USC
UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOXÍA INGLESA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Ano 2016/2017

POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE AND THE WORK OF SARAH KANE - LANGUAGE AND FORM

Graduanda: Maria Emilia Rey Pimenta

Director: Anxo Abuín González

Traballo de Fin de Grao presentado na Facultade de Filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela para a obtención do Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas no curso académico 2016/2017

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“Beauty is the agreement between content and form.”

Henrik Ibsen

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1. ABSTRACT

This graduation assignment, based on the notion of a new theatrical form that German theatre researcher Hans-Thies Lehmann (1999) called *postdramatic theatre*, will be addressing the characteristics of the work of English playwright Sarah Kane that coincide with the postdramatic aesthetics. A few concepts about theatre throughout history will be explained, and a few facts about Sarah Kane's life will be mentioned, as well as the scarce work that she produced in her short life. Postdramatic theatre disrupts the logic of the language and the audacity of the staging of Sarah Kane's plays attacks the spectator, pulling him out of the comfort zone, questioning and sometimes destabilizing the audience. The idea of the postdramatic theatre as the theatre of performance, not just drama as literature will be also developed. A quick view of the "prehistory" of postdramatic theatre, the previous playwrights of the movement, and the kind of theatre produced will be displayed throughout the essay.

Even though Sarah Kane's last two plays, *Crave* (1998) and *4.48 Psychosis* (1999, premiered posthumously in 2000) are more paradigmatic of postdramatic theatre aesthetics – in the words of Hans-Thies Lehmann himself in his "Preface to the English edition" of his book *Postdramatic Theatre*: "*4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane would almost have to be invented as one of the great texts in analogy to postdramatic theatre if it did not already exist." (2006, p. ix) –, the plays that will be studied in this assignment are Kane's first three

plays, *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love* and *Cleansed*. The use of the text in these three plays can be seen in the light of a postdramatic context, where different aesthetic variables, apart from the text itself, interact to create the theatrical work.

2. INTRODUCTION

How can we define theatre? Is it a purely aesthetic form of expression? Is it a form of expression closely linked to language? Does it necessarily have to convey a moral lesson? *Prodesse et delectare.* Is literature an intrinsic part of its form? Or is it just the carpentry and its structure, the staging, the performance that count? The word “theatre” comes from Greek and can roughly be translated as “seeing place”. Curiously, in Shakespeare's days, people would talk about going to “hear a play” at the theatre, rather than going to “watch a play”. Even though nowadays the expression is not used anymore, people who go to a theatre to see a play are called an “audience” (from the Latin *audientia* – group of listeners). Even if the image is important, the attention is drawn to the hearing, not to the sighting. The importance of language, of words in British theatre can be well perceived in Sarah Kane's plays.

Theatre is a collective fine art composed not only of words but also of living images, concerned with live performances. Already in the golden age of English drama, one of Shakespeare's characters, the cynical and melancholic Jacques, from the play *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene seven), expresses his thoughts about the similitude of the world and the theatre:

Jacques All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;

> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages.
>
> (Shakespeare, 1998, p. 172)

And not only we humans use masks and take a different appearances from what we really are, but also animals and nature itself.

The word drama comes from Greek and means “to do”, “act”. The Aristotelian definition of drama was “an imitation of men in action” (mimesis), drama as the mimetic staging of a fable. Theatre imitated reality, dealt with people, and also had an action (a plot), with a beginning, a middle and an end.

In the beginnings of English theatre, in the late medieval period, three religious dramatic forms displaying Christian values with a mixture of pagan values were performed: miracle plays, which dramatized the life of Saints; mystery plays, which focused on the representation of the stories in the Bible; and morality plays, which dramatized sermons and were based on the allegories of virtues and sins. As the audience expected more, liturgy plays gave way to secular pieces, and guilds started to perform the plays as a means for entertainment. The duality of aims in poetry observed by Horacio in his *Ars Poetica* – *prodesse et delectare* – was present since the beginning in English theatre.

Having its golden age in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era with dramatists such as Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd, and Ben Jonson, English drama always was a medium of showing the society of the time and its values, both from the aristocracy and the commoners, in short, human experiences.

After the popularity of English drama in the Elizabethan period, with audiences with voracious appetite for new plays, British theatre had a turbulent time with the closure of

theatres during the *Interregnum* in the 1640s, under Oliver Cromwell. They opened again with the restoration of the monarchy, in 1660.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century theatre again flourished as a popular pastime and the audience began to develop preference to certain actors. The dramatic text, conjoined with the charisma and empathy of the actors had the audience enthralled, the least. The actor is an artist, bearer of the creative fire, a link to the god Dionysus, and holds the collective unconscious. A citation by Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung seems proper here: "As a human being the artist may have many moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is 'man' in a higher sense – he is 'collective man' – one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind." (Jung, 1933, p. 93, 94)

Artistic forms underwent a progressive development that reflects the condition of society at each moment in history. From the active verbal participation of the Elizabethan audiences to the critical distance required from the audience in Brecht's epic theatre, what theatre does aim is to move the spectator, to stir some kind of emotion, to avoid apathy. That goal is also present in the theatre of Sarah Kane who wanted a theatre that could speak directly to the audience's experiences.

The audience of postdramatic theatre does not just watch the play without getting involved, but they sometimes are led to participate in the staging. Different from a previous kind of theatre that aimed to create in the audience social and political awareness, the new performances make the spectator confront his own fears, anxieties, perversities. Sarah Kane liked the unpredictability of theatre as a living medium and its effect on the spectators: "With *Blasted*, when people got up and walked out it was actually part of the whole experience of it. And I like that; it's a completely reciprocal relationship between the play and the audience."

(Saunders, 2001, p. 13) Different from cinema or TV, in theatre audience and actors are connected by an invisible thread – the actions of both are prone to changes in the performance.

For the actors, this kind of theatre is no longer just the repetition of a text, but the creation of something based on the text. After the avant-garde movements of the beginning of the twentieth century, with the rejection of the traditional bourgeois theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann points to the outbreak of a new theatre that puts new paradigms of stage and drama. Postdramatic theatre would be an extension of the theatre of the postmodern aesthetic from the 1960s.

