



T.C.
AKDENİZ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



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DEATH OF DRAMA: ENTROPY IN SARAH KANE'S *BLASTED*, *CRAVE* AND *4.48*
PSYCHOSIS

Department of English Language and Literature
Master's Thesis

Antalya, 2024



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DRAMANIN ÖLÜMÜ: SARAH KANE'İN *BLASTED*, *CRAVE* VE *4.48 PSYCHOSIS*
OYUNLARINDA ENTROPİ

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İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Antalya, 2024

Akdeniz Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğüne,

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Anabilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans Programı tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Tez Savunma Tarihi : 02/11/2023

Mezuniyet Tarihi : 04/01/2024

AKADEMİK BEYAN

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26 / 12 / 2023

TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU BEYAN BELGESİ

Öğrenci Bilgileri	
Adı-Soyadı	Samiye Sinem Çoban
Öğrenci Numarası	201952115003
Anabilim Dalı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Programı	Tezli Yüksek Lisans
Danışman Öğretim Üyesi Bilgileri	
Unvanı, Adı-Soyadı	Doç. Dr. Mustafa Şahiner
Yüksek Lisans Tez Başlığı	DEATH OF DRAMA: ENTROPY IN SARAH KANE'S BLASTED, CRAVE AND 4.48 PSYCHOSIS
Turnitin Bilgileri	
Ödev Numarası	2264902813
Rapor Tarihi	26.12.2023
Benzerlik Oranı	Alıntılar hariç: %8 Alıntılar dahil: %26
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE,	
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CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	ii
ÖZET.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1

CHAPTER 1

ENTROPY

1. 1. Definition and Historical Development of Entropy.....	6
1. 2. Entropy in Social Sciences.....	10

CHAPTER 2

FROM DRAMATIC THEATRE TO POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE

2. 1. First There was Order: Dramatic Theory.....	13
2. 2. Disturbance in Order: Historical Avant-Gardes.....	18
2. 3. In-yer-face Theatre.....	21
2. 4. Under the Reign of Disorder: Postdramatic Theatre.....	24

CHAPTER 3

“THIS DISGUSTING FEAST OF FILTH”: *BLASTED* (1995)

CHAPTER 4

“HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME”: *CRAVE* (1998)

CHAPTER 5

“PLEASE OPEN THE CURTAINS”: *4.48 PSYCHOSIS* (2000)

CONCLUSION.....	61
REFERENCES.....	65
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	69

SUMMARY

Entropy is the degree of disorder and randomness in a system. According to the second rule of thermodynamics, entropy in a closed system increase until it reaches the maximum and dies. This principle reflects a universal tendency for elements in the universe to shift from order to disorder. The implications of entropy permeate various facets of life, making it a comprehensive concept applicable across diverse disciplines, including literature. This fundamental notion easily applies to the realm of theatre. In this thesis, the central aim is to illuminate the intimate relationship between entropy and the shift from dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre, as revealed through a detailed analysis of Sarah Kane's three emblematic plays: *Blasted*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*. This thesis initiates with an examination of *Blasted*, a play that demonstrates Kane's early investigation of in-her-face experimentation within the framework of traditional dramatic form. Although *Blasted* has a fractured storyline and explores challenging subjects, it retains a coherent structure that guides the audience through its complex aspects via a clear roadmap. This state of comparatively low entropy serves as a basic standard for evaluating the increasing disorder shown in Kane's later works. The examination of *Crave* demonstrates a deliberate deviation from traditional dramatic components, as demonstrated by the conscious absence of plot, stage directions, and structural unity. The deliberate acceptance of ambiguity, fragmentation, and poetic abstraction indicates a significant rise in entropy, requiring a greater degree of active and interpretive involvement from the audience. This change redefines the theatrical contract, making meaning a shared effort between the playwright and the audience. With *4.48 Psychosis*, Sarah Kane takes a bold step further into the realm of chaos, extending the structural experiments initiated in her previous work, *Crave*. This play's total rejection of all the traditional conventions of dramatic theatre marks it as Kane's most entropic work. In embracing this extreme level of disorder and catastrophe, Kane challenges her audience to grapple with a narrative that avoids the safety of traditional storytelling, delving deep into the fragmented psyche of its characters. *4.48 Psychosis* not only tests the boundaries of theatrical form but also serves as a compelling example of how entropy can be harnessed to create a disorienting and thought-provoking experience for the audience. By conducting an in-depth examination, this thesis aims to clarify how Kane uses the power of entropy, using it not only as a measure of disorder but also as a potent instrument for exploring the complexities of the human condition and the revolutionary power of theatre.

Keywords: Sarah Kane, *Blasted*, *Crave*, *4.48 Psychosis*, entropy, postdramatic theatre.

ÖZET

Dramanın Ölümü: Sarah Kane'in *Blasted*, *Crave* Ve *4.48 Psychosis* Oyunlarında Entropi

Entropi, bir sistemdeki düzensizlik ve rastgelelik derecesidir. Termodinamiğin ikinci yasasına göre kapalı bir sistemde entropi daima artmaktadır. Bu yasa, evrendeki unsurların düzenden düzensizliğe doğru kaymasına yönelik evrensel bir eğilimi yansıtmaktadır. Entropinin etkileri yaşamın çeşitli yönlerine nüfuz eder ve onu edebiyat da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli disiplinlerde uygulanabilir kapsamlı bir kavram haline getirir. Bu temel kavram tiyatro alanına da kolaylıkla uygulanabilir. Bu tezin temel amacı, Sarah Kane'in *Blasted*, *Crave* ve *4.48 Psychosis* isimli üç önemli oyununun ayrıntılı analizleri üzerinden, entropi ile dramatik tiyatrodan postdramatik tiyatroya geçiş arasındaki yakın ilişkiyi aydınlatmaktır. Bu tez, Kane'in geleneksel dramatik biçim çerçevesinde, suratına tiyatronun deneysel tavrını benimsediği *Blasted* oyununun incelenmesiyle başlar. *Blasted*, parçalı bir hikâye akışına sahip olmasına ve zorlu konuları irdelemesine rağmen, seyirciyi bütün bu karmaşa boyunca net bir yol haritasıyla yönlendiren tutarlı bir yapıya sahiptir ve bu sebeple de bu tezde Kane'in en düşük entropi düzeyine sahip oyunu olarak ele alınır. Bu oyundaki düşük entropi düzeyi, Kane'in sonraki eserlerinde ortaya çıkan artan entropiyi değerlendirmek için bir referans noktası sağlar. *Crave'in* analizi, olay örgüsü, sahne yönergeleri ve yapısal bütünlüğün bilinçli olarak eksik olduğunu göstererek, geleneksel dramatik unsurlardan kasıtlı bir sapmayı işaret eder. Belirsizliğin, parçalanmanın ve şiirsel soyutlamanın kasıtlı olarak kabul edilmesi, entropide önemli bir artışı gösterir ve seyircinin daha aktif ve yorumlayıcı katılımını gerektirir. Bu değişim tiyatral sözleşmeyi yeniden tanımlayarak anlamı oyun yazarı ve seyirci arasında ortak bir çaba haline getirir. *4.48 Psychosis* ile Kane, bir önceki çalışması *Crave'de* başlattığı yapısal deneyleri ilerleterek kaos alemine doğru cesur bir adım daha atar. Bu oyunun dramatik tiyatronun tüm geleneksel kurallarını tamamen reddetmesi, onu Kane'in en entropik çalışması olarak öne çıkarır. Bu oyunda aşırı düzensizlik ve kaos seviyesini kucaklayan Kane, seyircisini geleneksel hikâye anlatımının güvenli sularından çıkararak ve karakterlerinin parçalanmış ruhunun kaotik derinliklerine inmeye zorlar. *4.48 Psychosis* sadece tiyatral formun sınırlarını test etmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda entropinin seyirciler için kafa karıştırıcı ve düşündürücü bir deneyim yaratmak için nasıl kullanılabileceğine dair ilgi çekici bir örnek teşkil eder. Bu tez, seçili üç oyunun derinlemesine bir incelemesini yaparak, Kane'in entropinin gücünü yalnızca düzensizliğin bir ölçüsü olarak değil, aynı zamanda insanın karmaşıklığını anlatmak ve

tiyatronun devrimci gücünü keşfetmek için güçlü bir araç olarak nasıl kullandığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sarah Kane, *Blasted*, *Crave*, *4.48 Psychosis*, entropi, postdramatik tiyatro.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to my advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şahiner for his precious guidance, incredible patience, and kindness. I am also thankful to my jury members; Dr. Emine Şentürk for always being there for me, supporting and guiding me through this chaotic process and Dr. Sevcan Işık for her valuable comments. I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the current and former lecturers within the English Language and Literature Department at Akdeniz University. Their invaluable contributions have afforded me a deep comprehension of the concepts utilised in this thesis and the scope of their significance.

Nonetheless, I am fully aware of the fact that my biggest gratitude is owed to my dear friends, without whom I would have succumbed to the effects of entropy long before the completion of this thesis. I am grateful to all my friends for being there for me whenever I needed it; for comforting me and even, at times, for jolting me back to my senses; and for not allowing me to give up. I must confess that I am very fortunate when it comes to friends, and if I were to attempt to list all their names here, it could take pages. I love you all very much.

I want to thank my family: to mom Huriye for her angelic heart; to my dad Osman for his unwavering support; to Gizem and Ömer for always standing by my side; and to Alp, my dearest padawan, for just being the most perfect thing in my life.

Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to Atatürk; if it were not for him, we would not be where we are now.

INTRODUCTION

Heraclitus, a renowned ancient Greek philosopher, and polymath famously asserted that the only constant in life is change. He implied that nothing could remain confined to its environment or limitations indefinitely but would inevitably find a way to evolve or transform into something else, regardless of the magnitude of the change. Millennia later, modern science has corroborated this astute ancient wisdom by postulating and demonstrating that the universe itself is in a state of perpetual flux, as are the components that comprise it. Theatre, as a representation of how humans interact with their world, is no exception, undergoing countless permutations throughout its existence. One such drastic transformation occurred along the continuum from dramatic to post-dramatic theatre, which forms the primary focus of this thesis. To fully comprehend this transformation, it is imperative to clarify the relationship between drama and theatre. Drama refers to the written text, while theatre encompasses the performance, the dramatic work, and the physical space of the theatre itself, with all its accoutrements. To understand how this distinction has manifested in the art of theatre, it is necessary to trace its origins back to the early beginnings of Western dramatic theory, which is universally referenced by Aristotle.

The foundations of Western dramatic theory can be traced to its origins in the teachings of Aristotle, who defined drama as the "mimesis of action" and established fundamental principles in his work *Poetics*, believed to have been composed around 355 B.C. Aristotle emphasized the significance of order and proportion in creating a beautiful and harmonious dramatic composition. Aristotle (2009: 7) stated that "to be beautiful... every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order". The dramatic theory places the literary text at the forefront to uphold a sense of order and aesthetic appeal. However, in postdramatic theatre, the diminishing significance of the drama implies that order and structure is no longer considered paramount. Hans Thies Lehmann (2006: 17), in his book titled *Postdramatic Theatre*, asserts that:

By alluding to the literary genre of the drama, the title 'Postdramatic Theatre' signals the continuing association and exchange between theatre and text. Nevertheless, the discourse of theatre is at the centre...text therefore is considered only as one element, one layer, or as a 'material' of the scenic creation, not as its master.

In postdramatic theatre, the conventional function of the literary text, which was previously responsible for establishing order and coherence within the theatrical production, undergoes a

significant transformation. The central position of the drama loses its significance as other constituent components assume greater prominence. This thesis aims to clarify the transition of theatre from dramatic to postdramatic by employing the all-encompassing concept of entropy. To achieve this objective, the selected works of Sarah Kane, namely *Blasted*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*, are subjected to comprehensive analysis. This study attempts to elucidate the fundamental mechanisms of transformation within these theatrical productions by utilising entropy as a guiding tenet, thereby highlighting their departure from traditional dramatic structures.

For this purpose in mind, and since this thesis is written in humanities, it is essential to start by defining the term entropy. The concept of entropy was introduced by Rudolf Clausius, a physicist from Germany, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The word derives from Greek for "transformation" and is closely associated with the second law of thermodynamics. In essence, entropy can be defined as "a measure of disorder" (Atkins, 2010: 52). The formulation proposed by Clausius is consistent with the second law of thermodynamics, which asserts that every component of the cosmos has a natural inclination to shift from organised states to disorganised states. As Kurman points out, "the rise in entropy is a measure of the irreversibility of certain processes, all of which contribute to a decrease of available energy or order or structure in the system in question" (1975: 284). The phenomenon of increased entropy is observed to persist in the system until it achieves a state of equilibrium. The notion of entropy bears great significance in diverse scientific fields, constituting a fundamental basis for our rational understanding of the universe and its mechanisms, as indicated by Rifkin (1980: 6):

The second law, the Entropy Law, states that matter and energy can only be changed in one direction, that is, from usable to unusable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered. In essence, the second law says that everything in the entire universe began with structure and value and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos and waste.

Due to its extensive applicability and conceptual complexity, entropy exceeds the limitations of physics and spreads into various other fields, such as the social sciences. As a result, entropy has been elevated to the position of a "super concept," functioning as a cohesive framework that links various fields of study and promotes interdisciplinary discourse.

In his seminal work, *The Two Cultures*, C. P. Snow (1998) delves into the concept of a cultural dichotomy that has long plagued Western society. This division, which has been profoundly shaped by Snow's own experiences, manifests itself in the gradual separation of the intellectual landscape into two opposing factions. On one side are the literary intellectuals, who have arrogantly assumed the mantle of "intellectuals" as if no others exist. On the other side are the scientists, with physical scientists standing out as the most prominent representatives of this

group. The chasm between these two cultures is characterized by a mutual inability to comprehend one another, occasional hostility, and disdain, but most importantly, a deep-seated incomprehension. Their vastly different worldviews make it difficult for them to even find common ground on an emotional level. Snow attributes this conflict to the fact that most scientists do not regard social sciences as "real science," while the latter denounce the former as "brash and boastful" (1998: 4). This mutual disrespect and lack of understanding have created a barrier that impedes communication and collaboration between these two vital segments of society. The consequences of this cultural divide are far-reaching. It hinders our ability to address complex problems that require insights from both the natural sciences and the humanities. It also fosters a climate of intellectual isolationism that prevents us from fully appreciating the richness and diversity of human knowledge. Snow's call for a bridging of the two cultures is as relevant today as it was when he first articulated it. In a world that is becoming more intricate and interconnected, it is crucial to take necessary actions to overcome intellectual disparities and promote cooperative approaches to tackle the current difficulties. According to Snow (1998: 14, 15):

A good many times I have been present at gatherings of people who, by the standards of the traditional culture, are thought highly educated and who have with considerable gusto been expressing their incredulity at the illiteracy of scientists. Once or twice I have been provoked and have asked the company how many of them could describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The response was cold: it was also negative. Yet I was asking something which is about the scientific equivalent of: Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?[...] So, the great edifice of modern physics goes up, and the majority of the cleverest people in the western world have about as much insight into it as their Neolithic ancestors would have had.

To him, the opposition between these two sides leads to a lack of communication and collaboration, thereby resulting in missed opportunities for interdisciplinary progress. This thesis asserts an opinion that is based on the observation of the current intellectual and cultural dichotomy between the sciences and the humanities. The main aim is to cultivate and promote collaboration between these two cultures, motivated by the recognition of their fundamental interdisciplinary character. One of the objectives of this study is to narrow the gap between the fields of science and humanities through the promotion of collaboration, thereby achieving a more comprehensive and integrated approach to knowledge and problem-solving. The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis indicates the significance of engaging both scientific and humanistic perspectives, as they mutually inform and enrich one another. The overarching objective is to improve communication and cooperation to address societal issues effectively, noting that this study is part of a broader research effort with similar aims.. In this context, this

thesis will use entropy to explain the development of theatre from dramatic to postdramatic understandings through an analysis of Sarah Kane's plays.

Sarah Kane was a prominent playwright in 1990s British theatre. She was famous for her provocative and challenging works. Her literary composition was distinguished by its use of poetic diction, fragmented storylines, and emotionally charged settings. Her plays often displayed characters who were marginalised and suffered from various forms of damage, while also struggling with existential crises and societal forces that were oppressive in nature. Her works challenged conventional conceptions of storytelling, pushed the limits of theatrical form, and confronted audiences with unsettling truths. Hence, to explore the evolution of theatre from dramatic to postdramatic, they offer an exceptionally rich foundation for this research.

Kane was born on February 3rd, 1971, in Brentwood, Essex and spent her childhood in Kelvedon. Her parents are middle-class journalists who adhered to a religious belief system, actively engaging in religious practises. They initiated these principles in their daughter, Sarah, nurturing her religious upbringing. She attended Bristol University, where she studied drama and developed her skills as a playwright (Saunders, 2009). Kane's objective was to achieve success in the field of acting. She consistently maintained high academic performance and devoted a significant portion of her time to the theatre, a space where she felt secure. However, her enthusiasm faded, and she found different interests during her time at university (Sierz, 2000). In 1995, Kane made a notable entrance into the theatre world with her inaugural production, *Blasted*. It provoked a strong reaction from spectators due to its rigid examination of themes related to aggression, sexual behaviour, and hierarchical relationships and challenged traditional norms by utilising graphic and unsettling visuals to address cultural stigmas. Kane persistently produced courageous and strong theatrical works that explored topics of estrangement, individual suffering, and the human experience. The plays *Phaedra's Love*, *Cleansed*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis* contributed significantly to establishing her image as a bold and unwavering artist. Sarah Kane's influence on modern theatre remains significant, despite the shortness of her career. Sarah Kane tragically committed suicide at the age of twenty-eight on February 20th, 1999, leaving behind a legacy of innovative plays that continue to be studied, performed, and celebrated for their audacious and uncompromising vision.

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will focus on the definition of the concept of entropy. Chapter two will focus on the theatrical background of the study by giving a historical background of theatre focusing on the shift from dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre. Chapters three, four, and five concentrate on the analysis of Sarah Kane's

three plays: *Blasted*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*, respectively. The thesis will end with a conclusion chapter.



