

**INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN THE PLAYS OF SARAH
KANE: A CRITICAL STUDY**

Thesis submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

By

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DECLARATION

I do hereby acknowledge that:

- i. The present thesis entitled “Interpersonal Violence in the Plays of Sarah Kane: A Critical Study” is a presentation of my original research work done under the guidance of my thesis supervisor. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.
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Date: 16 May 2024

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Certificate by Supervisor

I hereby affirm that:

- i. The thesis presented by Maninder Singh entitled “Interpersonal Violence in the Plays of Sarah Kane: A Critical Study” is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
- ii. The candidate has pursued the prescribed course of research.
- iii. The work is the original contribution of the candidate.
- iv. The candidate has incorporated all the suggestions made by the Department Doctoral Board during the Pre-submission Seminar held on 20th January 2024.

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Abstract

The thesis entitled “Interpersonal Violence in the Plays of Sarah Kane: A Critical Study” seeks to understand various aspects of violence. It is particularly concerned with the Western world and kinship. The research applies the technique of close literary analysis to the plays of Sarah Kane by employing the conceptual categories of interpersonal violence, ideology, gender and language. Utilizing Kane’s body of work as a case study, the thesis connects her plays to different aspects of violence. Specifically, it investigates her characters and their socio-cultural contexts.

The thesis is divided into two parts, the first of which is a theoretical framework, which is drawn upon the monograph of Slavoj Žižek entitled *Violence* (2008). The framework is nothing but an interpretation of Žižek’s theory of violence. Three paradigmatic elements of violence are identified, all of which appear in Žižek’s monograph. These include the victim-/agent-hood, the space and the affectivity of violence. In the first section of the framework, Žižek’s depiction of the victims and agents of violence is explored – including their attributes and courses of action. It explores the image/figure of the victims; how readily they are, or not, given the victim status; and how they react to their victimization. It also explores the figure of agents of violence; how they victimize the weak; how they are immunized against the effects of violence, such as the pain and suffering of the victims; and how violence is defended or justified by the perpetrators and their supporters. The second section of the framework builds on Žižek’s examination of the space of violence and explores its various aspects, such as the space being ideological, abyssal and a nest of obscene fantasies. Various distinctions of space are also observed, including open and closed space, private and public space, social and political space as well as cyberspace. The third section explores Žižek’s take on the affective nature of violence, such as how violence affects the subjects via their emotional responses, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, constant internal conflict, perception created by false-images and false narrative leading to a deadlock.

Furthermore, the general theory is particularized to the Western kinship system to examine the roles of language and gender in generating and sustaining violence. It is observed that patriarchal ideology is the norm and made to appear natural. That is, it renders objective violence to remain hidden in the features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goals of kinship relations. They are underlined by paternalistic dominance in which the male is

privileged and the female is underprivileged. This disparity, the sexual double standard and the female subordination, is depicted in male-centrism/androcentrism as well as gender asymmetry and bias within the sexist language and gendered practices in Western kinship.

In the second part of the thesis, Sarah Kane's plays are textually analyzed using the proposed framework and are extensively detailed in chapters two, three, four and five. Chapter two examines the first aspect of the framework or the victim- and agent-hood within Kane's plays. It demonstrates how, as victims, Kane's characters are perceived as threatening and intrusive figures as well as figures of obsession; how they react differently to their particular victimization, which includes retreating to a safe space, internalizing their victim status, becoming sensitive to future or potential victimization and standing their ground or fighting back. It also demonstrates how, as agents of violence, Kane's characters react to a perceived threat; to victimize the weak, how they caress their humanity or employ empty-gestures to distract or coerce their victims; how they defend/justify their actions, which includes blaming the victim, portraying themselves as victims, diverting the blame on the institution they serve, defending their right to seek justice or vengeance, and claiming that violence is for the greater good or requires a sacrifice.

Chapter three examines the space of violence within Kane's world. Her world is a world of violence not just because of the existence of subjective and objective violence, but also because her characters are born into violence and live through it. It is observed that Kane's world is violent because it is ideological and her characters are plagued with fear and envy of an imponderable Other, which keeps them in a never-ending abyss; and also, because her world is a nest of obscene fantasies, which exist in a censored form but are essential to sustain the space of violence.

Chapter four examines the ways violence affects Kane's world. It is observed that violence affects Kane's characters through their emotional responses, such as fear, envy, terror and trauma; via their economic situation, that is, the resources or capital they possess at their disposal could determine their fate; via their socio-symbolic identity, an identity through which they are judged as either good or bad or as superior or inferior; via their internal conflict or the conflict between the particular and universal aspects of their identity; via their perception formed by circulation of false-images; and via a false narrative, which creates a deadlock so that they do not stop participating in violence. There is a multilayered affectivity of violence in Kane's plays.

Chapter five examines the kinship system within Kane's plays to explore the connection between violence, language and gender. It is observed that the kinship within Kane's plays is sustained by the ideology of patriarchy, which has normalized and naturalized the disparity between the sexes. This gender disparity is unraveled by the presence of sexism in language and practices, observable in the asymmetrical use of stereotypes, expletives, superciliousness and silence as well as gender bias, whereby the males are privileged and their activities are valued, and the females are invisibilized and their activities are devalued and controlled.

Through these explorations, the thesis suggests a model to inspect violence within a space/system. It argues that Kane's world depicts the disrupted state of the contemporary world, including kinship, as well as the disparity between races, sexes and sexualities. A key conclusion of the thesis is that it finds patriarchy at the core of the very violence which sustains this disparity within Kane's plays. Finally, it provides us with a scope for further research, that is, the same framework can be employed to inspect the state of other spaces/systems.

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All praise and thanks be to my genitors and my nurtures – my loving parents Charnjeet Kour and Late HC Jaspal Singh – as well as my beloved siblings, Ramandeep Kour and Raspreet Kour, and my admirable *JiJaJi* Mohinderpal Singh. Without them, I would not be here. Their presence is the source of my strength and patience. I cannot imagine a life without them.

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Introduction

Sarah Kane (1971-99) is considered as one of the boldest dramatists of the English stage. Her plays reflect her awareness of the socio-economic situation of her country and Europe at large. The ineffective political intervention during the seventies, which – instead of reviving the sinking economy – led “the country to a state of virtual bankruptcy” (Vlad 603); and Britain’s slow economic revival in the eighties under the Conservative government of Thatcher (1979-90), who used “Trade Union reforms, privatization, deregulation, a strong-inflation stance, and control of tax and spending” (608) which led Britain to “economic prosperity... in the 1990s and 2000s” (Hadley, Louisa and Elizabeth Ho 9), but it did so at the expense of social, political, and cultural tranquility. Kane’s awareness of the atrocities in the Balkans; her experience of an experiential performance of Jeremy Weller’s *Mad*, a Grassmarket Project performed by actors who had experienced mental illness; and the violence in Edward Bond’s play *Saved* (1965) paved the foundations for her first play *Blasted* (1995). Her next play *Phaedra’s Love* (1996), which she directed herself, is a post-modern adaptation of *Phaedra*, a play by Seneca. Her next two plays *Cleansed* (1998), in which she played the role of Grace when one of the actors got injured, was inspired by the situation of a lover in Ronald Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* (1977); and *Crave* (1998), in which she played the role of C during the production tour of Ireland and Europe, was influenced by Bible, T. S. Eliot’s *Wasteland* (1922) and the narrative of Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on her Life* (1997). Her last play *4:48 Psychosis* (2000) – inspired by her own severe depression – was posthumously produced at the Royal Court Upstairs; and her only screenplay, *Skin* (1997), was inspired by Irvine Welsh’s movie *Trainspotting* (1993).

Kane has always been linked with the postmodern In-Yer-Face theatre – infamous for its use of violence, strong language, and presentation of unconventional rather taboo subjects on stage. Although she preferred not to be labeled by any term other than a writer, she nonetheless found the term *in-yer-face* better than *new brutalism* – its alternative. The phrase in-yer-face – suggesting a breach in personal space causing a sensation of discomfort – “originated in American sports journalism during the mid-seventies and gradually seeped into more mainstream slang over the following decade” (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre* 4). The in-yer-face theatre, first publicized by the theatre critic Aleks Sierz, is experimental, sensational and experiential: experimental in the terms that it employs the tactic of shock to question the moral or social norms of the society by

tapping into hidden and forbidden topics; sensational in the terms that it shakes the audience out of their conventional expectations and responses; and experiential in the terms that it does not let the audience to sit in comfort as detached spectators instead it engages them in an emotional confrontation. What makes in-yer-face theatre so powerful is its ability to make its audience react – first, by luring them into a naturalistic and comfortable position; and then, by shocking them into an oblivion of their invested emotions. What contributes to the success of the shocking tactic of in-yer-face theatre is not just the confrontational language and the intimate subjects it employs – like swearing, sexuality, nudity, taboos, and raw and extreme violence; but also, the dynamic of its performances as well as its theatrical setting. While the bad language – swear or taboo words, sick jokes and insults, and gross verbal imagery – when used in a public setting like theatre does, reveals the insecurities, resentments and biases of a particular culture; the same becomes confrontational, provoking and impossible to ignore when the private and intimate situations – like the act of sexually charged coitus and other sexual activities, exposing human body to the extent of full nudity, and painful, humiliating and degrading acts of violence – are performed in a proximity without the possibility of a comic relief. What adds to its intensity of in-yer-face theatre, much like other types and genres of theatre, is the performances by the actors. A live performance of an intimidating human condition presented by fellow humans – actors – in proximity not only lets the audience connect with them, despite a willing ‘suspension of disbelief’, but also makes them aware of their observance by fellow audience members and thus makes their situation extremely uncomfortable. And lastly, the stage setting of in-yer-face theatre also plays a part in chocking the emotions out of its audience. If performed in a small studio theatre with close seating and brutal and fanatic stage imagery, an in-yer-face performance achieves its full potential of provocation.

The playwrights of in-yer-face theatre broke from the previous norms of writing and fostered a new aesthetic. They reacted against the conception of what a global society is by painting an unadulterated picture of dysfunctional contemporary life which mirrored not only the homegrown violence – hooliganism, joblessness, protests, riots, terrorist attacks, discrimination and violent attacks against homosexuals and racial minorities – but also other violence-ridden countries – war crimes in Balkan civil war, including rape camps, mass murders and ethnic cleansings of minorities; Rwandan genocide and invasion of Chechnya; and unstable middle-east. Their writing was immensely influenced by the financial and political pressure asserted directly or

indirectly by the government and their policies (Iball, *Sarah Kane's Blasted* 16); and the imagery, they employed, by societal tensions and injustices (Saunders, *About Kane* 16) comprised the crisis of masculinity and liberal imagination. Their motive to avoid the simplification of existing complex problems of the world immensely appealed to the foreign stage. Hundreds of productions were staged in North America, Australia and other European countries, including Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands (Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre* 246). The main proponents responsible for the birth of in-yer-face theatre, according to the theatre critic Aleks Sierz, were Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Anthony Neilson. While Kane “publicized the effrontery of the new wave” (122), Neilson seduced the audience to the issues – at hand – in depth and Ravenhill made sure that this sensibility was here to stay. Several others made their contributions to commercializing and became the beneficiaries, including Phillip Ridley, Phyllis Nagy, Joe Penhall, Martin McDonagh, Judy Upton, Nick Grosso, Jez Butterworth, and Patrick Maber among others. As a result of their efforts, by the end of the decade, the theatre was healthy again – became more diverse, fluid, experiential and complex; the contemporary notions of beauty, language and truth were redefined; and despite the darkness and hopelessness, there remained a sense of hope to look forward to by facing the harsh reality on the stage and growing into better individuals in the real world.

Sarah Kane was a leading dramatist of the mid-nineties, often considered the poster girl for its, in-yer-face, style. Her plays were loaded with explicit content with the sole purpose of shocking the audience to provoke them to think about what was going on in their surroundings. While her first play, *Blasted*, made the most impact by shocking and provoking its audience and critics, the plays that followed, carried the tradition and her last play, produced after her death, was just as impactful as her first, if not more or less. There is a substantial amount of research available on the works of Sarah Kane. While most of the researchers concentrated on different aspects of her plays, like their dramaturgy, performance and experimentalism, as well as their cultural, political or historical context; others have dealt with elements of the plays, like body, language, characters, and themes, including violence among others.

Ken Urban in his research paper “An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane” (2001) concentrates on the dramatization of Kane’s quest for ethics. According to Ken, despite going through the chaos of the world, there is still a possibility of the existence of good and Kane’s world is a world of this possibility (37). In another research

paper “Towards a Theory of Cruel Britannia: Coolness, Cruelty, and the ‘Nineties’” (2004), Urban examines the cultural context of 1990s Britain by exploring “the possibilities of cruelty and nihilism as a means of countering cynicism and challenging mainstream morality’s interpretation of the world” (354) through the plays of Sarah Kane and other in-yer-face playwrights.

Graham Saunders in his book *‘Love Me or Kill Me’: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes* (2002) explores the experimental plays of Sarah Kane, who as an emerging young British writer of the mid-1990s outlined the movement of in-yer-face theatre. The book explores the “principal themes and dramatic structure as well as literary and dramatic sources” of Kane’s plays (Saunders, *Love Me x*), and lastly argues for the need of her writings for the survival of theatre itself. In his research paper “‘Out Vile Jelly’: Sarah Kane’s ‘Blasted’ and Shakespeare’s ‘King Lear’” (2004), Saunders inspects the language and the dramatic form of *Blasted* and compares it to the Shakespearean tradition. He finds that the play is “a response to contemporary reality and an engagement with the history of drama” (69). Saunders in another research paper “‘Just a Word on a Page and there is the Drama.’ Sarah Kane’s Theatrical Legacy” (2010) looks at Kane’s honest and direct theatrical approach to uncover “some of the intentions that lie behind her drama” (99). He concludes that it is because her drama is constantly defining the characters and with them the spectators in experiencing and expressing what is considered being human in a posthuman society.

Annabelle Singer’s research paper “Don’t Want to Be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane” (2004) explores the institutions and people, working in those institutions, behind Kane’s career, including “critics, academics, students, agents, theatre practitioners, audience members, and doctors” (140), which shaped and helped create the explosive legacy of Sarah Kane.

Christine Woodworth in her doctoral thesis entitled *Beyond Brutality: A Recontextualization of the Work of Sarah Kane* (2005) examines the plays of Sarah Kane from three paradigms, namely: “death, madness, and female authorship; feminist theatre practice; and the historical legacy of experimental female playwrights throughout the twentieth century” (iii). Furthermore, the study addresses the enormous stir the plays of Kane caused in mid-1990s Britain and argues that Sarah Kane was among those women writers, who were “problematically situated within predominantly male artistic movements” (iv). In her research paper “‘Summon up the Blood’: The Stylized (or Sticky) Stuff of Violence in Three Plays by Sarah Kane” (2010), Woodworth looks at the

use of blood as a stage prop, in the realistic or artificial or metaphorical sense, in the productions of three of the plays of Sarah Kane, namely *Blasted*, *Phaedra's Love* and *Cleansed* (12). She finds that the use of a particular blood as a stage prop situates the whole scene and thus the whole work within a particular historical framework.

Sean Carney's essay entitled "The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*" (2005) asserts that the play stands for unity, that is, it attempts to unite the particular, "the nonsignifying, the immediate, the disruptive shock, the 'real'," and the general, "the meaningful, the thematic, and the contextual" (276). Despite its effect of shock, the aesthetics of the play are not disrupted. Sanja Nikcevic's research paper "British Brutalism, the 'New European drama', and the Role of Director" (2005) explores the role of artistic directors of British theatre in the 1990s and finds that they played an important role in shaping the so-called in-her-face movement. Furthermore, Sanja elaborates on Kane's first play *Blasted* to suggest that "the acceptance of the normality of violence without reference to its social context negates the possibility of remedial action" (255). In his research paper "Approaching performance through Praxis" (2014), Stephen Farrier adds onto the ideas of praxis by Richard Schechner from his theory in performance studies. Farrier claims that "praxis can help expose what is often disavowed in the tension between what can be described broadly as 'a theoretical approach to making performance' and 'a physical approach to making performance'" (129).

Helen Iball in her research paper "Room Service: En Suite on the *Blasted* Frontline" (2006) adopts a phenomenological approach to trace the context of the bad reception of Kane's first play *Blasted*. She concludes that due to "Kane's selective exploitation of theatre's unique mode of signification" (329) the play starts to feed on itself, and this becomes all too unbearable for the audience. In her book *Sarah Kane's Blasted* (2008), Helen conducts "a systemic study of the play in its biographical, historical, social and political context, followed by an in-depth study of text" (ix). The book shows how the play serves as a blueprint for the readers, students, playwrights, and theatre makers to broaden the horizon of their understanding of cultural life as well as the production of the work.

The research paper by Kim Solga "*Blasted's* Hysteria: Rape, Realism and the Thresholds of the Visible" (2007) explores "the theoretical and historical dimensions of the 'missing' in Kane's play" (346). Solga finds that Kane, by keeping the scene of rape offstage, hints at the history of representing rape as well as the power of representation on stage. This act of *missing* makes the scene of the rape more appealing to the spectators

and their curiosity is maintained. The research paper by Alicia Tyser “‘Victim. Perpetrator. Bystander’: Melancholic Witnessing of Sarah Kane’s ‘4.48 Psychosis’” (2008) explores the function of melancholia and witnessing in the dramatic staging of the play by employing the psychoanalytic approach to critique the mental health system as well as challenge the binarism of gender.

Amelia Howe Kritzner’s book *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing: 1995-2005* (2008) is a study of the “society and politics in contemporary Britain” in the post-Thatcher era and the rise of political playwriting, including the in-yer-face playwrights, such as Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson among others, which “has brought in a new generation of playwrights and re-energized an older generation to create fresh sociopolitical critiques” (26). Ariel Watson’s research paper “‘Cries of Fire: Psychotherapy in Contemporary British and Irish Drama” (2008) investigates the interest of in-yer-face playwrights in the process of psychotherapy. According to Watson, plays such as *4.48 Psychosis*, *Shopping and Fucking*, *Blue/Orange*, etc. are examples of plays that show the concerns of contemporary playwrights, who are cynical of contemporary life and policies and try to resort to psychotherapy to look for answers for their problems. In the research paper “‘In Better Places’: Space, Identity, and Alienation in Sarah Kane’s ‘*Blasted*’” (2008), Christopher Wixson draws from Michel Foucault’s heterotopic spacing to explore Kane’s delicate dramaturgy of violence which balances the flexibility of Medieval drama and the over-determinism of modern kitchen-sink. David Barnett in his research paper “‘When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts” (2008) explores Kane’s play *4.48 Psychosis* and Crimp’s *Attempts on her Life* to understand what post-dramatic theatre is. He concludes that both, what the texts represent and how the timeline is structured, impose restrictions on performance and turn them “into objects in their own right, as constellations of language, devoid of individuated perspective” (23).

Jennifer Beth Phillips’s doctoral thesis (2008) examines Samuel Beckett’s innovative and paradoxical use of impotence and emptiness in the spatiality and text of his plays and his influence on later plays, including Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*. The study shows how “Beckett’s use of emptiness and impotence as theatrical, literary and artistic gestures have led to a new kind of hopefulness, and a new kind of artistic inspiration that is unique to our time” (vii). Summer Neilson Moshy’s doctoral thesis entitled *The Empty Center: Acting Out Theatrical Alliance in Three Texts by Sarah Kane* (2008) critically engages the debut productions of the plays of Sarah Kane and argues for a social,

political, and theatrical alliance. The work uses the literary theories of Wolfgang Iser to imply that “the malleability and ingenuity of Kane’s texts allow her work to transcend the limits of the media criticism endured during the mid-to-late 1990s and be included among the most poignant and astutely theatre in modern drama” (xi).

Andrew Wyllie in his book *Sex on Stage: Gender and Sexuality in Post-War British Theatre* (2009) looks at post-war British plays produced during the second half of the 20th century to explore the term ‘gender political’ content and finds two types of plays at the helm of it: one, which “arises from the extent to which Brechtian techniques are in evidence in the polemical dramas of the 1970s;” and the other, a farce, which contributed “to the critique of social attitudes in Britain towards gender and sexuality” (9). Elaine Aston in her research paper “Feeling the loss of Feminism: Sarah Kane’s ‘Blasted’ and an Experiential Genealogy of Contemporary Women’s Playwriting” (2010) offers a genealogy of British women playwrights whose works were “characterized by an experiential drive” (577). Aston concludes that the period comprising the life span of this genealogy, their disinterestedness in the promise of postfeminist empowerment, points to a period where the women playwrights suffer from the loss of feminism.

The book *Sarah Kane in Context* (2010), edited by Laurens De Vos and Graham Saunders, examines the two “most compelling preoccupation[s]” of Sarah Kane, namely: “the question of subjectivity and the problem of presentation” (1). It sheds light on how Kane made use of all the influences, including “many theatrical, literary and philosophical predecessors” (9), into something innovative in her plays. Laurens de Vos’s book *Cruelty and Desire in the Modern Theatre: Antonin Artaud, Sarah Kane, and Samuel Beckett* (2011) looks at the Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty and its influence on Sarah Kane. By employing Lacanian psychoanalysis, the book contends that Kane is closely associated with Artaud, both of whom “relate to language” as well as share similar goals “in writing dramatic literature” (3).

Erica Bexley’s research article “Show or Tell? Seneca’s and Sarah Kane’s *Phaedra* Plays” (2011) analyzes the graphic violence and explicit sexuality in Kane’s version and finds that, just like Seneca, Kane also pushes “the boundaries between theatrical illusion and visual reality” (365). In her research paper “Subversion, Refusal, and Contingency: The Transgression of Liberal-Humanist Subjectivity and Characterization in Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*, *Crave*, and *4.48 Psychosis*” (2012), Cristina Delgado-Garcia argues that the characters in the last three plays of Kane portray a disfigured and eschewed form of Cartesian and liberal-humanist character (231).

Honni van Rijswijk's essay "Towards a Feminist Aesthetic of Justice: Sarah Kane's *Blasted* as Theorization of the Representation of Sexual Violence in International Law" (2012) engages with the feminist theories and practices in the representation of sexual violence in the play *Blasted*. She finds that the dominant "narratives and tropes regarding sexual violence are extremely powerful in determining the ways in which adjudication proceeds" (123). The research paper by Duska Radosavljevic "Sarah Kane's Illyria as the Land of Violent Love: A Balkan Reading of *Blasted*" (2012) concentrates on the play's political nature based on Slavoj Žižek's notion of post-politics which focuses on management of the system and departs from ideological struggles of governance. Radosavljevic finds that the play heavily depends on the political situation in the contemporary Balkans as far as the characters and the theme of violence are concerned.

Louise Emma Lepage in her doctoral thesis entitled *Beyond Character: A Post/Humanist Approach to Modern Theatre* (2012) explores the nature of dramatic "characters in drama and theatre" (3). The modern characters do not align with the traditional liberal humanist terms but rather reveal that human subjectivity is post/humanist. The thesis concludes that both the dramatic and real world as well as the characters inhibit them mutually from each other. In her research paper "Rethinking Sarah Kane's Characters: A Human(ist) Form and Politics" (2014), Lepage finds that the characters of *Blasted* are naturalistic, but not "in the sense assumed by Kane commentators who maintain that naturalistic character[s], and the form of the human subject[s] that stand behind it, are constructed upon Cartesian" model (252). Rather, they are naturalistic in the compatibilist sense.

Thomas Oldham, in his doctoral thesis (2012), conducts a dramaturgical study of the distinctive uses of violence in early modern and postmodern plays, both periods presenting extreme violence on stage. The study found that violence is often used within dramaturgy to make the effect of catharsis on the audience "even more impactful" (Oldham 4). The plays from these two periods – studied from the perspective of readings of Aristotle, Antonin Artaud, and René Girard – use violence for its purgative function through revenge, battling evil, or questioning the values of society; and often deal with either domestic violence to portray love and hate between lovers or family members, or political violence for its relation to power, or religious violence to solve societal issues by scapegoating. The focus of the study is on the dramaturgy of violence and not the concept of violence itself.

Dror Harari's research paper "Artificial, Animal, Machinal: Body, Desire, and Intimacy in Modernist and Postmodernist Theatre" (2013) compares two icons of their times, namely Alfred Jerry's *Ubu* from the positivism of the 19th century and Kane's *Hippolytus* from the capitalism of 20th century. Harari concludes that while the "modernist attempts to overcome desire by likening the performer's body to a machine," the postmodernist is indifferent towards it rather is willing to become "a desiring machine" instead (311).

Elzbieta Baraniecka's book *Sublime Drama: British Theatre of the 1990s* (2013) looks at "the presentation of the category of the sublime in a theatrical outline" and analyzes "the aesthetic of the sublime in four selected plays," including Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* (2000). Together with the analysis of the play's sublime aesthetic, the book also looks at Kane's creation of the language of parergon (12). In her research paper "Words That 'Matter': Between Materiality and Immateriality of Language in Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*" (2013), she focuses on the rift within the protagonist of the play, leading them down a destructive path. Kane's language undergoes a radical change and oscillates "between its function as meaning (ergon) and its existence as silent matter (parergon)" (161).

The essay by Ian Ward entitled "Rape and Rape Mythology in the Plays of Sarah Kane" (2013) explores the presentation of sexual violence in Kane's plays and the myths associated with it within the broader feminist debate. Ward identifies four myths on rape and claims that Kane's take on sexual violence does not ascribe "to any particular feminist position" (229). In her research paper "Dealing with Bodies: The Corporeal Dimension in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and Martin Crimp's *The Country*" (2013), Maria Elena Capitani explores the approaches to corporeality, the fraught figuration of body, in the plays of Kane and Crimp. Both plays horribly treat the body in a horrible manner, but by removing it from the stage, from the sight of the audience, they subtly offer an experiential quality of the play to the audience.

Nina Rosanne Kane's doctoral thesis (2013) on Sarah Kane adopts "a dramaturgical approach" to the productions of the plays, namely *Blasted* in 1995 and *Cleansed* in 2012, in England, Japan and Ireland "from a feminist and queer position, informed by theories of gender and transgender, and the marginalized, loving and delinquent practice of clowning" (2). She discusses the theories of Luce Irigaray, Cicely Berry and Sue Morrison to bring the voice of the issues of the marginalized community of transgenders into the limelight through the violent practices "of gender violence,

mutability, transitioning, the sharp fractures and silences of gender dysphoria” (371).

The research paper of Ryan Claycomb “Here’s How You Produce This Play: Towards a Narratology of Dramatic Texts” (2013) highlights the way the features of a dramatic text, such as *4.48 Psychosis*, could help to effectively read its performance. It could be done “by considering this text in relation to both the mimetic narrative within and the paratext that surrounds it” (176). Amani Alied’s doctoral thesis entitled *A Desacralization of Violence in Modern British Playwriting* (2014) explores the relationships “between humor and violence or forms of ‘sacrifice’ in the” modern British plays (5). The study uses the philosophy of René Girard, involving religion, violence, and culture, and uncovers the daring plays which “give voice to the voiceless, to call the victims by their names and refuse to hide their stories of resistance against political oppression and social injustices” (276). Sarah Ablett’s research paper “Approaching Abjection in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*” (2014) employs the psychoanalytic framework of Julia Kristeva to explore abjection in the play. Ablett concludes that through the instances of abjection, such as rape, etc., the contemporary drama works to provide a catharsis to its ailing spectators.

Ellen W. Kaplan in her research paper “The Cage is my mind: Object and Image in Depicting Mental Illness on Stage” (2015) explores the representations of mental illnesses and disorders in the last two plays of Kane, namely *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* which blur “the boundaries between inner life and external reality” (120). Kaplan highlights that Kane’s artistic control over language and her theatrical freedom provided her with the opportunity to fiddle with the question of what is real and what is considered real. Mathew Roberts’s research paper “Vanishing Acts: Sarah Kane’s Texts for Performance and Post Dramatic Theatre” (2015) elaborates on the significance of Kane’s last play *4.48 Psychosis* by examining its language to demonstrate the “dynamic relationship between text and performance as well as how it challenges traditional conceptions of playtext and performance” (97). Jolene Armstrong in her book *Cruel Britannia: Sarah Kane’s Postmodern Traumatics* (2015) conducts a textual analysis of Sarah Kane’s examination of sexual and non-sexual violence and discusses the role “the construction of masculinity plays” in them (42). Kane “forcibly and persuasively breaks with deceiving, theatrical intent... rather than perpetuate illusion” (212).

Karoline Gritzner’s book *Adorno and Modern Theatre: The Drama of the Damaged Self in Bond, Ruskin, Barker and Kane* (2015) looks at the problem of expression as well as poststructuralist theories of subjectivity “in the post-Beckettian

projects of Barker, Bond, Ruskin and Kane” (22) to explore “the theoretical discourse of non-identity in performative theatrical and dramatic terms” (23). In her research paper “(Post)Modern Subjectivity and the New Expressionism: Howard Barker, Sarah Kane, and Forced Entertainment” (2008), Gritzner argues that in the postmodern theatre, the subject is bound to interact with the other and there is no escape from this prison. She finds that “the postmodernist deconstruction of the self is problematic and misleading if it implies and encourages a theoretical redundancy of the category of selfhood” (329).

The research paper by Stefka Mihaylova “The Radical Formalism of Suzan-Lori Parks and Sarah Kane” (2015) concentrates on the radical in-her-face plays of Parks and Kane and places them within the boundaries of formalism “to avoid perceived traps of identity politics” – racial and gender (227). Scott C. Knowles in his doctoral thesis entitled *Dystopian Performatives: Negative Affect/Emotion in the Works of Sarah Kane* (2016) focuses on the theatrical inquiry of Kane’s plays to understand the audience’s responses by studying three areas, namely “affect/emotion science, performance theory, and utopianism” (iii). The study concludes that such experiences leave a positive impact on the behavior and psyche of the audience. Catherine Rees in her book *Adaptation and Nation: Theatrical contexts for contemporary English and Irish Drama* (2017) focuses on the contemporary texts of theatrical performances, including Sarah Kane and others, to explore the concepts of adaptation and nation. The book goes on to “explore the idea of national theatre, and discuss the relationships between theatre, nation and adaptation” (2).

