

12-2008

# The endangered representation of sexual violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*

Dina Zhurba

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses>

---

## Recommended Citation

Zhurba, Dina, "The endangered representation of sexual violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*" (2008). *Master's Theses*. Paper 700.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu](mailto:scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu).

THE ENGENDERED REPRESENTATION OF SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE IN SARAH KANE'S  
*BLASTED*

By

DINA ZHURBA

B.A., Dnepropetrovsk National University, 2005

M.A., Dnepropetrovsk National University, 2006

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English

December, 2008

Richmond, Virginia

**The Engendered Representation of Sexual Violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, Dina Zhurba, Master of Arts in English, University of Richmond, 2008, Ilka Saal.**

In *Blasted*, Kane represents how incidents of rape highlight, exacerbate and solidify the unevenness of power distribution between men and women in the modern world and provides a new perspective at what we might call “rape in general” – a transhistorical phenomenon of rape as a practice of violence towards the female victim. Through a detailed analysis of the unique representational circumstances of the multiple scenes of rape, such as Cate’s meaningful absence in Ian’s scene of rape, the author of the essay comes to a conclusion that rape is and remains an engendered practice. However, along with reaffirming the depth of the fundamental binary opposition of masculine and feminine in the social construction of rape, Kane introduces a new dimension to the issue of sexual violence through the vividly represented physical rape of the feminized male body, questioning the status of rape as the female victim-only space.

## The Engendered Representation of Sexual Violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*

Addressing the issue of rape has always been an extremely precarious endeavor. Men and women in the past were no less reluctant than we are today to deal with the problem. Therefore it is not surprising that a number of historians who have attempted to write the history of rape concluded that it would be logical to redefine the subject, considering the history of the silencing of rape, rather than that of rape itself.<sup>1</sup> While Sarah Kane's play *Blasted* is about many things, such as war, gender issues, and dysfunctional society, what really gets under the audience's skin is precisely the playwright's insistence on the explicit representation of rape scenes. The author shuffles the subjects and objects of rape and varies the modes she uses to represent the four different acts of rape depicted in the play.

The story line develops so that the ugliest rape in the play happens to the male character Ian, which may mislead the reader to conclude that finally the silence of the rape history was heard and the male victimizer was punished through rape as a form of justice for all the atrocities he had been inflicting on women for centuries. However, I could not help but wonder what it is in the text that works against feeling empathy for Ian as a victim of rape or against interpreting it as an allegorical revenge on all male violators. The play instead presents rape as a practice that like no other perpetuates the existence of gender difference, inequality and otherness. Why does the symbolic female become the object of rape regardless of the fact that the only female character Cate is not

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Baines, "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation," *ELH* 65.1 (1998), 69.

physically present at the scene of Ian's rape? And why does the author veil the actual rapes of Cate? As well as why did the feminist critics express relative lack of interest in a play dealing with rape written by a woman playwright?

On the surface one may conclude from the play that Kane was able to come up with a new take on rape and change the attitude towards rape as a centuries-old story about the rapable female and the raping male. In the light of the feminist attempts to eliminate gender roles, the play could be interpreted as a progressive aesthetic representation of how finally the fundamental binary opposition of the feminine and masculine could be destroyed, providing the narrative about the raped man. Yet, I contend that although the only vividly represented rape occurs to Ian, it is only Cate who is raped in the social sense, thus confirming the patriarchal construction of the object of rape as exclusively feminine. This formulation of rape has been advocated by a number of feminist scholars, such as MacKinnon and De Lauretis, who unanimously treated rape as a woman's experience, assigning the roles of victim and perpetrator to the female and male respectively. In spite of Kane's adherence to the classic feminist critique of rape in the construction of social space for the scenes of rape in *Blasted*, the author's decision to use the body of the male character for the metonymic representation of Cate's rape adds a new dimension to what we might call "rape in general" – a transhistorical phenomenon of rape as a practice of violence towards the female victim.

In examining the question of engendered violence and the peculiarities of its representation in *Blasted*, I shall begin by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the argument. In order to examine how rape operates in the play as an engendered kind of

sexual violence, I will define and interpret the social structure of rape that always follows the hierarchy of the symbolic feminine and masculine in spite of the biological sex of the object. Secondly, I will look at the unique image of Sarah Kane as a female playwright who always denied any sort of compliance with feminist ideas. The playwright's apparent indifference to her own gender and insistence on its irrelevance are particularly interesting to note since *Blasted* is above all a play about gender. Then, I will turn to the history of rape in representation and give a brief overview of the historic allusion to the rape camps in Bosnia that Sarah Kane herself indicated as an inspiration for the play. The final section will be devoted to the textual analysis of the unique representational circumstances of the four rapes in *Blasted*: Cate's, Ian's, the rape of the Soldier's girlfriend, and Cate's probable rape again when she is off stage.

The first decade of scholarship on *Blasted* focused primarily on Ian's rape, implicitly celebrating it as an aesthetic attempt to get done with rape as a deeply engendered sexual practice. Only some critics pointed out the lack of scholarly interest in the underrepresented scene of Cate's rape as if it were a "warm-up" before the major course at the feast of cruelty, once again presenting the subject of a woman's rape as a common sexual practice both in the domestic and war context. However, no one has discussed Cate's meaningful absence in Ian's scene of rape or the final act when Cate comes back after probably having been raped again.

Although Kane purposefully downplays Cate's rape by Ian, while vividly presenting both his rape and the atrocities described by the soldier who rapes him, the playwright generously scatters hints for the reader to indicate that Cate, as a matter of

fact, never escapes from the rape scene through the bathroom window after the bomb's explosion. Her function in *Blasted* as an object of rape remains consistent throughout the play and serves as a visible manifestation of gender difference and otherness, posing rape as a deeply engendered social practice.

### **The Hierarchy of the Symbolic Feminine and Masculine in Rape**

Before looking in greater detail at the text of *Blasted*, it is crucial to define and interpret the term "engendered sexual violence." When one first surveys the representation of family and sexual violence in general, it appears that the object of violence almost always remains feminine. In spite of the agreement among statistical studies that in cases of family and sexual violence over 90 percent of victims are female and 97 percent of the assailants are males, researchers continue using such gender-neutral expressions as "spouse abuse" or "marital violence."<sup>2</sup> In other words, even as empirical studies claim to remain unbiased and objective, they cannot avoid and indeed engage in the deeply engendered rhetoric of violence. In relation to *Blasted*, it turns out that Ian's rape is a similar practice of engendered violence, in the form of representation. Regardless of the author's resistance to the ideology and relevance of gender, the play's structure presents the endangered feminine, deeply enmeshed in the centuries-old imbalance of power.