CHAPTER 1: ENTROPY

1. 1. Definition and Historical Development of Entropy

“Everything passes / Everything perishes / Everything falls” (Kane, 2001: 218). The universe, with all its components, is moving towards its end. Everything, including the universe itself, is doomed to die. All living entities, including humans, animals, plants, and microorganisms, undergo a process of ageing and gradual deterioration that concludes in their death and following decomposition. Not only the living beings have this fate but also the most resilient structures collapse and disintegrate until they are reduced to atoms. Illustrious empires and civilizations have gone. Just as Percy Bysshe Shelly (1818) illustrates in this famous poem “Ozymandias”, “Nothing beside remains. Round to decay”. Furthermore, the very fabric of the universe itself propels constantly towards its completion. As a result, everything in the universe, including the universe itself, invariably consumes its useful energy reserves until they are completely depleted, leading to their death. For centuries scientists and philosophers have been studying to understand the underlying cause and mechanism of this decay in order to fight against it. The principle of entropy emerges as the most convincing explanation for this process of degradation.

Prior to delving into a deeper comprehension of entropy, it is essential to first clarify the basics of thermodynamics. The development of thermodynamics was rooted back in the industrial age when scientists who engaged in the study of furnaces and steam engine functioning conducted research to use energy more efficiently. Thermodynamics examines and evaluates the basic principles that regulate the transfer, conversion, and application of thermal energy to understand the complex dynamics of many physical systems. Thermodynamics studies how heat, work, temperature, and energy interact and elucidates matter's fundamental mechanisms. There exist four primary laws. The zeroth law of thermodynamics establishes thermal equilibrium. The first law of thermodynamics states that energy cannot be created or destroyed in isolated systems. The second law of thermodynamics introduces the concept of entropy and asserts that in a natural process, the movement of heat is always from hotter matter to colder ones. The third law of thermodynamics deals with the behaviour of systems approaching absolute zero temperature. Even though the rules of thermodynamics originated in physics, they are “about almost everything” (Atkins, 2007: v) and especially “the second law is one of the all-time great laws of science, for it illuminates why anything -anything from the cooling of hot matter to the formulation of a thought- happens at all” (Atkins, 2007: vi).

As previously mentioned, scientists and researchers during the Industrial Revolution dedicated their works towards advancing the efficacy of steam engines, a groundbreaking technological innovation of that time. Their academic efforts and practical concerns related to the efficient operation of these technological devices led to the development and comprehension of the idea of entropy. Young scientist Nicolas Leonard Sadi Carnot (1796-1833) realised that the efficiency of a heat engine relies on the presence of two separate temperatures. Although he understands how to enhance efficiency, he realizes that there exists a maximum limit to the amount of work output that can be achieved from heat flow. Carnot's research had a significant impact on the development of the second law of thermodynamics (Ben-Naim, 2010). Another important figure in the development of the second law is William Thomson (1824–1907), later referred to as Lord Kelvin. He provides the first formulation of the second law which demonstrates that it is not possible to achieve complete conversion of thermal energy into work (Ben-Naim, 2007). According to his formula, a degree of energy is always lost in the process of transformation of energy into work or as Atkins (2007: 41) illustrates “nature exerts a tax on the conversion of heat into work”. Taking up from Carnot and Lord Kelvin’s studies, Rudolf Clausius (1822–1888) was the second scientist to formulate the second law of thermodynamics. He simply declared that in a natural process, heat always moves from a body at a higher temperature to a body at a lower temperature. Thus, the cold body is heated up while the hot one is cooling down (Ben-Naim, 2007). This statement can be observed by anyone in everyday life easily. In this context, imagine that a cup of hot coffee with an initial temperature higher than the surrounding room temperature is placed on a table. It goes through a spontaneous cooling process as it transfers heat to its surroundings. Likewise, when a glass of ice-cold water is placed on the same table, it absorbs heat from the room and raises its own temperature, demonstrating the opposite phenomenon. Both of these phenomena are governed by the same overarching principle despite their contrasting manifestations. These occurrences are examples of one-directional, spontaneous processes in which heat travels naturally from regions of higher temperature to regions of lower temperature. This spontaneous flow of heat from hotter to cooler objects agrees with the second law of thermodynamics and functions as a fundamental principle governing natural processes. The most significant part of this statement is that this process only occurs in one direction naturally. There are many other processes that are one-directional and familiar to all of us as such. To explain them all, Clausius coined the word entropy. Entropy is a quantity that undergoes continuous, one-directional change in a spontaneous process. It is strongly associated with the irreversible phenomena that occur in nature. Thus, for Clausius, entropy stands for quantification of the one-directional transfer of

energy and is linked to the rise in disorder or unpredictability within a given system. When talking about his choice of word, Claudius (quoted in Cooper, 1968: 331) states that:

I prefer going to the ancient languages for the names of important scientific quantities, so that they may mean the same thing in all living tongues. I propose, accordingly, to call S the entropy of a body, after the Greek word “transformation.” I have designedly coined the word entropy to be similar to energy, for these two quantities are so analogous in their physical significance, that an analogy of denominations seems to me helpful.

Claudius’ choice of word entropy is also significant. Despite our familiarity with the concept of entropy in our daily lives, the term itself was still quite unfamiliar. Through this action, he garnered significant attention towards his novel concept. Hence, this attention brought along the challenges which led us to the atomistic definition of the term.

Until the discovery of atoms and molecules in the late nineteenth century, physicists, including the ones who worked on thermodynamics, focused on the macroscopic measurable quantities of matter, and their research was grounded in a limited set of, so-called, comprehensive, and absolute principles (Ben-Naim, 2010). Remarkably, the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers were the first ones to talk about the notion of atoms and molecules over two thousand years ago. According to them, atoms exhibit random movements in many directions and occasionally change their paths following collisions. This interpretation clashed with the notion of divine entities and gods. As a result, atomism gradually diminished in significance, becoming a mere footnote in ancient philosophy. Later with the work of Pierre Simon Marquis de Laplace (1749–1827), this ancient determinism resurrected through the concept of Laplace’s Demon¹ and again clashed with religious beliefs (Müller, 2007). Be that as it may, this time research on atoms continues and advances the field of physics, rather than diminishing. The development of the kinetic theory of gases led the way for a significant advancement in science known as the atomic theory of matter. It hypothesizes gases’ composition as comprising minuscule entities, namely atoms and molecules. By doing so, it effectively explicated the properties of gases. By considering the movements of atomic and molecular contents, this new perspective provided fresh interpretation for the macroscopic phenomena that are commonly observed in laboratory environments, including temperature and heat. Although this interpretation resulted in valuable insights, it failed to offer a practical method for calculating measurable quantities. The application of existing theories in physics was restricted to a limited set of objects. Yet, to understand how matter is made up of atoms, a

¹“Laplace’s demon: ... an intelligent creature capable of knowing all forces ... and all places of all things in the world and equipped with the intelligence to analyse those data. Thus, he can evaluate the motion of the greatest celestial bodies as well as of the tiniest atom; nothing is hidden for this demon: future and past lie open to his eyes” (Müller, 2007: 79).

vast number of particles need to be studied. It became necessary to adapt statistical techniques to establish a connection between observable macroscopic quantities and the complex movements of atoms and molecules. These techniques themselves are dependent on the principles of probability (Ben-Naim, 2010). Emerging from this historical context, it was Ludwig Boltzmann (1844–1906) who established the atomistic formulation of entropy. Carved on his tombstone, his famous equation explains his statistical interpretation of entropy, which defined a connection between entropy and the overall quantity of microstates within a system that is macroscopically characterized by a given energy, volume, and number of particles. His formula promoted a significant advancement in our comprehension of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics (Ben-Naim, 2007). Simply, he used “statistical reasoning to provide a link between the huge number of individual ingredients that make up a physical system and the overall properties the system has” (Greene, 2004: 151). What divergence makes Boltzmann’s definition of entropy significant is the fact that he uses the word “probably” instead of “certainly” (Rifkin, 1989). Therefore, imagine you randomly shuffling a perfectly ordered deck of cards, from ace to king in each suit. In the end, there is a vast number of possible highly disordered and unpredictable arrangements (high entropy) yet only one specific ordered state (low entropy). As Sir Arthur Eddington (1928) states “If an army of monkeys were strumming on typewriters, they ‘might’ write all the books in the British Museum” (quoted in Rifkin, 1989: 57). To understand this better, another example from Greene (2004: 151) exemplifies the situation as follows:

To get a feel for the ideas, imagine unbinding a copy of *War and Peace*, throwing its 693 double-sided pages high into the air, and then gathering the loose sheets into a neat pile. When you examine the resulting stack, it is enormously more likely that the pages will be out of order than in order. The reason is obvious. There are many ways in which the order of the pages can be jumbled, but only one way for the order to be correct. [...] Entropy is a concept that makes this idea precise by counting the number of ways, consistent with the laws of physics, in which any given physical situation can be realized. High entropy means that there are many ways; low entropy means there are few ways. If the pages of *War and Peace* are stacked in proper numerical order, that is a low entropy configuration, because there is one and only one ordering that meets the criterion.

To sum up, entropy can be looked at and measured in two distinct ways. Firstly, it can be regarded as a metric of the energy that is inaccessible within a closed thermodynamic system. Secondly, it can be viewed as a measure of the degree of disorder present within a closed system. The first measure pertains to the transformation of thermal energy into kinetic energy. The second pertains to the probabilities of a specific molecular configuration manifesting in a state of gas (Mavrofidis et al., 2011). The law of entropy or the second law of thermodynamics holds paramount significance within the realm of science and our rational comprehension of

the universe due to its explanatory power concerning change. Atkins (2010: 32) emphasised the importance of the entropy as:

The second law is of central importance in the whole of science, and hence in our rational understanding of the universe, because it provides a foundation for understanding why any change occurs. Thus, not only is it a basis for understanding why engines run and chemical reactions occur, but it is also a foundation for understanding those most exquisite consequences of chemical reactions, the acts of literary, artistic, and musical creativity that enhance our culture.

So, entropy as a foundational principle of physics does not only explain how engines operate and how chemical reactions occur by offering profound insights into their fundamental processes, but also this rule extends its influence on the realm of arts and humanities.

1. 2. Entropy in Social Sciences

Social sciences, too, have employed entropy as a metaphor to refer to disorder in arts and humanities including philosophy, literature, theology, plastic, and fine arts. This concept has been strongly associated with postmodernism. As a tool to disrupt the mechanistic nature of these territories that have focused on meta-narratives, post-modernism has proved to be a modern worldview that has foreshadowed a new paradigm. In his article titled “Chaos and Entropy Metaphors in Postmodern Sciences and Social Theory”, Steven Best (1991) asserts that postmodernism regards entropy as a fundamental concept for it stands for the notion that our world succumbs to the very process of creation. We observe entropy in astounding proportions. Humans have found themselves in a constant struggle to survive the growing chaos. That said, even though postmodernism has been considered one of the main ingredients that have contributed to where we pessimistically are, it still holds a key to the very salvation of humanity by “abandoning its aggression to the planet” and reharmonizing within the natural order. In his article, Best also refers to Jeremy Rifkin (1989) and his book titled *Entropy: A New World View*, which posits that the universal adjustment of entropy is the only hope for our way out.

Another use of entropy in sociology is through Social Entropy Theory (SET) devised by Kennet Bailey, as introduced in his article, “Social Entropy Theory: An Overview”, published in 1990. Sociological theory employs social entropy to appraise social behaviours based on the method of the second law of thermodynamics. Thus, SET’s main aim is to form “an adequate model of complex society” that will help comprehend the functionality of a complex society on a daily basis. According to sociologist Bailey, one of the indicators of entropy may be inferred by the crime rates in a given society; that is, a certain country is supposed to be low-entropy, such as Norway if it has low crime rates and vice versa, such as Mexico (high-entropy society). He also argues that the high level of entropy in a society can be

reduced by investing in healthcare, infrastructure, and education, and where these key principles are disrupted, entropy axiomatically increases.

Entropy, inevitably, has made its way into theology, too, which tends to employ the idea in apocalypse and eschatology. Throughout human history, various religions and belief systems have grappled with the notion of the world's ultimate fate and the creation of an afterlife, often envisioning humans as active participants in shaping this destiny. According to this, the world as we know it will eventually come to an end, though this end is not really by way of a thorough destruction of the matter but transformation into something else that was not, i.e., an alternate dimension. The parallels between the concepts of creation and apocalypse and the law of entropy capture the attention of theologians, prompting them to incorporate entropy in their explanations of a future in which complexity and independence among elements increase, potentially leading to the breakdown of order. Accordingly, Turkish scholar Caner Talesman (2006), in his article “Din Felsefesi Açısından Termodinamik Yasası” addresses the second law of thermodynamics to explain four topics from a theological perspective: the end of the universe, its beginning, the argument from design, and miracles, respectively. Conversely, Erwin Hiebert (1966), in his article titled “The Uses and Abuses of Thermodynamics in Religion” critically argues how entropy has been manipulated to interpret the tenets of religions, most notably the existence of God.

As for the use of entropy in art, it is mostly associated with postmodern art such as abstract art. One of the most outstanding scholars associated with it is Rudolf Arnheim. In his book *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order*, Arnheim (1971) asserts that art and aesthetics heavily rely on the concepts of entropy and structural order. To him, the delicate balance between chaos and order is necessary to create art, which makes art interesting and captivating. Arnheim thinks that entropy and structural order are interconnected in the world of art because art requires energy, something that increases the levels of entropy. This way, the artist creates works that boast complexity and congruity. On the other hand, Donald Kuspit in his book *End of the Art*, argues that art is dead as it has lost its aesthetic component with the rise of entropy with postmodernism, which has been countered with “post art”, coined by Alan Kaprow, as a new visual category that favours banality over enigma, the vernacular over the sacred, and cleverness over creativity.

Literature has also made extensive use of entropy, albeit most commonly to indicate disorder leading to the end. The theme of entropy is generally associated with “dark” themes, including decay and deterioration, and passage of time. In addition to the use of entropy thematically, it is also employed in literary analyses to explain how the text or story inclines to

chaos and darkness whereas its use following literary theories is quite rare. Accordingly, George Kurman's article (1975), "Entropy and the 'Death' of Tragedy: Notes for a Theory of Drama", possesses significance. In this article, Kurman argues that the recession of tragedy as a form of art owes it to the growing entropy in modern society. Traditional values and teachings have been exposed to religious erosion and hopelessness. The relationship between theatre and entropy comes from the idea that entropy stands for the decline of traditional values and creeds in the contemporary world, which affected the functionality of mutual understanding. That said, the increasing entropy of contemporary science has caused reactions to the conventional, of which the best example could be the theatre of the absurd. In these plays, characters are stuck in nonsensical situations in pursuit of meaning in a turbulent environment, which is best portrayed in plays such as Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*.

Likewise, this study offers an in-depth look at the development of Sarah Kane's playwriting by focusing on the concept of entropy. The study seeks to comprehend and elucidate the transition from traditional dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre. Traditional dramatic theatre is characterized by orderly structured texts that adhere to specific norms, resulting in a restricted scope for interpretation. This limited interpretive freedom and emphasis on order is associated with low entropy. Postdramatic theatre, in contrast, rejects conventional regulations, resulting in a play text that lacks a discernible order, and more probable interpretations, thereby exhibiting a high degree of entropy. This study examines the transition from traditional dramatic to postdramatic theatre by correlating theatre history with entropy, employing a chronological analysis of three plays in Sarah Kane's short yet impactful career to illuminate the progression and heightened entropy. In order to better understand the relationship between entropy and theatre, the next chapter will focus on the historical development of drama and theatre from Aristotle to Lehmann.

CHAPTER 2: FROM DRAMATIC THEATRE TO POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE

2. 1. First There was Order: Dramatic Theory

Aristotle's *Poetics*, which was written around 355 B.C., holds an unchallenged position of importance in both theatrical and literary theory. *Poetics* is universally acknowledged as the first work in the literary tradition, and its fundamental concepts and arguments have exerted a lasting impact on the evolution of literary theory over the course of many centuries. Despite the limited amount of work available on the topic, there are some prior works that have addressed it to some extent. However, the only substantial observations on the subject prior to Aristotle's writings are those made by Aristophanes (c. 448-380 B.C.) and Plato (c. 427—347 B.C.) (Carlson, 1993:15). Written as a response to his teacher Plato, who advocated for stringent state censorship and control over theatrical performances due to his apprehension regarding their substantial influence, (Brockett and Hildy, 2014:36), Aristotle's *Poetics* provides a comprehensive investigation and assessment of Greek tragedy, with a particular emphasis on its fundamental components, structure, and objectives. The aforementioned work provides significant perspectives on the characteristics of theatrical expression and presents a methodical analysis of the key principles that underlie the creation and interpretation of drama. Before delving into it, it is better to mention that there are several problems regarding *Poetics* even though it is universally acknowledged. First of all, since the original Greek text is lost, contemporary editions rely on an eleventh-century manuscript, along with a less satisfactory thirteenth- or fourteenth-century variation as well as a translation into Arabic from the tenth century. All three versions are perplexing, and the style is so obscure that academics suspect the original material was lecture notes or private work for Aristotle's students. Despite these issues, the text's fundamental thesis and organization remain apparent (Carlson, 1993:16).

Aristotle's *Poetics* suggests an inquiry into the subject of poetry, which he defines as a means for mimesis, or the act of imitation, through the utilization of language, rhythm, and harmony. To fully understand Aristotle, first, the term mimesis should be clarified since he famously defined drama as “mimesis of an action”. Mimesis is a problematic term. Aristotle borrows the term from Plato but then uses it with an exactly opposite meaning (Else, 1957). To comprehend the difference between Aristotle's and Plato's use of the term mimesis, a comparison of Platonic and Aristotelian realities may help. According to Plato's philosophical perspective, the true nature of reality consists of pure "Ideas," which are only faintly mirrored in the physical realm and imitated by artistic creations. Aristotle's perspective on reality posits that it is a dynamic progression, wherein forms that are only partially actualized undergo

natural processes that propel them towards their idealized states. Through observing the incomplete forms found in nature, an artist who manipulates unrefined materials is able to anticipate their eventual wholeness. The individual in question presents a depiction of reality that aligns with a normative standard (Carlson, 1993). “Plato disregards mimesis considering that it causes twice removal from the reality” (İzmir, 2014:12) and suggested that individuals were assigned a singular role, yet the theatrical medium enabled the portrayal of multiple roles during the act of imitation. This could potentially complicate an individual's willingness to accept their current life circumstances and lead to corruption. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle points out the value of mimesis in education, as he believed that children acquire knowledge through the act of imitation (Wiles, 2009), and to him “mimesis, the childish joy of recognition, so to speak seduces people to engage in thought” (Lehmann, 2016:1). Aristotle emphasises the profound impact of mimesis by stating that it not only encourages intellectual development but also captivates individuals, compelling them to engage in deep observation.