In his essay “Still: Sarah Kane after Beckett and Joy Division” (2017), Martin Harries looks at a production of Kane’s *4.48 Psychosis* to explore the concept of immobility. Harries argues that, as a theatrical piece with no stage directions and no visible action, the play defies its role of an appealing and/or confrontative piece and resorts to a state of withdrawal. Sean McCorry’s research paper “‘This Disgusting Feast of Filth’: Meat Eating, Hospitality, and Violence in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*” (2017) focuses on the consumption of meat in the play and concludes that the economy of meat, whether it is human or non-human, whether material or symbolic, reflects the violent grounds on which the society is based and is “thoroughly structured by misogyny and racism” (1). Merve Kansiz’s research paper “‘Born in the Wrong Body’: The Articulation of Sexual Self-Perception in Sarah Kane’s *4.48 Psychosis*” (2017) employs Merleau-Ponty’s concept of rationality as far as the logic of perception is concerned to explore the play’s “treatment of different perceptions” as well as Cixous’s “Aller a la mer” to “explore the

play's problematization of language in the depictions of sexual self-perception and of character(s)' bodily experience" (277). Kansiz concludes that it is the play that problematizes both, and it could be noticed by observing the play's fragmented scenes, the experiences of the protagonist patient in the hospital-like setting, and not its dramatic structure.

Alex Mangold's research article "Failure, Trauma, and the Theatre of Negativity: The New Tragic in Contemporary Theatre and Performance" (2019) argues that tragic failure is used as an important and defining element in the post-dramatic writings of playwrights, such as Kane, to foster a change in the society as well as to make an ethical stance within the contemporary chaotic social order (33). On the other hand, in their article "Trespassing Physical Boundaries: Transgression, Vulnerability and Resistance in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995)" (2019), Guerrero and Calvo argue that vulnerability is an important and defining human trait and is thus critically used by Kane. Vulnerability, for Kane as for Judith Butler, stands for a call for resistance and not for helplessness (1).

While conducting the review of literature, it is found that the existing research has employed different perspectives to explore violence in Kane's plays, including Aristotelian catharsis, absurdism, feminist, psychoanalytical, characterization, dramaturgical, post-dramatic and investigation of language and body. Various aspects of violence, such as sacrifice, scapegoating, institutionalization, and effects of violence on mental and physical health have also been investigated independently, but the present study provides a unified view to explore violence by employing a theory of violence which assimilates and carries forward a body of exploration of violence. The previous body of research takes violence for granted – hinting at the permanence of violence in the world – and the focus on violence in Kane's plays has been dispersed. These views can be seen to cohere within the body of thinking on violence as far as Kane's plays are concerned.

In exploring violence in Sarah Kane's plays, a view is presented in the form of a framework which is distinctive from other critical approaches. The present framework is nothing but an interpretation of Slavoj Žižek's theory of violence. In *Violence*, Žižek presents us with a typology of violence consisting of subjective and objective violence, with objective violence further divided into symbolic and systemic violence (1). According to Žižek, subjective and objective violence are two sides of the same coin, with the former as the visible or physical form of violence and the latter as the invisible or subtle form of violence. Furthermore, objective violence remains hidden because it is

built into the fabric of society, that is, the language we use, which is a medium of communication and reconciliation, can also facilitate violence; the functioning of our institutions also facilitates discrimination and inequality. In other words, objective violence is inclusive in the norm, or what Žižek calls the “zero-level standard” of our reality (2). He also finds that it is ideology, which renders the inherently violent norm of reality appear as “neutral, non-ideological, natural, [and] commonsensical” (31). That is, it hides objective violence from the common eye. For Žižek, it is the objective violence which sustains our reality. Subjective violence, on the other hand, is experienced against the very reality which is already inclusive of objective violence (2). This line of thinking suggests the topic for this proposed research to be – **Interpersonal Violence in the Plays of Sarah Kane: A Critical Study.**

As far as research objectives are concerned, four research objectives for my thesis have been formulated, which helped me to explore the aforementioned topic. The four research objectives are as follows:

- To develop a framework for the study of interpersonal violence in Kane’s plays by using the critical insights of Žižek
- To infer the links between interpersonal violence, patriarchy and gendered language
- To analyze violence in Kane’s plays by employing the framework developed in this research
- To explore the connection between interpersonal violence, patriarchy and gendered language in Kane’s plays

The research applies the technique of close literary analysis of Sarah Kane’s plays by employing the conceptual categories of interpersonal violence, patriarchy and gendered language by including the following:

- Survey of the theory of violence and its background
- Survey of patriarchy
- Survey of gendered or sexist language

Violence, in the plays of Sarah Kane, happens in an intimate social context between people who were or are intimate or become so to one another. The present thesis proposes to study Kane’s plays using an adaptation of Žižek’s theory of violence incorporating systemic patriarchy as the root cause of objective violence through the exercise of power and genderization of language. Ultimately, the objective violence of the patriarchal

system leads to overt subjective violence. These relationships are critically examined in the following chapters.

Chapter one consists of a framework which has been developed using Žižek's critical insights from his monograph *Violence*. The first section of the framework illustrates victim- and agent-hood. Here, Žižek's depiction of the victims and agents of violence is explored – their attributes, categories and courses of action. It comprises how the image/figure of the victims is constructed, how readily they are, or not, given the victim status and how they react to their victimization. It also comprises how the agents of violence victimize the weak, how they are immunized from the effects of violence, such as the pain and suffering of the victims, and how violence is defended or justified by the perpetrators and their supporters. In the second section, various aspects of Žižek's examination of the space of violence are explored, such as the space being ideological, abyssal and a nest of obscene fantasies. Various distinctions of space are observed, including open and closed space, private and public space, social and political space as well as cyberspace. In the third section, Žižek's take on the affective nature of violence is explored, such as how violence affects the subjects of space via their emotions, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, constant internal conflict, perception created by false-images and false narrative leading to a deadlock. It is also observed that violence can transform victims into agents of violence as well as witnesses/observers into either virtual victims or into ones who intervene to stop violence. Furthermore, the general theory is particularized to Western kinship. Here, the roles of language and gender within Western kinship are examined. It is observed that patriarchal ideology makes the norm of the reality of kinship appear natural. That is, it renders the objective violence to remain hidden in the features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations, which are underlined by paternalistic dominance in which the male is privileged and the female is underprivileged. This disparity, the sexual double standard and female subordination, is depicted in male-centrism/androcentrism as well as gender asymmetry within the sexist language and gendered practices of the Western kinship.

Chapter two examines the first aspect of the framework or the victim- and agent-hood within Kane's plays. The figures of victims and agents of violence are examined in Kane's plays, comprising their attributes and behavior. As victims, Kane's characters are perceived as threatening and intrusive figures as well as have become figures of obsession. They react differently to their respective victimization, including retreating to

a safe space, internalizing their victimization, becoming sensitive to future victimization and standing their ground or fighting back. As agents of violence, Kane's characters react to a perceived threat, and to victimize the weak, they caress their human side and qualities. They employ empty gestures to distract or coerce their victims; and defend/justify their actions by blaming the victim, portraying themselves as victims, diverting the blame on the institution they serve, defending their right to seek justice or vengeance, or claiming that violence is for greater good or requires a sacrifice.

Chapter three examines the space of violence within Kane's world. Her world is a world of violence not just because of the existence of subjective and objective violence, but also because her characters are born into violence and live with it. It is observed that Kane's world is violent because it is ideological and her characters are plagued with fear and envy of an imponderable Other, who keeps them in a never-ending abyss; and also, because it is a nest of obscene fantasies which exist in a censored form but are essential to sustain the space of violence.

Chapter Four explores the ways violence affects Kane's world. It has been observed that violence affects Kane's characters through their emotional response, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, internal conflict, perception and false narrative. Furthermore, as victims, agents and observers of violence, her characters are also affected by the presence of each other. There is a multilayered affectivity of violence in Kane's plays.

Chapter Five explores Kane's plays through the connection between language and gender as far as violence is concerned. It has been observed that the kinship system within Kane's plays is sustained by the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy makes the norm or the zero-level standard of the reality of Western kinship appear natural. That is, it renders Kane's characters to accept their domestic reality as natural and not inclusive of objective forms of violence. The features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations are underlined by gender disparity. This gender disparity within kinship in Kane's plays, also known as objective violence and comprises sexist language and gendered practices, is invisibilized by patriarchal ideology.

Chapter I – Slavoj Žižek’s Theory of Violence: A Theoretical Framework

Slavoj Žižek, born in 1949, a Slovenian postmodern philosopher and cultural critic, is one of the leading and prolific intellectuals of contemporary times. His oeuvre, comprising more than 70 monographs, continues to grow from the publications of his first *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, in 1989, to the start of the third decade of the 21st century, plagued with the Covid-19 Pandemic. Žižek has also “produced a swathe of journal and magazine articles, introductions, prefaces, polemics and commentaries” (Sharpe 1). His philosophy arises from the combination of Marxist political struggle, Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Hegelian dialectic which paved the way for his critique of “liberal-capitalist economy and liberal-democratic political order” (Zweerde 251).

Žižek, in his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008), has examined violence through different glances but he was not the first to look at violence within the human species. If we look at the core of human interests, we will find that all of their “interests are set in conflict with the interests of others,” and like life, literature also reveals the same, that violence held a central position as far as “the underlying structure of human motives and passions” are concerned (Carroll 33).

Before the twentieth century, violence, in general, and as a concept, was taken for granted, as a necessary part of being alive which did not require any explanation as far as its meaning or nature is concerned. Instead, the focus was on the impact, function, or use of violence. In ancient Greece, violence predominantly ran through its atmosphere, socio-religious norms, history, and literature. We find this, in the consolidation of a violent cultural environment, in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (Palaima 11); or “the hard realities... human beings go through in practicing and experiencing violence” in Homer’s *Iliad*, and *Odyssey* (4); or “overcoming concrete violence” through vulnerability as per Plato’s philosophy (Achtenberg 171); or countering the “‘natural’ or ‘free’ force” (Borisov 5) or the “reality-based anxieties” through the purgation of emotions by witnessing violence (Palaima 20). Similarly, violence was also deeply embedded in “the institutionalization of various forms of violence in Roman Culture” (Gale and Scourfield 6) – in its myths, literature, “social hierarchies and power-relations” (19). For instance: Cicero found it difficult “to distinguish between... justifiable brutality and... battle frenzy” (10); or conflict and heroism in Virgil’s and domestic violence in Ovid’s poetry as well as “mutilation and amputation” in Senecan drama (Most 395) and justified “pre-emptive killing in self-defense” in Augustine’s writings (Vorster 58); or

Aquinas's favoring state violence for "securing peace, coercing the wicked and helping the good" (62); or Machiavelli's advocating political violence for the good of the state (Tucker 405) and for "means to govern people (Winter 11).

Subsequently, the early-modern models for the study of violence, from the 14th to 19th century, were primarily engaged in the discussion of the relationship between sovereignty and warfare, primarily for political reasons. These models also focused on the use of violent means to effect a revolutionary change, primarily to solve prevalent societal problems. For instance: Bacon recognized that humans have learned to use violence from the nature, and they see it a means to change what needs to be changed (Pesic 77); or Spinoza finds individuality as the cause of violence in contrast to commonality which leads to agreement (Yeoman 64); Locke justifies the use of violence in the revolution, given it is virtuous and against the "criminal acts of tyrannical rulers" (Frazer and Hutchings 47); or Sorel claims that "violence is already on the scene" (56), inherent in the working of the state, and revolutionary or virtuous violence is a response to the existing state violence; or Kant's pacifist opinion that we should passively resist the tyrannical state and avoid partaking in revolutionary activities against the state (Hill 110); or Hegel finds "violence at the core of the law" (López 31) and claims that the legal system "reproduces the very same violence that it punishes" (43); or Kierkegaard finds "the root of violence in our turn away from God as we attempt to control creation" (Zlomislic 266) and claims that Christian love can overcome violence (581); or Nietzsche sees positivity in violence for its ability to "build another culture from destruction" (Gritti 144).

While the older models were exclusively focused on the function of violence, the theorists of the 20th century, on the other hand, explored its meaning and questioned the conditions which are responsible for its inception. This line of inquiry involved different schools of thought that collectively demonstrated multifaceted aspects of violence, that is, violence is ubiquitous, is both repressive and creative, and is tied to other concepts. For instance: Carl Schmitt finds that violence is intertwined with myth and creates the world of meaning, and this meaning has political significance (Rae and Ingala 4); or Benjamin finds latency and inseparability of violence "in all forms of violence" (Kellogg 76); or Gramsci argues that myths create and transform societies because they are affected by violence (Rae and Ingala 4); or Arendt points at different relationships between power and violence as well as different kinds of actions to re-conceptualize power and violence (5); or Heidegger argues that violence is included in the process of

our subjectification, in the way we act and think (D'Agnesse 449); or Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological claims that violence is inescapable and shapes the space we inhabit (Rae and Ingala 5); or Fanon emphasizes that violence as anti-colonial struggle makes us conscious of ourselves, and by providing catharsis, it motivates, unites and reconstructs society (Jha 360); or Derrida deconstructs simple origin of violence and argues that violence depends on primordial signifier, which is responsible for the generation of meaning and which ultimately defines them (Rae and Ingala 6); or Castoriadis sees violence as a necessary part of the development of the psyche and argues that the experience of violence is shaped by the socio-symbolic sphere of our society (7); or Agamben finds violence not only is intrusive and prohibitive but is also an opening or possibility of creativity (8); or Butler argues that violence stabilizes a certain worldview as a norm, while non-violence disrupts it and hints at the opening of an alternative worldview (7).

A similar perspective is provided by Slavoj Žižek in his monograph *Violence*, which provides a new and fascinating framework to look at violence. His theory of violence rejects the narrow definition of violence in which violence is reduced to physical confrontation and aggression. His theory proposes to look beyond the physical dimension of violence and consider violence in its much broader conception. Žižek's theory of violence not only categorically explains the manifestation of violence in the domains of social as well as economic and political systems – like, what constitutes this violence, who participates in it and who is the victim – but also presents us with structurally imbalanced systems, which work on the principle of inequality and/or exploitation, and thus generate violence. If we look at violence from the perspective of Žižek, we find that violence is built into the very fabric of our society.

Žižek defines violence both as an act of physical aggression and as an inherent feature of our society. He does not look at violence through moral or ethical lenses. He considers violence as “something inherently mystifying” and avoids “a direct confrontation with it” because doing so could overwhelm us emotionally and render us unable to comprehend violence in its entirety (Žižek, *Violence* 3). Although Žižek condemns violence, he finds that violence has destructive as well as creative features. As a destructive force, it can destroy a person, a group and an institution or system. As a creative force, it can shape the beliefs and behavior of a person and/or a group as well as create new institutions and sustain them. Thus, for Žižek, violence is integral and essential to the functionality of our society.

In his theory of violence, Žižek categorizes violence into a triumvirate, including subjective violence and “two objective kinds of violence,” namely symbolic and systemic violence (1). Subjective violence refers to the physical and immediate form of violence and is “the most visible of the three” (10). The “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict” are a few examples of subjective violence. Because of its visible nature, as it is “performed by a clearly identifiable agent,” subjective violence attracts and consumes our attention (1). For instance, an assault or a murder committed by a person. This form of violence is easily identifiable because we perceive it as a disturbance to the norm or the status quo of our social order. In the words of Slavoj Žižek:

subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the ‘normal’, peaceful state of things. (2)

As far as subjective violence is considered, for Žižek, it is just the tip of the iceberg. Because it is the most visible form of violence, it distracts us from other objective and more insidious forms of violence. For instance, a police officer using excessive force against a civilian from a minority/oppressed group might distract us from the structural oppression of that community. According to Žižek, if we want to understand and make sense of subjective violence, we need to put our focus on the objective forms of violence.

Objective violence is a more hidden and insidious form of violence. Because it is deeply embedded in the structures and institutions of our society, it is often ignored and overlooked. For instance, an economic policy introduced by the government to improve the businesses of the country ends up widening the wealth gap between the rich and the poor, leading to more poverty and social unrest. Objective violence is difficult to notice or often goes unnoticed because it is not perpetuated by an individual or a group of agents of violence and is accepted as the norm or the status quo. According to Žižek,

objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to... [the] ‘normal’ state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. (2)

Objective violence remains hidden because it is inbuilt in the very thing, we call the norm or normative. According to Žižek’s theory of violence, objective violence sustains the

norm of our social order and subjective violence disrupts it. Objective violence remains “barely visible or recognizable” because it sustains the illusion of a non-violent norm of our social order (Vidaillet 129). Subjective violence, on the other hand, seems irrational precisely because it is perceived as disruption against the so-called non-violent norm. This makes violence a complex issue because objective violence, which is inherent in the norm, creates the conditions for subjective violence, which is perceived against the norm. This is why Žižek calls for the recognition and investigation of objective violence if we want to bring real changes in our society as far as violence is concerned.

According to Žižek’s typology of violence, symbolic and systemic violence are objective violence. He defines the former as a form of violence which is embedded “in language and its forms,” and the latter is a form of violence which is the “catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (Žižek, *Violence* 1). Symbolic violence refers to the ways language and discourse can be used to perpetuate violence. It does so by maintaining or reinforcing existing or new social hierarchies and power relations. For instance, the use of hate speech or discriminatory language against people from oppressed/minority groups to sustain the social hierarchies and maintain the existing division between the communities. Symbolic violence can be hard to detect because it is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural norms and habits of our society. For instance: a racial slur commonly used by a police officer to address people of color; or advertisements promoting unrealistic/particular standards for women’s beauty; or the curriculum or teaching practices of some educational institutes create the standard of an ideal student which enforce the power structure, favoring the privileged and disadvantaging the underprivileged class.

Because symbolic violence is deeply ingrained into our norms, it is disguised as natural and neutral, and it becomes difficult to tackle and resist it. Symbolic violence works subtly and maintains the existing social structures and hierarchies. It does so by shaping our perception and understanding of our reality through language, discourse and cultural symbols. For instance, the use of heteronormative language, discourse and symbols not only makes reality appear heteronormative but also enforces heteronormativity as the norm of reality. The subjects of this social order would treat heteronormativity as the natural and neutral state of their social order and anything that is not heteronormative is treated as an exception or a mistake. In this heteronormative space, the use of a heteronormative language, like binary gendering, reinforces power relations in favor of heteronormativity and undermines or works to erase other sexual

communities. Žižek calls for a need to recognize the existence and operation of symbolic violence and challenge it if we want to bring concrete changes in our society.

Likewise, systemic violence is the form of violence which is built into our social structures/systems. Because it results from the working of the systems, it often remains hidden from the common perception. Objective violence is a part of the fabric of our society, it is normalized as everyday life and is not perceived as such. For instance, people from global south countries are often discriminated against and exploited by multinational companies as far as their wages are concerned, or non-heterosexual people are often discriminated against in getting employment and housing, or people of color are victimized more by police brutality.

Systemic violence, like symbolic violence, is deeply ingrained in the norms of the system and is also harder to detect and tackle. Systemic violence reveals how power operates through our social, political and economic systems. For instance, the goal of the capitalist system is accumulation of the capital or wealth. This is how capitalism operates. Capital is accumulated through perpetuating inequalities and injustices. This results in the creation of systemic problems like poverty, exploitation and socio-economic inequalities. For Žižek, to create a more equitable society, we need to recognize the deeply embedded systemic violence and challenge it. That is, there is a need for fundamental changes in our social structures and systems if we want to address systemic violence.

According to Žižek's theory of violence, violence is an inherent feature of our society. In discussing how it functions or operates, Žižek presents two concepts, namely mythical violence and divine violence. The former is a form of violence which aims to create and sustain social structures and systems, whereas the latter aims to destroy the existing social structures and systems. He borrows these opposing terms from Walter Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence," where Benjamin states that "if mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood" (*Reflections* 297). Benjamin also states that "all violence as a means is either law-making or law-preserving" (287), whereas the former imposes law, "the latter preserves an already-established law." As means to an end, both "fall under the concept of mythical violence" (Guzmán 50) because "both necessarily imply and feed each other" (61).

For Žižek, “mythical violence is a means to establish the rule of Law” as well as to maintain or sustain it (*Violence* 169). To create a new social order, myths or false narratives, representing some sort of an ideal vision of the social order, are employed which justify the use of violence. That is, beliefs are maintained that mythical violence is necessary if we want to create or sustain a particular social order. These beliefs are often rooted in the traditional or religious values of the social order. It requires a condition though. That is, if we want to create or sustain a particular social order, we must give something in return. This comes in the form of making a sacrifice. In other words, a sacrifice has to be made if we want to uphold our values or ideals in the pursuit of maintaining our social order. For instance, Nazi Germany was based on the belief that the Aryan race was superior and the Jews were inferior and a threat to the prosperity of the Aryans. Nazis used mythic violence to create and sustain their utopia. They also defended their right to do so based on their belief in purifying and strengthening their German nation. To achieve this goal, they were ready to make the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives as well as the sacrifice of the Jew sympathizers. Similarly, Stalin’s Soviet Union was also based on an ideal belief. A belief of a proletariat eutopia. They also used mythic violence to justify or defend their actions against their people whom they deemed as the enemy of the state.

Following Benjamin’s classification of mythic violence into law-making and law-sustaining, Žižek also maintains that both are deeply embedded in the functioning of our social order. That is, while the former is used to establish the norms and structure of a particular social order, the latter maintains these norms and structures through suppression. Law-making mythical violence refers to the act of establishing a new order through violent means. It does so by creating rules and regulations that would govern the newly created order. We can look at colonial history for its examples, such as the colonial laws during the British rule in India had created laws to secure itself from scrutiny and rebellion. That is, rebellion and resistance against British rule in India were prohibited and those violating these laws were considered criminals and were liable to punishment under the same law. In another example, the Patriot Act of the USA was created after the 9/11 attacks. It consisted of laws granting and expanding the powers of law enforcement agencies to investigate and detain suspected individuals. These laws were created hastily and without proper transparency. They aimed to create a better social order. The resulting order was inclusive of norms in which people grew suspicious of each other, with violence increasingly perpetrated against people of color under the guise of the newly

created laws.

Law-making mythical violence is often accompanied by law-sustaining mythical violence because the latter sustains the order created by the former. That is, law-sustaining mythical violence enforces the laws that have already been established by the law-making mythical violence. For instance, under British rule in India, the authorities used police and military force to suppress the movements resistive against colonial rule. Law-sustaining mythical violence can take many forms from police brutality to military intervention. It is defended or justified as an action to protect civilians or maintain the status quo of the social order. It is seen as protecting those in the position of power and authority. For instance, a public protest against the ruling regime is suppressed with the use of tear gas or rubber bullets. Law-sustaining violence in excess can also pose a threat to the existence of the very social order it is trying to sustain. That is, an excessive use of force to suppress protest or dissent can lead to greater unrest and resistance and can contribute to the breakdown of the very system it is trying to uphold. Žižek calls this reactionary violence against mythical violence as divine violence, violence which aims to destroy the existing order or power structures.

Žižek defines divine violence in terms similar to Benjamin. According to Žižek, divine violence arises from the sphere of the divine, where the “injustices are not forgotten. They are accumulated, the wrongs are registered, the tension grows more and more unbearable, till divine violence explodes in a retaliatory destructive rage” (*Violence* 152). One major characteristic of divine violence, for Žižek, is that there is no meaning of divine violence, it is just an expression of accumulated dissatisfaction into a violent outburst – a “sign of the injustice of the world, of the world being ethically ‘out of joint’.” How it is perceived depends on who is perceiving it, because “there are no ‘objective’ criteria enabling us to identify an act of violence as divine.” It is entirely subjective, that is, “the same act that, to an external observer, is merely an outburst of violence can be divine for those engaged in it” (169).

Divine violence is a radical and destructive form of violence. It aims to destroy the existing structures of power and authority. It can be both liberating as well as dangerous. That is, it can bring about positive as well as negative changes in our society. As the former, it can bring radical and significant changes, and as the latter, it can bring catastrophic changes in society. The French Revolution is an example of the liberating aspect of divine violence. It was set against the existing order of monarchy and aristocracy in France and aimed to destroy it. The destruction of an existing order then

can be the founding ground of a new order. Here, we see divine violence culminating in the creational cycle of the mythical violence. The resultant order after the French Revolution was based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. On the other hand, we find an example of the dangerous aspect of divine violence in the example of the 9/11 attacks on the USA. It was set against the existing order of Western imperialism and secularism to destroy it. Unlike the French Revolution, the 9/11 attacks led to catastrophic consequences inside as well as outside the USA. Following the attacks, on the one hand, people of color as a whole were systemically harassed and discriminated against, and on the other, the US bombed and attacked several countries in pursuit or disguise of seeking revenge or justice.

Divine violence can be justified by their agents as something that originates from the idea of a higher calling or purpose. But at the same time, it is not justified by any particular ideology, that is, it can be religious/spiritual as well as secular. The only aim is the destruction of the existing oppressive social order. Since the agents of divine violence have been earlier subjected to subjective/objective forms of violence in the existing social order, they resort to reacting against it to destroy it. They reject moral and legal principles that rule the existing order. So, the violence they perpetrate does not and cannot be justified by the same moral and legal principles. In other words, divine violence is beyond the realm of the law and morality of the existing order.

Žižek categorizes divine violence into two categories. The first is an immediate or reactionary form of violence, which occurs occasionally as it is the immediate course of revenge or justice. This pure and immediate divine violence “breaks the rule of myth... by destroying current law, before being absorbed again into the mythical cycle” (Guzmán 52). That is, soon after achieving its goal, it diffuses itself into the existing order, marking the permanent change in it. The occurrences of this divine violence are not futile just because they are absorbed into the normative. It could also be said that because they are absorbed, that is, revenge/justice is achieved, they hint at the occurrence of a more permanent and lethal form of divine violence. For instance, in 1992, following the death of three young black men from a slum area in Rio de Janeiro angered the localized people against police brutality. The “crowds descended from the favelas [slums] into the rich part of the city and started looting and burning supermarkets” (Žižek, *Violence* 171). The agents of divine violence, the angry crowd in this case, avenge the wrongdoing and bestow justice on the victimized. After achieving their goal, the crowd dispersed and went back into the social order after marking a change in the current order. The change

in the aftermath of Rio de Janeiro looting comes in the form of setting a precedent, including the widespread protests and social unrest in the city.

The other form of divine violence is revolutionary divine violence. It is seen as the one “which would bring a qualitative change to humanity and create a new world” (Guzmán 57), as it occurs “in the ‘coming age’” and “is the highest manifestation of divine violence” (52). It permanently destroys the existing order, but its possibility always lies in the future. That is, it cannot be actualized precisely because doing so would suck it back “into the cycle of mythical violence” (53). That is, as soon as this divine violence is actualized, it would cease to exist because it would fall into the means-end cycle. This is why many critics resist accepting this concept of divine violence because it never appears. Žižek’s examples of this divine violence, Reign of Terror in the French Revolution from 1792-94 and Red Terror of 1919, are not considered acts of divine violence (Kurelić 212; Linden 51). For Žižek, divine violence is radically subjective, that is, only those who are involved in it – its agents – enact divine violence. For those who are watching them from outside, it may appear to be a random act of violence.

Žižek finds that it is relatively easier to mark changes in the existing order, via immediate/reactionary divine violence, than to destroy the existing order, via revolutionary divine violence. It is because revolutionary divine violence is fueled by collected rage against the oppressive existing order and “there is never enough rage capital” (Žižek, *Violence* 159). That is, “after the revolutionary explosion of rage, full satisfaction never takes place and an equality and hierarchy re-emerge,” requiring a second explosion (158). The agents of revolutionary divine violence are never fully satisfied because the oppressive existing order is not fully destroyed because of the deficiency of enough rage. Žižek finds that successful historical revolutions like the French Revolution or Mao’s communist revolution are successful not because they had enough rage, but because they mixed other rages into their own. For instance, “Mao’s communism mobilize[d] the rage of exploited poor farmers, not proletarians” (159).

In addition to combining other rages to destroy the existing oppressive order, which is a violent way of doing things, Žižek also talks about a non-violent way which could also lead to the destruction of the existing order. According to Žižek, the act of total withdrawal, “a Gandhian level of non-violent resistance” (182), when enacted, leads to the collapse of the structurally oppressive order. He gives the example of Jose Saramago’s novel *Seeing* (2006) to illustrate his point. In the novel, the majority of the disillusioned citizens of an unnamed country cast blank ballots in the parliamentary

election. It leads to the collapse of the democratic structure of the country when “the government... labels the movement ‘terrorism, pure and unadulterated’ and declares a state of emergency, allowing the government to suspend all constitutional guarantees” (181). Despite numerous arrests and suspension of services, the citizens continue to indulge in day-to-day activities without much difficulty, further frustrating the ruling party. The act of total withdrawal is not to be confused with passivity or pseudo-activity. Passivity in the face of violence maintains the status quo of the existing order. For instance, ordinary Germans, who did nothing during the Nazi concentration camps, were passively complicit in the horrors of the Holocaust. Pseudo-activity, on the other hand, is “the urge to ‘be active,’ to ‘participate,’ to mask the nothingness of what goes on” (183). According to Žižek, all it does is to engage the existing order and the order continues to function smoothly. For instance, the sharing or signing of online petitions for a cause is a pseudo-activity. It provides the illusion of a social or political engagement but nothing really changes because it accepts and functions within the framework of the existing order and thus, amounts to nothing. The existing order continues to function as such.

The activity of withdrawal is an active refusal of engagement. It disrupts the status quo of the existing order. It rejects the very framework which perpetuates violence within the existing order. But, according to Žižek, the activity of withdrawal, the active form of resistance, is a truly difficult thing to do. First, because the existing order prefers or demands constant engagement from its subjects, this is how it sustains itself, the subjects must resist engagement with it. Second, the subjects are required to have resources at their disposal during the term of their collective resistance. Both of these are satisfied in José Saramago’s novel *Seeing* (2006). By realizing and employing their collective power, by refusing to engage with it and by helping each other out, the citizens of the unnamed capital city destroy the existing corrupt and unjust democratic system of their country. They achieve their goal through their collective effort.

