(الرّابط الدّموي وراء الاحتفاليّة في أعمال كاريل تشرتشيل وسارة كين)

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المُلخّص

ينظر بحثي هذا (الرّابط الدّموي وراء الاحتفاليّة في أعمال كاريل تشرتشيل وسارة كين) عن كثب في الترابُط والتداخل بين الأشكال المَهرجانيّة وعمليّة انتقاء الضحيّة في عدد من مَسرحيّات كاريل تشرتشيل وسارة كين. تبلورَ اهتمامي في المأدُبات والمُحاكاة السّاخرة والأشكال الأخرى للمَهرجاني بفعل نظريّة المُفكّر الرّوسي ميخائيل باختين عن الكرنفاليّة لكنّ قراءتي النقديّة لأعمال الكاتبتين تتجاوز رؤية باختين لتأخذَ بعين الاعتبار الضحيّة (الضّحايا) وسطَ الاحتفاليّة. بتجاوز الاحتفاليّة، تضعُ الكاتبتان مشاركتنا موضعَ المُساءلة حيثُ إنّ المُشاركة المُباشرة في مواقع الذّعر لم تعُد تقتصِر على مناطق الحرب والنّزاع بل أصبحتْ حقيقة من حقائق حياتنا اليوميّة في القرنين العشرين والواحد والعشرين. على الرّغم من "الانتصار" والتطوّر الذي أحرزه كل من العِلم والتكنولوجيا في كافّة المَجالات، تكمنُ مأساة الحياة المُعاصِرة في حقيقة أنّ البشر لا يزالوا يضحكون بينما يتفنّنون بصناعة المَوت ، فمسحتْ هذه الصّناعة الفروقات والحدود بين الشّخصي والحميمي والعِلمي والعسّكري /السّياسي.

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The Bloodline of the Festive in Caryl Churchill and Sarah Kane

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Abstract

This paper looks closely at the interconnections between festive forms and victim selection in a number of plays by Churchill and Kane. My interest in banquets, travesty and festive/carnival forms is shaped by Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival humour, but my critical reading of the playwrights' works is post-Bakhtinian because it takes into consideration the victim(s) at the heart of the festive. By looking beyond the festive, the playwrights question our participation in living sites of terror which are no longer limited to war zones but have become a fact of daily life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In spite of all the scientific and technological 'triumph' and progress, the tragedy of modern life lies in the fact that humans continue to laugh as they make death, and the industry of death-making has blurred the lines between the intimate, the scientific, and the military / political.

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In this paper I want to draw attention to a strange connection and an implicit dialogue between two British playwrights: Caryl Churchill (1938) and Sarah Kane (1971-1999). It is strange because the two playwrights have a different repertoire in terms of dramaturgy and professional maturity not forgetting that they also come from different generations of writers. By drawing this comparison, I want to focus on the festive and its connection to victimisation in Churchill's TheSkriker (1994), Top Girls (1982) and Far Away (2000) – as well as Kane's Cleansed (1998) and Blasted (1995). My argument is not limited to the selected plays, but these are chosen as a sample. My interest in festive forms such as laughter, parades, banquets, parodies and travesty stems from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival humour. However, in my analysis of the selected plays I will go beyond Bakhtin by pointing out to the victim(s) staring at us in the flames in an attempt to freeze the dance and question one's participation. Before I explain Bakhtin's carnival humour and the explicit and the implicit representations of festive elements in the selected plays, I would like first to talk about the two playwrights and the theatre cultures they come from and represent. Here it is important to clarify that the playwrights do not view themselves as Bakhtinians or post-Bakhtinians and may not be aware of Bakhtin's theory. Having read most of their plays, I can identify a mutual interest in sexuality, identity, domestic violence, trauma, and persecution. The language they use to examine individual and collective suffering varies from context to context. Its fluidity - the fluidity of their poetic-theatre styles - has the ability to contain the cruel and the festive, the distorted and the comic, the political and the subjective. In this article, I will examine Churchill's explicit use of festive

forms and then I will elaborate on Kane's fragmented or reductive language of the festive. The reason behind their choice of the explicit and the implicit, the visible and the fragmented has to do with the contexts they examine. In the case of Kane's Cleansed and Blasted it is hard to stay human and there is no time to celebrate one's humanness unlike the less severe situations Churchill explores in Top Girls and The Skriker. By going beyond Bakhtin's theory of carnival humour, we will be able to understand the playwrights' different uses and applications of the festive, reconstruct and perhaps restore the disrupted narratives of victimization in terms of gaps and silences.

