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A Private Honesty: Torture and Interiority in the Theatre of Sarah Kane

This article analyzes the role of pain and torture in the construction and destruction of subjectivity by way of a comparison of the depictions of torture in the theatre of Sarah Kane and Elaine Scarry's highly influential *The Body in Pain: On the Making and Unmaking of the World*. The essay uses Kane in conjunction with the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas, as well as relevant work on the history and sociology of privacy and private speech. Its purpose is to develop an account of what is here called pain's bi-directional character, or its capacity to represent both the presence and the absence of the victim's subjectivity, possibly at the same time. Using Kane to expand upon Scarry's account of the role of subjectivity in torture, we can see how the logic of torture structures numerous relationships in Kane's work, including *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, *Cleansed*, and *Crave*. The essay establishes Kane as not only a major playwright, but also a subtle and perceptive theorist of suffering for whom the question of intersubjectivity is a major site of dramatic struggle. Jeremy Colangelo is the author of *Diaphanous Bodies: Ability, Disability, and Modernist Irish Literature* (University of Michigan Press, 2021) and the editor of *Joyce Writing Disability* (University Press of Florida, 2022). His work has appeared in such journals as *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Textual Practice*, and *Modern Drama*. He currently teaches at King's University College, University of Western Ontario.

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The Subjectivity of a subject is vulnerability, exposure to affection, sensibility, a passivity more passive still than any passivity, an irrecuperable time, and unassimilable diachrony of patience, an exposedness always to be exposed the more, an exposure to expressing and thus to saying, thus to giving.
Emmanuel Levinas¹

THIS ARTICLE investigates the role of interiority and its relationship to pain in the theatre of Sarah Kane, using as its theoretical basis Elaine Scarry's description of torture in her *The Body in Pain* to show how Kane demonstrates the breakdown of Scarry's framework in the process of developing a sequence of tragedies of competing subjectivity.² Kane was at one point the *bête noire* of British theatre, her brilliant plays called all sorts of terrible things by all sorts of ignorant people.³ The academic response to those plays – even now, decades after her suicide – has largely stayed attached to the terms of that controversy and

has thereby limited its critical horizons.⁴ The aim here is to open up a new avenue to reading Kane, which sees her work as philosophically and psychologically resonant and expressive of a complex and nuanced understanding of the relationship between theatre, performance, and interiority. This is a process in which her depiction of torture is a key component.

For Kane pain is distinctly expressive, due in part to what is here called pain's bi-directional character – its capacity to signify both the presence and the absence of interiority at the same time. *The Body in Pain* observes that torture, which is abundant in Kane's work, 'bestows visibility on the structure and enormity of what is usually private and incommunicable, contained within the boundaries of the sufferer's body'.⁵ Scarry's argument is not necessarily incorrect but incomplete, for it relies not only on the assumption that pain is always a private experience that cannot be communicated,

but also assumes that the strategy employed by the torturer (externalizing the experience of pain through the correlative of the prison cell) functions the way the torturer expects it to, and functions non-reciprocally. This essay's conclusions are thus both critical and theoretical: critical in the sense of developing a novel reading of Kane's drama that explores several major philosophical resonances in her work; and theoretical in that it uses Kane to critique and build upon Scarry's highly influential text to show how the presumption of pain's incommunicability (upon which Scarry's argument relies) leads to contradictory and paradoxical results.

A Room of One's Own

This section begins by comparing two statements on the relationship between theatre and space. The first is from Antonin Artaud, who in his first manifesto on the 'theatre of cruelty' emphasizes the 'spatial expression' required by performance.⁶ He goes on to write about his ideal performance environment:

The auditorium will be enclosed within four walls stripped of any ornament, with the audience seated below, in the middle, on swivelling chairs allowing them to follow the show taking place around them. In effect, the lack of a stage in the normal sense of the word will permit the action to extend itself to the four corners of the auditorium. . . . The action will unfold, extending its trajectory from floor to floor, from place to place, with sudden outbursts flaring up in different spots like conflagrations.⁷

Compare this passage to Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, specifically from the discussion of torture, which argues that torture has much less to do with the extraction of information than it does the affectation of power, and specifically the power of the torturer over the victim's interiority. The torture room is an important element in this argument, for, as she writes, the room is 'on the one hand, an enlargement of the body: it keeps warm and safe the individual it houses in the same way the body encloses and protects the individual within', while the room is also 'simultaneously a miniaturization of the world, of civilization'.⁸ This similarity is no accident, for Scarry

identifies 'higher moments of civilization' with 'more elaborate forms of self-extension' such as 'the telephone or the airplane'.⁹ The room extends the self because it extends the process of enclosure that Scarry, in a rather Cartesian way, identifies with the process of subject formation: my room contains my body like my skull contains my mind. So-called civilization, then, is a process by which agency, as well as the act of enclosure, extends to farther and farther vistas. The relationship between torture and enclosure is thus quite important in Scarry, and it has for her a distinctly theatrical element in that 'the final product and outcome of torture' is, for her, 'the fiction of power'.¹⁰ Thus Scarry writes:

Through his ability to project words and sounds out into his environment, a human being inhabits, humanizes, and makes his own a space much larger than that occupied by his body alone. This space, always contracted under repressive regimes, is in torture almost wholly eliminated. The 'it' in 'Get it out of him' refers not just to a piece of information but to the capacity for speech itself.¹¹

In both cases the power of the performance comes from the dissolution of the spatial divisions that allow the self to be guarded. In Artaud's theatre, 'direct contact will be established between the audience and the show, between actors and audience, from the very fact that the audience is seated in the centre of the action, is encircled and furrowed by it'.¹² The straightforward stage/audience division of the traditional realist theatre, which grants the audience a space that is 'real', where the act of fiction has not taken place – and so permits them to keep a mental distance from the show regardless of how shocking it may be – is a luxury Artaud would not permit, for the performance must be all-pervasive if it is to achieve its effect. Torture for Scarry operates on similar terms, but more combatively. The torturer does not invite the victim to a night of experimental theatre, but hauls that victim against their will into the room (or prison cell), forces them to remain there, and – more relevantly here – attempts to colonize the victim's interiority through the infliction of pain and the overwriting of that interiority's extension into the environment.