Rape is "engendered" in the sense that regardless of whether the victim of rape is male, female or an inanimate object (as in "rape of nature"); it is always perceived socially and culturally as feminine. As a number of feminist critics, such as Teresa de

---

<sup>2</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender," in *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 242.

Lauretis, contend, rape is violence done exclusively to a feminine other,<sup>3</sup> which makes rape a deeply engendered form of sexual violence. While it may not be exclusively practiced on women, “rape is sexual essentially because it rests on the very social difference between the sexes. If men rape women, it is precisely because they are women in a social sense;” and when a male is raped, he, too, is raped “as a woman,” Lauretis writes (244). MacKinnon likewise argues, “To be rapable, a position which is social, not biological, defines what a woman is.”<sup>4</sup>

Kane seems to pick up on this contention when she meticulously constructs binary gender oppositions between a naïve and impressionable Cate and a masochistic Ian on the one hand, and on the other hand, later on reverses this by ascribing to Ian the role of the passive and weak (feminine) victim of aggressive masculine violence (Soldier). In this regard, Kane seems to remain within the feminist view of rape as an act of gendered sexual violence, revealing the socially constructed story of male and female sexuality, difference, and power that makes women (or those in the social position of women) essentially vulnerable and mute objects.

### **Author and Gender**

For writers and literary critics confronting the entanglement of rape and representation, the answer to Beckett’s question “what does it matter who is speaking?”<sup>5</sup> appears to be

---

<sup>3</sup> Lauretis, “The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender,” 249.

<sup>4</sup> Qtd. in *Rape and Representation*, eds. Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 119.

<sup>5</sup> Beckett’s question appears in *Texts for Nothing*, trans. Beckett (London: Calder & Boyers, 1974), 16. It supplies a direction” for Michel Foucault’s “What is an Author?” Also, accompanies Andreas Huyssen’s discussion of alternative subjectivity that would challenge “the ideology of the subject (as male,

particularly crucial. De Lauretis concludes that it is mostly a prerogative of the female authors to talk about “confrontation and reconceptualization of the female’s experience of sexuality.”<sup>6</sup> Thus Kane’s position should be considered legitimate and trustworthy with regard to the assertion that it is women’s business to write about rape. However, a number of observers have drawn attention to the tensions surrounding Sarah Kane’s position as a female playwright. She has been associated with both the male-dominated circles of the “young and the angry” British playwrights and feminists authors -- contrary to her own understanding of herself as a “gender neutral” writer.

Whereas a previous generation of female dramatists was perhaps more willing to see their work as an expression of their gender, Kane fiercely rejected being categorized as either a feminist or a woman writer, seeing such labels as inherently limiting. In one of her interviews she vigorously stated: “I don’t want to be representative of any biological or social group of which I happen to be a member.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Elaine Aston’s book *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights, 1990-2000* contains a whole section devoted to Kane’s theatre. Since Kane denies any sort of compliance with feminist ideas, it is no wonder that Aston identified her as the most controversial author included in the study on feminist playwrights for in the mid to late 1990s she was more

---

white, and middle-class”): “Mapping the Postmodern,” *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 212-213. Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver raise this question in relation to the women who attempt to address the experience of rape, whether in the police station, the courtroom, the novel, or the critical essay. Who is speaking has a great deal to do with whether or not the victim, most commonly but not always a woman, is believed and whether a case will be made against the assailant. They come to a conclusion that in the case of rape, who is speaking is all that matters: Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver, introduction to *Rape and Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Lauretis, “The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender,” 241.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with the author in *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting*, eds. Natasha Langridge and Heidi Stephenson (London: Methuen, 1997), 80.

frequently grouped with male writers. For instance, she was mentioned in Michael Billington's list of "young guns of British drama" and was mostly considered as part of the male-dominated circles of the young and the angry.<sup>8</sup> She was repeatedly hailed as "the bad girl of the stage" and "the karate kid of the British theatre" or, as one reviewer wrote, "Kane has proved she can flex her muscles alongside the toughest of men."<sup>9</sup>

In the immediate years after *Blasted* premiered, one of the ways of dealing with Kane's youth and gender (apparently, women are not supposed to write such violent and brutal plays) was to represent her as an honorary male. Jane Edwardes read *Blasted* as Kane's strategy "to beat male playwrights at their own game."<sup>10</sup> Mary Luckhurst expressed her doubt as to whether Kane's rapid rise would have happened at all had she been a man,<sup>11</sup> since until Kane's enlistment the tradition of representing violence had been mostly male.

Kane's own lack of interest in the ideas of feminism and her consistent denial of being identified as a feminist playwright could have been one of the reasons why feminist scholars (with the exception of Aston) expressed relative indifference to her plays. It is particularly surprising in the context of the discussions prompted by *Blasted*. The fact that the playwright strove by all means to destroy sexual difference with regard to both her image and her characters could serve as a good reason for the feminist scholars to

---

<sup>8</sup> Elaine Aston, *Feminist views on the English stage women playwrights, 1990-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.

<sup>9</sup> *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British and Irish dramatists since World War II*, ed. John Bull. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005), 117.

<sup>10</sup> Qtd. in Mary Luckhurst, "Infamy and Dying Young: Sarah Kane, 1971-1999," *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, eds. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 108.

<sup>11</sup> Luckhurst, "Infamy and Dying Young: Sarah Kane, 1971-1999," 109.

study *Blasted* as a play attempting to destroy a fundamental binary opposition of masculine and feminine. Why would feminist critics not be interested in a play about a middle-aged man who rapes a girl and later in the play gets raped by a random soldier? However, even the popular interpretation of the play as Kane's revenge on men for the sexual abuse inflicted on women did not look appealing in the feminist circles. I suspect that in the case of *Blasted*, this could have been because of the critics' intuitive recognition of the play's deeply engendered representation of rape, for rape like no other practice perpetuates the existence of gender difference, inequality and otherness.