For Žižek, violence and power are intrinsically linked to one another. Power is always accompanied by violence or the threat of it. The potential for violence is always present wherever power is involved. That is, while “violence [is] the necessary supplement of power;” power, on the other hand, “is always-already at the root of every... relationship of violence” (Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* 191). For instance, to seek or maintain power over an individual, a group, or subjects of a state, violence is employed as a tool. Žižek gives the example of Israel, a state founded by displacing and oppressing

a section of the population, the Palestinians (Žižek, *Violence* 116). Israel maintains and enforces the power relations between the Palestinians and the state through the use of violence. At the same time, Palestinians also use violence as a means to resist the state power. They resist the state power of Israel with their collective power, through acts of civil disobedience, terrorism, etc. Thus, for Žižek, violence and resistance are bound with power. In other words, power is needed if we want to perpetuate or resist violence. In Žižek's theory of violence, power can be exerted in two ways: either as a liberating power which is employed to avoid getting dominated by others, that is, "to achieve independence from [the dominating] others" (54), or as "a destructive power" (56) which is employed to dominate or subdue others. In discussing the liberating power, where we seek and perpetrate violence to liberate ourselves from others' dominance, Žižek gives the example of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Žižek claims that liberation for the Palestinians includes not only getting out of Israeli occupation but also from the influence of the "corrupted clerical and military regimes from Syria to Saudi Arabia" (107). Žižek believes that Israel as well as the Arab countries have their own agenda for prolonging the conflict. They do not want to resolve it. It is because the state of Israel does not want to lose its victim card, the image/status of Jews being universal victims (102); the Arab countries, on the other hand, are using "the Israel occupation to legitimize themselves" (107).

In discussing destructive power, where we perpetuate violence to be from a dominating position, Žižek gives the example of capitalist power structures. As a corrosive power, capitalism "undermines all particular lifeworlds, cultures, and traditions, cutting across them, catching them in its vortex" (132). The goal of capitalism is to make a profit at all costs and it is achieved by dominating the market and exploiting the workers. In other words, the capitalist power structures derive their power from the weak and sustain themselves through systemic violence. In another example, Žižek talks about the concentration of power in a totalitarian regime. The regime does not listen to the weak and tries to maintain the status quo by any means necessary. It derives its power from its subjects because they have accepted to participate in the exploiting power structure. The subjects do not resist the existing structure primarily because they do not perceive it as such. That is, the exploiting power structure is disguised by a narrative in which it is idealized. Žižek finds that,

One of the strategies of totalitarian regimes is to have legal regulations

(criminal laws) so severe that, if taken literally, *everyone* is guilty of something. But then their full enforcement is withdrawn. In this way, the regime can appear merciful... (135)

According to Žižek, this act of disguise is exactly how an ideology operates. That is, it naturalizes the power relations within the existing power structures. In the case of a totalitarian regime, ideology legitimizes the exploiting power structure of the regime by framing inequality and concentration of power as a natural and inevitable aspect of the system.

In inspecting the concept of violence, Žižek finds ideology in the working and maintenance of the existing order. Ideology, in a generalized form, “is a strategy of reproducing domination and exploitation that operates in the realms of communication, culture, psychology, emotions, and beliefs” (Fuchs 217). Terry Eagleton provides a range of the meaning of ideology. He understands ideology as: “ideas, ...class experience, ...legitimization of class interest, ...legitimization of dominant class’ interest, ...legitimation of a ruling class or group’s ideas by distortion and dissimulation, ...false consciousness” (220). For ideology to work effectively, it must first create a difference of perception – that is, a difference between how an object is and how it appears – and then hide and naturalize this difference, making the object appear true and natural to the subjects. Žižek also subscribes to such a view but in a slightly different manner. That is, his understanding moves beyond the conception of ideology as being “‘false conscious’ or an illusion as perceived by Marx” (Cook 14), which is nothing but a distortion of reality. In other words, Žižek rejects the notion that ideology is false conscious because it is not “an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself” (*The Sublime Object* 30). Ideology, for Žižek, refers to a set of beliefs, values, practices and structural norms, both conscious and unconscious, that shape our understanding and actions. It informs our habits, routines, cultural, religious and political convictions as well as the way we perceive ourselves and others, and how we interact and interpret them.

Žižek argues that ideology presents us with a particular sense of reality. It does so by masking the underlying conditions of reality. That is, ideology is not simply a perception of a given life or situation rather it is inherent in the very modes of life or situation. Thus, ideology is real for those who are subjected to it because their actions and thoughts are the embodiment of their ideology. In this way ideology makes reality

appear natural and neutral to us. For instance, presenting a partial or distorted vision of reality can hide the true nature of reality. It can hide the way power is distributed within the space and obscure the prevailing inequalities and oppressive norms. Engaging in a capitalist framework is an example of how ideology determines an individual's perceptions and actions. People living under a capitalist framework see success in terms of gaining capital and resources and indulge in individualism without being aware that this is how the ideology of capitalism works. That is, it rewards those who favor individualism and competition over solidarity and cooperation. The ideology of capitalism shapes our understanding of what success is by changing the underlying socio-cultural as well as political or economic structures and practices of our society. For this reason, Žižek claims that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than a far more modest change in the mode of production, as if liberal capitalism is the 'real' that will somehow survive even under conditions of a global ecological catastrophe" (*Mapping Ideology* 1).

Žižek also talks about how ideology operates implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly, it operates through the subtle forms of norms and values of a society. By naturalizing and normalizing the distorted reality, ideology achieves multiple goals that make it harder for us to see the truth by instilling a sense of comfort and security in the adherence to ideology and the status quo of reality. At the same time, it also obscures alternative possibilities. For instance, if success is measured in terms of individual gain of capital, then people would indulge in the rat race in the hopes of achieving success. Even if they are exploited, they would get a sense of relief and comfort that they are gaining capital, that they are achieving success. Another example of how ideology operates on an implicit level is "the liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation" in which "political differences... are naturalized and neutralized into 'cultural' differences... something that cannot be overcome... [but] 'tolerated'" that is, it becomes the problem of intolerance rather than the problem "of inequality, exploitation, or injustice" (Žižek, *Violence* 119).

On the other hand, explicitly, ideology operates through propaganda to influence and alter people's perceptions and actions. An example would include an unrealistic characterization of a war hero by the nationalist ideology in which the hero achieves or performs something in terms of an impossible task. The hero does so by making the ultimate sacrifice and is hailed and even worshiped for it. The propaganda is circulated to naturalize the spirit of sacrifice for their nation. By actively glorifying the readiness of the people to sacrifice their lives, nationalist ideology distorts the reality in which the

focus is shifted from the living standard of the citizens to the survival and prosperity of the nation. Citizens might seem to contend with living in miserable conditions in the hopes that they are also making sacrifices for their nation and are somehow contributing to the glorification of their nation. For instance, “the propaganda texts distributed by North Korea during the Korean War” include the unrealistic heroic tale of a soldier named Kang Ho-yung, who with broken arms and legs is somehow able to kill the enemies with a grenade in his mouth only after making a speech praising their leader (71). This propaganda text serves to mask the true reality of the North Koreans with something they can feel proud of despite having day-to-day difficulties and oppressive norms.

Žižek also maintains that what distinguishes a dominant ideology from others is its ability to reorganize in anticipation of its subjects’ skepticism towards the prevalent beliefs and norms. That is, the dominant ideology can locate the potential actions of its subjects well within its boundaries. So, it does not matter if the subject reacts to the dominant ideology in a skeptical manner or not, their actions nevertheless would sustain and strengthen the prevalent ideology. In other words, a dominant ideology operates through the unconscious of its subject such that even if the subject “is perfectly aware of the ideological deception, he/she hardly resists it,” and this is because the unconscious of the subject is symbolically overdetermined, making the subject a “product of the symbolic” (Lekesizalin 65).

Žižek follows Lacan in describing the conception of the subject, a product of the socio-symbolic space in which it erupts. According to Lacan, as individuals, “we are born into a pre-existing language and system” and therefore cannot be “a self-contained autonomous individual but a being that must articulate itself in a pre-existing network of signifiers” (Homer 159). In other words, a subject comes into existence because of the social reality, its linguistic and social structures. Lacan postulates that the individual is born into a pre-existing language and system and undergoes symbolic castration to become a subject. He gives the example of a child, who becomes a subject or recognizes himself as a subject, only after the separation from their mother and entrance into the symbolic world of language and images.

Žižek also posits that we become subjects of our social reality precisely because we are born into it. That is, without being aware of the true nature of our existence, we follow certain social discourses and practices, and seek meaning and validation according to these discourses and practices. The process by which we are integrated into our social

settings and become subjects of our particular social system is called ideological interpellation. According to Žižek, it is “the process of ideological interpellation through which the subject ‘recognizes’ itself as the addressee” (*The Sublime Object* xxv). For instance, if a person is born into a religious family, their particular religious faith transforms them into a believer by providing them with a framework to understand the world and their place in it. The subject of this particular religious faith is a religious person who understands the world from a certain perspective which they believe is natural and integral to their being. Or, in a capitalist society, advertisement transforms a person into a consumer by providing them with a framework, according to which happiness/success is directly proportional to buying/owning capital. The subject of the capitalist world is a consumer who views happiness/success in terms of buying goods or owning capital. Thus, a subject is someone who “sustains the very universal frame” in which they exist through their actions, and they also have the capacity to disturb the global order (Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* 160).

In the context of violence, Žižek maintains that subjectivity is inclusive of violence because violence is present in the social settings within which the subject is interpellated. For instance, soldiers are interpellated as subjects of the military institution which is built on the principle of obeying orders, including the perpetration of violence. So, interpellation can legitimize violence as something which is deemed natural and neutral, like soldiers fighting against terrorists to protect the civilians or the country. Žižek has also talked about subjectivity which is inclusive of a subtle form of violence, also known as systemic violence. He gives the example of the expulsion of the bourgeoisie from Soviet Russia in 1922 (Žižek, *Violence* 8). People like Nikolai Lossky, who were born into rich families and enjoying their comfortable lives, were the interpellated subjects of the bourgeoisie society. Their subjectivity was inclusive of insensitivity and blindness to the systemic violence the poor had been suffering for a long time. No wonder when the campaign against bourgeoisie took place, those who benefitted from the dominating and exploitative relations between the classes were expelled no matter how generous and caring they, individually, were towards the poor.

Žižek also follows Lacan in describing our subjectivity. According to Lacan, the figure of the Other is the locus around which the subject is created. That is, it is only through the subject's relation to the Other that the subject becomes cognizant of their own self as well as their place in the world. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, there are two forms of Other, namely “the little other, which refers to other people, and the big Other,

which is the socio-symbolic system itself” (Homer 160). For Lacan, either as another subject or as the symbolic order, the Other is never complete, there is always something missing and this discovery of something lacking in the Other informs the birth of the subject. Lacan gives the example of a child. For a child, the mother represents the figure of the Other around which their subjectivity is formulated. The mother provides and satisfies every need of the child, but the child soon discovers that the mother goes away and does not always return. This discovery marks the figure of the mother as something imperfect or incomplete. As a result of this discovery, the child undergoes symbolic castration and starts to form their sense of self, distinct from their mother (Evans 136).

Firstly, the discovery of the lack in the figure of the Other is crucial and central to the formation of the subjectivity of a person because it informs their desires, and what derives them. Žižek also claims that the discovery of incompleteness of the Other does not necessarily mean that the subject knows what exactly the Other is lacking. The subject cannot know what the Other lacks simply because it is unknowable, that is, our subjectivity is built on this lack. In other words, lack is nothing but an inherent feature of our subjectivity. For Žižek, the Other constitutes the lack in us. Since the Other is external to us, we cannot know what the Other lacks. So, the next best thing we can do is to make an assumption. We assume that it must be something of value and/or appeal and we desire to attain it. It is here ideology comes into play. It naturalizes our desires.

Žižek paves the way to show how this lack is satisfied by ideology, but to do so he reformulates ideology as something inherently paradoxical, which fulfills as well as denies the subject’s desire to unite to their being. Instead of providing a passage to the desire, which would fulfill the subject’s lack, ideology enables misrecognition – it redefines the desire for the subject. That is, instead of satisfying the subject’s original desire to fulfill the fundamental lack that underlies their subjectivity, ideology defers the subject to a stand-in desire which is shaped by their social reality, the socio-cultural norms and expectations. Ideology not only creates the stand-in desire but also makes it appear natural and neutral by formulating what is acceptable or desirable within a particular social context. For instance, the ideology of consumer capitalism not only creates a desire for materialistic things among the subjects within the symbolic order but also promotes the idea of happiness and fulfillment through consumption.

For Žižek, our desire is directly informed by what we lack, and the “place holder of lack” is called “*objet petit a*,” also known as the “object-cause of desire” (Gildersleeve 110). The *objet a* is not an actual object per se but is a fantasy or a virtual construct. It is

both the source of our desire and denies its fulfillment because we can never possess it fully. It refers to those objects that make us desire them just because we assume that the Other desires them too. For example, in the “imaginary link between the infantile body and the mother,” when the child becomes a subject upon their “entry into the symbolic order,” the *objet a* reflects “the fantasy of a loss” and not any feature of mother’s anatomy nor any memory associated with her. This loss is primal, resulting from the child’s subjectification, who has left behind the possibility of a reunification with the mother. This lack “stimulates a fantasy of absolute love that is the true cause of desire” (Kirshner 88).

Since the subject cannot fully possess the *objet a*, their desire can never be fully satisfiable, rendering the subject to remain incomplete, unfulfilled and unsatisfied. Žižek claims that fantasy solves this problem for us by providing a kind of completeness and satisfaction to the subject. Fantasy refers to the “matrix through which subject begins to desire” (Cottrell 89). It distracts us “from directly engaging with the dissatisfaction of lack” and “provide[s] something of equal consequence” (90). It is fantasy whereby the subject becomes a desiring-subject. It provides a safety net to the subject by providing an illusion that would tackle the incompleteness. To do so, fantasy sets the subject on a path of pursuance. It points towards a privileged object which is the potential cure of the subject's lack. What fantasy provides is the chance for the subject to fulfill their lack via desire. That is, by domesticating the desire, fantasy brings the subject to a promise of enjoyment, or *jouissance*, which is nothing but “the excess of repression” (Daly 80). It is a kind of negative pleasure; pleasure we get from prohibitions. According to Lacan, the subject has never possessed *jouissance*, it is “an empty spectre, a kind of anamorphic effect of symbolic circumscription” (83). The sole bearer of *jouissance* is the figure of the Other. This is the illusion fantasy traps the subject in. That is, it promises the enjoyment to the subject, the satisfaction of possessing the desired object, but since the subject does not possess the *objet a*, fantasy makes it appear that the figure of the Other possesses it. For the subject, if they do not possess the *objet a* then someone else definitely must and this someone is none other than the Other. That is why the subject is always fascinated by the Other. In other words, the subject is attracted to what distresses them. In this sense, enjoyment is something which “not only animates the subject but also threatens to destroy it” (80). For instance, for a smoker, smoking harms their health but they still indulge in smoking because they get a certain pleasure from it.

In the context of violence, ideology structures a false reality and insists that the

subject must believe it (Zeihner 205). It revolves around the figure of the Other as it occupies the central stage. The subject is fascinated by the Other because they derive their enjoyment from it. That is, the Other refers to the subject's lack and defines their desires. For Žižek, ideology provides a framework that shapes the subject's perception of the imbalanced and exploitative world as well as offers a coherent and satisfactory justification for it. It makes the reality appear natural and inevitable. It does so by pitching the subject against the Other by presenting a false picture of the Other, one which is both to be feared and desired/envied. That is, violence often results from the threat posed by the Other as well as the subject's pursuit of the desired object, the *objet a*, which is possessed by the Other. For Žižek, violence results as a response to the subject's fear and desire towards the Other. It is an ideology that helps create and sustain a narrative in which the Other is seen as a figure of fear and desire.

As a figure of fear, the Other is perceived as someone foreign, unknown, dangerous and/or threatening. It threatens the subject's existence as well as their way of life. For subjects, the other is an enemy which must be defeated and violence is used to secure their own safety. For instance, immigrants in a homogenous community/country are perceived as the figure of the Other. The ideology of the homogenous community creates a narrative in which immigrants appear to be low-lives, criminals and thieves; and pose a threat to the society, as their existence challenges the existing norms and way of life in which they are marginalized. The ideology serves to create uneasiness and fear among the citizens, intending to get rid of the immigrants from the homogenous community. It opens up doors for violence as it justifies the use of violence against immigrants.

According to Žižek, fear is the "ultimate mobilizing principle" (Žižek, *Violence* 34). Because by instilling fear into the subjects, a passion or solidarity is introduced among the subjects and hate is introduced against the Other. The fear or paranoia of the subjects is used as a tool to mobilize them. To perpetrate violence against other humans, an ethical illusion is employed to psychologically blind the subjects so that the victimization does not invoke sympathy. It is done by reducing the Other to a non-human entity, an object whose misery or proximity to the subject would not generate sympathy among the subjects. Ideology plays a major role in pitching and blinding the subjects against the threatening Other. Two sets of rules are created to achieve the goal of separating the subjects from the Other. The first is for the subjects, in which common ethical norms are followed. The second is for the Other, in which the ethical norms are broken. According to Žižek, this distinction of different rules between different groups

“does not come naturally to” us, rather “it is a violation of our spontaneous ethical proclivity” and “involves brutal repression and self-denial” (41). For instance, “the very same people who commit terrible acts of violence towards their enemies can display warm humanity and gentle care for the members of their own group” (40). Žižek gives the example of the New Orleans riots of 2005, where false images are constructed out of partial truths to create and maintain the fantasy that the Other is supposed to be feared. After Hurricane Katrina, the destroyed poor urban neighborhoods, mostly black, faced racist prejudice. They were left on their own, no help was provided by the authorities, but at the same time, fake reports of rape and sexual assaults were reported in the media. Usually, poor urban neighborhoods indeed have more crime than thinly populated neighborhoods. But in this instance, partial truths, consisting of preconceived notions mixed with racial prejudice, were used to create an intolerable image of the Other, in this case, the black people. Thus, the Other becomes “a screen for the projection of our fears, anxieties and secret desires” (88).

As a figure of desire, the Other is perceived as someone who is to be fascinated with. Ideology marks a permanent gap between the subjects and the Other, which is maintained by constructing the role of the Other, as a desiring Other. The Other is envied by the subject because it not only possesses the desired object, also known as *objet a*, but also has the ability to enjoy it. It is an ideology that uses enjoyment as a tool to submit the subject to the existing social order by maintaining that the Other possesses it precisely because they have stolen it from the subject. Thus, the Other becomes the primary focus of the subject. The subject is disturbed not only by the Other’s possession of *objet a*, but also its ability to enjoy it.

Ideology tricks the subject into accepting the repression via the fantasy of surplus enjoyment. Jouissance, writes Žižek, is “the circular moment which finds satisfaction in failing again and again to attain the object” (*Enjoy Your Symptom* 48). That is, the subject gets the pleasure not from any object per se but rather from the pursuit of the unattainable object of their desire. In other words, the lack in the subject is the lack of enjoyment and the subject is fascinated by the Other because they possess this enjoyment. So, rather than setting onto the path to attain enjoyment, the subject is thrown in the opposite direction. Since the subject cannot fully possess the enjoyment because the Other has it, the subject is pitched against the Other’s ability to enjoy. So, they work to deny the Other of their enjoyment. For the subject, this enjoyment does not belong to the Other because it is stolen from them. Žižek gives the example of the response to the French suburban riots

of 2005, where the subjects feel fascinated by the Other's (immigrants) way of life, especially their ability to live in and enjoy the welfare state without any contribution. The Other is not involved in creating and/or sustaining the welfare system but is milking the benefits of the system and at the same time is complaining about the system. Here, the Other's ability to enjoy becomes an object of envy. For the subjects, this enjoyment is not earned by the Other and belongs to the subjects of the system. The subjects cannot get it back because the enjoyment of the Other is non-transferable. So, the only possibility of a goal is of a psychological gain – that is, to destroy the Other's ability to enjoy even at the expense of their own loss. For the subjects, violence seems like the logical way to get back what they have lost.

According to Žižek, the symbolic order, into which we enter and are interpellated as its subject, is the network of social rules and norms that form reality. The rules and norms of our social reality inform our subjectivity and regulate our actions and behavior. It shapes how we unconsciously perceive ourselves as well as others based on what is acceptable and unacceptable in society. By operating at an unconscious level, ideology naturalizes and normalizes these social rules and norms as well as makes it difficult for us to question or challenge them. For instance, in a patriarchal order of society, the language as well as the cultural and social norms prioritize male control and dominance. So, the males are given priority and importance over their female counterparts in the socio-cultural relations, operations and structures. These rules and norms are hard to challenge because they shape the unconscious fantasies and desires of the subjects. That is, it is relatively easier for a heterosexual man to succeed within the patriarchal framework because the social norms and structures provide them with unforeseen advantages over their female and non-heterosexual counterparts. In the context of violence, Žižek maintains that symbolic order is inclusive of violence. That is, it can provide space for the eruption of violence if the already established norms and rules are challenged or disrupted. For instance, certain life-worlds, like Taliban rule over Afghanistan, are strict on gender roles because their social reality is maintained through the enforcement of strict gender roles and norms. The gender disparity already discriminates against women and are subjected to further violence in the form of punishment if they challenge the norms of the strict religious gender order under the Taliban rule. There is a provision of punishment if women are caught not following the laws, like failing to cover their faces (Akbari and True 630) or protesting against the institutionalized discrimination.

Violence, posits Žižek, “threatens to explode not when there is too much contingency in the social sphere, but when one tries to eliminate this contingency” (Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming* 11). For instance, challenging the norms within the patriarchal framework would attract a violent response against those challenging the status quo. Žižek also maintains that “violence is not an ontological given, something inherent to certain acts” rather “it only appears within a particular context, a socio-symbolic framework that is structured by ideology” (Rasmussen 324). The “ideological apparatuses,” says Žižek, “always-already prepare the ground for the exercise of physical violence” (Žižek, “Invisible ideology” 16). In other words, ideology sustains the very norms of the social reality which is inclusive of violence and it works to legitimize the systemic aspect of the violence as well as renders it invisible in the normal functioning of the symbolic order.

Building up on Žižek’s theory of violence, the study formulates a framework, comprising three aspects, namely: victims and agents, space and affectivity of violence. In Žižek’s theory of violence, the subjects’ potential for violence is always present, but their attitude or behavior is generally shaped and influenced by the space they inhabit. And this relation also has an affective influence.

The first aspect, namely victims and agents of violence, determines the presence of violence within the figuration of victims and agents of violence. The term *victim* refers to “the Latin word for sacrificial animal, *victima*” (Van Dijk 1) and is often negatively connotated to a state of passivity and weakness (Thunberg and Bruck 206). In other Western and Middle Eastern languages, comprising modern Greek, German, Dutch, Icelandic, Hungarian, and Slavic languages as well as Hebrew, and Arabic, the word refers to “sacrifice and/or sacrificial object.” Contrarily, in the Asian languages, including Japanese and Chinese, the term *victim* is used in a more neutral sense, such as calling the victim, the one who is harmed (Van Dijk 2). Van Dijk found the origins of *victima*, as a sacrificial object, in the “Christian imagery of Jesus Christ,” which is “directly derived from the Catholic (and Lutheran) concept of Jesus as the Lamb of God” (3). Despite being used as an alternative name of Christ in Europe for many centuries, it was only after the 17th century that the term *victim* was informally used in a broader sense, referring to and relating to the suffering of fellow humans, as the general victims of the disasters and crimes, to the suffering of Christ (4). This image of Christ, Nietzsche pointed out, as the one who does not resist, defend and protect, but instead prays, suffers and loves his tormentor (5), grounded the concept of an innocent victim. The comparison,

between Christ and the victims of the disasters and crimes, carried a double meaning which turned the victims into sacrificial objects. One, the acknowledgement that the victims, like Christ, are innocent sufferers, and second, like Christ, they need to forgive their tormentor. Thus, the victim connotes sacrifice, the sacrifice of “their right of revenge” (7).

The modern usage of the term *victim* comes from the late 1940s when “first systematic studies of victims began... in the fields of criminology and victimology” (Jacoby 514). While criminology encompasses “the scientific study of illegal activities, offenders, their victims, criminal law and the justice system, and societal reactions to the crime problem” (Karmen 18); victimology, on the other hand, encompasses “the scientific study of the physical, emotional, and financial harm people endure because of illegal activities” (1). Both fields often overlap. They share many similarities between them, but the primary difference between them is their preoccupation with the opposing parties in a conflict. In criminology, the focus is on criminals, that is, their behavior, motives, causes for behavior, and how they can be rectified or punished. For this reason, it is also known as “offenderology” (20); and victimology focuses on the plight of the victims, that is, their injuries, losses, suffering, causes of victimization, and how to provide them assistance, security, and healing processes (2). There are problems with their respective approaches to victims. While criminology was “traditionally preoccupied with the perpetrator;” traditional victimology, a subdiscipline of criminology, by categorizing the victims into features, like culpability, proneness, etc. is criticized for indirectly blaming the victims, especially in the “politically, racially, or sexually motivated crime” (Ferguson et al. 859).

In the field of international relations, the issue of the complexity of the identity of victims also arose when the United Nations defined the term in their 1985 *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* as:

persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power (214).

The etymological origins of the term *victim* as *victima* or sacrificial thing create an issue

as far as the agent or perpetrator of violence is concerned. Because it can put “the behavior of the perpetrator in a strangely favorable light,” that is, if the victimized is an object of sacrifice, then the perpetrator seems to be “motivated by higher, unselfish motives.” The same logic applies to the etymology of the term *Holocaust* which refers to a “sacrifice by fire,” or burnt offering. Most Jewish people avoid the term because it “implicitly suggests that the killing of millions of Jews has somehow served a higher purpose” and casts the Nazis in a relatively positive light. For this purpose, they prefer an alternative “*shoah* meaning the God forsaken disaster” (Van Dijk 2) to the term Holocaust to connote the gravity of the tragedy. Similarly, there has been a call, mostly by feminists and supported by other scholars, to replace the negatively connotated term *victim* with a positive and strong term *survivor* (3). Papendick and Bohner (2017) in their study found that the victimized women when self-referencing, experienced “positive effects of the label ‘survivor’, which increased the women’s perceived long-term psychological stability” (16). Regardless of the terminology, whether victim or survivor, their link with the agent or perpetrator of violence cannot be denied. Both are interdependent. Where one is conjured, the other is implied by default. That is why, most thinkers and researchers use them emphatically.

In his theory of violence, Slavoj Žižek has used the term *victim* to represent the one who is harmed through objective and/or subjective violence. Objective violence represents the latency of violence, that is, it “is precisely the violence inherent to... [the] ‘normal’ state of things” (Žižek, *Violence* 2). Subjective violence, on the other hand, represents the manifestation of violence, that is, it is the violence including “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict” (1). Given that subjective violence is the visible mode of violence, the victims of subjective violence possess a certain appeal than the victims of objective violence. For instance, the physical torture of a person can be more difficult to witness or the death of a child can be more provoking than the subtle systemic discrimination against women at home or the minorities at the workplace. This is because, “although our power of abstract reasoning has developed immensely, our emotional-ethical responses remain conditioned by age-old instinctual reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that is witnessed directly” (36). On the other hand, the victims of objective violence are often ignored or overlooked precisely because of the invisibility of objective violence. Their victimization is not seen as such rather “seems just to have happened as the result of an ‘objective’ process, which nobody planned and executed” (12). For instance, the working conditions of an institution, like long hours,

hard manual labor, etc., disadvantage women over men especially if they have children and household duties. Women in these working conditions tend to lose jobs or do not excel/succeed in their professional jobs when compared to men of similar skill sets. They are expected to compete in an environment which is discriminatory against them as far as their professional life is concerned. The systemic racial profiling by the police against people of color is another example because the institution itself determines the ways to identify suspicious individuals who happen to be closely related to the people of color, making the whole process discriminatory against the people of color.

Žižek finds the figure of the victim of violence in the field of psychoanalysis, where the victim is an individual who is victimized precisely because they are perceived as a disturbing Other. This Other is an alien being or a foreigner with a different lifestyle and way of doing things, whose presence “disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails” and “when it [Other] comes too close, this can also give rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder” (50). The proximity of this disturbing Other makes us cautious and the immediate reality more volatile. Since this disturbing Other is an alien being, we cannot know them and their unknowable wants, intentions and desires, which makes us suspicious of them. So, “to dissipate our own sense of incomprehension thrown by the” disturbing Other, “we create our own scenario, explaining... their actions in terms of a hidden agenda” (Myers 94). Žižek points out that since we cannot know what they want, we rely on our imagination and conclude that they probably want something precious from us. In this way, we create a fantasy that “acts as a structure that provides the coordinates” of what we desire or imagine what the Other wants (Cottrel 89). According to Tony Myers, fantasy, for Žižek,

functions as an attempt to fill out the void of the question of ‘What do you want from me?’ by providing us with a tangible answer. It spares us from the perplexity of not knowing what the Other really wants from us. (94)

Fantasy, thus, projects “our fears, anxieties, and secret desires” about the Other (Žižek, *Violence* 88). Žižek believes that the fear of the disturbing Other is the “ultimate mobilising principle” which causes violence (34). The figure of the disturbing Other is that of an intruder who has entered our space to disturb us and our way of life. This intruder appears dangerous because of the image we have created of them, which is inclusive of our prejudices, biases and stereotypes. The proximity of this potentially

dangerous and threatening intruder generates fear in us. We become fearful because we imagine that this Other threatens us with the fear of harassment as well as poses obstruction and danger to our way of life. So, the aim is to get rid of this potentially dangerous and threatening Other by any means necessary, including violence. It can be done either by eliminating them from our space, for instance, the Holocaust where the Other, the Jews, were systematically eliminated, or by splitting the very quality of the intrusive Other which makes them intrusive in the first place, for instance, the decaffeinated coffee, the very quality of coffee which makes it a coffee. The presence of the Other, in the latter case, can be tolerated because it is not intrusive. But, according to Žižek, “this Other is not really” an Other (35).

