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Enacting Kane's Disgust: A Cognitive and Emotion Science Approach to *Blasted*

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Abstract

Utilising emotion science on disgust and the interconnection between emotion and cognition this essay analyses Kane's *Blasted* to articulate not only how the play makes us feel through an application of the evolutionary basis for disgust, but how this experience is meant to communicate the morality of the play's world through the cognitive structures of embodied schemata. The operation of experiential theatre is expanded through an understanding of *enactivism,* an integral part of 4E cognition, as it applies to the emotion of disgust.

Identifying and analysing the embodied schemata of BOUNDARIES, CONTAMINATION, ANIMALITY, and BALANCE the essay develops how *Blasted* relies on the most evolutionarily advanced form of disgust, '*moralisation*', to understand how the embodied experience of theatre creates meaning. Kane's shocking and disgusting theatre is thus understood to go beyond feeling. It can help us understand how viscerally reactive moments in the theatre impinge on how an audience/reader learn and adopt moral views.

Key words

Sarah Kane, enactivism, emotion science, cognitive science, disgust, *Blasted*

In 1995, theatre critic Jack Tinker (1995: 5) labelled Sarah Kane's *Blasted* 'The Disgusting Feast of Filth'. According to scholar and dramaturg Tom Sellar (1996: 29–32), *Blasted* 'ignited a scandal in the British press that lasted months' and largely focused on the 'immediate presence' of 'real' and 'threatening' violence based in 'underclass rage', 'political retribution', and 'terrorism'. The critics themselves described the play with a penchant for disgust and moral judgement:

> [W]atching her [The Soldier's Girlfriend] avenged in this gory way is of interest predominantly to one's stomach [in reference to the rape of Ian and his eye's being sucked out and eaten]. (TAYLOR 1995: 27)

> There is not enough [in *Blasted*] besides the degradation so it emerges as gratuitous, oppressive and, finally, tedious. (HEMMING 1995: 15)

> I do not think I've yet seen a play that can beat Sarah Kane's sustained onslaught on the sensibilities for sheer, unadulterated brutalism. Heaping shock upon shock, *Blasted* is a powerful experience in the same way that being mugged is a powerful experience. Rape, torture, cannibalism, death: they're all here, over two uninterrupted hours. (CURTIS 1995: 46)

> It does not deserve attention, but it demands it. It made me feel sick, and giggly with shock. After the press night, strangers were talking to each other. Sarah Kane will hope that this is an inverted tribute to the piece. I see it more as the sudden solidarity that descends when people have been involved in the same calamity. [...] If the play has any message it is that death is preferable to life. (KELLAWAY 1995: 9)

Kane's *oeuvre*, as Sellar, among many scholars and critics illustrate, continues to be viewed through its ability to shock an audience physically and cognitively. According to Kane, theatre should be 'emotionally and intellectually demanding' (Kane quoted in BENEDICT 1995: 3), 'visceral' (KANE 1998: 12), and 'experiential rather than speculative' (Kane quoted in SIERZ 2001: 98).[1] 'Experiential' is one of the primary defining qualities of what Aleks Sierz (2001) calls 'in-yer-face theatre', a movement of British theatre in the 1990s that he further defines as 'drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message', it is a theatre 'so powerful, so visceral, that it forces audiences to react: either they feel like fleeing the building or they are suddenly convinced that it is the best thing they have ever seen' (SIERZ 2001: 4–5). Much of the scholarship on Kane's *Blasted* addresses the experiential nature of her plays. For example, Graham Saunders (2003: 102) concedes that 'emotional intensity is undeniably integral to Kane's drama' while focusing on the tension between Kane's masterful use of language and the visceral experience. Elaine Aston (2010: 580) posits the potential political affect of the experiential while analysing *Blasted*

1 Quotes from Sarah Kane that are pulled out of Aleks Sierz's *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, as here, originate from Sierz's personal interviews and correspondence with Kane.

to advocate for a specific political purpose: feeling the lost connection between the personal and political in feminist theatre. Allyson Campbell (2005: 81) utilises Jeremy Gilbert's Deleuzian notion of 'affective specificity' and 'affective analysis' to understand Kane's idea of theatre, that is, 'experience as the key to eliciting change in the spectator'. I argue that *Blasted* strategically elicits and manipulates disgust within the text to create a visceral experience around sexual violence, war, and racism. Far from deploying disgust to simply shock – although the play certainly does – *Blasted* interrogates *moralisations* around its themes by *enacting* disgust as an emotion system that involves affective, behavioural, and cognitive elements to challenge audiences/readers to reassess how disgust structures their morality.

Enacting disgust: a method of analysing the 'disgusting feast of filth'

Disgust's origins are found in the evolutionary need to avoid foods that might be 'poisonous, toxic, or otherwise harmful' (KELLY 2011: 46) and 'disease-causing pathogens', 'infections', and 'parasites' disconnected from ingestion (KELLY 2011: 48). Paul Rozin, Jonathan Haidt, and Clark R. McCauley (2008: 759) call these first two categories of disgust: distaste and core disgust. Going further, the authors contend that disgust continued to evolve from 'a mechanism for avoiding harm to the body [to a] mechanism for avoiding harm to the soul' (ROZIN et al. 2008: 771). This is accomplished through what Daniel Kelly (2011: 141) labels Co-opt Theory and what Rozin et al. (2008: 764) discuss as a 'process of preadaptation' adding three additional categories of disgust: animal nature, interpersonal, and moral. A simple breakdown of the elicitors and functions of these categories of disgust is provided by Rozin et al. (2008: 764) which will further help in identifying disgust elements within *Blasted*: (1) *Distaste* protects the body and is elicited by 'bad tastes'; (2) *Core Disgust* protects the body and is elicited by 'food/eating, body products, animals'; (3) *Animal Disgust* protects both the body and soul while denying mortality and is elicited by 'sex, death, hygiene, envelope violations'; (4) *Interpersonal Disgust* protects body, soul, and society and is elicited by 'direct and indirect contact with strangers or undesirables'; (5) *Moral Disgust* protects society and is elicited by 'certain moral offenses'. Kelly argues that disgust

> is in a sense ballistic: once activated, it runs its course, generating the full, coordinated package of affective, behavioral, and cognitive components, and influencing downstream cognitive activity in typical ways, regardless of the actual character of the eliciting entity. (KELLY 2011: 142)[2]

2 Kelly (2011: 142) goes on to argue, 'In light of these features of the response, once something triggers disgust, the underlying cognitive system causes an agent to think about and treat the offending entity *as if* it were revolting, dirty, impure, and contaminating, whether or not it really is, or whether or not those assessments or inferences are endorsed by the person, or whether or not they are in any way reflectively justifiable'.