Cate gets consistently raped throughout the play. Literally, she is raped twice: in the beginning of the play (accompanied by the metaphor of scattered flowers that serves as a frame for the narrative, reappearing in the end of *Blasted*) and later outside of the hotel. Symbolically, she is also raped via language by various practices of social disempowerment (for instance, her fainting spells and Ian's verbal abuse), as well as in the scene of Ian's metonymic rape. Whether she stays in a hotel or makes it to the outside world, what awaits her is nothing but rape as if it is a common condition for a contemporary woman. The character of Cate in this respect conforms to the traditional feminist critique of the gender binaries, outlined above by de Lauretis, positing victimhood as feminine (the only other role Cate takes on later is gaining power by the end of the play through performing maternal care for the victimized Ian). When the Soldier realizes that Cate has escaped the Leeds hotel through the bathroom window, he immediately predicts that no matter what she will be raped out there. She belongs to the

class of women (which can also contain biological men, as in the case with Ian) and stays within the category of traditional social and sexual relations.

Along with Aston, a number of male critics also tried to ascribe a feminist agenda to Kane's aesthetics. Christopher Innes noted that Sarah Kane along with Caryl Churchill marked a new development in feminist drama as a potentially energizing force at the end of the millennium, taking the feminist principle that "the personal is political" to its extreme."<sup>12</sup> Graham Saunders, on the contrary, argues that Kane's theatre marks a break with a tradition of women's dramatic writing that generally takes the "woman's side," instead, it is the damaging effects of a "diseased male identity" that are central to Kane's theatre.

And yet, even though Kane refused to position herself as either a woman or an "honorary" male, the critics made it their point to categorize her as either of the two. I assume that one of the reasons why this whole debate developed is probably that the issue of gender is one of the key themes in Kane's works and addressing gender seems to be inseparable from the author's gender, especially when they address the issue of rape.

Gender was a controversial and much disputed subject for Kane's contemporaries. The playwright David Edgar, commenting on the rebirth of British theatre in the 1990s puts its ascendancy down to the rediscovery of a shared subject matter – its exploration of masculinity: "whatever the distinctions between them, these plays address masculinity and its discontents as demonstrably as the plays of the early 1960s addressed class and those of the 1970s the failures of democracy. The decline of the dominant roles of men –

---

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Innes, "Sarah Kane (1971-1999): the poetry of madness in violent dreams," *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 529-530.

in the workplace and in the family – is probably the biggest single story of the last thirty years in the western countries.”<sup>13</sup> With that in mind, it is no wonder that Kane had a great interest in the subject and shared similar views. The main male character in *Blasted*, Ian, is a vivid presentation of the male identity in crisis. At the close of the play Kane demonstrates a complete rearrangement of power structures - the reversal happens through the symbolic means of food. Cate provides nourishment and protection for the weak and disabled Ian, returning to the hotel room almost as Jane Eyre returned to the blind Mr. Rochester. However, similarly to Jane, this power rearrangement is reduced to maternal actions of a woman taking care of the man’s basic needs, simply reaffirming patriarchy in the play.

From these considerations with regard to the relationship of Kane’s actual gender, to her perception of it, as well as the critics’ view on both, it becomes obvious that it is extremely complicated to identify the playwright’s voice either as singularly female or male. Kane does not represent a particular gender, but rather tries to distance herself from her identity as a woman and speaks as a genderless writer who is very interested in gender issues and the interplay of power between men and women that dominate all her work. With regard to the current study, the absence of a biased, authorial position on gender emphasizes even more how deeply the rhetoric accompanying representation of gender violence is embedded in our culture. While her refusal to be representative of any biological or social group might cause distrust in readers expecting a traditional woman’s perspective on rape, the deeper implication is that addressing rape is not strictly

---

<sup>13</sup> Saunders, Graham, “Love Me or Kill Me”: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes” (Manchester, England: Manchester UP, 2002), 30.

“women’s business” or part of a feminist agenda. Kane’s authorial self-construction suggests that all human beings should question and oppose the scale at which sexual violence has been directed towards the female as well as the establishment of rape as a common cultural practice. By not taking a woman’s side, Kane attempts to answer the question: is it possible to find a way out of the tradition of rape representation, the violence of the gender system and the violence of rhetoric that have always put women (or those who are in the social position of a woman) in a “rapable” position. And what difference does her choice of a male victim make for the women-dominated space of rape victimhood?

### **Rape, Representation and *Blasted***

With regard to the history of rape in representation, *Blasted* both adheres to the tradition of silencing rape (similarly to the treatment of rape in law and social contexts) and defies it due to unique representational circumstances of the rapes in the play, such as the underrepresented scene of Cate’s rape intertwined with the explicit visual presentation of Ian’s rape. Although the issue of rape in *Blasted* has drawn much critical attention, it has been treated rather superficially. Almost any critical response to the play meticulously lists all the cruelties occurring in *Blasted*, and the rape is by far among the first to be mentioned. However, the only scene that has been widely discussed in criticism is the gruesome violence directed against the play’s central male character, Ian, while Cate’s multiple rapes are often overlooked.

The assumption behind much of *Blasted* criticism is to consider Cate's rape a premonition of the violence that will later overwhelm the stage, or as mentioned earlier, as "warm-up" before the major course at the feast of cruelty. I insist that more attention should be paid both to the rapes of Cate in the opening and final scenes, as well as to the role of Cate in Ian's rape.