Aristotle's (2008) *Poetics* is primarily centred on the genre of tragedy, which employs a dramatic structure as opposed to a narrative one. He presents a theoretical framework for understanding the aesthetic qualities and structural organization of tragedy through a logical analogy. The principle that tragedy must possess a cohesive structure consisting of a beginning, middle, and end, in addition to the requirement that the duration of the plot should be adequate to facilitate an abrupt change in the storyline leading to a decisive calamity, is formulated based on the model of logic. According to *Poetics*, poetry is a framework that provides a coherent (specifically dramatic) arrangement of the bewildering disorder and abundance of existence. The internal organization, reinforced by the renowned unities, creates a tight seal around the significant structure embodied in tragic works of art, separating it from external reality. Simultaneously, this organization establishes it as an indivisible, comprehensive entity (Lehmann, 2006: 40). Aristotle (2008:10) emphasizes the significance of structure when he states that, once more, a beautiful entity, whether it's a living creature or any composite whole, should possess both a well-organized arrangement of its components and specific proportions, as beauty is contingent on size and arrangement.

However, while “*Poetics* has been treated as a manual of aesthetics, that is, as the exposition of a philosophy of poetic beauty” (Marshall, 1953: 228), it is not just that. Surely it cannot be understood without his aesthetic doctrine, yet the most general concept of *Poetics* describes the process of creating a successful drama and the essential techniques for evaluating the literary quality of poetic works. (Marshall, 1953). Aristotle states in *Poetics* that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and various forms of flute and lyre music are all

considered modes of imitation in their overarching conceptualization. Nevertheless, they demonstrate variations among themselves in three aspects, namely the medium, the objects, and the manner or mode of imitation, which are unique in every instance. From a certain perspective, Sophocles can be considered a mimicker in the same vein as Homer, as the two authors imitate elevated character archetypes. From an alternative perspective, Sophocles can be likened to Aristophanes, as both authors imitate individuals engaged in action and behaviour. Therefore, poems that depict action are referred to as 'drama' which is "a larger and higher form of art" (Aristoteles, 2008:6). He (2008: 8) defines tragedy which is a form of drama as a representation of a significant, whole, and appropriately scaled event; narrated with eloquence and enriched with various artistic elements, with each type of ornament placed in distinct sections of the work; conveyed through action, not through storytelling; achieving the desired catharsis of feelings like pity and fear. Unity is therefore key to the definition. When it comes to unity, Aristotle (2008: 8) states that every drama has six parts: plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle: "[o]f the six, three (plot, character and thought) comprise the objects of imitation, one (diction) the manner of imitation and two (song and spectacle) the medium of imitation" (Kwiat, 2008:15). Aristotle's classification of the elements of drama not only offers a thorough order for comprehending the complexities of theatrical composition but also highlights his precise examination of the core elements that contribute to the unity and artistic coherence of dramatic works.

To Aristotle (2008: 8), the plot which "is the imitation of the action: for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents" is the most important element, thus it is "the soul of the tragedy" (Lehmann, 2006:68). According to Aristotle, the ideal dramatic structure consists of a unified and complete sequence of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The events in this composition are connected by a cause-and-effect chain. Similar to how the end, or resolution, is caused by preceding events, the middle, or climax, is as well. The conclusion should not, however, imply further occurrences unrelated to the play because a play's unity of action is crucial (İzmir, 2014). Also "in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory" (Aristotle, 2008: 10). Thus, according to the prevailing definition, tragedy is a form of art that replicates a comprehensive and unified sequence of events of a specific scale. The narrative of a well-crafted story should adhere to these rules and not begin or end at random.

While the plot is "the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place" (Aristotle, 2008: 9) as the doer of the incidents written in the plot. Aristotle (2008: 16, 17) illustrates that regarding character, there are four objectives to pursue.

Firstly, and most crucially, it should be virtuous. The second objective is appropriateness. Thirdly, the character should mirror reality, which is distinct from the aforementioned goodness and appropriateness. The fourth aspect is consistency: even if the model for imitation is inherently inconsistent, the portrayal must be consistently inconsistent. Aristotle contends that characters should be more than mere plot vehicles; they should have depth and complexity. Their actions should be consistent with their individual characteristics, beliefs, and motivations. By analysing the motivations and actions of the characters, the audience obtains a deeper comprehension of the plot and its significance. Furthermore, Aristotle emphasizes the significance of character development and recognition within a narrative. From a state of ignorance to one of self-realization, he suggests that characters should change circumstances or self-realization. This transformation adds depth and complexity to the narrative, emotionally and intellectually engaging the audience. “Tragedy represents protagonists who are recognizably enlarged and simplified versions of what is best in us” (Rorty, 1992:9). This quote emphasizes the significance of character for trial in tragic drama, particularly highlighting Aristotles view that tragic protagonists should be exemplary people who are good, intelligent, and brave.

The third important part of the tragedy for Aristotle (2008: 9), “is Thought, which, according to him, is the capacity to express what is feasible and pertinent in specific situations. Through the dialogue and actions of the characters, thought reveals the play's philosophical, ethical, and social implications. Other elements defined by Aristotle (2008: 8) are; diction by which he refers to the mere rhythmic organization of the words and song which is a concept that everyone comprehends; spectacle which is “the least artistic and connected least with the art of poetry” so the least important element of the tragedy. Hence, for Aristotle (2008: 9, 10) “[f]or the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet”. It is clear that drama is more about the literature than the performance as he openly declared.

To sum up, the Western dramatic theory begins with Aristotle. He defines drama as “mimesis of action” and sets some fundamental rules in his *Poetics*. According to Aristotle (2009: 7) “to be beautiful... every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order.” He provides the formula to achieve the perfect version of the drama. Thus, a perfect tragedy requires an organized plan. First and foremost, it requires a “plot consisting of two parts: complication and unravelling” (Kwait, 2008: 16) that exhibits actions that evoke pity and

terror. That complication leads to a “Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes ” (Aristotle, 2008: 9) and “this recognition typically fulfils the ancient command to know oneself (gnothi seauton)” (Rorty, 1992: 12). The aim of the tragedy is to provide a catharsis.

With all these clear and detailed instructions to achieve the perfect tragedy, Aristotle provides the fundamental definition of dramatic theatre. Even though, through time, some divergent forms develop, the main concepts of Aristotle still maintain their importance. For example, the works of William Shakespeare exhibit a significant deviation from the traditional Aristotelian form. Shakespeare's refusal to adhere to the classical unities of time, place, and action is a notable departure from Aristotelian principles. Contrary to Aristotle's insistence on a rigorous commitment to the unity of time and place, Shakespeare's plays frequently cover multiple places and extended periods, allowing a broader and more complex narrative scope. This divergence contradicts the Aristotelian focus on unity and serves as a clear example of the changing dramatic conventions that diverge from the classical framework. Furthermore, Aristotle's ancient principles emphasised the differences between comedy and tragedy, advocating for a precise separation between the two genres. Nevertheless, Shakespeare, in a departure from Aristotelian conventions, exhibited a distinctive ability to effortlessly combine components of comedy and tragedy within a single play. Shakespeare challenged the rigid Aristotelian rule against blending genres in works such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, skilfully intertwining periods of comedy and amusement with deep tragic aspects. Shakespeare's innovative technique defied Aristotle's traditional dichotomy, demonstrating his willingness to experiment with narrative norms and contributing to the advancement of dramatic expression. In addition to this, Shakespeare employs innovative techniques such as asides, challenging the traditional norms set by Aristotle. However, despite the presence of various conventionalized techniques such as asides and direct audience address, theatre is commonly perceived as a diegesis of a distinct and self-contained reality that is subject to its own principles and characterized by an internal consistency of its components. This reality is framed and separated from its surrounding environment and is regarded as a fabricated entity (Lehmann, 2006). In dramatic theatre, the reader or audience is aware that they are in a fictional world.

In conclusion, the Aristotelian principles of dramatic theatre have been a significant influence on the development of dramatic works for many centuries. While the importance of the three unities and the restriction of mixing comedy and tragedy has diminished over time, Aristotelian principles such as conflict, climax, resolution, hamartia, recognition, and catharsis remain present in dramatic theatre. While a play written in the twentieth century may not

express these principles in the same order or with equal significance, they still serve as a framework to evaluate theatrical works (İzmir, 2014: 19). The enduring influence of Aristotelian concepts on dramatic theatre for nearly twenty-four centuries is tightly connected to their promotion of order and structural coherence in the dramatic narrative. In essence, the lasting impact of Aristotelian concepts can be understood through the lens of entropy. The placing of greater importance of order, structure, and well-defined sequences, such as conflict, climax, and resolution, inherently minimizes dramatic entropy. Aristotelian theatre doesn't leave much room for different readings or unpredictable paths because the stories are tightly connected and there isn't much to be ambiguous about. As a result, the potential states of the dramatic system and the interpretations available to the audience are limited, leading to a low-entropy experience.

2. 2. Disturbance in Order: Historical Avant-Gardes

To fully understand the concept of postdramatic theatre, it is crucial to mention the historical avant-garde because “the conventional classical dramaturgy of unity was first disrupted” (Lehmann, 2006: 57) here. In the late nineteenth century, the dramatic crisis shattered several fundamental aspects of traditional theatre. The world is in a state of perpetual change. The nineteenth-century world embodies stark differences from the one in which Aristotle lived. Social structures, religious practices, and philosophical tenets have undergone several impactful changes. As well as that, theatre does change too since it is both the oldest and the most social form of all the arts (Çapan, 2008). Theatre avant-garde movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were closely tied to the changing socio-political and cultural climate. Against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution, urbanisation, and the rise of modernity, artists tried to break away from traditional artistic norms, questioning established traditions and challenging societal norms. As many were left suffering from disillusionment and trauma, the chaotic aftermath of World War I ignited an even greater yearning for artistic innovation. In theatre, there was a gradual shift toward questioning the idealization of an absolute order in terms of form and content. To contend with the swiftly changing world and evolving perceptions of the human subject, playwrights attempted a variety of solutions while simultaneously, questions were raised about the compatibility of drama and theatre (Lehmann, 2006). Fundamental aspects of traditional dramatic theatre are shattered. Elements such as suspenseful dialogue, interpersonal speech as the primary means of conveying reality, and action unfolding in the present were scrutinized and lost importance. Thus, avant-garde theatre was a place for experimentation, reflecting its fractured, chaotic, and frequently contradictory

environment. This period abandoned realism and used abstraction, symbolism, and surrealism to represent a swiftly changing global world. With its focus on pushing the limits of conventional theatrical norms and questioning standards, the avant-garde in theatre reflected the historical turmoil and change of its period.

Symbolism, which is the first revolutionary response to naturalism and realism, is an artistic and literary movement that emerged in France during the latter part of the 19th century. Symbolism rejected the idea that the perception of reality could be achieved just by sensory experience and rationality. Symbolists chose to convey profound truths by means of symbols. Symbolist theatre, in the same way, departed from the typical bourgeois society, placing emphasis on an individualistic and unusual universe. Symbolist plays took place in smaller theatres, characterised by a sense of separation, limited physical movement, dim lighting, and actors frequently positioned behind scrims (Kirby, 1987: 99, 100). Symbolist drama generally involves surreal or exquisite imagery. It emphasizes a departure from reality and a focus on the inner world of the person. Therefore, as İzmir (2017: 75) points out, the perceived deviations from reality in symbolic theatre mostly result from the subjective perception of reality rather than its form; even though “[t]he theatre of the Symbolists marked a step on the way to postdramatic theatre because of its undramatic stasis and the tendency towards monological forms” (Lehmann, 2006: 57), regarding the narrative structure symbolist theatre lacks any meaningful differentiation from realist theatre.

Expressionism, which originated in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century, comes as the second revolt against realism. Expressionist plays often manage social and political issues. They criticise the alienation of man in modern, industrial society. By using an array of different theatrical methods, like disjointed structures, unclear characters, powerful visual events, intense language, and symbolic representations, it aims to express the inner world of the characters (Pettersson, 2010: 195). As Lehmann (2006: 65) puts forward “[e]xpressionism seeks ways of representing the unconscious whose nightmares and images of desire are not bound to any dramatic logic”. In expressionist plays, there is no actual time or place. Everything is possible. The playwright does not have to obey any limitations of reality. The main intention is to simulate the fragmented while still keeping loyal to the coherent form of the dream (Strindberg cited in Reilly, 1994: 168). However, despite all these innovative techniques and ideas, expressionist theatre remains within the boundaries of dramatic theatre.

Another significant theory of historical avant-garde is Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre. As stated by Brockett (2014: 411), “Brecht called his approach “epic” in order to indicate its broad sweep and its mixture of narrative and dramatic techniques”. Brecht’s main agenda was to

include the audience in the play actively. Instead of simply identifying themselves with the characters and emotions, he advocates that the audience should be kept distant from the play so that they would question the events that they were seeing and relate them to the real world. Brecht's objective was to create a form of theatre that is more than simple amusement. He sees theatre as a powerful tool for effecting social transformation (Brockett, 2014: 411). He suggests that the audience should be aware of the fact that they are watching a play not a real event. In order to achieve this, Brecht rejects the conventions of Aristotelian dramatic theatre. He divides his plot into independent episodes (Morgan, 1987: 77). By doing this, he challenges the Aristotelian understanding of the plot as a unified whole. Also, he makes theatrical elements such as lighting instruments and musicians visible to the audience or uses asides to remind them that they are watching a play. While, with epic theatre, Brecht intended to eradicate dramatic theatre "by creating a non-dramatic, anti-Aristotelian one" (İzmir, 2017: 76), it is still in the realm of dramatic tradition since it "clings to the presentation of a fictive and simulated text-cosmos as a dominant" element (Lehmann, 2006: 55). Lehmann's observation shows how epic theatre's reliance on a fictive and simulated text-cosmos both challenges and perpetuates Brecht's attempt to break away from traditional dramatic conventions.

Just as significant as epic theatre, another theory of historical avant-garde is the theatre of the absurd. Martin Esslin (1961) introduces the Theatre of the Absurd to refer to the type of drama that emerged in the mid-twentieth century and is considered as the "theatricalization of existentialism. No character discusses the philosophy; characters exist within it and embody it" (Singleton, 2010: 3) thus, absurdist plays focus on absurdity and meaninglessness of human existence. Most of the dialogues are without meaning. Characters featured in absurdist plays are usually trapped in a repetitive situation, trying to find meaning in a world of chaos and disorder. The absurdist plays are known for their rejection of traditional dramatic conventions. A variety of avant-garde techniques, such as non-linear narratives, surreal imagery, and the use of silence and stillness, are often integrated into absurdist performances. The absurdist plays "use an unsettling form as a reflection and symptom of a society which has lost value and meaning" (İzmir, 2014: 40) since traditional methods are not capable of telling these stories in which "a play's action is in the image or the word; character motivations are, at best, opaque; there is no dramatic conflict. The world of the absurd has lost the unifying factors of logic, reason, and rationality" (Singleton, 2010: 3). Again, despite all its attempts to defy the conventions of dramatic theatre, as Lehmann (2006: 55) highlights, "the Theatre of the Absurd, like Brecht's theatre, belongs to the dramatic theatre tradition. Some of its texts explode the

frame of dramatic and narrative logic.” Even though the Theatre of the Absurd tries to break the rules of dramatic theatre, it is paradoxically rooted in that tradition.

To conclude, historical avantgardes stand out for their rejection of traditional values and norms of theatre in both form and content. Furthermore, they embrace experimental and innovative techniques to convey their messages since the new stories of modernity require new ways of telling. To them, art should not simply imitate one single reality. Thus, the avant-garde plays advocate the subjective experience of reality by focusing on the inner world of the individual. As Pavis (2016: 26) asserts, The avant-garde perceives itself as in constant conflict, both in form and content, with established works of art and the society responsible for their creation and “it sets out from the principle that its disturbing ideas will one day be accepted and adopted and will indeed become the new norm in their turn.” However, despite all these contradictions and innovations, historical avantgardes are still classified as a form of dramatic theatre.

2. 3. In-yer-face Theatre

This thesis is dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the shift in Sarah Kane's theatrical approach, transitioning from a conventional dramatic style to the postdramatic mode. This transformation will be rigorously examined within the context of her plays, with specific emphasis on the analysis of three distinct plays. The first work to be subjected to meticulous scrutiny is Kane's debut play, *Blasted*, renowned as an emblematic exemplar of the in-yer-face theatre movement. Consequently, to provide a comprehensive underpinning for the thesis argument, it is essential to undertake an extensive peruse of the in-yer-face theatre phenomenon, which substantially pervaded the British stage during the 1990s. This period is often associated with the socio-political influence of Margaret Thatcher's governance, a context in which the artistic movement known as in-yer-face theatre emerged. To understand the perspective of this new generation of writers better, Sierz (2001: 237) characterizes the period they live in as:

Imagine being born in 1970. You're nine years old when Margaret Thatcher comes to power; for the next eighteen years –just as you're growing up intellectually and emotionally- the only people you see in power in Britain are Tories. Nothing changes; politics stagnate. Then, sometime in the late eighties, you discover Ecstasy and dance culture. Sexually, you're less hung up about differences between gays and straights than your older brothers and sisters. You also realize that if you want to protest, or make music, shoot a film or put on an exhibition, you have to do it yourself. In 1989, the Berlin Wall falls and the old ideological certainties disappear into the dustbin of history. And you're still not even twenty. In the nineties, media images of Iraq, Bosnia and Rwanda haunt your mind. Political idealism- you remember Tiananmen Square and know people who are roads protesters- is mixed with cynicism- your friends don't vote and you think all politicians are corrupt. This is the world you write about.

Another significant point to keep in mind is that postmodernism, which refers to the end of order and rejection of grand narratives is “the shaping spirit of age in which 1990s in-yer-face was born” (Bal, 2009: 28). As Lyotard (1984: 81) demonstrates:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work.

