological milieu surrounding her characters; her characters do not allude to social problems in any way. The play handles themes of the eligibility or legality of brutality and trauma. Moreover, *Blasted* is a play where violence is predominant; the small scenes seem to be shrunk as the play progresses, and humans live in abject and poor living circumstances, they become lonely, broken, traumatised, and eventually destroyed. (Greig 2001, cited by De Vos 2001, P. 5)

Apart from psychological conflicts, *Blasted* displays intense violence that, for some audience, could be challenging to view, including sadistic and bloody scenes. Yet, violence does not signify nothing, accordingly, the most reliable theatre theorist Aleks Sierz stresses upon the degree of violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, for him violence is a reaction to the perpetuation of the ceaseless war that Kane's *Blasted* (1995) might be seen as both a protest against war and a moment in the habituation of audiences to the terrors of perpetual war" (2007, Function, p.390). Indeed, *Blasted* does not picture war to terrorise or threaten people, it is vividly depicted as a contra reaction to the Balkan war in the 1990s, based on this Helen Iball (2008) confirms that 'A major conflict of the 1990s was civil war in the former Yugoslavia, and it was news footage of this conflict to which *Blasted* responded" (p.9).

Steve Waters (2003, p.79) claims that Britain in the 1990s only reacted to the war like an audience, though the war could have reached other places and spread to different locations. It was merely being broadcast on TV in Britain. Additionally, Elaine Aston, the British playwright (1958-), clearly criticises Kane for having written *Blasted* as it delineates cruelty; she proclaims that women are not thought to be penning such ghastly and brutal plays.

Bert States (1985) distinguishes between Kane's *Blasted* and Harold Pinter's plays in which the stage properties, such as bed, table, food, guns, etc., that are visible on stage are utilised best to resemble Pinter's indoor plays. The opening scene of *Blasted* explicitly reflects the outside upheaval and instabilities. These stage probes also contribute to the extent to which the characters are in a psychological turmoil, for they must face traumatic events outside their room. (p.67). As the play draws to the end, Ian grows to be more desperate thus he gives full vent to his sense of frustration and depressive state, he engages in self-pleasure act at the

same time he continues to utter vulgar words ‘cunt’ in speaking to Cate. In performing this act, he denigrates the value of women. After giving himself sexual pleasure, futilely, he manages to strangle himself. The failure of his suicide makes him behave more filthily; he answers the call of nature and cleans up his bed with the newspaper, then hysterical laughter is heard (Iball,2008, p.43).

Overall, most researchers have examined Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, focusing on trauma, violence, and psychological breakdown. While these approaches have provided valuable insights, they have largely overlooked the play’s postmodern dimensions. In contrast, this study approaches *Blasted* from a postmodernist perspective, emphasising its fragmented reality and experimental structure. By doing so, it seeks to offer a new understanding

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in postmodern literary theory and trauma studies to explore the fragmented reality in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida, the research investigates how the play constructs disjointed experiences of time, space, and identity through linguistic rupture, non-linear narrative, and grotesque imagery. Postmodern concepts such as the collapse of metanarratives, the instability of subjectivity, and the politics of representation inform the analysis.

The primary method involves close textual analysis of *Blasted*, with emphasis on its depiction of violence, war, and dehumanisation through cannibalistic and abject imagery. Kane’s dramaturgical fragmentation is read as both a formal and thematic device that critiques the erosion of moral order in postmodern society. This research also considers the socio-political backdrop of the Bosnian War, examining how real-world atrocities are aestheticised and intensified on stage. The study aims to illuminate how Kane destabilises theatrical conventions to expose the fractured human condition in times of extreme conflict.

4. Postmodernism: Objective Reality, and the Power of Knowledge

Sim (2001) asserts that postmodernism is ambiguous and complicated to clarify easily, as it has often been used to refer to various conceptions and philosophical and non-philosophical views. Some could suggest it could refer to a mood, or zeitgeist of a particular period in history, or it may mean a political or global change; thus, the term is too vast to define precisely.

The roots of the movement of postmodernism date back to the early 1930s. Historians are not so sure who has pioneered the actual term of postmodernism. They agree that it relates to the philosophical ideas of the German philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose famous quote is “Gott ist tot”. Along with his novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), his declaration on God’s death implies the rejection of the objective reality and the absolute truth. With the outbreak of the two world wars, it has vehemently devalued religion, especially

Christianity, as it became customary for people to question it in the aftermath of the two wars. The pioneering and leading postmodern thinkers appeared to shape their philosophical theories regarding the advent of postmodernism.

Bressler (2006) opines that the chief postmodern thinkers are the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1926-2004), the French cultural historian and philosopher, and literary critic Michael Foucault (1926-1984) Jean Jean-François Lyotard, the French aesthetician (1924-1998) and the American pragmatist Richard Rorty (1931-2007). These postmodern thinkers concluded that modernism was a complete failure as it attempted to detect objective reality. They also ascertain that modernism did not succeed in philosophically determining the essence of the Lord, logic, and, after all, scientific innovations and inventions, as these were their major quests for centuries and centuries. Postmodern thinkers believe that in the universe, it is impossible to determine absolute reality inherited in scientific research and investigations; therefore, they refuse every possible tenet of modernist thinking and philosophy. Henceforth, postmodern thinkers illuminate that the essence of reality is shaped by the individual's way of thinking and perceiving. The individual creates a personal reality. Throughout the interaction of the individual with his social group, he asserts reality; such reality becomes man-made. Hence, reality is not one entity but collective, as each person forms a personal reality. However, the person's analysis of reality is not identical to that of others. The truth becomes a universal perception understood by everyone in a different way. Therefore, absolute truth fades away as it was dominant in the modern era.