While the elicitors help to point out how Kane's text, reviews of performances, and other descriptions of a production trigger a disgust reaction, the trajectory from protection of the body to protection of social and moral ideals is essential to recognise how Kane is utilising disgust to create embodied experiences about sexual violence, war, and racism that question our 'gut sense' of right and wrong.

Cultural differences in disgust abound, specifically in animal, interpersonal, and moral disgust where cultural evolution pre-adapts or co-opts disgust mechanisms to social and cultural ends. One such difference, studied by Jonathan Haidt, Paul Rozin, Clark McCauley, and Sumio Imada (1997), is the way in which moral disgust in US America may guard 'against threats to an individualist, rights-based social order'; whereas, in Japanese culture *Ken-o* (the correlate word in Japanese for disgust) guards 'against threats to a more collectivist and interdependent social order' (ROZIN et al. 2008: 766).[3] Kelly (2011: 151), following Rozin (1999: 218–219), describes the application of moral disgust to any particular event, group of people, belief, institution, etc. as *moralisation*: the process by which a moral standard or belief is established via emotional experience. Disgust then is a complex emotional experience that can be broken down into 'affective' (physiological experiences like nausea), 'behavioural' (facial expressions, physical withdrawal), and 'cognitive elements' (symbols, embodied schemata, sympathetic magic) that possesses a 'hair trigger' that activates 'quickly and automatically' despite fictional elicitors, as in theatre and literature (KELLY 2011: 141–142). Centrally, disgust can be used for *moralisation*, a process I argue *Blasted* engages to *enact* and disrupt – with audiences/readers – moral understandings of the specific themes of sexual violence, war, and racism.

Enactivism highlights the way in which disgust, in its more complex forms, is an opportunity to form or create the moral world of an individual organism. Enactivism, represents one of the four E's in 4E cognition: embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended. Of course, all elements of this theory of cognition are interconnected, but enactivism helps explain the way that emotion operates as both embodied and situated within the organism and its environment. According to Maiya Murphy (2019: 9), enactivism 'proposes that organisms *enact* cognition, or actively create it, rather than simply access a world that exists outside of them'. Giovanni Colombetti (2014: xiv) might add, that an organism *enacts* cognition through sense-making, a cognitive and affective process, whereby the organism 'brings forth a world' through action.[4]

Bruce McConachie's *Evolution, Cognition and Performance* explicitly connects enactivism to the cognitive structures of image schemas which he argues 'give expressive order to all performances and are a chief means for communicating meaning to spectators', and indeed that 'image schemas help to generate much of the conflict that is inherent

3 Unfortunately, psychological research on British moral disgust is lacking in that the focus of culturally diverse research on disgust is often initially situated in language differences and different cultural words for disgust, as seen here. Thus, American culture is the barometer for variations of English language 'disgust'. For example, see (SCHWEIGER GALLO et al. 2024).

4 Another way to view the *enaction* of emotions is through Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotions in her book *How Emotions are Made* (2017).

in nearly all performances' (MCCONACHIE 2015: 59, 72). Importantly, 'image schemas recur as bundles of interacting relationships that involve our brains, bodies, and immediate material environments' (MCCONACHIE 2015: 159). That is, like disgust, they rely on affective, cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors. However, as McConachie (2015: 241) goes on to explain in enactivist terms, 'these relationships center on recurring structural couplings embedded in flows of action that are prototypically perceived and embodied as experiential gestalts; that is, despite their several interacting parts, we perceive image schemas as complete wholes'. Disgust interacts with a number of important image schemas that are embedded within *Blasted* and can be used to analytically understand the play's *enaction* of a particular moral view.

Haidt et al. (1997: 122), following the work of Mark Johnson (1987: 28–30), among others, suggest utilising 'embodied schemata' as a means of understanding disgust as 'imaginative structures or patterns of experience that are based in bodily knowledge and sensation' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 122). For Johnson, image schemas are dynamic patterns in two specific ways:

> (1) Schemata are structures *of an activity* by which we organize our experience in ways that we can comprehend. They are a primary means by which we *construct* or *constitute* order and are not mere passive receptacles into which experience is poured. (2) Unlike templates, schemata are flexible in that they can take on any number of specific instantiations in varying contexts. (JOHNSON 1987: 29–30)

The embodied schemata of disgust, suggested by Haidt et al. (1997) differ from Johnson's formulation in that they go beyond spatial, force, and balance categories of image schemas to integrate emotion or affect (internal stimuli experienced within the body). Jean M. Mandler and Cristóol Pagán Cánovas (2014: 17) call this 'schematic integration' and discuss it as a form of conceptual blending, layering of 'feelings or non-spatial perceptions' onto 'spatial primitives' and 'image schemas'. Haidt et al. (1997) refer to this more complex category of image schemas as embodied schemata. Thus, we can see how some of the embodied schemata suggested by Haidt et al. represent more complex and blended schema than those suggested by Johnson. Within the context of *Blasted,* four embodied schemata are essential to understand the *moralisation* of disgust within the play: BOUNDARIES, CONTAMINATION, ANIMALITY, and BALANCE (see HAIDT et al. 1997).[5]

Enaction relies on an organisms' 'relentless sense-making activity' based in affective and cognitive tools embedded within the workings of the human organism from an evolutionary perspective (COLOMBETTI 2014: xvii). In this way, Colombetti's enactivism agrees with the views of Antonio Damasio (1999) and Jaak Panksepp (2014: 22–24) that at its most basic, affect is part of the 'self-regulatory' process that has evolved in many organisms (humans included) to maintain homeostasis. Kane's *Blasted* exploits

5 Here I follow the common practice in Cognitive Studies of capitalising all image schema in addition to capitalising these specific embodied schemata.

the evolutionary basis of disgust to trigger the embodied and affective experience that leads to complex emotion for an audience/reader. This may help explain Edward Bond's claim that 'the humanity of *Blasted* moved me' and certainly mirrors Kane's own description of her intention for the play: 'to create something beautiful about despair, or out of a feeling of despair, is for me the most hopeful, life-affirming thing a person can do' (Bond quoted in SIERZ 2001: 91). Take for example, Ken Urban's description of a moment in the Royal Court's 2001 revival of *Blasted*:

> When Tom Jordan Murphy's Soldier raped Neil Dudgeon's Ian, the experience was harrowing. The sounds that Murphy made as he transformed Ian's body into his dead girlfriend Col, coupled with the duration of the sequence, was unlike any other experience that I've had in the theatre. Such a moment is many things, but it is not cynical. It makes an argument about our notions of sexuality and violence, an argument that is *felt*, not heard: no dialectical conversations, instead, the power of the image, of Dudgeon's exposed buttocks and Jordan Murphy's incessant sobs. (URBAN 2004: 370)

The feeling of the play in this example, and its morality, is attached not to discourse but to the embodied experience that I am suggesting is based on *Blasted*'s elicitation of disgust and its concomitant *moralisations*.