In the realm of the postmodern milieu, the dramatists of in-yer-face theatre embarked on a rebellious odyssey, wielding their artistic creations as a formidable weapon against the entrenched conventions of yore. They forged narratives uniquely their own, forsaking grand sagas of religious dogma, enlightenment ideals, the realm of capitalism, the fervour of socialism, and the allure of communism. They did not only want their message to be distinctly heard, but they also wanted it to be more palpable. They wanted to leave an indelible mark on the audience. As Ken Urban (2006: 20) highlights, this new writing has the same purpose at the centre which is to create an effect instead of just making art on social issues.

The peculiar neologism in-yer-face originally had been used in American sports journalism before it became a commonly used term. The phrase alludes to something that is exceedingly distressing and violent (Çelik, 2014). “It implies that you are being forced to see something close up, that your personal space has been invaded” (Sierz, 2001:4). Professor Aleks Sierz coined the term in-yer-face theatre in his eponymous book *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*. Sierz’s (2001: 4) famous characterization of the in-yer-face theatre goes as “any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message. It is a theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves, provoking alarm”. Thus, this new form of drama does not let the audience just “sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, the best in-yer-face theatre takes us on an emotional journey, getting under our skin” (Sierz, 2001: 4). In-yer-face theatre does not merely narrate a story; it compels its audience to undergo what unfolds upon the stage. In in-yer-face theatre, one finds playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Edmund Bond, and Philip Ridley, known for their propensity to challenge societal norms, broach forbidden subjects, and evoke disquiet (Sierz, 2001: 4). Sierz (2001: 5) asserts that distinguishing whether a play qualifies as in-yer-face theatre is straightforward because in such plays,

the language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each other, experience unpleasant emotions, become suddenly violent. At its best, this kind

of theatre is so powerful, so visceral that it forces audience to react: either they feel like fleeing the building or they are suddenly convinced that it is the best thing they have ever seen and want all their friends to see it too. It is the kind of theatre that inspires us to use superlatives, whether in praise or condemnation.

They employ shock methods to convey something essential. The shock can serve as a poignant awakening for the audience, especially when dealing with distressing topics or challenging emotions. Provoking or confronting audiences is frequently a strategy for playwrights “to push the boundaries of what is acceptable – often because they want to question current ideas of what is normal, what it means to be human, what is natural or what is real” (Sierz, 2001: 5). Sierz states that provocation in performance might range from a fresh voice, an issue of sensitivity, to purposeful attacks on an audience's prejudices. The most effective plays are those that lure the audience in a realistic manner and then hit with deep emotional material or those that use form to challenge assumptions. “In such cases, what is being renegotiated is the relationship between audience and performers– shock disturbs the spectator’s habitual gaze (Sierz, 2001: 5)”. He identifies two separate versions of in-yer-face theatre: the hot version and the cool version. The version with explicit language, violence, and erotic content is classified as hot and it is frequently performed in small, intimate spaces with the intention of shocking and upsetting the audience. The cool version is more subdued and uses humour or other distancing devices to soften the distressing nature of the material. It is often performed in larger venues and aims to stimulate the audience's contemplation of discomforting and contentious issues. Nonetheless, it does not matter whether it is cool or hot; in-yer-face plays emotionally disturb the audience “to contain material that questions our ideas of who we are” (Sierz, 2001: 6). Our perception of the world and ourselves are influenced by binary oppositions such as "human/animal; clean/dirty; healthy/unhealthy; normal/abnormal; good/evil; true/untrue; real/unreal; right/wrong; just/unjust; art/life" (Sierz, 2001: 6) which are ingrained in our minds. In challenging these, in-yer-face theatre disquiets us, compelling us to directly confront the ideas and sentiments we habitually evade. We ignore these feelings and notions because they compel us to recognize that individuals are capable of immoral actions and possess restricted self-control. Traditional theatre is a safe place where audiences experience diverse emotions and gain insights into themselves. In-yer-face theatre is more appalling when it threatens this artificial sense of security.

Form in in-yer-face play is also important since “the fact that meaning in theatre comes across by means of not only the content” (İzmir, 2014: 45). About the form in in-yer-face theatre, Sierz (2001: 6) states that:

a play's content can be provocative it is expressed in blatant or confrontational language or stage images, but its power as drama also depends greatly on its form. The further a play departs from the conventions of naturalism, especially those of the well made drama, the more difficult it is for many audiences to accept.

Yet, naturalistic depictions of distressing subjects are typically more manageable than emotionally charged scenarios that are portrayed in an unconventional manner. Therefore, the plays frequently utilize fragmented narratives, nonlinear structures, and sudden changes in time and space to confuse and unnerve the audience. In-er-face theatre is aimed at tearing the conventional boundaries between actors and audiences by providing a fully immersive and discomfiting experience that compels viewers to confront social conventions and uncomfortable truths. This theatrical form necessitates active participation from its audiences and encourages them to scrutinize their own beliefs and assumptions. The aimed interplay between the stage and the audience is amplified by the use of small theatre spaces which provide "greater intimacy, sense of cohesion, and openness to shock" (Aragay et al., 2007: 143). Experiencing a live theatrical performance, wherein the actors are physically present in close proximity, elicits a responsive reaction from the viewer who is aware of the reciprocal reactions of fellow audience members (Sierz, 2001: 7).

So, to sum up, in-er-face theatre refers to the plays produced by a group of British playwrights emerging in the 1990s who reject obsolete conventions of the past. In-er-face theatre is characterized by its intention to shock and confront audiences through the use of intense emotions, explicit content, and provocative themes. It challenges traditional theatrical conventions by using fragmented narratives, nonlinear structures, and a breaking of the fourth wall. True to its postmodern nature, "It deconstructs traditional borders and taboos; it destroys inviolable values and subjects, and it makes spectators feel extreme emotions" (Güneç, 2017: 15). Rather than following grand narratives such as theological narratives, enlightenment, capitalism, socialism, and communism, in-er-face playwrights have crafted their own personal narratives. Thus, since "one major way that the entropy of Western values manifests itself in postmodern theory is the repudiation of historical narratives..." (Best, 2009: 216), in-er-face theatre provides an excellent field to explore the concept of entropy in theatre.

2. 4. Under the Reign of Disorder: Postdramatic Theatre

The term postdramatic theatre was coined by Hans-Thies Lehmann, a German theatre scholar and critic, in his book titled *Postdramatic Theatre* first released in 1991, which was translated into English by Karen Jürs-Munby in 2006. This book has gained significant recognition and impact within the realm of modern theatrical research. Simply, in his book,

Lehmann examines a shift in theatrical practices that emerged in the late twentieth century. These forms are characterized by the rejection of the traditional paradigm of drama, which emphasizes plot, character, and conflict and instead, they focus on the investigation of form, language, and the performer-audience relationship.

To begin with, since they both use the prefix “post”, and also postdramatic theatre exhibits a number of postmodernist characteristics it is essential to clarify the difference between postmodern and postdramatic theatres. As stated by Lehmann (2006: 26):

when the progression of a story with its internal logic no longer forms the centre, when composition is no longer experienced as an organizing quality but as an artificially imposed ‘manufacture’, as a mere sham of a logic of action that only serves clichés (something Adorno abhorred about the products of the ‘culture industry’), then theatre is confronted with the question of possibilities beyond drama, not necessarily beyond modernity.

Postdramatic theatre, as a term, comes from the recognition that these innovative practices have departed from the traditional model of representing a dramatic conflict through the theatrical enactment of a narrative story, complete with characters engaging in dialogue within a fictional world. About the confusion caused by the use of “post”, Catherine Bouko (2009: 26) suggests that the prefix "post" can be confusing as it may be understood two ways: either as a way that ignores dramatic advances and looks for a new beginning or as an interesting form that chooses to focus on non-dramatic expression without disregarding the dramatic novelties. Furthermore, Karen Jürs-Munby (2006: 2) elucidates that "post" in postdramatic theatre is not akin to its use in words like postmodernism; in that it does not refer to a specific era or epoch after a certain one but rather stands for a break from dramatic theatre while keeping its connection with drama. Thus, while postdramatic theatre implicates the deconstruction of the conventional association between theatre and drama and acknowledges the various manners in which this association has been redefined in modern practice since the 1970s, postmodern theatre “is without discourse but instead dominated by mediation, gestuality, rhythm, tone” (Lehmann, 2006: 25). For Lehmann, "postdramatic" performance far exceeds drama's conventions. This follows the dramatic pattern in theatre. It does not signify an abstract refusal of the dramatic heritage. ‘After’ drama suggests that it survives in traditional theatre, though reduced and depleted.

According to Lehmann, despite their revolutionary innovations, the historical avant-gardes went on to cater to the modernized portrayal of the textual world and therefore “they largely maintained the essence of the ‘dramatic theatre’” (Lehmann, 2006: 22). The theatre revolutionaries broke almost all conventions, but even when they turned to abstract and alienating staging techniques, they largely maintained the mimesis of action on stage. Yet, “the spread and then omnipresence of the media in everyday life since the 1970s has brought with it

a new multiform kind of theatrical discourse that is here going to be described as postdramatic theatre” (Lehmann, 2006: 22) which signifies the total departure from the dramatic conventions.

Postdramatic Theatre challenges almost every aspect of conventional dramatic theatre. The classic theatre building is regularly abandoned for street, hotel, lecture hall, or national-cultural memory monuments. Characterization is largely absent, and the stage is populated by "text bearers" or "vestigial figures" who lack psychological coherence. By incorporating "real" individuals, without fictional identities, such as disabled performers and untrained actors functioning as witnesses, postdramatic theatre disrupts and challenges imposed historical narratives. Also prevalent is a focus on the body and the reconsideration of the material components of theatre divorced from their meaning. These deconstructions of traditional theatre elements necessitate a comprehensive reconfiguration of the relationship between the stage and the audience, frequently with the intention of eliciting audience participation or engagement. This participation may occur indirectly through encountering ambiguity in meaning, or directly through tasks designated to audience members, such as reading aloud selected passages (Jürs-Munby, et al., 2013). Lehmann (2006: 34) asserted that the concept of drama loses its significance and cognitive value when it is obvious that we no longer need conventional elements such as dramatic illusions, theatrical distances, plots, or well-defined personas as brought forward by the new drama. By doing so, postdramatic theatre does not merely eliminate one or more elements such as stage, character, and action/plot, it also releases itself from the conventional obligation or anticipation that the stage must create a fictional universe that harmonizes all the dramaturgical aspects into a cohesive entity.

Lehmann aims to establish a theoretical foundation for this novel understanding of theatre, which rejects the dominance of drama. For that, he lists the fundamental characteristics of postdramatic theatre. First of all, parataxis is one of the most significant aspects of postdramatic theatre which refers to the abandonment of hierarchical structure among the elements in conventional theatre. The non-hierarchical layout goes against the conventional, which typically uses a hypothetical way of connecting elements to establish superiors and subordinates. This is done to prevent confusion and ensure harmony and comprehensibility. The parataxis utilized in postdramatic theatre does not establish clear connections between its components. Postdramatic theatrical practice combines various genres in a performance, such as dance, narrative theatre, and performance. All means are given equal importance, and play, object, and language point in different directions of meaning, encouraging a contemplation that is both relaxed and rapid. The outcome is a modified perspective from the observer.

Signal simultaneity is associated with the procedure of parataxis. Lehmann (2006: 87) demonstrates that dramatic theatre typically underscores a single signal at a time, almost in a row and placed in the centre. Conversely, postdramatic theatre, often intentionally, floods the audience's perception with the simultaneity of signals. So, the audience is loaded with too many signs at the same time, and they cannot possibly process everything. Therefore, they have to choose between simultaneously presented events/signs to engage with. That resulted in limitless possible interpretations. Lehmann (2006: 88) suggests that the traditional goal of achieving a natural interconnection within the elements of the play is disrupted by parataxis and simultaneity. Drama's compensatory role of augmenting "the chaos of reality with structural order" (Lehmann, 2006: 88) is reversed as the audience's need for guidance is denied. The abandonment of the principle of one dramatic action is justified by the desire to create events that allow audiences to make choices and decisions. However, this freedom is limited and exclusive, causing frustration. This differs from chaos by allowing the recipient to process and structure the simultaneous based on their own preferences.

Related to this, postdramatic theatre deliberately subverts the established norm of sign density. Lehmann (2006: 89) asserts that with respect to time, space, and the significance of the subject matter, the audience observes either an excess or a distinct shortage of signs, which signifies an artistic desire to achieve an orderly balance between abundance and scarcity, completeness, and emptiness. This shift in theatrical expression is shaped by the impact of media culture, which is characterised by an excessive number of stimuli and an increasing divergence between perception and reality. As a result, audience perception is criticised for being perceived as shallow and superficial. Postdramatic theatre, according to Lehmann (2006: 89, 90), is a form of resistance against the incessant flood of signs; it employs signs carefully, avoids redundancy, and favours graphic and written elements. This deliberate reduction is intended to captivate the imagination of the audience. On the contrary, the notion of "plethora" in postdramatic theatre signifies a deliberate acceptance of excessive signs, thereby interfering with the synthesis that occurs onstage. By focusing on a rhizomatic framework proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, postdramatic theatre intentionally disrupts associations between signs, placing greater emphasis on the diversity of the theatrical experience rather than its synthesis. Postdramatic theatre, which reshapes audience perception through a nuanced play with sign density in the contemporary theatrical landscape, is, at its core, a deliberate departure from traditional dramatic conventions.

The attribute of musicality holds significant importance in postdramatic theatre as it serves as a crucial component for both language and staging, and musicality here stands for the

entire audio harmony in a play. Music has evolved into its own independent theatrical structure, both for the actor and the director. This is not a question of the obvious function of music and music theatre, but rather a deeper concept of theatre as music (Varopoulou qtd. in Lehmann, 2006: 91). Musicalization is a technique that uses unique sounds and cultural elements to enhance the text and distinguish it from the actors' dialogue. This helps to create a more diverse and dynamic dramatic experience. Postdramatic theatre often incorporates the use of foreign languages by actors, resulting in a unique rhythm being created on stage (Günenç, 2016).

De-hierarchized use of signs allows postdramatic theatre to demolish the logocentric hierarchy and make it possible to assign a powerful role to the elements of theatre. This is particularly relevant to the aspect of visuals rather than sound. Instead of a text-based dramaturgy, a visual dramaturgy has become prevalent, appearing to have complete control. Lehmann (2006: 95) discusses how visual dramaturgy, in this case, transcends mere visual elements and develops its narrative independently from the text. The central focus is not whether the 'theatre of images' benefits or challenges traditional theatre, or whether it serves as a last resort in an image-centric culture. Instead, the key question is its impact on the theatrical language, ushering in a scenography-driven theatre.

As Lehmann (2006: 95) argues, it can be challenging for audiences who are familiar with theatre that is grounded on text to accept the rejection of linguistic signs and the de-psychologization in postdramatic theatre. The century-old tradition of representing human experiences and stories on the stage with real people on stage demonstrates a certain warmth in the audience. Even though these traditional expectations have been challenged for some time, postdramatic theatre represents a significant and distinct development which can be seen as coldness for those who expect a portrayal of the human condition. Drama refers to warmth and coldness as an audience's engagement with the play. The relationship between the audience and dramatic theatre is warm and the audience is accustomed to an obvious storyline in which characters, events, and even decor are preset and comparatively leave a small space for imagination. Postdramatic theatre resonates with coldness as the audience commonly lacks a beginning, middle, and end with little depth to the psyche of the characters.

This can be expanded to the physicality of the actor. Postdramatic theatre employs the actor's body as a sign just like decor or lights, though the actor's body here bears no given meaning as to the play itself (Lehmann, 2006: 95). Physicality can be construed as frightening, and at times distressing but also enchanting by way of ignoring traditional casting parameters. This pattern makes postdramatic theatre similar to dance and musical theatre. Postdramatic theatre repeatedly pushes the boundaries of pain, intending to challenge the division between

the body and language and restates the physicality of the body to the world of voice and language. It investigates the enigmatical nature of the body's signifiers, resulting in tragic and ecstatic experiences that are intense and sometimes contradictory. As postdramatic theatre shifts from a mental, intelligible structure to emphasizing intense physicality, the body takes centre stage. Paradoxically, it tends to absorb and encompass all other forms of expression. This results in a significant transformation: as the body no longer conveys meaning but is expressive through unmeaning gestures such as dance, rhythm, grace, strength, and kinetic wealth, it becomes a powerful symbol of social reality. The body becomes the sole subject (Lehmann, 2006: 96).

Lehman (2006: 98) alludes that “the non-mimetic but formal structure or formal aspects of postdramatic theatre are to be interpreted as ‘concrete theatre’”. It draws inspiration from other art forms such as concrete poetry and concrete painting. Concrete theatre emphasizes the non-mimetic but formal elements of the performance. In this context, theatre presents itself as an art form that utilises space, time, and human bodies, along with other artistic elements, to create a complete work of art. Theatre aesthetics has evolved with the integration of media technology, dance theatre, spatial art, and performing practice. This has led to the realization of visual dramaturgy, challenging traditional conceptions. If signs have some material references, they can be perceived through complex associative effort yet if these references diminish extensively, reception must confront a more extreme rejection: encountering a metaphorically "silent" and compact presence of physical bodies, materials, and shapes. Postdramatic theatre focuses on the concrete and intensified perceptibility. In contrast to mimesis, which seeks to achieve recognition and specific results, the perception of theatre in this context involves the ability to perceive potentialities that are not entirely comprehensible or actualized. The essence of postdramatic theatre is to involve audiences in sensory encounters that stimulate a feeling of possible and postponed comprehension.

Moreover, postdramatic theatre takes a sharp turn from this premise and blurs the border between reality and fictionality. The traditional idea of the theatre relies on the idea of an independent fictional world within its confined area, regulated by its own principles and logical consistency world which is established by means of mimesis. Although there may be occasional interruptions, such as asides or direct addresses to the audience, theatrical performances are typically viewed as a constructed reality that exists independently from the real world. The world of theatre has its own distinct rules and ensures that all its elements are consistent with each other. However, in postdramatic theatre, the boundaries that are separated reality from fiction are destructed. While, for instance, when a character in one of Shakespeare's plays asks

a question to the audience, he does not expect any response, in postdramatic theatre, the answer is expected. As it is indicated by Günenç (2016: 37), “[p]ostdramatic theatre asks spectators questions and allows them to observe furthermore, postdramatic theatre leads spectators to stalemate with its provoking position and aesthetic fiction formed between reality and daily life”. According to Lehmann (2006: 104), the reality of dramatic theatre has its set boundaries with the fictional world. Postdramatic theatre takes a sharp turn from this premise and blurs the border between reality and fictionality.