The postmodern philosophy is volatile due to this instability and inflexibility; it is often reestablished, reconsidered, re-researched, and rewritten over time. There could be several explanations regarding the theory or the philosophy of postmodernism; therefore, no definition is sufficient to describe it, much like how Franklin used to represent the most crucial voices in the modern age. Bringing together the philosophical thoughts of the postmodern is possible through the philosophers of Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, and Rorty. They could come to an understanding of what post-modern thinking looks like. Hence, they could explain that:

.....

 Gone are the days of individualism. Gone are the days of conquest. Now is the time for tolerance, understanding, and collaboration. Because our knowledge is incomplete and always will be. We must focus on a new concept: Holism. We must realize that we all need each other, including our various perspectives on the nature of reality. We must also recognize that our rationality, our thinking process, is one of the many avenues that can lead to an understanding of our world. Our emotions, feelings, and intuition can also provide a valid interpretation and guidance for living. (Bressler,2006, pp.88-89)

In retrospect, within the premises of the postmodern notion, there is no object of reality as it doesn't exist for the whole society. Therefore, each person holds one perspective on the nature of truth. It is shaped and constructed within individual groups or communities that the people live in, or we live in. As long as there is more than one multiple truth, postmodern people or communities should recognise that their truths differ from those of other people, since there is a difference between each social member, and they must come together and accept their various opinions on the concept of truth. Moreover, the postmodern man should not try in vain to discover what could be found as absolute truth, as it has been mentioned, is not attainable by a single person. In this respect, one crucial point is that what seems agreeable and reasonable for one person could be unacceptable and illogical for someone else. What must enlighten and guide mankind is to have the faculty to accept others as they aspire to be accepted; to give and share love, openness, and harmony rather than hatred. The postmodern philosophy must instil harmony and acceptance. One must not condemn one's fellow for being unable to touch or discover truth, as each person endeavours to see the truth from their point of view. Literary texts have no concrete and reliable meaning because the meaning of literary works does not lie between the lines, since the meaning relies upon the reader's critical perception. (p. 90)

However, in the current French philosophy, the pivotal point regarding the emergence of postmodernism was first pioneered by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his book *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). In his book, he stresses the changes occurring in the knowledge and how it is malfunctioning. He confirms that the technological developments after the demise of the Second World War have deeply affected knowledge. How we handle knowledge is different in the postmodern era, as it has been stored and saved in technological devices like computers, or sending telegrams, emails, posts, all these changes in the postmodern epoch have made knowledge commercialised and materialised. For this reason, the state of knowledge has changed in how it is utilised and applied. (Lyotard, 1984, pp.4-5)

Despite the lenient views postmodern thinkers provide, its leading figure, Richard Rorty, further clarifies the significant role of the nature of truth:

The idea of "necessary truth" is just the idea of a proposition which is believed because the "grip" of the object upon us is ineluctable. Such a truth is necessary in the sense in which it is sometimes necessary to believe that what is before our eyes looks red-there power, not ourselves, which compels us. The objects of mathematical truths will not let themselves be misjudged or misreported. Such paradigmatically necessary truths as the axioms of geometry are supposed to have no need of justification, of argument, of discussion-they are as undiscussable as the command of Zeus shaking the lightning, or of Helen beckoning to her bed. (Rorty, 1979, pp.157-158)

As the above quote claims, the truth is essential because it is beyond us to shun it entirely. One has to have a tenacious attitude to state that it could not be avoided when it presents itself before the eyes, as if one sees a particular colourful object, the eyes could but tell what colour it is. Thereby, it imposes itself upon us no matter how much we may endeavour to discard it. Moreover, Rorty elucidates that truth is like mathematical and geometrical calculations that justify themselves without further clarification or evidence. For this reason, it is too admissible. Truth has the power to command, according to Rorty, like how the Greek Olympic god Zeus demands to throw his thunderbolt to act, or how Helen of Troy calls someone to share her bed despite perceiving the immediate truth and identifying it ostensibly. Hicks 'Truth is a myth reason is Eurocentric construct. Equality is a mask for oppression. Peace and progress were met with cynical and dismissive reminders of power or explicit ad hominem attacks (p.30).

5. Fragmented Reality in *Blasted*

Sarah Kane's *Blasted* opens in Leeds in a hotel. The two characters who appear in it are Ian, the Irish journalist, and Cate, the English girl. The playwright explicitly displays their personalities throughout the stage directions and dialogues between Ian and Cate. First and foremost, Ian's selfhood and personhood are fragmented; therefore, whatever he tries to convey seems to blur his reality. The reason for deforming reality is his poor psychological uneasiness and distress. As a result of his psychological imbalance, he is unable to take hold of his emotions. Therefore, he acts eccentrically. His attires are drenched, and he is showing symptoms of illness and imbalance. The aspect of his fragmented identity is depicted as Kane describes in the following stage direction:

Ian comes back in, hair wet, with a towel around his waist, drying himself off. He stops and looks at Cate a moment who is sucking her thumb. He goes back to the bathroom where he dresses. We hear him coughing terribly in the bathroom. He spits in the sink and re-enters...He pours himself another gin, this time with tonic, ice, and lemon, and sips it at a more normal pace. He collects his gun and puts it in his underarm holster. He smiles at Cate (Kane, 1995, p. 4).