Theatre had its origins as a social practice, but it was also an effect of power, as shamans, chiefs and rulers knew well to use dramatization and exaggerated gesticulation to manifest their elevated position. “Yet, at the same time, theatre is a practice in and with signifying material, which does not create orders of power but introduces chaos and novelty into the ordered, ordering perception.” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 179) There is also the importance of the aesthetic function in any kind of ceremony, the practice of theatre being one of them. “Postdramatic theatre, however, liberates the formal, ostentatious moment of ceremony from its sole function of enhancing attention and appraise it *for its own sake*, as an aesthetic quality, detached from all religious and cultic references. Postdramatic theatre is the replacement of dramatic action with ceremony, (…) the whole spectrum of movements and processes that have no referent but are presented with heightened precision; (…) musical-rhythmic or visual-architectonic constructs of development; para-ritual forms, as well as the (often deeply black) ceremony of the body and of presence; the emphatically or monumentally accentuated ostentation of the presentation.” (Ibid, p. 69) Thus, the

Aristotelian concept that the “soul” of tragedy is the mythos (almost synonymous with plot) – the same as the Brechtian fable being the “soul” of drama – in postdramatic theatre is, in a way, disrupted. This so called “soul” in this new theatre is conceptual, fragmented, chaotic, and sometimes even non-existent. In the new theatre, there is an overcoming of the dramatic theatre and, as there is a demand for a new attitude by the audience – just like in Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre – we can therefore assert that the postdramatic theatre is a post-Bretchian theatre; “it situates itself in a space opened up by the Brechtian inquiries into the presence and consciousness of the process of representation within the represented and the inquiry into a new 'art of spectating'” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 33) Pop theatre, visual theatre, post-epic, performance, concrete theatre are all forms of theatre that disrupt the triangle drama – action – mimesis, and they can be summarised with the term postdramatic theatre.

3. CONCEPTS OF “POST” AND POSTDRAMATIC

The nineteenth century brought many innovations and advancements, and in the cultural and artistic sphere, it also brought a “trivialization” of the new. The society was thirsty for novelty, and the advancement in the possibility of information made possible for a growing number of artists to innovate, to be controversial. “Modernity” is commonly formulated in terms of processes that are regarded as marking the transition from the traditional to the new. Modernity was then a split from tradition. The innovations came in a rapid succession, time was getting shorter, and the world was changing quickly. With so many changes grew a sense of dissatisfaction – men wanted more. Indian sociologist, Krisham Kuma, explained the atmosphere very appropriately: “But after so many 'new movements', modernity was nothing more than an endless innovation, a succession of endless changes of style, endless cycles of fashion.” (Kumar, 2005, p. 122) French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his book *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* asserted: “Hidden in the cynicism of innovation is certainly the despair that nothing further will happen.” (1991, p. 106,107), rightly expressing the spirit of the time.

In the late part of the nineteenth century, there was dissatisfaction with the defining process of traditional theatre, a malcontentment with drama’s two fundamental processes: the representation of the external world and the structuring of time. When the paradigm of a

poetic of drama begins to be substituted by a poetic of the scene, the transformation to a new theatre occurs. There is a radical transformation in terms of scenographic materialization with the use of elements beyond drama that belong to other art forms, for example, music and painting.

The audience of the beginning of the twentieth century wanted diversity, acceleration – and one act plays began to be popular. Tiny pieces were performed (particularly in the variety theatre, music hall or even some of the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd). There is a "demolition of the continuum" that leads to a more fragmented drama. The new paradigm that imposes itself throughout the twentieth century is of the spectacular – a building tension between a poetic of the scene and a poetic of the dramatic; and the concept of postdramatic is based on this tension.

From the cultural movements of the 1960s a new term began to be used in cultural criticism: postmodern. So, in contrast with the belief in the progress of science and reason resulting from the modern era, the artistic sphere is shattered with feelings of irrationality, indetermination and anarchy, which will finally end up in the postmodern culture characterized by a revolt against all that was represented by modernism. The prefix post is associated with a rejection to certain key elements of a tradition already well established.

Lyotard indicates "the pointlessness of any periodization of cultural history in terms of 'pre-' and 'post-', before and after" (1991, p. 24) So, instead of using the term "postmodernity", he considers more appropriate to use the prefix "re" in place of "post", applying this new prefix not to the noun "modernity", but to the verb "write". Therefore, he thinks preferable to use the term "rewriting modernity". By choosing to use the term "postdramatic theatre" in reference to the theatre of the 1970s to the 1990s, Lehman draws a

relationship between this new style of theatre and its predecessor, dramatic theatre, a theatre dominated by drama, mimesis and action. But this new theatre does not only have changes in theatre text, but undergoes a transformation on the theatrical modes of expression. Lyotard's choice of terminology brings an idea of something new, not a succession; something that does not depend on previous paradigms but can be a totally new form. Even though Lehmann asserts that "even provocative, negating art has to create something new under its own steam. Through this alone, and not through the negation of classical norms, can it obtain its own identity." (2006, p. 28), the use of the prefix post in any word inevitably defines it by its relationship to its predecessor, not something totally new. The idea of the new theatre is linked to the idea of the dramatic theatre, but as a negation of it.

In the new theatre that began in the second part of the twentieth century, with the introduction of multimedia and other form of conveying a signifier, the audience had to free themselves of the traditional idea that considers theatre as a form of literature and its representation as the materialization of the author's words. In the avant-garde theatre, there is a search for a profound and radical renewal in how to stage and conceive theatre in relation to the stereotyped conventions in the so-called "official theatre". There is a turn to performative act in place of a well-made *message*. In the new theatre there was a shift from a text-based culture to a new media age of image and sound. The space of the theatre expands; it is not anymore a closed space where the audience watched a stage in which actors imitating human action represented a fictitious world. The art of theatre can be expressed in any kind of space, big or small, closed or open. The theatre after the avant-garde movements, after the modern drama and after the epic theatre is considered to be postdramatic theatre.

The postdramatic movement seeks to destabilize the monolithic nature of traditional

theatre. From the happenings (already defined as postdramatic in 1977 by American professor of Performance Studies, Richard Schechner in his *Essays on Performance Theory*) to the theatre of deconstruction, multimedia theatre, theatre of gestures and movement, all these new forms of theatre show an estrangement from drama. Ambiguity, discontinuity, heterogeneity, non-textuality, pluralism, multiple codes, subversion, all sites, perversion, deformation, considering text to be authoritarian and archaic, performance as a third term between drama and theatre, anti-mimetic, resisting interpretation are key words for the new postdramatic theatre.