Žižek also believes that we are obsessively preoccupied with the figure of the Other. Since we do not know what they want, we like to believe that they must be seeking something from us. We become intrigued by their desire and not of our own. Since we prioritize them and their desires, we find ourselves lacking something and end up wanting or desiring the same thing which, we believe, the Other wants or desires. For Žižek, desire is intersubjective. That is, the things we desire, for instance, our “tastes, wishes, choices, are thus directly informed by what ([we] imagine) the Other desires” (Bjerre 66). Since we are always predicting and chasing Other’s desires, we become envious of them. We resent them for our lack, which is directly informed by their desires. Once we consciously or unconsciously recognize our lack, we try to fulfill it by all means necessary. We start to look at what the Other has and we do not. We look for something of value, the prized object of Other’s desire. It is also known as *objet petit a*, “‘the object cause of desire’ and ‘the unobtainable object of desire’” (Haley 202). Since the Other has this prized object and we do not, we envy them. According to Žižek:

The subject does not envy the Other’s possession of the prized object as such, but rather the way the Other is able to enjoy this object, which is why it is enough for him [Subject] simply to steal and thus gain possession of the object. His true aim is to destroy the Other’s ability/capacity to enjoy the object. (*Violence* 77)

The decision to perpetuate violence or to destroy “the enjoyment we fantasize this Other to possess” results from the recognition of “our own lack of impossible enjoyment [because we do not possess the prized object] and the non-lacking status of the Other,”

who possesses the prized object and ability to enjoys it, as per our imagination (Cottrel 91). Apart from envy, there are two other factors which render us unable to enjoy the prized object. Žižek calls it “the triad of envy, thrift, and melancholy” (*Violence* 77). An envied person cannot enjoy the prized object because they do not possess it. A miser person cannot enjoy the prized object, even though they possess it because doing so would lose the desired status of the prized object. And the melancholic person cannot enjoy the prized object, even though they possess it, because they do not find it desirable anymore.

As an envied person, we fantasize about the Other’s desire and react to it accordingly. It opens up the possibility of violence, making it a reactive phenomenon. By aiming to deprive the Other from enjoying the prized object, we seek a pathological gain. That is, since we are more focused on Other’s loss, we consider it our only gain (75). This makes violence inclusive of psycho-pathological elements. That is, the figure of the Other is victimized because there is something to be gained from them, even if it is psychological gain. This makes power struggle implicit in violence. That is, “individuals seek power so as not to be dominated [and/or victimized] by others” (55). And the same power can be used to dominate and/or victimize others as well. For Žižek, the category of victim is a subjective one. In other words, all the victimized people are not considered victims or readily given victim status. They must meet certain criteria to secure their victims’ status. Nils Christie, a Norwegian sociologist, has proposed a framework to determine, what he calls, an ideal victim.

An ideal victim is one who is readily given the victim status and is not scrutinized for their role in their victimization. Christie has listed out six characteristics which when followed qualify the victimized to be considered an ideal victim. He proposes that an ideal victim must be a weak individual; that at the time of victimization, they must be “carrying out a respectable project;” that they cannot “be blamed for being” there at the time of the assault; that they are harmed by a “big and bad” offender or agent of violence; that they are victimized by an “unknown” offender (Christie 19); and that they possess enough power to “successfully claim the status of an ideal victim” (21). He gives the example of a “young virgin” girl who, returning home from a sick relative’s house, gets “severely beaten or threatened before she gives in” (19). Jan Van Dijk (2009) in his paper has also “indicated that the public shows compassion and warmth towards victims who possess the ideal victim’s characteristics (e.g., weak, blameless, harmed)” (Lewis et al. 4324).

Christie's concept of ideal victims, although well-received, has also been criticized for "being stereotypical and... not [a] representative of a complex set of victimizing experience" (Thunberg and Bruck 197). Joris Van Wijk (2013) applies Christie's framework to the events of collective violence, like genocide, mass killings, wartime sexual violence, etc., and notes some interesting observations. First, to secure the status of a victim, being weak is not enough because the context in which victimization occurs also matters to the observer. For instance, the US gave the victim status to murdered Polish priests who were opposing communism but not to Latin Priests who were opposing the dictators opposed by the US (Van Wijk 163). Second, though it is likely for the victimized persons to secure their victim status if they were engaged in a respectable project, whether the project is respectable, or not, depends on the perception of the observer. Christie did not explain what he meant by 'respectable' project. For instance, being in a bar when a person is attacked is considered a non-respectable project for Christie, but it could be a neutral project for others. Third, Christie argues that victimized persons, who are not blamed for their victimization, are likely to get victim status, but, again, he did not take the perception of the observer into account, whether the observer believes the victims share any responsibility for their victimization. For instance, it could be claimed that the monks in Myanmar, who were protesting, would not be arrested and tortured if they had not protested (164). Fourth, when granting the victim status to the victimized person, the characteristics of the agent are inspected. It is not because of the victim's moral superiority or the agent's greater size, but because of the common conception, rather misconception, of evilness, that the agents of evil atrocities are fundamentally different from the rest of the population. For instance, in the 1950s, Christie found that it was hard for Norwegian society to acknowledge that the Norwegian guards in Nazi concentration camps committed the same barbaric crimes as the Nazis did. Their reluctance was because of the common perception that evil acts, like those in the Holocaust, could only be performed by psychopaths (165). Fifth, the unknown status of an agent helps the victimized person get their victim status. Although it is true that the stranger the agent in their "customs, culture, and appearance," like the Taliban for the Western world, "the more likely the victim is to be granted the victim status," but at the same time, the "well-known and famous offender," like Saddam Hussein, also "expedites their victims being granted victim status" (166). And lastly, to successfully claim the victim status, the victimized person must have enough power to make their case known and to get the required support. This depends on their access to social and state

institutions. For instance, it is very hard for the victims of international conflict, like the conflict of the DRC, to claim victim status because of their inability to make their case known via international media (167). Van Wijk (2013) emphasized on the observer and the context in which the victimization takes place as far as the label or status of the victim is concerned.

In his typology of violence, Žižek has also discussed the attributes of the victims of violence, especially their victim status. He has listed out features, based on which the victim status is measured. Firstly, in individual versus group victimization, it is observed that the misery or the victimization of an individual, for instance, “the death of a West Bank Palestinian child” (Žižek *Violence* 2-3), can cause more uproar than the “detailed documentation of how around 4 million people died in the Democratic Republic of Congo” (2). This is because it is easier to relate to and sympathize with an individual’s suffering than to people in mass. Secondly, in proximate versus abstract victimization, referring to Sam Harries from *The End of Faith*, Žižek points out that “witnessing the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes” is more difficult than the “abstract knowledge of mass suffering” (36). For instance, amid the Ukraine crisis in 2022, several Western news agencies were shocked to see Russian missiles falling on a nearby “European city,” in the 21st century, and not on some distant and “Third World” places like “Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades” (Gathara). They were shocked at the fact that the suffering of the victims, who are just like them, was immediately felt by the proximity of violence. Thirdly, in human versus nonhuman victims, the victimization of an individual, who is perceived to be too close to an ordinary-looking human being, its closeness to one’s neighbor, generates sympathy in the observers and makes the violence unacceptable. Contrarily, in the victimization of a non-human victim, the individual is reduced to a non-human entity or a thing. It makes the violence tolerable because, by perceiving them as objects, their “pain is neutralized, reduced to a property” (Žižek *Violence* 38). For instance, in the Rwandan genocide of the Tutsi people in 1994, where 500,000 to 1 million were killed, they were constantly called cockroaches. By degrading them to a nonhuman level, a large number of the Hutu people were convinced to take part in the killings without being affected by the violence. Lastly, in anonymous versus spectacle victimization, victimization for the sake of spectacle is perceived more effectively than the victimization of nameless individuals. For instance, “the ‘standard’ way prisoners were tortured in Saddam’s regime” was in secrecy, in contrast, the tortures of the prisoners in Abu Ghraib were recorded on camera

by the soldiers of the US (146). It caused a huge public uproar when the pictures of the tortures from Abu Ghraib were made public, while tortures under Saddam's regime were known for their brutality, but they never attracted such a response from the observers.

As far as the status of the victims of violence is concerned, Žižek makes a distinction between the passivity and activity of the victims of violence. The distinction is based on the evaluation of the role of the victimized and determines how easily they can be given the victim status. Žižek points out that the victim must have a passive role, and must comprise qualities – like factual unreliability, confusion, and inconsistency – in their narrative to successfully secure their victim status (Žižek, *Violence* 3). By passivity of the victim, Žižek refers to the blamelessness of the victim, that is, they cannot be blamed for their victimization. This judgment depends on the observers of violence who usually grant the victim status to the victimized. The passivity keeps the victim in a vulnerable state in the eyes of the observers and together with the sympathy invoked by their innocence, the victim status of the victim is ensured. For Žižek, the usual suspects of the victims in 2006 were “Muslim women and their plights, or the families of 9/11 victims” (2). They were readily given victim status because of their passivity in their victimization in the eyes of the observers – the media. Similarly, the deaths of innocent and blameless children, be they Palestinians, Israelis or Americans, in the media are “worth thousands of times more than the death of a nameless Congolese” (3). The victim status is given by the observers and the passivity of the victimized in their victimization helps them secure the victim status.

Contrarily, the activity of the victimized can hold them accountable for the violence perpetuated on them, that is, they can be blamed for their victimization. Žižek has talked about several victims that could be listed under this category, including scapegoated victims, structural victims, proxy victims and fake victims. Scapegoating is an obscured mechanism in which “the scapegoat is a substitute victim, not chosen for any intrinsic quality as, but simply as a substitute” (Pound 42). That is, a social antagonism or misfortune is attributed to the scapegoated victim. For instance, the cause of the “pestilence and drought,” the city of Thebes suffered, was “put down to Oedipus's sexual misdemeanor. Oedipus is violently expelled as the condition of social harmony” (124). Another example can be found in the Holocaust. In Nazi Germany, a fantasy around Jews, linking them to a repulsive and grotesque figure, was created to exaggerate fear and hate, such that their persecution would not generate any sympathy and hence any uproar by the public or observers. This is how, according to Žižek, ideology operates,

that is, it is “an illusion... of an (unconscious) fantasy” that structures “our social reality itself” (*The Sublime Object* 30). The Jews became the scapegoat for social antagonism and were held responsible for creating a provocative and intolerable reality for the German people (Žižek, *Violence* 57).

The victims of structural violence, on the other hand, are those who are not victimized by individual agents of violence but rather by the social, cultural, political and/or economic institutions. Žižek calls them the victims of systemic violence, one of the two forms of objective violence – a violence that “is invisible” because “it sustains the very zero-level standard” of reality against which we measure the events of subjective violence (Žižek, *Violence* 2). Systemic violence results from “the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems;” while the other form of objective violence, also known as symbolic violence, is embedded “in language and its forms” (1). Due to its invisible nature, the victims of objective violence suffer from indirect violence.

Similarly, there are those victims who lay claim to victim status. They include proxies and fake victims. Proxy victims are those who claim victim status on behalf of the group they belong to or their past victimization. Žižek gives a few political examples, including the US justifying its military expansionism after 9/11 (Žižek, *Violence* 107), Israel justifying its claim to the land of Israel by invoking historical argument (94), and the “corrupted clerical and military regimes” from the Arab world using the oppression of Palestinians “to legitimize themselves” and their politics (107). Žižek finds that these victims claim victim status from the position of power and seek to gain, legitimize or stop something. Fake victims are those who are not victimized but pretend to be victims for their own gain. For instance, the case of soviet spies, namely “Ethel and Julius Rosenberg,” who were caught by the FBI in 1950 for spying and providing top-secret information to the Soviet Union (Žižek, *Violence* 43). They denied the charges against them and pleaded their innocence with utter sincerity, though they did not succeed and were persecuted in 1953. They even “issued a public statement: ‘By asking us to repudiate the truth of our innocence, the government admits its own doubts concerning our guilt... we will not be coerced, even under pain of death, to bear false witness’” (Freeman). It was after the fall of the Soviet Union, that the information regarding them was declassified and proved that they were guilty, causing embarrassment to their defenders (Žižek, *Violence* 43).

Furthermore, violence has a profound effect on the victim. That is, they undergo victimization and react to it in a number of ways. It includes retreating to a closed space,

indulging in tolerance or fighting back to seek vengeance or justice. Žižek finds that, after being victimized, some victims refuse to engage in a world or space in which their victimization took place. So, they withdraw from the violent space and take refuge in a closed and relatively safer space. Žižek gives the example of the movie *The Village* (2004) in which a “crime victim’s support group” have “decided to withdraw from the [violent] century completely” and to live in a newly founded and secluded village amidst “a ‘wildlife preserve’” (21). The founding condition for the creation of such a space involves sacrificial logic. That is, to gain something – in the case of the movie *The Village*, it is a non-violent and peaceful space – something else has to be sacrificed, the pleasures of life or the essentials for a healthy life. This proves to be fatal for the existence of the closed and safe space the former victims have built. When one of the characters, namely Lucius Hunt gets severely injured and requires modern medicine, an intervention from the outside world, the former victims decide to forgo their closed space and reunite with the outside world. The bubble of the closed space burst because the former victims refused to sacrifice Lucius.

Žižek’s typology of violence lacks information about the victims who are reluctant to accept the victim status, that is, they dislike the connotation the victim status carries with it. Many scholars, including Van Teeseling (2001), Rock (2004), Cole (2006), and Spalek (2006), have observed victims’ reluctance to be associated with the victim status, including its stereotype and negative connotations (Van Dijk 2). One personal reason to reject or avoid victim status is the desire to move on with life and leave behind the discomfort of victimization. Those victims who have faced a less impactful victimizing event are more likely to move on. It was interesting to notice that it is common to avoid victim status, “even among those respondents who reported serious crimes such as sexual assault and rape” (Fohring 201). This also includes cases which do not result in serious injuries or cases in which the victims were males. Furthermore, the label of a victim connotes weakness, vulnerability, distress, and self-pity which “is not acceptable and highly undesirable” for most people, including male victims (204). It could be argued “that masculinity is driving the dissociation” of male victims from the victim status (201).

Consequently, some victims have internalized their victimization and have decided to abide by the status quo, in which “*they themselves* secretly consider themselves as inferior” (Žižek, *Violence* 73). Žižek gives the example of the multicultural tolerance preached by political correctness. He finds it problematic because it gives rise to “a society [which is] immobilized by the concern for not hurting the other, no matter how

cruel and superstitious this other is and in which individuals are engaged in regular rituals of ‘witnessing’ their victimization” (110). In another example, Žižek talks about the anti-Semitic image propagated by the Nazi regime. The circulation of these images makes reality intolerant and rage-provoking and affects the ways Jews are perceived by others as well as how they perceive themselves (67). This inaction of the victimized is countered by the hypersensitivity of those who have become so sensitive that they indulge in, what Žižek calls, the “politics of fear,” which “focuses on defense from potential victimization or harassment” (34). This fear arises from the otherness of the other, their foreign and intrusive status. That is, anyone or anything that appears foreign and intrusive generates fear and requires a response from potential violence, whether it is subjective or objective.

Similarly, there are also those victims who react violently after enduring violence, that is, after the “suffering dragged on to an unbearable length, the victim finally gathers the strength to strike back with a vengeance” (163). Žižek calls it *Divine violence*, a violence that “strikes out of nowhere” while “demanding and enacting immediate justice/vengeance” (171). He gives the example of the movie *Dogville* (2003), in which the protagonist “is exposed to terrifying... suffering and humiliation” and in return “she mercilessly strikes back and exacts full revenge for the despicable way the residents of the small town where she took refuge treated her” (163). But enacting divine violence, or seeking revenge or justice, does not provide the agent or perpetrator of violence with a license to perpetrate violence nor “some kind of angelic innocence” (171). In divine violence, the victim of violence is transformed into the figure of the agent of violence. In his theory of violence, Žižek finds that the agents of violence pave the way for the generation of new agents of violence. He explains how the liberal communists, who “fight subjective violence” through philanthropy and charity, “are the very agents of the structural violence which creates the conditions for the explosions of subjective violence” (31). That is, to do the common good, they require the resources or the wealth and these resources are gathered through the ruthless exploitation of the weak. This brings us to the figure of the agent of violence.

As a noun, the term *agent* comes from the Latin word *agentem*, “present participle of *agere*,” referring to “one who acts,” or who “set[s] in motion, drive[s] forward; do[es], perform[s]; keep[s] in moment” (“Agent” *Online Etymology Dictionary*). So, an agent of violence is an individual who sets violence in motion or who performs acts of violence. The violence perpetuated by the agent of violence could be initiated by them or could be reactionary, in response to an existing violence. Many alternative terms could be used for

an agent of violence, for instance, a perpetrator, an offender, an assaulter, a criminal, etc. The present study primarily uses the term *agent* because Žižek uses the term agent of violence. Though the study is not restricted to the use of just one term, it includes other terms as well, mainly to quote, refer and explain the points different thinkers and researchers, who used those respective terms, make. For instance, Christie (1986) uses the term *offender*, who in contrast to their victims, are strong enough to overpower and victimize them.

As a positively connotated term, it refers to an individual “with the capacity to act” or the agency, which “denotes the exercise to manifestation of this capacity” (Schlosser). They can “act freely to accomplish rationally determined goals” (Butler 238). As a negatively connotated term, it refers to an individual who does not use their individuality but rather “acts for or represent another” (“Agent” *Cambridge Dictionary*). They act as an extension of other(s) authority. For instance, the soldiers serving in the military institution act as the arm of the institution when they participate in its activities, including violence.

Žižek, in his typology of violence, provides us with a picture of the agents of violence. He defines two types of violence, subjective and objective, based on the visibility of their agents. Subjective violence, the visible part of the violence, is perpetuated “by a clearly identifiable agent” (Žižek, *Violence* 1). For instance, in the case of a robbery, the victims or the agents of the crime are easily identifiable. On the other hand, objective violence is implicit in the “‘normal’ state of things” (2), and it makes their agents not easily identifiable. For instance, people, who live under miserable socio-economic conditions, are the victims of an oppressed system, and the agent is not clearly visible to the victims rather a faceless system is presented in its place. It is relatively more difficult to identify agents of objective violence than agents of subjective violence because the latter are easy to locate and held responsible for perpetuating violence, for instance, documented cases of communist crimes. The former category of agents of violence is not easily located and the responsibility of violence is subsequently denied, for instance, in the Belgian Congo genocide, millions of people “died as the result of capitalist globalization.” This is because the objective violence appears out of, what Žižek calls, “an ‘objective’ process, which nobody planned and executed” (12). In other words, objective violence is a condition of suffering, and the agents of objective violence are not perceived as individuals with total autonomy but rather as an extension of the “zero-level standard” of reality, or the “‘normal’ state of things” (2), or the very system

in which they exist. Furthermore, the agents of objective violence, namely symbolic and systemic violence, differ in the medium of their operations. That is, the agents of symbolic violence operate through “language and its forms” to perpetuate violence (1). For instance, Western caricatures of the prophet Mohammed were perceived by the Muslims as “constructing and imposing a certain symbolic field” which condensed their “humiliations and frustrations” (51). The agents of systemic violence, on the other hand, use “more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (8). In other words, their actions help create such conditions in which the weak suffer, for instance:

The same philanthropists who give millions for Aids or education in tolerance have ruined the lives of thousands through financial speculation and thus created the conditions for the rise of the very intolerance that is being fought (31).

The agents of objective violence do not perpetuate violence directly, rather they help create, or sustain, the conditions in which the weak individuals suffer or are victimized through domination and exploitation. It is difficult to identify the agents of objective violence primarily because of our fascination with the “directly visible ‘subjective’ violence” and its agents, we overlook the invisible objective violence along with its agents and victims (1). And secondly, because of the entanglement between the actions of the agents of violence and the working of the system, in which they exist, it is hard to distinguish between the two. For instance, in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), an adaptation of Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Col. Kurtz is a perfect soldier and his actions identify with the actions of the military power system so much so that it is hard to distinguish the two, which turns Col. Kurtz into an excessive figure, one who creates hindrance in the smooth working the system (149).

In *Violence*, Žižek has also mentioned another form of violence, called divine violence, which is the “brutal intrusions of justice beyond law” (151). It is subjective in nature, that is, for the agent of violence, it is divine violence, and for an observer, it can be just a random outburst (169). The agents of divine violence are motivated by “immediate justice/vengeance” (171). They act against the injustice that happened to them; they are prior victims. Žižek has identified two courses of action of the agents of divine violence. One, where justice/vengeance is extracted violently, for instance, in the

Brazilian economic crisis of the 1980s, the “supermarkets, food warehouses and shops” in Rio de Janeiro were looted by thousands of people living in the slums, who were on the verge of starvation (Diehl). The other course of action for the agents of divine violence includes non-violence, in which, instead of engaging in violence, the agent withdraws completely. For instance, in Saramago’s *Seeing* (2006), the oppressed people of the capital of an unnamed country abstain from any political engagement, which brings the collapse of the whole political system (Žižek, *Violence* 182). Žižek has given preference to the violent expression of divine violence over the non-violent one, he says:

The most obvious candidate for ‘divine violence’ is the violent expression of resentment which finds expression in a spectrum that ranges from mob lynching to organized revolutionary terror (157).

Žižek gives the example of Red Terror, in which the Russian bourgeoisie were expelled and persecuted, including anti-communist intellectuals, like Nikolai Lossky, who was exiled. The agents of this divine violence were working-class people, who were systematically dominated and exploited by the bourgeoisie, and whose accumulated resentment exploded in a violent revolution (8).

In discussing the various aspects of violence, Žižek portrays the figure of the agent of violence, who primarily acts against a perceived threat, it could be real or imagined. That is, the agents of violence act against an Other who appears threatening, in other words, potential agents of violence. This Other is an “imponderable Other,” an enemy, “whose very reasoning is foreign to us, so that no authentic encounter with him in battle is possible” (Žižek, *Violence* 47). This Other is also an intrusive Other (35), whose presence threatens our way of life (8). The figure of the agent of violence acts against the Other who is threatening, intrusive and imponderable. For instance, the Nazi’s picturization of the Jews involves them being depicted as an Other/enemy who is not human. Nazis achieved this by using the German language to create and sustain an intolerable image of the Jews, by comparing them with filth, and vermin-like cockroaches (Marais 96). The agents act against the threatening Other because they themselves do not want to be dominated or victimized and to avoid their own victimization, they achieve or tend to achieve the dominating position (54).

For Žižek, the “*inhuman* dimension of the Neighbor” fits the ideal picture of the threatening Other (*Violence* 48). But what makes this figure a threatening one is its

proximity to the subject as well as its unknown or nonhuman-like status. The proximity is not just physical but also a conceptual one. It signifies the permanence of presence, that is, the more proximate the Other is, the more threatening it appears. And the human elements, when removed, make the Other more alien, more unknown and thus more threatening. But at the same time, their unknown or nonhuman-like status would not generate sympathetic emotions if they were to be harmed. This generates an ideal situation for violence, where the proximate of the Other threatens the existence of the subject, but because this Other is nonhuman-like, they are reduced to “an object whose pain is neutralized, reduced to a property that has to be dealt with in a rational utilitarian calculus” (38). The point Žižek makes is that, in prescribing these qualities to a nonhuman Other, the motive is to make them appear different from the subject and at the same time to keep them together at a proximate distance where violence could break at any time because the threat is always there.

Žižek finds that most of the agents of violence possess human-like qualities, that is, despite being threatening, they are able to “display warm humanity and gentle care” (40). By caressing their human side, they are able to create a distraction such that their humanitarian endeavors overshadow the terrible acts of violence they have committed. Within the context of the capitalist world, there is a group of profiteers, like “Bill Gates and George Soros, the CEOs of Google, IBM, Intel, eBay, as well as their court philosophers, most notably the journalist Thomas Friedman,” the category of people Žižek calls the “liberal communist” (Žižek, *Violence* 14). They employ “all the tricks of the trade to achieve” their goals, including doing “charity” to hide their “ruthless pursuit of profit” and “economic exploitation” (19). Žižek considers them as the agents of objective violence because their actions, their ruthless pursuit of profits, “have ruined the lives of thousands through financial speculation and thus created the conditions for the rise of... intolerance” (31). Because objective violence is invisible, it is hard to clearly identify its agents. By indulging in humanitarian activities, they project themselves as the greatest philanthropists and thus are able to hide in plain sight.

Similarly, by using *empty gestures*, the agents of violence are able to lure or coerce the weak. Empty gestures are the offers in the symbolic exchange that are “made or meant to be rejected” (136). These gestures do not provide the Other with any choices but rather merely serve as custom, a pretense or appearance that choices were provided to the Other. In other words, they maintain “the appearance that there is a free choice when there isn’t one” (137). Žižek gives the example of systemic exploitation in Japan where workers are

expected not to exercise their full right to yearly holidays. There appears to be an implicit agreement between the employer and the employee. The workers are provided with forty days of yearly holidays on the terms that they will not exercise their right to its full extent.

According to Žižek, to perpetrate violence requires an immunization of the victim's suffering because indulging in violence, directly or indirectly, has affective consequences. It affects the agents, victims as well as the observers of violence. This immunization is done in many ways. Firstly, it requires psychological blindness, that is, two sets of rules are formulated, one for their own self and the second for the Other. For Žižek, this is "how the very same people who commit terrible acts of violence towards their enemies can display warm humanity and gentle care for the members of their own group" (40). In the first set of rules, basic ethical rights and concerns are followed and in the second, the same rights and concerns are suspended for the Other, to those who lie outside our space. For instance, "the same soldier who slaughtered innocent civilians was ready to sacrifice his life for his unit" or "the commander who ordered the shooting of hostages can that same evening write a letter to his family full of sincere love" (41). The distinction between the two sets of rules tones down the effects of violence.

Similarly, Žižek also finds that an *ethical illusion* conceals or minimizes the effects of violence. Ethical illusion is the difference between the experience of witnessing the violence directly and having abstract knowledge of it. Because the abstract knowledge of violence and suffering could reduce our ethical reactions or sympathetic response to pain and suffering when compared to experiencing violence directly. Žižek illustrates the concept by giving an example that "shooting someone point-blank is... much more repulsive than pressing a button that will kill a thousand people we cannot see" (36-37). The ethical illusion makes abstract-anonymous violence tolerable and in some cases acceptable. By resorting to ethical illusion, the agents of violence are able to perpetrate violence without directly experiencing the effects of the suffering of the victim.

Furthermore, to immunize the suffering of an individual's suffering, a sacred cause and/or reward is required. According to Žižek,

[t]he large majority of people are spontaneously "moral": killing another human being is deeply traumatic for them. So, in order to make them do it, a larger "sacred" cause is needed, which makes petty individual concerns about killing seem trivial... The majority needs to be "anaesthetized" against their elementary sensitivity to the other's suffering. For this, a sacred cause is

needed. (115)

Subjective violence can profoundly affect the individuals directly involved in it. As far as agents of violence are concerned, a sacred cause is required to overcome this hurdle. For instance, when terrorists indulge or “pursue what appear to us to be evil goals with evil means, the very *form* of their activity meets the highest standard of the good” (74). For them, the violence they are perpetuating is for a sacred cause and promises a greater reward in return. It does not matter if the idea of the greater reward appears ridiculous to others, but to the agents of violence, it aligns with their beliefs and desires. For instance, “the infamous 400 virgins awaiting the believer in paradise as a ‘rational’ explanation of why he is ready to blow himself up” (71). The ultimate aim is to distract the focus of the agents of violence from the suffering of the victimized to something else, something which can overcome the said problem and sacred cause and reward fit this picture well.

Lastly, what affects the way the agents of violence experience their reality as intolerable is their overdetermination through the dehumanization of the Other. That is, they react to a dehumanized “image/figure of the” Other “which circulates and has been constructed in their tradition” or space (57). For instance, in the Nazi’s dehumanization of the Jews, the Jews were reduced to a “less-than-human Other-enemy” (47). They were stripped of their humanity and considered worthless filthy insects. This dehumanized image/figure of the Other, which makes them intolerable to the agents of violence, reduces them to a subhuman level such that the agents of violence are not affected by the violence they perpetrate on the dehumanized Other.

Žižek has also identified ways through which the agents of violence and those who align with them defend themselves and justify their actions. The first way violence is defended or justified is by blaming the victims for causing anxiety and thus are held responsible for their own victimization. That is, the victims can be labeled as immoral, conspirators, instigators, traitors or criminals. Žižek gives the example of post-9/11 right-wing reactions, where the victims were blamed for the violence. That is, the victims were blamed for living in sinful ways, for their “hedonist materialism, liberalism, and rampant sexuality” (155).

The second way violence is defended or justified is by projecting the agents as the ultimate victims. Žižek gives the example of the riots in New Orleans after Katrina when the looting and chaos happened in the black neighborhood. The agents of such violence were mostly poor black people, who were living in the New Orleans’ ghettos. After

Hurricane Katrina in 2005, there was a shortage of supplies, food and fuel. Because poor urban localities have more crime than other localities and also mostly poor people live there, the authorities did not give enough attention to them. This led to a violent outburst in the city, where people, deprived of basic necessities, started looting. These agents of violence, belonging to the lower strata of life, projected themselves as the victimized people and were able to generate some sympathy for their violent actions, including Žižek's. In another instance, Žižek gives the example of the fully subjectivized Frankenstein's monster from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). The monster defends his monstrous murders by blaming his creator, a young scientist named Victor Frankenstein, for making him an unloved and desolate brute. He sees "himself as the ultimate victim... yearning for company and love" even though he is "the ultimate criminal;" and through his subjectification, by unraveling "what it is like to be labelled, defined, oppressed, excommunicated, even physically distorted by society" (39), the author tries to create sympathy in her readers towards the monstrous murderer. By laying claim to the victim's status, these agents of violence could succeed in harnessing sympathy towards themselves.