As a profoundly unbalanced person, Ian, who is in existential crisis, carries a revolver presumably to put an end to his life. He acts like earlier modernist absurd protagonists with several unanswered questions concerning the dilemma of existence. To build and present such an existentialist character, Kane only emulates former existentialist playwrights who presented such suicidal characters in their plays. Indeed, the revolver, in terms of the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud, symbolises sexual repression. (Tyson, 2006). Ian tries to pull his split self together in an attempt to build a kind of union with Cate; therefore, he proposes marriage to Cate, but Cate cannot accept it as she is incapable of deserting her mother. To refuse his marriage proposal, Cate resembles traditional and loyal girls who remain staunch to their family duties as far as their mother is concerned. She does not want to abandon her mother to build a family 'I could not leave mum' (p.6). Being a traditional girl,

she can barely make amends with her former boyfriend, Ian. At the same time, his attitude toward Cate seems absurd and flippant, as if he discerns that he is no longer fit for marriage. Despite being refused, he does not want to be left alone, as if he realises that he plunges into despair when he is left alone. The likelihood of turning aggressive towards himself is visible in his ways of speaking and behaving unreasonably because of his addiction to alcoholic drinks. Abruptly, he proposes to her as if the marriage he wishes to entertain will fragment. This is obvious early in the play when he divulges his desire to marry her:

IAN: Do not want you ever to leave

Cate: I am here for the night.

IAN: You Ever thought of getting married?

CATE: Who would marry me.

IAN: I would.

CATE: I could not. (Kane,1995, p.5)

To free himself from his frustration, Ian undresses in front of Cate, who begins to laugh at his behaviour. Ian does not care about his act of nudity; for him, there are no limits, carrying guns, overdrinking whisky, getting drunk, and even walking naked. His dark, humorous manner makes Cate fail to understand his actual life; she can only laugh at him. Accordingly, the laughter signifies that she is feeling utterly perplexed. Ian, to perform several peculiar conducts at one time, crashes Cate's perception of coming to terms with the life she has just faced in the hotel in Leeds.

Frenzy, as he could be, invites Cate to admire his body, but Cate does not seem to show attraction. Ian's repetitive and monotonous acts, entering the bathroom, holding the gun, getting dressed, taking off his clothes, drinking, coughing, and speaking randomly, reflect his fragmented and insecure personhood. Cate also knows he is not acting appropriately, but she accepts him, knowing he needs someone to listen to. Ian's deteriorating psychological state deeply affects Cate; he does not give her a bright perspective for finding a job, though she claimed that she has applied for a job at an advertising agency, but out of disdain and pessimism, he bewilders her mercilessly.

Affected by his venomous manner, she falls into epilepsy. He does his best to wake her as she falls on the ground. He turns her over and lifts her eyelids. He does not know what to do. 'He gets a glass of gin and dabs some on her face. CATE sits bolt upright, eyes open but still unconscious' (p.8). As the play progresses, the events seem to be internal as they both have psychological ailments, and each one is fully aware of their manners and the changes that occur to them. Cate has a more drastic health issue; she cannot cease her hysterical stroke, and she suddenly swoons. Her recurrent epileptic state is the embodiment of her declined and fallen self, losing the total balance and equilibrium of herself. To become unconscious like that, she becomes detached from her reality, illusion, and fantasy encompass her world. Cate

stands motionless and stunning as if she has been brought back to a new world where her eyes can scarcely recognise. The epileptic state plunges her into an abyss of complete delusion. The delusion she has delved into could not make her come to terms with the bitter, fragmented, and traumatic reality she witnesses. Her ability could be limited to visualising reality; the epileptic manner is the vehicle through which she could escape her world; while she is conscious, sober and alert, her mind revolves around piecing together the fragmented actual events before her eyes, what she sees is only destruction and vandalism. Cate cannot escape the severe and fierce reality inside the hotel, where she and Ian are trapped. As she falls into delirium, Ian has no medical methods to treat her; he could only splash a drop of gin on her visage without trying to call a doctor or using a better method. He also does not show a sense of concern or fear when he notices her losing consciousness. Ian is preoccupied with his own troubled life; he chooses to end his life slowly. In so doing, he uses several detrimental ways to do so. Smoking heavily is making him have a rotten lung; he knows that he is killing himself slowly, but he does not care about his demise. The desire for life in him has died, and it is only death that he longs to invite. It is worth noting that Ian's relationship with his wife turned out to be shocking and threw him into an absurd circle where the only solution and treatment he has is taking drugs or becoming drunk the whole time. Ian's failure is that he could not cope with reality. Several painful events have made him suicidal and miserable. As he recounts such drastic stories, the most shocking one that made him in the fraction is that he has discovered that his wife was a lesbian who had been having a carnal relationship with another woman. Consequently, he abandoned her, who did not share intimate feelings with him. It becomes apparent that Kane's characters attempt to unleash their psychological problems in non-linear narrative forms so that they can be healed from their traumatic experiences. Ian is a victim of his family failure as he finds himself unwanted by Stella, his wife, who has no straight or heterosexual feelings for him:

IAN: Yes, his mother' s lesbos. Am not preferable to that.

CATE: Perhaps she is a nice person.

IAN: She does not carry a gun.

CATE: I expect that is too..

IAN: I LOVED Stella still she became a witch and fucked off with a dyke and I love you, though you have not the potential (p.17).