This new theatre does not build itself by the structural principles of drama or of any form of rational narrative reaffirmed by the physical and symbolic presence. It imposes itself less by the lines spoken by the characters (if any) than by the images and sounds, less by the cognition than by the sensation.

Other key words defining elements of the new theatre are: nihilistic and grotesque forms, empty space, silence. Even if we can find some of these concepts in previous forms of theatre (in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, for example), others can only be used for the postdramatic theatre.

But there are also oppositions: postdramatic theatre knows not only the empty space but also the overcrowded space. It shows a renunciation of the traditions of dramatic form, the possibilities beyond drama. By maintaining a constant state of strength, postdramatic theatre is able to go beyond the principles of mimesis and fiction. “Postdramatic theatre is a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations.” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 68) The main idea is no longer to tell a story that mirrors the world.

As the dramatic text seems to have lost its place of importance in the new theatre, the role of the theatre director seems to be more important than the role of the playwright. Images seem to be more important than words. “The theatre (…) manifests itself only as the one half (in analogy to a broken pottery) and awaits the presence and gesture of the unknown spectators who realize the edge of the fracture through their intuition, their way of understanding, and their imagination” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 61). In this way, they will perceive the theatre “work” as a whole.

Some typical traits of postdramatic theatre are narrative fragmentation, heterogeneity of style, hyper-naturalist and grotesque elements, but those characteristics can also appear in productions that belong to the model of dramatic theatre – what decides if the new theatre can be defined as postdramatic is a series of elements that can be identified but not taken as a norm. As the postmodern paradigm is subversive *per se* – the reality is at the same time multiple, local and temporal, and devoid of any demonstrable fundament – the same goes to postdramatic theatre.

In contrast to what William Wordsworth asserted in 1800, in his “Preface to Lyrical Ballads” – “the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants” (1991, p. 248)–, Albert Camus wrote that “human capacity for attention is limited. It must be ceaselessly stimulated, spurred on by provocation.” (1965, p. 462) Like the dandy in Camus philosophical essay “L'Homme Révolté” (1951), postdramatic theatre, and therefore Kane's plays are always compelled to astonish; excess is their way to perfection, perpetually incomplete, always on the fringe of things.

Richard Schechner also talked paradoxically about a “postdramatic drama”, in which the “story” was no longer the “generative matrix”, but the “game” (here understood as

performance) (1988, p. 22). In postdramatic drama, time replaces destiny. The new theatre text is no longer just a dramatic theatre text, it must conjoint with a scenic text that will include, at the same level, a variety of elements of support like light, music, costumes, multimedia, electronic paraphernalia, and so on.

Postmodern traits that can be seen in this new theatre include the seeming to the real arbitrariness of means and quoted forms, the not concealed use and mix of heterogeneous styles, a "theatre of images", mixed media, multimedia and performance. It also includes violent performances – performances that includes the spectators, scatological performances among other characteristics.

Postdramatic theatre and performances seek to destabilize the spectator's construction of identity by which a new understanding of the other and for the self is constructed. But mainly, it appraises the performance, even though it does not forget the important dimension of the text.

In the perspective of postdramatic theatre, works of Bertold Brecht – the epic theatre, for example – are considered "part of the dramatic tradition". The same goes with the Theatre of the Absurd – a term coined in 1961 by critic Martin Esslin in his work "Theatre of the Absurd" from 1961 – which was a short-lived theatrical movement of the 1950s based on the philosophy of existentialism and Albert Camus assessment that the human situation is essentially absurd. Such diverse playwrights as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter or Edward Albee shared a pessimistic view of humanity struggling vainly to find a purpose. But in Pinter and Albee, it is not the universe that appears as inexplicable, but the own individual that remains opaque to the eyes of others and of ourselves, not allowing to be reduced easily to interpretative schemes. We see the acts, but do not penetrate in the

motivation, the plan. Different from epic theatre, where the historic causality prevails and it is up to the audience to discover it underneath the facts, in the work of these two British playwrights we have only indetermination. And that is clearly a common link with Sarah Kane's plays.

We have only to remember Macbeth's famous soliloquy, on the homonym Shakespeare's play: "Life is a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". (Macbeth, Act V, Scene 5.2)

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.
>
> (1910, p. 370)

Again the use of theatre metaphors to explain life and the human passage on Earth. Life is a bad play, an illusion, and we are mere walking shadows cast by a brief candle.

But, as Lehmann argues, both the epic theatre and Theatre of the Absurd are types of literary theatre. They hold on to the presentation of a simulated reality presented by a text. (2006, p. 55) In order to be considered postdramatic theatre, all the theatrical paraphernalia other than language has to be positioned in the same level with the text and is systematically conceivable without it. And there enters the interaction of multimedia, the increasingly sophisticated use of media technology as film and video recordings and projections, the use of television, electronic sound effects, microphone and computer programs, light effects and a plethora of other electronic assistances.

4. REALISM, NATURALISM, HYPER-NATURALISM

What is usually understood as modern theatre began to develop from the middle of the nineteenth century, when new philosophical ideas of Realism and Naturalism replaced the subjective traditions of the Romantic Movement. The Romantic emphasis on emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect had given way to a much more objective and scientific way of examining the human condition. Romantic idealism was rejected in favour of pragmatism. These new ideas resulted in a radical shift in theatrical presentation.

As Hans-Thies Lehmann explains, “Theatre can only ever be ambiguously 'real' – even when it tries to escape deceptive appearance and draws close to the real. It permeates all representation with the uncertainty of whether something is represented.” (2006, p. 180) The term Realism began to be used some time after Naturalism, which was a style of theatre that explored the concept of scientific determinism – how we are shaped by our circumstances, either social, physical, mental or economical –, where the inevitability was at stake. It focus particularly on how society and genetics affect individuals. In Realism, authors were producing works about individuals like ourselves, but with no determinism involved. Realism describes any play that depicts ordinary people in ordinary situations. The spectators could relate to what was being performed and sympathise with the actors onstage.

But one of the conventions of theatre is that the audience knows that what is being presented is not real, it is an illusion, a depiction of reality – but not quite it.