Lisa Guenther writes in her study of the phenomenology of solitary confinement that 'the architectural design of the cell reflected and produced the social and political situation of the prisoner . . . Buried from the world and confined to this living tomb, prisoners were reduced to their single individualities, their "cellular souls".'¹³ Pain – which for Scarry is destructive of both language and interiority – serves as a means of attacking this guarded cellular interior to venture from the shared quasi-interiority of the physical environment (now fully colonized by the torturer) to assault and destroy the actual interiority guarded by that ur-enclosure of the victim's skull. Thus, much like Artaud's writing on the theatre of cruelty, Scarry's writing on torture describes not merely a process of affecting power but a whole theory on the relationship between interiority and exteriority, agency and performance, and the self and the world. In a sense, it is a weaponization of what T. S. Eliot called the 'objective correlative' of a work of fiction, or the way a piece of writing (Shakespearean drama in Eliot's case) depicts a character's interior indirectly by correlating it with the environment.¹⁴

Blasted takes place in a hotel room. That in itself is not usual, as critics have noted, and the fact that the play begins with a man and a woman showing up at a hotel room is how *Blasted* sets up the realist veneer through which it will blow a large hole later.¹⁵ The hotel room is, nevertheless, interesting when thinking about the relationship between privacy and interiority. It is a place of transition and temporary occupancy, even though its rooms are designed (especially at more expensive hotels, like the one in which *Blasted* takes place) to look and feel like home: *like* home because they will so rarely resemble any given person's home. The purpose here is verisimilitude – a simulacrum of home-ness, mostly detached from what any person's home is like. It is also a place of setting out, a place of departure. In *Totality and Infinity*, at the start of a section on 'The Dwelling', Emmanuel Levinas writes:

the privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement. . . .

Yet this inwardness opens up in a home which is situated in that outside – for the home, as a building, belongs to a world of objects. . . . Concretely speaking the dwelling is not situated in the objective world, but the objective world is situated by relation to my dwelling.¹⁶

One's home, one's dwelling, serves as a starting point from which one proceeds in engagement with the objective world; and it is so caught up in the way that the subject understands their relationship to the outside world that it would be wrong to imagine that the dweller interacts with or conceives of their dwelling objectively. It is the place where one's subjecthood becomes spatialized, and from which one sets out. As Levinas remarks in an earlier work, 'while the I in the world tends toward things, it also withdraws from them. It is an inwardness. The I in the world has an inside and an outside.'¹⁷ The resonances here with Artaud and (especially) Scarry should be clear. The self, the I, experiences its environment in part through relations of inside and outside, the dwelling being the prototypical inside space from which the I sets out into the world. Scarry's writing on torture sees the act as a deliberate disruption of this process, which fundamentally attacks the way that the subject relates to the world by overwriting the place of their setting out, turning everything into 'outside', including the mind itself.

It is in this light that we should consider the scene description at the start of *Blasted*, which describes the setting as 'A very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world'.¹⁸ The nowhere-ness of the room, and so its lack of specificity, indicates that it is fungible and is integral to the bait-and-switch the play pulls with its seemingly realist environment: the room *could* be anywhere, but it is in Leeds, on the eve of a war. Had it been anywhere else, the events of the play could not have happened. And the large hole blasted into the wall at the start of the play's second half, which individualizes the room and makes it unlike any other, simply confirms this transition. The generic character of a *realist* space is thus contrasted with the specificity of a *real* space. Yet at the start of the play there is at least one person who is 'at

home' in this room – Ian. For while Cate, as she steps in, is *'amazed at the classiness of the room'*, Ian *makes* himself at home, pouring himself a drink and throwing his old newspapers around.¹⁹ As a journalist, Ian has no doubt been in many hotel rooms, and their generic appearance means that, once you are used to one of them, you are used to all of them. Thus, for Ian, it can serve as a dwelling, while for Cate it is part of the objective world. This particular phenomenological relationship, the fact that Ian may dwell in this room while Cate cannot, sets up the power dynamic of the first half of the play.

The destruction of the room and the entry of the Soldier in the second half repeats the process. The room may be unique, but it is the Soldier, not Ian, who is used to war and to war-ravaged locales, so it is he, now, who is the torturer while Ian is the victim. Notably, then, by the time Cate returns, she has mastered the new situation to a far greater extent than Ian has, since, at that point, he is blind and trapped in the room, while she is able to leave it and search for food. Cate treats the room much like a dwelling, coming and going as she needs with the play treating the outside 'objective' world as literally obscene, entirely located offstage. Ian, stuck in the room, struggles to dwell in it. The end of the play suggests ambiguously that perhaps he is able to, but, in the process, he has been brought from a position of power over Cate to a position of dependency. Once again, the question of who may dwell in that room reflects the power balance between the play's characters.

These observations can be supplemented with some information from the history of privacy and of the architecture of the home. Andrea Tange writes, in *Architectural Identities*, that in Victorian England 'a house was made into a home . . . through careful attention to the interplay between the physical space and the identities contained therein'.²⁰ This focus on the interplay between different functions of the house and the identities associated with them would have a long influence beyond the nineteenth century. The division of the house between its functions, and the designation of certain parts as being 'for company' (like the living room) or 'for work' (like

the kitchen) would, in the bourgeois home, serve as a way to manage the various public and private identities that the inhabitants of the house participated in. Similarly, David Vincent argues in his history of privacy that, since the Middle Ages, 'in the definition and defence of privacy, there was a critical distinction between the inside and the outside of the dwelling place . . . The expectation of what could be known of thoughts and behaviours changed radically once the threshold was crossed.'²¹

Furthermore, Vincent describes how, as a result, servants were a frequent site of anxiety with regards to privacy among those who could afford them. The presence of a servant brought the room to a hybrid state, where it was at once the one person's dwelling and another's workplace. The household 'constituted a shared world of personal knowledge', where the intimate facts of one's life and thoughts could be laid out in confidence of their secrecy, but where the material conditions which allowed that privacy – owning a large home – also necessitated that privacy be transgressed by the labourers needed to keep that home functional.²² If, as Levinas writes, 'man abides in the world as having come to it from a private domain, from being at home with himself, to which at each moment he can retire', then the extension of that 'home' to a physical space entails the extension of that intimacy too.²³ Physical privacy – the enclosure of one's dwelling – creates the precondition for its violation. Antoine Prost writes that 'private life makes sense only in relation to public life', for it is the existence of the exterior public world which makes it both possible and necessary to guard a place of seclusion physically.²⁴

While the historical process by which the bourgeois Victorian household arose may seem of far remove from Kane's work, the history of privacy speaks to the pervasive anxiety over the public nature of one's living space. The possibility that one's presumed social inferior might see one's dirty laundry – literally or figuratively – creates a tension in the relationship, inextricable from the conditions which make privacy possible, wherein the household's power hierarchy is constantly

under threat of inversion. The dynamic Scarry describes in her chapter on torture could be seen as a special case in this process where the threat posed by the victim has been made to the greatest extent possible external to the immediate situation: the torture victim may be a political dissident, an enemy combatant, or a member of a subaltern group, but whatever threat they may pose (or may be imagined posing) to the torturer has been reduced to mere virtuality, a possibility which will likely never be actualized.