Cate, seemingly the voice of Kane, expresses her tolerant attitude toward lesbians; no matter what Stella's sexuality might be, she could still be a good person. On the contrary, Stella's refusal of Ian destroys his mental state and makes him go astray. Cate can see his psychological insecurities; therefore, she is kind to him and acts as if she is there to cure him. Ian's repressed desire is to be loved by Stella; this emotional gap has made him an alcoholic. More tragically, his son, Mathew, has been showing disdain and hatred toward him. He admits frankly that 'He hates me' (P.17). Ian's sense of abandonment is doubled when he realises that his son does not even like him, he strongly expresses that 'He fucking does' (p.17). Ian's sense of family unity is utterly shattered; therefore, he does not have a positive perspective that family could bring harmony and comfort to him. Thus, there is no need to

build a family, as long as it would spleen vent and begrudge. Don't ever think about it. Who would have children? You have kids, they grow up, they hate you, and you die" (p.20). Real events for Ian are bitter and harsh to embrace; he wants to avoid the world he lives in, but every time he has to make strenuous efforts to create a reality for himself. The only possible way is found through Cate. He tries his utmost to persuade Cate to start a carnal relationship with him; through such a relationship, he believes he would be able to avoid his fragmented reality. He has exerted every effort through the relationship to lead a normal lifestyle. To rebuild a reality, he has to establish an illusion of reality where he will successfully forget his deep-rooted and inevitable reality. In so doing, he craves Cate's love:

IAN: When I am with you, I cannot think about anything else. You take me to another place.

CATE: It is like when I have a fit.

IAN: Just you.

CATE: The world do not exist, not like this. Looks the same, but-Time slows down. A dream I get stuck in, cannot nothing about it. On time. (p.21)

Cate also feels vexed and ennui-filled with what she can perceive through her life. She does not sense the passing of time; it is too slow and stagnant for her. Her pessimistic and bleak vision of life and living comes into light in her dreams. As an existentialist character, she cannot change the course of time. She also seeks comfort and joy in a world she does not see as moving and promising. Indeed, she had already been in a relationship with Ian, but she could not continue it as it was not quite satisfying or fulfilling. Nonetheless, she is split between two realities; the reality she lives in is rather depressing and gloomy, and the other reality is that she messes around to figure out what she could do to alter a different dimension of reality that surrounds her. Cate remains unmoving in her stagnant condition and cannot even change her reality. She is a cold character who does not return the love Ian is showing, violently and impatiently. Her cold attitude causes further perplexity and inner turmoil, which splits his selfhood.

IAN: ... That is why I love you, want to make love to you.

CATE: But you cannot.

IAN: Why not?

CATE: I do not want to.

IAN: Why did you come here?

CATE: You sounded unhappy.

IAN: Make me happy.

CATE: I cannot.

.....

.....

.....

IAN: I love you

CATE: I do not love you. (p.22)

Cate is straightforward with him; her reality disturbs Ian profoundly. He is desperately in need of love and affection. Ian's attitude does not emanate respect as he immediately asks her to fornicate with her. On the contrary, she does not react emotionally to his physical needs. Doubtlessly, her presence makes him express himself more deeply than being by himself. The other pivotal aspect of Ian that Cate does not prefer is that Ian is too decadent, unbalanced, and seemingly from the gutter class. Fortunately, she realises the gap between herself and him, so she tries not to permit herself to be close to him. The more Ian tries to abuse Cate sexually, the more he feels frustrated and psychologically drained. Shockingly, instead of giving him love and care, Cate reacts violently toward him. Her sense of misandry is depicted when she brutally bites his genital male organ. To bite his male genital organ out of vengeance, she is driven by her violent instincts. She is not an image of Eve to proffer kindness and love for a man; hence, she acts as if she is tortured and oppressed by men who think they are superior to her. Her act of biting uncovers her deep-rooted revenge and begrudge toward men. She leaves no space to discuss her situation and position as a woman. She acts brutally, believing that men are incapable of changing their denigrating views on women; therefore, she behaves out of savagery. She aggravates Ian's feeling of security, fearing they are being watched and stalked. Her frightening manner makes Ian more paranoid:

CATE: Will they come?

IAN: I don't know

CATE: (Begins to panic)

IAN: Do not start that again

CATE: I c-c-c-c-c

IAN: Cate I will shoot you myself, you do not stop.

I told you because I love you, not to scare you (p.29).

Both characters have panic attacks. Ian is not able to see her going through epilepsy; he can easily have mental breakdowns, and he seems too ready to shoot her out of fear. Cate feels helpless when she has such fits. She is no longer able to bear his psychological changes and his abusive behaviour. Consequently, she states that she once loved him, but now that he has engaged himself in drugs, debaucheries, and a life of debauchery, she finds him unbearable and fearful 'You are a nightmare (p.32). By the end of the play, the situation and the aura of reality become vague and blurry with the arrival of the soldier intruding and taking the gun from Ian, depriving him of the power he has been establishing against the war outside. The

soldier's presence shatters reality as he brings forth another phase of the outward reality. War is experienced inside the hotel, which makes Cate run away from the scene. The soldier tries to introduce a façade of reality. Upon seeing him, Ian feels his real paranoia immediately respond to him... You have come to shoot me” (p. 40). Fear of being shot paralyses Ian. Suddenly, a bomb explodes, and the soldier falls unconscious. Then, when he comes to his senses, he asks Ian personal questions. Ian affirms he is Welsh. As the war was occurring, the soldier recounts terrifying events in which, with his fellow soldiers, they looted a house, caught a woman and captured the men. They captured the woman and hanged her brother by the testicles on the ceiling. The soldier who has gone through these harsh experiences does not pity Ian; he uses his gun to threaten him. In so doing, Ian is submitted entirely: He grabs Ian forcefully and holds the pistol to his head. In such a dreadful and threatening scene, Ian gives up resisting. Thus, the soldier hungrily drops his pants and violates him. In so doing, the soldier releases a scream at the top of his voice.