Kim Solga is one of the first critics to note that the first rape happening in the play - of Cate by Ian - became a curious blind spot in the discussion of Sarah Kane and needs to be explored in greater detail. The major question she raises is why in a play famous for its onstage violence the rape of Cate is left unstaged. She emphasizes the near-total lack of scholarly engagement with the unique representational circumstances of Cate's rape and explores the theoretical and historical dimensions of the "missing"<sup>14</sup> in *Blasted*. Solga is right to point out the underrepresentation of Cate's rape. Particularly, in light of the atrocities that are to invade the play later on, it is rather disturbing to see how the playwright poetically covers up Cate's rape through its metaphoric representation by a bouquet of flowers that has been ripped apart and scattered around the room at the opening of the second act.<sup>15</sup> While Solga does not address directly the issue of gender in *Blasted*, her study is interesting for the current paper in terms of its focus on the history of rape representation and Kane's implicit critique of it. In fact, the critic suggests it

---

<sup>14</sup> Kim Solga in her discussion of the difference of Cate's rape from the other moments of violence in *Blasted* emphasizes the fact that the reader does not get to see it onstage. She connects missing representation of Cate's rape with the history of rape's representation that is rather the history of being effaced within representation. For her complex discussion she coins the term "missing" that stands for the missing of representation of Cate's rape, its very disappearance from stage: Kim Solga, "Blasted's Hysteria: Rape, Realism, and the Thresholds of the Visible," *Modern Drama* 50:3 (Fall 2007), 346-74.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Kane, *Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 2001), 24. All subsequent references to the play are given in parenthesis.

would be legitimate to rename the history of rape representation as “rape’s history of being effaced within representation.”<sup>16</sup> Along with Sean Carney and Christopher Wixson, Solga claims that the choice not to stage Cate’s rape was intentional, launching the author’s critique of the systematic social and generic disavowal of rape in representation. In this reading, *Blasted* is an extended comment on the history of the cultural disavowal of rape,<sup>17</sup> staging the representation of sexual violence as a process of brutal cover-ups.<sup>18</sup>

Solga’s interpretation of Cate’s rape in the beginning of the play is quite progressive and marks a new stage in the criticism on *Blasted*, on top of being one of the few works devoted solely to the complexity of the rape scenes in the play.<sup>19</sup> However, it is surprising that Solga did not include the possible rape of Cate in the end of *Blasted* in her discussion of “missing” acts of violence; neither did she recognize Cate’s physical missing in Ian’s rape – both of these issues will be addressed in this essay.

---

<sup>16</sup> Solga, "Blasted's Hysteria: Rape, Realism, and the Thresholds of the Visible," 349.

<sup>17</sup> Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver went even further and classified the striking repetition of inscription and erasure of rape in literature as a “trope.” It recurs independently in different national literatures and time periods as if it were a stylistic device. One of the conclusions they arrive at is that in spite (or perhaps because) of their erasure, rape and sexual violence have been so ingrained and rationalized through their representation as to appear “natural” and inevitable, to women as to men: Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver, introduction to *Rape and Representation*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>19</sup> Another important study relevant to the current paper is Brannigan’s discussion of the relationship between trauma and representation, and the question of how the overwhelming experience of trauma can be processed in mimetic form. The repetition of rape, from Cate to Ian to the soldier’s girlfriend, serves firstly to remark upon the cyclical pattern of sexual and physical abuse. The soldier can express his pain only by making Ian take the burden of his shame and sense of victimization. While this view might increase our understanding of the rapist’s psychology, it entirely ignores the position of the raped characters, particularly the fate of Cate, as the only victim in the story that never engages in the acts of either verbal or brutal physical violence unlike the male characters. Once again, the study focuses on the pain and shame of the male abusers, reducing the role of the woman (and those placed in the feminized position) to an object that is constantly being acted upon: John Brannigan. *Orwell to the present: literature in England, 1945-2000* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 154.

While the first rape of Cate occurs in times of peace, all subsequent events unfold in the context of warfare, which serves to exacerbate the very terms of sexual violence – gender and power. The war emphasizes the importance of “power” aspect to rape through the figure of the raper in the military uniform with a gun, representing absolute domination of the strong over the weak. The play is set in a hotel room in Leeds; and the author does not provide any contextual information as far as location and the circumstances of the war conflict are concerned. However, given the time when the play was written and the writer’s own commentary on the play and on the Yugoslavian War,<sup>20</sup> critics often position *Blasted* as an allusion to the rape camps in Bosnia. As one critic suggested, treating *Blasted* as a response to the shocking rage of inter-ethnic violence in former Yugoslavia<sup>21</sup> was a way for critics and commentators to place the play in a recognizable historical context.

Sarah Kane defined *Blasted* as an “eventually logical merger of themes that are at first glance utterly distinct, gendered violence and civil war, brought about by news footage from the Bosnian conflict.”<sup>22</sup> Appalled by the atrocities occurring in the Balkans,

---

<sup>20</sup> Kane herself drew comparisons between acts of rape in the play against the part mass rape played in the Serbian policy of “ethnic cleansing”: “I was working on this with some actors and someone said “there’s nothing kind of unusual about the fact that there’s rape camps in Bosnia, or people are raped during war. That’s what war is.” Certainly the Vietcong it seems didn’t rape. And when Western women were captured by the Vietcong and they were finally rescued, the people said, “Oh God, what happened. Were you raped?” – gleefully, for stories, and there just weren’t any. And similarly the Chinese army...Isolated incidents, but it really isn’t kind of used as a war weapon. Certainly, it’s happening in Yugoslavia. It’s being used systematically to degrade Muslim women. And so I tend to think there’s got to be something cultural about that”: Interview with the author in Saunders, “Love Me or Kill Me”: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes,” 48.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Waters, “Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma,” *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama: 1880-2005*, ed. Mary Luckhurst (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 379.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer Emig, “Blasting Jane: *Jane Eyre* As an Intertext of Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*,” *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, eds. Margarete Rubij and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), 393.

she intuitively assumed that there could have been a cultural tradition that accompanied the very possibility of the emergence of rape camps. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that rape has always been considered an unfortunate and inevitable by-product of war. Therefore the phenomenon of rape camps, the deliberate Serbian impregnation of Croatian and Muslim women, became possible partially because of the war context which produces sexual violence on a much larger scale and makes different forms of violence towards civilians socially invisible.

Although Kane was not likely to have been familiar with Yugoslav culture, her play seems to summarize succinctly the prevalent cultural attitude toward women in the Balkans, only aggravated by the war. The cultural tolerance towards acts of rape in the Yugoslav lands, regardless of their treatment in law, produced an attitude that never considered it a serious criminal act and made it exclusively a “women’s business.” Dubravka Ugresic suggests that the war simply activated what had always existed in the male mindset. Although it would be wrong to make a judgment about the whole culture from the words of just one observer, it is striking how similar the views of Ugresic in her cultural review on Yugoslavia and Kane in *Blasted* are on the gender roles of today’s women and men. According to Ugresic, the role of women in the Balkans in war was to lose homes, children, husbands and be raped.<sup>23</sup> Thus the definition of a woman was inherently limited to having a family and being in a rapable position. The extremes of the humble and obeying feminine and aggressive and abusive masculine resulted in the

---

<sup>23</sup> Dubravka Ugresic, *The culture of Lies* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

possibility of rape camps. Kane's text tells a similar story: the above described formula of the hierarchy of power is characteristic of *Blasted* as well.