The third way violence is defended or justified is by diverting the blame on others or the institutions the agents serve. Žižek finds such pictures of the humanized agents of violence, who are defended by others, including their family members or acquaintances. For instance, Svetlana Stalin, the daughter of Joseph Stalin, "presented... [him] as a warm father and caring leader" in her memoirs and blamed his collaborators for the mass murders. Similarly, Andrei Malenkov, the son of Georgy Malenkov, described "his father, Stalin's successor, as an honest hard worker, always afraid for his life" (40). Žižek's example of the movie *The Fugitive* could also illustrate the point. In the movie, Dr Nicholas is a colleague of Dr Kimble, the former falsifies the scientific data on the instructions of a Pharma company and gets the latter into trouble. Dr Nicholas is a respected individual, who is "lured into swallowing the bait of the pharmaceutical company" to solve the hospital's financial problem and commits the crime (175). Dr Kimble's appearance resembles a sincere and honest person, which makes it difficult for Žižek to consider him as an agent of violence. Another factor that casts doubt over these groups of agents of violence is that, for observers, their actions do not reflect individual authority, rather they appear to be influenced or coerced by others, that is, in the case of Dr Kimble, it is the big pharma. By portraying that the agents of violence are acting on behalf of others, that is, they are acting as the extension of the institution they serve and

not as free agents, their responsibility can be shed. The reverse is also true, that is, the institution can blame the agents for acting on their own and misusing the institutions when they perpetrate violence. For instance, in the case of “religiously inspired violence... it is the violent or ‘terrorist’ political agent who ‘misuses’ a noble religion” (113). They are scapegoated for the violence they perpetrate. It is precisely the negative connotation of the term *agent*, where the agents do not employ the cognitive capacity to act on their own and act on behalf of others, that both situations are possible. One where the blame is diverted onto others and the other where the blame is reverted onto the agents of violence. In the case of the latter, the agents of the institutions are scapegoated for the survival of the institutions. According to Žižek, the need arises because of the agents’ over-identification with the institutions they serve. Their over-identification turns them “into the excessive figure the system [or institution] has to eliminate” (149). In the movie *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the protagonist Kurtz is an example of an over-identified agent of Western military power. As an over-identified agent, his actions threaten the image of the institution he is serving. The institution reacts to save its public image and orders Kurtz’s elimination. Here, the agents of violence become the victims of violence.

The fourth way violence is justified is by defending the agent’s right to seek damages for their own victimization in the form of vengeance or justice. The victims of violence attempt to see vengeance or justice on their own accord as agents of violence. Žižek gives the example of what he calls *Divine violence*, a violence which explodes when the wrongdoings accumulate to an unbearable amount (152). The agents of divine violence are not granted immunity rather they are held responsible because they choose to act on their own accord. The violence they perpetrate is divine for them and they believe that they are in the right in seeking vengeance or justice for all the wrongdoings that are done to them. Divine violence is not “an expression of personal pathology... not a crime... nor a sacred sacrifice” because the victims “are fully and completely guilty” (168). Žižek claims that divine violence could appear irrational or merely an outburst. It is because for them it strikes blindly and appears random. For instance, for outsiders, “the panic in Rio de Janeiro when crowds descended from the favelas into the rich part of the city and started looting and burning supermarkets” (171), might appear random and irrational, but for the crowd, it explodes because there is injustice in the society.

Lastly, violence is justified or defended by projecting it to be for the greater good. In Žižek’s example of the movie *The Village* (2004), in which the logic of sacrificial violence is adhered to for the foundation of their community (21). Founding violence is

violence that, when practiced, finds a new space and requires a sacrifice in the form of the founding figure of the previous space (59). In the movie, what makes the village a closed and safe space is the fact that the villagers do not leave the village or go into the woods. Thus, they are isolated from everything external. The founding figure of this village is the monsters that live in the woods surrounding the village. To make a transition from a closed space to an open space requires the sacrifice of the monsters. The death of the village idiot, dressed as a monster, marks the transition to a new space.

To conclude, this section has discussed the first aspect of the framework namely victims and agents of violence. Žižek's depiction of the victims and agents of violence is explored – their attributes, categories and courses of action. We have observed how the image/figure of the victims of violence is constructed, how they are, or not, readily given the victim status and how they react to their victimization. We have also observed how the agents of violence victimize the weak and how they are immunized from the effects of violence they perpetrate, from the pain and suffering of the victims. Lastly, we have seen how violence is defended or justified by the perpetrators and their supporters. The next section will discuss the second aspect of the framework namely the spatiality of interpersonal violence in which exploration of how violence is shaped and facilitated by the space will take place.

In *Oxford Lerner's Dictionary of Academic English*, the term 'space' has ten connotations and is primarily defined as "the whole area in which all things exist and move," or "a real or imagined area where activities take place or are possible" ("Space"). Based on its physicality, space can be classified into two: one which is physical, and the other which is abstract in its form. The former "is simply the unlimited expanse of the universe, in which all material objects are located and all phenomena occur;" and the latter "is a conception, the result of a mental construction" (Nowinski 1). Both forms are related to each other such that they are the two sides of the same coin. That is, the former "is an objective space containing objects that can be measured by physical instruments," and the latter "transforms this physical space into a cognitive (mental) representation that persists over time" (Baird et al. 204).

Žižek, in *Violence*, uses the term *space* in its abstract form – a cognitive or mental representation of the physical space. In this space, we exist and interact as its subjects. From Žižek's perspective, this space comprises three intertwined dimensions – namely, Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real. Symbolic is the dimension of the law that governs a given space and its subjects, and without which the subjects cannot function or interact.

Imaginary is what the subjects have to presume to make sense out of the law of the Symbolic. Real is everything that is excluded from the Symbolic. For instance, if we define space in terms of the game of chess, we find that Symbolic is the rules of the game, “without it the game is strictly unplayable;” Imaginary is the presumptions we make to play the game, like the knight “corresponds most closely with the silhouette of a horse;” and Real is everything contingent to the game that is not involved in its rules, like “the weather, unpredictable interruptions (i.e. a phone call, a washroom break), the skill sets of the players, and so on” (Butler 213).

For Žižek, the space which we inhabit is the space of violence – a space where violent actions take place; a space in which the norm is violent; and a space in which its subjects emerge through a violent process. Let us discuss the various aspects of the space of violence. Firstly, the space, where violent actions take place, refers to the space of subjective violence – a physical and visible form of violence. The violent actions include “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict” (Žižek, *Violence* 1). Secondly, the space, itself, is inherently violent, that is, what we call the norm, or what Žižek calls the “‘normal’ state of things” or the “zero-level standard” of our reality, is sustained by objective violence (2); and this inherently violent norm then lays the foundations for subjective violence (1). According to Žižek, the norm or the zero-level standard of a space, against which we perceive and determine what the acts of subjective violence are, is inclusive of violence. This norm or the zero-level standard is also not static, that is, the level of inherent violence varies at different times and places. For instance, what is perceived as a non-violent norm in the 19th or 20th century, like child labor, might be considered acts of violence in the 21st century; or what is perceived as a social norm in some parts of the Middle East, like child marriage, might be considered as a violent act in other parts of the world.

And lastly, the subjects emerge into the space of violence where they are exposed and subjected to violence. In Žižek’s monograph on violence, several ways are identified through which the subjects interact with the space and are exposed and subjected to violence. It includes entering into a space, forcedly exiting from it, having exposure to provoking images which overdetermine their experience and over-identifying with the institution they serve as its agents. Firstly, the entry into the symbolic space marks the process of the birth of a subject. It is also known as interpellation. For Lacan, in the mirror stage, the individual or child “first ‘otherizes’ his own image” and later, upon the entry of the father and the following break from the mother’s libidinal relationship, the

individual is interpellated into the realm of the symbolic (Padilla 64). Žižek maintains that the interpellation of the subject, “the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic dimension” (56), never fully succeeds (Pfaller 142). This is because the original trauma, the realization of the sense of loss and incompleteness, always disrupts the symbolic, that is, the subject’s desire lies in the imaginary which is inaccessible from the symbolic dimension. For instance, an infant’s separation from the mother can be seen as a trauma for the child. It generates the realization of separation from the mother and the sense of loss within the child. It, thus, initiates the process of the subject formation for the child. That is, the child undergoes a traumatic experience to become a subject of the space they inhabit.

Similarly, the subject of a particular lifeworld can also be violently pushed out of the space and into another one. According to Žižek, the subject of a new space “can emerge only as the result of an extremely violent process of being torn out of a particular lifeworld, of being cut off from one’s roots” (*Violence* 124). This process is violent as it extricates the universal essence of the subject, frees it from the binding power of its particular lifeworld, and elevates it above its lifeworld to assert full autonomy. But, according to Žižek, this process also does not fully succeed, because the transition is not truly universal, that is, it is inclusive of nuances of their previous lifeworld. For instance, multicultural liberals are intolerant towards the freedom of choice of other cultures, in their practices of “clitoridectomy, child brideship, infanticide, polygamy, and incest;” yet they ignore the women of their own culture who undergo painful “procedures as plastic surgeries, cosmetic implants, and Botox injections in order to remain competitive in the sex market” (123).

Alternatively, when the subjects of a particular space are exposed to provoking images, they can be overdetermined into the figures of the agent of violence. In the process, a false image/figure of the Other is constructed and circulated within the space to alter the experience of the subjects towards the Other. The aim is to make the reality unbearable to the subjects such that they are provoked and thus, transformed into aggressors who perpetrate violence without being affected by the suffering of the victims. Žižek gives the example of the dehumanization of the Jews by the Nazi regime, who created and circulated the “anti-Semitic image” to alter the experience of the common Germans and transformed them into anti-Semites such that they found the Jews intolerable (57). They turned a blind eye to the suffering of the Jewish people and even blamed or attacked them on occasion.

Likewise, the process of over-identifying with the institution turns its agents into excessive figures, whose actions are directly associated with the working of the institution. These over-identified subjects manifest what Žižek calls “the obscene disavowed underside” of the institution, consisting of its dirty secrets (142). Because the over-identified agents closely associate themselves with the institution they serve, their actions are believed to be actions of the institution. Also, their close association grants them the power to enact certain decisions on behalf of the institution. This makes it hard to distinguish the institution from its over-identified agents and generates uncertainty that these agents might undermine or replace the very institution they serve. Seeing them as a liability and potential threat, the institution reacts to preserve itself by eliminating these agents. Žižek gives the example of Colonel Kurtz, the protagonist of the movie *Apocalypse Now* (1979).

Kurtz was a perfect soldier. Through his over-identification with the military power system, he turned into the excessive figure the system has to eliminate... [This shows] how power generates its own excess which it has to annihilate in an operation which has to imitate what it fights. (149).

According to Žižek, the institution tries to eliminate its overidentified agents because they threaten to expose its obscene underside. The obscene underside is the set of unwritten and implicit rules which, Žižek believes, sustain the institution. For instance, the spies of a country’s secret services indulge in illegal activities or covert operations for the safety of their nation. And when they are caught, their institution refuses to recognize them as its agents. This is because the spies, who willingly do illegal and immoral acts, are excessive figures. The illegal actions they have indulged in, now threaten to reveal classified information about the internal workings of the secret services. So, to save the information from getting leaked, the institution reacts and tries to eliminate the threat, the very spies who sustain the institution of secret services of a nation.

In his monograph, *Violence*, Žižek lists out various features of the space of interpersonal violence. These include the space being ideological, an abyss and a nest of fantasies. Žižek’s theory of violence follows the postmodernist trend, which traces a particular meaning through its relation(s) to others, to inspect the concept of violence and finds ideology in the working and maintenance of the very system. Ideology, in a

generalized form, “is a strategy of reproducing domination and exploitation that operates in the realms of communication, culture, psychology, emotions, and beliefs” (Fuchs C. 217). Terry Eagleton provides a range of the meaning of ideology. He understands ideology as: “ideas, ...class experience, ...legitimization of class interest, ...legitimization of dominant class’ interest, ...legitimation of a ruling class or group’s ideas by distortion and dissimulation, ...false consciousness” (220). For ideology to work effectively, it must first create a difference of perception – that is, a difference between how an object is and how it appears – and then hide and naturalize this difference, making the object appear true and natural to the subjects. It empties the meaning of an object, fills the void with an artificial meaning and then naturalizes this artificial meaning with the help of a distorted medium of communication, that is, by fostering a simplistic form of communication, like using stereotypes, biases, etc., and by denying the subjects their “full capacity to think and act” (223) which renders the subjects to perceive the ideology as true. Žižek also ascribes to such a view but in a slightly different manner, that is, even though “ideology is always false,” it is not necessary for the subjects to consider it as true. This is because “ideology today operates in a cynical manner so that the individuals [subjects] know that ideology exists but nonetheless follow it” (227).

Žižek’s understanding moves beyond the formulation of ideology as being “‘false conscious’ or illusion as perceived by Marx” (Cook 14) which is nothing but a distortion of reality. In other words, Žižek rejects the notion that ideology is false conscious because it is not “an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself” (*The Sublime Object* 30). He argues that ideology rather adjoins the reality itself, that is, ideology is not simply a perception of a given life or situation rather it is inherent in the very modes of life or situation through actions and thoughts. Thus, ideology is real for those who are subjected to it because their actions and thoughts are the embodiment of the very ideology they adhere to. But what makes the subjects blindly adhere to ideology, what they get in return, is enjoyment. In exchange for blind adherence, ideology offers enjoyment and requires us to surrender ourselves (Žižek, *Violence* 115). Žižek gives the example of the Lossky family, who were enjoying a comfortable bourgeoisie life in Soviet Russia and were blind “to the *systemic* violence that had to go on in order for such a comfortable life to be possible” (8). Their blindness to systemic violence was the direct result of the unawareness of their adherence to the bourgeoisie ideology. Although they cared for the poor and helped the society get better; at the same time, they were part of an exploitative system and were reaping the benefits

from it. Consequently, what distinguishes a dominant ideology is its quality of reorganization in anticipation of its skepticism. This is how dominant ideologies operate, that is, acting in an anticipatory manner to reorganize themselves to accommodate the skeptic response of their subjects towards their (ideologies') beliefs and ideas. By accommodating the actions of their skeptic subjects well within their boundaries, they neutralize their effects. So, it does not matter if the subjects react to ideology in a skeptical manner or not, their actions nevertheless sustain and strengthen the ideology (Cook 14). Ideology operates through the unconscious of its subjects so that even if the subject "is perfectly aware of the ideological deception, he/she hardly resists it." This is because the unconscious of the subject is symbolically overdetermined, making the subject a "product of the symbolic" (Lekesizalin 65).

The command of an ideological space, for its subjects, is to believe, that is, to believe the rhetoric or the law of the symbolic space. In exchange for their obedience, the subjects are promised protection from their fears. Fear, thus, is the "ultimately mobilizing principle" (Žižek, *Violence* 34), which makes subjects abide by their ideological space. The source of the fear is an Other, who is foreign to the subject and intrudes into their space, who is imponderable, and who threatens the lifeworld of the subject. Other's different way of life, different sense of reasoning and refusal to integrate into the space makes the encounter traumatic to the subject, so much so that the more proximate this alien Other is to the subject the more unsettling the subject becomes and the more volatile the space gets. Additionally, since we live in a post-ideological era, we must abide by its command, which is to enjoy our particular lifeworld (115). But the problem arises when the subjects find themselves devoid of the very object which is responsible for causing desire without which any sort of joy is not possible. The subject rather finds that the object of desire, the source of enjoyment, is in the possession of the Other, who "is able to enjoy this object" (77). The subject's inability to enjoy thus predicates the Other's ability to enjoy. This makes the subject envious of the Other who not only possesses what the subject lacks but also enjoys it (76). This tormenting relation demands an action to get back what the subject lacks. But the subject cannot simply gain possession of the prized object because one, it is in the possession of the Other and as long as the Other has it, the subject cannot have it; and second, it is an unattainable object for the subject because the desires can never be fully satisfied. Thus, the only goal of the envious subject is the destruction of the Other's ability to enjoy. The subject reacts "to destroy the Other's ability/capacity to enjoy the [desired] object" (77). The violence

manifests in the subject's attempt to possess the desired object.

According to Žižek, “a certain ideological vision of” a particular lifeworld “distorts... reality” (51). That is, it is the ideology which makes the norm of the lifeworld “appear[s] to be neutral, non-ideological, natural, commonsensical” (31). The same holds true for violence in ideological space. The subjects of ideological space appear to suffer from selective blindness as far as violence in the ideological space is concerned. For instance, “around 4 million... [deaths] in the Democratic Republic of Congo” in the aftermath of the political turmoil was ignored by the media “as if some kind of filtering mechanism blocked this news from achieving its full impact in our symbolic space” (2), while the death of a child from West Bank was overwhelmingly transmitted by the media (3). This shows that, in an ideological space, a victim is perceived as a victim if they possess the qualities of a victim, which are defined as such within the contours of the very space. In another example, the acts of subjective violence take the focus away from objective violence, including symbolic and systemic violence. Žižek calls for a disengagement with the fascination of subjective violence (1) and an engagement with violence which is inherent to the norms of our symbolic space.

The second feature is that the space of violence is an abyss to its subjects. That is, within the contours of the space, the subject is placed next to an imponderable Other, whose presence constantly torments the subject (36). The subject suffers from the presence of an Other because one, the intrusive Other poses a threat to their ways of life (8); and second, they both are alien to one another and want the same thing, the object of enjoyment, but only the Other possesses and enjoys it (77). From this abyss originates the violence that the subject perpetuates onto the Other to secure a safe space. But, the perpetuation of violence in proximity, both physical and mental, runs the risk of arousing sympathy for the victimized. The subject is caught in, what Žižek calls, an “ethical illusion” in which “our emotional-ethical responses remain conditioned by age-old instinctual reactions of sympathy to suffering and pain that is witnessed directly,” like killing someone by pressing a button is much easier than “shooting someone point-blank” (36). This difficulty is removed by, what Žižek calls, “the abolition of the dimension of the Neighbor,” where the victim of violence is reduced to “an object whose pain is neutralized” (38). By reducing the Other to a non-human level, the suffering of the Other does not torment or produce sympathy within the subjects. For instance, in Nazi Germany, the disfigured-image of the Jewish people created an abyss, a tormenting space for most of the population. By creating and circulating the disfigured-image of the Jew,

the Nazis were able to create a “fantasmatic dimension” in which violence against the Jews, the “anti-Semitic pogroms,” became acceptable (57).

Furthermore, the subjects of an ideological space cannot escape “the abyss of otherness”, that is, the subjects are stuck in the tormenting space with “the imponderable Other” and there is no way out for them. According to Žižek, this imponderable Other is an enemy with foreign reasoning which makes it impossible to authentically engage with them (47). Žižek gives the example of cultural differences which consist of “different ‘ways of life’ which are something given, something that cannot be overcome. They can only be ‘tolerated’” (119). This is because cultures have different norms, values, biases, views, beliefs, nuances and ways of interpreting and understanding the world; and these differences are deeply ingrained into the subjectivities of the people. The imponderable Other cannot be reasoned with because their subjectivity is shaped by personal history, cultural background and unconscious desires and processes. The particular aspect of their subjectivity is different from the people of other cultures and cannot be fully known or understood through rational discourse.

Contrary to the tormenting space, like Nazi Germany, in which the difference between the subject and the Other cannot be eradicated and intolerance runs high, in a contemporary liberal-multicultural space, the subject and the Other are stuck in a space in which the difference between them cannot be eradicated but are tolerated. In this space, the burden of tolerance lies with the subject, that is, the subject is stuck in the abyss of liberal-multicultural freedom of choice, where they are not only free to make a choice but are also expected to make a choice that aligns with the discourse of the liberal-multicultural space. This presents us with the “paradox of forced choice,” where “freedom of choice” is given “on condition that” it will not be used (109). The subject’s freedom of choice is paradoxical because it has to align with the spatial discourse. For instance, Japanese workers have a certain freedom of choice, including “the right to forty days’ holiday every year,” but they have to conform to the expectations of the work environment in which “they are expected not to use this right to its full extent” (137). What they are provided with is not freedom of choice but rather an illusion, in which they are expected to make decisions on their own but their actions are subtly constrained, restricted or undermined. This freedom, no matter how paradoxical, comes with another condition, that is, the subject has to “assume full responsibility for” the choices they make (6). They have to bear the consequences of their actions, even if their actions are subtly influenced or constrained by social norms or ideological mechanisms. For instance, one

of the limitations of multicultural liberal tolerance is the tussle “between respect for the other versus our freedom of expression;” that is, it demands respect and openness towards the Other but at the same time curtails the freedom of expression from legitimately scrutinize the Other, “no matter how cruel and superstitious this other is” (110). Although it champions freedom of expression, instead of accommodating the criticism, it targets the subjects for voicing their concerns and labels their views as hateful and discriminatory. In another example, Žižek discusses José Saramago’s novel *Seeing* (2006) in which the citizens of the capital, tired of the corrupted and inefficient democratic political system, exercise their right to cast blank votes to show their displeasure with the political class. Consequently, they are labelled as conspirators and are responsible for their actions. Following this, the country undergoes “a state of emergency, allowing the [ruling] government to suspend all constitutional guarantees” (181) and the citizens face many consequences for bringing down the democratic framework of the nation, including physical and mental abuse.

According to Žižek, it is the language that “opens up and sustains this abyss” of the imponderable Other/neighbor (62), as it constructs and imposes a certain symbolic field which facilitates violence. For instance, in the aftermath of the Muhammad caricatures printed in Europe, we can see how the language of the Muslim countries distorted the Western reality. Words like “Western imperialism, godless materialism, hedonism, and the suffering of Palestinians,” which were prevalent in the Muslim world, got attached to the Muhammad caricatures and resulted in protests and violence against the West as a whole (51). Contrary to the opinion that humans have achieved humanity because of their ability to socialize through speaking which coincides with “the renunciation of violence,” Žižek aligns with Hegel that “there is something violent in the very symbolization of a thing” (52). Within the space of violence, language “is the first and greatest divider” (56), as it separates the subject from the Other, but at the same time it keeps the subject into the abyss of the imponderable Other, that is, it torments the subject by keeping the Other in the proximity. For Žižek, language, which is “the medium of reconciliation and mediation, of peaceful coexistence,” can become the “violent medium of immediate and raw confrontation” (51). It is because of the subversion and distortion within the language by certain social, political and ideological conditions. For instance, biases, stereotypes and discriminatory language perpetuate and reinforce social inequalities and power imbalances, as we saw in the case of the Danish newspaper which published the caricatures of Prophet Mohammad. The same newspapers which claim to practice

freedom of the press also display bias when they refuse to publish caricatures of Christ for being too offensive (92). According to Žižek, “language gets infected” because the “contingent ‘pathological’ circumstances... distort the inherent logic of symbolic communication” (51). The circumstances, which deviate or alter the language from its intended use or meaning, can include social biases, political propaganda and ideological power structures. For instance, the doublespeak language politicians employ to manipulate the public and maintain political power. They do so by concealing the truth or distorting the reality and propagating their hidden agendas in the name of social equality and justice. According to Žižek, “it is language, its symbolization, which make” the reality intolerable (57).

The third feature of the space of violence is that it is a “nest of obscene... fantasies,” that is, the discourse of any ideological space – like autocracy, democracy, religion, cult, etc. – “is accompanied and sustained by a whole nest of obscene, brutal, racist, sexist fantasies” (86). These fantasies are nothing but “the projection of our fears, anxieties, and secret desires” about the Other (88). For instance, the discourse of socialist democracy, according to Žižek, is “sustained by a set of implicit and unspoken, obscene injunctions and prohibitions,” which teach us how to operate within the given space (145). These obscene fantasies are not part of the official discourse but are essential for its existence. That is, they are not accepted or openly admitted within the space, their existence is discarded, but “they nevertheless pop up in our public space in a censored form” (86). For instance, the hypothetical proposition for the elimination of a certain section of people, like poor black neighborhoods, to reduce crime. These fantasies are not openly admitted but the occasional appearance of such hypothetical propositions in the public space, even in the censored form, unravels the subject's unconscious fascination with the Other. In another example, Žižek talks about the explicit homophobia in the military which “is accompanied by an implicit web of homosexual innuendos, in-jokes, and obscene practices” within the military space (145). These implicit practices, the obscene fantasies, though part of the military space, are not openly admitted but are essential to keep explicit homophobia in the military space. According to Žižek, punishing the individual acts of homophobia in the military will not resolve the problem of homophobia unless implicit practices are addressed.

Furthermore, these obscene fantasies not only culminate in such violent propositions into false-images and/or stories but also motivate their circulation. These images and/or stories are false not because of the absence of factual truth but because of

the motive of their circulation (85). The circulation of such images and/or stories overwhelms the subjects and makes the space more volatile, or what Žižek calls, its 'Fantasmatic' dimension, a dimension in which the experiences of the subjects are overdetermined. For instance, the over-circulation of the anti-Semitic image in Nazi Germany heightened the intolerance towards the Jewish people because the subjects could "not distinguish between in any simple way between real Jews and their anti-Semitic image" (57). For Žižek, the existence of obscene fantasies reflects the presence of objective violence, which maintains the status quo of the symbolic space. Contrarily, the acts of subjective violence erupt against the status quo, against "this Fantasmatic dimension," as was the case of anti-Semitic Pogroms (57). In this 'Fantasmatic' dimension, the subjects fantasize about their own "fears, anxieties, and secret desires" (88) to the figure of an imponderable Other. For instance, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the racial bias against the poor black neighbor of New Orleans came to light in the form of rumors and false reports of rapes and murders.

Additionally, the obscene fantasies also show the limits of the ideological space. That is, they operate "within the contours of" the ideological space (110). The boundaries of the space of violence engulf the area in which an ideology operates. The ideology of a given space operates through obscene fantasies, implicit prohibitions and practices, and marks off the boundaries of the space. For instance, blasphemy is a religious concept and operates only within the domain of religious space. That is, it only affects those who are the subjects of the religious space, and who believe in a particular religious school of thought. Ideology sets up the boundaries of a given space by deploying its law through "mythic violence," a concept Žižek borrowed from Walter Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence" (1921). Mythic violence is violence, including the acts of objective and subjective violence, which is law-making, as it sets the boundaries of the space (167). In another example, Žižek talks about the boundaries of multicultural liberal tolerance. By promoting tolerance and acceptance of the Other, it reveals "its propensity to self-blame and its effort to 'understand' the other" (109). By demanding respect and protecting the Other from public scrutiny, it inadvertently protects and legitimizes harmful or discriminatory practices.

In his monograph, *Violence*, Žižek has made several distinctions as far as space of violence is concerned, such as open and closed spaces; private and public spaces; social and political spaces; and virtual or cyberspace – an extension of cognitive space. Let us briefly discuss the distinctions.

Open and Closed Space: An open space refers to a “modern, open ‘risk society’,” whereas a closed space refers to an old, safe, exclusive and self-enclosed community (Žižek, *Violence* 22). The reason why the open space is risky is because of its principles of “open border and acceptance of others” (88). That is, people belonging to foreign or different societies are accepted into this space. But this acceptance creates a feeling of uncertainty among the underprivileged subjects, whose livelihood and, thus, existence is threatened by the mere presence of the seemingly invading others. The more proximate these others are, the more fear they generate among the subjects because their space is invaded by the others. As a result, intolerance runs high in the open space, and the risk of subjects resorting to rebellion is also high, thus making the space a risky one. In discussing open space, Žižek gives the example of the liberal Europe of the 21st century, a space which is respectful and open towards Muslim immigrants. This respect and openness create fear in the heart of the population because while their own space is intruded by the immigrants – the others are by definition intrusive – the reverse is not allowed. That is, the population should not intrude into the space of the immigrants and should respect the over-proximity of the immigrants. It is their space, which is open and is intruded upon by the immigrants, and they should accept it as such. But their tolerance of the immigrants’ proximity, at the same time, “coincides with its opposite,” the demand of the respect of immigrants’ intolerance of the population’s proximity (35). That is, the space of the immigrants must not be intruded. It makes the space more volatile and prone to violence. The danger of an explosion of violence is always around the corner.

On the other hand, a closed space exists because of the desire to create an exclusive or cocoon-like world, to protect the innocence of the homogeneous population. The subjects of the closed space are united against an enemy, an Other, which lies outside the boundaries of the space, thus maintaining “a temporary truce” between the subjects and the Other. This external threat serves two purposes: firstly, it “maintain[s] a permanent state of emergency,” a permanent threat (22); and secondly, it unites the population against the common external enemy or threat (23). In explaining closed space, Žižek gives the example of the movie *The Village* (2004) in which the village elders wanted to create “a closed universe of authenticity” to protect the innocence of the next generations “from the corrosive force of modernity.” The village was situated within “a ‘wildlife preserve’, surrounded... by a big fence and lots of guards” (21), all bought by Edward Walker, one of the village elders. To keep the next generation from leaving their closed space, a myth was created that the village, was surrounded by dangerous forest. Even

though there were no real monsters or external threats, by maintaining the threat of a monster in the woods, the inner circle of the village, comprising of the elders, replaced the evil with themselves because they were enacting, what Žižek calls, objective violence on the subjects of the village. The threat of violence is always present in closed spaces.

Private and Public Space: A private space refers to “the safe haven of family and the non-state public sphere of civil society” in which “personal and private idiosyncrasies” are expressed, and a public space refers to “the network of norms and rules” possessing “the binding power of a collective” (120). Žižek observes an opposition between Richard Rorty and Immanuel Kant, in their observations of private and public space. Žižek agrees with Rorty’s depiction of private space, that “creativity and wild imagination rule and moral considerations are (almost) suspended” in a private space (121). Žižek points out that it is because a person’s idiosyncrasies are influenced by their ties to the “very communal-institutional order” (122) with which they identify. Žižek also agrees with Kant that one employs “*private use of reason*” (122) in the private space, revealing their prejudicial attitude. In discussing the private space of violence, Žižek gives the example of “Nazi anti-Semitism,” to exemplify the private use of reason, which he referred to as “a pathological ideological condition” because “[t]he cause of all social antagonisms was projected into the” figure of the Jew (85). The use of (private) reason in Nazi anti-Semitism was “constrained by contingent dogmatic presuppositions” (121). Žižek goes on to claim that even if these presuppositions were based on truth, like the “rich Jews... exploited German workers, seduced their daughters, dominated the popular press and so on” (84-85), what made them untrue was the prejudicial attitude and political motives of the Nazis. That is, in the guise of presenting facts, the Nazis were wrong in their subjective position, they were motivated by their political ambitions, thus making the space volatile and prone to violence.

As far as public space is concerned, Žižek agrees with Rorty that it “is the space of social interaction, where we should obey the rules so that we do not hurt others” (121-22), but to do so, citing Kant, Žižek argues that we must be free from prejudices and dogmatic presumptions, and must possess “the level of free thinking” or “the dimension of emancipatory universality.” In other words, we must engage in an “unconstrained free exercise of reason” (122), that is, “telling the factual truth... [must] not involve the lie of the subjective position of enunciation” (85). According to Žižek, it is difficult to get to the level of universal individuality because one, it requires the extrication of a person from their “particular cultural/social roots” (121); and two, there could be a restriction

on the content of the factual truth. That is, if the content of the factual truth is censored or restricted, then no matter what the fact contains or presents, it would be discarded. For instance, in today's political correctness, the content of the factual truth, like "black committing crimes... lesbian couples mistreat[ing] their children... underprivileged minorities brutali[zing] women and children" (85), is outrightly discarded. According to Žižek, the content of the factual truths form, what he calls, the obscene fantasies, which "pop up in our public space in censored form... evoked as an option and then immediately discarded" (86). The invocation of these obscene fantasies within the public space is nothing but the presence of objective violence.