The cognitive, emotional, and socio-moral implications of disgust as an analytical frame is connected to the broader affective turn in the humanities, which can generally be seen as falling along two interrelated axes. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010: 5–6) note in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader,* these axes can be defined by two important essays published in 1995: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold' and Brian Massumi's 'The Autonomy of Affect'. In the first, Sedgwick and Frank rely on Silvan Tomkins' *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (1962), which represents a seminal treatment of basic emotion theory, connected to innate affect and evolution. Massumi relies on Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist theories on bodily capacities to analyse affect in regard to the relations between complex assemblages that impact both bodies and the world. More simply, Erin Hurley's (2010: 78–79) *Theatre & Feeling* describes these axes as the cognitive and affective turn, distinguishing the two as those that explicitly utilise cognitive science and those that do not. Further, as McConachie (2015: 110) argues, scholars in the performing arts have largely bypassed the scientific research on 'human emotion' and jumped to theories of affect based in Deleuze and Guattari among several other orientations, 'none of which draw substantially on empirical science' but clearly produce 'much scholarly heat these days but little light'. Sara Ahmed (2014: 3, 4) straddles these axes in her well-known book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* citing the evolutionary basis and psychological understanding of emotion as well as Spinoza, Descartes, Feminist Philosopher Judith Butler, psychoanalytic theory, and more. Though Ahmed specifically critiques and utilises both axes at different points in her work, her overall methodology and case studies focus on 'surfaces and boundaries' (AHMED 2014: 10) to ultimately approach 'emotion as a form of cultural politics and world making' (AHMED

2014: 12). In other words, while engaging the work of cognitive science, she ultimately falls into the cultural theory of affect as represented by Massumi, Deleuze, and Spinoza. Interconnections and resonances between these axes enhance my understanding of the *enaction* of disgust, specifically the work of Ahmed. While Ahmed falls in the direction of social and political discourse, I am interested in the specificity of Kane's text as an experience *enacted* by an emotional body that relies on embodied schemata to make sense of the affective triggers of disgust. With that said, Ahmed's assertion that disgust operates in some ways like a performative and that BOUNDARIES can be read as an embodied schema that resonates with disgust enriches an analysis of *Blasted*.

What follows is an analysis of the play through each of the four embodied schemata to demonstrate how the play *moralises* on its themes through the affective triggers of disgust: BOUNDARIES, CONTAMINATION, ANIMALITY, and BALANCE. While my analysis primarily relies on textual evidence, I will provide occasional insights from those who have experienced the play themselves, like Ken Urban above.

Breaking disgusting BOUNDARIES

BOUNDARIES are integral to the storytelling of *Blasted.* Disgust is an emotion that is essentially protective of the body or self, and as Rozin et al. (2008: 771) would amend, the soul. Susan Miller's *Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion* (2004: 1–22) takes this further noting that disgust essentially serves as a mechanism to protect the boundaries of both the physical and psychological line between self and other: 'Disgust is about skin. [...] Skin is a container, barrier, demarcater of inside and outside. Disgust is about leakage and escape through skin, about permeation and penetration and soaking and about fears (coupled with wishes)' (MILLER 2004: 18–19). BOUNDARIES are integrated with many spatial image schemas such as CONTAINMENT, CONTACT, and MERGING. Ahmed adds 'above' and 'below' to the notion of disgust and BOUNDARIES:

> The spatial distinction of 'above' from 'below' functions metaphorically to separate one body from another, as well as to differentiate between higher and lower bodies, or more and less advanced bodies. As a result, disgust at 'that which is below' functions to maintain the power relations between above and below, through which 'aboveness' and 'belowness' become properties of particular bodies, objects and spaces. (AHMED 2014: 89)

'Above' and 'below' in particular highlight the moral valence of BOUNDARIES and how the protective emotion system of disgust is deployed to police and *moralise* on bodies, actions, peoples, and more.

The play is broken into five scenes, with the first two scenes operating as standard naturalistic sociopolitical theatre in which a young woman, Cate, has been lured to a fancy hotel room and is sexually abused by Ian, a tabloid journalist. At the end of scene two, a Soldier arrives and scene three begins after the hotel room literally explodes, creating a BOUNDARY. The remaining scenes explore an expressionistic,

apocalyptic nightmare in which the Soldier rapes and abuses Ian, Cate returns with a baby as Ian tries to kill himself, and finally a series of vignettes as Cate and Ian work to survive or die. Disgust and its elicitors are strewn throughout the play triggering the disgust emotion system's concern with BOUNDARIES and the inherent danger of not protecting the self and society.

Disgust's evolutionary origin in the BOUNDARIES of eating, taking material into the body and incorporating it into the self, highlights the importance of cannibalism within *Blasted* and presents an interpretation of one of *Blasted*'s most disgusting scenes, the moment when the Soldier sucks out Ian's eyes: '*The **Soldier** grips **Ian**'s head in his hands. He puts his mouth over one of **Ian**'s eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it. He does the same to the other eye*' (KANE 2001: 50). The scene has disgust elicitors from the core to moral stages, including, eating of body products, envelope violation, direct contact with an undesirable stranger, and the moral taboo of cannibalism. Immediately following this act, the Soldier confirms this is a re-creation of what a soldier did to his girlfriend, Col: 'He ate her eyes. / Poor Bastard. / Poor love. / Poor Fucking bastard' (KANE 2001: 50). According to Carole A. Travis-Henikoff's *Dinner with a Cannibal,* this act could be classified as exocannibalism, or rather, cannibalism of an enemy as opposed to starvation cannibalism. Travis-Henikoff (2008: 230) argues cannibalism can occur 'whenever people are schooled to think of others as less than human, during wars, or when a lack of resources bring forth survival tactics inherent within the form'. In the case of Ian and the Soldier, war and the dehumanisation of an enemy seems the likely cause, although the Soldier is also looking for food. The act as a re-creation, however, seems to question these very justifications, both Col and the soldier that murdered her are '[p]oor'. As Kristen Guest's 'Introduction: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Identity' suggests, the cannibal, 'long a figure associated with absolute alterity and used to enforce boundaries between a civilized "us" and savage "them," may in fact be more productively read as a symbol of the permeability, or instability, of such boundaries' (GUEST 2001: 2). Thus, the 'them' of the Soldier consuming Ian's eyes and the other soldier that did the same to Col, might be understood as a blurring of permeable, unstable BOUNDARIES. The Soldier implicates Ian in the same behaviour he perpetrates:

> Soldier. Didn't you ever - [rape someone]
>
> Ian. No.
>
> Soldier. What about that girl locked herself in the bathroom.
>
> Ian. *(Doesn't answer.)*
>
> Soldier. Ah.
>
> Ian. You did four in one go, I've only ever done one. (KANE 2001: 43–44)

The BOUNDARY between perpetrator and victim[6] begins to blur, and the rape of Ian, the cannibalism of his eyes, and other abuses are connected to the earlier rape of Cate; the rape, eye-eating, and death of Col; and ultimately the experience of the rape camps in Bosnia. Given this complexity, the play *moralises*, as Kane suggests, for the connection 'between a common rape in a Leeds hotel room and what's happening in Bosnia' (Kane quoted in SIERZ 2001: 101), but goes even further in bridging the self/other divide between the Soldier and Ian, the Soldier and Col's murderer, and Ian and Cate. The power dynamics of these abuses, what Ahmed might call 'aboveness' and 'belowness' are at once instantiated through a representation of violent BOUNDARY crossing and confused by attaching 'aboveness' and 'belowness' to each character in turn. This directly relates to Ahmed's (2014: 93) model of performativity for disgust in which 'it both lags behind the object from which it recoils, and generates the object in the very event of recoiling'. An audience/reader then recoils from the eye-eating, rape, and abuse of Ian, *enacting* a *moralisation* of sexual violence, war, and the 'other' as disgusting. As Ahmed (2014: 94) would suggest, creating a 'distance from the [disgusting] thing'. *Blasted*, however, breaks this distance by blurring BOUNDARIES between those that commit and receive violence, allowing an audience/reader to recognise that same disgusting behaviour in Ian, Cate, and perhaps themselves, a disintegration of the BOUNDARIES of disgusting violence outside of self/other dichotomies.

Racist CONTAMINATION of self and other

The disgust elicitors noted by Rozin et al. (2008: 764) run constantly throughout the script and work to complicate the *moralisation* of disgusting BOUNDARIES through the embodied schema of CONTAMINATION. For Haidt et al. (1997: 116), CONTAMINATION is 'extended into the social world, where we use it to avoid "evil" and increase contact with "goodness"'. There are at least 97 different disgust elicitors in a script that runs 58 pages, *enacting* a world deeply embedded in the disgusting. Less complex elicitations of disgust on the level of 'food/eating, body products, animals' and 'bad tastes' include references to foul smells, Cate's refusal to eat meat, Ian's penetration of Cate's mouth with his tongue, the imagery of Ian's rotting lung as rotting pork, Ian's breath, the comparison of genitals to 'meat', and the expulsion and sharing of bodily fluids (including the Soldier peeing on the bed, and Cate retching up Ian's sperm) (KANE 2001: 3–39). All of these speak to the CONTAMINATION of the self through the failure of BOUNDARIES.

Other more complex notions of disgust appear in discussions of mortality (specifically Ian's lung cancer), violations of body BOUNDARIES at different wanted and unwanted sex acts, and the preadaptation of disgust as a means of justification for racism and xenophobia. As Kelly (2011: 145) notes, '[p]erhaps unsurprisingly, disgust has been

6 The blurring of victim, perpetrator, and bystander is a common interpretation of much of Kane's work. See (GREIG 2001: xvii).

linked to the most extreme cases of prejudice and xenophobia toward other groups'. Of particular interest, Kelly cites a 2006 study conducted by Harris and Fiske, in which they find that the dehumanisation of a group of people is linked to brain activity associated with disgust and confirmed by their study's participant's self-reported feelings of disgust (HARRIS and FISKE 2006: 847–853).

All of this begins with the first line of the play. Ian states, 'I've shat in better places than this (*he gulps down the gin*) I stink' (KANE 2001: 3). Soon after Ian has an extreme coughing fit off stage involving the expulsion of body fluids, linking Ian to disease and setting up the embodied schema of CONTAMINATION (KANE 2001: 4). This is blended with a more insidious form of moral disgust as Ian proclaims, 'Hate this city. Stinks. Wogs and Pakis taking over' (KANE 2001: 4) *enacting* foul smells (core disgust) with racist language to present the use of disgust to dehumanise, as Harris and Fiske suggest. In a 2005 interview with Graham Saunders, Aleks Sierz wonders whether *Blasted* lost something with the elimination of the 'Muslim Other' as Kane worked to erase 'specific cultural references' in favour of 'universalizing the text' (SAUNDERS 2009: 133). According to Sierz, 'Bosnia' became code for what was not only happening to Bosniak populations (Bosnian Muslims) in the 1992–1995 Bosnian War but also the prejudice encountered by Muslims in Britain in 1995 when the play was first staged at the Royal Court (Sierz quoted in SAUNDERS 2009: 133). Sierz refers to Reverend Bob Vernon's defence of *Blasted* (VERNON 1995: 21), where Vernon responds to Michael Billington's (1995: 22) claim that *Blasted* 'falls apart' because 'there is no sense of external reality – who exactly is meant to be fighting whom out on the streets?':

> My local shopping centre looks like Grozny, only two out of two dozen shops remain. The rest are reduced to shattered glass and wrecked steel shutters. Some housing estates in our city look like war zones too, burnt out houses, glass- and rubbish-littered streets, dazed, tranquilized people trying to survive. With so many casualties who is fighting whom out there? (VERNON 1995: 21)

'Grozny', a reference to the First Russo-Chechen War, was associated by Vernon, a British Reverand, as a Russian attack on Chechen's Muslim identity, a connection that does not necessarily reflect the actual causes, conflicts, and aims of the war. However, as Sierz (2010: 46) articulates in '"Looks like there's a war on": Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, Political Theatre and the Muslim Other', Muslim identity, while made absent through specific revisions by Kane, casts a 'shadow [that] falls across the play' and that the Bosnian War, as inspiration for the play, helped Kane embed 'Muslim disaffection' and 'English reactionary racism' within the text.