According to J. Wisniewski, 'the pain inflicted on the tortured during interrogation serves to sever her connection to a world of significance'.²⁵ Yet its trace of the threat is also what motivates the torture itself, it is the necessary supplement, in the Derridean sense of the term, upon which the whole system relies – indeed the active exclusion of the victim's threatening agency by way of their imprisonment is what creates the situation in the first place. In an ideal act of torture, the infliction of pain breaks down the final enclosure of the victim's psyche and completes the process of extracting them from the 'public', that is, the broader social context which renders them threatening. As Scarry writes: 'Intense pain is world-destroying. In compelling confession, the torturers compel the prisoner to record and objectify the fact that intense pain is world-destroying.'²⁶ The goal, then, is to open every door and window of the victim's mental house to better reveal that it is empty.

The relationship between Ian and Cate, and, later, between Ian and the Soldier, shows this process in action, indicating that 'a central concern in Kane's work . . . is a passionate, almost pathological identification with pain and trauma and a concomitant desire to communicate the horror of pain *in its own idiom*'.²⁷ The idea that pain could be communicated *in an idiom* is one of Kane's major dramatic theme: that the body in pain has an *idios*, a private secluded meaning all its own that differentiates it from the near meaninglessness it has in Scarry. If, as Richard Ashby argues, in *Blasted* Kane investigates 'the crisis of the post-Auschwitz subject, who is trapped in a totalized system that destroys the possibility of

autonomy',²⁸ then her investigation of pain's idiom shows how the forces producing these totalized systems can never be completely successful, including, it would happen, in the system of conventional theatre through which she so effectively blasted a hole.

One example of how the act of torture is self-defeating in Kane is the interaction between Ian and the Soldier. The Soldier enters the hotel room not long after it has a hole blown through the wall by an unexpected mortar shell, completely changing its status as a dwelling and, importantly, opening it up to public observation. It is almost as if the destructive power of the shell affects the structure of the stage itself, adding to the already invisible 'fourth wall' (through which the audience looks) a broken third wall which allows the performance to be viewed from multiple sides (invoking the image of Artaud's stage, which overlaps the audience). Much of the play's third scene involves the Soldier asking Ian questions, many of them inane or meaningless, and Ian answering them.²⁹ Occasionally the Soldier answers a question, but the conversation is highly unidirectional. For example:

IAN: I'm Welsh.

SOLDIER: Sound English, fucking accent.

IAN: I live there.

SOLDIER: Foreigner?

IAN: English and Welsh is the same. British. I'm not an import.

SOLDIER: What's fucking Welsh, never heard of it.

IAN: Come over from God knows where have their kids and call them English they're not English born in England don't make you English.

SOLDIER: Welsh as in Wales?

IAN: It's attitude.³⁰

Neither of them are really talking *to* each other, they are barely interlocutors, yet the Soldier's superior command of the room and his possession of a gun allows him to demand a response from Ian which Ian cannot demand in turn. This pattern holds through the conversation that takes place right before the Soldier rapes Ian:

SOLDIER: You don't know fuck all about me.

I went to school.

I made love with Col.

Bastards killed her, now I'm here.
Now I'm here.
(*He pushes the rifle in IAN's face.*)

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: And now you agree with anything
I say.³¹

Note here the absence in the Soldier's speeches of first-person pronouns in several places where they normally should be ('Kill you then', instead of 'I will kill you then') until the last one, right before he begins sexually assaulting Ian. Generally, as we see also at the start of this passage, the Soldier reserves his first-person pronouns for moments of self-assertion, that is, moments where he literally asserts the fact of his selfhood, his inner ego, against the totalizing violence in his life or, in Ian's case, against a person he believes represents that violence.

As Giovanni Stanghellini and René Rosfort write, 'the self can only become who she or he is by becoming a person through the dialectic of selfhood and otherness. Or to put it differently, the self has to reappropriate itself as a person through otherness in order to come to terms with who and what she or he is.'³² What the Soldier has done – and what the act of torture necessarily does – is depersonalize himself through the very act of self-assertion. He asks, but mostly does not answer, questions, and refuses to relate to Ian or anyone through any means other than violence and aggression. In analyzing the play's depiction of rape, Kim Solga argues that the 'anxiety, and often anger, over the play's violence turns out, at bottom, to be but the symptom of a much more uncanny fear of the loss of spectatorial control'.³³ For anxious, fearful power, the kind of power that engages in the act of torture, whether it is a single rogue soldier or a whole government, it is the fact that the world is not a panopticon,

that the privacy of the other exists, and that difference and disobedience cannot be fully brought under control, which torture desperately tries to solve.

Yet the very attempt to break through to the enclosure of the mind is what cuts the torturer off from any relation with the other, isolating and diminishing both. You may blast a hole into a room and see what is inside, but you cannot look inside the mind by blowing a hole in someone's head. In fact, it makes them much more difficult to talk to. Thus, in *Blasted*, the dialogue and the dramaturgy investigate how the problem of the room – the dwelling, the scene – is but a transposition of the problem of the mind which relates to it; it is a way of trying to access the psyche by other means. Thus, an investigation of the dwelling place in Kane leads directly to the matter of pain's expressive quality, and the question of what, if anything, a screaming person has to say.

The Pain in Kane

To what extent can a person in pain communicate their subjectivity? Scarry, as already established, would hold that, when pain is sufficiently intense, the question of subjectivity becomes moot: there simply isn't a 'there' there. Yet the sociologist Erving Goffman would beg to differ. In his *Forms of Talk*, he relates cries of pain to what psychologists refer to as self-talk, the act of talking to one's self, which serves many important psychological self-regulatory functions. Self-talk, Goffman argues, is also 'a threat to intersubjectivity' since 'it warns others that they might be wrong in assuming a jointly maintained base of ready mutual intelligibility'.³⁴ To talk to yourself is to participate in, and communicate, an internal reality not accessible to others – in this case, the internal reality of the pain which no other can directly experience. It is evidence of one's inaccessible interior, of one's status as other. Goffman considers pain cries as a variety of self-talk, and writes that

the cry in these cases can serve as a self-regulated indicator of what is happening, providing a reading for the instigator of the pain, who might not otherwise have access to the information needed.