However, reducing Kane's representations of rape to a mere reenactment or critique of the rape camps would be unjust to the author and the play. Kane stated, "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 is war."<sup>24</sup> Cate gets raped violently when there is no civil war in Leeds yet. She has to protect herself with the gun before the explosion and the soldier's invasion. With the entrance of the soldier these atrocities become as commonplace as the domestic violence preceding the blast. Thus Sarah Kane blurs the line between peace and war in terms of the way women are treated.

A closer analysis of the characters and scenes of rape in the play will demonstrate how the earlier discussed discourses of war and rape, gender and rape, and author and gender all come together in a room in a Leeds hotel where the soldier rapes Ian as a woman in a social sense and thus confirms that the aesthetic representation of gender remains deeply embedded in specific social structures.

---

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in Aston, *Feminist views on the English stage women playwrights, 1990-2000*, 85.

### **Victims and Perpetrators in *Blasted***

In examining the characters in *Blasted*, it is hard to make a clear distinction between victims and perpetrators. The most obvious victim, however, is Cate. She suffers from epilepsy, is unemployed, possibly retarded, sucks her thumb throughout the play and is abused by Ian, a much-older man. Despite continuous ill-treatment from Ian, she is always worried about him and keeps coming back, fully complying with the label of a “masochistic woman.”<sup>25</sup> Her character, however, has changed tremendously by the final scene.

The playwright creates characters that despite showing the ability to inflict mental and physical torture on other people have an “underlying fragility, a desire to be loved and an almost pathetic tenderness that often lurks beneath their cruelty.”<sup>26</sup> Ian’s character constantly oscillates between fear and aggression, love and hate. Amidst insults addressed to Cate in almost every other replica, he manages to say things like, “Cate, love, I am trying to look after you. Stop you getting hurt” (17). Nevertheless, Ian is repeatedly abusive to Cate, as he is abusive to “Pakis,” “retards,” ‘lesbos,’ and women in general. “Tip that wog when he brings up the sandwiches,” he crudely remarks to Cate about the room service (3). Assuming a condescending and patronizing attitude, he demonstrates his authority over others and makes himself appear dominant in their eyes. He acts like he knows best and has the powers to define and name the truth. He doubts Cate’s intellectual potential and hence her chances to get a job, as well as her genuine

---

<sup>25</sup> Critics have often viewed *Blasted* as the exploration of gender relations through “a dichotomy between aggressive self-torturing men and passive masochistic women: Saunders, “Love Me or Kill Me”: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes,” 32.

<sup>26</sup> Saunders, “Love Me or Kill Me”: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes,” 32.

affection for her family, saying that the only reason she loves her mother is because she still needs her (21). Ian's insensitivity is particularly striking in a comment he makes on the news story about a serial killer who slaughtered British tourist Samantha Scrace, saying that it was her fault for she was the one who spread her legs and it was not worth the space to talk about (12-13). Up to the bomb explosion, the play is an exploration of a diseased male identity. Here masculinity is represented in the wounded form of Ian, "anatomized, even celebrated before being brutally punished."<sup>27</sup> However, similarly to Cate's character, Ian, too, experiences a transformation by the end of the play, turning from an aggressive "homophobic and xenophobic alpha-male"<sup>28</sup> in the beginning into an abused and dependent man.

The third character in the play, the Soldier, is another victim in spite of his brutal violence. He is merely taking revenge for the girl he loved: "They bugged her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door" and "ate her eyes" (47). He is crying his heart out as he rapes Ian, and blows his own brains out with the revolver during the night. The author of *Blasted* sees the soldier in some ways as an expression of Ian himself. However, she makes Ian look like a baby in terms of violence.<sup>29</sup> When you look at what Ian does to Cate, it is utterly appalling and it is hard to imagine that anything worse could possibly happen, until the Soldier tells the story about the atrocities he committed before entering the room, as well as his violence represented

---

<sup>27</sup> Waters, "Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma," 381.

<sup>28</sup> Ilka Saal, "Making it Real? Theater in Times of Virtual Warfare," *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 20.2 (Spring 2008), 6.

<sup>29</sup> Saunders, "Love Me or Kill Me": Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes" (Manchester, England: Manchester UP, 2002), 46.

on stage. The soldier introduces the war aspect to rape and the total domination of the male with a gun over a symbolic female defenseless object.

### **Scenes of Rape in *Blasted***

It has been mentioned earlier in the paper that the only rape scene that has received significant scholarly attention is that of Ian by the Soldier, Kim Solga being the only critic who closely studied one of the other rapes in the play – of Cate by Ian in the first act. While the only visually represented rape occurs in the fourth scene, when Ian is raped by the Soldier; the theme of rape is present in *Blasted* from the opening to the final pages, containing possibly four rapes. Below I will discuss the ways the multiple rapes in *Blasted* are represented visually on stage, as well as poetically on the page, in order to see how they relate to each other and what they tell us about rape and Kane's approach to its representation.

The first rape is staged within the tradition of representing the most violent acts off-stage. The audience is protected from witnessing Ian's violation of Cate, however, the playwright provides enough evidence to assume that Cate gets raped between the first and second act. Taking into account the brutality of Ian's visibly represented rape later in the play, it is particularly surprising to note that Kane represents Cate's rape symbolically through the bouquet of flowers. In fact, the metaphor of scattered flowers becomes a motive that runs through the whole play.

When we see Cate the first time on stage, she smells the flowers and smiles (4). After she rejects Ian's invitation to make love, the stage directions that close the first

scene do not imply any violence, but rather end the scene on an almost romantic gesture from Ian: “*Turns away. He sees the bouquet of flowers and picks it up.* Ian: These are for you” (24). From the opening of the following scene we find out that the characters had some kind of fight for “*the bouquet of flowers is now ripped apart and scattered around the room*” (24). The immediate dialogue between Cate and Ian confirms the audience’s suspicion that Cate was raped by Ian:

**Ian** Loved me last night.  
**Cate** I didn’t want to do it.  
**Ian** Thought you liked that.  
**Cate** No.  
**Ian** Made enough noise.  
**Cate** It was hurting (31).