Brecht's aim was to discourage involving the audience in an illusory narrative world and in the emotions of the characters. He thought the audience required an emotional distance to reflect on what was being presented in critical and objective ways, rather than being *taken out of themselves* as conventional entertainment attempts to do. In complete opposition to this estrangement or alienation effect, there is the willing “suspension of disbelief”, a term coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, founder of the Romantic Movement in England, in his work of 1871 called *Biographia Literaria* (Chapter XIV). This term means a willingness to suspend one's critical faculties and believe the unbelievable. The theatre audience knows that what is being performed onstage is fictional, even though it contains “likenesses” of reality (mimesis). “The new Naturalism of the 1980s and 1990s offers situations that exhibit a grotesque decay and absurdity”. (Lehmann, 2006, p. 117). It does not differ much of the Naturalism of the nineteenth century, it just adds new elements showing what was “not supposed” to be shown.

In Sarah Kane's plays, the reality shown fictionally appears to be cruelly and exponentially magnified, more real than reality. In the same stream of the new Naturalism, beyond the representation of what was repressed by “respectable society”, Kane's theatre shows a world where norms and rules have been forgotten, a more brutally naked environment, a concrete reality of her time. Fiction elevates and surpasses the real life, depicting “reproduction of real”, therefore a more conscious creation of reality, causing in the audience the heightening of the senses.

And like one of the great masters of Naturalism, Russian playwright Anton Chekhov who employed understatement, broken conversation, off-stage events and absent characters as ways of creating dramatic tension, Sarah Kane also shows in her plays these same

characteristics that can be classified in the concepts of postdramatic theatre. She, as her fellow Russian dramatist, represented the world as it is, without moral judgement, and also rejected the classical Aristotelian plot-line, in which rising and falling action comprised an immediately recognisable climax, catastrophe, and denouement. But Chekhov's plays go beyond the naturalistic theatre, boding the disruption of Naturalism in the twentieth century.

This new disrupted Naturalism, in the case of the work of Sarah Kane can be considered a hyper-naturalism, and it aims to challenge and break down the barrier that separates theatricality/performance from social reality.

5. THE THEATRE OF SARAH KANE

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Kane was born in Essex, in 1971. As an adolescent, she was a committed Christian, but later rejected those beliefs. She studied drama at Bristol University. After she graduated, she took a MA course in playwriting at the University of Birmingham. She originally wanted to be a poet, but was attracted to the stage and worked as literary associate for the Bush Theatre. She spend one year as writer-in-residence for Paines-Plough, a theatre company promoting new writing.

Kane began to write her first play, *Blasted*, while still a student in Birmingham, where the two first scenes had a public performance. The complete play was performed in January 1995 at the small space of the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, in London, directed by James Macdonald.

In 1995 she wrote a screenplay called *Skin*, an eleven-minute short-film written for a British TV station, Channel 4 televised in 1997.

Her second play, *Phaedra's Love*, which she also directed, was commissioned by the Gate Theatre, in Notting Hill, London and had its premiere in May 1996.

Her third play, *Cleansed*, premiered in April 1998, at the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs, in London, directed again by James Macdonald.

Her last two plays were *Crave* and *4.8 Psychosis*. *Crave* was written under a

pseudonym, and premiered in August 1998 at the Traverse Theatre, in Edinburgh, directed by Vicky Featherstone. It was an experiment in an open textual form, a theatrical poem on love. In this play, as expressed by David Greig in his "Introduction" to *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays*, "the borderlines of character evaporate entirely and her [Kane's] imagery moves from physical to textual realisation." (Kane, 2016, p. xiv) Kane considered her piece *Crave* more as text for performance than as a play.

4:48 Psychosis was written through the autumn and winter of 1998/99 during her periods of depression and hospitalisation, and performed posthumously in 2000 at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, in London, directed by James Mcdonald. The play avoids characters to offer a non-individualized examination of mental illness. Here, as well as in *Crave*, there is no indication of the genre of performers, and furthermore, also no indication of the number of performers.

Sarah Kane suffered from episodes of depression which lead her to commit suicide on February 1999, at the age of twenty-eight. She believed that by experiencing something through art it could change our future – she preferred to "risk an overdose in theatre than in life" (Saunders, 2002, p. 22) –, and according to Graham Saunders, Kane was well aware of the importance of theatre as a tool for living sanely. She lived in a liminal state so productive for artists, and as all creative beings, she was a duality, a synthesis of paradoxical traits. Nevertheless, her work cannot be considered as "suicidal theatre", her mental illness cannot be taken as a unifying thread of her whole body of work. In his essay "Psychology and Poetry", Jung explains: "A great work of art is objective and impersonal, and it speaks to us most deeply. Thus, the personal aspects of the creator is a mere obstacle or advantage, but never essential for the work of art." (Jung, 1999, p. 97) And, according to some critics, trying

to understand Kane's art in light of her mental illness would be a reduction of its artistic value.

6. *BLASTED*, *PHAEDRA' S LOVE* AND *CLEANSED*: LANGUAGE AND FORM

Blasted is set in a hotel room, where a middle-aged man, Ian, and a young woman, Cate, interact with shocking repercussion – a rape. A third character appears at the second part of the play, a soldier that brings even more violence from the outside world, torn apart by civil war. Kane's premise was that there was a connection between a rape in a hotel room and the devastation of civil war (she was inspired by images of the war in Bosnia). As the play progresses its form begins to fragment; the time frame condenses – a scene that begins in spring ends in summer. The middle-aged man, Ian, becomes a reduced man, from a position of power, of predator, he becomes the victim.

Kane's experimentation with form left the audience annoyed – the naturalistic first half of the play suddenly changes into a nightmarish and symbolic second half. It was a scandal, as it showed scenes of rape, cannibalism, and other forms of violence. In Scene three, the Soldier sucks Ian's eyes off its sockets and eats them, a scene that brings to mind Shakespeare's *King Lear*, where Lear's daughter tears out Gloucester's eyes. It is interesting to point out that Sarah Kane identified Jacobean theatre as some of her source of inspiration. It was a period when the plays were becoming more edgy and human situations were becoming more exaggerated. Extreme violence was being portrayed on the stage. The playwrights were focusing on the human being’s capacity for selfishness, and exaggerating

such Renaissance forces as human ambition, and its effects. They were exploring the nature of evil, pushing things to the extremes of human behaviour, showing the representations of the society in which they lived, dramatized in exciting stories, full of sex and violence. The dramas of that time showed a pessimistic vision of the world as well.