Social and Political Space: Žižek defines social space in terms of a space in which people "interact with others obeying certain... rules" (51); and political space in terms of a space in which people get involved in mass actions and practices to achieve some political goals or agendas, like, in the 2005 violent protests of Paris, the protestors "wanted to be... fully recognized as" French citizens (65). According to Žižek, the social conditions of a space or its socialization practices determine how its subjects behave. For instance, in most European countries, alienation "is woven into the very social texture of everyday life" (51). That is, people, living next to each other, do not really interact with each other. It is a common practice to maintain distance from others and not get too close to them. Žižek finds that this "weakness and failure" of Europeans, "namely the alienation of social life," makes "it easier to tolerate different ways of life" (50-51). This could make peaceful coexistence a possibility. Consequently, subjective violence in a social space erupts when the living conditions deteriorate, when disparity grows between the sections of the population, as we have seen in the 2005 riots of New Orleans. Post Hurricane Katrina, the underprivileged could not leave the city and "were left behind, starving and uncared for" (81). In the absence of survival means, the social order of New Orleans disintegrated and the city fell into chaos. There was thievery, foraging among other crimes. The violent reactions of the underprivileged in the aftermath of Katrina show the fragility of a social space, which is deeply unbalanced and divided, and how easily it could disintegrate.

On the other hand, in a political space, protest is the most common means to seek attention. The political protests usually have a clear vision, goals and demands, like socio-economic upliftment, or seeking special status or protection for religious, ethnic, and racial identities. The violence, thus, perpetuated by these protestors is "carried out on behalf of... [an] *absolute* meaning" (69). They have a justification for the violent

actions posited against their enemy. For instance, Nazi antisemitism was posited against Jewish conspiracy (67). In contrast, there are, what Žižek calls, ‘zero-level’ protests, which demand nothing. Žižek gives the example of the 2005 Paris riots, a violent protest without a clear vision and means to achieve their goal. The violence perpetuated by the protestors was self-destructive, that is, it “was almost exclusively directed against their own,” destroying their own neighborhood (64). These blind or sudden explosions of subjective violence lie beyond the contours of law and are considered instances of divine violence.

Cyberspace: Žižek defines cyberspace in terms of a virtual space in which people “communicate and self-organize” (28) but not as themselves rather as their alter egos. That is, the subject of cyberspace is nothing but an avatar, “a ‘false’ image... which stands for... [a real person] in a virtual community in which... [they] participate.” When a person enters the realm of cyberspace, they wear a persona and turn into their avatars. Through this mask, they observe and experience the virtual world. Even though they experience emotions through their avatar, what they “feel and ‘feign’ as part of... [their] onscreen persona... [is] not simply false” (83). It is because the person who hides behind their cyberspace avatar is able to get satisfaction and/or relief in the real world through the deferral of emotions, from the fact that their avatars got to experience certain emotions and feelings in cyberspace.

To conclude, this section has discussed the second aspect of the framework namely the spatiality of interpersonal violence. We have observed Žižek’s examination of the spatiality of interpersonal violence and its various aspects, including the space of violence being ideological, abyssal and a nest of obscene fantasies. We have also observed the various distinctions of space Žižek makes in his monograph. It comprises open and closed space, private and public space, social and political space as well as cyberspace. The next section will discuss the third section of the framework namely the affectivity of interpersonal violence and explore how violence affects the subjects and thus, transforms them and the space itself.

The term *affect*, a noun, according to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, refers to the Latin term *affectus* meaning “disposition, mood state of mind or body produced by something external” (“Affect”). *Cambridge’s Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and Thesaurus* primarily defines it as a verb referring “to have an influence on someone or something, or to cause a change in someone or something” is called an affect (“Affect”). As an adjective, the term *affective* is “connected with the emotions” in the modern field

of Psychology (“Affective”). The suffix “ity” when combined with the adjective “affective” forms the term *affectivity* referring to the ability to experience affects, as the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* defines it as “the degree of a person’s response or susceptibility to pleasure, pain, and other emotional stimuli” (“Affectivity”). There are two dimensions of affectivity, namely positive and negative. The former reflects “one’s level of pleasurable engagement with the environment... reflecting one’s enthusiasm, energy level, mental alertness, interest, joy, determination” as well as “lethargy and fatigue;” and the latter reflects one’s “distress, and subsumes a broad range of negative mood states, including fear, anxiety, hostility, scorn, and disgust” (Watson and Clark 347). According to Thomas Fuchs, affects, in general, “are conceived as private, ‘mental’ phenomena that arise in the subject’s mind (or brain) from cognitive evaluation of external stimuli” (612). In this context, Slavoj Žižek has explored the effects violence produces on the individual, that is, how violence affects the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of an individual. Before diving deep into how violence affects us, let us briefly discuss the concepts of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Subjectivity refers to self-awareness or self-consciousness. A being is said to have the possession of subjectivity, also known as a subject, if they have “the tendency to interpret data or make judgements in the light of personal feelings, beliefs, or experiences” (“Subjectivity”). It is “the perception or experience of reality from within one’s own perspective (both conscious and unconscious) and necessarily limited by the boundary or horizon of one’s own worldview” (Cooper-White 882). Intersubjectivity, on the other hand, refers to “the sharing of subjective experience between two or more people... [and] seen as essential to language and the production of social meaning” (“Intersubjectivity”). There is an interdependency between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, that is, we become subjects, or possess subjectivity, through our interaction and awareness of others. In other words, “the subject emerges through a process of social interaction” and their “subjectivity is always already intersubjective” (Frie 17). A distinction is to be made between the term subject used in subjectivity and subjective violence. The former is an individual who is self-aware or self-conscious and possesses an agency of their own. Their subjectivity is achieved by developing a relationship and interacting with others (Cronick 532). The latter is an individual who perpetrates the violence. These include “social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds” (Žižek *Violence*, 9). Because subjective violence is the most visible form of violence, therefore, its agents (1) and their ideological

sources (12) are clearly identifiable. As far as subjective violence is concerned, as is the case with subjectivity, “the terms ‘subject’ and ‘agent’ are... synonyms” because they possess self-awareness and agency (Cronick 531).

Throughout his monograph *Violence*, Žižek has identified several ways in which violence affects the subjectivity and thus, intersubjectivity of an individual. One way violence affects the individual is through emotional responses, such as fear, envy, terror and trauma. According to Žižek, Fear is “a constituent of today’s subjectivity” and it is fear of the Other that “actively mobilise[s] people,” (*Violence* 34). For instance:

fear of immigrants, fear of crime, fear of godless sexual depravity, fear of the excessive state itself, with its burden of high taxation, fear of ecological catastrophe, fear of harassment. (34-35)

Additionally, being terrified also affects subjectivity by luring our attention from “the contours of the background which generates” the outbursts of violence to the outburst itself (1). That is, we get fascinated by the agents of subjective violence and ignore the reasons why it erupts in the first place. In discussing the horrors of Stalinist purges, Žižek refers to Anna Akhmatova’s description of the Leningrad Prison. He agrees with Wallace Stevens in calling her description a non-realistic one because it creates “an inexistent (virtual) space of its own, so that what appears in it is not an appearance sustained by the depth of the reality behind it, but a decontextualized appearance, an appearance which fully coincides with real beings” (Žižek *Violence*, 5). Akhmatova’s artistic description of the prison depicts horrors to evoke terror, the feeling of extreme fear, into her readers and affects their subjectivity.

Similarly, the emotions of envy or resentment, “constitutive components of human desire,” can make the subject act against their own interests (74). The subject affected by envy or resentment not only can endorse Other’s loss but also can prefer it even at the expense of their own loss (75). At the heart of this envy live an uncomfortable situation where the object finds itself devoid of something precious. That is, the subject is envious of an Other who not only possesses something of value which the subject does not have but also enjoys the prized object (76). The subject envies the Other’s possession as well as enjoyment of the desired object. Because the Other is able to enjoy the object in a specific way, it makes the subject envious of the way the Other enjoys the object. Therefore, the true aim of the subject of envy is the destruction of “the Other’s

ability/capacity to enjoy the object” (77). Evil, according to Žižek, emerges when the subject goes to extreme lengths “to deprive the Other of his enjoyment,” including bearing huge losses of one’s own (79).

For Žižek, being traumatized also affects the functioning of the subjects. It not only makes them factually unreliable but also confused and inconsistent (3). Their narrative may appear truthful to them but to others, it could “signal that the reported content [is] ‘contaminated’ (4). For instance, the verbal reports of Holocaust survivors can be labelled as untrue or fake if the victims’ narratives appear too coherent, logical and rehearsed. Similarly, their narratives could raise suspicion if they do not have traits, such as factual unreliability, confusion and inconsistency. The emotional element is always linked with the narrative of the traumatized victims.

Žižek, in his monograph, does not categorically distinguish how violence affects different groups of people who are involved in it. Cristian Ciocan, in his research paper entitled “Violence and Affectivity,” has explored “the emotional dimension involved in the phenomenon of interpersonal violence, identifying various modalizations of affectivity occurring in the architectonics of this phenomenon” (195). According to Ciocan, the three modes of violence, namely exerted violence, endured violence and witnessed violence, constitute distinct affectivities. While the first two are the opposite poles as far as the activity of the first and passivity of the second is concerned, the third, on the other hand, “constitute a distinct pole, having a specific affectivity, which must also be taken into consideration in a comprehensive description of the emotions involved in violence” (200). Irrespective of the modes, violence remains an inter-subjective phenomenon.

In describing the affectivity of the exerted violence, Ciocan traces the emotional changes within the subject which turns them into the agent of violence, the one who actively exerts violence. The emotional changes arise within a subject when they are pitched against the figure of an Other, who, according to Žižek, is “intrusive” (*Violence* 35), “imponderable” and “traumatic” (47). The starting point of the emotional change within the subject is the point of discontent and the source of this discontent is the figure of the Other. That is, the Other is held responsible or is blamed for creating discontent within the subject. At the heart of the agent’s emotional crescendo lies the figure of a constantly intrusive and imponderable Other. The emotional crescendo begins with “initial *discontent*,” which escalates to an “*indisposition* and *irritation*,” which further evolves to “a more concentrated *annoyance*,” which “eventually transform[s] into a more

rigid *antagonism*,” where “*anger*” first emerges, “and then into full-blown *hostility*,” where “*fury* and *rage*” ultimately manifest into violence (Ciocan 201). As a result of this progressively increasing emotional changes and without any break in the emotional crescendo, the subject turns into the figure of the agent of violence and perpetrates violent acts onto the Other.

As far as the affectivity of the endured violence is concerned, “fear,” according to Ciocan, “is the first affective disposition” (206). Žižek also finds that in today’s world of “*post-political bio-politics*,” fear is “a basic constituent of today’s subjectivity” (*Violence* 34). That is, it is through fear people are mobilized. The fear arises from an Other, who is proximate and constantly intruding on the space of the subject. It is their otherness, their “foreign” status and their “traumatic character,” which generate fear because their “reasoning is foreign... so that no authentic encounter with... [them] is possible” (47). The absence of a reasonable encounter creates a limbo for the subject, who is stuck with an imponderable Other and perceives the Other as a threat. Ciocan points out “that although fear does not necessarily imply violence, violence necessarily involves fear (for the one who endures it)” even if it is in its “anticipated” form, that is, perceived as oncoming (208). Žižek also points out that as long as the subject perceives the Other as intrusive, thus threatening, the fear of potential violence, even if it is not real, remains very much on the table (35). Furthermore, when the potential violence turns into actual violence, “the emotional situation” changes, “either fear is aggravated into *being terrified*” in case of a “helpless and hopeless” victim “or it is modified into fierceness” if the victimized “decide[s] to fight back” (Ciocan 208). Contrary to potential violence where the weak subject has the time and space to withdraw, in actual violence, the “possibility of escape and withdrawal is somewhat suspended” and the emotional situation degrades into being terrified (209). According to Ciocan, in a state of being terrified, there is an “impossibility of recoil,” which stems from an “impossibility to escape” and comprises “a very radical situation in which violence does not leave” (213). That is, the subject, one who endures violence, are overwhelmingly terrified, has “no place to withdraw,” or an “exit plan,” or a “strategy to defend” themselves, and are “totally surrounded” and “paralyzed” – thus are unable to retreat, flee, defend, or escape (212). Just like the emotional crescendo transforms a subject into an agent of violence, into one who exerts violence, the emotional degradation, on the other hand, transforms the subject into a victim of violence, into one who endures violence.

Lastly, confronting violence “from the position of a witness” or an observer, who

is “simply there, incidentally or not,” also has its effects (214). These effects may include revolt, astonishment, indignation, consternation as well as being “shocked, perplexed, or scandalized” (215). There are several roles the witness could and could not adopt in the face of witnessing violence, including the role of an intervener, mediator, “neutral onlooker or a pacifier” (200). Ciocan has listed various factors that could affect the witness of violence, including “the gender or age” of the victim, “the *intensity* of violence” and the “diverse *symbolic* forms” in which violence is perpetrated, like what impact a slap, punch or kick has on the witness (215). In his typology of violence, Žižek has also talked about a few factors that could determine the affectivity of witnessed violence. His factors also correlate to Ciocan’s list of factors. Firstly, in individual versus group victimization, it is observed that the misery or the victimization of an individual, for instance, “[t]he death of a West Bank Palestinian child” (Žižek, *Violence* 2-3), caused more uproar than the “detailed documentation of how around 4 million people died in the Democratic Republic of Congo” (2). This is because it is easier to relate to and sympathize with an individual’s suffering than to people in mass. Secondly, in proximate versus abstract victimization, referring to Sam Harries from *The End of Faith*, Žižek points out that “witnessing the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes” is more difficult than the “abstract knowledge of mass suffering” (36). For instance, amid the Ukraine crisis in 2022, several Western news agencies were shocked to see Russian missiles falling on a nearby “European city,” in the 21st century, and not on some distant and “Third World” places, like “Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades” (Gathara). They were shocked at the fact that the suffering of the victims, who are just like them, was immediately felt by the proximity of violence. Thirdly, in anonymous versus spectacle victimization, victimization for the sake of spectacle is perceived more favorably than the victimization of nameless individuals. For instance, “the ‘standard’ way prisoners were tortured in Saddam’s regime” was in secrecy, in contrast, the tortures of the prisoners in Abu Ghraib were recorded on camera by the soldiers of the US (146). It caused a huge public uproar when the pictures of the tortures from Abu Ghraib were made public, while tortures under Saddam’s regime were known for their brutality but they never attracted such a response from the observers. And fourthly, in the differentiation between a human versus a subhuman victim. The victimization of an individual, one who is perceived as too close to an ordinary-looking human being, generates sympathy among the observers and makes the violence unacceptable. Contrarily, in the victimization of a subhuman, the individual is reduced

to a less-than-human status. It makes the violence tolerable and does not generate sympathy because, by perceiving them as something that is not fully human, their “pain is neutralized, reduced to a property” (Žižek, *Violence* 38). There are other reasons for the observer’s indifference towards the victim, like the victims who are considered disposable and have no relevance to the observers of violence, or who are blamed for their victimization because they seemingly deserve it. For instance, middle-aged medieval women “had important functions, at birth, in case of sickness, and in cases of death,” and in the event of a mishap, they were held accountable for their responsibilities because of their supposedly link with the divine (Christie 23).

Furthermore, what also stops a witness or an observer from intervening or mediating in the violence is the fear of getting hurt – the emotional crescendo (Ciocan 215). In the fear of getting hurt in the ongoing act of violence, the emotion of horror dominates the witnesses and they are no longer outsiders or neutral viewers of violence, rather their position changes “into a sort of *passive pole* of violence, becoming a kind of virtual victim” (216). Similarly, if the emotion of horror does not dominate the observer, “one can overthrow one’s own fear and intervene, no matter what the risk” (215). This is the difference between being horrified and being fierce. For instance, in the ongoing protests in Iran, aftermath of the death of “a young woman who was arrested by the country’s morality police for allegedly not adhering to a mandatory dress code” in September 2022 (Motamedi), the authority used public beatings and executions “to instill fear among of the public” (“Iran: Horrifying execution”). While this tactic stopped some people from intervening in the protests against the theocratic regime, others were enraged and joined the protests (Fassihi).

Additionally, an observer's presence could also have a profound effect on victims and agents of violence. For victims, the presence of observers can either encourage them to fight back or discourage them from pursuing the violent path. For instance, it is seen that some mothers choose to fight back or flee the domestic abuse of their husbands if their children are involved (Zink et al. 587), while others endure intimate partner violence for the sake of their children (Griffing 309). Similarly, for agents of violence, the presence of observers can either deter them from perpetuating violence or support/stimulate their violent acts. As deterrence, the presence of observers breaks the escalation of violence by snapping the agents out of their emotional crescendo. As supporters, observers’ presence encourages the agent to continue exerting violence.

Violence also affects the individual via their “economic situation” or “the situation

of capital” at their disposal (Žižek *Violence* 11). In discussing the affectivity of violence, Žižek gives the example of the invisible nature of systemic violence in the contemporary capitalist world. According to Žižek, objective violence “took on a new shape with capitalism,” that is, the “self-enhancing circulation of capital” disregards “any human or environmental concern” (10), pursues the “goal of profitability” and “affect[s] social reality.” It is this “speculative dance of capital” which decides “the fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries” (11). This is how a capitalist system perpetuates systemic violence. For instance, millions of people have “died as the result of capitalist globalization... [like] the tragedy of Mexico in the sixteenth century” (12), where the native population collapsed significantly, about 12-25 million, because of “an epidemic disease in the wake of European conquest” (Acuna-Soto et al. 360). In another example, in “the Belgian Congo holocaust a century ago” (Žižek, *Violence* 12), about 10 million Congolese died of “physical exhaustion, famine and infectious disease” because the greedy “Leopold II, king of Belgium” wanted to ruthlessly extract the natural resources, like “ivory, hardwoods and wild rubber from their homeland” (Hamilton). In describing the affectivity of objective violence in today’s world, Žižek points out that “the social reality of the actual people involved in interaction and in the production processes... doesn’t matter, what matters is the situation of capital” (*Violence* 11). The economic situation of the very people, who are involved in the process of production which sustains the capitalist system, determines how objective violence would affect them as subjects of the capitalist space. In facing economic exploitation, they are transformed into the victims of objective violence. Furthermore, because the capital is unevenly distributed, people who lack proper resources are at a disadvantage. They suffer the most. For instance, the 1943 Bengal “famine was exacerbated by the decisions of Winston Churchill’s wartime cabinet in London,” that is, about 30 million people died because of “a combination of wartime inflation, speculative buying and panic hoarding, which together pushed the price of food out of the reach of poor Bengalis” (Safi). Contrarily, people with proper resources at their disposal can avoid their victimization even at the worst of the conditions. Žižek gives the example of the “liberal communists,” who have earned an enormous amount of wealth through economic exploitation (19). They have resources to protect themselves from the devastation that they have caused in the first place (23). They can live in closed and protected spaces and enjoy the perks of their wealth while the world around them disintegrates.

The next way violence affects the individual is through “their socio-symbolic

identity.” Žižek points out that humans, as “socio-symbolic being[s],” have a social existence and are judged on their “performative efficiency” (*Violence*, 62). Violence that disrupts their performative efficiency would definitely affect them as socio-symbolic beings. He gives the example of racial disparity, the “inferiority of blacks” when compared to the white majority (61). According to Žižek, “the white racist ideology exerts a performative efficiency,” which is “an interpretation that determines the very being and social existence of the interpreted subjects” (62). That is, the inferiority of blacks can be factually observed in different strata of life, where black people lag behind white people. For instance, “blacks earn twenty-four percent less, live five fewer years, and are six times more likely to be incarcerated” when compared to an average white person (Fryer 856). This gap between the performative efficiency of blacks and whites results from their socio-symbolic identity, which is largely affected by systemic violence – in this case, it is racist violence. Racism affects blacks not only in performing and competing against the white majority but also in their social identity and thus autonomy. For instance, Perry et al. (2015) found that the medical field is predominantly white and “African American students who perceive their race to be central to their personal identity,” and face everyday discrimination, are more likely to have a “poorer well-being (higher levels of depression, anxiety, fatigue, and perceived stress and lower levels of state self-esteem)” (523).

Furthermore, the identity of a particular individual is in constant internal conflict. The two aspects of the identity, namely particular and universal, are in clash with each other (Žižek, *Violence* 129). While the former refers to “particular cultural/social roots” (121) and comprises biases, presuppositions and feelings of belongingness to “a particular, contingent lifeworld” (129); the latter, on the other hand, is a timeless dimension, which refers to the transcendence of historical roots and “which undermines all particular lifeworlds, cultures, traditions” (132). It is the latter which “perturbs and affects it [the identity] from within” (129). By a constant internal conflict, Žižek means that the particular dimension of the identity, to maintain a particular and original stance, strives for the stabilization of identity. To achieve this end, it tries to repress the universal dimension because the implicit universality is constantly undermining every particular position and thus, brings about a change in the identity. Žižek gives the example of protests within a particular culture. The cultures have particular rules and constraints, which they try to uphold and defend. They repress any protest which threatens their operations and thus, existence. The protests, on the other hand, “*are formulated from the*

standpoint of universality” (133) and they strive for a change in the rules and constraints of the cultures. According to Žižek, the protests are successful in bringing about a change in the cultures, only if they have “actual universality,” that is, the protestors, who share the experience of the negativity, must “come together in a shared struggle” (134). So, it is “*the experience of negativity*,” resulting from objective or subjective violence, which affects the subjectivity or the identity of an individual from within.

Violence also affects the individual via the perception, created by the circulation of false-images of the Other (57). This perception is created or constructed through language or symbolization which facilitates violence, also known as symbolic violence. At the heart of this perception lies the disfigured- or false-images of an Other which helps spread the misinformation. The disfigured- or false-images are timely circulated within the space to maintain a particular perception of the Other. For instance, the disfiguration of Jews by the Nazis overdetermined the public’s experience of Jewish people (57). The circulated images are false not because they are factually wrong, they could be partly or factually true, but because the motive behind their circulation is false (85). William Brustein, in his book *Roots of Hate*, has traced four roots of hate, including religious, racial, economic and political, which helped the Nazis to create a false-image of Jews. The religious roots depicted Jews “as deniers of Christ, pariahs and a demonic people, perpetrators of ritual murder, and agents of the Antichrist” (Brustein 63). The racial roots depicted Jews as “devoid of self-control and possessed by unbridled egoism” (130) and “a racially determined group unable to alter their ways and properly assimilate into German society” (131). The economic roots depicted Jews as opportunists who rose from being “hawkers, petty traders, usurers and innkeepers to jobs in retail and wholesale businesses and banking” (205). The political roots depicted Jews as mischievous people who were covertly planning “to take control of the [whole] world” (265). Using these misconceptions about the Jewish people, the Nazi were able to create an anti-Semite image and thus, a perception which affected the psyche of common German people. Violence erupts when these false-images circulate within the space and make the reality intolerable. It affects not only the subjects but also the Other against whom the violence is perpetuated. That is, the perception created through language and its symbolization affects the subjects’ experience of the Other as well as the Other’s experience of themselves. For instance, “the image/figure of the ‘Jew’” had made the Nazis intolerable of Jewish people (*Violence* 57). Similarly, “the image of Jews as victims” has been internalized and given rise to a victim mentality, like the Jewish state of Israel employing

the victim card “to legitimize its power politics as well as to denounce its critics” (102). The constructed perception affects the victim's psyche and transforms their experience of themselves.

Lastly, violence also affects individuals through a false narrative, which upholds the perpetuation of violence. The motive behind the creation of a false narrative is the continuation of violence. It is done by creating a sort of deadlock, a situation which is not meant to be resolved despite having the possibility of a resolution. The deadlock provides “some kind of pathological libidinal profit,” for the warring parties which results in the continuation of violence (104). By satisfying their libidinal gain, the parties indulged in violence are rendered unable to find a solution even if there is an apparent one. Žižek gives the example of the Israeli narrative for the creation and violent possession of the land of Israel. It makes a historical claim for the land, that the land belonged to their forefathers and they have the right to evict the occupiers. When their argument does not hold water because the same holds true for Palestinians, that the land belonged to their ancestry as well, the Israelis evoke or switch to the religious claim “to justify the geographical location” (103). It appears to Žižek that there is an obvious solution to the problem of the land, a two-state solution with a compromise on Jerusalem, but both parties do not want to resolve it and thus are stuck into a deadlock (104). They do not want to resolve it because both are gaining some libidinal profit. For Israeli leadership, agreeing to a solution would mean that they have to assume the position of power and the responsibilities that come with it and lose “the image of Jews as victims,” which they employ time and again “to legitimize... [their] power politics, as well as to denounce... [their] critics” (102) and which they do not want. For Palestinian leadership, the recognition of a Jewish state would legitimize the decades of Israeli occupation and they would lose the support of their fellow Arab nations, which they also do not want. Thus, the only way forward for both parties is the continuation of the deadlock to legitimize their respective politics.

In terms of interpersonal violence leading to a deadlock, there are similarities as far as gaining a pathological libidinal profit is concerned for the victims and agents of violence. One of the libidinal profits is to sustain their respective statuses, that is, the status of a victim or an agent of violence. This leads Žižek to quote the author and journalist Arthur Koestler:

If power corrupts, the reverse is also true; persecution corrupts the victims,

though perhaps in subtler and more tragic ways. (102-3)

For the victims of interpersonal violence, their victimization could also corrupt them. Griffing et al. (2002), in their research article, note that the victims of domestic abuse are often revictimized. This is because they return to their abusers either willingly or by being pressured by others or by being coerced by their abusers after they show vulnerability or remorse or promise to be better and/or seek help (308). The hope for a better and improved future acts as their pathological libidinal profit which restricts them from getting out of the cyclic abuse. Contrarily, for the agents of interpersonal violence, the strategy of showing vulnerability or remorse or the promise to get better restricts the victim from escaping and helps them sustain cyclic violence. For Žižek, this act of vulnerability “re-establishes balance – a kind of redistribution of” power which does not end the cycle of violence but rather postpones it (*Violence* 20). So, the perpetuation of violence, resulting from the false narrative, affects the subjectivity of the individual by providing them a pathological libidinal profit and thus restricting them in a deadlock.

To conclude, this section has discussed the third and the last aspect of the framework namely the affectivity of violence. We have seen thus far the affectivity of interpersonal violence, like how the violence affects the subjects via their emotional responses, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, constant internal conflict, perception created by false-images and false narrative leading to a deadlock. We also observed that the affectivity of violence also includes transforming victims into agents of violence as well as transforming the third pole, the witness or observer of violence, into either virtual victims of violence or into one who intervenes and/or stops the violence. The observers of violence are transformed into virtual victims when they witness something horrifying, which renders them unable to intervene. And contrarily, it is the fierceness, similar to victim’s actions against their abusers, that renders them able to intervene in the violence they witness. There are other instances of course where the third pole is not affected by witnessing the perpetration of violence and hence does not intervene in it. It is because the violence does not affect them, the victimization of a victim does not generate sympathy. There could be various reasons. For instance, in the eyes of the observer, if the victim is at fault and hence deserves the punishment; or if the victim is not even considered a human, or is tagged as a subhuman, and hence does not entail the attention. In the next section, the framework is extended to the Western kinship system to explore the relationship between violence, ideology, gender and language.

Numerous human kinship systems exist or have existed in the world but the present study focuses only on the Western or the Euro-American kinship system. This is because the focus of this thesis is to study violence within the domain of kinship relations in Sarah Kane's plays, and the kinship system in Kane's world happens to be the Western or the Euro-American one. The term *Euro-American* is used differently in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the US, the term refers to those Americans who have European ancestry (Edwards 131). In the UK, the term "is used to aggregate: to reflect what are thought to be resonances between and across European and North American world views;" that is, it is "a proxy for 'Western'" and refers to "the similarities between European and North American ideologies" (132). The present study follows the latter understanding of the term and based on this conception, it often uses the terms Western kinship and Euro-American kinship interchangeably.

Western or Euro-American kinship system refers to a system of classifying or organizing familial relationships prevalent in European and North American or Western societies. It is also known as the Eskimo system, named after the Inuit or Eskimo people, and is primarily characterized by a nuclear family and distinction between relatives is based on generation and sex. The basic features of Western kinship system include bilateral descent, where "kin connections over the generations [are traced] through both males and females" lines (Stone 166), and corporate groups are not formed based on the descent (167); inheritance by disposition/will (Scheider and Homans 1194), or bilateral inheritance, where all children, irrespective of their gender, are eligible to inherit family property (Stone 166); no succession of public office to kins (Scheider and Homans 1194), except for monarchy, such as the English crown; Nuclear family, a basic kin unit which includes immediate family members, such as a couple and their children; monogamous marriage, a "marriage between two persons" (Stone 18) is legally permitted and is often predicated in romantic love (228); and neolocal residence, "whereby a married couple moves to a new household or location" away from their parents (15).

As far as the basic kin terms in the Western kinship system are concerned, the evidence of their roots in the older sources is pretty clear. For instance, the "direct terms (*mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter*) are directly descended from... their Proto-Indo-European sources" and "the collateral terms (*uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, cousin*) seem all to be circa 14th-century borrowings from French" (Kronenfeld 33). These terms are found to have "two aspects or functions: first, an *ordering* or *classifying* aspect and, second, a *role* or *relationship*-designating aspect" (Scheider and Homans 1196). The

former refers to the genealogical category assigned to the kin. For instance, in the Euro-American kinship, the term *father* is exclusively assigned to the male genitor, whereas in other terminological systems, such as the Hawaiian system, the term father refers to the male genitor as well as his male siblings. The latter refers to the symbolization of the role or behavior of the kin. For instance, the figure of the father is often laden with authority over his children.