The sexual violence the soldier imposes on Ian makes him feel defeated. He was ready to defend himself, but his paranoid self-weakened him to be defensive of himself. The soldier used his power and authority to topple him and make him his poor prey. The war zone the soldier created has made everything fall apart, and he paved the way for every ghastly act to be committed without impunity. None of them could realise what sort of reality they were undergoing, rape, murder, drugs, and sexual violence weakened their perception of how reality. The more violent the situation was, the more they aspired to plunge into delirium through drugs and overdrinking alcohol.

5.1. The Shadow of War

Historically, the Bosnian War occurred between 1992 and 1995. It was a hard travail resulting from the breakup of former Yugoslavia and its adverse consequences. After the separation of Slovenians and Croats from former Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Serbs rejected the Bosnians' declaration of independence. To attempt to provide some protection for the Serbian territory and population, the Bosnian Serbs' forces advanced into the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and war erupted. Bosnian Serbs were aiming to create their Bosnian Serb through a war which was defined as genocide, ethnic cleansing and rape (Othman, 2020). Commenting on Kane's plays, Morley (2000) proclaims that the Bosnian war influences the setting of *Blasted*, and the playwright uses the traumatic time to shape her characters amid the gloomy war atmosphere.

The play ostensibly delineates the dire wreckage of war and its impact on society. It brought panic, uneasiness, fear, distress and insecurity. As Ayoub Dabiri (2012) states, Kane's *Blasted* is labelled as a war play. However, critics find difficulties in locating and pinpointing the exact destination of the battlefield in her play, as the dramatist does not explicitly dramatise it before the eyes of the audience; she instead sheds light on its horrific consequences. Kane states that the war inspired her to write *Blasted*, though the audience knows that war is occurring in Leeds rather than in Bosnian cities. Historically, as the war

was waging, tens of thousands of civilians fell victim when Sarajevo was ambushed ferociously by the Serbian soldiers, where women in particular were captured and sexually violated at the camps in Serbia. Kane refers to the war event as she declares:

" My intention was to be absolutely truthful about abuse and violence. All of the violence in the play has been carefully plotted and dramatically structured to say what I want about war. The logical conclusion of the attitude that produces an isolated rape in England is the rape camps in Bosnia. And the logical conclusion to the way society expects men to behave in war. "(Chramosilová, 2013,p.18)

The effect of war takes a heavy toll on Ian, the journalist who is being traumatised by the atrocities of war. To be defensive and protective of himself, he carries a revolver. His psychological state deteriorates, and he often desires to use the revolver against himself. The everlasting war makes him feared as well. His closeness with Cate emanates much of his insecurities and unbridled fears. Both unfairly and innocently pay for the war's dire arrival. As the playwright asserts in the above quotation, the most devastating effect of war is raping. Her play is replete with such abusive and cruel incidents that the audience can uncover raping scenes conspicuously. Kane vividly pictures sexual abuses gradually; first and foremost, Ian's insecurity incites him to try to abuse Cate sexually, whereas she also fearfully reacts to war through her sudden strokes. Though Ian has story writing skills, he is seemingly supposed to be a cultured man, but the chaos of war has left him neither hope nor a single positive view or inspiration to cultivate. Ian's libido is active, and he does not conceal his sexual fantasies; therefore, he removes his clothes blatantly in front of Cate to excite her sexually. His debut is brief and mythical:

" Looks down at his clothes. Then gets up, takes them off, and stands in front of her, naked" Ian attempts to dress butt fumbles with embarrassment. He gathers his clothes and goes into the bathroom where he dresses. Cate eats, and giggles over the sandwiches. Ian returns, fully dressed. He picks up his gun, unloads, and reloads it". (p.7)

His sexual advances are expressed through war events as if war is showing no room for etiquette and manners on how he must behave appropriately. After being stripped of his clothes, he forces her to be kissed. Cate does her best to shun Ian when he tries to approach her against her will. Nonetheless, when he sates his desire, Cate pushes him away and wipes her mouth as if she has been feeling dirtied or impure. For Cate, Ian is acting brutally toward her; therefore, she is not satisfied with his abusive manner. Ian realises that human morality often falls in wartime, and there is the possibility of doing anything that interests or gives pleasure. Like any soldier at war, he is hungry for sex. Ian wishes to avoid the reality of war; he reverts to abusing Cate frequently, kissing her violently, which calms him down. But as he read a newspaper on the phone to report the murder of a British tourist called Samantha, whose body was found in New Zealand. Suddenly, a bomb exploded, and he felt more uneasy. The news he reads intensifies his feelings to be numb, as if what war is overwhelmingly bringing is normal and human. For this reason, Ian acts as if there are no

moral boundaries. Brimmed unconsciously with horror images, he further commences to harass Cate more violently and forcefully. This time, he overuses his masculine power to dominate her. Eventually, Ian molests her against her will and obtains self-pleasure while using her as a mere sexual tool. Meanwhile, Cate does not show any intimacy toward him as she feels that she is being exploited sexually. He pushes him away out of distress and disgust.