Churchill's personal triumph as a woman playwright may be described as a journey of overcoming both social and cultural barriers. She identified herself as a socialist and became the first woman resident at the Royal Court Theatre. During the socialist and feminist phase of her career as a playwright, she supported the subsidised sector avoiding commercial motives and helped amateur playwrights in their early writings and productions (Aston, Caryl Churchill 3). She also sacrificed individuality for group work and female solidarity by collaborating with many theatre groups (Reinelt 20). Her interests in sexual politics, identity, and women's health did occupy a dominant aspect of her work for both the theatre and the radio. In her more recent work she paid close attention to ecological issues criticizing the worldwide dominance of globalism and capitalism (Rabillard 89). Sarah Kane, however, refused to be labelled or defined on the basis of her "age, gender, class, sexuality, or race" (Saunders, Love Me 30). Compared to Churchill, Kane's journey from 1995 to 1999 is too short during which she wrote exclusively for the theatre with the exception of

Skin a short television film (Saunders, Love Me 13). Kane suffered a lot at the hands of critics in Britain but was well-received in Germany, although she died at a very young age after she hanged herself in a bathroom at a hospital in London. Because of her interest in violence and sexuality, Kane's work is often compared to Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty", the Jacobean Theatre and New Brutalism. Her theatre, well-known for its shocking tactics and indecent content, came also to be recognized by AleksSierz as a representative of 'in-yer-face theatre' (Saunders, Love Me 5) and by the Germans as 'the blood and sperm' theatre (Sierz, Still In-Yer-Face 17). However, the works and interests of Churchill and Kane have not been considered together as a topic for discussion and comparison by critics for many reasons. Some might even consider the comparison in question unfair for the young poet-playwright Kane since Churchill has become a legendary playwright, an icon of modern British theatre. Although their career journeys take different paths and they have different theatre styles, they both embrace the unfamiliar and the poetic when it comes to stage techniques and language prioritizing sound, movement, and ritual over word (Keyssar 143). Churchill's inclination towards the nonverbal, the ambiguous, and the poetic is clearly evident in her late works such as The Skriker, Far Away,and Seven Jewish Children (2009). Churchill and Kane are both interested in the cruel intrusions of the political into the personal or/and the intimate in a world where the globalist metaphor of the world as a small village is becoming more and more claustrophobic and nightmarish.

Why Bakhtin's Carnival Humor?

This interest in cruelty and comic forms goes back to the popular and theatre cultures of the early 1950s and 60s until 1990s (as represented in the works of a wide range of British playwrights such as Osborne, Arden, Barnes, Barker, Kane and Churchill). The popular culture of the 1950s and 60s is described as a new renaissance in terms of change, prosperity, the birth of the age of television and rock 'n' roll (Lacey 1). Critics such as Rebellato, Lacey and Bull also speak of a theatre 'uprising' during which the theatre began to free itself from censorship as well as financial concerns. Following the 'cruelty' season in 1963, Simon Shepherd observes a change in the history of theatre development from the verbal and the realistic to the ambiguous, the irrational and the subjective (119-20). In the 1970s, playwrights transformed the theatre into a laboratory in order to experiment and explore and thus they were able to discover a language of performance and challenge the writer's role by giving birth to the practitioner (Shepherd 165). The cruelty of this theatre invites the audience to look beyond violence at the humanity of the victims and thus it helps them defamiliarise their experience as well as their perception of violence and their role in the world. Before I unravel the victim from the ashes of the festive, it is important to examine Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, how it is viewed by critics and then try to locate Churchill's and Kane's use and application of the carnival/esque in the light of that theory.