The meaning, then, may not be 'I have been hurt', but rather, 'You are just now coming to hurt me'.³⁵

The pain cry thus serves two functions: first, to regulate one's own subjective response to the cause of pain; and second, to indicate to others that what is currently happening is in fact painful, that the act has had a subjective effect not otherwise visible. Pain expression thus has a *bi-directional* character, where it at once pulls the self inwards (as in Scarry) and also engages in an act of intersubjective communication. Torture, in seeking out these cries, is again at cross-purposes with itself, for, in every sign that it takes to indicate the destruction of interiority, it may see the shadow of the reciprocity to which it has been invited.

Kane's later play *Crave* gives a more explicit engagement with the relationship between torture and interiority. The character A, for example, describes how 'I am shaking, sobbing with the memory of her, when she loved me, before I was her torturer, before there was no room in me for her'.³⁶ Although it is difficult to ascribe definite characteristics to the elliptical and intertextual characters in *Crave*, A seems to represent in part a kind of patriarchal, chauvinist authority reminiscent of Ian in the first half of *Blasted*.³⁷ Meg Peters has commented on how the elliptical quality of the writing and characterization makes it difficult to note any definite starting point to the various traumas that *Crave* describes, writing that 'the cycle of trauma that takes place in the play functions as a barrier to the relief of distress for the characters. . . . There is no clear "perpetrator" of violence, and no clear "victim"'.³⁸ And while, in this passage and elsewhere, A self-identifies as the aggressor, the psychological framework of torture serves to efface the relationship between perpetrator and victim. As L. Felipe Alarcón writes, 'a torturer does not see a body, but only signs. A torturer is a writer, but a writer of bodies, and with his writing he would render the body invisible'.³⁹ Shortly after, A has another monologue, again reminiscing their lost love as well as their violent possessiveness:

don't say no to me you can't say no to me because it's such a relief to have love again and to lie in bed and be held and touched and kissed and adored

and your heart will leap when you hear my voice and see my smile and feel my breath on your neck . . . I will lie to you from day one and use you and screw you and break your heart . . . I will take what I want then walk away and owe you nothing.⁴⁰

In A's mind, the Venn diagram of love and torture overlaps at the desire to possess and overwrite the other.

The figure of A in *Crave* is, like Kane's torturer characters more generally, caught up in a rejection of need, of the fact that they live by being dependent on other people and things. Levinas argues that the traditional argument which identifies need with lack is misguided, for 'what we live on does not enslave us; we enjoy it. . . . The human being thrives on his needs; he is happy for his need'.⁴¹ As he goes on to say, 'happiness is made up not of an absence of needs, whose tyranny and imposed character one denounces, but of the satisfaction of all needs. . . . Happiness is accomplishment: it exists in a soul satisfied and not in a soul that has extirpated its needs'.⁴² A, like Ian, must fulfil their need for touch, for closeness, and for affection in order to be happy, yet they seem to have misidentified the need itself as the source of their unhappiness, and not its lack of fulfilment. Thus, they heap suffering upon their romantic partners and abuse them in order to keep their otherness at bay; unable to eliminate the need for an other, they try to turn the other into an object so as to secure their pretensions of self-sufficiency. A's declaration that 'I will lie to you from day one and use you and screw you and break your heart' is thus part of the same logical structure which had them praising the 'heart' of their lover earlier in that same monologue ('and your heart will leap when you hear my voice'). A can only accept the fulfilment of their need for the other by denying that otherness, by rejecting their ethical responsibility to the other, or by claiming vicarious control over the other's interior state.

The structure of *Crave*, being composed of several overlapping monologue sequences such that it is not clear whether or where the characters are communicating or simply delivering a soliloquy, means that there are fewer opportunities for A's delusions to be challenged.

More commonly, as suggested above, the presence of the suffering person troubles the smooth affectation of the (literal or figurative) torturer's desire through pain's bi-directional quality; that is, its capacity to serve as evidence both for and against the existence of an interior state inaccessible to outside observers.

Kane achieves a similar effect through quite different means in her second play, *Phaedra's Love*, an adaptation of Seneca's *Phaedra* performed in 1996, which depicts the title character's obsessive love for her seemingly repulsive and abusive stepson Hippolytus, the son of the Greek hero Theseus and the Amazon Hippolyta. The slothful Hippolytus of Kane's rendition 'starts off as what Artaud would call a mummy, the prototype of Western man, spoiled and brain-dead due to an overdose of consumerism'.⁴³ Yet he is – locked in his room watching television, eating sweets, and having sex all day – also at the near pinnacle of privacy, able due to his wealth and status to avoid almost any human contact he does not desire and largely avoiding interaction with the outside world.

Daniel J. Solove, in his *Understanding Privacy*, cautions that, although it is individualizing, we should not think of privacy in solely individualistic terms since it emerges and functions in relation to our relationships with others: 'privacy is not something that atomistic individuals possess in the state of nature and sacrifice in order to join the social compact. We establish privacy protections because of their profound effects on the structure of power and freedom within society as a whole.'⁴⁴ Privacy has an extremely important psychological function, allowing people to 'escape from the relentless force of social judgement, which in too pervasive a dose can stunt self-development'.⁴⁵ Again the relevance of Levinas's idea of dwelling is evident: the home serves as an extension of the private psyche and as a refuge from which we set out to encounter a world we share with other minds. *Crave* and *Blasted* show how the bi-directional effect of pain is matched with a similarly doubled character of privacy: the torturer's desire to invade and obliterate the otherness of the other is matched with a desire to preserve their own selfhood.

In all of these cases, the aggressive party attempts to establish a double standard – privacy for me and not for thee – which in torture and interrogation is intensified: one party asks the questions and the other answers them. With Ian, who rapes Cate offstage during the first section of *Blasted*, the double standard is reversed upon the arrival of the Soldier, whose inaccessibility becomes complete with his offstage suicide. *Phaedra's Love* follows a similar pattern with the relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus. But while in *Blasted* the conflict takes place amid sexual assaults, in *Phaedra's Love* the sexual encounters are consensual but deeply unsatisfying, and in Phaedra's case traumatizing.

