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Consuming the non-human and the less-than-human: A critical study of Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995)

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Abstract

The epoch of the Anthropocene, with accelerating technological advances and growing economic and social inequalities, have made the spatial reality more violent, intolerable, discriminatory and disintegrating. These growing inequalities set the conditions for exploitation and subjugation. While the privileged section of the human population buys their way out and lives comfortably within the closed spaces of their gated communities amidst the global devastation; the underprivileged, on the other hand, have to confront the consequences. Within the privileged closed space, the food is available in abundance, and is lavishly served, consumed and even wasted; but for those outside the privileged closed space, the scarcity and unavailability of food is an imminent threat. The paper focuses on the fragility of the economy of food within the gradually worsening Anthropocene condition, especially the over-dependence of global food supply chains. The paper places Sarah Kane's play *Blasted* (1995) in one such condition, such as conflict or war, in which the food supply is halted and the havoc is unleashed. In *Blasted*, the object of consumption, the food eaten by human subjects when the food supply chains are unharmed, is the non-human flora and fauna. And when the food supply chains are disrupted or halted, when the bubble of a safe closed space bursts and when the food is hard to come by, the natural instinct to survive kicks in and the human subjects do everything in their power to survive, including cannibalizing the less-than-human or the dehumanized Other.

Keywords: Anthropocene, *Blasted*, less-than-human, non-human, Sarah Kane



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Public Interest Statement

The paper looks at the economy of food and its globalized dependence and focuses on its fragility, especially its susceptibility to disruption in food supply chains such as war, climatic or political catastrophes. The paper further explores the impact of one such circumstance and highlights the need for a broader conversation on the relationship between humans and food.

1. Introduction

The term *Anthropocene* has been derived from the Ancient Greek *Anthropos*, or human, and *kainos*, or new. It refers to a new epoch of the geological time scale (Malhi 2017). The decisive role humanity plays in the earth's ecology and geology has led this epoch to be named after the human race (Clark 2015). Humans have evolved to "become an overwhelming force that can build and destroy, birth and kill all others on the planet" (Gan, Tsing, Swanson, & Bubandt, 2017). This is the core concept of Anthropocene, that is, humans have "become something much larger than the simple biological agent[s]," such that they "now wield a geological force" (Chakrabarty 2009). They have "a dominating presence on multiple aspects of the natural world and the functioning of the Earth system" (Malhi 2017). Through their activities, humans "have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of nature and are pushing the Earth as a whole into planetary *terra incognita*" (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007). The term was originated from the natural sciences, where it projects different perspectives, like Earth System Sciences, Biosphere and Geological, and focuses on the changes or disruptions in the planetary functions, planetary biodiversity and planetary history timescale by the sum of human activities respectively (Malhi 2017). The term was later adopted into the social sciences, including humanities, where it goes beyond its strict geological meaning and examines the "new contexts and demands... of environmental issues," such as "climate change, ocean acidification, effects of overpopulation, deforestation, soil-erosion, overfishing and the general and accelerating degradation of ecosystems" (Clark 2015). Here, they primarily focus and discuss "human relations to the environment and human responses to a changing world" (Malhi 2017). It is in this context the paper lies and investigates human activities, especially the activity of food consumption, within our changing, for the worse, world.

The rise of humans as a dominating species has its roots in the last twelve millennia of Earth's history (Parikka 2018). During this period, the human population gradually grew largely because of the advent of agriculture, as it could sustain a greater number of people (Malhi 2017). To facilitate the constantly growing population, the production and consumption of resources also grew, and so did technological growth. The onset of "the industrial revolution, around 1800" and "the 'Great Acceleration' since 1945" are pivotal as far as human advancement and impact on the entire planet is concerned (Clark 2015). The more the human population is growing, the bigger the human imprint is getting on the planet's resources and functions. The dominating human presence has drastically influenced the natural world and has led to devastating environmental changes, including climate change as well as "biodiversity decline and species mixing across continents, alteration of global biogeochemical cycles and large-scale resource extraction and waste production" (Malhi 2017). The growing human population, together with its humongous needs and booming economic development, have gradually worsen the environmental conditions, and which, in turn, have negatively impacted the living conditions of humans, through climate change and pollution, by impacting their "basic resource security (such as livelihood, food, water, soil)" (Zeka, Leonardi, & Lauriola, 2020). This paper aims to highlight one such problem which poses a threat to human survival, the problem regarding the need of a vast amount of resource consumption.