In his book Rabelais and His World (1965) the Russian philosopher and thinker Bakhtin (1895-1975) uses the term 'carnival humour' to speak of the power of the people in the middle ages to overcome the official mainstream language of both the

church and feudalism by means of parodies, travesty, banquets, and laughter. He knows that their temporary triumph represented by the carnival provides the people with a safety valve or an illusory reality by means of which they overcome fear of authorities, taboos and divine punishment. Thus, carnival becomes the rule of misrule that creates a parallel world the entry to which provides the people with a carte blanche to act as they please and speak freely. There are two camps of critics who view Bakhtin's theory of the carnival differently: the first I will call the Bakhtinians and the second the post-Bakhtinians. The Bakhtinians (such as Hilary B.P. Bagshaw and Sue Vice) agree on the anti-sacrificial and celebratory nature of carnival humour: in the carnival people are allowed to revive the pagan past that the church tried to abolish (Bakhtin 391). Here they celebrate the return of their pagan gods and they embrace the corporal or "the lower bodily stratum which could not express itself in official cult and ideology" (Bakhtin 75). It is the unofficial which Bakhtin describes in terms of laughing, lovemaking, banqueting, swearing, giving birth and defecation. In other words, this celebration of the people's second nature, the unofficial and the pagan is also a celebration of community laughter, the power to be, and the people's triumph in terms of labour as they eat and drink, dance and sing, abuse, mock and swear. However, the post-Bakhtinians (such as Baz Kershaw, Mikita Hoy, and Michael Garndiner) differentiate between the passive carnival and the politically-active carnivalesque. The first is seen as powerless and entertaining whereas the second involves activism and protest empowering the people to take action against oppression. The carnival gives birth to the interventional carnivalesque when the first is combined to "counter-cultural and emancipatory

movements" such as peace and anti-war campaigns as well as civil rights demonstrations (Kershaw 40). Bakhtin's book Rabelais and His World in which he presents a detailed study of carnivals, their elements and the history of their development is criticized because of his silence about mass deaths in the twentieth century. Bakhtin himself explains that "victory over fear is not its abstract elimination; it is a simultaneous uncrowning and renewal, a gay transformation" (91). Here it is important to note that Bakhtin's theory came at a time when freedom of speech and expression was confiscated at a time of Stalinist oppression (Pomorska xi). Beneath the festive and its 'liberating' laughter, critics such as Ralf Remshardt and Sergei Averintsev also point to layers and layers of victims beginning with the oppression of the church in the middle ages and ending with production of death at the hands of totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century.

Bakhtin also studies the history and the development of the carnival from the middle ages until the eighteenth century. It is a transformation from a community laughter as an expression of transitory triumph over fear, repression and oppression into a celebration of the personal and the subjective. The latter change is characterised by dark humour, estrangement and terror as seen in the gothic genre of the eighteenth century (Bakhtin 37). Here hell and the devil are no longer the spokespeople of the unofficial truth and its regenerating laughter but the representative of disorder and negative laughter as seen in the works of modern British playwrights such as Churchill, Kane, Barker, Rudkin and others. In other words, the playwrights have entered into the realm of the laughter that does not laugh, the laughter that produces dismemberment and death in an attempt to question our

participation by examining the relationship between carnival humour and victim selection. Beneath Bakhtin's folk celebrations, the victim who is mocked, abused and tortured stands out in the flames of witch-hunt, death camps, and wars. Whereas Bakhtin may be implicitly criticizing his own culture, both Churchill and Kane rip apart the festive in order to reach out for the victims. Thus they restore history to Bakhtin's timeless and ahistorical carnival principle. By doing so, Churchill and Kane give voice to Bakhtin' svoiclessness and highlight his 'justified' inability to express himself clearly and explicitly at a time of Stalinism. The moment the victims are given a voice midst carnival frenzy could be the moment of transformation for the audience if the latter choose to cease laughing or participating. The pain of the victims gazing at the festive monstrosity of the celebrants is our pain too; it is the place of rebirth and individual awakening over crowd manipulation and state oppression.