Ian disregards Cate's distress when he approaches her; he knows that she is hypersensitive when she is forced to be touched and sexually manipulated. At such critical moments, Cate suffers from epilepsy, and her epileptic manner turns out to be strong and uncontrolled. But for Ian, how much she may suffer is of no significance as long as he can use her as a sexual object. Ian, likely to have moral values, is too vulgar and obnoxious. War changes him to act sadistically; even the language he uses is not the language of journalists. Do not pity me, Cate. You do not have to fuck me because I am dying, but do not push your cunt in my face then take it away because I stick my tongue out" (p.14). Moreover, war has built an air of absurdity, and both Ian and Cate have fallen into abject misery. They do not have a clear vision of their future lives as they are confined in the hotel. He eventually forces Cate to engage in self-pleasure despite her unwillingness. 'Takes her hand and grabs it around his penis, keeping his hand around the top. Like this, he masturbates until he comes with some genuine pain. He releases Cate's hand, and she withdraws it" (p.14). With time, Cate also comes to the realisation that she can also turn out to be aggressive and sadistic. Suddenly, she acts violently and unpredictably when Ian announces in a loud voice that he is a murderer. In their confined lodge they their physical and psychological health deteriorate; Cate begins to cough and urinate blood, and when she answers the call of nature, she feels much pain. In such poor living conditions, Kane has reestablished the theatre of the absurd throughout the outbreak of war. Ian and Cate embody absurd characters who struggle to make meaning of their lives in vain. Each one of them suffers from unhealed and chronic diseases that cannot be cured easily. Ian already has an addiction; he is also obsessed with sex profusely and effusively. He is too weak to try to make his life better. In their helpless and appalling condition, Ian's futile attempt to make her feel better fails.

CATE: I cannot piss. It is just blood.

IAN: Drink lots of water

CATE: Or shit. It hurts.

IAN. It will heal. (p.32).

Ian lacks medical information on how he could help her heal. In such a sickening state, there is the sound of the door being knocked on. 'They both bolt jump. " Cate DO NOT ANSWER IT DO NOT ANSWER IT DO NOT ANSWER IT" she dives on the bed and puts her head under the pillow" (p.32). Fear of war has paralysed them into staying inside the hotel. Their fear of danger is best evoked when they hear a knock on the door. Cate already hides herself in the bathroom, while Ian has no other choice than opening the door; he does his best to keep it locked, but the power of war could destroy and unlock iron doors. Unable to resist keeping

the door locked, the soldier breaks in despite Ian's resistance to keep it unlocked. Outside is a Soldier with a sniper's rifle. Ian tries to push the door shut and draw his revolver. The Soldier pushes the door open and takes Ian's gun easily, the two stand, both surprised, staring at each other". (p.34)

The arrival of the soldier makes him perceive that he is experiencing war on his own; without his gun, he is powerless and seething with paralysing fear. The soldier realises that there is a girl with Ian, and he searches for her in the bathroom, but she is already gone. He realises that the hotel is shambolic and dishevelled, and anything could be possible. He has the sensation that Ian and Cate have been sleeping together, thus once he looks around, he declares that he feels that a sexual intercourse has been performed; therefore he wants to satisfy his carnal desires at wartime; this time provides him the opportunity to release himself of the carnal pressure that has been accumulated: He wants to conjure up in his mind's eyes the beauty of Cate; thus he eagerly asks where she is; his call for her is revealed as he wonders her whereabouts:

SOLDIER: What is she like?

IAN: (Does not answer)

SOLDIER: Is she soft?

SOLDIER: What is she like?

IAN: (Does not answer)

SOLDIER: Is she soft?

Is she-? (p.36).

There is little time to discuss anything. Suddenly, the hotel is shaken by a bomb. A mortar bomb has blasted the hotel. 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" (p. 37). The scene is shocking, and the two are severely affected by the bomb. They lose their consciousness, and the sound of bombing petrifies them. When they both come to their senses, Kane better characterises the soldier, who behaves worse than Ian. He is hungry for anything he can grab:

SOLDIER: The drink.

IAN: Empty

The Soldier takes the bottle and drinks the last mouthful.

IAN: Worse than me. (p.37)

The soldier exploits his power to dominate Ian when asking Ian to give him a cigarette, he threatens him, "Because I have got a gun and you have not" (p.38). The soldier acts like his master as he continuously gives him orders. Then he recounts war atrocities to Ian, where he becomes more traumatised than the soldier himself. Hearing traumatic events could inflict trauma on the hearer. The soldiers shove their way inside breaking down the door to find out that a little boy has hidden himself out of fear, finding him out, they shot him to death instantly; the soldiers went into each room in search of whatever and whoever they could see, while finding three men and to copulate with the women inside. The youngest among them was a twelve-year-old girl, who was forced to give him physical pleasure. The little girl seemed to be helplessly crying from her heart. He shoots her father. Upon seeing the murder scene, the brother shrieked, and he was also hanged from the ceiling by his genitals.

Armstrong (2015) explains that in Kane's war, the sexual violence has been manipulated as much as weapons have been used during the war. Frantically, they seem to have the same function as destroying mankind. The soldier, in committing crimes, seems to have numbed feelings. His sense of guilt and compassion do not awaken him to be aware that he is doing inhumane deeds. Raping and killing appeared to be out of question. In this scene, Ian is trapped; he is unable to escape, and he has to submit himself entirely. The soldier is only repeating the atrocities that other soldiers committed. Shocked and traumatised by what he has witnessed before his eyes how the other soldiers raped his girlfriend Col and then mutilated her body. The soldier realises their crimes; he thus wishes to retaliate against everyone he meets. This traumatic event turned his life upside down, leading to more ferocious war crimes. For him even the soldiers are not villainous creatures: " You do not know fuck all about me. I went to school. I made love with Col. Bastards killed her. Now I am here...." (p.46).