The symbol of the torn bouquet returns in the final scene when Cate comes back to the hotel to find a violated and disabled Ian:

*She looks around and finds two pieces of wood.  
 She tips the lining out of Ian’s jacket and binds the wood together in a cross which she sticks into the floor.  
 She collects a few of the scattered flowers and places them under the cross (57).*

Given the later atrocities occurring in *Blasted*, the playwright’s decision to represent Cate’s rape so poetically may seem odd, to say the least. This metaphoric mode of representation makes Ian’s cruelty to Cate seem petty (and pretty!) in comparison with the atrocities the Soldier relates to Ian. Moreover, Cate’s rape serves as a frame for the play, since the bouquet of flowers returns in the end of *Blasted*. At this point, a famous quote from Theodor Adorno comes to mind, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is

barbaric."<sup>30</sup> In relation to *Blasted*, it seems illegitimate to speak of violence in such a poetic form in the end of the play after such graphic representation of Soldier's brutality committed to Ian. Indeed, it is an emotional challenge for the audience to see Cate collecting flowers from the floor and be able to resist a feeling of desperate powerlessness caused by the vivid representation of violence. However, Kane found a way to express a sense of hope through Ian's "thank you" to Cate in the end of *Blasted*, thus leaving hope that no matter how much they were battered and violated, the ideals of youth, femininity and maternity represented in the gesture of gathering flowers would save the world. At the same time, even though Cate appears to be much stronger in the end of the play as opposed to Ian, somehow, there is no hope for a social change for her, nor for a break through the rhetoric of violence.

The first rape scene follows classic gender roles. The significantly stronger male character overpowers the weaker female. First, Ian abuses Cate verbally, calling her stupid and mocking at her attempts to get a job. "You're just too thick to understand" (8), Ian says repeatedly, and at this point in the play nothing predicts the complete reversal the characters experience in the final scenes of *Blasted*. Cate does not demonstrate any potential yet to develop into a latter-day Jane Eyre that returns to feed and care for the blinded and traumatized Rochester, symbolizing the male incapacitation and female support.

---

<sup>30</sup>In his 1949 essay "Cultural Criticism and Society," Theodor Adorno wrote, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," anticipating the problem for the artist after WWII. In Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, tr. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 34.

After the bomb explodes, the audience of *Blasted* witnesses the atrocities of war. The scene in the hotel once again turns into a gender opposition between the weak, defenseless object (female) and the male abuser. From now on Ian is bound to obey the Soldier for the gun in his hand gives him superiority over Ian. This power and lust for revenge for his killed girlfriend overwhelm him. The Soldier is the only character in the play that does not have a name and thus most likely stands for a universal figure of a soldier embodying all types of military atrocities, such as group rapes and torture, killings and mass transportation of refugees in cattle-trucks.<sup>31</sup>

However, from the Soldier's words, it becomes apparent that the act of his violence towards Ian is by far not the first one on his list of atrocities committed by him towards civilians. Through tears, he tells about one of the brutal scenes he was a participant of:

Three men and four women. Called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there...Closed my eyes and thought of – ...shot her father in the mouth. Brothers shouted. Hung them from the ceiling by their testicles (43).

Apparently, abusing women in front of their men is the most satisfying act, turning women's bodies into the battlefield of revenge. In war, more frequently women have to pay for real or alleged, previous or actual acts of their husbands, sons, brothers,

---

<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note though that in the two Birmingham drafts of *Blasted* the soldier is very much a product of events taking place in the former Yugoslavia. Here, the soldier is even given a Serbian name, Vladek. To him, Leeds and indeed all of Britain is just another piece of territory:

**Vladek.** English shit. Why did you fuckers recognize Croatia?

*Ian is confused.*

Why are you English spineless dogs sniffing Germany's arse?

**Ian** That was the government. I'm not the government.

**Vladek** This is a Serbian town now. And you are English shit.

*He spits in Ian's face* Saunders, "Love Me or Kill Me": Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes,"

fathers. Rape is used to punish woman's male relatives or just fellow country men, or serves as a political tool of ethnical cleansing, as in the particular case of Yugoslavia. By punishing the woman, the enemy obviously wants to indirectly punish her husband, neighbor, male friend or son for their previous or actual acts, turning rape into an institutionalized practice of abusing the enemy's women. This is the social space and context that Cate leaves behind when she escapes from the hotel room, putting Ian into the position of the endangered feminine.

On one level, Soldier's act of violence is representative of the meaning and scope that rape acquires in times of war, as well as a symbolic act of revenge for his own girlfriend who has been raped and killed by an enemy soldier. His lust for revenge cannot possibly be satisfied by punishing the actual abuser of his girlfriend for his girlfriend is a victim of war rape, which makes the probability of tracking down her victimizer very low. Therefore his violence is directed towards all the women of his enemy. The soldier is fantasizing about Ian's girl because raping her would be the best revenge on Ian the individual and the enemy soldier in general. The Soldier's way to communicate his rage to the male enemy is through raping their women. The purely sexual content of rape for the soldier seeking revenge has only marginal meaning – rape is used as a means for goals that have nothing to do with sexuality.<sup>32</sup> While the Soldier could have left the room

---

<sup>32</sup> The research on male-on-male rape shows that in most of the cases it does not imply homosexuality. This is a common misperception. People often view the male aggressor as a homosexual, and may think of the recipient as having homosexual tendencies too. Research indicates that the most common form of male-male rape is group rape by other males who rape males who are considered less than "real" men or latent homosexuals: Michael Scare, *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing., 1997), 123.

and taken advantage of another woman in the street, strong lust for revenge to the war enemy as opposed to a mere interest in the actual sexual pleasure overpower him. This animalistic drive for revenge poses Ian as an object of rape in the absence of a woman. In this scene, war and the practice of revenge to the enemy male through the sexual violence towards his women create a space that subordinates and feminizes Ian, making him the physical victim of a highly traumatized and disturbed Soldier.

The possible functionality of the story about the act of violence that the Soldier tells before raping Ian is to demonstrate the usual scenario of his revenge: violating the women in front of their men. The Soldier is ready to accomplish his plan according to the familiar plan with assigned roles:

**Soldier** She is in there?

**Ian** Who?

**Soldier** I can smell the sex.

*He begins to search the room....*

*The Soldier is searching a chest of drawers.*

*He finds a pair of Cate's knickers and holds them up.*

**Soldier** Hers?

**Ian** *Doesn't answer.*

**Soldier** Or yours.

*He closes his eyes and rubs them gently over his face, smelling with pleasure.*

*What's she like?*

**Ian** Is she soft?

Is she - ? (38).