Feasts of Death Making:

Interrogating carnival humour and its so-called inclusivity to reveal rituals of victim selection has become a landmark of modern British theatre. This investigation of the festive, as I said earlier, is not particularly limited to Churchill and Kane but includes a wide range of playwrights such as Shaffer, Barnes, Barker and Rudkin. The carnival principle continues to influence our life today, and it has adapted well to fit a modern life style shaped and contaminated by totalitarianism, globalism and capitalism. In return to Churchill and Kane, I will closely examine the festive 'language' – including banquets, parades, carnival hell, grotesque beatings, and travesty - in the selected works and how it is used and to what purpose. By going beyond Bakhtin's carnival, both playwrights give voice to

the voiceless (such as mothers, children, patients/prisoners, the dead) as they rewrite history to reveal the unsaid, question one's participation, and perhaps become aware of and free from generational trauma. I agree with Elin Diamond who explains that the state of terror and of being terrified as well as the making of terror/ism is one of Churchill's earliest concerns (Diamond 125), but this equally applies to Kane's Cleansed and Blasted. In Churchill's and Kane's works, as we shall see, terror has become invincible and has found its way to both form and content, individual and community, language of performance and subject matter.

Churchill's The Skriker, a play about two outcast mothers Josie and Lily, is quite relevant here. It begins with Josie who is in a mental hospital accused of having killed her child. Unlike her sister, Lily chooses to look after her child in spite of the difficult socio-economic status quo haunting single mothers in Britain. "It is not coincidental that The Skriker […] arrived at a moment when the British government was accelerating its dismantling of the welfare state. Aston observes that single mothers were especially at risk for funding cuts" (Amich 398). Both mothers are indeed haunted by the omnipresent Skriker - a shapeshifter, an army of spirits, a monster, and the deadly feast of capital, waste, objectification, and isolation. Omnipresent because it is everywhere in the food, the water, the air, possessions, institutions and money. Where the Skriker is, there is confinement, delirium, illness, and terror. Unlike the fools of the middle ages and the Renaissance, there is nothing divine or funny about the Skriker's folly; rather she/it (the Skriker) is a grotesque manifestation of capitalism and patriarchy that view maternity as a tool in the machination of labor

and irresponsible consumption. The womb in this context is the medium that has to continue to provide the gaping mouth of capitalism (the Skriker) with labor hands. Here women have no authority or liberty over their bodies in terms of abortion, sexual pleasure and financial security. Everything is controlled including and above all the tempo of the womb that is the tempo of life for the sole purpose of production and materialism.

Confined womanhood, a recurring motif in Churchill's works, should not come as a surprise for Churchill's audience. In The Skriker, the hospital is inseparable from the cell and the banquet from the underworld. Josie is the patient-prisoner accused of having committed infanticide. Hope of salvation is completely lost by the constant and unstoppable intrusive presence of the Skriker and the downfall of Josie into an underworld of feast and objectification. The underworld banquet the Skriker provides for Josie is a metaphor for the pleasures and the glamour Capitalism offers in the upper world. In return to Bakhtin's theory, the banquet is viewed as an expression of the individual's triumph of labour over the world, hardship and death in the act of eating, drinking and celebrating. Here, the participants encounter and devour the world without being devoured by it (Bakhtin 281). However, beneath the surface of the Skriker's feast with its idealistic promises, and contrary to Bakhtin, Churchill reveals a hellish world and a nightmarish reality of dismemberment and distortion, of 'aborted' children and exploited mothers. Thus, (m)otherhood becomes a symbol as well as a metaphor for otherness, homeland and the globe. In other words, Churchill establishes a link between the national and the transnational, the maternal and the environmental. We are all one – plants, animals, and humans - the micro is

inseparable from the macro world haunted and devoured by the Capitalist beast. The Skriker is a successful translation of Churchill's pluralistic approach and vision – here we find her feminist and socialist concerns are crowned by her ecologist ones for the planet.