1.1 Consumption

In the Anthropocene, humans are the agents of consumption, who consume tirelessly and endlessly. The object of their consumption is everything that is considered consumable, including flora, fauna, fossil fuels, metals, non-metals and gases. *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.) primarily defines the term *consume*, a verb, either as using, for instance, using “fuel, energy, time, or a product;” or as eating or drinking something. The paper employs the term *consumption* in the latter sense, that is, what is consumed, eaten or drunk, by humans in the Anthropocene, in other words, what food is consumed. The deteriorating environmental conditions, as a result of expanding human imprint on the planet’s resources and functioning, are affecting the planetary support system for the humans, especially the object of their consumption, food. The economy of food in the Anthropocene is already stretched because it has to constantly support the exploding population, while being affected by the changing climatic and socio-economic conditions. Food security, as the Anthropocene progresses, is constantly being threatened either by disruptions in the “agricultural productivity” or by any “alterations in society” (Butler & McFarlane 2018). The former includes effects of climate change on the productivity of food itself. For instance, in 2010, Russia suffered “severe drought and heatwave” (Zeka et al. 2020), and resulted in less production of wheat, which, in turn, caused the prices to rise and ultimately, affected the low-income population. The latter, on the other hand, the socio-cultural, economic and political alterations in human society, which has remained less appreciated for a long time, but in the recent decades, has come to be appreciated as the world has become interconnected more and more through globalization.

1.2 Food Supply Chains

In today’s world of globalization, everything and everyone is connected with one another. There is a global dependence on knowledge and resources. As far as the economy of food in the Anthropocene is concerned, it is globally connected through supply chains. This global interdependence, on the one hand, ensures a constant supply of food and resources; and on the other hand, it also points out one of its vulnerabilities. That is, in case of a crisis – such as Pandemic, or economic/political turmoil, or war/conflict – the supply of food and resources can be disrupted and even halted. We have already observed this in the last few years when human activities were drastically reduced and the supply chains of food and resources almost stood still with the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020. Although COVID-19 seemingly originated from China, first cases were observed in the Wuhan city, Hubei province (Davidson, 2020), it was due to the fact that we live in a globalized world, the spread of the disease could not be localized and the whole world was affected by it (Centre for Disease Control [CDC]. 2022). The “unprecedented stresses on food supply chains” during the pandemic unravelled that “[t]he biggest risk for food security is not with food availability but with consumer’s access to food” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Similarly, the economic and political turmoil in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka post-2020 has affected the local human population’s basic food and resource security (United Nations News, 2022; Al Jazeera, 2022). The Ukraine conflict in 2022 is another example of the disruption of food and resource supply in the contemporary globalized world. The war in Ukraine has not only risked the local population from accessing the basic food resources – for instance, people displaced by the war became at risk of hunger (Nchasi, Mwashu, Shaban, Rwegasira, Mallilah, Chesco, Volkova, & Mahmoud, e862) or the Mariupol city “ran out of food in March 2022” (Maassen, 2022) – but people from other countries have also suffered, especially the poor and developing nations, because Ukraine is one of the major exporters of Wheat (World Food Programme [WFP], 2022). The present paper focuses on this last aspect, war and conflict within the Anthropocene, which, along with worsening environmental conditions, has caused immense suffering. The suffering results not only because of the violence humans perpetuate on one another but also because of the scarcity and unavailability of food. The paper places Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* (1995) in

this context of war and conflict within the Anthropocene to highlight and discuss the issues related to the scarcity and unavailability of food which is caused by the disruption in food supply.

1.3 Object of Consumption

The object of consumption in *Blasted*, the food eaten by the human subjects, is either the non-human flora and fauna or the human Other who is deemed as less-than-human. The paper does not focus on the act of cannibalism exclusively or in general, rather links it to the situation that arises out of the unavailability of food. It erupts along with a general change in eating habits, as a result of the collapse of the food supply-chain amidst a conflict or war, where a judgement of survival has to be made. The process of making the judgement of what and who are deemed as less-than-human, is a subjective process and is usually made by the subject, who consumes. Before getting into the analysis of the play, let us inspect the object of consumption – the non-human and the less-than-human.