Ian's continual spouting of dehumanising, racist language is one elicitor of disgust. For example, Ian's suggestion that Cate is 'after a bit of black meat' (KANE 2001: 17) in scene one, in which a black man is dehumanised through the suggestion that he is food stuff, hyper-sexual, and animalistic. Or, a moment in scene three in which Ian is 'forced' by the Soldier to imagine raping then killing 'foreign slag' and the stage directions suggestion that this makes Ian '*look sick*' (KANE 2001: 45). Or even the Sol-

dier's own dehumanisation of the enemy as he describes them as 'pigs', notes his rape of a young girl who had her 'hand up inside her trying to claw my [the Soldier's] liquid out', and the Soldier's enemies resorting to cannibalism: 'Starving man eating his dead wife's leg' (KANE 2001: 50). While Ian literally stinks and is disgusting via his illness and the increasing permeability of his bodily fluids with his environment, his invective against the 'other' elicits disgust to establish a dual experience of CONTAMINATION, one in which the character deploys a racist *moralisation* of disgust against Muslims in Britain and in which an audience/reader views Ian as contaminated because of his lung disease, constant coughing of blood and phlegm, and imagery connecting his lungs to rotting pork. Put simply, Ian is disgusting based in core and animal nature elicitors, helping an audience/reader *enact* a world where he is disgusting morally, while he simultaneously attempts to utilise disgust *moralisations* against out-group communities.

The play makes no secret of disgust's effectiveness in dehumanising a group of people, and indeed audience/readers are meant to avoid CONTAMINATION with this behaviour by rejecting the racism and violence of Ian through viewing his body as impure, diseased, disgusting and identifying with the innocence of Cate. Ian, for example, argues that Hitler was wrong about the Jews and should have 'gone for' 'queers', 'wogs', and 'football fans' arguing that a bomber at Elland Road (a football stadium, historically located next to a working-class neighbourhood) would 'finish them off' (KANE 2001: 19). Cate combats this view, asking: 'I go to Elland Road sometimes. Would you bomb me?' and later 'could you shoot me?' Ian claims shooting someone is as 'easy as shitting blood' and while never directly denying he could or would shoot Cate, claims he is soft with 'people I love' (KANE 2001: 20). Shitting blood, disgusting through elicitors like bodily fluid and hygiene connected to core disgust and animal disgust, *moralises* violence as disgusting, especially directed at marginalised groups. Miller (2004: 154) argues that disgust's 'self-protective boundaries to exclude "dirt" conveys us quickly into the treacherous realms of extreme nationalism and ethnocentrism, and toward the notion of "cleansing" an ethnic group of elements that are suspected of polluting its purity'. This *moralisation* of disgust is clearly seen in Ian's language, suggested actions, and rhetoric, but Kane complicates the *moralisation* of extreme nationalism and ethnocentrism as itself disgusting by blurring the BOUNDARIES between the in-groups and out-groups, perpetrators and victims. For example, Cate rejects Ian's argument that the marginalised are destroying their country:

> Ian. I won't see it destroyed by slag.
>
> Cate. It's wrong to kill.
>
> Ian. Planting bombs and killing little kiddies, that's wrong. That's what they do. Kids like your brother.
>
> Cate. It's wrong.
>
> Ian. Yes, it is.
>
> Cate. No. You. Doing that. (KANE 2001: 32)

Cate rejects the *moralisation* of nationalism and ethnocentrism by taking a stand, against killing generally, but also against Ian's attempt to *moralise* BOUNDARIES between groups through disgust. However, it is not only the Soldier and Ian who are marked by disgust and perpetrate violence. Moments before the above exchange, Cate bites Ian's penis 'as hard as she can' and 'holds on with her teeth' releasing only after Ian beats her off of him and he is left to 'lie in pain, unable to speak' (KANE 2001: 31). Similar to Ian's rotting lungs serving as an elicitor of disgust, Cate's fainting spells, seizures, and mental disability invoke the CONTAMINATION of Cate and her inability to change or challenge the world of Ian and his ilk. *Blasted* does not simply *moralise* racism and xenophobia as disgusting, but instead points out, as Kelly (2011: 152) argues, that 'recommending disgust as the proper, moral response to racism and racists [...] would be to invite the too easy slip into thinking of and treating racists not just as wrong but as dirty, tainted, contaminating, even inhuman'. Kane advocates in an interview, 'if we can experience something through art, then we might be able to change our future, because experience engraves lessons on our hearts through suffering, whereas speculation leaves us untouched' (Kane quoted in LANGRIDGE and STEPHENSON 1997: 133). Kane's use of disgust, along with an audience/reader, *enacts* this objective. By triggering the experience of disgust through strong disgust elicitors, *Blasted* challenges audience/readers to deal with *moralisations* normally left 'untouched' in 'speculation', like the idea that racists or terrorists are disgusting while killing terrorists or racists is not. Kane's subsequent reversals or inclusions (at who or what disgust is directed) and the blurring of 'self' and 'other' complicates the embodied schemata of BOUNDARIES and CONTAMINATION to open up space for an audience/reader to blend common everyday violence with acts of war, terrorism, or ethnic cleansing.

'At home I'm clean': rejecting the cleansing power of ANIMALITY

Sexual violations occur throughout *Blasted*. Alongside the forced kisses and other violations there are six major assaults: (1) Cate is forced to give Ian a hand-job; (2) Cate is raped during the night, offstage; (3) Kane's stage directions describe a 'simulated' rape: '*He* [Ian] *puts the gun to her* [Cate's] *head, lies between her legs, and simulates sex*' (KANE 2001: 27) during one of Cate's fainting spells; (4) Cate bites Ian's penis; (5) the Soldier rapes Ian; and (6) Cate engages in sex work to acquire food. Sex is linked to what Rozin et al. (2008: 761) call animal-nature disgust which includes domains such as 'inappropriate sexual acts, poor hygiene, death, and violations of the ideal body "envelope" or exterior form (e.g. gore, deformity, obesity)'. ANIMALITY, as an embodied schema, suggests the way that 'many cultures feel the need to distinguish themselves from animals, and to hide their animal nature behind the cover of humanizing rituals and practices' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 112).[7] The *moralisation* of sexual violence through