HIPPOLYTUS: If we fuck we'll never talk again.

PHAEDRA: I'm not like that.

HIPPOLYTUS: I am.

PHAEDRA: I'm not.

HIPPOLYTUS: Course you are.

They stare at each other.

PHAEDRA: I'm in love with you.

HIPPOLYTUS: Why?

PHAEDRA: You thrill me. [. . .]

They both stare at the television.

Eventually, PHAEDRA moves over to HIPPOLYTUS.

He doesn't look at her.

*She undoes his trousers and performs oral sex on him. He watches the screen throughout and eats his sweets.*⁴⁶

Recall again Levinas's point about happiness arriving through the fulfilment of a need rather than its removal. Being happy, he says, requires that one accepts need and dependency as essential facts of life. Hippolytus's aggressive unhappiness would suggest that he guards his psychological privacy to as great an extent as his physical privacy. To paraphrase A, he refuses to let his heart 'leap'. In a conversation with Phaedra right after the section quoted above, she tells Hippolytus that 'I'd like to see you lose yourself', to which he replies, 'It's not a pleasant sight.'⁴⁷

Hippolytus's withdrawal from the world, and indeed from pleasure, stems, then, from his desire to maintain self-control, as well as his interior privacy. Recall that, in both

Seneca's *Phaedra* and the Euripides play *Hippolytus* from which it derives, Hippolytus is closely linked to the idea of chastity. In Euripides, he takes a vow of chastity due to his love of hunting, the Greek goddess of the hunt, Artemis, herself being a virgin. In Seneca, he similarly expresses a disinterest in human affairs and a preference for being out in nature on his hunting trips; and, at the beginning of the play, he prays to Diana, the Roman analogue to Artemis, for her favour. In both cases, his rejection of all sexual activity – not merely with his stepmother, but with anyone – is implicitly equated with his disinterest in human affairs and the maintenance of his private, solitary life hunting in the woods.

In Kane's version, the privacy of the wilderness is replaced with the privacy of the bedroom, which is far less secure due to its greater proximity to the public life of the palace and the outside world. In attempting to seduce Hippolytus, Kane's Phaedra thus plays into a now-familiar pattern, where a character, upon entering the private dwelling of another, attempts to overwrite their psychology. In this case, Phaedra wishes to have the love she feels reflected back at her, despite Hippolytus's rejection not just of her love, but of love as such. What can be seen is the deliberate disinterest he takes in her sexual advances – his continuing to watch television, for example, or his refusal to let her look him in the eye – as a kind of psychological retaliation, an attempt to make Phaedra feel his apathy in place of her love.

As with *Crave*, then, what is evident in the dynamic of torture is suffering and fear of intersubjectivity. The example from *Phaedra's Love* is illustrative: Hippolytus does not wish his face to be visible during an orgasm because, like the grimace of a person in pain, such responses are reflexive and honestly communicative of an interior experience. It is *because* such acts are communicative and *because* they are involuntary that, paradoxically from Scarry's perspective, they can be better reflective of interior mental states than ordinary non-reflexive language. To 'lose yourself', as Phaedra asks Hippolytus to in this context, does not mean that one loses one's selfhood, but that one ceases – or is

forced by one's body to cease – all the social niceties that keep the self concealed. When genuine, the wince or the grimace, because it is reflexive, signifies the person's interior state without guile because, by definition, the possibility of guile has been removed.⁴⁸ We should remember that Hippolytus is also trying to enforce a double standard with regards to his relationships: he is perfectly fine with having sex with other people, many of whom no doubt 'lose' themselves in the process. He creates a one-way intersubjective relationship, where the sexual partner expresses their interiority while he remains stoic and removed. By asking *him* to lose control, Phaedra asks for emotional reciprocity which he refuses to give, despite accepting her advances. While some scholars have read Phaedra as 'enslaved by desire' and Hippolytus as 'lack[ing] interiority', this reading here sees the encounter between them as instantiating a conflict over two models of emotional intimacy.⁴⁹ One is defined by a desire for reciprocity and recognition, and the other by a desire for privacy and individuality; the latter is marked by indifference to the privacy and individuality of others.

It is in this context that Phaedra's suicide is also an act of retaliation. As Erica Bexley points out, despite all of the sex and violence in this play, her suicide is the only obscene act that is literally obscene – that is, offstage.⁵⁰ This fact is notable, given the earlier discussion about the relationship between the space of a dwelling, the space of a stage, and interiority.⁵¹ An offstage suicide (like, for example, the Soldier's in *Blasted*) is something of an anti-objective correlative. Instead of taking the character's interior thoughts and metaphorically externalizing them as objects, the suicide (whether the character intends it to or not) forecloses access to the interior by both killing the character and providing no representation of the death that the audience could see and interpret. And while, of course, a character could come in and describe what happened, even by recounting the dying character's final words, the internal pains of that character are inaccessible to anyone but them, as Scarry so emphatically argues.

By killing herself, Phaedra denies Hippolytus access to her interiority. By killing herself offstage, she also denies it to the audience who, just earlier, watched her have sex with her stepson. The audience is thus paralleled with Hippolytus by way of its voyeurism, by having watched something that she quite explicitly does not want other people to know about; and it is a fact about her interiority, about her sexual urges, that she considers shameful. Similarly, Phaedra's claim that Hippolytus had raped her – in addition to being in line with the classical plays Kane draws from – effectively returns dishonesty for dishonesty. It is a way of protecting Phaedra's interiority by dismissing in advance any claim that she felt attracted to Hippolytus even as she disparages his character. It also, in a seeming paradox, forces Hippolytus out into the public world while also permanently exiling him from any positive social relationship.

At the end of the play, his father Theseus pushes him into a crowd of people who, while declaring him a 'royal raping bastard', strangle him and tear his body to shreds.⁵² True to the play's origins in the work of the Roman Seneca, he becomes *homo sacer*, in the ancient sense of one 'who may be killed and yet not sacrificed . . . An obscure figure of Roman law, in which human life is included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)'.⁵³ In a sense then, Phaedra's rape accusation kills Hippolytus by giving him too much of what he wanted: to be included in society in one way, as a voyeur of interiority, but excluded, in another, by his near-total privacy and loneliness. In the end, however, he is undone, torn open and fed to vultures on the street, the image of his pain becoming visible for all to see.