The first question the Soldier asks is if “she is in there” nodding toward the bathroom. Since he is looking for a “she” object, it becomes evident that from the very start the soldier intends to abuse a woman. It is interesting to note that in one of the early drafts of

the play written at Birmingham, the parallels are made more obvious as the soldier is intent on raping Cate.<sup>33</sup>

When the Soldier finds a pair of knickers, he does not care if those belong to Ian or his woman. He has already drawn in his imagination an abstract and defenseless female object and asks what “she is like” (38), even though he doesn’t have any knowledge as for what had happened in the room before he came in or confirmation from Ian that his partner was a woman. Through the numerous references to a symbolic female object, the Soldier feminizes Ian, forcing him into a submissive role:

**Soldier** Turn over, Ian.

**Ian** Why?

**Soldier** Going to fuck you.

**Ian** No.

**Soldier** Kill you then.

**Ian** Fine.

**Soldier** See. Rather be shot than fucked and shot.

**Ian** Yes.

**Soldier** You smell like her. Same cigarettes.

*The Soldier turns Ian over with one hand.*

*He holds the revolver to Ian’s head with the other.*

*He pulls down Ian’s trousers, undoes his own and rapes him  
– eyes closed and smelling Ian’s hair.*

*The Soldier is crying his heart out (49).*

Since there is no object that is of female sex, he rapes Ian still thinking of it as a revenge to men. Racked with emotional vulnerabilities, the Soldier rapes Ian with closed eyes, smelling his hair that reminds him of “her hair.” He eats Ian’s eyes and says, “He ate her eyes” as if the whole scene is a reenactment of the sexual atrocities inflicted on his girlfriend and the object he deals with at the moment is feminine.

---

<sup>33</sup> Saunders, “Love Me or Kill Me”: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes,” 47.

With the Soldier's entrance, it looks like we leave Cate's story and enter Ian's. Supposedly, the characters take turns becoming the objects of rape. However, we never really leave Cate's story. As a matter of fact, the male protagonist Ian is violated only because he finds himself in the position of the symbolic female. Ian only accidentally takes over Cate's place of the rapable object, which reveals the absoluteness of the object of rape as feminine.

It may seem that Cate got lucky in the play and was able to escape before the Soldier's entrance and thus avoid being raped by him. However, the Soldier does not get upset over not being able to carry an act of revenge toward Ian as an enemy male through raping his woman. He expects Cate to be raped anyway: "Gone. Taking a risk. Lot of bastard soldiers out there" (38). He knows that somebody will take care of violating Ian's girlfriend for him, for Cate's position is to be raped. Moreover, raping women is what the Soldier expects soldiers to do at war. When he asks Ian if he has ever done anything similar to his act of raping four women, he is surprised to receive a negative response, for raping and violating "for your country" is one of the privileges and duties of the man in the military:

**Soldier** What?

**Ian** *Doesn't answer.*

**Soldier** Thought you were a soldier.

**Ian** Not like that.

**Soldier** Not like that, they're all like that...  
Even me. Have to be...

**Soldier** What if you were ordered to?

**Ian** Can't imagine it.

**Soldier** Imagine it (45).

**Soldier** In the line of duty.  
For your country.

Wales (45).

The stage directions tell us that Cate (in accordance with the Soldier's prediction) gets raped again after escaping from the hotel. She returns with "blood seeping from between her legs" (60), which along with her off stage rape in the beginning of the play serves as a figure for the tradition of effacing rape in representation. Thus the total number of Cate's rapes in the play equals three, including her metonymic rape in the figure of Ian. In a sense, we stay in Cate's story throughout the play, even though she is absent at the time of Ian's rape. Using different modes of representation, Kane consistently returns to the subject of the raped and rapable female.<sup>34</sup>

However, along with reaffirming the depth of the fundamental binary opposition of masculine and feminine in the social construction of rape, Kane introduces a new dimension to the issue of sexual violence through the vividly represented physical rape of the feminized male body. While rape remains the female victim-only space in the social sense in the play, the innovation of Kane's approach lies undoubtedly in her decision to represent the literal, physical male on male rape.

---

<sup>34</sup> The violence is engendered on the level of verbal abuse as well. The only curse word the author overwhelmingly employs is "cunt." While it is unlikely that Kane was familiar with Yugoslav mentality and language, it is interesting to draw a parallel between the specificity of the brutal language in *Blasted* and Ugresic's considerations on how women's status in Croatian and Serbian languages is marked by language. The colloquial synonym for a woman is "cunt." It is so widespread and frequent that it has lost its offensive connotation. By the end of the play, even Cate, who unlike Ian avoids using explicit language, says "cunt."

### ***Blasted* and the Possibility of Male Victimhood**

As Ken Urban suggests, in *Blasted* Kane gives us a “world of catastrophe, which offers neither solutions nor redemption.”<sup>35</sup> It is a passionate response to the atrocities occurring in the Balkans, the dangers of a contemporary world, its inequalities and injustices, as well as a feminist critique of war and the absoluteness of the object of rape as a feminine, which always presents the violence of the symbolic masculine against the symbolic feminine.

The author’s passionate rejection of the label of a woman writer has been often ignored or intentionally overlooked by the critics that welcomed the energies from the feminist theatre in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus a number of critics, such as Christopher Innes and Benedict Nightingale, would constantly label Kane as a representative of the new feminist theatre. Male writers conveniently grouped her with the feminist playwrights, while feminist criticism remained indifferent to Kane and her works, in spite of her following the feminist modes of interpreting rape as a deeply engendered kind of violence. Thus critics have been unable to grasp Kane’s unconventional positioning of herself as a gender neutral author. These tensions around the author’s image-making and Kane’s own categorical claims of gender irrelevance make her position on gender autonomous and unbiased, which only increases the visibility, depth and at the same time limitations of the feminist discourse of rape.