7 Importantly, Daniel Kelly (2011: 57–59) rejects the theory of animal-nature disgust as being connected to death and mortality, instead finding scientific evidence for disgust operating as a protective system from microbes and parasites, thus hygiene, sex, decaying bodies, deformed bodies, and envelope violation point

ANIMALITY leads to a strong moral disgust component as Paul Rozin, Laura Lowery, Sumio Imada, and Jonathan Haidt (1999) suggest in their essay 'The Cad Triad Hypothesis'. The authors categorise moral disgust as an other-critical emotion, meaning an emotional reaction directed towards someone else's moral violation. 'The Cad Triad Hypothesis' sets out to test a presumed link between contempt, anger, and disgust to three ethics, proposed by Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park, and used by various societies to deal with moral violations: 'the ethics of community, autonomy, and divinity' (ROZIN et al. 1999: 575; see also SHWEDER et al. 1997). Divinity/purity violations are connected to the emotion of disgust and defined as 'cases [where] a person disrespects the sacredness of God, or causes impurity or degradation to himself/herself, or to others' (ROZIN et al. 1999: 576). Returning to Haidt et al.'s work on disgust and morality, we can recognise disgust as 'the guardian of the temple of the body' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 114). ANIMALITY schema operates to condemn and create distance from sexual violations considered animal like, and thus immoral. Within *Blasted*, Kane deploys the act of washing as a ritual or practice to theatricalise ANIMALITY's erasure of sexual violence through disgust, after all 'cleanliness is indeed next to godliness' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 113).

Blasted's sexual violations activate disgust to *enact* a *moralisation* on sexual assault in which the play works to tie the rape of a woman in a hotel room with rape as a weapon of war, artfully leading an audience/reader to the embodied schemata of ANIMALITY, only to reject its simple disgust *moralisations* that neatly separate sexual violence from audience/readers. As David Greig in a 1995 letter to the editor points out, this message was lost in the original production:

> Ironically, in the journalists' treatment of Sarah Kane, her analysis is borne out. On a day when a 15-year-old girl was raped and murdered, both the tabloids and the *Guardian* felt it necessary to devote more space to attacking a young writer who has done nothing more than represent the abuse she sees in the world around her. (GREIG 1995: 19)

The complexity of disgust *enacted* throughout the sequence of sexual assaults in *Blasted* relies on BOUNDARIES between self and other in the extreme situation of sexual violation and the potential for CONTAMINATION, contact with and exposure to evil. Through the repeated and failed practice of washing, the play points a way forward, and it becomes clear why so many, including Kane herself, consider the play hopeful.

Kim Solga (2007: 355) argues that the various rapes in *Blasted* open the possibility of critiquing 'rape's history of cultural disavowal, its ambiguous performance history, as well as the vexed history of the female body in realist representation'. This occurs not only because of carefully thought-out signification, but because of the way in which the various rapes alter our perspectives through the elicitation of animal-nature and moral disgust. The initial rape of Cate between scenes one and two is finally confessed

towards this protective element instead of a comparison with animals. Despite this, the *moralisations* of disgust surrounding these triggers lead to similar social and cultural implications.

by Ian when he admits to the Soldier, 'You did four in one go, I've only ever done one' (KANE 2001: 44). Prior to this, Cate's relationship to the audience/reader is akin to many rape victim's relationship with their community. That is, their statements are questioned and scrutinised in an effort to suggest sexual consent, a cultural practice meant to cover up the animal-like violence of rape. For example,

> 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. (KANE 2001: 31)

Cate makes it clear that what occurred was against her will, was rape, and Ian utilises various strategies to imply that she was consensual. Aston (2010: 583) notes this erasure of rape in *Blasted* as a 'backlash against second-wave feminism' and its investment in 'women as passive sexual victims'. She thus describes this erasure as 'not rape at all, but sex construed as rape in the light of "morning after" regret' (ASTON 2010: 584). The rape of Cate off-stage allows the ambiguity of this 'she said/he said' battle to *enact* the experience of many rape victims and the communities that often fail to believe them or as Solga (2007: 355) would put it, 'cultural disavowal'. Ian's disgusting actions are papered over in his unseen rape of Cate through the cultural practice of demanding women's behaviour be the gatekeeper of purity, the schema of ANIMALITY.

Cate starts scene two by calling Ian a 'Cunt', the bouquet of flowers Ian gave to Cate the night before is torn apart indicating a struggle, and Cate tears the arms off of Ian's leather jacket in revenge. Ian begins the scene experiencing extreme pain, coughing, crying until he 'is a crumpled heap on the floor' (KANE 2001: 24–26). Kane, again, utilises Ian's disgusting situation (disease, rotting lungs, coughing) to *moralise* the abhorrent nature of his actions; however, convincing an audience/reader through an emotional experience that sexual violations are wrong, is not the play's objective. Kane complicates the simple *moralisation* of ANIMALITY through failed washing. When Ian arrives at the hotel, he 'stinks' and immediately wants to wash. Afterwards, he has his first coughing fit off-stage which yields bodily fluids, which he spits in the sink; he constantly attempts to clean himself only to again become CONTAMINATED. For example, Ian starts 'sweating' again, describes his rotting lung, and continues his unwanted advances towards Cate, blaming his body odour for Cate's rejection, 'Because I stink?' (KANE 2001: 8). Between each scene, the stage directions indicate the audience should hear the sound of rain attached to a specific season, which occur in the following order: spring, summer, autumn, and finally 'heavy winter rain' (KANE 2001: 57). Instead of the rain washing the horrors of the previous scene, they escalate,

presenting the CONTAMINATION of the world through sexual violations and the failure of ANIMALITY to cover up and protect patriarchal power and women's purity.