Lehmann's analysis of theatre departing from traditional signification reveals a deeper questioning into postdramatic theatrical practices, characterized by an enigmatic and silent approach. The focus shifts beyond the mere combination and interpretation of signs to explore the transformation that occurs when signs intertwine with the practical elements and context of the theatrical event. In the "postdramatic theatre of events" (Lehmann, 2006:104), emphasis is placed on real-time actions, eschewing a lasting cultural impact or specific message. Lehmann acknowledges the risk of veering toward seemingly insignificant events, resembling happenings and performance arts (2006:104). The blurred distinction between improvisation and scripted text underscores the paramount importance of the event itself, challenging the delineation of drama and performance. In this dynamic setting, time and space lose their conventional meanings, with "now" and "here" taking precedence. Audience engagement becomes pivotal, transforming the theatrical experience from a static situation into an evolving process. As theatre shifts from a traditional audience activity to a social event, the participatory nature of this form becomes apparent. Audience members actively engage in simulated interactions, challenging notions of passive observation and fostering a collaborative relationship with the producers. This transformation not only questions established ideas of theatre but also promotes a more dynamic and engaged role for the audience.

To conclude, Lehmann's postdramatic theatre disrupts the structured universe of Aristotelian conventions, aiming instead for a chaotic and unpredictable state of high entropy. Lacking plot, characters, and specified directions, the stage transforms into a realm where meaning artfully wanders through the shadows. In this context, fragmented narratives and unconventional stagings serve as catalysts, intensifying the underlying disorder of the theatrical experience. The deliberate aim of individual perception in this context fosters ambiguity, allowing each audience member to have their interpretation. The traditional, well-structured Aristotelian narratives have been replaced by a dynamic and constantly changing landscape of endless possibilities, where each meaning is always being formed again. Within this entropic

take on, the distinctions between performer and audience disappear and the collective yet deeply individual experience exceeds the limitations of a single understanding.

This thesis aims to elucidate the close correlation between entropy and the transition from dramatic to postdramatic paradigms, as exemplified by an in-depth investigation of Sarah Kane's three distinctive plays: *Blasted*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*. Entropy, as a measure of disorder and randomness within a closed system, plays a significant role in unravelling the dynamics of theatrical change. Low entropy characterizes the ordered and predictable nature of dramatic theatre, where meticulous textual descriptions leave little room for interpretation. Conversely, postdramatic theatre, marked by less detailed descriptions, introduces a degree of disorder and unpredictability, resulting in higher entropy. With this conceptual framework established, this investigation explores the dynamic world of Sarah Kane's dramatic works starting with *Blasted*.



CHAPTER 3: “THIS DISGUSTING FEAST OF FILTH”²: *BLASTED* (1995)

The first play of Sarah Kane *Blasted*, which is also the first play to be put under investigation within the scope of this thesis, was premiered on January 12th, 1995, at the Royal Court Theatre. Kane started writing the play while she was doing her MA at Bristol University, and the first draft of the play was staged by a professional director and the student actors on July 3rd, 1993. Even though the reactions to the play were not all good, it was found promising by literary agent Mel Kenyon who was among the audience, and she took the play to the Royal Theatre (Saunders, 2009: 9). As an exemplary work of in-her-face theatre, immediately after *Blasted* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, it led to public indignation because of its explicit use of violence on the stage. Sarah Kane was just twenty-three years old when the play debuted. The press used her youth against her. Critics like John Peter declare her play as an early experiment and add that Kane would become a better playwright with maturity (Saunders, 2002: 38). Some of the reactions gathered by Gönenç (2016: 107) tell us that the play was not welcomed with positive criticism by several parties; Jack Thinker and others even took it further to refer to the play as "disgusting" and "not well-written." Michael Billington, too, found the play quite explicit and disturbing, citing risqué content, violence, and cannibalism.

For Kane, these reactions were not expected. Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 51) talked about the play with Aleks Sierz and in her own words *Blasted* “is a shocking play, but only in the sense of falling down the stairs is shocking – it’s painful and it makes you aware of your fragility, but one doesn’t tend to be mortally outraged about falling down the stairs”. Soon she realized that most of the reactions came from the press not from the audiences since on the opening night, almost most of the audience were critics. Kane described the event as an enigmatic epiphany; in that once she realized that her character was a middle-aged man, just like the majority of the audience, and he would not be liked by anyone. She remembers the following morning as chaotic. She defined these reactions as “somewhat self-renewing frenzy by journalists that was not positively received by audiences” (Saunders, 2009: 51). The most popular adjectives used by the media which are associated with the play were “‘disgusting’, ‘disturbing’, ‘degrading’ and ‘depressing’” and the play was labelled as “‘prurient psycho-fantasies’, ‘unadulterated brutality’ and ‘degradation in the raw’” (Sierz, 2001: 95). Kane was irritated by the press’ anger towards representation on violence on stage rather than the actual violence, “[w]hile the corpse of Yugoslavia rotting on our doorstep, the press chose to get

² Jack Thinker’s comment on the play (quoted in Sierz, 2001: 94).

angry, not about the corpse, but about the cultural event that drew attention to it” (Kane quoted in Saunders, 2009: 54). Yet, since the play gained so much attention from the press, the audience who came to watch the play had some sort of expectation and prejudices which was disappointing for Kane (Saunders, 2009: 53). She believed in the transformative potential of theatre thus her intention was to draw out a strong emotional reaction from the audience by employing shocking elements, thereby enabling them to empathise with the depicted anguish within the play; she wanted to make lasting impact on the lives of others (Saunders, 2009: 82). And she succeeded. *Blasted* is widely recognised as a significant milestone in the chronicles of contemporary English theatre. It is regarded as one of the most noteworthy plays of the in-er-face theatre movement (Carney, 2005: 275). As Saunders (2009: 20) emphasizes, “*Blasted* proved that a work performed in a small studio theatre could create shockwaves that reached way beyond its immediate audience, generating, even, a national news story about the description of violence on stage.” Sierz (2001: 106) identifies *Blasted* as “Kane’s best play. Harsh, humane and grimly humorous, it’s not an easy play, but it’s written with passionate intensity.” Ken Urban (2001: 37) highlights the significance of the play by stating that it is “the defining moment of British theatre in the 1990s, not because of the media brouhaha, but because it was a wake-up call: the critics had to recognize changes occurring in British playwriting.” For Edward Bond (quoted in Saunders, 2002: 190), “*Blasted* changed reality because it changed the means we have of understanding ourselves. It showed us a new way in which to see reality, and when we do that reality is changed. It makes a demand on us. We must either respond to it or reject it and in doing so we define ourselves”. *Blasted* has emerged as a formidable force in contemporary theatre, not only challenging morality, and the boundaries of human cruelty but likewise pushing the limits of conventional ideas of traditional dramatic theatre. True to its in-er-face nature, as in Sierz’s (2001: 4) infamous definition, in *Blasted* Kane wanted to take “the audience by the scruff of the neck and shake it until it gets the message”. Kane (quoted in Urban, 2001: 39) argues that the stage can portray any subject. The denial of this capability is similar to refusing to even talk about the subject, hence denying its existence. She believes that the truth should prevail no matter how difficult it is to stomach. Contents that are represented on the stage by acting are listed by Sierz (2001: 100) as “anal rape, masturbation, micturition, defecation, fellatio, frottage, cannibalism, and eye-gouging”. In addition, the play contains vivid descriptions of atrocious stories of war accentuated in savage language which are worse than the represented ones. Kane also pushed the boundaries of traditional forms of dramatic theatre in *Blasted*. The play is divided into two halves: “a naturalistic first half” which abruptly transforms into “a nightmarish and symbolic second half”

(Sierz, 2001: 102). This experimental form of the play was caused by her attempt to merge two different plays into one. About *Blasted* Mel Kenyon demonstrates that:

I don't think it's accidental that in *Blasted* she took a three act structure and literally blew it apart. There is a bomb – it blows apart, and we move from socio-realism to surrealism, to expressionism. So I think that was indicative of what she was trying to do. She found existing forms quite constraining or restraining because those big structures offer a kind of security and comfort which I think she felt was dishonest (quoted in Saunders, 2002:40).

Yet, despite its experimental form and content, *Blasted* still retains key aspects that position it within the realm of dramatic theatre. Therefore, among the three plays which will be analysed in this thesis, *Blasted* has relatively lower entropy due to its dramatic form than *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. Although the narrative exhibits nonlinear inclinations, the play maintains an organized plot centred on the interactions among well-defined characters within a distinct setting, specifically a hotel room. The play effectively portrays discernible and comprehensible themes, like violence, power dynamics, and the effects of war which are examined and analysed through the behaviours and dialogues exhibited by the characters.

First of all, true to its dramatic nature, despite being nonlinear and fragmented, the sequence of the events is distinctly revealed in the plot of *Blasted*, which has two integrated plotlines. The main plot focuses on the story of an older man and a young woman's abusive relationship, the second plot is about war. The play commences with an examination of Ian, a middle-aged tabloid journalist, and Cate, his much younger ex-girlfriend's abusive relationship. Ian brings Cate to a hotel room in Leeds, despite her objections, in an attempt to have a romantic encounter. The evening takes a dark turn when Ian engages in sexual activity without consent. Soon after that, an unnamed Soldier enters the scene, and a mortar bomb explosion changes the style of the play. The Soldier reveals disturbing acts that were committed he witnessed during the war. As the interaction intensifies, the Soldier commits a sexual assault on Ian, rendering him blind for life by eating his eyes before committing suicide. Cate later goes back with a baby in her custody, but the baby tragically dies. Cate buries the infant and offers a prayer for its eternal rest. Ian's fall into madness causes him to perform bizarre behaviours, such as eating the buried infant. Cate returns to the stage and offers food and drink to Ian, who responds with a simple "thank you" before the final curtain descends (Saunders, 2009: 16,17).

The plot functions as a means to examine and emphasise the core themes and concepts of the play in *Blasted* which is known for its portrayal of intense and unsettling subject matter. Moreover, the plot of the play holds significant importance in effectively communicating the playwright's intended messages and captivating the audience in a stimulating and emotive experience. Also, to enhance the comprehension of the plot, intensify its emotional resonance,

and establish the overarching ambience of the play Kane included the Author's Note at the very beginning of the script. This way she provides insight into her mindset and motivation during the process of playwriting. In the Author's Note of *Blasted*, Kane (2001: 2) engages in direct communication with the audience, providing contextual information and elucidating her artistic perspective. The Author's Note carries a key position as an essential preface, offering valuable context and profound understanding regarding the playwright's intentions and the thematic explorations within the play. Thus, even before the play begins, Kane connects with her audience and gives them signs to maintain order without getting lost in her chaotic mind. In *Blasted*, stage directions are precisely given. Stage directions play an essential part in providing instructions and guidance to the actors, director, and production team regarding the order in which the play ought to be executed and presented. Specific and detailed stage directions in *Blasted* provide an image of her peculiar artistic style and her intention for the play to be performed with precision.

For Kane (quoted in Sierz, 2001: 101-102), *Blasted* “was about violence, about rape, and it was about these things happening between people who know each other and ostensibly love each other [...] suddenly, violently, without any warning, people's lives are completely ripped to pieces” but it was also about terrifying devastations of war. In Kane's (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 50) own words:

I started writing *Blasted* in March 1993. I was twenty-two. Originally, I was writing a play about two people in a hotel room, in which the older man rapes the younger woman. At some point during the first couple of weeks writing, I switched the television. Srebrenica was under siege. I was suddenly completely disinterested in the play I was writing. What I wanted to write about was what I'd just seen on TV.

But she does not want to put away what she had already written since, in her own words, it is “really good”(Kane quoted in Sierz, 2001: 101). Therefore, Kane needs to find a way to transform the portrayal of a typical rape occurring in a hotel room into an illustration reminiscent of the atrocities committed in rape camps during the Bosnian conflict. Kane (quoted in Sierz, 2001: 101) accentuated this process as:

I asked myself: ‘What could possibly be the connection between a common rape in a Leeds hotel room and what's happening in Bosnia;’ And then suddenly this penny dropped and I thought ‘Of course, it's obvious. One is the seed and other is the tree.’ And I do think that the seeds of full-scale war can always be found in peacetime civilization and I think the wall between so-called civilization and what happened in central Europe is very, very thin and it can get torn down at any time.

So, she decided to tear that wall down in her play by literally blasting it with a mortar bomb. She loved the idea of “[j]ust blowing up the set” (Kane quoted in Sierz, 2001: 102). *Blasted* begins by depicting an abusive relationship between a man and a woman in which a woman is

sexually assaulted by a man, which is ‘usual’. The next section of the play explores the occurrence of a man perpetrating sexual assault against another man within the context of war, which is ‘not usual’ (Biçer, 2011: 77). Then suddenly, a soldier comes out of nowhere and the wall of the hotel room blows up. In a letter to Sierz, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2003: 103) complained about the directors’ attempts to stylize the entrance of the soldier as she thought that many directors interpreted the second half of *Blasted* as a metaphor, dream, or nightmare, finding it more abstract than the first half. Though she believed that in a successful production, the first half should feel incredibly real, and the second half even more so. To her, in the end, there should be a sense of uncertainty, making the audience question if the first half was a dream. Kane’s intention of including the soldier in the play was to connect “a common rape in a Leeds hotel room” to “what is happening in Bosnia” (Kane quoted in Sierz, 2001: 101). She wanted to show that they are both coming from the same seed therefore she wanted the second half of the play to be more real, more intense, and more disturbing so that the audience would feel all the horrors of the war to their bones. Kane disquieted her audience by making the distant seem familiar and ordinary on stage (Ağkaş Özcan, 2023: 302). The unconventional form of the play is partly caused by her attempt to merge these two plotlines together. Kane intentionally disrupts the linear sequence of events, resulting in a perception of disorder and confusion. The play’s structure reflects the disordered lives of the characters and the disintegration of social order in the hotel room setting. The fragmented plot structure’s role in emphasising the inherent disorder and decay present in human relationships and societal structures. In an interview with Dan Rebellato, Kane (quoted in Biçer, 2011: 77) disclosed her experiments in the form:

Formally, I’m trying to collapse a few boundaries as well. To carry on with making the form and content one. That’s proving extremely difficult...What I have to do is keep the same place but alter the time and action. Or you can actually reverse it and look at it the other way around: that the time and place stay the same, not the time and the action stay the same, but the place changes. It depends actually how you look at the play... For me the form did exactly mirror the content. And for me the form is the meaning of the play, which is that people’s lives are thrown into complete chaos with absolutely no warning whatsoever.

So, Kane advocates the idea that the form and content should support each other in order to increase the intensity of its message. And for *Blasted*, since the “war is confused and illogical” she preferred to use an unpredictable form. By doing this, she wanted to make sure that the audience received the message correctly and intensely.

Kane used stage directions to establish the physical setting and atmosphere for each scene, in detail describing every aspect of the hotel room and its surrounding environment. The importance of this setting cannot be exaggerated, as it serves as the primary backdrop against

which the unfolding events in the play take place. Every scene in *Blasted* begins with an explicit description of the setting. Scenes one and two are set in:

A very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world.

There is a large double bed.

A mini-bar and champagne on ice. A telephone.

A large bouquet of flowers.

Two doors- one is the entrance from the corridor, the other leads off to the bathroom (Kane, 2001: 3).

The second scene ended with “a blinding light, then a huge explosion” (Kane, 2001: 39). In scene three, the luxurious hotel room “has been blasted by a mortar bomb” (Kane, 2001: 39) and after that, the setting becomes a nightmarish, chaotic ruin. Kane repeatedly emphasized the vitality of every little detail of the setting and the props. As Saunders wrote (2002: 42), she even penned a letter to the director in which she highlighted the significance and vitality of each prop and guided him on casting and technical issues. It is clearly understood that even the smallest technicality is so important for Kane since it serves to build up the precise message of the play. For this reason, she specifically defined every little detail, from the placement of the props on the stage to the gestures of the characters and all in the text to make sure that her play is performed correctly so that her message is understood/felt beyond any doubt. In addition to describing the setting of the play, the stage directions provide significant details about the passing of time during the play. There is no explicit statement regarding the passing of time in the play. Nonetheless, the play contains expressions that indicate the passage of time, such as “darkness/light”, “hours later”, and “the next day”. Also, at the end of every scene, Kane depicts a rainy atmosphere. Scene one ends with “the sound of spring rain” (Kane, 2001: 24); scene two ends with “the sound of summer rain” (Kane, 2001: 39); scene three ends with “the sound of autumn rain” (Kane, 2001: 50); scene four ends with “the sound of heavy winter rain” (Kane, 2001: 57). Thus, according to these depictions in the play, it is calculable that it takes more than a season. Moreover, Kane used stage directions in *Blasted* to provide essential instructions to the actors, effectively guiding their physical actions, interpersonal dynamics, and nonverbal expressions. They assist actors in portraying their characters convincingly by aligning their actions with the progression of the narrative. Furthermore, these cues serve to enhance the complexity of the character's emotions and intentions, thereby playing a significant role in the overall progression of the plot and amplifying the emotional resonance of the play.

Another dramatic aspect of *Blasted* is that as it is stated before, the play's narrative focuses heavily on its characters, making them central to the plot. Each character has a multidimensional personality, allowing the audience to delve thoroughly into their psychological depth. There are three characters in *Blasted*: Ian, Cate, and the Soldier. At the

beginning of the play, Kane's stage directions introduce two main characters with their specific traits: the female protagonist Cate, who is "*21, lower-middle-class Southerner with a south London accent and a stutter when under stress*" and the male protagonist Ian who "*is 45, Welsh born but lived in Leeds much of his life and picked up the accent*" (Kane, 2001: 3). In addition to these succinct yet explicit definitions of the characters, from well-crafted dialogues throughout the play more information about them can be achieved.