Armstrong (2015, p. 75) further espouses stories that the soldier recurrently narrates to Ian are inferred to express fetishism. He even takes much pleasure from recalling stories that describe sexual acts. At the same time, such stories threaten Ian because he fears being his sexual prey like others. He attempts to trap Ian into his vicious circle, Ian is not fascinated as he is already in turmoil of war, he prefers to be killed than to be raped by the soldier. Helplessly, Ian falls victim to his repressed sexual desires.

Ian is treated like a woman when the soldier rapes him, first kissing him, in so doing the soldier presumably reimagines his former beloved Col whom he used to kiss tenderly, he pictures Ian to be her embodiment 'You smell like her' (P.47). Then he uses his revolver to prevent Ian from defending himself. Ian does not seem to be enjoying the forced sex; he can only be in excruciating pain. Accordingly, Armstrong opines that 'Kane presents Ian's rape in plain view, rendering it as trauma that is obvious and definable...its impact on the victim is immediately apparent. (2015, pp 76-77). To be raped Armstrong concludes that 'Ian loses status and masculine power when the Soldier rapes him' (p.74). Obviously, McCorry (2017) stresses on significance of the setting of the play, he maintains that 'The play' s setting—a "very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world" (4). The steep hotel is like a concentration camp where Ian enjoys his freedom with Cate. He is doing anything he wants, masturbating, taking drugs, and carrying a gun.

The costly hotel is dirty and appalling; it has a repugnant and revolting smell. The play's accustomed place, the hotel, seemed to be a haunting building, *Blasted*, terrorised, destroyed, dirtied and eventually dehumanised. This is all due to the emergence of war, which has affected the hotel. The shadow of war has blurred the reality of what could be perceived as a comfortable hotel setting where one can enjoy for a few nights. The irony of the hotel has challenged the views of the readers and the audience altogether, as the perception of reality has been utterly shattered.

5.2. Cannibalistic Nature

Byard (2023) states that cannibalism means eating the flesh of the same species. Initially, it is derived from the Spanish language '*Cannibals*'. The name is used to refer to the Indians in the Caribbean Sea who were thought to be cannibals. Eating one's flesh is normally common among animals such as fish, insects, etc. Blurton (2007) illustrates that the act of cannibalism appeared in classical literature, especially in mythical stories. It is associated with barbarism and the colonisation of one country by another. The first appearance of such a barbarian act is depicted in Homer's *Odyssey*. More precisely, the first English epic records cannibalistic events. Grendel has a penchant for human flesh. Throughout the poem, he kidnaps men from Hrothgar's court and takes them into his den and eats their flesh nightly. Indeed, cannibalism is considered one of the most ancient types of taboos that have survived until now. Siefkes reports:

" Cannibalism has been called "the last taboo ", the strongest of all taboos, and "mankind's oldest taboo. It can be doubted that no other taboos remain in modern society, and Reay Tannahill rightly rejects the last appellation, pointing out that "the tabu on eating human flesh is by no means the oldest tabu in the world." But there can be no doubt that the taboo against practicing cannibalism is very strong—so strong, in fact, that it may seem as if "the taboo on cannibalism has become transformed. " (Siefkes,2022, p.1)

Kane's characters engender uncanny and animalistic instincts. The dystopian world they live in has changed their human conduct. Most of the aggressive acts in the play are related to sexual violence that erupts. Like the volcano, such sexual cannibalistic acts begin to come to the surface. Early in the play, Ian maniacally and animalistically attempts to seduce Cate; first and foremost, he projects his naked body in front of her like a mythical figure. She looks at him with a giggle. Doubtlessly, she figures out which part of his body can be eaten when he does a strip. Cate chooses the most sensitive body organ, the manhood, to inflict pain on him and to deprive him of his manhood. The member is the part of the body that women mostly tend to be dominated and oppressed by as a sign of manhood. To try to strip him of his virility and potency, she wishes to be physically as strong as he is. She could have 'penis envy' or penis complex that is why she chooses his member to cut with her teeth. Cate's apparent cannibalistic aspect is visible as she attacks him ferociously to mutilate him, choosing sensitive parts of his body. Ian does not have a clear vision of why Cate is targeting one part of his body to cut; as war is looming large, he fails to have a clear view. While Cate is alert and conscious of what is happening in every spot of the city, that is why she is in control of Ian.

Penis envy is a phrase pioneered by Sigmund Freud, within his sexual theories he asserts that girls at an early age as they observe their body, thus they realise that a part of their body, mainly the male sexual organ is missing. Therefore, they grow the desire for the male sexual organ to possess not to be a man but to own his manly traits and authority. (1925). The cannibalistic scene is the reactionary and revolting scene that Cate performs because she has already been forced to give Ian sexual pleasure forcefully, and she begins to cough and retch. She puts her fingers to her throat and produces a hair. She holds it up and looks at Ian in disgust. She spits.” (p.32) Armstrong comments that the hair she takes out from her throat is Ian’s pubic hair, which she was forced to provide him sexual pleasure. In so doing, she is enraged to take revenge.