The next iteration of Cate's rape occurs when Ian simulates sex on top of Cate, a gun to her head, while she is passed out. This is the kind of rape typically abhorred (read: culturally avowed) by all – that is, the far less common, gun to your head, rape – and Kane makes it clear that it should appear fake, theatrical, as a simulation (KANE 2001: 27). It is an 'inappropriate sexual act' but does not involve a body envelope violation and is interrupted by Cate's hysterical laughter that turns to tears. The common disbelief of a girl raped in a hotel room by her former lover is replaced by the disgust invoked at a fake, culturally readable gun-to-head rape, which leaves the audience/reader ambiguously disgusted and unsure which rape should be *moralised* as animal-like, covered up, and put at a distance through the embodied schema of ANIMALITY: the disgusting rape was fake and the actual rape was not (yet) disgusting because of its unmarked and unseen nature (SOLGA 2007: 355). Despite the spring rain leading into scene two, and after Ian's painful fit, he again goes to wash. Cate too cleanses herself after the simulated rape as her hysterical laughter turns to tears. As Haidt et al. (1997: 113) note, tears are the only 'body product that is not regarded as disgusting by Americans or many other peoples'. Instead of *enacting* the embodied schema of CONTAMINATION, as most bodily fluids and processes do, tears serve to cleanse, as Cate deals with the aftermath of both her real and subjunctive future sexual assaults. Similarly, after Cate bites Ian's penis, she 'spits frantically, trying to get every trace of him out of her mouth' and goes to wash in the bathroom, for the first time, after she commits her sole act of sexual violence (KANE 2001: 31). The persistent and failed attempts to wash away the sexual violations of the play by Ian and Cate highlight the failure of ANIMALITY to performatively protect social and moral BOUNDARIES by creating distance with human being's animal nature. Disgusting acts of sexual violation by each character blur the BOUNDARIES between victim and perpetrator while the attempts to wash *enacts* the performative creation of distance by labelling an act disgusting, which Ahmed (2014: 94) notes is required for it to be efficacious; the cleansing fails and simple *moralisations* are disrupted. The sexual violence is *moralised* as disgusting, but the CONTAMINATION of the characters and audience/reader is inescapable as they cannot successfully get clean and create distance from the acts.

The last staged moment of sexual violence iterates this powerfully in the moment described by Ken Urban (2004: 370) above as the Soldier rapes Ian: 'It makes an argument about our notions of sexuality and violence, an argument that is felt, not heard: no dialectical conversations, instead, the power of the image, of Dudgeon's exposed buttocks and Jordan Murphy's incessant sobs'. Before the rape, the Soldier and Ian discuss raping men, women, and children and then killing them. For example, the Soldier discloses, 'I broke a woman's neck. Stabbed up between her legs, on the fifth stab snapped her spine' (KANE 2001: 46). He goes on to discuss torturing his victims, including holding a 'gun to [their] head', and how his girlfriend, Col, was killed: 'they buggered her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door', as well as other ways he raped and killed people in war (KANE 2001: 43–47).

Ian, as a journalist, reciprocates by sharing a story he wrote about a man from Sheffield, England who tied two teen prostitutes to a fence and proceeded to rape and kill them (KANE 2001: 48). This is the moment that the Soldier asks for what he really wants from Ian:

> Soldier. Doing to them what they done to us, what good is that? At home I'm clean. Like it never happened.
> Tell them you saw me.
> Tell them ... you saw me. (KANE 2001: 48)

Ian refuses to tell the world the Soldier's horrific stories because he does not cover 'foreign affairs' and continues to complain that the Soldier does not make a good story because his war crimes are not 'personal'. The Soldier replies, 'I went to school. / I made love with Col. / Bastards killed her, now I'm here' (KANE 2001: 48–49). For the Soldier, the story is personal, and there is not a difference between violence happening in war and rapes/murders in Sheffield. ANIMALITY schema serves the audience/reader as a cognitive process to work through the atrocities outlined in this moment and safely tie them to people and animality outside an audience/reader's community. The play disrupts this simple disgust *moralisation* in two ways. First, the Soldier rejects the promise of being made 'clean', through the cultural practice of accepting violence perpetrated in the name of nationalistic and xenophobic ends to guard the social body from the CONTAMINATION of the 'other'. Second, immediately after Ian's refusal to tell these specific and disgusting stories of violence, the Soldier rapes Ian, recreating the rape and murder of Col while '*crying his heart out*' (KANE 2001: 49). Tears fail to wash away his crimes, as the Soldier continues to reiterate horrific violence visited upon his love, his countless victims, on Cate, and now finally on Ian. Using disgust to *moralise* sexual violence in a hotel room and as a weapon of war fails as the play lays bare the ineffectual and dangerous process of protecting the BOUNDARIES between 'us' and 'them'. *Blasted enacts* empathy across groups and calls attention to the way sexual violence is often justified and condemned via the disgusting nature of the 'other' to protect and cleanse the self and one's own community.

Disrupting BALANCE

The final moment of *Blasted enacts* the culmination of socio-moral disgust based in interpersonal CONTAMINATION and social violations ranging from 'racism, brutality, hypocrisy, political attitudes, and violations of important social relationships' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 115–116). *Blasted*'s final scene rehearses many of the disgust elicitors of the play and *enacts* the embodied schemata analysed above; however, BALANCE provides explanatory force to the play's metaphoric conclusion. BALANCE is addressed by Mark Johnson (1987: 74–75) as an 'activity we learn with our bodies' referencing a baby learning to move and walk as well as the bodies equilibrium which he describes as

similar to homeostasis. Emotions are connected to the body's equilibrium where they can place a body out-of-BALANCE, something Johnson (1987: 89) labels 'the structure of our experience of emotions' that goes beyond language or conceptualisation to focus on embodiment. Haidt et al. (1997: 121) contends that the 'image of the world as being out of balance, caused by (or reflected in) immoral human action, may be key to understanding socio-moral disgust'; going further, Rozin et al. (1999) connect socio-moral disgust with sacredness, the divine, and the degradation of the self or others, as seen above.

In the final scene, Cate buries a recently deceased baby, prays for its soul, and decides to engage in sex work to obtain food. Ian, dismisses Cate's care for the dead child and asks Cate for forgiveness. After Cate exits, Ian performs a series of vignettes between moments of light and dark:

> *Ian Masturbating*
>
> Ian. cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian strangling himself with his bare hands.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian shitting.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian laughing hysterically.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian having a nightmare.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian crying, huge bloody tears.*
>
> *He is hugging the Soldier's body for comfort.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*
>
> *Ian lying very still, weak with hunger.*
>
> *Darkness.*
>
> *Light.*

> *Ian tears the cross out of the ground, rips up the floor and lifts the baby's body out.*
>
> *He eats the baby.*
>
> *He puts the remains back in the baby's blanket and puts the bundle back in the hole.*
>
> *A beat, then he climbs in after it and lies down head poking out of the floor.*
>
> *He dies with relief.* (KANE 2001: 59–60).