Western kinship is characterized as bilateral but with a patrilineal twist (Stone 239). It is visible in the use of the father's last name, or the father giving away his daughter at her wedding, or emphasizing genealogical records on the father's side, or forming a family tree along the father's line. While monogamy is legally permitted, marriages are preferred to be exogamous or outside of a closed kinship circle. Apart from these features, Euro-American kinship is also characterized by the changes within Western societies. It includes changing family roles and structure. While the traditional family roles have evolved with the changing gender roles within societies; on the other hand, the rise in divorces and remarriages as well as growing practices of adoption and fostering have significantly changed the landscape of Western kinship. Furthermore, it has also been impacted by social and religious institutions as well as social and cultural factors. As far as Western kinship is concerned, according to Gerda Lerner, it is patriarchy under which family relations have evolved and which still underlies the Western kinship (*The Creation of Patriarchy* 239).

The term *patriarchy* is derived from Greek *patriarkhes*, meaning "male chief or head of a family" ("Patriarchy"). It is widely defined as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 239). Patriarchy primarily includes sexism in the form of paternalistic dominance and includes double sexual standards and female subordination. Sexism, also known as sex-based discrimination, refers to "(actions based on) the belief that the members of one sex are less intelligent, able, skillful, etc. than the members of the other sex" ("Sexism"). It is often used to demonstrate segregation between men and women. For Lerner, it is "the ideology of male supremacy, of male superiority and of beliefs that support and sustain it;" and "as long as sexism as an ideology exists, patriarchal relations can easily be re-established, even when legal changes have occurred to outlaw them" (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 240). The patriarchal system is maintained through paternalism or paternalistic dominance, visible in the systemic bias against women and

the norm favoring men as well as in sustaining gender stereotypes. Let us briefly look at the concept of paternalistic dominance before we explore the patriarchal nature of Western kinship.

Paternalistic dominance or paternalism is “a subset of patriarchal relations” and “describes the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights” (239). It is a sort of exchange between the dominants and the subordinates, whereby “in exchange for protection and privilege,” the subordinates can accept being dominated and their subordinate status (234). For Lerner, paternalistic dominance is maintained: by convincing the subordinates that they need the support and the protection; by weakening their ability to see the discriminatory system; and by structuring conditions through kinship relations and social institutions which make the solidarity between the subordinates extremely difficult (241). In a patriarchal system, women, as a group, are the subordinates and men, as a group, are the dominants. However, there is a hierarchy among men, that is, some men possess more power than others. Female subordination or subordination of women is a key feature of the patriarchal system.

The term *subordination* is “the act of treating someone/something as less important than somebody/something else” (“Subordination”). Thus, the term *female subordination* refers to “the inferior position of women to men” and includes the “power relationship” between them in which “men dominate women” (Sultana 7). Some theorists find biology responsible for female subordination, while others “argue that a subordinate status of women is not biologically rooted but socially imposed (or imposed by men)” (Stone 2). The former builds their case on sexual dimorphism and reproductive roles. Sexual dimorphism refers to differences between the sexes, including size, weight and other features, such as body mass, body fat, etc. These differences make men stronger and naturally dominant. Humans “generally exhibit a greater degree of male dominance” because of their sexual dimorphism (49). Similarly, “women’s reproductive roles” are seen “as an instrument of their oppression or subordination to men” (3), that is, pregnancy, birthing and infant rearing make them dependent on males for food and protection. Their critics point out that sexual dimorphism and reproduction are also seen in other species, including nonhuman primates, but unlike them, only human females are the ones who lose their autonomy over their lives (49). This leads them to conclude that female subordination is socially imposed (2). Linda Stone finds Robin Fox’s ideas about

the formation of human kinship, a combination of descent and alliance theory, interesting because “they suggest that the birth of fully human kinship was simultaneously the birth of female subordination” (52). That is, the systemic exchange of women is used as a strategy to form larger groups and make alliances with others (206). Gerda Lerner finds that female subordination, including their sexual and economic as well as their family, social and religious life, was institutionalized with the formation of patriarchy (*The Creation of Patriarchy* 9). Within Western civilization, female subordination, which highlights their devalued status, has historic roots. It is visible in the ancient law codes and the emergence of monotheism. For instance, female subordination was affirmed by double sexual standards and included female premarital purity as well as sexual behavior.

Double sexual standard or “sexual double standard (SDS) consists of judging men and women differently for the same sexual behavior” (Gomez-Berrocal et al. 686). For instance, in a patriarchal society, “female premarital virginity” is preferred over male premarital virginity (Stone 228). The sexual double standard has been a constant parameter within Western civilization. It was institutionalized in the ancient Mesopotamian, Hammurabic and Hebrew laws (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 113), and was also prevalent in classical antiquity (216). Later, in the Middle Ages, it was upheld by the Church as well, granting men control over their wives and children and demanding female submission to their husbands (Stone 237). It was employed as a strategy by men to ensure “the legitimacy of their offspring and thus secured their property interest” (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 113). Female compliance, on the other hand, with their subordination, especially female premarital purity, has also had historical roots. That is, female purity was seen as a family asset because it could help them improve their social status through hypergamy (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 9). Women cooperated because “in exchange for... sexual, economic, political, and intellectual subordination to men,” they enjoyed class privileges (218) as well as protected “the family estate from seductive lower-class fortune hunters” (Stone 235).

According to Lerner, Western civilization is founded on these constructs which render female subordination as something natural and hide it from general observation (*The Creation of Patriarchy* 10). For Lerner, Patriarchy is the ideology of Western civilization. If we look at Lerner’s position through Žižek’s eyes, her position of paternalistic dominance within Western kinship and societies as a whole, we will find patriarchal ideology working at the core of the Western kinship system. For Žižek, it is ideology that sustains the system. It does so by distorting the reality for the subjects of

the system (*Violence* 51) and making them adhere to it by indulging them in the pursuit of enjoyment (115). In the monograph *Violence*, Žižek provides us with a framework to uncover how ideology sustains the system through violence, especially through the two forms of objective violence, namely symbolic and systemic. The former refers to the “violence embedded in language and its forms” and the latter refers to the “catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (1). We can use this framework to uncover how patriarchal ideology sustains the Western kinship system through objective violence – in its symbolic and systemic form. In its symbolic form, gender is infused in the structure as well as the use of language within Western kinship. And in its systemic form, gender is infused in the functioning of the Western kinship system, that is, kinship practices are laced with institutionalized sexism. Together, they sustain paternalistic dominance within Western kinship. Now, we shall inspect the empirical evidence, showing men and women indulging in symbolic violence in the form of sexist language as well as in systemic violence in the form of practicing institutionalized sexism. Ultimately, it points towards the features of Western kinship. But first, let us briefly discuss what are sexist or gender-laced language and practices.

Sexist language refers to a “language which excludes one sex or the other, or which suggests that one sex is superior to the other” (“Sexist Language”). In the English language, there is a gender asymmetry between men and women, with male representation highlighted and female representation subsumed. Similarly, kinship practices within Western kinship also exhibit gender asymmetry. That is, like language, there is a bias in favor of the male/masculine, while the female/feminine is reduced “to the status of the ‘subsumed,’ the ‘invisible,’ or the ‘marked’ one” (Pauwels 553). According to Ann Coady, a sexist language requires three parts all of which are visible in the language of Western kinship, that is, the English language. The first is iconization or “a *dichotomizing* process whereby two groups of speakers are created according to linguistic features they share, or are perceived to share” (Coady 275). Linguistically, sex/gender divides humans into two groups and because historically men were more powerful, they represent all humans, that is, the term *man* became the generic term which referred to all humans in general (280). The second part is called “fractal recursivity [which] describes how the dichotomies created from iconisation are reflected onto some other level (e.g. gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class...)” (280). For instance, men often have a lower frequency of voice than women and it is then associated with men in general, that is, it becomes a stereotypical trait of masculinity and men producing high

frequency are perceived as effeminized or homosexuals (281). And finally, there is erasure, “a process whereby any evidence that contradicts the naturalness of one side of the argument is ignored” (283). As we know language does not evolve in a vacuum but rather reflects socio-cultural conventions and thought patterns. It is shaped by its speakers and those with power have more influence than others (286). Hence, we see more use of the male generic ‘he’ in gender-neutral nouns, such as student, doctor, citizen, surgeon, patient, individual, etc. Let us now discuss the empirical evidence of sexist language, including its structure and usage, and practices within Western kinship, and societies as a whole.

The present study focuses on the English language and treats it as the language of Western kinship. Primarily, because it is the most spoken language in the Euro-American societies and it is the same medium Sarah Kane has written her plays. In its structure and usage, English is considered a natural gender language. That is, it “distinguish[es] gender through pronouns (such as he or she), [and] most nouns have no grammatical marking of gender” (Prewitt-Freilino 269). Being a natural gender language, it is distinct from gendered and genderless languages in some respects. A gendered language is also known as grammatical gender language and has a gender assigned to its nouns. For instance, French, Spanish, Hindi, German and Hebrew among others are considered grammatical gendered languages. A genderless language, on the other hand, is a language which is free of grammatical gender. That is, it has no gender assigned to nouns and pronouns. For instance, Finnish Turkish, Persian, Chinese and Swahili among others are considered Genderless languages. But that does not mean that they are free of sexism. The implicit male bias is also present in genderless languages. Because grammatical gendered languages constantly make gender distinctions, it is believed that they lead to greater sexism, but gender asymmetry and male bias among other sexist traits are also observable in natural gender as well as genderless languages (271).

A sexist language includes male generic and biases embedded in its structure and usage. The biases include associating or connoting or referring to females in a negative, derogatory, trivializing or abusive manner, and projecting males in a positive light and as a norm. They also include associating negative, trivial, pejorative and emotional activities with females as well as associating positive, important, combative and rational activities with males. Furthermore, sexist language maintains a gender asymmetry or imbalance through androcentric perception, asymmetrical speech patterns and stereotypes. Let us briefly discuss these traits in the structure and usage of the English

language as well as gendered practices that maintain the gender imbalance.

Although “English is not a grammatically gendered language,” we often see the “use of the generic masculine” (Perez 6). In a generic masculine, the male acts as the norm or the typical representative of the human species. In other words, it serves as a default for humanity as a whole. A language with masculine genericity is also known as male-oriented language in which the standard roles or designations or occupations are hypothetically designated to males. It is visible in all parts of life and stereotypes are often used while “deciding generic pronouns for specific occupations and roles” (Prewitt-Freilino 270). For instance, the use of masculine pronouns, including *he*, *his*, *him* and *himself*, while referring to a beggar, student, doctor, lawyer, reporter, farmer, traveler, colonist, writer, wrestler, judge, etc. This mechanism of generic masculine, whereby the male or the masculine pronoun represents all, excludes women from representing the human species as well as operates to keep them invisible (Miller and Swift 178). For instance, words like forefathers, brotherhood, chairman, garbageman, milkman, mailman, freshmen, etc. “are androcentric, and make women seem invisible in historical and contemporary discourse” (Prewitt-Freilino 270). Even in church liturgy, the use of generic masculine is typical. For instance, the use of terms *man* or *men*, such as “whatsoever the man would call every living creature” in *Genesis* (Lerner 181) and “the Son of Man” in the *New Testament* (Mills 49), or the use of term *father* and pronouns, such as *he*, *him*, *his*, while referring to God. Generic masculine is also visible in the legal language, in its use of the masculine pronoun *he* (52). Through feminist interventions, changes have been proposed and accepted to include gender-neutral language, but the changes are “at a fairly slow pace” in practice (Kurzon 111).

In addition to masculine generic, sexist language is also inclusive of asymmetrical gender-marking and gender biases (Mills 45). That is, through the normalization of masculine genera, the male serves as a standard and the female is seen as an extension of the male. We can see this asymmetry within the theology. In *Genesis*, Adam is not only said to be the first human but also is the mother of all human females, that is, the first woman Eve, is created out of his flesh and bone (Lerner 181). Adam not only precedes the first human female but also the relationship between them is asymmetrical. One, Eve was created from the lower part of Adam’s body denoting an inferior status (183). And two, the activity of name-giving, “a symbol of sovereignty,” is given to Adam and by extension to all males. Adam not only names all living creatures but also names the first female as a woman because she is created out of him as well as renames her as Eve after

the Fall of men (182). It also birthed the powerful metaphor of a woman as a temptress because she caused the downfall of the human species. The word *Adam* means humankind in Hebrew and “stands for the generic term for humanity” (183). We see this asymmetrical relation repeating itself time and again. For instance, in Old English as well, where the term *mann* means a human, *wermann* stands for male-human or man and *wifmann* stands for a female-human or woman; but gradually *mann* became man, referring only to male-human making them the standard for all humans, and *wermann* became woman, referring only to female-human and making them seen as extension of men (Coady 279).

This asymmetrical relationship is also visible in other parts of life as well. For instance, a gender asymmetry is placed between men and women in the Protestant Church of England, that is, while women can be priests, they cannot be bishops largely because of the institutional tradition (Mills 151). We also see the asymmetrical relationship in occupations which one gender predominantly pursues, and it makes the other gender appear as an extension of the first. For instance, associating men with occupations, such as writer, doctor, surgeon, etc. Women within these occupations are referred to as female-writer, female-doctor, female-surgeon, etc. respectively (Prewitt-Freilino 270). It also works the other way around. That is, some occupations are associated with women, such as a nurse, midwife, secretary, etc. and men in these occupations are seen as an extension of women, such as male-nurse, male-midwife, male-secretary, etc. respectively.

Gender asymmetry is also observed in the honorary titles that are associated with men and women. For instance, while *Mr.* is the standard for all men, women have *Mrs.* and *Miss*, distinguishing them into two groups based on their marital status. Although *Ms.* was introduced in the 1970s as an equivalent to *Mr.* but is negatively connotated to a section of women, consisting of “divorced women, feminists, lesbians, ‘man-haters’ and women who are living with men without being married to them” (Mills 64). Similarly, taking the husband's surname after marriage displays “a form of possession of the woman by her husband on marriage” (61). Both the loss of one's surname and the use of honorary titles “identify women in terms of their relationship to men... [and] highlight their dependency on the male (Hellinger and Pauwels 653). That is, just like Eve emerges from Adam's rib, women's identities are seen as extensions of their husbands. A similar asymmetry is also observable in the official US documents, whereby the honorary title *Mr.* is used if men occupy positions, such as President, vice-president, speaker, etc., while the honorary title *Madam* is used if women occupy the same positions (“Appendix C”).

We see a clear contrast in not using *Mrs.*, *Miss*, or *Ms.* as equivalent to *Mr.* because while the first two make an indication of the marital status of women, the third has lost its value over time. So, to show respect to a high degree, the title *Madam*, which is an equivalent of *Sir*, is employed to address women in positions of power. Furthermore, some terms refer to certain roles and occupations which are associated differently with men and women. For instance, the term *landlady*, an equivalent of the term *landlord*, has different references and connotations in Britain. That is, unlike *landlord*, the generic term, *landlady* “has now become restricted largely to the owner of a Bed and Breakfast or someone who rents out room in her house to lodgers” (Mills 60). Likewise, the term *manageress*, equivalent to *manager*, refers to women managing shops; and the term *priestess*, equivalent to *priest*, is associated with pagan religions.

The male serving as a norm and the female serving as its extension is also visible in terms related to human anatomy as well as sexual activities. As far as human anatomy is concerned, “male anatomy and physiology are often represented as the norm, with women being underrepresented in non-reproductive anatomy” (Morgan et al. 362). The asymmetry is visible in the terminology as well. That is, if we look at the physiology of the female body, we would find that the female parts have male origins. For instance, the *hymen* is named after a male Greek god *Hymenaeus*; *fallopian tubes* are named after an Italian physician Gabriele Falloppio; *ovarian follicles* are named after a Dutch physician Graffian Follicles; *Pouch of Douglas* is named after a Scottish physician James Douglas; *Venous Plexis of Kobelt* is named after a German anatomist George Kobelt; *Halban’s fascia* is named after an Austrian gynecologist Josef von Halban; *G-spot* is named after a German gynecologist Ernst Grafenberg; *Braxton Hicks contractions* are named after an English Obstetrician John Braxton Hicks; *Stein-Leventhal Syndrome* now known as PCOD or polycystic ovary disease is named after two American gynecologists Irving Stein and Michael Leventhal; *Kegel exercises* are named after an American gynecologist Arnold Kegel; and even the term *hysteria* is derived from *hysterika*, a Greek term for uterus, is given by a Greek physician Hippocrates who characterized it as an illness caused by uterus’s movement (Kaminsky). There are other terms which seem feminine but have sexist origins, such as the term *clitoris* is derived from the Late Greek term *kleitoris* meaning “to sheathe” or “to shut” (“Clitoris”); and the term *vagina* is derived from Latin meaning “sheath, scabbled, covering” (“Vagina”). Furthermore, sexual terminologies, such as the use of terms like *penetrative sex*, *screwing*, *fucking* and *foreplay*, also suggest that sexual activities have historically been presented from a male-

oriented perspective, whereby the male is an active figure and the female is a passive figure (Mills 150). This is because language is heavily influenced by male activities and perspectives, and women have been for the most part “excluded from the process of naming and defining” (43)

Gender asymmetry is also visible in the order of word pairing, giving importance to masculine terms and placing them before feminine terms. For instance, the commonly used order is “*king and queen (not queen and king), father and mother (not mother and father)*” (Coady 283). Similarly, male terms are usually prioritized in pairs, such as “*male and female, men and women, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, boys and girls, [and] Adam and Eve*” (Miller and Swift 174). There is no grammatical rule that places masculine terms before feminine terms, rather it depends on the common practices. This common usage is based on, what Dennis Baron calls, “the concept of worthiness” in which men are perceived as worthy and which places them “at the head of creation, with women in a subordinate, subservient, and frequently invisible place” (Baron 98). That is, male or masculine terms preceding female or feminine terms signify that men are worthier and more comprehensive than women (Mills 52).

The common usage of language itself also suggests asymmetry between women and men. We can observe this in the asymmetrical representation and speech of males and females. Within the language, there is an asymmetrical representation of males and females, whereas the former is presented more optimistically than the latter. This hints at the institutionalized practices of differential treatment of men and women. For instance, difference between the presentation of male and female tennis players, whereby “the male players... [were] represented positively in terms of their fitness and successes on court, and the female players [were] represented as suffering from self-doubt” (71). The speech itself is also represented differently. That is, not only the speech of women is represented indirectly, when compared with the speech of men, but also is often “laden with negative affective meaning” (Eberhardt 228). For instance, the asymmetrical linguistic representation of female and male politicians, whereby women were projected as more aggressive and negative than their male counterparts. Similarly, it is more common to represent males “as active and acting upon other[s]” as well as in the subject position; and represent females as being acted upon by others or as “the recipient of others’ actions, [and] in the object position” (Mills 69). For instance, in representing a sexual encounter, it is often the males who actively do things to the passive female.

Furthermore, there are certain adjectives and verbs which when associated with

females and males project them in a certain stereotypical light. For instance, adjectives, such as “‘shrill’ and ‘feisty’ are used almost exclusively to describe women, and seem to have connotations of excess,” that is, the former “presupposes that certain women’s voices are unpleasantly high or loud’ and the latter “is used to refer to women who are strong and independent, but’ in a condescending way (44). In contrast, male norms include being independent and strong as well as having a normal pitch voice (45). Similarly, term *bossy* connotes strong but immature women, *a nag* refers to a strong-willed but detail-oriented women, *catty* is used for those who lash out at other women, *sassy* negatively connotated to witty women, *bubbly* is used for women who are considered silly and giggly, *hysterical* is used for those who are irrationally affected by the high-pressure situation, *emotional* negatively connotated to women for lacking rational thought and *frigid* refers to those who lack sexual responsiveness. Likewise, the adjective *bitchy*, which is often used for females, has a plethora of negative connotations, such as being sarcastic, self-absorbed, spoiled, bossy, pushy, whiny, condescending, bratty, spiteful, snotty, etc.; and in contrast, *sarcastic*, which is often used for males, has relatively lesser negative connotations, such as being witty, ironic, satirical, grumpy, cynical, dismissive, rude, snarky, etc. (Taylor C. 429). The contrast can be seen in cultural activities as well, such as in music, whereby the use of terms, such as *bitch*, *hoe* or *hos*, among others objectifies women, while the term *pimp* establishes sexual credentials and cool lifestyle of men (Mills 54).

As far as verbs are concerned, gender asymmetry can be observed in the descriptions of speeches of females and males. In discussing the verbs that are associated with boys and girls in the textbooks, Freebody and Baker (1987) found that not only are verbs used for boys more in numbers than the verbs used for girls, but also that girls are often placed at the objective position (68). It is observed that the representation of the speech of women and men is also asymmetrical. That is, the speeches of women tend to be in indirect speech while the speeches of men are directly presented. For instance, in the newspaper *Guardian*, the speech “of the former UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett” was mostly presented indirectly, while “comments about Beckett from [other] politicians and journalists” were directly quoted (71). This observation also correlates to Sally Hunt’s finding of asymmetrical usage of verbs for females and males in literature as well. According to Hunt, the books of *Harry Potter* reveal the usage of different verbs for male and female characters. For instance, verbs associated “with male body parts (*hands*, *feet*) are more likely to show agency than female body parts” (Eberhardt 230).

Similarly, the speech is also asymmetrical. For instance, males are portrayed to use more reported speech verbs than females (232). A reporting verb tells us about the action performed by a person. Likewise, males are portrayed using more neutral, such as *tell* and *say*, and expressive verbs, conveying the speaker's feeling, such as *complain* (233), as well as aggressive verbs, such as *bark*, *lash out*, etc. (234). Furthermore, unique verbs and verbal modifications made by males and females also maintain gendered stereotypes. For instance, females produce high-pitched voices and project fearfulness through verbs, such as “*scream, squeal, shriek, squeak*” and helplessness through verbs, such as “*wail, whimper;*” and males produce low-pitched voices and project emotional distance and disengagement through verbs like “*mumble, grumble, grunt*” (235). Similarly, verbal modifications made by males and females also maintain gendered stereotypes. That is, not only do females' speeches include more verbal modification than males' speeches (239), but also the verbal modifiers are different. For instance, females' speeches include modifiers, such as shrilly, briskly, sadly, tartly, loftily, timidly, etc., while males' speeches include modifiers, such as incredulously, hoarsely, bracingly, jerkily, savagely, etc. (240). These modifiers maintain the stereotypical image of females and males respectively.

The asymmetrical speech patterns of males and females can also be observed in their use of sarcasm and irony, stereotypes, expletives, superciliousness and moments of silence. As far as sarcasm and irony are concerned, it has been the common perception that sarcasm and irony are more likely to be associated with male speech and behavior than their female counterparts (Taylor C. 419). Furthermore, these stereotypes also maintain that females are “more likely to evaluate sarcasm as potentially disruptive to relationships” and irony as a tool for mockery; males, on the other hand, are more likely to find sarcasm “less critical..., more polite..., more humorous..., more enjoyable... and more affirmative” and “use irony for amusement and self face enhancement” (420). This asymmetry suggests that while both females and males use sarcasm and irony, only females are judged more unfavorably.

The use of stereotypes of women and men reinforces the hypothesized “set of features, roles and possible narrative sequences” that are associated with them (Mills 126). For instance, common stereotypes characterize males as active and rational, and females as passive and emotional (Morgan et al. 359). A French printer Didot coined the term *stereotype* “to describe a printing process involving the use of fixed casts of the material to be reproduced” (Ashmore and Del Boca 1). The term later found its way into

psychology, referring “to [the] fixity of behavior” (2). Stereotypes that are based on women and men as groups, also known as gender/sex-role stereotypes, comprise the beliefs of differing characteristics of women and men. The gender stereotypes relate women and men with their femininity and masculinity respectively. Consequently, they can be discredited or ridiculed if the stereotypes of the opposite sex are associated with them (Mills 57). For instance, calling a male sissy or a woman just because he is sensitive and caring towards others or calling a female butch or tomboy just because she appears masculine. The common gender stereotypes associated with women are that they “should take the major role in childrearing and household management” (127); that they are often “associated with the private sphere and the values associated with that sphere” (130); that they “are weaker than men or that they should not compete with men in the workplace” (128); that they “are more considerate of other people’s feeling” (129) and that they “lack intelligence and competence” (13). Furthermore, other stereotypes are associated with women, such as “the stereotype of the nagging woman and the gossip..., the over-polite woman..., the self-effacing woman” (128), the domestic woman (130), the sexual object (133), the excessive femininity (135), the manipulative woman (143), the emotional woman (2), the working mother (58), the victim (69), among others. Stereotypes of women are also visible in the use of jokes, whereby women are often the butt of the jokes (11), such as being a bad driver (10), athlete and colleague (12). Similarly, there are not only more insult terms associated with women than there are that are associated with men (57) but also the insults are directed at their alleged lack of intelligence and competence as well as negatively connotate their sexuality (13). For instance, in Britain, terms like *old bat*, *cow*, *slut*, etc. relate women to the stereotype of being non-compliance; terms like *tart*, *slag*, etc. are directed at their sexuality; terms like *gossip*, *nag*, etc. relate women to the stereotype of being talkative and loud; and terms like *dog* and *trout* are directed at their appearances (Schultz 134-48).

In contrast, the common stereotypes of men are associated with their masculinity. It includes them being aggressive, hard and engaging in battle and warfare (Mills 130) as well as being “direct, plain-speaking and obsessed with sex” (143). In terms of agency and communality, “men are characterized as more *agentic* than women [because of their masculinity], taking charge and being in control, and women are characterized as more *communal* [because of their femininity] than men, being attuned to others and building relationships” (Hentschel 2). Furthermore, terms like competent, rational and assertive are often associated with male stereotypic traits, whereas female stereotypes indicate

warmth and expressiveness (Ashmore 37). Since masculinity is typically highlighted in the male stereotypes, it also becomes the site of insults. That is, just like women become the butt of jokes and insulted for their lack of masculinity when it comes to sports like football; similarly, men who are indulged in activities that are primarily seen as feminine or are associated with women, are perceived as emasculated and homosexual (Mills 12). Men, who do not align with stereotypically masculine behavior are often insulted by terms like *woman*, *girl*, etc., to show them in a bad light. Another aspect of the use of this stereotypical speech is to generate fear among men that departing from the norm would denigrate them and categorize them in the group of emasculated men. For instance, the fear of being labeled as gay may force men “to engage in stereotypical masculine speech” and behavior (132).

If we look at the stereotypical speech patterns of males and females, we find them asymmetrical. That is, stereotypical male speech is laden with stereotypical masculinity and stereotypical female speech is laden with stereotypical femininity. A stereotypical masculine speech is characterized as being direct, forceful, dominating, highly intense, abusive and “aimed at establishing a position in the hierarchy” (130). In contrast, stereotypical feminine speech is “nonassertive, tentative and supportive” as well as contains “more euphemism, politeness forms, apology, laughter, crying, and unfinished sentences” (Haas 623).

Another contrast between male and female speech is the use of expletives. An expletive refers to “a word that is considered offensive” or “a rude or offensive word used to express anger, pain, annoyance, etc.” (“Expletive”). Since expletives or swear words are seen as verbal aggression and males are considered more aggressive than females, the use of expletives or swear/vulgar words seems “to have a stereotypical association with masculinity” (Mills 130). That is, “male brains may have the propensity to create more aggressive behavior than female brains” because they have “significantly smaller volume of orbital frontal cortex than women,” a region which regulates emotional responses (Güvendir 134). It is also “observed that men use stronger expletives, such as *shit* and *damn*, whereas women use weaker or softer profanity, such as *oh dear*, *goodness*, or *fudge*” (Haas 617). In English anecdotes, there are many classifications of swearwords: swearwords which are related to sexuality, such as *fuck*, *ass*, *shit*, etc.; swearwords which associate with animals, such as *pig*, *cow*, *bitch*, etc.; swearwords which are sexist terms, such as *whore*, *slut*, etc.; swearwords which are intellect-based terms such as *idiot*, *prat*, *moron*, etc. (Anglistika 29); and swear words which are connected to Christianity, such

as *Hell, damn, Jesus, God*, etc. (30). Swear Words also often involve taboo words. It includes words which make sexual references, such as *blowjob, cunt*, etc.; words which are considered blasphemous, such as *goddamn, Jesus Christ*, etc.; words which refer to disgusting objects, such as *shit, crap, douche bag*, etc.; words which are considered as substandard vulgar terms, such as *fart face, on the rag*, etc.; and words which are offensive slangs, such as *cluster fuck, tit run*, etc. (Güvendir 133). As far as gender asymmetry in the use of expletives or swearwords is concerned, it has been observed: “that males are [not only] inclined to use stronger swear words more than females” and “the frequency of swearing in public is higher in males than females” but also “possess a larger lexicon for strong swear words” (134). In contrast, “females are generally more status-conscious than males, and therefore more sensitive to any linguistic norms” (Anglistika 28). When it comes to the usage of swear words, it is observed that females “use milder swearing more” than males because they see it as losing self-control which might hinder or jeopardize relationships (Güvendir 134).

The stereotypes of gender, when negatively portraying one gender, reveal the position of that gender within the society as well as the position of the speaker (Mills 129). Gender asymmetry between female and male speech is also observed in the use of supercilious or condescending speech and behavior. The term *supercilious* refers to “behaving as if you are better than other people, and that their opinions, beliefs, or ideas are not important” (“Supercilious”). A supercilious or condescending speech and /or behavior superimposes the message of the superiority of the speaker as well as tries to belittle/demean others or make them feel small. The condescending gestures which are commonly associated with sexist speech and body language include objectifying, patronizing and stigmatizing women. Objectification can be done “through fixation on personal appearance,” such as making comments about their hair, clothes, etc.; Patronization can be done “through the use of derogatory forms of address,” such as using the term of endearment, like *my dear, darling, love, honey*, etc. to address women; and stigmatization can be done “through abusive and discriminatory labelling,” such as using stereotypical insults for women (Ilia 594). Furthermore, patronizing language can also demean and belittle women when compared to men. For instance, the use of the word *women* or *girl* in a dismissive way or using the word *girl* before a designation to trivialize the authority of the women (Pyle 119). Similarly, females can also be belittled and trivialized by “having their decisions scrutinized more or evaluated differently than their male counterparts” (Kissane and Winslow 827).