1.3.1 Non-Human

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) defines the term *non-human*, an adjective, as one which refers to life forms that are not human. In the Anthropocene, humans are the subject of consumption, the one who consumes, and the object of consumption, in its non-human form, on which humans feed on, includes the kingdoms of plants and animals. Aside from the worldwide loss of biodiversity, because of the disastrously growing human footprint on the planet, human consumption is primarily focused on some specific species of plants and animals. For instance, the plants producing grains, like cereals and legumes, and animals producing the flesh and other edible food items. To support the humongous human population, these non-human objects of human consumption are being harvested to a dangerous level – resulting in clearing more and more land for crops and using chemicals to support them; farming of poultry, animals and aquatic creatures; and over harvesting of land and sea life. The constantly growing consumption demand keeps putting pressure on the food-production industry. On the one hand, it is leading to the loss of numerous species of kingdom plantae as well as soil's fertility; on the other hand, it is raising the issue of the “various forms of cruelty towards animals bred on large-scale industrial farms” as well as extinction of numerous species of kingdom animalia (Sitko 2022). As the Anthropocene progresses – with “biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, fertile soil loss, freshwater depletion, and contamination” (Butler & Mcfarlane 2018) as well as the already stressed food production system due to worsening environmental changes (Zeka et al. 2020) – the consumption of non-human food, and other resources, brings out some interesting distinctions. One, a distinction among the subject of consumption or the human themselves, that is, the distinction between “high-income population” and “low-income population,” where the former has a much bigger consumption footprint than the latter (Butler & Mcfarlane 2018). And the other, the distinction between the situations when food is available and when it is not. There could be numerous reasons for the availability and unavailability of food.

Food is available in the Anthropocene, more or less, in abundance. As I have already discussed, it is because of the over production and harvesting as well as availability of global supply chains, despite the fact that we are damaging the planetary support system by doing so. The unavailability of food, on the other hand, which I have also discussed earlier, is mostly linked with either the production loss, caused by extreme climate conditions, or the disruption in the global supply chains. The reasons can include worldwide shutdown because of pandemic, war or conflict between food providing nations, among many others. As far as the scope of this paper is concerned, it focuses on the consumption of food within the pretext of war or conflict, especially when the availability of food is threatened within the European context. Because in this context, food, whether it is plant-based or animal-based, is no longer a symbol of social status or luxury

rather it is the need for survival. It is here the other aspect of the paper comes to light – the other object of human consumption – the object which is neither a non-human object nor is considered as a human, rather is deemed as less-than-human. Let us briefly look into the concept itself, before we discuss it as an object of human consumption.

1.1.2 Less-than-Human

The term *less-than-human* or *less than human* refers to dehumanising a human individual to a subhuman level. That is, “their humanity... [is] stripped away from them” and “what is left was a creature that seemed human – had a human-looking form, walked on two legs, spoke human language, and acted in more-or-less human ways – but which was nonetheless not human,” for instance, the Nazis had dehumanized the Jewish people by comparing them to “filthy, parasitic vermin” despite the fact that they “looked every bit as human as the average Aryan” (Smith 2011). According to Žižek, in his monologue *Violence* (2008), “the Nazi figure of the Jew as the less-than-human Other-enemy originate[s] from... the abyss of otherness” (Žižek 2008). That is, this Other is an enemy, an alien, who not only intrudes into the subject’s space and causes trauma but also “whose very reasoning is foreign to... [the subject], so that no authentic encounter with him in battle is possible” (Žižek 2008). The paper employs the term in reference to human consumption amidst the scarcity or unavailability of food due to ongoing war or conflict. It refers to those individuals who could be harmed or even consumed as food, without raising sympathy or empathy by the human subject. It is because “our emotional-ethical responses remain conditioned by age-old instinctual reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that is witnessed directly” (Žižek 2008). So, an ethical illusion is required to mask the direct exposure to violence, including dehumanizing the victim of violence. By reducing them to a subhuman level, it is ensured that no amount of suffering and pain would instigate sympathy. This also applies to the act of feeding on this human-object of consumption. Because this object is not a human, anything that happens to them does not breach the barrier of the age-old instinctual responses.

In this category of dehumanization, there exists another group of individuals, women, who are treated differently. Contrary to the Nazi dehumanisation of the Jews, “the oppression of women” refers to a “different... form of dehumanisation,” where they are perceived “as *things* rather than human beings, as desirable lumps of flesh rather than human subjects” (Smith 2011). Their entry into the subject’s space is not traumatic. They are rather perceived as the desirable object of sexuality. Although women, as less-than-human individuals, are not the object of human consumption and, thus, are beyond the scope of this paper, I, nevertheless, will refer to it in the analysis of Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*, particularly in the sexual activities between Ian and Cate, alluding to the aspect of biting and not eating human flesh. The two points I will focus on in the analysis of the play, as far as the availability and unavailability of food is concerned within a war-torn city and a globalized world, are the two objects of human consumption – the non-human and the less-than-human.

2. Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* (1996): An Analysis

The play, *Blasted*, opens with Ian and Cate entering a hotel room somewhere in Leeds. Cate is 21 years old and belongs to an economically poor family, while Ian is a mid-aged journalist. They are ex-lover and it has been a while since they have seen each other. It is Ian who invites and brings Cate to a “*very expensive hotel room*” (Kane 2001). Cate agrees to come because Ian sounded upset while on the phone which made her worried about him. Upon entering the room, Cate is astonished by its beauty. She has never seen such a lovely place in her entire life. She enters the room, “*puts her bag down and bounces on the bed. She goes around the room, looking in every drawer, touching everything. She smells the flowers and smiles*” (Kane 2001). Ian, on the other hand, is not impressed by the luxurious room, he rather finds it repulsive. He claims

that he has been to places that are better than this room. Cate belongs to a low-income household with little to nothing as far as economic resources are concerned. Her father has been absent most of her life. She lives with her mother and brother, who is a differently abled person. Her family survives on government aid. She does not have a proper education yet wants to get a job to help out her mother with home expenses. But she is unable to find one because she possesses no particular skills. She has been looking for a job for a while when Ian contacts her and asks her to accompany him to an expensive hotel.

2.1 *Intact Food Supply*

As far as consumption and eating habits are concerned, there is a huge contrast between Cate and Ian. Cate's consumption footprint is smaller as compared to Ian, who is accustomed to a lavish lifestyle. As soon as he enters the hotel room, he starts consuming. Ian is an alcoholic and Gin is his favourite drink. He drinks profusely. Before entering the hotel room, before the play starts, Ian has already ordered food, cheese and ham sandwiches, and an expensive champagne for Cate which she refuses to eat and drink. Cate does not drink alcohol or eat meat. Ian does not know this fact despite having a sexual relationship with her in the past. He has never bothered to learn about her needs and habits. Cate does not eat meat even though she is hungry because she cannot stand the sight of blood and dead meat. She warns Ian that she might puke. She does not believe in killing animals for food. In a situation when she is hungry and food is right in front of her, she is unable to eat because the food presented before her is not the object of her consumption. So, she does the next best thing, she could at the given time, she salvages the situation by separating "the cheese sandwiches from the ham ones" (Kane 2001). This refers to the traditional roles of ancient "egalitarian societal arrangements" (Lerner 1986), where male usually provided meat, from big-game hunting, and females usually resorted to gathering or forging. Ian is a modern masculine figured male who provides meat, although not by hunting himself but by buying with his money. His offer of meat is refused by Cate, who, besides being a young naïve woman of the late twentieth century, is an ethical vegetarian as well as a rejector of traditional gender roles. Cate has strong familial bond, except for her mostly-absent father, who has caused her enough trauma that his mere presence in the house causes her anxiety and seizures on the regular. Cate loves her mother and brother, and considers them as good people. Despite being born in a poor home with minimal resources and having a simple lifestyle, she does not want to leave the space of her house. She has a small consumption footprint, so she does not care much for the money. For her, she has enough to get by, and only wants a job to help her mother out, even though it is unlikely that she would get a job based on her non-existing skills. Cate is a complex character. In the first scene, she is feminine in her physique and passive in her behaviour, yet there is a defiance and resistance in her. On the one hand, she is coerced by Ian to come to the hotel room, who has invited her to satisfy his sexual desires; on the other, she resists his sexual advances as well as the meat he offers.

Besides being an object of ethics, meat, as an object of consumption, is a symbol of privilege. It signifies Ian's high social and living standard as compared to Cate and the unnamed Soldier, the third character of the play. Ian belongs to the high-income section of the population. The people in this section "are the most voracious raiders, consuming fossil fuels, elevating greenhouse gas concentrations, and purchasing goods whose production harms biodiversity" (Butler & Mcfarlane 2018). But belonging to a high-income section of the population, a long and healthy life is not guaranteed. We observe this in the case of Ian, his life expectancy is much lesser than that of Cate's. It is primarily because of his unhealthy lifestyle. Excessive drinking and smoking have significantly shortened his life. He "is terminally ill, with [possibly] lung cancer" (McCorry 2017) as well as a fatal cirrhosis.

