The Monstrous Masculine: Trauma, Horror, and Mediated Witnessing in Blasted

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ABSTRACT

This paper reconfigures Sarah Kane's Blasted (1995) within the framework of trauma and horror studies by foregrounding its performative and affective dimensions. It examines the play as a modern Gothic horror text through the theoretical lenses of Raewyn Connell's concept of masculinity and crisis, Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, and Giorgio Agamben's theory of biopower and bare life. Focusing on key scenes—such as the toxic relationship between Ian and Cate, which reflects the crisis of masculine identity; the escalation of violence and humiliation following the entrance of the Soldier; and the aftermath of the Soldier's suicide—the paper demonstrates how power, violence, trauma, and horror intersect within the Gothic atmosphere. Furthermore, the study claims that these dynamics can be read as forms of traumatic experience that reconfigure the spectator's position as an ethical witness. It argues that horror in Blasted (1995) is not merely represented but performed on stage, producing an embodied and affective experience for the audience. Accordingly, trauma goes beyond functioning as a narrative device and operates as both a mediated and performative experience that shapes its impact on the audience. Kane's theatre reveals a double-edged structure of violence in which the perpetrator becomes the victim and domination ultimately consumes itself. In Blasted (1995), Kane exposes the decay inherent in the existing order and evokes ethical responsibility amidst the ruins, transforming horror into a shocking form of catharsis that reawakens the possibility of renewal. By emphasizing the performative nature of horror, the paper situates Kane's theatre within contemporary understandings of horror as an experiential and destabilizing aesthetic mode. The paper thus proposes a rethinking of trauma representation and ethical spectatorship by positioning the audience as a form of mediated witnessing. Such an alternative form of life redefines what it means to be human after the collapse of order, turning the stage into a space where destruction and creation coexist.

Keywords Masculinity; Abjection; Bare Life; Biopower; Violence; Gothic Horror; Trauma; Witnessing; Mediation

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