First of all, the female protagonist Cate emerges as a complex and vulnerable character, initially depicted as naive, childish, and beautiful. At the very beginning of the play, she is depicted as being "*amazed at the classiness of the room*" while Ian says, "I've s*** in better places than this" (Kane, 2001: 3) and goes into the bathroom. Even after that, she keeps checking the room, "*smells the flowers and smiles*" and utters her appreciation "Lovely" (Kane, 2001: 4). She keeps ignoring the negativity and acts as if nothing is wrong. At the play's outset, she falls victim to Ian's abusive and manipulative behaviour. About Cate, in an interview with Rebellato, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 58) stated "Yes, I think Cate's f***ing stupid. What's she doing in that hotel room in the first place? Of course, she's going to get raped, and it's utterly tragic that this happens to her." Despite being aware of his mistreatment, Cate exhibits masochistic tendencies, remaining entangled with him and even trying to help him after enduring a traumatic rape. Her actions reveal her deep vulnerability and psychological struggles, further emphasized by her habit of sucking her thumb like a baby. As the play unfolds, Cate's earnest and sulky nature, combined with her susceptibility to stress, becomes apparent. About her fits, Kane elucidated that she created the character based on someone she knew who had fits just like Cate (Saunders, 2009: 59). Her tendency to stutter under pressure highlights the emotional toll of the abuse she endures.

Ian kisses her.

She responds.

He puts his hand under her top and moves it towards her breast.

With the other hand he undoes his trousers and starts masturbating.

He begins to undo her top.

She pushes him away.

Cate Ian, d- don't.

Ian What?

Cate I don't want to do this.

Ian Yes you do.

Cate I don't.

Ian Why not? You're nervous, that's all.

(He starts to kiss her again.)

Cate I t- t- t- t- t- told you. I really like you but I c- c- c- c- can't do this.

Ian *(Kissing her)* Shhh.
 (He starts to undo her trousers)
Cate panics
 She starts to tremble and make inarticulate crying sounds.
Ian stops, *frightened of bringing another 'fit' on* (Kane, 2001: 14).

Here, she is being abused, on the verge of a psychotic break because of Ian and still she says that she likes him. Özlem Karadağ (2013: 35) interpreted her relationship with Ian in relation to her relationship with her father and suggested that “she is being abused by these older men since she was a child.”

Cate begins to tremble. **Ian** is laughing.
Cate faints.
Ian stops laughing and stares at her motionless body.

Ian Cate?
 (He turns her over and lifts her eyelids.
 He doesn't know what to do.
 He gets a glass of gin and dabs some on her face.)

Cate *(Sits bolt upright, eyes open but still unconscious.)*

Ian Fucking Jesus.

Cate *(Bursts out laughing, unnaturally, hysterically, uncontrollably.)*

Ian Stop fucking about.

Cate *(Collapses again and lies still.)*
 Ian stands helplessly.
 After a few moments, Cate comes round as if waking up in the morning.

Ian What the Christ was that?

Cate Have to tell her.

Ian Cate?

Cate She's in danger.
 (She closes her eyes and slowly comes back to normal. She looks at Ian and smiles) (Kane, 2001: 9).

Here, Cate faints after being insulted by Ian and she rambles about a girl being in danger before she comes to herself but when she comes back to normal, she just smiles like nothing happened. This shows that she does not remember the traumatic event she had experienced. When Ian asks her since when she is having these fits, she states that since her father came back which supports the idea that she is abused by her father (Karadağ, 2013: 37). Her character is a pathetic portrayal of a young woman caught in a cycle of abuse and self-destructive behaviour, adding layers of complexity and depth to the play's exploration of human relationships and vulnerabilities. Kane is upset about herself for creating such a beautiful but stupid woman character but also, she sees her as a woman who knows what she wants, especially about sex,

and acts accordingly so she is not simple, she is “possibly the most intelligent of them all” (Saunders, 2009: 58).

Secondly, the male protagonist Ian appears as a profoundly complex and morally unlawful persona. Kane created the character of Ian based on a person she knew a long time ago, who is “very violent, and very racist, sexist, homophobic – really unpleasant” (Kane quoted in Saunders, 2009: 55). Despite the morally unacceptable actions of him, Kane finds Ian's personality to be entertaining. At the beginning of the play, Ian is introduced as the perpetrator, exerting authority and dominance over others. His arrogance is evident as he demeans Cate by disregarding her aspirations and diminishing her self-worth. Cate is also subjected to emotional and psychological abuse by Ian, who makes insensitive remarks about her family and employment prospects. For example, he castigates her for clothes not being sexy by stating that “You look like a lesbos” (Kane, 2001: 7). He criticizes her for not standing on her own feet and accusing her of sleeping with men for money. When she says she is applying for jobs he answers “Cate. You’re stupid. You’re never going to get a job” (Kane, 2001: 8). Regardless of knowing that she cannot eat “[d]ead meat. Blood” (Kane, 2001: 7) due to her ethical beliefs, he keeps ordering hams or sausages from the room service and force her to eat since “[n]o one would know” (Kane, 2001: 7) disregarding her autonomy and ethical beliefs, in an attempt to impose his values on her. That indicates that he does not believe she can have her own ethical values or ideologies. He also does not respect his job. He just writes about what he thinks people might be interested in. When the soldier asks him about his job and states that he “should be telling people” about the war to prove it happened, he replies, “No one’s interested” and adds “I write... stories. That’s all. Stories. This isn’t a story anyone wants to hear” (Kane, 2001: 47, 48). He is also acting as if he is hiding from someone and becomes afraid easily. For example, when “a car backfires” he “throws himself flat on the floor” (Kane, 2001: 28). In addition, his excessive drinking and smoking indicate his self-destructive behaviour, despite his deteriorating health. When Cate warns him about his drinking and smoking habits’ effect on his health, he tells her that it is too late for him, there is nothing to do anymore.

Cate Whenever I think of you it’s with a cigarette and a gin.

Ian Good.

Cate They make your clothes smell.

Ian Don’t forget my breath.

Cate Imagine what your lungs must look like.

Ian Don’t need to imagine. I’ve seen.

Cate When?

Ian Last year. When I came round, surgeon brought in this lump of rotting pork, stank. My lung.

Cate He took it out;?

Ian Other one's the same now.
Cate But you'll die.
Ian Aye.
Cate Please stop smoking.
Ian Won't make any difference (Kane, 2001: 10,11).

It is clearly understood that he does not respect his own life either. This dialogue continues with Cate's questioning him about his condition and trying to find a way out of his death sentence, but Ian is resigned to this idea and shakes off all her ideas emphasizing that he is not worthy of any efforts because he will die soon anyway, either because of his lungs or from cirrhosis. Ian's homophobic and bigoted tendencies underscore his prejudiced character. He makes derogatory remarks about homosexuals throughout the performance, even at one point, revealing his narrow-mindedness and bigotry.

Soldier [...] *(He pushes his rifle in Ian's face.)*
 Turn over here
Ian Why?
Soldier Going to f*** you.
Ian No.
Soldier Kill you then.
Ian Fine
Soldier See. Rather be shot than f***ed and shot.
Ian Yes.
Soldier And now you agree with anything I say (Kane, 2001: 49).

As clearly stated in this dialogue, he rather be dead than “f***ed” by a man. Through the end of the play, his role as the perpetrator turns out to be the victim. He becomes the addressee of the same violence he performed on Cate. He is raped and tortured. He begs to die and even tries to kill himself but fails. In the end, after eating the dead baby, he dies with relief. As David Greig (2001: x) accentuated, at the end of the play “all the structures of his life destroyed, reduced to his bare essence – a human being, weeping, shitting, lonely, broken, dying and, in the play's final moments, comforted.” The last image of him resembles a Christlike image. It is not clear if Ian is punished or redeemed at the end. Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 55) comments on the issue in an interview in 1995 as this:

Ian is deified in a way I didn't realize until I saw the play performed for the first time. [...] I went in for the technical run later on in the day. And when I watched the blood being washed away by the rain; I saw how Christ-like the image is -which isn't to say Ian isn't punished: he is of course, he dies, and he finds that the thing he's ridiculed – the life after death – really does exist. And that life is worse than where he was before. It really is hell.

It can be interpreted that what happens to Ian in the second half of the play is a demonstration of divine justice. The play displays the story of Ian's journey from being the perpetrator to the victim.

The last character of the play is the nameless soldier who is included in the play because Kane wanted to write about the pain that people in Bosnia felt (Saunders, 2009: 50). There is no specific description of the soldier. He is just one of the "soldiers screwing each other for a patch of land" (Kane, 2001: 48) who just appears at the door with a sniper's rifle and forced his way into the room through the end of the second scene. He is vulgar, savage, and unmerciful. He brings the ferocity of the war into the room. He urinates on the bed, rapes Ian, tells Ian what he has done in the war, rapes, tortures, and murders. He is hungry and devours all the food in the room and asks for more. He is traumatized by the horrors of the war. His fiancée, Col, is raped, tortured, and killed by the other soldiers. He tells Ian about what happened to her as "they buggered her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door (Kane, 2001: 47). On the soldier, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2002: 46) comments:

The Soldier is a kind of personification of Ian's psyche in some sense, and it was a very deliberate thing. I thought the person who comes crashing through that door actually has to make Ian look like a baby in terms of violence – and I think that's successful. It's difficult because when you look at what Ian does to Cate it's utterly appalling, and you think, 'I can't imagine anything worse', and then something worse happens.

This link between the soldier and Ian emphasizes the play's main argument: there is no difference between domestic violence and violence performed in the war. They both have the same roots. The soldier, in some way, is the personification of the concept of war with its traumas and atrocity. Also, as the play purposefully withholds information about the specific groups involved, the sides of the war and their motives for conflict remain unclear. Instead, emphasis is placed on the root cause of all the violence. To emphasise the universality of conflict-related suffering and devastation, Kane avoids providing a clear political context on purpose. The soldier's rape of Ian, which happens against this backdrop of war and disorder, is a defining moment. In a haunting disturbing scene, Soldier reveals to Ian in a chilling manner that he is no different from anyone else who has suffered in battle.

Soldier You never f***ed by a man before?

Ian *(Doesn't answer)*

Soldier Didn't think so. It's nothing. Saw thousands of people packing into the trucks like pigs trying to leave the town. Women threw their babies on board hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death. Insides of people's heads came out of their eyes. Saw a child most of his face blown off, young girl I f***ed hand up inside her trying to claw my liquid out, starving man eating his dead

wife's leg. Gun was born here and won't die. Don't think your Welsh a*** is different to any other a***
I f***ed. [...] (Kane, 2001: 50)

This potent statement blurs the lines between victim and perpetrator, emphasising the play's theme of shared humanity and the tragic consequences of violence. The soldier commits suicide after raping Ian and eating his eyes while rambling about what happened to Col. In a way, his character development is the opposite of Ian's. He was just a man who went to school and made love with his lover until they killed his fiancée. Thus, his character evolves from victim to perpetrator.

So, to conclude, *Blasted* is regarded as an example of dramatic theatre. In spite of its experimental and confronting elements, the play abides by the fundamental characteristics of the traditional dramatic form. First of all, while *Blasted* explores dark and challenging themes, the play has a well-defined plot characterized by recognizable cause-and-effect relationships between events, which allows viewers to comprehend an organised narrative. The play's non-traditional structure does not hinder its ability to present a clear sequence of events that contribute to the plot's development. Second, the plot is supported with detailed stage directions to offer guidance to actors and directors, specifically pertaining to character actions, interactions, and nonverbal expressions. The stage directions in question serve to bolster the dramatic framework of the play and effectively convey the desired emotions and atmospheres. Thirdly, the play has a continued association with traditional theatrical elements, including distinct settings and personal interactions among characters. And finally, the play centres around character development, delving into their psychological depths and motivations, in accordance with the core principles of dramatic narrative.

As stated before, entropy can be defined as the measure of disorder in a system and as the system moves from an ordered state to a disordered state, the entropy increases accordingly. Similar to how entropy signifies the inherent tendency of systems to progress towards states characterised by increased disorder, the development of dramatic theory is characterised by a series of conceptual and innovative disruptions from dramatic theory, with its emphasis on ordered structure, to the postdramatic theatre which embraces elements of unpredictability and contingency, leading to a heightened state of disorder and enabling new possibilities for theatrical exploration. Unlike her other plays which will be investigated in this thesis, in *Blasted*, Kane preferred to use a more dramatic structure. Thus, despite its fragmented and non-linear structure, *Blasted* maintains a sufficient level of contextual order, allowing the audience to fully engage with the narrative and its underlying themes. Therefore, *Blasted* has the lowest degree of entropy among Kane's plays in terms of its formal structure.

CHAPTER 4: “HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME”³: *CRAVE* (1998)

Sarah Kane’s fourth play, *Crave*, made its debut at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh on August 13, 1998. It was directed by Vicky Featherstone and produced by Paines Plough. Paines Plough has a significant role in the creation of *Crave*. The company was founded by the English Art Council to educate new writers (Sierz, 2001: 118) and encourage them to create original and brave works (Gönenç, 2016: 116). The founding purpose of the company perfectly aligns with Kane’s understanding of theatre and in August 1996, she joined them as the writer-in-residence. She wrote the play while she was here (Saunders, 2009: 10). It was one of Paines Plough’s lunchtime play readings when she presented the first draft of *Crave*, which, as Greig (2001: xiii) illustrated “was an experiment in an open textual form”. As Featherstone (quoted in Saunders, 2002: 128-129) reports:

Sarah was our writer in residence, and she had selected a group of six writers who she was interested in doing workshops in development with. We have this thing called World lunch on Friday, and we asked the writers to do a short piece for that. And the last writer, [...] was unable to do it. So Sarah and I talked, and rather jokingly – as it took Sarah an incredibly long time to write a play – I persuaded her to write something for this lunch-time reading in front of an audience. So what she decided to do was come up with a title and choose four actors whose voices she was interested in. Then she went off and wrote the first minutes of *Crave* over three days.

Yet, since she did not want her play to be judged under the influence of being Sarah Kane’s play, she preferred to use the pseudonym Marie Kelvedon for its first reading. She even included a fictional biography for her in the program. As for this biography, the writer of the play is:

Marie Kelvedon is twenty-five. She grew up in Germany in British Forces accommodation and returned to Britain at sixteen to complete her schooling. She was sent down from St Hilda’s college, Oxford, after her first term, for an act of unspeakable Dadaism in the college dining hall. She has had her short stories published in various literary magazines and has a volume of poems *Onzuiver* (“Impure”) published in Belgium and Holland. Her Edinburgh Fringe Festival debut was in 1996, a spontaneous happening through a serving hatch to an audience of one. Since leaving Holloway she had worked as a mini-cab driver, a roadie with the Manic Street Preachers and as a continuity announcer for BBC Radio World Service. She now lives in Cambridgeshire with her cat, Grotowski (quoted in Singer, 2004: 167).

Kane creates this fictional woman to avoid any prejudices about her reputation. This way she had the opportunity to “see her work played in front of – an audience unswayed by the influence of the Blasted phenomenon” (Sierz, 2001: 117). Again, Featherstone (quoted in Hattenstone, 2000) explains the underlying reasons for Kane’s preference for using a pseudonym:

³ (Eliot quoted in Kane, 1998: 8)

In one way, she thought it was funny. Marie was her middle name; Kelvedon was a town near where she was born. But in another way, it was deadly serious. She had spent a lot of time shaking off the negative effects of *Blasted*. She really wanted to write something that could be judged for what it was, rather than for the fact that it has been written by Sarah Kane.

She became one of the most talked about playwrights of her time after the premiere of her first play *Blasted*. The graphic violence, rape, and brutality of war depicted in the play challenged the sensibilities of traditional theatre audiences and critics and put her “on the news pages of tabloids as well as the arts pages of broadsheets” (Greig, 2001: x). Kane was declared as the bad girl of English Theatre. From that point on all of her works were perceived under the shadow of the *Blasted* controversy. Therefore, since she did not want her play to be judged under the influence of being Sarah Kane’s play, she preferred to use a pseudonym, Marie Kelvedon.

About Vicky Featherstone’s contribution to *Crave*’s production, apart from challenging her to write a play in a very short time. Kane got the inspiration for *Crave* after reading Fassbinder’s *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*, which she found on Featherstone’s office desk (Kane quoted in Saunders, 2009: 78). As it is already stated, she wrote the first draft of the first 20 minutes of the play in three days. The first draft was rehearsed with actors, and it was decided that it was unfinished. Featherstone commissioned her to finish the play. Saunders (2009: 78), quoted from Thielemans (1999), conveyed Kane’s words on that as:

In the case of *Crave*, I had a twenty-minute version after three days of writing. We did a reading at lunchtime with four different actors. Vicky had orchestrated the rhythm and by listening to it, I realised how much further I could go in terms of musicality. The ‘Yes, no, yes, no’ (163) sections suddenly came to my mind by listening to the rhythm and I thought, ‘How extreme can I be with this’? I wouldn’t have known just by writing it at my desk.

Her intention was to question if one can achieve “meaning through rhythm and whether language could become arbitrary” (Featherstone quoted in Saunders, 2002: 129). She was looking for a different form with *Crave*. She intentionally experimented “with form, and language and rhythm and music” to transcend conventional theatrical boundaries and delve into the realm of poetry while maintaining a dramatic essence. While doing this, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 94) confessed that:

[w]ith *Crave*, I knew what the rhythm was, but I didn’t know what I was going to say. There were a couple of times I used musical notation – only the rhythm without actual words. [...] I submerged myself in writing. It is not insignificant that I wrote it while I was living in America where no one could understand my accent at all. I was completely losing my articulacy.

Unlike in her previous plays, in *Crave*, there is no traditional plot, stage directions, or a defined time and setting. The play deliberately avoids traditional dialogue, choosing instead to use fragmented and poetic language. The lack of these traditional aspects emphasises the play's

departure from traditional theatrical storytelling and its concentration on a more poetic and abstract type of writing. Thus, *Crave* demonstrates a significant divergence from the artist's prior works with its form and presentation.

Reception of the play was extremely positive. The critics love the play. Saunders (Quoted in Saunders, 2009: 32) commented that *Crave* created a tremendous stylistic shift and transformed the views of British critics. The unorthodox structure with rhythmic language and lack of conventional character development did not really alienate critics or spectators. He gave it to the familiar literary aspects and absence of scenes of violence and sexuality. In her first three plays, Kane used explicit demonstrations of violent and sexual content on stage. However, in contrast to her three previous plays, *Crave* departs from the explicit manifestations of physical violence on stage and instead explores more distinct psychological realms. The play portrays violence through words. Thus, even the critics, who castigated her started to praise her works.