Ian brings Cate to the hotel to spend time with her. He offers her food and luxury and expects sexual favour from her. He touches her inappropriately and makes sexual advances throughout the first scene, but

Cate continues to resist his sexual advances. However, in the second scene, the next morning, it comes to light that Ian has raped Cate during the night. He has also restrained her from leaving the room, by locking the room and pocketing the key. This event is significant if we want to understand the psyche of Cate. We observe a new side of Cate afterwards. She is no longer a passive and resistant individual anymore. Despite the fact that she cannot escape the room, she tries to take the control back from Ian and is able to secure some control. When a car backfires on the street outside, Ian gets scared and throws himself on the floor. He becomes paranoid that the men from secret services are after him. Emotions overwhelm him and he is unable to recover from its effects. Cate finds the opportunity to take back control and consoles him. She kisses him and performs oral sex. She uses her sexuality to take control back from Ian. Cate takes on an active role and controls the narrative. The resistance and defiance inside her bursts out, she takes on the role of a strong and independent person, who cannot be easily coerced anymore. Within the contours of the hotel room, Cate turns the table on Ian. She is not afraid of him anymore. When Ian “*puts a gun to her head,*” Cate dares him to shoot her; and when Ian orders more food, sausages and bacon, she starts retching. While Ian gulps down the food, Cate becomes disinterested and leaves “*picks up her bag and goes into the bathroom*” (Kane 2001).

2.2 Disrupted Food Supply

The play takes another sharp turn with the entry of an unnamed Soldier. He forces himself into the room and easily subdues Ian with his physical power. Cate finds the opportunity in her favour and escapes through the bathroom window before Soldier pushes himself into the bathroom. Soldier holds Ian at gunpoint and he demands the food and Ian produces the leftover from under the bed. Soldier gorges on the food and demands more but there is no more left. Here, we see one of the effects of war, a disruption in the supply chain of food. The hotel is in Leeds, which is an urban city. And in an urban area, there is a high concentration of population and thus, there is high demand for food. The city comes in the crosshairs of war and the food supply chains are disrupted. The ease with which Ian could order food, at his whim, is gone with the onset of war. The bubble of Ian’s closed space has burst. A close space is a space which is safe and in which he has enjoyed his life while others on the outside, like Cate and Soldier, were facing hardships. On the one hand, Cate enters the space on Ian’s invitation, where he controls the narrative of the space. On the other, Soldier intrudes the safe space of Ian and makes it volatile, just like his own. Ian faces the hardship he has never experienced before. There is no more food anymore. Whatever was left, the Soldier took it by force. The roles have reversed for Ian. Now, he is on the receiving end. A new hierarchy has risen in which he is not on the top of the food chain, rather he becomes the food of the top-dog, a more masculine Soldier.

Unlike Cate, who belongs to the poor section of the population, and unlike Ian, who is rich, the economic situation of Soldier is somewhere in the middle of the both. Soldier holds a rifle and thus is able to secure authority over Ian. He commands Ian at his will. We see the play of masculinity here. Soldier is more masculine than Ian. He personifies toxic masculinity. He reiterates his wild adventures to Ian. One, where he has raped and killed a family on eight people at one occasion; and on the other, he has broken the neck of a women by stepping on her. Soldier has no regard for the age and gender of people he victimized, including innocent children and women. He is getting the satisfaction of avenging the murder of his own girlfriend by the enemy soldiers, probably belonging to the same community against whom he is now perpetuating grotesque violence. Soldier does not consider his victims mere humans. For him, they are less-than-human to them, which makes it easy for him to perpetuate violence on them. The same is true for his treatment of Ian, whom he physically holds on the floor and rapes. When Soldier feels hungry again, he cannot find food anymore and there are no prospects of getting more since he has eaten everything Ian had. Soldier resorts to feeding Ian.

*The Soldier grips Ian's head in his hands.
He puts his mouth over one of Ian's eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it.
He does the same to the other eye. (Kane 2001)*

Soldier has not only breached Ian's safe space – subdued him, threatened him, consumed all of his food and lost his control over Cate – but also has pushed him down from the position of the subject of consumption to the position of the object of consumption. By feeding on Ian's eyes, Soldier has created a new food chain in which the weaker, be it a human, could be the food to the stronger.