The extreme violence shown in her first play manifested an erotic inclination, and seems to be the inevitable condition of men. Sex is the principal activity to fill the void (as well as in *Phaedra's Love*). Sarah Kane brings with her plays a new concept of reality, a reality inexpressible beyond the practice of violence. In Kane's theatre, onstage nudity does not mean sexual liberation, as was the case with the theatre of the 1960s, but is a sign of abuse and domination. But also, of a extreme exposure, a total fragility of the being. By showing scatological scenes, bodily functions that normally are kept hidden, Kane reaches the effect of a superlative exposition of a body that is already exposed, an exhibitionism taken to extremes. In both *Blasted* and *Phaedra's Love* we see bodily functions that are generally kept private – urination, defecation, masturbation; mankind reduced to its bare essence. That is a means of unsettling audiences.

Harold Pinter and Edward Bond seem to be two voices against the negative critics *Blasted* received. Pinter acknowledge the new form of Kane's play (“Facing something actual and true and ugly and painful”) and Bond seemed to be fascinated by its novelty (“Strange, almost hallucinatory quality”)[1]. But the rest of the critics expressed their repulsion for the brutality, the disgust and the filth that this new playwright had depicted in her *debut* piece.

Phaedra's Love was inspired in a Greek myth – the story of Phaedra –, but with a contemporary setting. In this play Sarah Kane continued her process of fragmenting Naturalism. The play deals explicitly with the theme of love (even if it is of a brutal nature)

1 Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, 2014.

and it focuses more in Phaedra's stepson Hippolytus, a selfish and spoiled prince with an uncontrollable sexual impulse, to whom life has no meaning and all emotions are an unbearable threat. His nihilism is in opposition with Phaedra's love for him – he feels nothing, she feels too much –, leading to total despair, and eventually, to her suicide. Like the Hippolytus portrayed by Roman dramatist and philosopher Seneca the Younger, this modern Hippolytus has a total lack of passion, an absence of emotion (*apatheia*).

Phaedra	Have you ever thought about having sex with me?
Hippolytus	I think aboyt having sex with everyone.
Phaedra	Would it make you happy?
Hippolytus	That's not the word exactly.
Phaedra	No, but – Would you enjoy it?
Hippolytus	No. I never do.
Phaedra	Then why do it?
Hippolytus	Life's too long.
Phaedra	I think you'd enjoy it. With me.
Hippolytus	Some people do, I suppose. Enjoy that stuff. Have a life.
Phaedra	You've got a life.
Hippolytus	No. Filling up time. Waiting.
Phaedra	For what?
Hippolytus	Don't know. Something to happen.
Phaedra	This is happening.
Hippolytus	Never does.
Phaedra	Now.
Hippolytus	Till then. Fill it up with tat. Bric-a-brac, bits and bobs, getting by, Christ Almighty.

(Kane, 2016, p. 79)

The short sentences and even monosyllabic answers throughout the play are part of the raw and brutal language used by Kane. The language shows a fragmentation, not only of the plot, but also of the characters who speak in short, blunt statements – fragmented to the

essential ideas. She chooses to use words that are intense and visceral in order to convey specific emotions on the audience.

Phaedra's Love was received by the critics as being a “black comedy, a savage farce”, even making a strange relation with the actual English royal family! Unlike Greek tragedy, where all violence takes place off stage, in *Phaedra's Love* the violent action happens on stage.

Productions on some of the different staging versions of the play – for example the one directed by Marina McClure in 2011, a production by CalArts Ensemble Theatre, or the 2008 production by Loose Cannon Theatre Company, directed by Jason Byrne – used technology such as the resource of video cameras to capture live images of the actors onstage, projecting those images in real time. The immediate effect of filming what is being performed on stage is that the audience's attention is drawn to what the camera is filming, focusing on specific parts of the performance, or even on a direct part of the actor's body – that is, what the director wants the spectator to look at, enhancing its importance. At the same time, the audience is placed in the role of voyeur – privacy revealed. Although the audience has a close proximity to the actors onstage, the spectator's gaze tend to divert to the screen, which gives them a safe distance, with no interaction with the party who is the subject of the gaze. The same concept of voyeurism is presented in the play *Cleansed*, when the character Tinker goes to the peep-show booth.

Kane directed the first staging of *Phaedra's Love*, a very good opportunity to see how the own author would provide solutions for staging her work. In the last part of the play, when there is the lynching by the mob, a collective violence against Hippolytus, the actors rose from seats among the audience thus making the limits between reality and fiction

blurred. The effect achieved was the uneasy sensation of danger in the audience, the sensation that people able to commit such a violence could be just your neighbour, could come from anywhere – a good example of "in-yer-face" theatre, a concept coined in 2001 by British theatre critic Aleks Sierz in his book *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*. This term explains British theatre from the 1990s that is new in tone and structure, that often employs shock tactics provoking alarm and discomfort in the audience, taking them into an emotional journey. It questions moral norms and affronts the ruling ideas of what should be shown onstage.

Cleansed is set in different parts of a university that strangely seems more like a mental institution that is run by a sadistic doctor/drug dealer called Tinker who experiment with the relationship of six more characters. The characters do not have clear attributes; it is more important what they represent in their relationships. In this play, Sarah Kane begins to move towards the abstract and a poetic imagery in her work. Critics began to understand more her new aesthetics, were more condescending with her new play saying it was "mysteriously critic"[2].

In *Cleansed* Kane continued to push theatrical form to its limits, continuing to use extreme violence and to shock the audience. Scene fifteen, when the character Tinker forces Robin to eat all the chocolates in a box of chocolates, the author, instead of writing the stage direction indicating the action only once, she repeats the same action several times, the same amount of time as the number of the chocolate pieces in the box, as if it were a formal poem. The passage is shown below:

> Tinker *lets go of* Robin**.**
> *He opens the chocolates.*
> *He takes one out and tosses it at* Robin**.**

2 Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, 7 May 1998.

Tinker Eat

Robin (*Looks at the chocolate. He starts to cry*).
They're for Gracie.

Tinker Eat it.

Robin *eats the chocolate, choking on his tears.*

When he has eaten it, Tinker *tosses him another.*

Robin *eats it, sobbing.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *tosses him the last chocolate.*

Robin retches. Then eat the chocolate.