For *Crave*, Kane's principal influence was T. S. Eliot's famous, groundbreaking poem "The Waste Land". Kane's objective was to deliver a theatrical representation of the barren world portrayed in "The Waste Land," encompassing themes of corruption, solitude, hopelessness, and the predicament of confined individuals. Kane was even considering adding some notes to play as explanations but then decided against it since she did not want to make the same mistake as Eliot. She was afraid that everyone would be more interested in the notes to understand the play. Also, adding the notes to explain the play meant that she had to give too many details about her personal life. So, instead of adding a note section which would be longer than the actual play to explain everything about the play, she explained nothing (Kane quoted in Rebellato, 1998). Hence, with their shared themes and atmosphere, the influence of T.S. Eliot's poem in the play is easily recognizable in *Crave* in both form and content.

Kane was also highly inspired by Beckett while creating *Crave*. The play shares a sensibility with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1990), as seen by the rhythmic language and themes of hopelessness and futility. Also, both *Waiting for Godot* and *Crave* have a character who has a long and uninterrupted speech which is unusual for both writers since they are known for their simple and reduced use of language (Saunders, 2002: 106, 107). Apart from *Waiting for Godot*, *Crave* also takes its inspiration from Beckett's short play *Quad* (1982). Both plays illustrate a modern concept of lost individuality, with anonymous characters searching for a sense of self. The similarity is emphasised by the anonymity of Beckett's cloaked figures and Kane's protagonists A, B, C, and M, who share an impossible desire for individuality. The plays emphasise their characters' existential struggles and the lack of a way out of their situations,

reflecting a shared investigation of identity and the human condition in a minimalist creative framework (Mangold, 2007: 121).

The focus of this chapter is to analyse Kane's short play *Crave*, which serves as a fascinating example of postdramatic theatre. The fundamental goal of this research is to look into the structure and presentation of the play, emphasising its departure from standard dramatic conventions. *Crave* illustrates the essence of postdramatic theatre, with its emphasis on nonlinear storylines, fragmented language, and a focus on visual imagery and emotions rather than chronological plot progression. The primary focus of the inquiry is how this postdramatic structure adds to a higher amount of entropy inside the play when compared to Kane's previous work, *Blasted*. *Crave* exhibits a larger degree of chaos and unpredictability by embracing a more fragmented and abstract structure, breaking conventional theatrical rules, and fostering a more interpretive and engaged theatrical experience. This study aims to highlight Kane's artistic innovation and willingness to push the boundaries of traditional theatre through a comprehensive analysis of *Crave*, demonstrating how postdramatic techniques can elevate the level of entropy in theatrical work, leading to a deeper exploration of human emotions and experiences.

To start with, it is important to understand that Kane's primary focus on *Crave* is in the play's staging. For Kane, the rhythm of the words is more important than their meaning since she wants to convey her message through the rhythm of the words rather than their meanings. Billington (1998: 12) defined the play as “a virtually actionless piece of word-music”. Greig (2001: xiv) emphasized the significance of the issue by stating that, “[t]he text demands attendance to its rhythms in performance, revealing its meanings not line by line but, rather like a string quartet, in the hypnotic play of different voices and themes.” For Kane, performance is a deeply emotional event that immediately links participants to their thoughts and feelings. It requires active participation from both the actors and the audience, resulting in a compelling shared journey of emotions and ideas. This immediacy distinguishes performance as a distinct and appealing form of artistic expression. Her aim in *Crave* precisely corresponded to this. Thus, Kane (1998: 12) expresses her intentions by stating that “[i]ncreasingly, I’m finding performance much more interesting than acting, theatre more compelling than plays. Unusually for me, I’m encouraging my friends to see my play *Crave* before reading it, because I think of it more as a text for performance than as a play. The plot, temporal framework, and conventional structure of the play are all loosely defined. Kane purposely avoids using standard division of scenes or acts. Kane purposely avoids using a chronological plot, a fixed place, and a linear flow of time in the narrative. Here, it is important to remember that Aristotle (2008: 6) explicitly

distinguished drama from poetry as an imitation “in the form of action, not of narrative”. Aristotelian understanding of drama as the imitation of action continues to be a fundamental principle of dramatic theatre. Clearly, *Crave* deviates significantly from dramatic theatre since it lacks a typical plot and, as a result, no major action. Instead, it takes on a more lyrical shape, imitating its material primarily through narration rather than direct portrayal of occurrences. Hence, “[a]s brutal as its subject matter may be, the play is more poetry than drama – the writing is an interweaving of four streams of consciousness’ (Mackrell, 2018). It is vital to notice that Kane's artistic vision extends beyond the mere portrayal of activities since she places greater emphasis throughout the play on the investigation and evocation of imagery through language. In Thielemans, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 94) explains her amazement as “with *Crave*, I did not see the staging. I saw the images that I had. I saw the girl in the car etcetera (157-8). I saw the images that are described. Those images I embedded in the language. But I didn’t see the actors on the stage. On other occasions, I saw very definite stage images”. The play deviated from the portrayal of physical acts of violence and torture, thereby exemplifying Kane's transition in emphasis towards innovative forms of writing characterised by fragmented language. Rather than directly portraying acts of violence, the depiction is conveyed to the audience through the commentary provided by the characters. The objective of this approach is to articulate a postdramatic perspective that delves into the futility of action, and the influential capacity of poetic language as a performative tool. Torture, misery, physical suffering, and pain are initially reproduced and deceptively indicated in order to elicit agonising empathy in the audience with the acted pain. Rather than evoking catharsis through the process of empathetically identifying with the characters' pain, *Crave* utilises a concept of pain experienced in representation as outlined by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his work on Postdramatic Theatre. With *Crave*, the audience observes “a transition from *represented pain* to *pain experienced in representation*” (Lehmann, 2006: 106) in Kane’s works as the play demonstrates a departure from Kane’s prior works characterised by explicit representation of violence and brutality on stage and instead making its audience experience the pain through characters “poetic monologues” (Sierz, 2001: 118). Relatedly, *Crave* lacks a traditional plot due to the lack of incidents or acts taking place on stage. A traditional plot is a set of events that develop in order, leading to a conclusion or climax. The actions and interactions of the characters drive these events, resulting in a cohesive and linear narrative. Thus, as Aristotle (2008: 10) highlighted, the plot is the most important element of the play since it provides “an orderly arrangement of parts”. Kane's departure from the standard plot structure in *Crave* creates entropy in the play's storyline. The play reflects disorder and unpredictability by rejecting an

orderly sequence of events for the sake of fragmented language and imagery. This entropic nature signifies the breakdown of traditional dramatic conventions, allowing for a nonlinear and fluid exploration of emotions, violence, and language.

The intentional lack of detailed stage directions in *Crave* emphasises its deviation from traditional plot-driven dramatic structure. Since there is no defined plot, the play does not need specific stage directions to maintain order by guiding the action. The limited stage directions in the play are used only to contribute to the play's rhythmic flow as in the following quotation.

M Yes.
B No.
A Yes.
B No.
C No.
A Yes.
A beat.
B No.
C No.
M Yes.
B No.
C No.
A Yes.
C No.
A beat.
A Yes.
C No.
B No.
M Yes.
A Yes.
M Yes.
C (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
A beat.
C (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
B (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
M (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
B (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
A (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
M (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
C (*Emits a short one syllable scream.*)
A beat. (Kane, 1998: 20)

As it is seen from the quotation, the stage directions as “A beat” and “Emits a short one syllable scream” are only used by Kane to maintain the flow of the rhythm within the play. Moreover,

Crave is noteworthy for the absence of dramatic settings and locations, in contrast to Kane's earlier works, which provided specific details about locations in their stage directions. For *Blasted*, the setting is specifically depicted with all the details as “[a] very expensive hotel room in Leeds” (Kane, 2001: 3); *Phaedra's Love* (1996) begins in “[a] royal place” (Kane, 2001: 65), continues in “[a] prison cell” (Kane, 2001: 91) and ends “[o]utside the court” (Kane, 2001: 98); *Cleansed* (1998) sets in “a university” (Kane, 2001: 109). Kane liberates the play from the limits of the physical world by eliminating specific time and setting, letting it explore more abstract and emotional regions. The freedom that comes from conventional settings and temporal constraints in *Crave* definitely contributes to its entropic characteristics. The concept of entropy, which indicates the level of disorder and unpredictability, increases when artistic boundaries are challenged or exceeded.

Another important characteristic of dramatic theatre which is challenged in *Crave* is the traditional understanding of characterization. In contrast to her previous works, in which explicit character descriptions were provided, Kane challenges the traditional idea of characterisation in the play. The explicit definition of characters is not provided in the stage directions. The characters in *Crave* are depicted in a fragmented and unconventional manner. Kane avoids giving the characters specific names on purpose, instead designating them with letters such as A, C, M, and B. This departure from conventional character development, coupled with the play's use of fragmentation, monologues, and repetition, defies the conventional norms and expectations of dramatic character development (Günenç, 2016: 128). Biçer (2011: 79) emphasises Kane's non-dramatic characters who challenged the traditional theatre in that these characters, who lacked typical elements such as age and gender, discussed strange events and craved things in places unbeknown to them.

This adds to the abstract and poetic aspect of the play, enabling the audience to dig into the characters' internal worlds and feelings rather than focusing on superficial characteristics. The absence of clear stage instructions and character information adds to the sense of mystery and universality, allowing each viewer to interact with the characters on a more personal and interpretive level. Moreover, while it is possible for these four characters to be four different people, Greig (2001: xiv) suggested another interpretation after seeing the play on the stage:

The overwhelming impression is that the four voices are, in fact, voices from within and without one individual life, yet the stage is occupied by four physically real bodies. [...] The play form this central, single image – four different bodies occupying one life – combine to evoke the powerful sense of a self fragmented.

In an interview with Rebellato, Kate (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 79) elucidated that about her characters:

A, B, C and M do have specific meanings which I am prepared to tell you. A is many things: the author and abuser, because they are the same thing; Aleister as Aleister Crowley, who wrote some interesting books that you might like to read, and the Anti-Christ. My brother came up with a***-hole, which I thought was good. [...] M was simply Mother, B was Boy and C was Child but I didn't want to write these things down because then I thought they'll get fixed in those things forever and they'll never change.

The play is purely speech between individuals, with no indication of the relationship between their respective utterances and minimal linear progression observable in their comments throughout the play. Because of this purposefully ambiguous non-characterisation, it becomes difficult to establish any type of clear argument about how the characters in *Crave* might interact with one another (Peters, 2018: 110). Yet still, as Mangold (2007: 118) suggests “[a]t the beginning there are several hints on possible relationships the characters might have with each other. A could be the abuser of C, C the daughter of A or M, and M could be the mother of either C or B”. The intentional exclusion of explicit character descriptions and linear progression in the play is a recognisable aspect. This departure challenges established theatrical conventions and gives rise to a more abstract and intricate dramatic encounter. Hence, the move away from traditional methods of character portrayal in *Crave* results in a rise in entropy through the introduction of disorder, unpredictability, and the opportunity for individual interpretation. Peters (2018: 112) accentuates that “[t]he play text leaves room for directors, actors, and audiences to interact with and develop new readings of the play each time it is performed”. However, the presence of subtle hints and cues embedded within the dialogue enables readers to make certain deductions about the characters. By examining their interactions, emotional expressions, and references to each other, one can deduce certain insights regarding their relationships and individual characteristics. For example A is “not a rapist” but “a paedophile” (Kane, 2018: 4); M is a woman who keeps telling people that she is pregnant with a strangers baby (Kane, 2018: 4); C is a young women who was raped by a fourteen years old boy when she was six years old (Kane, 2018: 15); B is a heavy smoker and drinker who wants to be seduced by an older women (Kane, 2018: 5). All the character in *Crave* is suffering from a traumatized past and crave for different things yet there is one shared fear among them all: passing of the time and death because “[n]o one survives life” (Kane, 2018: 20). As an older woman M expresses her horror about the passing of time by stating that “[t]ime is passing and I don't have time” (Kane, 2018: 5) and “HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME” (Kane, 2018: 5). After all, they are all “[c]ome from the womb” “[a]nd expire” (Kane, 2018: 23). The characters in the play exhibit emotional scars resulting from their traumatic pasts, which in turn creates in them a sense of consuming fragility regarding life. The shared anxiety towards the passing of time and the inescapable reality of mortality is characteristic of the

entropic essence of human existence, wherein all aspects of life are temporary and vulnerable to disruption and decay.

To conclude, *Crave* provides an excellent example of a departure from traditional dramatic agreements and reflects the fundamental characteristics of postdramatic theatre. The play highlights the use of non-linear narrative techniques, fragmented linguistic elements, and a focus on visual imagery and emotional expression, as opposed to adhering to a linear progression of events. Hence, it is difficult to subscribe to a single interpretation of the play *Crave* due to its multiple open-ended interpretations. Accordingly, Sierz (2001: 118, 119) suggests four strategies for interpreting the hidden meanings between the lines. First "The rationalist approach", which seeks to interpret the play as a coherent whole, can restrict interpretations. This approach is limited because it tends to restrict interpretations of a text that is intentionally open-ended. Second, "The 'Eng Lit' approach, investigates the play's parallels with the Bible, Shakespeare, and T.S. Eliot. This strategy considers allusions to specific works but avoids providing explanations. According to the third interpretation, *Crave* is Kane's most intimate work, containing private allusions and references to *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, as well as Kane's breakdowns and hospitalisations. This approach can result in a limited evaluation and the play being reduced to a bare biography. The fourth interpretation suggests that *Crave* can be experienced as a performance in which its images and phrases enchant the mind. The problem, however, is that *Crave* is more of a poem than a play, as the stage image of the first production appears trivial in comparison to the words. In short, *Crave* demonstrates a heightened level of disorder and uncertainty through its embrace of a fragmented and abstract structure, lack of specific characterization, deviating from traditional theatrical norms and encouraging a more interpretive and actively engaged theatrical encounter.

CHAPTER 5: “PLEASE OPEN THE CURTAINS”⁴: *4.48 PSYCHOSIS* (2000)

4.48 Psychosis is the last play written by Kane, shortly before her tragic suicide on February 20th, 1999. The play premiered posthumously on June 27th, 2000 at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs under the direction of James Macdonald, her long-time friend (Greig, 2001: xviii). The play has been widely interpreted as a suicide note due to the prominent presence of suicidal themes throughout its content, as evidenced by the portrayal of benevolent suicidal tendencies, and the fact that it was completed just days before the author's death. She had been hospitalised after an unsuccessful suicide attempt with antidepressants and sleeping pills as a result of acute depression. She took her own life by hanging herself in the hospital with her shoelaces, on the morning of February 20th, between two and three o'clock (Saunders, 2009: 11). Due to the connection with Kane's own life and experiences, the play's predominant themes of suicide, melancholy, and mental disorder have garnered special interest, and her tragic suicide lends a significant layer of significance to the play's exploration of these themes and her personal struggles (Kümbet, 2010: 98). Yet, still, according to Saunders (2009: 35), it should be noted that she “had begun to work on *4.48 Psychosis* from at least January 1998 onwards – over a year before her death”. Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 80) describes her new play as:

I've just started to work on a new play: [laughs] awful isn't it – yet another play which is about the split between one's consciousness and one's physical being. For me that's what madness about. And the only way back to any kind of sanity is to connect physically with who you are emotionally, spiritually and mentally.

Here, Kane humorously acknowledges her inclination to explore the dichotomy between consciousness and physical being, a theme that she closely associates with the concept of madness. Her last two plays can be interpreted as representations of internal psychological states, depicting the gradual loss of personal identity or struggles against profound feelings of hopelessness. These plays exemplify Kane's profound examination of psychological challenges and the complex mechanisms of the human psyche. Again, about the play, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 81) expresses that:

I'm writing a play called *4.48 Psychosis*. [...] It's about a psychotic breakdown and what happens to a person's mind when the barriers which distinguish between reality and different forms of imagination completely disappear, so that you no longer know the difference between your waking life and your dream life. And also you no longer know where you stop, and the world starts.

⁴ (Kane, 2001: 246)

The theme of a psychotic breakdown and the blurring of the lines between reality and imagination is a psychologically and philosophically profound concept to investigate. The concept of being unable to differentiate between one's conscious life and dream life, as well as losing one's sense of self in relation to the external world, is a rich and complex topic to explore. This loss of distinction can result in profound psychological and emotional struggles for the protagonist, and it opens up opportunities for investigating the fragility and resilience of the human mind. In order to achieve this, the play deliberately breaks down all traditional dramatic barriers. *4.48 Psychosis* is regarded as one of the most significant examples of postdramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006; Barnett, 2008; Biçer, 2010; Delgado-Garcia, 2010; Chramosilová, 2013; Diedrich, 2013; Günenç, 2016; D'Cruz, 2018; Bozdağ, 2022). As in Lehmann's (2006: ix) words, "*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". The play departs from the norms of traditional dramatic theatre, where the focus is on narrating a clearly defined character's story through actions in a fictional world. Instead, it chooses to achieve the representation through language. By doing so, the play aims to vividly depict the picture of a person's mind, in which the effects of losing the boundaries between reality and imagination lead to complete chaos. Indeed, besides exemplifying a remarkable piece of postdramatic theatre, this play offers valuable material for exploring the manifestations of entropy in the realm of theatre theory.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Kane's transition from her earlier works, such as *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, and *Cleansed*, which relied on violent and disturbing images to startle the audience, is evident in her final two plays, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. She adopted a markedly poetic style in her later works. *4.48 Psychosis* expands on the structural innovations of *Crave* by presenting a textual collage with language that appears to have been sourced from various sources. Moreover, the play combines poetic passages and naturalistic dialogue with cryptic lists of numbers positioned strategically on the page to convey prospective delivery and meaning (Urban, 2000: 44). *Crave* featured characters utilising concise and disjointed sentences, frequently interrupting one another's words intentionally without abiding by the rules of grammatical structures. Just like what she did in *Crave*, Kane also demonstrated acts of violence through her use of language in *4.48 Psychosis*. Yet this time she took a step forward into the realm of poetry. In Tabert (1998), Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 81) articulates that "[n]ow my entire work is moving towards poetry". The deliberate manipulation of traditional language, characterised by a lack of obedience to grammatical conventions, functioned as a mechanism for her to engage in further experimentation with the theatrical form in her final

play. By doing that, she was not just questioning the limits of theatrical form, she was "also questioning the boundaries of identity and the concept of sanity" (Kaplan, 2005: 122). She (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 81) elucidates that to Rebellato (1998) as:

Formally I'm trying to collapse a few boundaries as well; to carry on with making form and content one. That's proving extremely difficult, and I'm not going to tell anyone how I'm doing it because if they get there first I'll be furious! But whatever it is that began in *Crave* it's going to a step further – where it goes after that I'm not quite sure.