This moment is a barrage of highly affective images that run the gamut of life's experiences, touching on many of Haidt et al.'s disgust elicitors: Ian releases sperm, self-harms, shits, cries blood, deals with death, starves, eats a human baby, and 'dies with relief'. Social violations in these final world-shattering vignettes align with a Hopi concept, *koyaanisqatsi*, meaning 'world out of balance' that Haidt et al. (1997: 120–121) have linked to disgust while researching different cultural connections to the emotion. This is not the BALANCE of a scale, but rather that 'of a tall object that has been pushed away from the upright position, and is about to come crashing down' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 126). It is a moment of chaos, loss of control, sin, and is described by Haidt et al. as 'the sickening moment before the end of the world' (HAIDT et al. 1997: 127).

The most disgusting portion of these vignettes might be Ian eating the dead baby, a moment in which an innocent is devoured by a depraved middle-aged man at the end of his life. The start of the scene invokes god and the soul through the baby's funeral and Cate's prayer: 'Don't feel no pain or know nothing you shouldn't know [...] see bad things or go bad places [...] or meet anyone who'll do bad things [...] Amen' (KANE 2001: 57–58). In each of my elisions in this quote, Ian interrupts Cate's prayer asking for forgiveness, a prayer for himself, and argues that Cate's hopes for the baby to avoid bad things, places, and people is pointless, because 'she's dead' (KANE 2001: 58). Ian is degraded in this scene and sees no reason to pray or bury the dead baby. Cate ignores him, completing funeral rights and praying to god. In fact, it is only at the end of scene four and in scene five that god is discussed or invoked in the play. In rehearsal for the 1995 production, Kane describes Ian's masturbation and declamation of 'cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt' (KANE 2001: 59) as invoking questions about god because 'Pip Donaghy [Ian] was looking up and it looked like he was praying' (SAUNDERS 2009: 56). It recalled Ian's proclamation about god and divinity at the end of scene four when Ian fails to kill himself with an empty revolver:

> Cate. Fate, see. You're not meant to do it. God–
>
> Ian. The cunt. (KANE 2001: 57)

The final scene of the play is a moment of heightened mortality, reminders of our animal nature, and the CONTAMINATION of the divine. A world out-of-BALANCE, as a symbol of innocence and the future dies unexpectedly and Ian *enacts* disgusting vignettes that *moralise* the 'crashing' down of human nature's most threatening (and

thereby disgusting) aspects: sex, defecation, self-harm, cannibalism, and death. Darkness and light in the description of the vignettes, Ian seeking comfort from the corpse that raped him and ate his eyes, and his own self-burial, seem to establish BALANCE by placing Ian firmly in the camp of 'belowness' and Cate 'above' him in a too obvious *moralisation* of what is and is not disgusting. Even Ian's tears cannot cleanse him as they are filled with blood.

While Ian is left a blinded head sticking above the floor boards, a thorough embodiment of the disgusting, Cate has gone to sell her body (taboo sex), returned with meat (a previously disgusting food) and '*blood seeping from between her legs*' (KANE 2001: 60). Cate, a figure initially seen as a BALANCE to Ian's horrific situation, in reality, is a mirror of the same collapse. Only in embracing the out-of-BALANCE nature of all acts of sexual violence, prejudice, and war does the play attend to the possibility of hope:

> *She sits next to Ian's head.*
>
> *She eats her fill of the sausage and bread, then washes it down with gin.*
>
> *Ian listens.*
>
> *She feeds Ian with the remaining food.*
>
> *She pours gin in Ian's mouth.*
>
> *She finishes feeding Ian and sits apart from him, huddled for warmth.*
>
> *She drinks gin.*
>
> *She sucks her thumb.*
>
> *Silence.*
>
> *It rains.*
>
> Ian: Thank you. (KANE 2001: 61)

Despite all moral violations, the world out-of-BALANCE, the CONTAMINATION of Ian's sins and degradation, despite what depravity Cate must perform and endure to acquire food, she shares it with a man who has no right to expect such humanity and 'it rains' a final time. In a return to the basis of disgust in food and distaste, *Blasted* resets the process of disgust *moralisation* by depicting a shared meal, a mirror of the play's first moments. Washing away the CONTAMINATION of Ian and refusing the *moralisation* of disgust that creates a BOUNDARY between 'us' and 'them' or the false dichotomy of a rape in a hotel room vs rape as a weapon of war, *Blasted enacts* the interconnection between the threat to an individual and the socio-moral order: 'one is the seed and the other is the tree' (SIERZ 2001: 101).

Conclusion: Kane's theatre as enactive

Blasted is an experiential treatise on human morality that relies on the embodied schemata and elicitors of disgust to critique a world of false BALANCE and harmful BOUNDARIES. In the afterward to Graham Saunders's *Love Me or Kill Me: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes* Edward Bond (2002: 189–191) eulogises Kane and places her dramaturgy in the history of 'dramatists of the second sort' that 'change reality' and confront the 'ultimate', the 'implacable'. For Bond (2002: 190), modern drama of this kind either corrupts through 'nihilism and trivialities', or 'create[s] [...] humanness'. Conversely, Sanja Nikcevic argues that plays like *Blasted* and,

> [i]n-yer-face never potentializes change. The worlds are stabilized states of horror, which makes them not political but fatalistic. [...] Evil is omnipresent, and claims innocent victims. There is no escape or possibility of change, because that evil exists on a deeper level. (NIKCEVIC 2005: 264)

Similarly, Sierz (2010: 55) defines Kane's politics as 'moral absolutism', stating that 'she believed in right and wrong as black and white facts, and had no time for shades of grey or compromises'. The *enaction* of disgust in *Blasted*, an embodied, affective, and sense-making experience, is part of the social structure that impacts politics, war, prejudice, and sexual violence. The play is not a horror movie nor does it proffer a black and white world view. Instead, it meticulously constructs and deconstructs complicated disgust *moralisations* through embodied schemata. Bond's (2002: 189–191), confrontation with the 'ultimate' or the 'implacable' is a confrontation with mortality and humanness and what was once the spiritual and religious. Kane embeds disgust within *Blasted*, piece by piece feeding the body's sensorium with images and affects that *enact* disgust's potentially troubling *moralising* force, calling into question the performative power of stating 'that's disgusting', at individual and communal levels. For Bond (1995: 22), *Blasted* comes 'from the centre of our humanity and our ancient need for theatre'. It concludes in the sharing of food, recalling the ancient evolutionary basis for altruism and human cooperation. Despite the staged immoral actions of sexual violence, war, and racism the play presents a feeling, an experience, and embodied perspective of hope for change in a world out-of-balance.

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