Tinker *takes the empty tray out of the box – there is another layer of chocolates underneath.*

Tinker *throws* Robin *a chocolate*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*

Robin *eats it.*

Tinker *throws him another.*
Robin *eats it.*
Tinker *throws him another.*
Robin *eats it.*
Tinker *throws him another.*
Robin *eats it.*
Tinker *throws him another.*
Robin *eats it.*
Tinker *throws him another.*
Robin *eats it.*
Tinker *tosses him the last chocolate.*
Robin *eats it.*

(Kane, 2016, p. 139, 140.)

As Lehmann explains in his book *Postdramatic Theatre*, "A crystallization of time occurs in repetition, a more or less subtle compression and negation of the course of time itself." (2006, p. 156) Formerly employed for structuring and constructing a form, repetition is here used for the destructuring and deconstructing of story, meaning and form. The text has a lyric function, which is only perceived when the play is read; the effect dilutes or has to be metamorphosed to other type of lyricism.

I n *Cleansed* we see the simulation of the simulation, when two levels are superimposed, and the material level crosses the fiction level. The transvestite is a flagrant manifestation: the woman character, Grace, wears her brother's clothes, and at the same time the young male character, Robin, wears her clothes. This game between true or false, real or imaginary can also be perceived in *Blasted*, where a different yet possible world, incompatible with the laws of nature is displayed to the audience. As a matter of fact, this is inherent with theatre – a representation, by nature a simulation, a "lie", an illusion.

Apart from the bad language used, the sexual explicitness sex and the overt violence, Kane's work can be noted by the attention she put on the form, the structure of the plays. In

Blasted, the play's form is totally unconventional. Kane's interventions into the typical arc of narrative and her literal deconstruction of the physical space address her preoccupations with a regressing theatrical structure apparent in much of her work.

Theatre performed by particular real individuals – but, can Sarah Kane's theatre be considered as being written by a person who lived in the "real world"? At least, she tried to adapt to social conventions and what she really perceived the world to be.

At the same time, Sarah Kane had the opinion that performance was much more interesting than acting, theatre more compelling than plays. For Kane, "performance is visceral. It puts you in direct physical contact with thought and feeling"[3]. She aimed for a theatre that could speak directly to the audience's experience. Her work tried to unsettle the spectator's psyche, to break down the divide between socially and culturally imposed patterns of behaviour and the drives of the libido.

In an interview with *The Guardian* in 20 August 1998, she explained how she felt watching the work by artist Mona Hatoum called *Deep Throat*, where the artist showed in footage the insides of her body with endoscopic probes: "I found that the voyage up Mona Hatoum's arse put me in powerful and direct contact with my feelings about my own mortality."

This idea of a direct communication with an audience is maybe opposed to Bertold Brecht's "alienation effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*), described by him in his essay "Allienation Effect in Chinese Acting", in reference to the traditional Chinese acting as "playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a

3 Kane, *The Guardian*, 20 August 1998, in https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jan/12/sarah-kane-theatre-football-blasted.

conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious." (1936, p. 91) Brecht believed that theatre should appeal not to the spectator's feelings, but to his reason, and Kane wanted to disturb the spectator's habitual gaze.

Therefore, it comes to mind Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, specifically the scene where a theatre troupe puts on a dumb show re-enacting the murder of Hamlet's father – a play within a play –, in which the aim was to awaken in the king the sense of culpability in seeing the murder he had committed in real life reflected in fictive *dramatis personae* – a kind of Aristotelian catharsis. Watching the dramatic action which is plausible, the spectator recognizes and identifies himself with the characters on the play and, in doing so, he reaches a liberating effect. In Shakespeare's play, the catharsis happens by mimesis, in Kane's play it happens by following a non-mimetic principle in postdramatic theatre that leads to an enhanced reality, in a way a hyper-naturalism.

The past and the present are thrown on scene as fragments, remains. The same as the own characters, remains of individuals, disoriented with the chaos of society, not anymore what they used to be, what as they recognised themselves (seen mainly in *Blasted*). The fragmentation of each character's lines are like crevices in the play, new forms of speaking so as to speak about other things, different things, a form of escaping understanding in order to conceive things that do not exist. This new manner of talking about things is a way of breaking with traditional drama, a way to stir the cultural paralysis and shake the audience into awareness.

I n *Blasted*, another way of showing the passing of time is perceived on the stage directions, where there is indication that at the end of each scene it rains. Scene one ends with the sound of spring rain (Kane, 2016, p. 24), Scene two ends with the sound of summer rain

(Ibid, p. 39), Scene three ends with the sound of autumn rain (Ibid, p. 50), and Scene four ends with the sound of heavy winter rain (Kane, p. 57). Finally, in Scene five, the last scene, the scenic indication is a simple *It rains* (Ibid, p. 61). It is up to the director, who will work with the sound director or with the production designer, to come up with means of conveying those seemingly unstageable stage directions.

This fragmented passing of time, just shown by different kinds of rain (is it possible for the audience to perceive that whole seasons passed just by the sound of rain?) abide by the Theatre of the Absurd, where there is often a deliberate absence of the cause and effect relationship between scenes.

Similar indication of the passing of time is to be seen in *Cleansed*, where the stage direction for Scene one is *It is snowing* (Kane, p. 107), locating the time in winter, and on Scene two the indication is *Midsummer – the sun is shining* (Ibid, p.109), thus locating the time in August.

Violence pervades *Blasted* showing the cruel necessities required for social survival. The cruelties of the world are made visible, but also the human capacity for love. What makes us human? Our births and deaths are absurd. But our lives must not be. To find meaning in life is what makes us human. And a very important point in Kane's theatre is to show our mortality. Our mortality and also our eagerness to exist, to last. Spinoza's philosophy can be cited here as an example of how men are considered in a very realistic way, as they are, not as they ought to be, and the extent to which a thing perseveres always strives – and hence exerts causal power – to persevere in its being, while in existence: “Existence of this kind is conceived as an eternal truth, like the essence of a thing, and, therefore, cannot be explained by means of continuance or time, though continuance may be

conceived without a beginning or end." (Spinoza, p. 17) Kane's characters striving to exist is an eternal theme, depicted since Greek theatre.