The early theatrical works of Kane, *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, and *Cleansed*, garnered recognition for their disturbing depictions of violence and shocking representations. Nevertheless, the author's last two plays, namely *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, adopted a distinct methodology. Although Kane continued to delve into challenging and disturbing subjects, she approached them with a higher emphasis on poetic and lyrical expression. Kane effectively generated intense emotional responses from her audience, employing linguistic techniques rather than representing acts of violence. Similar to *Crave*, *4.48 Psychosis* also lacks a conventional plot and instead relies heavily on the power of imagination rather than adhering strictly to realistic representation. Sarah Kane continues to prioritise language as the principal mode of representation, demonstrating a more courageous departure from traditional dramatic limits compared to her earlier plays. In both plays, Kane delves into an examination of language's capacity to effectively communicate complex emotions and internal conditions. About *4.48 Psychosis*, Tabert delivers her words as, "[a]t the moment it doesn't have characters – there is only language and images. But all the images are within language rather than visualized. I don't even know how many people there are" (Kane quoted in Saunders, 2009: 81). This artistic attempt results in a distinctive and thought-provoking theatrical encounter that defies traditional dramatic conventions which also makes *4.48 Psychosis* Kane's most entropic play.

As stated, the play *4.48 Psychosis* challenges conventional theatrical structures by deviating from established norms such as a clear plot, explicit stage directions beyond the use of dashes to potentially denote dialogue exchanges and moments of silence, and conventional characters with designated dialogue. Furthermore, the play lacks adherence to a particular setting or temporal context. That said, it carries the characteristics of a poem rather than following the conventions of a traditional play. About the poetic inclinations in *Crave*, Kane (quoted in Saunders, 2009: 94) puts forward her intentions by stating, "I wanted to find out how a poem could still be dramatic". She pursued her investigation in *4.48 Psychosis*. The play "looks more like an experimental poem than a conventional theatre script" (D'Cruz, 2018: 1)

thanks to its departure from dramatic form and embracement of postdramatic characteristics. Some of the sections of the play are deliberately written in verse as in the following part.

Every compliment takes a piece of my soul
 An expressionist nag
 Stalling between two fools
 They know nothing –
 I have always walked free

Last in a long line of literary kleptomaniacs
 (a time honoured tradition)

Theft is the holy act
 On a twisted path to expression

A glut of exclamation marks spells impending nervous breakdown
 Just a word on a page and there is the drama

I write for the dead
 the unborn (Kane, 2001: 213)

In addition to its visual demonstration on the page, the language used in *4.48 Psychosis* is highly poetic. Kane skillfully uses various kinds of poetic devices such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, repetition, metaphor, allusion, simile, etc. There are some parts in the play completely written in the form of stream of consciousness, Kane just lines up words just to create an audial harmony as in:

flash flicker slash burn wring press dab slash
 flash flicker punch burn float flicker dab flicker
 punch flicker flash burn dab press wring press
 punch flicker float burn flash flicker burn
 [...]
 flicker punch slash dab wring press burn slash
 press slash punch flicker flash press burn slash
 dab flicker float flash flicker dab press burn slash
 press slash punch flash flicker burn (Kane, 2001: 231, 232)

The paragraphs, which are composed of repetitive words, serve as background images during the play, illustrating the deep suffering that follows after the experience of love's absence. This deliberate use of strategic repetition works to generate a feeling of confinement, effectively engaging the reader in the intense experience of suffering during that particular moment as if like “it will never pass” (Kane, 2001: 23). Thus, both with its formal characteristics and with use of poetic language, *4.48 Psychosis* aims to create vivid imagery in its audiences' minds,

instead of showing them on the stage. Glenn D'Cruz (2018: 35) comments on the confusing nature of *4.48 Psychosis* in a humorous tone:

Despite its poetic qualities, there is no doubt that *4.48 Psychosis* is a text written for the theatre. The obvious giveaway is that the work appears in a book titled Sarah Kane: Complete Plays and its first page follows the convention of published dramatic texts by providing the details of the work's first performance. The first page of the play proper also underscores the performative dimension of the work by issuing an imperative in form of a stage direction [...].

Through poetic interludes, the play transcends limiting interpretations and embraces deliberate ambiguity, marking a new kind of theatre that explores various facets of suffering, expanding the focus beyond individual pain (Barnett, 2008: 21). Instead of constraining the description of pain into her own experience, by summoning the imaginative power of poetic language to her assistance, the play makes it possible for its audience to envisage their own vortex of despair. This leads to the limitless probable definitions of agony and therefore to a state of higher entropy since, as it is stated in the first chapter, entropy is positively correlated with probability.

4.48 Psychosis, like *Crave*, defies standard dramatic conventions, extending the boundaries of what a poetic text may accomplish. Both plays go beyond the standards of structured plot-driven tales, which frequently dominate the theatrical landscape. They instead depend on the power of language to convey their messages and feelings. The drama does not rely on traditional action or incidents to tell its story. As the play embraces a non-linear structure, reflecting the chaotic nature of the mind it attempts to examine, there are no orderly incidents written out in acts or scenes. Instead, the play is divided into 24 sections separated simply by horizontal dashes. As Tycker (2008: 26, 27) simply puts:

The page layout varies throughout the play, ranging from dialogue, to lists, columns, and a few numbers or words scattered on a page. Scenes are delineated by a series of dashes instead of the traditional act and scene divisions, with the urgent acronym "RSVP ASAP" (214) being the shortest example of a scene.

However, even at first look the play looks like "a collage of thoughts, lists, conversations and other random bits of information" (Earnest, 2005: 299), as a close examination of the play might still "builds dramatic tension" (Tycker, 2008: 153). In Kane's (2001) play, we meet a patient suffering from depression who is torn between her internal conflicts. She refuses medication because she believes they may "switch off my (her) mind" (220) and also no "drug on earth can make life meaningful" (220). As her battle worsens, she approaches a breaking point and attempts suicide, but fails. She gives in and gets "the chemical lobotomy" (221) as a result of this painful incident. However, as the treatment advances, her ideas grow increasingly scattered, lost in her mind's maze. There are fleeting moments of clarity when "sanity visits" (229). Despite these brief respites, the weight of her emotional agony proves overpowering, and she kills herself. As opposed to this, Barnett (2008: 21) suggests that "Kane has certainly arranged

and ordered her scenes – there are repetitions, echoes, and changes in cadence” and “although one could interpret the speeches, humanize them, and represent characters and conversations” still in the play “there is neither cause, nor effect, nor development.”

With the exception of dashes and silences, there are no stage directions in the unconventional and evocative play. Stage directions in traditional plays are of significant importance as they provide guidance for various technical elements involved in the production, such as lighting, sound, costumes, scenery, props, and actor movement on the stage to achieve order. Conventional stage directions are not needed in *4.48 Psychosis* since the play intentionally avoids conventional theatrical elements like plot, action, setting, and explicitly defined characters.

Both *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* disregard traditional setting details found in her earlier works. In contrast to her previous plays, the two plays under consideration adopt a more abstract and subjective approach, evoking mindscapes, or mental landscapes rather than concrete physical settings (Saunders, 2002: 115). The absence of specific settings in the play is consistent with Kane's inclination towards experimentation and challenging traditional theatrical norms. The plays extensively explore the inner worlds, thoughts, and struggles of the characters, and the lack of a specific physical setting intensifies the attention on their psychological chaos and emotional progression. Yet, in the second section of *4.48 Psychosis*, there is a highly metaphorical description of a place which can be interpreted as the setting of the play:

a consolidated consciousness resides in a darkened banquet hall near the ceiling of a mind whose floor shifts as ten thousand cockroaches when a shaft of light enters as all thoughts unite in an instant of accord
body no longer expellent as the cockroaches comprise a truth which no one ever utters (Kane, 2001: 205).

The lack of punctuation here is also important since it enhances the sense of chaos. Instead of giving a fixed physical setting, Kane allows multiple personal interpretations of the play's mental landscapes.

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, in addition to the potentiality of the four characters representing separate people in *Crave*, there exists the potential for them to collectively embody the fragmented essence of an individual's self. Similarly, in *4.48 Psychosis* there are no explicitly defined characters. Moreover, In *4.48 Psychosis*, Kane does not say anything about the exact number of characters in the play. The dashes denote a single speaker in accordance with theatrical tradition, but, in the play, the lines are not explicitly attributed to specific characters. Instead “a proper name that designates the connection between the line and a distinct character” (D'Cruz, 2018: 36) she uses dashes as in:

- Have you made any plans?
- Take an overdose, slash my wrists then hang myself.

- All those things together?
- It couldn't possibly be misconstrued as a cry for help.

(*Silence.*)

[...]

- That's a metaphor, not reality.
- It's a simile.
- That's not reality.
- It's not a metaphor, it's a simile, but even if it were, the defining feature of a metaphor is that it's real.

(*A long silence*) (Kane, 2001: 211).

The intentional lack of clear character attribution in the text allows its transcendence of traditional boundaries and encourages diverse interpretations, thereby enabling the words to embody a unified voice representing shared emotions and experiences. The presence of silences within the play contributes to its distinct atmosphere, allowing for moments of reflection and self-examination. Kane explored themes of disorder, decay, and the disintegration of interpersonal relationships and societal norms. Silence is an effective instrument for conveying emotions and establishing a particular atmosphere. In the context of Kane's works, the strategic use of silence can reflect the breakdown of communication, the disintegration of relationships, and the internal struggles of the characters. It can amplify the feelings of isolation, darkness, and bewilderment that are common to her plays. In this way, the use of silence can be interpreted as a dramatic representation of the entropy-like disintegration and chaos within the characters' lives, thereby enhancing the overall experience of the play. Apart from the silences, the effect of decomposition is also supported by the play's graphological demonstration. In the last section, through the end, the play informs us that “the rupture begins” (Kane, 2001: 240) and after that number of words written on the page becomes lesser and lesser as the play progresses. With the use of fewer words and larger voids on the page layout, the significance of silences increases. As stated by Chramosilová (2013: 22, 23) “at the very end of *4.48 Psychosis* the words “fade away” and become scarcer and scarcer on each page just as the lines say, “watch me vanish” (244). This can be interpreted as if the words lose their useable energy in the play. Entropy, as stated before, is a thermodynamic principle relating to the gradual increase of disorder and the transformation of available energy into unusable energy in a closed system. To make an analogy between the useable energy of words and the concept of entropy, the ‘usable energy of words’ refers to their clarity, meaning, and communicative power, whereas the ‘unusable energy’ refers to the rising ambiguity, confusion, or lack of coherence when the text or language fragments. This analogy argues that, like in the process of entropy, the words in the text lose integrity and expressive power over time.

To conclude, with *4.48 Psychosis*, Kane takes a step forward into the realm of chaos as she extends the structural experiments of *Crave*. The earlier plays of Sarah Kane, such as *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, and *Cleansed* were known for their shocking and violent imagery through representation of action on stage, as well as their exploration of disturbing themes that challenged conventional theatre norms. Thus, even with their experimental structures and extreme subjects, they are still standing in the realm of traditional dramatic theatre. However, in her final two performances, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, Kane experienced a significant shift in style towards postdramatic theatre. She abandoned explicit violence and adopted a uniquely poetic approach. The language became more fragmented and abstract, concentrating on the inner worlds, emotions, and mental struggles of the characters. Kane invited the audience to engage profoundly with the plays through a lyrical and introspective lens, evoking a haunting and reflective atmosphere.



CONCLUSION

In this thesis, Sarah Kane's three plays – *Blasted*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis* - have been analysed to illustrate the transition from dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre by way of perusing entropy. Kane is one of the most prominent figures in British theatre in the last decade of the twentieth century. She is known for her provocative and challenging plays in which she pushes the boundaries of traditional understanding of theatre and experimenting both with form and content. From her first play to the last, her style changes significantly. Her first three plays, *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love*, and *Cleansed* are exemplary of in-her-face theatre and, therefore classified as dramatic theatre; her fourth play *Crave* marks a significant shift in her style by both carrying characteristics of postdramatic theatre; and her last play, *4.48 Psychosis* is considered as the embodiment of postdramatic theatre. Therefore, this thesis prefers to study Kane's plays since the analysis of her plays provides exquisite materials to shed light on the progression from dramatic theatre to postdramatic theatre.

Rooted in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Western dramatic theory places a strong emphasis on order and unity. Aristotle defines theatre as the "mimesis of an action". The main purpose of dramatic theatre is to present a well-developed story with a beginning, middle and end, through mimesis of actions on the stage with well-defined characters. To achieve this order, Aristotle requests a formula composed of six elements: plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle. These six elements are linked to each other hierarchically to create a fictional world on the stage as a unified whole. Dramatic theatre is dominated by the dramatic text, which serves to establish order and clarity by explicitly explaining every little detail about the action to be imitated, leaving little space for interpretation or ambiguity.

On the contrary, postdramatic theatre promotes ambiguity and multiple interpretations. Proposed by Hans-Thies Lehmann, the concept of postdramatic theatre offers a radical departure from the well-established conventions of Aristotelian dramatic theatre by challenging the traditional elements such as linear plot structure, well-developed characters, and meaningful dialogues that provide order and predictability. In postdramatic theatre, drama is no longer in the central place. One of the main objectives of postdramatic theatre is to actively include the audience, thereby shifting their role from passive observers to active contributors in the construction of their individual narratives. While in dramatic theatre the playwright is the one who creates and controls the play, in postdramatic theatre director and the audience take the job.

The supporting subject of this thesis is to elucidate how dramatic and postdramatic theatres differ from one another and how entropy is intrinsic to this transformation. Simply stated, entropy is the amount of disorder and randomness in a system. According to the second law of thermodynamics, entropy in a closed system always increases in a one-directional process as the system becomes more and more disordered. A well-structured narrative with a clear plot and distinctly identified characters in dramatic theatre emphasizes order and predictability. Also, dramatic theatre promotes a more passive and predictable experience to the audience. The use of these traditional conventions altogether results in a lower degree of entropy. In contrast, postdramatic theatre defies these conventions by adopting new, experimental ways such as fragmented or abstract narrative structures, unidentified characters, and a lack of dialogue. Moreover, unlike dramatic theatre, postdramatic theatre encourages the audience to be more active and interpretive. These unique characteristics contributed to disorder and ambiguity thus leading to higher entropy.

The first play of Sarah Kane, *Blasted*, is analysed as an example of dramatic theatre, for which it has the lowest entropy among the three plays. As an exemplary work of in-yer-face theatre, even though *Blasted* challenges conventional norms on so many levels, the play still exhibits loyalty to the basic characteristics of traditional drama. To start with, even while it is fragmented and nonlinear, *Blasted* does have a plot which reveals the arrangement of the events precisely in two integrated plotlines. All the events are linked to each other to narrate an orderly, whole story. The play narrates the story of three distinct characters: Ian, Cate, and the Soldier. The main plot is about domestic violence and revolves around the abusive relationship between Ian and Cate, while the second plot is all about war and its atrocities. Author's Note and stage directions are included in the dramatic text by Kane to further describe the events, characters, and the setting in detail. In the play, the characters interact with each other and have meaningful dialogues which provides a deeper understanding of their development. In *Blasted*, Kane creates a fictional world to tell her story. What this world looks like, how many people there are and how the story develops are stated in the text explicitly by her. That is to say, every little detail of the play is determined according to an order in the dramatic text, therefore leaving almost no space for probable interpretations. Consequently, *Blasted* has the lowest entropy among these three plays by Kane.

As for the second play to be analysed in this thesis, *Crave* exhibits a significant shift from Kane's previous works. Despite their experimental styles and provocative natures, her earlier plays still fall within the category of dramatic theatre. *Crave* is the first postdramatic play written by Kane. The play has no traditional plot since there is no action to be arranged.

Instead of actions, there are fragmented stories told by four characters. No information about the characters is provided in the dramatic text. They are introduced with their initials as A, B, C, and M. These characters rarely interact with each other since there are no dialogues in the play. All the characters talk in monologues. Since the play has no action to be represented on stage, no stage directions are required to preserve order by instructing actions or to describe the setting action. Instead, it takes on a more lyrical shape, imitating its story primarily through narration rather than direct presentation of actions. With *Crave*, Kane transcends the limits of dramatic theatre to bring order and predictability to the play. Apart from the four characters assigned to the lines, nothing is stated in the dramatic text to ensure order. Therefore, the play is open to limitless probable interpretations which indicates an elevated degree of disorder and ambiguity. In summary, the lack of traditional conventions results in an elevated level of entropy in *Crave*.

The last play, *4.48 Psychosis*, which is considered one of the exemplary works of postdramatic theatre, is analysed to demonstrate that it has the highest degree of entropy among Kane's three plays. *4.48 Psychosis* is about psychotic breakdowns. In the play, Kane aims to make the audience experience what is happening in the mind of a person when all the barriers between reality and imagination are lost. To achieve this, she takes a step forward into the realm of disorder as she extends the structural experiments of *Crave*. She disrupts all traditional conventions such as a structured plot, well-defined distinct characters designated to specific lines, dialogues, stage directions, or settings. *4.48 Psychosis* has no plot or distinct characters and no traditional dialogues. It looks more like a poem than a play at first. In *4.48 Psychosis*, Kane daringly abandons the conventions of traditional dramatic theatre, which typically relies on the narration of the story of a clearly identified character through physical actions within a fictional world. Instead of physical actions, the play chooses to achieve the representation through language. By doing so, the play frees itself from the restrictions of the physical world which results in unlimited probable interpretations. Accordingly, since it is almost impossible to talk about any kind of order and structure in the play, *4.48 Psychosis* has a higher degree of entropy.

To conclude, since its conceptualization, entropy has captivated countless scientists and scholars alike from the sciences to the humanities. They collectively opine that entropy is an inevitable force or truth, which spares no realm of knowledge gained by our observation of our universe; that is to say after order is oversaturated in any given subject, entropy takes over and leads to "chaos", though this chaos is not necessarily a negative alteration. Theatre, too, has been exposed to this concept and it helped us understand and explain the emergence of

postdramatic theatre with uncontrolled freedom with its chaotic and unpredictable nature. And the transition from dramatic to postdramatic theatre, that is from low to mid to high entropy, can probably be observed best through British playwright Sarah Kane's three plays - *Crave*, *Blasted*, and *4.48 Psychosis* - respectively, as illustrated in this thesis.



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