Even though Kane is refusing to see her work in terms of gender politics, in her construction of the social space for the rapes she ultimately adheres to the patterns of

---

<sup>35</sup> Ken Urban, “An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane,” 37.

gender criticism established by feminist critics like Teresa de Lauretis. Through a detailed analysis of the unique representational circumstances, such as Cate's meaningful absence in Ian's scene of rape, it is clear that, in the end, rape is and remains an engendered practice. In the underrepresented scene of Cate's rape, Kane follows strategic covering of rape that had been dominant in the history of rape's representation. Cate is raped both literally (twice off stage) and figuratively (in her metonymic rape in the rape of Ian), participating in the tradition of rape's non-representability. In this sense, Cate's rapes exist as experience, as memory or as a symbolic presence in Ian's rape. While the actual rapes of Cate remain unrepresented on stage, they are enmeshed in the metaphoric figurations of rape. At the same time, the brutality of Ian's rape suggests that it is possible to escape the tradition of metaphorizing rape. Kane represents the scene of Ian's rape vividly onstage and critiques the centuries-old story of rape's "missing" in representation, at the same time complicating the scene with Cate's symbolic absence.

*Blasted* adds fine nuances to the traditional representation of rape, exploring the issue of rape's representability, intertwining verbal and visual representation, as well as pushing the boundaries by visually staging a male on male rape. In *Blasted*, probably for the first time in the history of representation, the audience has to deal with the rapes of both man and woman in the same narrative. While feminist criticism denied the importance of actual sex by privileging the social aspect of rape and describing the victim as exclusively feminine, the shortcoming of this approach is the neglect towards the actual male rape-related trauma.

The general belief still persists that either men cannot be raped, or if they are, so few men are raped that it becomes a “freak occurrence, a bizarre act with excessively brutal details, which generates a sensationalistic focus on the particular assault.”<sup>36</sup> A similar scenario occurred with the scholarship on *Blasted*. The critics were so outraged, shocked and appalled by the graphic representation of the raped male that they failed to attend to the multiple rapes of Cate and the actual social or political meaning of Ian’s rape. Ian’s rape was conveniently treated as pathology or as an incredible product of the author’s imagination.

In some respects the situation facing male rape victims today is not so different from that which faced female victims about two centuries ago. The studies on male rape show that it has just recently emerged as a social problem. The struggle to create a common language that accurately names and defines this awareness of the new social problem is inevitable. Indeed, feminism has created and mastered proper terms and concepts to make the rape of the female visible as a social problem. While *Blasted* gives a lesson in how to recognize and critique the patriarchal structures subjugating women, the author of the play also draws attention to an emergent social problem (previously silenced and invisible) of the male rape.

Even though the play does not provide the social space and context (the institutionalized practice of raping the enemy’s women as an act of revenge works as the space Cate leaves behind herself when she escapes from the hotel room, putting Ian into the position of the endangered feminine) for the male rape, *Blasted* reveals much broader

---

<sup>36</sup> Scare, Michael, “Male on Male Rape: the Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame” (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Pub., 1997), 8.

social, cultural, and political factors surrounding the rape than we are used to, as well as the need of a new counter-discourse that would provide for us the terms to recognize and confront sexual violence as a practice victimizing both female and male.

### Bibliography

1. Aston, Elaine. *Feminist views on the English stage women playwrights, 1990-2000*. New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003.
2. Brannigan, John. *Orwell to the present: literature in England, 1945-2000*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
3. Baines, Barbara J. "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation." *ELH* 65.1
4. Dictionary of Literary Biography: British and Irish dramatists since World War II. Ed. John Bull. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005.
5. Emig, Rainer. "Blasting Jane: *Jane Eyre* As an Intertext of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*." *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*. Eds. Margarete Rubij and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007.
6. Higgins, Lynn and Brenda, Silver. "Introduction: Rereading Rape." *Rape and Representation*. Eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
7. Innes, Cristopher. *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. "Sarah Kane (1971-1999): the poetry of madness in violent dreams."
8. Langridge, Natasha and Stephenson, Heidi. *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting*. London: Methuen, 1997. Includes an interview with Sarah Kane.
9. Lauretis, Teresa. "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation

- and Gender”. *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*. Ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. 239-255.
10. Luckhurst, Mary. “Infamy and Dying Young: Sarah Kane, 1971-1999.” *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*. Eds. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
11. Saal, Ilka. “Making it Real? Theater in Times of Virtual Warfare,” *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 20.2 (Spring 2008), 6. ‘Singer, Annabelle. “Don’t Want to Be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane.” *The Drama Review* 48, 2, Summer 2004.
12. Oliver, Kelly. “Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media.” New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
13. Solga, Kim. "Blasted's Hysteria: Rape, Realism, and the Thresholds of the Visible." *Modern Drama*, 50:3 (2007 Fall), pp. 346-74.  
<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modern\\_drama/v050/50.3solga.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modern_drama/v050/50.3solga.pdf)>.
14. Saunders, Graham. 'Love Me or Kill Me': Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes. Manchester, England: Manchester UP, 2002.
15. Scare, Michael. “Male on Male Rape: the Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame.” Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Pub., 1997.
16. Ugresic, Dubravka. *The culture of Lies*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
17. Urban, Ken. “An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane”. *A Journal of*

*Performance and Art* 23.3 (2001) 36-46.

18. Urban, Ken. "Towards a Theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, Cruelty, and the 'Nineties." *New Theatre Quarterly*, 20:4 [80] (2004 Nov), pp. 354-72.
19. Waters, Steve. "Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma." *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama: 1880-2005*. Ed. Mary Luckhurst. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006.
20. Wixson, Christopher. "'In Better Places': Space, Identity, and Alienation in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*." *Comparative Drama*, 39:1 (2005 Spring), pp. 75-91.

### **Author's Biography**

Dina Zhurba was born and raised in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine. In 2000, she graduated from Humanitarian-Technical Lyceum, Kryvyi Rih with honors and started her post-secondary education in Dnepropetrovsk National University, Ukraine. She came first to the University of Richmond in 2003 as an exchange student. Having completed two semesters of undergraduate work in American Studies, she returned to her home country and earned her B.A and M.A. in English and Education from Dnepropetrovsk National University. In 2006, she returned to the University of Richmond to pursue M.A. in English with interdisciplinary concentration in Art History. She is currently employed in the Office of the Chaplaincy at the University of Richmond and plans on pursuing a doctoral program in English.