Scene four opens with Soldier lying dead on the floor, he has shot himself in the head, and Cate entering the room with a baby she found outside the hotel. While Cate moves around with authority, Ian is lying on the floor helplessly and is in a miserable condition. He calls for her and pleads for her touch, Cate takes pity on him and strokes his hair. When the baby cries out of hunger, Cate withdraws her hand from Ian's head to look for food for the baby. Although they are staying in a luxurious hotel, which stocks plenty of food for the guests, there is nothing to find amidst the war. The food supply chains are totally halted. Soldiers are the only ones with any possibility of the food. Ian warns her that going out alone could be dangerous for her. Cate thinks for some time and decides not to go outside. She tries everything to calm the baby down but it cries constantly. Cate continues to rock the baby, and after some time, it gets quiet. Cate checks up on the baby only to find that it has died. It has been seen that during major conflicts and wars, the death rate of infants tends to be higher (Abouharb 2023). The babies are the one of the most vulnerable sections of the population. They need great care and proper nutrition. With war halting the food supply chains, the infants are at greater risk of mortality. In the play, it is not known the reason why the mother of the baby has given the baby to Cate. But it is evident that Cate is not capable of taking care of the baby. She admits that she does not know what to do with the baby. She is unable to stop her from crying. Since he cannot go out with the baby anymore, thinking that the baby might get hurt, she resorts to what she thought could calm the baby down. She rocks the baby. And when the baby dies out of hunger, she is disappointed. After pronouncing the death of the baby, Cate bursts into a long hysterical laughter.

In the next scene, after Cate buries the baby into the floor of the room, she goes out to forge food for herself now that there is nothing to stop her from leaving. Contrary to Cate, who could go out to search for food, Ian, who is blind and helpless and cannot forge food for himself, goes through cycles of agony and suffering in the absence of food. It includes:

*masturbating... strangling himself with his bare hands... shitting... laughing hysterically...
having a nightmare... crying, [with] huge bloody tears... [and] lying very still, weak with hunger.
(Kane 2001)*

Ian goes through the agonizing effects of hunger. He wishes to die. He even tries to kill himself but fails. There is no one to console him. Ian hugs Soldier's dead body for comfort but nothing provides him with relief. He resorts to eating human flesh to fulfil his excruciating hunger. He digs out the baby's dead body, feeds on it and puts the rest into the pit again. Ian follows the precedent of feeding on a dehumanized Other set by Soldier. Soldier has also followed the same precedent set by the enemy soldiers, who have done the same to his girlfriend Col. This shows a chain of events, how a precedent is followed in terms of cannibalism. The context in each of these acts of cannibalism is slightly different. In the first scenario, whereby enemy soldiers feed on soldier's girlfriend Col, the cruelty with which she is raped and dismembered the intent seems genocidal. Soldier describes it as:

Soldier Col, they buggered her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door. (Kane 2001)

Whereas, in the second scenario, Soldier feeding on Ian is just him recreating the violence done to Col. He is avenging his dead girlfriend. He confesses to Ian that the only reason he has become a violent person is because of Col's violent end. We do not know what has happened to the enemy soldiers who have killed Col, but we know what happens to the Soldier. He has broken the emotional barrier between the prey and the predator. He has humanized his victim, his food. Soldier forms a sort of emotional attachment with Ian. He talks to Ian about his personal life and asks him about his life, but Ian is not interested in knowing Soldier's crimes. He expects Ian's approval for the justification of the horrible crimes he has committed. This irritates the Soldier and he gets angry. When he shows distaste of homosexuality, Soldier rapes her; and when Ian fears for his safety, the hungry Soldier feeds on his eyes without killing him.

In the third scenario, unlike Soldier, who gets too close to his victim, Ian has maintained his distance, both emotional and physical, with the baby. When Cate brings the baby inside the hotel room, Ian is disinterested in the baby and tries to ignore as much as he can. When Cate asks if he knows how to take care of babies, because he has a twenty-four years old son named Mathew, Ian declines and calls them useless. And, when Cate becomes concerned that the baby might die of hunger and gets ready to leave to fetch some food, Ian disregards the baby's needs and stops Cate from going out. Later, when the baby dies, Ian calls it a "lucky bastard" (Kane 2001); and after going through the agony of hunger, he decides to feed on the corpse of the baby.