Sara Kane's plays must be performed *in extremis*. During the second preview of *Crave*, the performance had to be stopped due to a sudden paralysis on one side of the face of an actor. Afterwards, the doctor assured it was not a stroke, but a hyperventilation. The actor, due to the ludicrous demands set by the text and by the director, was deeply immersed in his work and his performance was extremely physical and intense. By leaping fully to this intensity of performance there is a chance for accuracy in the expression of ideas and emotions, and a direct intellectual, emotional and physical contact with the audience's needs. The actor must take risks, the energy must be articulated, not the meaning – another characteristic of postdramatic theatre, where must occur an "imposing, often shocking physicality" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 95). –, there must be action, not illustration. Actors are expected to be thinkers, to be creative, to bring their imagination to the representation, not only to reproduce or mimic actions or lines.

There is no safe ground on staging Kane's work. The limits of what a body can bear sometimes surface as agitation or even to the extreme of hysterical convulsion. "The body becomes the centre of attention, not as a carrier of meaning but in its physicality and gesticulation. Postdramatic theatre often presents itself as an *auto-sufficient physicality*, which is exhibited in its intensity, gestic potential, auratic 'presence' and internally, as well as externally, transmitted tensions." (Lehmann, 2006, p. 95) Different from the eighteenth century theatre, where actors used their body and gestures conventionally and the audience could almost interpret them like a text, in postdramatic theatre the body does not convey emotion "but through its presence *manifests* itself as the site of inscription of collective

history." (Ibid, p. 97)

And those concepts are also reflected in *Blasted*, which begins in a naturalistic way, but afterwards it gets extreme. It still is a faithful account of the world, but of a world that has no middle tones, where violence is condensed in a confined space, and where individuals have already fallen into the abyss.

The stage directions in *Blasted* are striking. One stage direction for example, says: *He stands on the bed and urinates over the pillows* (Kane, 2006, p. 39). Another one says: *He puts his mouth over one of* Ian*'s eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it* (Kane, 2006, p.50). Those two stage directions are examples of the kind of stage direction the actor is challenged with. But, as Kane said in an interview for *The Independent* shortly after the premiere of *Blasted*, "there isn't anything you can't represent on stage. If you are saying you can't represent something, you are saying you can't talk about it, you are denying its existence, and that's an extraordinarily ignorant thing to do."[4]

Equally striking and challenging stage directions can be seen in *Cleansed*, directions almost impossible to follow. For example, a character must be impaled (Carl *'s trousers are pulled down and a pole is pushed a few inches up his anus*.[5]), flowers burst through the floor (*A sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their heads*[6] or in other scene, *Out of the ground grow daffodils. They burst upwards, their yellow covering the entire stage.*[7]), blood oozes from bodies (Graham *presses his hands onto* Grace *and her clothes turn red where he touches, blood seeping through. Simultaneously, his own body begins to bleed in the*

4 Kane, *The Independent*, 23 January, 1995, in http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/a-very-angry-young-woman-1569281.html
5 *Cleansed*, p. 117.
6 Ibid, p. 120.
7 Ibid, p. 133.

same places.[8]), and the most challenging of all, rats carrying away and chewing at severed body parts (*The rats carry* Carl*'s feet away.*[9]).

The actor is no longer an individual subject that has only one voice and that interacts with other actors but a multiple of voices that serve for an aesthetic idea.

In *Blasted*, as in the Theatre of the Absurd (Sarah Kane was also influenced by the work of Samuel Beckett. We just have to compare the scene where Ian is lying in a hole on the floor, head poking out, and compare it with the situation in which the character Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days* finds herself), we see characters that appear out of harmony with their own existence, and a sense that humankind is left feeling hopeless, bewildered. Words like chaotic, useless, meaningless, illogical, uncertain, can be used to describe the sensation left in the audience after a performance.

The same sense of being out of harmony and the potential for achieving a unity, a wholeness and harmony can also be seen in *Cleansed.* The theme of identity is to be seen throughout the play, with the characters changing identity and cross-dressing – the search for a self. Grace puts on her deceased brother's clothes in order to perpetuate the existence of her beloved sibling, striving in a psychic way for an ideal state of personal wholeness. Robin put on Grace's clothes, and at the end of the play Carl is using Grace's clothes that Robin was wearing before. It is almost as the characters were not defined – idea taken to its extreme in Kane's next play, *Crave*, as it will be explained later. The sense that something is missing, that there is a void needed to be fulfilled is recurrent in Kane's plays.

This androgynous vision is archetypal, and is also used by Shakespeare in many plays such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* or *Twelfth*

8 Ibid, p. 132.
9 Ibid, p. 136.

Night to name a few. Cross-dressing is a way to empower women in Shakespeare's plays, and in Kane's it is as a way to achieve harmony, a rarely attained state of wholeness.

The rejection of the normalized form is a postdramatic trait that can be distinguished in Kane's plays, which push theatrical form to its limits. Lehmann explains it as follows: "the renunciation of conventionalized form (unity, self-identity, symmetrical structuring, formal logic, readability or surveyability (Aristotle's 'synopton'), the refusal of the normalized form of the image, is often realized by way of recourse to extremes." (Lehmann, 2006, p.90) In *Cleansed*, Grace's cross-dressing is, in a way, a metamorphosis, a way for her to dissolve her personality and to tread by unknown paths trying to reach the familiar, to merge with her brother. The recurrent change of clothes and of personalities throughout the play, a rejection of the conventionalized form is, in a symbolic way, a search of the self.

> Grace *dresses in* Robin*'s* / Graham*'s clothes.*
> *When fully dressed, she stands for a few moments, completely still.*
> *She begins to shake.*
> *She breaks down and wails uncontrollably.*
> *She collapses.*

(Kane, 2006, p. 113)

The search for identity, for belonging, to be whole. What makes us human? Self-awareness is the most fundamental difference between us and the animals. Human beings are capable of self-analysis, mental time travel, imagination, abstract reasoning, cultural establishment, and morality. These higher level skills separate us from the beasts, and form the basis of our global culture as a species.

Sarah Kane is part of the so called "new angry generation", and her plays were classified as being a theatre that showed an "in-yer-face realism". "In-yer-face theatre is any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the

message." (Sierz, 2001, p. 5) – something blatantly aggressive or provocative, transgressive, confrontational. Some critics banalized her work, representing her as a monochord engaged author confronting society directly, going against everything and everyone. But Kane was more than just a young angry rebel. She was a serious writer with solid background in literature and dramaturgy. In all her work there is an idea of the stage as a rink, and as a battle field, but the sense of the actions that are developed there changes completely – dialogues become verbal combats. And Kane's plays, as all authentic drama, constitutes a mirror of their historical time.