Edible Others

We have already seen how Levinas's concept of the dwelling, the base from which one ventures and to which one returns and in relation to which the world of objectivity is understood, allows us to elaborate Scarry's concept of torture to understand how it applies to a

non-ideal situation such as the scenario of Kane's *Blasted*. We have seen how the bi-directional character of pain, which can signify both the absence and presence of interiority, and which draws attention to or away from the sufferer's subjectivity, troubles the easy, uni-directional psychological relationship Scarry posits, permitting (as in *Phaedra's Love*) a mental power struggle over the interior privacy and the need, in a reciprocal romantic relationship, for its involuntary exposure. Hippolytus barely tolerates others to enter his private room, and abides no entry to his psychology, which is why critics have tended to see him as a non-subject, void of interiority amid the agonized figures of this tragedy. Like A, and like Ian and the Soldier, he uses others and voyeuristically witnesses their undoing (albeit by way of pleasure instead of pain) and rejects any who would undo him.

What is missing from this analysis is the body. One can, after all, invade the body as one might invade a room, entering it through violence or consumption (as discussed here) in order to affect, literally or symbolically, the mind of the other. Critics have noted the prevalence of consumption metaphors in Kane's work, especially in *Blasted*. Seán McCorry writes of Cate's vegetarianism, for example, commenting on her 'visceral refusal to allow her body to incorporate the body of the other'.⁵⁴ There are many such instances of Cate's refusal to incorporate the other symbolically through consumption. At the start of the play, it is Ian and not she who goes for the mini-bar; she often cleans or wipes herself when Ian kisses her, especially early in the play; and after performing oral sex on Ian in the second scene she '*spits frantically, trying to get every trace of him out of her mouth*',⁵⁵ and acts with disgust when she finds a hair in her throat.⁵⁶ Ian's repeated attempts to undermine her boundaries thus resemble not only the interaction between him and the Soldier in the play's second half, but also the relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus. In the opening section of the play, after inviting her into a space where he is comfortable and she is not, Ian begins peppering Cate with questions, while rarely answering questions of

his own. He even attempts to undermine her confidence in her ability to find a job. The abuse and interrogation here serve to proxy a fight over who gets to access whose interiority, and in what terms. As with Phaedra and Hippolytus, the question is whether or not the relationship will be reciprocal.

The end of the play, where Ian has been left blind and suicidal and dependent on Cate for food, shows, at last, the reversal of the relationship they had at the play's beginning. If we read Ian's frequent drinking at the play's start in relation to his comfort with the hotel room and its status as a dwelling place, then what he is really consuming there is an image of himself – like Narcissus falling in love with his own reflection. At the end of the play, when he finds and begins to eat the corpse of the baby Cate brought with her after her first trip to find food, and which, while it was alive, she had planned to take care of, serves as a transition point. On the one hand, eating a dead person would allow to the nth degree what Hippolytus attempted in his relationships – to consume the other without any chance of the other consuming him. Yet because the baby is dead, *there is no other*, and thus nothing to consume. This moment comes right after Ian begs Cate not to leave him to search for food again:

CATE: I'm hungry.
IAN: I know so am I.
But.
I'd rather –
It's not –
Please, Cate.
I'm blind.
CATE: I'm hungry.
(*She goes.*)⁵⁷

Ian, here, seems to be asking Cate to die with him. The sequence of 'I know [you're hungry] so am I. / But. / I'd rather –' suggests that Ian wants the two of them to starve to death together. By this point, Ian has already asked Cate to let him kill himself, and she has refused. Forced to remain alive against his will, and with his subjectivity therefore still available (and while still able to be 'undone' by intense pain), he offers reciprocity in the form of their mutual withdrawal from each

other. She refuses that also and, in a scene reminiscent of the end of Beckett's *Endgame* where Clov abandons Hamm blind (like Ian) in his chair, she leaves – in search of food, not abandoning Ian but rather working to keep him alive. Alone, he has the option to let himself starve, but he is at last 'undone' by his hunger pains and eats the dead baby. Having revealed his interior – both his hunger and his desire to live – Ian is at last left no choice but to live and to depend on Cate, whose mastery of the world now surpasses his own.

This relationship is iterated in Kane's third play *Cleansed*, first in the relationship between Graham and Grace, and second in Carl's and Rod's responses to Tinker's torture. In the latter case, what Scarry says of the person who confesses under torture is useful:

World, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain of torture and not through the confession as is wrongly suggested by its connotations of betrayal. *The prisoner's confession merely objectifies the fact of their being almost lost*, makes their invisible absence, or nearly absence, visible to the torturers. To assent to words that through the thick agony of the body can be only dimly heard, or to reach aimlessly for the name of a person or a place that has barely enough cohesion to hold its shape as a word . . . is a way of saying, yes, all is almost gone now.⁵⁸

The point of torture for Scarry, remember, is not to extract information, but to perform a fiction of power through the destruction of the mind of the victim. Torture does not function that way in *Cleansed*, or, really, in any Kane play. Although it still does not serve, except incidentally, to extract information, and although it engages in a performance of power, what signifies the success of that power is not the destruction of the victim's interior, but its revelation. In this respect, Eva Gil Cuder is on the right track when she compares *Cleansed* to Ovid's depiction of the myth of Philomel and her sister Procne, who were mutilated by their rapists to prevent their testimony.⁵⁹ In Ovid, as with other depictions of the myth, like Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which alludes to Philomel and Procne although they do not appear, the mutilation is not meant to destroy Philomel and Procne's

witnessing, but to obscure it. The interiority of the two women is intact but inexpressible save by the cleverness of Philomel, who depicts the rape in her weaving.

The plot of *Cleansed* follows the several victims of Tinker, a doctor who performs horrible experiments on his prisoners, mutilating and torturing them for obscure purposes. Rod and Carl are two of his victims, gay men in love with each other yet misaligned in their commitment to the relationship. (In their first scene, Carl asks Rod to marry him and Rod refuses.)⁶⁰ At the beginning of the play, Carl is adamant that he would die for Rod, and Rod does not believe him, instead affirming his love only in the present, when it can be guaranteed: 'I'll do my best, moment to moment, not to betray you. / Now.'⁶¹ Tinker observes this conversation and later tests Carl's claims by threatening to torture him to death unless he declares he would rather that Rod die instead of him – and Carl does, crying out 'ROD NOT ME' right before Tinker, instead of killing Carl, cuts out his tongue.⁶²

This moment begins a pattern of mutilation, where Tinker, whenever he witnesses Carl attempt to communicate, cuts off the part of Carl's body that was used – such as later, when Carl tries to write in the dirt and ends up with his hands cut off (leading to the highly morbid stage direction, 'CARL *tries to pick up his hands – he can't, he has no hands*'),⁶³ or when Tinker sees Carl dancing and so cuts off Carl's feet.⁶⁴ Tinker's treatment of Carl resembles an ironic Dantean punishment, where in failing to convey his true nature when he proposed to Rod, he is unable to convey anything about his interior state ever again, robbed of the body parts needed to speak, to write, to dance. One imagines that any creative solutions on Carl's part – such as writing in the dirt with his nose instead of his fingers – would have a similar result. While Tinker's motivations are rather obscure in the play, on a figurative level the interaction with Carl is an attempt to escape the problem of the torturer – the fact that the cry of pain signifies both success and failure – by using mutilation to render Carl a docile, uncommunicative body.