The line separating the upper and the lower in this play becomes so thin almost non-existent; however, this 'union' must not be mistaken for liberty or equality. The festive banquet is nothing but exploitation and objectification; the fairy queen is a monster, and a shapeshifter; the food of the banquet is blood and dirty water, toads and money; and finally the laughter or the folly of the banquet is a dark comedy where life itself and the sources of life become dummies in the bestial arms of Capitalism. In this festive hell of Capitalist production and consumption, the present of the mothers shaped by the past affects the future of the children. Following the feast, Josie seen on her hands and knees helpless, entrapped, and fatigued is Churchill's attempt to warn us against any future involvement or participation in similar feasts and the consequent consumption of its products as well as the objectification of its consumers. In the underworld where Josie was confined she had children of her own that she could not claim or take back. At the banquet table, there is a link between food and being devoured by the earth, swallowing and giving birth, dismemberment and decay, flesh and materialism, laughter and terror. Unlike Bakhtin's carnival principle of regenerating laughter, in The Skriker Churchill turns laughter inside out to reveal terror warning us against participating in the bloodline of the 'festive'. Nothing but enslavement haunts the future of Lily's granddaughter upon Lily's participation in the feast. Consumption and participation in the

feast are two sides of the same coin leading to death of children, poisoning of food and destruction of nature and the planet.

The same occurs in Top Girls (1982) where Churchill constructs another banquet celebrating Marlene's success as a director of Top Girls Agency. At the banquet table the borderlines separating past, present and future break down to reveal another bloodline of victimization. Like The Skriker, Top Girls also discusses female health, women's work conditions, single motherhood, and capitalism. Again this play examines the relationship between two sisters: Marlene the businesswoman and Joyce a working-class single mother who has raised Marlene's daughter Angie as her own. Here Marlene's failure to save her child is highlighted as she sacrifices her maternity for the sake of her professional success at a time of masculinist and individualist work values. Ironically-speaking, Marelenecelebrates her success with historical and fictional women from the past with whom she shares a history of persecution, marginalisation, and sacrifice. The fact that Marlene is celebrating her success with the dead in itself invites us to question her position and her ability to understand the present or/and reshape the future. Like The Skriker, Churchill focuses on Angie's struggle to understand who she is and who her real mother is. Angie's desire to murder her foster (m)other Joyce (Churchill, Top Girls 44) reminds us of the bloodline connecting all the mothers in the banquet scene: here, contrary to Bakhtin, the banquet is not a place of triumph of life over death; rather it is a place of gaps and silences, marginalization, and exploitation. How to reconcile this struggle without further bloodshed or passive participation becomes a core question for future generations represented by Angie and Lily's granddaughter in The Skriker.

In the banquet scene, Marlene celebrates her success with Lady Nijo a concubine and a Buddhist nun, Joan a female Pope, Dull Gret among others. The stories they share speak of sexual exploitation and objectification, feasts and grotesque beatings, humour and horror. For example, Lady Nijo refers to a traditional ceremony during which the emperor's concubines are beaten up with hot sticks and by this practice it was believed they would give birth to boys rather than girls (Churchill, Top Girls 26). In the story of Pope Joan, the boundaries between male and female, pregnancy and papacy, childbirth and death collapse fuelling the crowds' fear of the Antichrist. Thus, Joan is beaten up, grotesquely debased and stoned to death in public for challenging religious authorities because her travesty went beyond its carnival purposes - beyond "the renewal of clothes and of the social image" (Bakhtin 81). However, Dull Gret herself - known as Mad Meg - does the beating as she leads an army of women into hell to fight the devils (Churchill, Top Girls 27). This army of women marching to hell is armed with aprons and kitchen utensils. Similar to what we have seen earlier in The Skriker, hell in the story of Dull Gret is a metaphor for the underworld where strange creatures dwell, and where excrement is confused for money and money for excrement (Churchill, Top Girls 28). Here the festive fire, the banquet foods and the dismembered or bruised body merge together in unison on the same table as a reminder of Bakhtin's travesty or the "reversal of hierarchic levels" (Bakhtin 81). It is interesting that women not men take the journey down to hell reminding us of Marlene's and Joyce's failure to unite against a market of capitalist and masculinist values. The Bakhtinian similarity between the gaping mouth of hell (or the earth) and the vaginal mouth might reflect the