The stage directions shed a different light on the author's work, thus contributing to an 'open' work in which each contributor (author, director, actors, audience) bring nuances, bring their own imagination and creativity that help build up the work. However, if a disparity, an impassable distance between the signifiers and/or referents of the emitter (via author or director) and of the receiver occurs, it results in ambiguity.

Scenographic indications were always an aspect of the theatre that always required special consideration, and the way to realize them in Kane's plays challenges directors and stage directors' creativity.

We see the same kind of problematic – staging something that is apparently impossible – in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene one.

> QUINCE
>
> Well it shall be so. But there is two hard things;
> that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber;
> for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby
> meet by moonlight.
>
> SNUG
>
> Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac;
find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

QUINCE

Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM

Why, then may you leave a casement
of the great chamber window,
where we play, open,
and the moon may shine in at the casement.

QUINCE

Ay; or else one must come in with
a bush of thorns and a lanthorn,
and say he comes to disfigure, or to present,
the person of Moonshine.
Then, there is another thing:
we must have a wall in the great chamber;
for Pyramus and Thisby says the story,
did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT

You can never bring in a wall.
What say you, Bottom?

BOTTOM

Some man or other must present Wall:
and let him have some plaster, or some loam,
or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall;
and let him hold his fingers thus,
and through that cranny shall Pyramus
and Thisby whisper.

(1960, p. 66, 67)

Even if the play is not studied in this assignment, I would like to give as an example of the same issue Sarah Kane's play *Crave*, where the characters do not have names, four different bodies occupy one life, they are indicated in the texts as letters: A, B, M, and C. This form evokes the powerful sense of fragmentation characteristic of postdramatic theatre. Although *Crave* stills speaks about violence and arrogance, it definitely marks a shift in the direction for a specific poetic approach, building affirmations and story's fragments that sometimes refer to other works (T.S. Eliot and William Shakespeare, for example).

7. CONCLUSION

When we are faced with a world that is so fragmented, with transgression permeated in all sectors of society, with no fixed contents, with multiple options and tools, highly adaptable to everything and anything, the theatre of Sarah Kane reflects the author's view of the place she had to live – and ultimately chose not to live. Her theatre reflected not an alternative world, but the disrupted reality, a blunt expression of the world inside her mind. Not a cognitive experience, but a sensorial and emotional one. The eternal and passionate questioning to understand a world that is destroying itself. In postdramatic theatre, the stage becomes a generator of shared experiences rather than knowledge, and spectators are confronted with the question of how they deal with such phenomena. The theatre of Sarah Kane does not give answers to this disrupted world, but, by raising questions, encourages the audience to reach their own conclusions and individual understanding.

The relative inadaptability of the artist is exactly Kane's best advantage – it allowed her to remain aloof of the general stream, finding what others, without knowing, were missing. But the limits of the scenic space were too little for the limits of Sarah Kane's lyric voice.

Jean Genet, as a novelist, transformed erotic and often obscene subject matter into a poetic vision of the universe. Sarah Kane, as a playwright, did the same with the poetic

beauty of her texts. She used nudity as a disruptive mode of textuality, giving different signifiers to the naked body. Beginning her career with so negative and bad critics, at the end of her short life she ended up being considered, by her friend and fellow playwright Harold Pinter, a poet.

Interestingly, the process of making theatre incorporates the idea of death – each new production is a life in itself, and at the end, there is a sense of loss, of grief, and frustrated lack of completion. The archetypical “death wish” that Kane literally pursued, in her plays was translated into performance. And the form and the voice she gave to her theatre was incredibly new, a new form of staging the postdramatic theatre.

Postdramatic theatre disrupts the logic of the language, and the audacity of the staging of Sarah Kane's plays attacks the spectator, pulling him out of the comfort zone, questioning and sometimes destabilizing the spectator. But, as Lehmann asserts, “postdramatic theatre (...) does not mean a theatre that exists 'beyond' drama, without any relation to it. It should rather be understood as the unfolding and blossoming of a potential of disintegration, dismantling and deconstruction within drama itself.” (2006, p. 44) And that is clearly perceived in the work of Sarah Kane, where the divine frenzy of the artist was channelled into creative force.

The postdramatic theatre movement does not suffer from the problem of other movements; it is inclusive rather than exclusive. It lives in the swaying between presence and representation, performance and mimesis, sensorial real and fiction, creative process and resulting performance. And it is in these dualities that the audience must build a new form of perception, an intensified and concrete perception – to respond aesthetically to what is intended in the performance and, at the same time, to be forced to react to extreme actions that demand a moral response – the spectator is confronted with the transformation of

theatrical modes of expression. And that is clearly what Sarah Kane delivers in *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love* and *Cleansed*. In each of these three plays she found a new structure that does not stick to a formal theatrical form. She gave audiences a new kind of theatre, with no political agenda, no psychological verisimilitude, no pre-established signifiers, and more important, no climax and no denouement. She created a theatre that must be experienced with open- mindedness, a theatre that leaves the audience with their senses heightened, co-creators of their own signifier, aware that their conclusions are not the only possible one. Sarah Kane's dramaturgy is similar to Chaos theory, with a plurality of signifiers and diverging outcomes.

Exposing resources recurrent in postdramatic theatre, her theatre is fragmented, in which a "scenic *écriture*" is at the same level as the text, the actors' bodies are pushed to their limits with an extreme physicality, a theatre that uses media technology, a theatre as in suspense, a theatre that awaits resolution, and which is in a state of potentiality, emphasizing what is incomplete.

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9. LIST OF APPENDIX

Figure 1 – *Blasted*. Production by Soho Repertory Theatre, director Sarah Benson, 2008 – image taken from https://theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/england/london/articles/the-most-controversial-plays-by-sarah-kane/

Figure 2 – *Phaedra's Love*. Production by CalArts Ensemble Theatre, director Marina McClure, 2011 – image taken from http://www.marinamcclure.com/portfolio/#/phaedra/

Figure 3 – *Cleansed*. Production by OKT/Vilnius City Theatre, director Oskaras Koršunovas, 2016 – image taken from http://www.okt.lt/en/plays/6175/

Fig.1 - *Blasted*

Fig. 2 - *Phaedra's Love*

Fig. 3 - *Cleansed*