Notably, however, the mutilations lack the characteristics of torture as Scarry describes it:

the stage directions are short and to the point – 'TINKER *produces a large pair of scissors and cuts off CARL's tongue*';⁶⁵ 'He forces CARL to the ground and cuts off his feet'⁶⁶ – which, like the pithy 'They fight' direction of a Shakespearean play, leaves it up to the director as to how elaborate the process should be. This concision suggests that the gruesomeness of the mutilation is inessential to the drama, and that the play's broader thematic concerns can be achieved even if the scene is performed quickly. Thus, maybe paradoxically, the relationship between Tinker and Carl does not disrupt my reading of torture in Kane but, rather, affirms it by omission. The best way that Tinker finds to finally cut Carl off from intersubjective expression is to avoid the very trappings of torture, which in Scarry are essential. The room, for example, is missing (Tinker simply appears wherever Carl happens to be), as are the theatrics of showing off the torture device or colonizing the victim's interiority.

Carl's treatment differs in very interesting ways from that of Grace, whose brother, Graham, Tinker helps commit suicide in the play's opening scene. Grace, over the course of the play, attempts to become her brother, and the entire process is tied up in consumption metaphors. For example, when Grace first arrives at Tinker's lab, she demands to be given her brother's old clothes, which she then puts on before breaking down in tears. Tinker at this point tells her that she has to leave, only for Grace to *volunteer* to be a patient of his in order to continue her transformation. Tinker agrees, and represents that agreement by giving Grace a pill to swallow, which she does. The next scene is where Carl loses his tongue, which ends with Tinker forcing Carl to swallow the wedding ring he used to propose to Rod. Both Carl and Grace are forced (or allowed) by Tinker to endlessly consume an other. Grace consumes/is consumed by her brother through her slow transformation, which involves surgical procedures to change her body, as well as electrical shocks to cauterize '*bits of her brain*' and destroy parts of her personality.⁶⁷ In the final scene, the play no longer identifies her as Grace, but as Grace/Graham, her brother now fully incorporated

in her. Rod and Carl come to a similarly difficult ending. Near the conclusion of the play, Rod finally tells Carl 'I will always love you', and then gives his own ring to Carl to swallow. Tinker gives Rod the same choice that he gave Carl – 'You or him' – and Rod agrees to die, although, instead of torturing Rod to death as he threatened with Carl, Tinker simply cuts his throat.⁶⁸

Grace and Carl are clear parallels, and both end in similar positions – consuming the interiority of another while their own interiority is either cut off or partially destroyed. Indeed, Grace, in her quest to become her brother, undergoes willingly what, for Scarry, is the goal of all torture: the elimination (partial in Grace's case) of the otherness of the other through the overwriting of their subjectivity, her mind now partially replaced with what the play represents as being Graham's. Carl, on the other hand, not only consumes his and Rod's rings, but also consumes Rod, listening to him, and interacting with him, while never being able to communicate. The two end up, in the final scene, in an embrace, sharing nothing but the 'insurmountable personal distance' that they have with everybody else.⁶⁹ Yet they have also moved in opposite directions. As Nina White writes, Grace's transformation is an expression of her grief over her brother, and the process of 'giving up her own identity and transforming into Graham is her solution to his loss'.⁷⁰ Carl, however, is left freshly grieving Rod.

Furthermore, while Carl's means of expression have been diminished, he still has his subjectivity, and he has all the time he needs to dwell on his misfortunes. Although he has symbolically consumed Rod, the consumption is *only* symbolic and cannot fulfil his need for love and human connection. As Rod advises Carl at one point, 'Death isn't the worst thing they can do to you. Tinker made a man bite off another man's testicles. Can take away your life but not give you death instead.'⁷¹ Carl's life is not strictly speaking 'take[n] away', as there are plenty of people with disabilities like his who have full and complex lives, but his life *as he knew it* is certainly over, and he has no doubt suffered enormously. And if he did want to die, he

would be left in a situation much like Ian is at the end of *Blasted* – stuck being alive against his will because he is rendered by mutilation unable to kill himself.

As Scarry argues, 'physical pain is so incontestably real [to the sufferer] that it seems to confer its quality of "incontestability" on the power that has brought it into being. It is, of course, precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable that torture is being used.'⁷² Sarah Kane's plays are in part an investigation of this conundrum, which expands it instead of solving it, drawing further attention to the precariousness of a performance of power. Like all performances, they can only communicate 'when actor and audience know each other's codes'.⁷³ Kane's plays can be read as tragedies of interiority, and like all classical tragedies their plots are built upon an inevitability.⁷⁴ In this case, the inevitability of the tragic plot arises from the competing needs to escape the other and consume it, and to eliminate the otherness of the other by becoming or obliterating it. Carl and Grace of *Cleansed* represent extremes of this position, but the same kind of pattern is elsewhere in Kane's work. Kane's depictions of torture, and of situations resembling torture, serve to give this process an objective, stageable form. The results are masterful dramas of phenomenology, not debased but enhanced by their relentless gruesomeness.

Notes and References

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 50.

2. Citations of Kane's theatre are from Sarah Kane, *Complete Plays* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

3. It has long been a critical commonplace for essays on Kane to start with a summary of the early response to *Blasted*, which is of little relevance to the argument here. Curious readers are encouraged to study Graham Saunders, *'Love Me or Kill Me': Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) for its detailed summaries of the varied responses to each of Kane's plays.