ambivalence and relativity of the carnival principle but it does not help the women in question find a language of solidarity: "Carnival's hell represents the earth which swallows up and gives birth, it is transformed into a cornucopia: the monster, death, becomes pregnant" (Bakhtin 91). In The Skriker and Top Girls, the underworld is nothing but the upper world travestied where language has become gibberish reflecting the impossibility of communication in a world dominated by patriarchal values, capital, waste and marginalization. Top Girls Agency becomes Marlene's carnival hell, a place of "carnival relativity"[1] where social and political stability is not available for women like Joyce or the young Angie but for those who are ready to compete and sacrifice their humanness and maternity.

In Churchill's Far Away (2000) we meet another child named Joan who also attempts to understand herself and the world around her. The recurring motif of the 'party' has a nightmarish or a plague-like effect and is depicted in terms of an invasive unstoppable march or parade. Beneath its festive appearance, there is another reality waiting for those who dare to question its purpose. This reality as Diamond explains "is one of continuous war, with nightmare sites like Bosnia different in quantity of death and agony but not in kind" (140). Just like the Skriker, the 'party' has become an inescapable reality at home and in the world not limited to a specific site. Travesty is also at work here because the 'party' a 'shelter' and a prison is both festive and political, and its participants are the celebrants and the members. Unfortunately,

[1] "carnival relativity" stands for the temporary reversal of hierarchic levels which is at the heart of carnival humour (Bakhtin 81).

having become an adult Joan is now a participant providing extravagant hats for the parades. The parades are trials for prisoners dressed extravagantly merely to die (Churchill, Far Away 30). By their customs and disguises they invite our passive applause and participation. Joan like many others has become oblivious about and numb to the suffering of others transforming their stories of persecution and victimization into objects of art in a live museum or a fashion show (Churchill, Far Away 31). Even art - enslaved by the interests of those in power – has become a means to an end dehumanizing prisoners for the sake of capital. The reality of violence and "State terrorism, no longer far away in refugee camps or military prisons, is not only here, it's normalized, a central feature of cultural production." (Diamond 140). In a materialist world where art serves those in the upper seats, nothing can save us from the killing machine of war which has become the living nightmare of Joan's reality. This vicious circle of capitalism and violence has poisoned and caused the death of humans, animals and nature. By the end of the play it is noticeable that there is no escape, and the transformation from a viewer into a participant is tragically unavoidable. It is important to note the irony behind the title because although one might think violence is far away, it is actually not. It is at home (when Joan was a little child), at work, and in the world. We are all connected (the personal and the political, the natural and the civilized), and in one way or another we are all responsible.

The similarities between Churchill and Kane should not come as a surprise although both of them had very different career paths in terms of maturity and opportunity. Like Churchill especially in her late career, Sarah Kane is also known for having

sacrificed the familiar and the journalistic for the poetic, the ambiguous and the nonverbal. Whereas Churchill was a socialist and a feminist, Kane refused to be identified as such although she is similarly interested in women's issues and war victims (Saunders, Love Me 32). Those who have analysed Kane's work focus on either the shocking language of brutality, violence, and explicit sex (such as Broich, Sierz and Urban) or the beauty of cruelty by going beyond labels (as seen in the studies by Graham Saunders, Elaine Aston, Edward Bond, and Mark Ravenhill). After her death, critics were also divided in the way they treated her work: some examined her plays in the light of her suicide, while others did not see this as something valid and valuable for the work she produced (Singer 23). Witnessing and victimization, identity and sexual politics, as well as cruelty and rituals are some of the themes that recur as critics continue to examine her works.