The dystopian setting that Kane created lamentably inculcates pain on each of her characters. The horrifying and cannibalistic nature of the stories that the soldier recounts psychologically sicken Ian. It is beyond him to bear the trauma he hears; his dreadful retreat from shocking stories is evidenced when he tries to stop the soldier from mentioning the murder of his girlfriend. The soldier gives a more detailed, grotesque, and ghastly description of how his beloved Col was murdered. He is therefore more traumatised than Ian ‘Col, they buggered her. Cut her throat, hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door. (p.45). Everything around the characters seems to be threatening and dehumanising. The soldier comrades act as brutally as the soldier himself. Kane depicts more drastic and cannibalistic images throughout the traumatic experiences the soldier has undergone ‘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” ... I am fucking starving (p.47). Not only people in war times turned cannibalistic but in times of famine men tried to eat human flesh to satisfy their hunger. Here the word ‘starving” could imply that the soldier has insatiable appetite for human flesh. He eventually loses his most dignified human nature. Hence, to seek survival, he only needs to be a cannibal. They have abducted his girlfriend and mutilated her entirely. The cannibalistic and barbaric nature of Kane’s *Blasted* visualises a society of savage criminals; no good person appears in her scenes. This makes her play more emotional and exciting. However, in the very last scene, everyone behaves barbarically. The lawless society of Kane has deprived the soldier of his human traits. He alters his desires into those of animals as he becomes cannibalistic himself:

" The Soldier grips Ian's head in his hands.

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 " (p.48).

The soldier, while being brimmed with torturous and cannibalistic footage, is unable to forget what has happened to his beloved Col. Before committing suicide, he unconsciously utters how the army soldiers abhorrently ate the eyes of Col. He feels pity for his love, who the soldiers have bitterly tortured. Doubtlessly, the soldier is heavily loaded with traumatic events; he is sick and unable to release his mind of the atrocities he has witnessed and committed throughout his life. The soldier has the proclivity only to inflict pain on whoever he encounters. His prey, Ian, is deeply trapped in his web of sadism. He enjoys making Ian feel pain, and the nature of the torture is so unbearable that it makes Ian shout out of pain. Ian, on the one hand, allowed himself to be tortured; on the other hand, he enjoys being in pain. Astonishingly, in this sadomasochist scene, the playwright reveals an aspect of human nature in which humans have the faculty to be cannibals. Eventually, the soldier puts an end to his life. Meanwhile, Cate enters with a baby, taking it from a mother who could not safeguard her child during the war. Cate, in this scene, is changing. She shows everyday human kindness to the child, desiring to feed it. Ian is resentful and does not like to keep the baby 'They shit and cry. Hopeless'. Ian is dejected and does not want to continue living; he no longer has a sympathetic attitude toward family life, and he only desires to shoot himself. His persona, his identity, and his whole being are split. Being in such shapeless form, he only aspires to death. He also condemns the culprit who ate his eyes.

CATE: May as well look.

IAN: Fucking bastards ate it.

CATE: It will die.

IAN: Needs its mother's milk (p.51).

There is no milk for the female baby; she dies of hunger. Cate buries her in the hotel. As time passed and there was no food to be found, Cate was starving; she attempted to get out of the hotel, hoping to find some food. But Ian, the cannibal, warns her 'Cate, it is dangerous, there is no food. (p.56), For there lurk cannibals who would turn off her flesh and satisfy their hunger on her. Ian is trying to extinguish his cannibalistic hunger by eating the baby. His scavenging manner is clear through the stage directions:

" Ian tears the cross out of the ground, rips up the boards and lifts the baby's body out. He eats the baby. He puts the sheet the baby was wrapped in back in the hole. A beat, then he climbs after it and lies down, head poking out of the floor. He dies with relief " (p.57).

From an absurd state of being, Ian turns into a cannibal. He is the victimiser and the victim too. He has the sensation that his life is futile; therefore, he contemplates the only possible solution as ending his useless life. Throughout the stage directions, Kane alludes that Ian dies in relief; he could no longer survive on the baby's flesh. For Kane, eventually, death is a relief for the nihilistic, absurdist, cannibalistic creature like Ian. According to Mohammed and Pishkar (2023), Kane's purpose in setting brutal scenes on stage is to depict the detrimental effects of it on mankind and his inner being or psyche. He further clarifies that Kane's depiction of violence is the human cul-de-sac condition that one must confront, no matter how hard the difficulty or challenge. Show its real sources and harmful effects upon the human body and spirit.

Overall, in *Blasted*, the playwright revealed several aspects of human traits. In severe and traumatic situations like war, her characters turned hostile, sadistic, and cannibalistic. The play carefully stressed the effects of war and how it made each of her characters, Ian, Cate, and the soldier, commit horrendous crimes, as war has no moral values. The dystopian world of Kane has made each character hold a blurry and vague vision of reality, as the shadow of encompassing each, each one tried to find a way out. In vain, they fell victims of war, no matter how hard they tried to act normally.

Conclusion

Eventually, in this study, the researcher voiced a human cry for survival in a world devoured by violence and suffering in Sarah Kane's play *Blasted*. The research revealed that even at the end of the twentieth century, man is still unable to find a haven of peace due to the occurrence of war. The trauma of war, as the main coincidence and theme permeating the play, shattered every possible hope for future aspirations. The study shows that war is also used as an excuse to plunge deeper into the human psyche to see to what extent humans are capable of committing ghastly crimes. The postmodern man turns hostile as his morals are dropped when the shadow of war enters through the door. The war has created room for bestiality and bellicosity for both main characters, who once were lovers; war changed them into formidable foes. Through characters' inhuman deeds, the researcher establishes the conviction that man becomes like an animal when laws are broken, and man becomes free of regulations and rules to abide by. Kane uses the atmosphere of war to enable her characters to depict an aspect of war; each of her characters fails to picture reality, thus their perspective of showing reality becomes blurry and vague because war has traumatised them desperately.

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