4. One effect has been that the treatment of pain and suffering *as such* in Kane's work has been relatively rare, which is unusual, given how commonplace those elements are in her work. For a recent exception to this trend, see Serena Guarracino, 'The Scene and the Stage: A Queer Reading of Pain and Catharsis in Sarah Kane', *Whatever: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies*, III (2020), p. 333–50. See also Maria Kotampitsi, 'The

Representation of Pain in Selected Works by Samuel Beckett, Sarah Kane, and Howard Barker', unpublished PhD dissertation (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2020).

5. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 27.

6. Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (London: Alma Classics, 2010), p. 63. For Artaud's influence on Kane, see Laurens De Vos, 'Sarah Kane and Antonin Artaud: Cruelty Towards the Subjective', in De Vos and Graham Saunders, eds., *Sarah Kane in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 126–38.

7. Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, p. 68–9.

8. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 38

9. *Ibid.*, p. 57. Notably, Scarry also cites Artaud here.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

12. Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, p. 68.

13. Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. 16

14. See T. S. Eliot, 'Hamlet', in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 122–8. For an analysis of the role of the objective correlative in the depiction of pain, see Jeremy Colangelo, *Diaphanous Bodies: Ability, Disability, and Modernist Irish Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021), p. 61–101.

15. For an analysis of Kane's relationship to broader trends in British and Continental European theatre, see Andrew Haydon, 'Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill: The "Blood and Sperm" Generation', in *Contemporary European Playwrights*, ed. Maria M. Delgado, Bryce Lease, and Dan Rebellato (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 150–67. See also Ken Urban, 'An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, XXIII, No. 3 (September 2001), p. 36–46.

16. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 152–3.

17. Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), p. 39.

18. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 3.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Andrea Kaston Tange, *Architectural Identities: Domesticity, Literature, and the Victorian Middle Classes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 6.

21. David Vincent, *Privacy: A Short History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 3.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

23. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.

24. Antoine Prost, 'Introduction', in *A History of Private Life*, Vol. 5, ed. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent (Harvard: Belknap, 1991), p. 3.

25. J. Jeremy Wisniewski, *Understanding Torture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 82.

26. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 29.

27. Steve Waters, 'Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma', in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880–2005* (London: Blackwell, 2006), p. 373 (my emphasis).

28. Richard Ashby, *King Lear 'After' Auschwitz: Shakespeare, Appropriation, and Theatres of Catastrophe in Post-*

War British Drama (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p. 235.

29. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 39–50.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 48–9.

32. Giovanni Stanghellini and René Rosfort, *Emotions and Personhood: Exploring Fragility – Making Sense of Vulnerability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 93.

33. Kim Solga, 'Blasted's Hysteria: Rape, Realism, and the Thresholds of the Visible', *Modern Drama*, L, No. 3 (Fall 2007), p. 346–74 (p. 352). See also Ian Ward, 'Rape and Rape Mythology in the Plays of Sarah Kane', *Comparative Drama*, XLVII, No. 2 (Summer 2013), p. 225–48.

34. Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 85.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 105–6.

36. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 177.

37. With regards to the difficulty in summarizing *Crave*, I note along with Karoline Gritzner the 'characters' problematic relationships with external reality: *Adorno and Modern Theatre: The Drama of the Damaged Self in Bond, Rudkin, Barker and Kane* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 157. It is very difficult to tell reliably which monologues refer to things the characters really (in the world of the play) did, and which ones are merely imagined. I have thus tried to remain agnostic on such matters; whether A really did what they say they did, or merely imagined doing so, is immaterial to my analysis. It is the attitude, the approach to intersubjectivity in the abstract, which is at issue in this article.

38. Meg Peters, "'White on White and Black': The Terror of Whiteness in Sarah Kane's *Crave*", *The Comparatist*, XLII (2018), p. 98–114 (p. 100).

39. L. Felipe Alarcón, 'On the Body: Torture and Writing', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, XII, No. 2 (Fall 2012), p. 247–57 (p. 252).

40. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 178 (my ellipses).

41. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 114.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

43. Laurens De Vos, *Cruelty and Desire in the Modern Theatre: Antonin Artaud, Sarah Kane, and Samuel Beckett* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), p. 92.

44. Daniel J. Solove, *Understanding Privacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 93.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

46. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 80–1.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

48. For a summary of the relationship between pain gestures and communication, see Chapter 6 of Joanna Bourke, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 159–91.

49. Dror Harari, 'Artificial, Animal, Machinal: Body, Desire, and Intimacy in Modernist and Postmodernist Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly*, XXIX, No. 4 (November 2013) [NTQ 116], p. 311–20 (p. 318).

50. Erica Bexley, 'Show or Tell? Seneca and Sarah Kane's *Phaedra Plays*', *Trends in Classics*, III, No. 2 (November 2011), p. 365–93.

51. Similarly, Kim Solga writes in her reading of the rapes in *Blasted* that 'Cate's rape is significant for its very purposeful elision and that, in ignoring its offstage status, we risk missing the play's most trenchant critique of the workings of realism' ('*Blasted's Hysteria*', p. 349).

52. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 100–1.

53. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 8.
54. Seán McCorry, "'This Disgusting Feast of Filth': Meat Eating, Hospitality, and Violence in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*", *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, XXIV, No. 4 (2017), p. 753–66 (p. 758).
55. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 31.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
58. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 35 (my emphasis and ellipsis).
59. Eva Gil Cuder, 'More Than Words: Drama and Spectrality for the Articulation of Trauma', *Journal of English Studies*, X, 10 (2012), p. 65–80 (p. 76–7).
60. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 109.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 117–18.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
69. Annette Pankratz, 'Neither Here nor There: Theatrical Space in Kane's Work', in De Vos and Saunders, eds., *Sarah Kane in Context*, p. 149–60 (p. 154–5).
70. Nina White, "'It Was Like Lightning": The Theatrical Resonances of Sarah Kane in Eimear McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*', *Irish Studies Review*, XXVI, No. 4 (September 2018), p. 564–77 (p. 567).
71. Kane, *Complete Plays*, p. 136.
72. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 27.
73. Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier, 'Cruelty, Violence, and Rituals in Sarah Kane's Plays', in De Vos and Saunders, eds., *Sarah Kane in Context*, p. 80–7 (p. 81).
74. See, for example, Erich Auerbach, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2004): 'Classical tragedy . . . discloses the end of [the protagonist's] career, when he has left all diversity behind him and no escape is possible; deciphered and manifest, his disastrous fate stands there before him like a stranger . . . he tries to defend himself against the universal which is destined to engulf his individual life; he flings himself into the hopeless final struggle against his own daemon' (p. 3).