However, compared to Churchill's explicit use of carnival elements, the representation of the festive in Kane's Cleansed and Blasted becomes less tangible and more implicit. For example, the banquet seen in Top Girls and The Skriker is replaced with remnants of food in Blasted. The gradual disappearance of festive elements in Kane's works is a reflection of a reality shaped by the terrors of world wars and totalitarian regimes. Like Churchill's The Skriker and Far Away, the indistinction between hospitals and prisons, doctors and jailors, medicine and politics plays an important role in Kane's Cleansed (1998). The process of cleansing referred to in the title could have multiple meanings such as religious purification, ethnic cleansing, "purification of love" (Brusberg-Kiermeier 87) or the act of being "completely burnt" (Saunders, Love Me 139). Like Joan in Far Away, the title of

Kane's play Cleansed invites us to look beyond the laboratory at the actual practice where a human is reduced to a rat in dictators' experiments. The party in Far Away is not a party, the hospital in The Skriker is a cell, and what looks like a hospital or a university in Cleansed could be a death camp or a prison. Every room in this 'hospital' functions for one thing but serves for another. Here, the two bodies in one (hospital/camp or university/prison) has nothing to do with Bakhtin's regenerating folk humour[2] and its travesty which enabled people to mock rank and authority represented by the figures of a mock king. In Cleansed, the hospital that helps patients recover from illness and brings them back to life becomes a slaughterhouse, and the university that educates and liberates people is a place of torture. Although Kane does not provide her readers/audience with a context in Cleansed – emphasizing like Churchill that violence and organized killing is not far away - it is important to note here how the borderline separating biology, politics, education, entertainment and intimacy collapses. Like the prisoners/patients, we are always reminded of the thin line separating them from the outside world. In other words, the 'patients' are locked in a zone of nowhere neither alive nor dead. The sound of the football match the 'patients' hear is another reminder of their lost humanity, a brief pause in the middle of infinite horror and terror. What remains of Bakhtin's carnival and its community laughter is a mere sound of a collective recreational activity (the football match). This moment of 'normalcy' might

[2]Bakhtin illustrates this principle of regenerating carnival humor by using the image of pregnant hags - the old and dying giving birth to the new (Bakhtin 25-30).

distract the patients from the cruelty surrounding them and might function as a temporary safety valve, a carnivalistic disguise in order to help them evade and avoid reality. Away from this illusory reality, the orchestra – or the 'party' in other contexts - of cruelty and death continues to play its music disguised as hospital/university. The match is also an indicator that people outside the hospital/camp have become so accustomed and even numb to the suffering of others. Thus the match, the hospital, and the university are all participants in the march of terror and the continuation of organized killing. In Cleansed there is no escape from participation in the machine of death production and no hope of going back to a time when the biological, the intimate, and the personal was possible without the political and vice versa.

We find comfort in the fact that the wars we watch on TV or we read about in the newspaper are far away in another country. In Kane's Blasted, however, war has knocked down our privacy, invaded our homes, and made the globe a small village reminding us of Churchill's Far Away and The Skriker. Kane successfully shocks her audience forcing them to gaze at the unavoidable reality of war and war victims. At the very moment she transforms her hotel scene into a battlefield, she is questioning our responsibility and even our complicity. Kane deconstructs the normalcy of the hotel/living room and its 'love' scene to reveal to us the hideous supremacy of war and its ugly symphony of rape, genocide and cannibalism. The festive atmosphere Churchill brought to the stage in the Skriker's feast, Marlene's celebration and Joan's parade is almost non-existent in Kane's Blasted. However, one can trace here the remnants of a 'feast' in the different acts of 'sex', eating and drinking. Of course the participants in the 'feast' are the soldiers

and the victims; the food they eat is the human flesh and the drinks are blood and semen. In the hotel room before it got blasted, Ian, a journalist, engages in non-penetrative sex with Cate during one of her fits, and afterwards she performs oral sex on him. After the hotel was blasted, Ian meets a soldier who is appalled by the atrocities of war and who eventually rapes Ian, sucks out his eyes, and commits suicide. In the final scene in the ruined room of the hotel Ian masturbates hugging the dead soldier for comfort and eventually he eats the baby buried next to him. Cate returns with sausage and gin. The blood running down her legs is a clear sign that she has paid for this by having sex with soldiers. She eats and gives some to Ian. In Blasted we are left with remnants of humanity; therefore, the festive is distorted. Humans can no longer celebrate their triumph over the earth in terms of feasting, lovemaking or labor because they are confronted with the burdens of witnessing and the pains of participating in the machine of killing and death-making. The festive march of death is the war itself demanding more victims and participants in the service of those who have power.