It is also interesting to note that Ian does not feed on Soldier's dead body rather he eats the dead baby. This points to the contrasting positions of the prey and predators within the food chain. Soldier feeds on Ian, so it puts him on the top of the food chain. Furthermore, Ian does not consider Soldier less-than-human because he personifies what Ian lacks – a higher form of masculinity and authority. A dead baby, on the other hand, is nowhere near as far as Ian's status in the society and manhood within the world are concerned. He does not like the baby as soon as it arrives on the scene. Ian wants Cate's attention but she is preoccupied with the baby. It makes Ian hate the baby more. The choice between eating either the dead baby or dead soldier is not that difficult for Ian. He chooses the dead soldier for comfort, showing a sign of respect and emotional attachment. So, he chooses to feed on the dead baby, he has no attachment to it at all.

In the last scene of the play, starving Cate goes out to forge food for herself. She is able to secure some food – bread, sausages and gin. She gets the food from soldiers by trading her body in return. She does not complain about how she secured the food and eats to her fill. She does and consumes the very things she disliked earlier, including sex outside relationship, drinking alcohol and eating meat respectively. This points to the tension between ethics and survival. For Cate, survival triumphs ethics. She shows not an iota of remorse on how she has secured the food or what food she is consuming. She does not complain about the smell of the meat nor does she dislike alcohol. There is a huge contrast between what Cate and Ian have eaten in the first scene and what they eat in the last. What changes between the first and the last scene is the fact that both are now victims of sexual abuse – Cate was raped by Ian and Ian was raped by Soldier. Also, in the first scene, there was no war and thus, no shortage of food; while the last scene is placed inside a warzone, with food supply chains shut and scarcity of food. So, whatever is available is consumed. The play ends with Cate turning to meat eating and Ian cannibalizing the corpse of a baby.

3. Conclusion

We have observed, thus far, that whenever there is an availability of food, the eating habits remain undisturbed. In *Blasted*, when Ian and Cate enter the hotel room, the object of their consumption is the non-human food items. They consume plant- and animal-based diets. Ian is a rich man and a meat eater, who likes to spend his money on expensive food and drinks. Cate, on the other hand, belongs to the lower and poor section of the population. She is jobless, moneyless, and has no resources to afford an expensive lifestyle like Ian. She is a non-drinker and an ethical vegetarian. She cannot stomach the sight of blood and meat. It all changes when the play plunges into war. There is scarcity and unavailability of the very food which was available easily and in abundance earlier. This is signified by Soldier entry into the hotel room. With the arrival of Soldier, the dynamics of the alpha male comes into play. Soldier is a masculine man who subdues Ian easily and eats off all of his food. When there is no more food to offer, the more masculine guest feeds on the lesser masculine host. Soldier eats Ian's eyes by sucking them out from his head. The unavailability of food also forces Ian and Cate to change their eating habits as well. Cate starts to eat meat and Ian resorts to human flesh. The war-enforced unavailability of food affects Cate and Ian differently. Cate is able to use her body to secure food from the unnamed soldiers. This brings gender dynamics into the play. She exchanges sex for food. Ian, on the other hand, is unable to find food on his own. One, because he is blinded by Soldier, rendering him unable to leave the room. And two, because he is accustomed to the practice of receiving food. Before the ongoing war intrudes into his private space, the food is delivered to him. After the war breaks down the room service of the hotel, Ian begins to starve. In the aftermath of Soldier's suicide, a unique opportunity is presented to the starving Ian. There are two dead individuals in the room, the dead infant buried into the floor and the dead Soldier lying next to Ian. He has to make a call if he wants to feed on human flesh. After going through an emotional turmoil caused by hunger, he chooses the flesh of the dead baby over Soldier as the object of his consumption. His judgement is based on the conception of what is considered as less-than-human. For Ian, the dead infant is less human than the dead Soldier. Contrary to Ian, who feeds on the flesh of a dead human being, Soldier chooses to feed on Ian while he is still alive. This instance of cannibalism is not only related to the unavailability of food but also highlights the affectivity of violence. In the aftermath of the torture, rape, mutilation and murder of his girlfriend Col, Soldier becomes an indirect victim of violence and reacts violently. This requires a further investigation into the affectivity of violence on the victims of indirect but traumatic violence, which ultimately leads them to perpetrate horrific acts of violence, including cannibalism.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

The paper is authored by Maninder Singh, a PhD scholar of English Literature. The co-author is the supervisor of the author and has contributed in mentoring and supervising the paper.

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