While analysing Kane's work, the encounter with remnants of humanity becomes unavoidable. In a war zone, the victims, the witnesses and the perpetrators are all confronted with what is left or the remains of something – be it the festive, the religious, or the medical (Cleansed and Blasted). Hence Kane's implicit representation of the festive reflects the playwright's awareness of the different contexts she is examining. In her study of cruelty in Kane's plays, Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier does not use the word remnants, but, interestingly enough, she identifies "a close connection between violence and rituals" (80). She considers the love, eating, religious and medical rituals as important tools in

Kane's theatre because they are emotionally and symbolically charged (Brusberg-Kiermeier 80). In Blasted, the banquet is replaced by Ian's ritualistic eating of the dead baby and by the food-sex offering Cate makes for Ian who is both a rapist and a victim of rape. Another example of the reduction of the banquet is seen in Cleansed in the ritualistic swallowing of the rings by Rod and Carl symbolic of their love for each other. To speak of table etiquette is of course pointless because it is replaced by survival or the survivor's dilemma to tell their tale or to bear the burdens of remembering or even to preserve their humanity in places where horror and terror dominate and control the tiny details of human lives. The disappearance of table manners, reflective of the absence of order, symbolizes humans' return to their instinctive and bestial physicality (Brusberg-Kiermeier 82-3). In my opinion, the similarity Kiermeier refers to between eating and sex in terms of swallowing and being swallowed, devouring and being devoured brings to mind the carnival and its atmosphere of liberty and equality. The war itself becomes the monstrous feast mocking everyone and revealing the unsaid about domestic violence, soldiers' trauma, and sexual exploitation of women and men. Some critics (Saunders and Kiermeier) view in Kane's use of pain and extreme violence a possibility for redemption and purification. In these contexts, ritual becomes Kane's theatrical medium that unites mind and body or mind and soul helping the victims attain some kind of hope or wholeness (Brusberg-Kiermeier 85-7). It is also "the mark of Kane" by which she hopes to unite the artist and his/her work, beauty and cruelty, life and drama (Bond 209-18). Thus by intensifying our pain and daring us to look at the victims, she challenges us to look within, changing our perception of the world and our role in it.

In tracing the bloodline of the festive in the selected works, Churchill and Kane wanted to locate the victim(s), question one's participation, and reconstruct identity in relation to the other (the future, the children, the victim and the victimizer, as well as the globe). Restoring history to Bakhtin's carnival begins by rewriting history to highlight its gaps and silences in terms of women's marginalisation and exploitation, the future of prisoners without trials, the use of sex as a tool of torture and humiliation in prisons, death camps and during war. By doing so the playwrights have chosen involvement and activism and have moved to the realm of the carnivalesque. To speak of affecting change in a community and worldwide, women's health and work conditions, domestic abuse and organized killing are some of the topics that come to the forefront in modern British theatre. The fact that these issuesare still constant concerns for British playwrights is in itself a messagethat aims to awaken us against the deceptive charm of today's high-tech capitalism. Thus Churchill and Kane take us on a journey of self-discovery, a journey beyond labels (religions, nationalities, and political inclinations) back to the core of our humanness to recognize our self in the other (the child in the mother and the grandmother, the victim in the victimizer, the doctor in the patient, and vice versa). The context in the selected works is the human rather than the political or the social. In other words, the human has become the battlefield and the remedy, self and other, here and there. Because of this larger-than-the-socio-political, the playwrights have also sacrificed the spatial (past, present, and future, here and there) for a moment of recognition between the human and the non-human, the estranged, and the deformed. By this encounter, the playwrights hope to revive the possibility of reclaiming the self, the planet, and the future.

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