Gender asymmetry in speech is also highlighted by the use of silence, especially by females. The term *silence* refers to “a period without any sound” (“Silence”). For Max Picard, Silence is not meaningless, rather is a “complete world in itself” (1). It is not just a “void in communicational space,” but is also considered “a communicative act in all cultures” (Lebra 343). That is, failing or choosing not to express themselves in speech, people often resort to silence, which can be associated “with inscrutability, concealment, sneakiness, disguise, and dangerous” (348) as well as expression of “embarrassment..., estrangement, hostility, or defiance” (350). Silence can take “the form of a pause, omission, understatement or falling silent” (Damska 317). It can be observed within the speeches and actions of the people, especially in their conscious/unconscious choices or inability to express themselves. It can reveal various aspects of their lives, such as the status of their mental condition, internal conflict and regression to comfort.

The empirical evidence of females and males using sexist language and practices points towards paternalistic dominance that underlies the features or characteristics of Western kinship. We can observe paternalism in the sustenance of sexual double standards and female subordination within Western kinship. The Church played a major role in shaping the characteristics of Western kinship. Firstly, it broke the traditional kin groups and normalized the goal of marriage. Most marriages today “are not arranged by parents or elders, and they are supposed to be based on mutual attraction, affection, and emotional commitment” (Stone 228). The Church played a major role in shaping this transition. That is, it “promoted individual free choice” (247) and happiness and fulfillment are seen to be preferred over socio-political alliances or continuation of descent. Secondly, it provides women with the option to escape traditional kin roles, such as wives, sisters and mothers and join the church to foster new spiritual kinship and practice the roles of nuns, as spiritual sisters and mothers (246). Thirdly, it upheld monogamy and neolocal residence as the norms to weaken the power of kin groups by banning many practices such “as polygyny, clerical marriage, cousin marriage, adoption, the levirate, divorce, and concubinage” (242). The Church weakened the kin groups by deeming children outside monogamy as bastards and women indulging in sexual relations as mistresses (243). But at the same time, the church also upheld the sexual double standard as well as female subordination that was already prevalent in the society. For instance, through the image of biblical Eve, the church upheld “the view of women as inherently more sexual than men, and as having very little control over their own impulses” as well as reaffirmed “the divinely sanctioned authority of the husband” over

the wife (238). It put men and male clergy in a commanding and dominating position and women in a fairly passive position (248).

Western kinship is bilateral with a patrilineal twist. That is, there is gender asymmetry and bias within Western kinship. Here, the male acts as the norm and the female serves as its extension. For instance, the nuclear family and neolocal residence pattern is the norm in Western kinship, usually the authority lies with a male, who is considered as the head of the family. There is a hierarchy in place with the husband possessing most of the authority over his wife and children (250). This asymmetry is also visible in the use and continuation of the surname. That is, the surname is mostly “transmitted from fathers to children, and” from husbands to wives (239); and usually, the “sons, and not daughters, carried on the ‘line’ by continuing the family name and serving as its heirs” (240).

Another difference is the asymmetrical evaluation of the sexual behavior of females and males within Western kinship. Although there are many restrictions on the behavior of females and males, a positive value is placed on females’ premarital virginity (232) and sexual purity is often linked with the honor of the kin group (233) or the social group (234). There is another reason for putting value on female purity, to maintain class purity and hegemony (235). The privileged or the upper class protects their property and wealth through the practice of class endogamy (231). Female premarital purity is guarded because it is an asset at marriage, to ensure men from unwanted communities do not get access to the property and wealth of the upper class (233).

Apart from sexual restrictions, the age of marriage is another differential between females and males. That is, “males are usually a little older at marriage than females” and they are older, they have more responsibilities and power (232). Furthermore, some restrictions are placed on young males to control their behavior. They are taught to avoid women. This is how “older males had and vigorously sought to maintain dominance over women and junior males,” otherwise known as the “gerontocracy argument” (183). Furthermore, dominance over women is also sustained by the ideology of female pollution. A woman is seen as contaminated and polluted if they are menstruating, and thus, is denigrated, separated, avoided and antagonized (182).

Gender asymmetry is also visible in the semantic derogation of females. That is, certain “words and phrases associate[d] with women become negatively inflected” (Mills 56). Within Western kinship, stereotypical roles of women, such as mother-in-law, wife, etc. often are at the receiving end of jokes and abuse. For instance, “mother-in-law

jokes... both reflect and defuse in-law tensions” (Stone 200). Wives on the other hand are often criticized for their domestic skills, such as cooking, child rearing, etc. (278).

One trait of Western kinship in the late twentieth century is the erosion and degradation of kinship relations. There is a rise in “family ‘breakdown,’ domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, and alienated youth” (248) as well as divorce rates and remarriages (249). Another trait is the changing and evolving position of women within the society. It starts with the position of virtuous womanhood, with all kinds of physical, sexual and mental restrictions imposed on her (252), to the position of educated mother and wife companion, with the loosening of restraints (254), and finally to the position of women as a person, with more independence (258).

We have seen thus far that the empirical evidence of sexism in the language and practices of Western kinship points towards paternalistic dominance, evident in sexual double standards and female subordination. This also supports the framework explained in the previous chapter. That is, they are nothing but the three aspects of violence developed in the framework, namely victim- and agent-hood, space and affectivity of violence.

According to Žižek’s theory of violence, the norm of the system or the zero-level standard of reality is inclusive of objective violence (*Violence 2*). In other words, ideology which sustains the system is inclusive of violence. This means that in the Western kinship system, patriarchal ideology is also inclusive of objective violence which sustains it. Sexual double standard and female subordination is another name for the objective violence of patriarchy. In the Western kinship system, the male figure of a male is the figure of domination and the subject of the system, and the female is the figure of subordination and the Other of the system.

As an Other, the female figure is perceived as a threat to the kinship system primarily because of their ability to birth. That is, because females can give birth to offspring and through marriage can bring outer men into the kin group (Stone 233), they attain the status of potential threat. So, to neutralize the potential threat, the kinship system requires them to prove their purity through restriction on their sexual behavior. Female subordination is another name for removing the threatening status from the figure of the Other. Similarly, as an Other, females are perceived as unknowable and intrusive. This is done to eliminate any humanizing effects from knowing the thoughts and needs of the females as well as stop them from including in the working of the kinship system respectively. Another quality of the figure of the Other is that they are obsessed by with

the subjects of the system. The females are the figures of obsession. They are sexualized primarily because the agents of the kinship system, the males, require sex and offspring to sustain the system.

As an Other, the subordinated females react in certain ways. They either retreat to a closed space or have internalized their subordination or fight back against the very system that subordinates them. Firstly, as far as their retreat is concerned, females could resort to staying in domestic arena where they know how to operate primarily because they are accustomed to the domestic settings. Secondly, as far as the internalization of subordination is concerned, females could become complicit in the sustenance of the kinship system. By participating in rituals and customs which actively subordinate females, they act as proxy agents or extensions of the males. Lastly, the subordinated females could decide to fight back against the oppressive kinship system. This is visible in the movements of female emancipation, especially the waves of feminism, which have improved the conditions of females within the kinship system and society as a whole.

Contrarily, mostly males, especially the ones with more power, are the agents of the kinship systems. This is true in the case of Western kinship system. They serve to sustain the system. To avoid their way of life from being threatened, they take on the dominating role. They legitimize their dominating roles and actions by diverting the blame on the females. It is visible in demonizing females as being inherently more sexual than males (238). The gender asymmetry is maintained by creating two sets of rules. One, for males in which social ethical rules are maintained; and second, for females, in which the social ethical rules are suspended. The maintenance of sexual double standards within Western kinship is its prime example. Furthermore, control over female activities and life decisions is also claimed to be for the greater good. One reason is to control who, through marriage and offspring, can enter the kin group; and the other is to protect kin assets and property.

As far as the space of the Western kinship system is concerned, it is ideological. That is, males and females share a space with distorted reality. They either adhere to spatial norms or become skeptical about it. Nevertheless, their actions serve to preserve the prevailing ideology of the Western kinship system. There is a parameter to judge the image of males and females. While the males are judged on their masculinity, the females are judged on their femininity. The constant need to prove themselves on the metrics of masculinity and femininity creates an abyss for males and females respectively. As agents of the kinship system, males are laden with the burden to keep the system running

without hindrances. It is the language which keep them in a state of torment. The norms of the Western kinship system are sustained by the fantasy of male dominance, which is projected as the way to access sex and offspring. The fantasy of male dominance motivates the circulation of false images in which females are sexualized and dominated. One thing to notice is that this fantasy operated only within the contours of an ideological space. That is, the fantasy of dominating and sexualizing females is part of paternalistic dominance and operates within the boundaries of the Western kinship system.

Paternalistic dominance has many effects on males and females. It can affect them through emotions, such as fear, envy, terror and trauma. It can affect them through economic situations. Within the Western kinship system, males, especially older males, traditionally hold more resources at their disposal. Financial dependency on males makes circumstances harder to overcome for females. Similarly, false-images, which replicate and normalize female subordination, are created through language and symbolization. Furthermore, a false narrative creates a deadlock between females and males. Both are unable to solve the violence because they get libidinal gain from it. Females get false hope that things will get better and males get the satisfaction of their hidden and obscene desires for male domination.

So, to conclude, we have seen thus far that human kinship shares many similarities and differences with nonhuman primate kinship. There are different degrees of kin relations and types of kinship systems. We observed the defining characteristics of the Western or Euro-American kinship system and its underlying factor, namely paternalistic dominance. Furthermore, we observed the empirical evidence of sexist language and practices, also known as objective violence, which sustain the Western kinship system. It is observed that patriarchal ideology makes the norm of the reality of kinship appear natural. That is, it renders the objective forms of violence to remain hidden in the features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations. They are underlined by paternalistic dominance in which the male is privileged and the female is underprivileged. This gender disparity or the sexual double standard and female subordination is depicted in male-centrism/androcentrism as well as gender asymmetry and bias within the sexist language and gendered practices of Western kinship. The next chapter will explore Sarah Kane's plays using the first part of the framework, consisting of victims and agents of violence.

Chapter II – Victims and Agents of Violence in Sarah Kane's Plays

Sarah Kane's world is a world of violence. We observe violence in every stratum of Kane's world. Violence is present not only in its physical form, what Slavoj Žižek calls subjective violence or the manifestation of violence, but there is also an invisible form of violence, what Žižek calls objective violence or latent violence. In Kane's world as in the real world, subjective violence or manifestation of violence in its physical violence is easy to observe. For instance, Cate's rape by Ian in *Blasted*, Hippolytus's lynching in *Phaedra's Love*, a mixed-race wedding is thrashed by a group of white neo-Nazi nationalists in *Skin*, Carl's torture and dismemberment by Tinker in *Cleansed* and acts of domestic violence in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. Physical violence has an appeal, it attracts the attention of the people. Contrarily, objective violence or violence in its latent form is often ignored precisely because most people fail to see it as violence rather it is seen as the norm itself. It commonly remains invisible from the eyes of people because it is hard to distinguish objective violence from the norm of reality. For instance, in *Blasted*, Cate is coerced and manipulated by Ian into leaving her home and accompanies him to a hotel room where she is mentally goaded into having sex with Ian. On the surface, it looks like two ex-lovers are meeting after a few years, where the male is chasing after the female, but when we inspect the language and actions of the characters, we find a more complex picture. We find that the characters have a latency of violence inside them. In this section of the chapter, we will explore the latency of violence in Kane's characters whether they are victims or agents of violence.

Latency of violence refers to violence which is not present in its physical form but can manifest if certain conditions are fulfilled. In *Blasted*, we observe latency of violence in Cate, who is victimized by Ian, as well as in Ian, who is the aggressor. Ian brings Cate to an expensive hotel to seek sexual intercourse with her. By using his illness as an excuse, he convinces Cate to accompany him to the hotel room. Once in the room, he starts coercing Cate into having sex with him. He buys expensive food for Cate, showers praise on her, touches and kisses her whenever he can, and when formally declines his advances, he gets angry and shames her for arousing him and not finishing the job. We observe the latency of violence in Ian's coercion and Cate's resistance. There are many occasions where violence almost falls short of its manifestation. For instance, when the food arrives at their doorstep, Cate refuses to eat it because there is meat and alcohol. Ian tries to force her to eat it but Cate resists that she'd "puke all over the place" (Kane

7). Ian backs off and makes fun of her by calling her a lesbian. A similar instance is also observed in Caryl Churchill's *This is a Chair*, where Muriel is pressured by her parents to eat (Aston 579). While Cate is resistant to Ian's coercion, Muriel is silent and non-responsive towards her parents' insistence that she should eat. On another occasion, Ian tries to break Cate's resistance by shaming her for leaching off the taxpayers. We witness a standoff between them and something triggers inside Cate. Instead of facing Ian, she undergoes a stress-induced seizure (Kane 9). Ian is also taken aback and the whole situation subsides and cools down. Violence manifests only when Ian's authority is challenged. Throughout the first scene of the play, Ian is chasing after Cate, seeking sexual favors from her. Cate rejects his advances through her conscious and unconscious defense, her confrontation and seizures respectively. This coercion and resistance go back and forth the whole day. It is only at night Ian is able to breach Cate's defense. He is aware of the fact that the next morning Cate would leave and it is now or never. Recognizing his coercion failing, Ian resorts to the use of physical force. He overpowers her and has sexual intercourse against her will. He rapes her during their night together in the hotel room. Violence manifests only when he fails to coerce her into sex. This is the contrast between Cate and Ian, that is, when Cate's ego is targeted by Ian, latent violence does not convert to physical violence; but when Ian's authority is challenged, violence manifests in its physical form. We observe a similar pattern in other plays as well.

In *Phaedra's Love*, the public is not satisfied with the rule of King Theseus. There is a growing discontent and Theseus appears to be aware of it. When Hippolytus stands trial for raping his stepmother Phaedra, the public's anger grows exponentially but violence does not manifest. The public hates the nobility and calls them the parasites (98). Violence manifests only after Theseus, who comes to Hippolytus's trial in disguise, provokes the public by stating that the trial is a sham and the guilty prince will walk free with a pat on his back for committing a horrendous crime. The angry public turns into an avenging mob. They dismember his body and leave it for vultures to feed on.

In *Skin*, the latency of violence is seen in the tension between races. Billy belongs to a group of skinheads who roam around the city and keep the interracial tension high at all times. They meet at a café in south London to plan their next moves. Although Billy lives in a poor neighborhood, with other black people as his neighbors, violence is never seen to be manifested there. Violence manifests only after he meets his gang of skinheads at the café, where they interact with each other and keep the tension high through their

talk. When Billy goes to meet the groups at the café, his colleagues make fun of him, especially for his petite physique, and question his ability to perform (253). This hurts Billy's ego and when they confront the mixed-race wedding, he initiates the abuse and brutally beats up a black man. Violence manifests only after Billy's emotional state crumbles.

Similarly, the transformation of latent violence into the manifestation of violence is observed in the oppressive norms for the homosexuals in *Cleansed*, for the poor in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. In *Cleansed*, violence manifests only after acts of homosexuality take place. Tinker watches Carl professing his love for Rod, exchanging rings with him and kissing him (112). Later, he orders to beat him and cuts off his tongue which Carl uses to profess his love for Rod and kisses him (118). Tinker is triggered by homosexuality and wants to get rid of it. Likewise, the families of the character named C in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* face hardship because they are poor. Whenever things get tougher, domestic violence starts to manifest (179). In addition to domestic violence, the father of the character named C also prostitutes her to older rich males and pedophiles, like the character A (158). The manifestation of violence during the childhood of C and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* has a long-term effect. They become dysfunctional adults. C suffers from a mental breakdown (182) and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* is hurting the very people she loves (207). Erik Uddenberg has also explored the issue of psychosis in his "adaptation of Suzanne Osten's story about a child and her schizophrenic mother" (Kaplan 116). The play is depicted from the eight-year-old child's perspective who tries to protect her mother from hallucinations. The play also differs in perspective from *4.48 Psychosis*, which is a first-person view of a patient who suffers from a mental disorder alone and sees death as an escape from a terrible life. Let us now inspect Kane's characters in some detail. We will first focus on her character who is victimized and later we will discuss her characters as agents of violence.

As far as victims of violence in Kane's plays are concerned, we find that victims of subjective violence attract more attention, precisely because they can be easily depicted as victims, than the victims of objective violence because they cannot be easily depicted as victims. We see this in *Blasted*, where physical assault and rape became the point of contention for many people because it is graphically depicted on the stage. People find it repulsive because of the "scenes of masturbation, fellatio, frottage, micturition, defecation... homosexual rape, eye-gouging and cannibalism (Billington). At the same time, people seem to ignore other more subtle forms of violence, such as

discrimination and inequalities. For instance, Cate comes from a household which is manifested with poverty and domestic violence. Her stutter and stress-induced seizures are the indicators of her emotionally overwhelming and disturbing life at home. We can unravel a lot if we look at the figure of the victim itself.

Kane's characters as victims have certain characteristics. In Žižek's theory of violence, we find that the figure of a victim is perceived in several ways. As a threatening Other, it disturbs our way of life and triggers a defensive response (*Violence* 50); as an unknowable Other, it becomes the screen of our fears, desires and fantasies (88); as an intrusive Other, it generates fear and leads to violence (34-35); and a figure of obsession, it possesses a prized object which is needed to be possessed (77). In *Blasted*, Ian is victimized by Soldier because of his threatening attitude. Soldier finds Ian as a threatening individual and to render him unable to pose a threat to him, Soldier gradually disarms Ian of his masculinity and with it his threatening characteristics. At first, Soldier holds Ian at gunpoint and eats all of his food (Kane 36). He, then, takes a cigarette from Ian (40), makes fun of his Welsh descent (41), demands the whereabouts of Cate and torments him by confessing to the atrocities he committed on other people (43). Later, Ian is robbed of the last shreds of his masculinity when Soldier rapes him anally (49), blinds him by taking out both of his eyes one by one and eats them (50). This way, Soldier removes the threatening feature of Ian's character and makes him redundant. He does not have to remain alert from Ian anymore. The stripping away of dignity and sense of superiority along with blindness is somewhat similar to the character of Pozzo's blindness and behavior in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (Wixson 85).

Contrarily, in *Phaedra's Love*, we observe another feature of a victim's character. That is, the victim becomes a figure of obsession for the agent of violence. The mob lynches Hippolytus to death for raping his stepmother Phaedra. Hippolytus is a dull character who stays in bed all day and stays up watching TV all night (Kane 79). He is also a promiscuous character often indulging in random sexual acts. It does not bother him if his sexual partner is a female or a male. The public has no sympathy for him when he is accused of raping Phaedra. They believed the allegations without much doubt. But the fact that he is a prince and a successor to the crown, he has always been in the limelight although he has no interest. The public seems to be obsessively preoccupied with him. They have names ascribed to Hippolytus, such as *bastard*, *poor bastard*, *royal raping bastard*, *royal slag* and *in-bred* (100-01). He seems to have what they do not. Their obsession with Hippolytus comes from the fact that he is royalty and the future

king who is enjoying a luxurious life on their taxes. For the public, Hippolytus possesses the prized object, also known as the *objet petit a* or the object cause of desire, a sublime object which makes them desire in the first place. They desire and want to possess the same luxury which Hippolytus seemingly possesses. But the prized object is unobtainable. That is, since Hippolytus possesses the royalty and the luxuries that come with it, the public cannot possess it. And since they cannot simply take it from him because he is born into royalty and is crown-prince by birth, all they can do to satisfy their desire is to deprive Hippolytus of the very royalty he is entitled to. Their true target is to destroy his ability to enjoy the prized object. So, when he stands accused of rape, they want him to go down and with him the monarchy. They make sure that he does not get a lighter sentence for the crime he is accused of and when they are doubtful that he might get off, they take matters into their own hands. They lynch him to death and leave his body to rot in the open.

We observe the same characteristic of the figure of a victim, as a figure of obsession, in *Cleansed* and *Crave* as well. In *Cleansed*, we find that Tinker is obsessed with Carl and Rod. He watches them regularly. He is bent on disproving the love between them. Tinker is a lonely person. Although he has power and authority, he is a doctor but he does not have anyone whom he could love. He sees it as a sign of weakness. That is why he secretly indulges in pleasure. He regularly visits a peep-show booth in the black room, where he masturbates to a dancing woman (121). Tinker likes Grace, his patient, but does not have the guts to tell her. He seems to be afraid of getting rejected. And when he notices Carl professing his love for Rod, he gets angry and orders his beating. He cannot digest the fact that a weak and homosexual person like Carl can possess what he, as a powerful doctor and a heterosexual person, cannot. Since he cannot take the courage from Carl, he plans to destroy Carl's ability/capacity to love. Tinker tortures Carl to discourage him from professing his love for Rod. He cuts off his tongue (118), his hands (129), his feet (136) and his genitals (145) to break Carl's spirit but ultimately fails to achieve his goal. In the end, he kills Rod to deprive Carl of professing his love.

Likewise, in *Crave*, the character named A, who is a rich old man and a pedophile, is obsessed with young children, such as the character named C. He often targets the poor dysfunctional families who are in dire need of money. He finds one such family, the family of C, where the father agrees to prostitute his little daughter C in exchange for money. C's father often sits in the back seat of A's car, while A performs sexual acts with C in the front (158). C is a figure of obsession for A. Although he recognizes that

he might be damaging her during the process, but wants to possess one of her intrinsic qualities, her ability to love. For A, C loves her father despite the fact he prostitutes her to old men like him. So, he wants her to love him as well. He tries to show her a good time by being a good seducer but he seems to ignore the fact that she is a child who has always been in the protection of her father. His efforts of showering love end up scaring her for life. As C grew up, she started hating her family and often felt disgusted remembering things that happened in A's car.

In *Skin*, we observe the intrusive nature of the figure of the Other. Billy and his skinhead gang are white nationalists and neo-Nazis. They believe that white people are superior and their nation should remain white. For those reasons, they hate black people, whom they find intruding into their great nation. So, they often indulge in racist activities to achieve their goal. The mere presence of black people irritates them. We find Billy getting disturbed and irritated when his black neighbor Neville nods at him. He turns his hands into a gun and points at him. And when he finds "a black woman staring at him from one of the windows, BILLY grabs his penis and makes wanking gestures at her" (250). Later that day, when "an eight-year-old mixed-race BOY outside the café" smiles at him, Billy snaps at him (252). Billy's intolerance comes from the proximity of intrusive Other. He along with his gang is adamant about expelling the intrusive Other from the space they believe is their own. This is why they attack a mixed-race wedding. A mixed-race wedding means the proximity of the black people would turn to over-proximity, which is why they are against mixed-race weddings. Because the mixing of races means that there is no pure white race and thus, they cannot separate them. They fail to see that mixing of races would make black people non-intrusive because they are no longer outsiders who want to intrude and overtake their space.

Contrarily, in *4.48 Psychosis*, the unnamed and ungendered protagonist is a patient in an understaffed and ill-managed mental health facility. Their threatening and unknown status does not come from their socio-symbolic identity but from the uncertainty of their stable mental capacity. That is, their unstable mental status makes them a threatening Other. They are not only discriminated against in the world they live in but they are also ill-treated in the very institution they are getting their treatment. The protagonist feels that they are not getting the help that they require to get better because the doctors and the hospital staff behave indifferently. The ill-managed mental health facility employs those who do not care for mentally ill patients. They are discriminated against and treated in a rough manner (209). They are overprescribed and as a result, the patients suffer from

terrible side-effects of the medication they take. In the absence of proper equipment and empathetic people in the profession, the patients would continue to suffer. This is one of the reasons the protagonist feels that they are not getting better. The mismanagement at the hospital is making them sicker. In the end, they decide that it would be better to stop the treatment and end their life rather than to live miserably.

The victims of violence in Kane's plays are not just passive individuals who are victimized by the agents of violence. They are complex characters. Along with vulnerabilities, they also have ambitions and demands as well as necessities and desires. Part of the reason they are victimized is because of these qualities. Kane's characters who undergo victimization are profoundly affected by it and can react in several ways. According to Žižek, victimization can induce various reactions from the victimized. It includes retreating to the safety of a "closed space" (*Violence* 21-22), becoming sensitive to future or "potential victimization" (34), internalizing their victim status (57), and deciding to stand their ground and/or "strike back" (163). In *Blasted*, we see Cate unconsciously retreating to an abstract safe space when she is distressed following Ian's sexual advances; on the other hand, in *Skin*, we observe a disheartened Billy retreating to the safety of his home only to end his life.

Cate, in *Blasted*, is already in a vulnerable state of mind when she enters the hotel room with Ian. Her vulnerability relates to her father, who has returned and created an atmosphere of stress at home. She has started having stress-induced seizures ever since her father returned. This is partly the reason why she agreed to accompany Ian to the hotel. She was expecting to find some mental relief with Ian. Contrary to her expectations, she finds herself in a more distressing situation when Ian starts to make fun of and seduce her against her will. After Ian embarrasses her for being a burden on her family and state. He also calls her stupid. Cate gets distressed, starts to stutter and undergoes a stress-induced seizure.

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 up 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 by 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 9)

Cate's vulnerability or her upset mental health renders her unable to resist Ian's intrusion. She undergoes a seizure and unconsciously retreats to an abstract space where she feels safe and has peace of mind. She describes it as going to sleep, having a dream and waking up from it. Although it might be a few minutes in real life, in her dream-like state, she can go away for months (10). It is a defense mechanism. Her brain shuts her down to save her from mental trauma. And when she regains consciousness, she feels as if she is waking up from a sleep. She does not remember anything that has happened during her seizure.

Contrarily, Billy in *Skin* retreats to a physical space, his home, when he gets rejected by Marcia. Marcia uses Billy for sexual pleasure. She also wipes out tattoos from Billy's body by scrubbing them off "with a stiff brush and bleach" (262). And when Billy professes that he likes her, she rejects him (263). Billy is physically and mentally bruised. Physically, she has thrashed and tortured him; and mentally, she has emasculated him. Dejected, he goes home and cries his heart out. Billy is an unlovable character and he is aware of this fact. He cannot believe his luck when Marcia invites him into his room and has sex with him. He tolerates immense pain and shame just to be with her. She beats him and feeds him dog food which Billy complies with because he knows she is the only person who could love him knowing well what kind of person he is. And when she rejects him, all hopes of finding a romantic love evaporates. Billy gets disheartened and walks to the only place where he finds some relief, his home. But when he gets home, he gets

naked and looks at his bruised and bleeding body in the mirror.

BILLY

You cunt.

He starts to cry. He punches the mirror, breaking it. He opens the cabinet and takes out a bottle of painkillers...

BILLY

No more Billy.

He tips a handful of pills into his palm. He puts them in his mouth. He gets a can of beer from the fridge and goes to the window, naked. He looks at MARCIA's window. She isn't there. He swigs some beer and swallows the pills. (266)

Billy retreats to his room and chooses to die there. It is the only place where he would find a glimpse of Marcia. And when he does not find her there, he decides to take his own life. But luckily, his black neighbor, whom he hates, sees him dropping down and comes to his rescue. He makes Billy vomit and saves his life.

There are characters in Kane's plays who have internalized their victimization. The characters of mothers, C's mother in *Crave* and the mother of the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis*, are such victims who have internalized their victimization. They accepted their violent reality as a norm and have learned to accept it. In *Crave*, C's father is an abusive man. C's mother was regularly beaten by C's father "with a walking stick" and when her father thrashed her, C's mother did not come to her rescue either (179). This behavior is observed in victims of intimate partner violence, who get so disoriented by the cycles of abuse that they stop caring for their own selves as well as their children. Similarly, the mother of the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* has also internalized her abusive life. Although her husband regularly abused her, she did not dare to leave him (215). As a consequence of her inadequacy, her child, the protagonist, also suffered. The protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* now lived their life as a child of neglect (239), who later developed mental disorders and suffered throughout their life.

Furthermore, as a result of exposure to violence, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* has become sensitive to their future victimization. Because of observing and experiencing domestic violence during their childhood, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* cannot have normal relations with other people. The protagonist admits that they have turned into

their father (240). That is, they are hurting the very people, like their brother and their lover, who love them (207). The protagonist also does not like people getting too close to them. Because of their sensitivity to future victimization, they have built an invisible wall around themselves, to protect themselves so that no one can hurt them again. And when people get too close to them, they shut themselves off from the world. The protagonist cuts themselves to feel physical pain. They find it “fucking great” and “fucking amazing” (217). When the doctor or the mental health counselor asks them if they can look at the cuts, the protagonist is taken aback and cautions the doctor only to look and not touch. Because the protagonist has closed themselves off from the world, they suffer immensely. They want to get better but lack the skills to do the same. As a result, their mental health continues to deteriorate.

Similarly, in *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus has emotionally closed himself off after a girl named Lena rejects him. His ego has been hurt. He could not believe that someone could hurt a crown prince. He also becomes sensitive to future rejection so much so that when Phaedra professes her love for him, he finds it demeaning. He becomes the rejector because now he is in a position of power. When Phaedra mentions the name of Lena, who has rejected him, Hippolytus gets furious.

Phaedra What about that woman?

Silence.

Hippolytus *looks at her.*

Hippolytus What?

Phaedra Lena, weren't you –

Hippolytus (*Grabs Phaedra by the throat.*)

Don't ever mention her again.

Don't say her name to me, don't refer to her, don't even think about her, understand?

Understand?

Phaedra (*Nods.*)

Hippolytus No one burns me, no one fucking touches me. So don't try.

He releases her.

Silence. (83)

Hippolytus not only rejects her but also brutally humiliates her. He discloses the fact that her daughter Strophe has had sexual relations with him, her step-brother, as well as with Theseus, her step-father and Phaedra's husband. He goes on to describe Strophe's sexual techniques to make her furious. Phaedra gets his subtle cue and leaves disheartened.

There are also characters in Kane's play who despite being victimized decide to stand their ground or fight back. In *Cleansed*, Carl is victimized by Tinker for exhibiting his homosexuality. Carl and Rod are captives of Tinker, who secretly watches the couple from a distance. Carl is in love with Rod and professes his love for him. Rod is a little hesitant to express the same. After they kiss, Tinker appears and Carl is "*heavily beaten by an unseen group of men*" (116). Carl begs Tinker to stop but the beating continues until he is unconscious. But this does not deter Carl from expressing his love again. Even after his tongue, hands and feet are cut off, Carl still finds ways to express his love for Rod. In the end, everything is taken from Carl. Rod is killed by Tinker and Carl's genitals are removed. Carl is disheartened and cries continuously but when an opportunity is presented to help someone when Grace/Graham calls for his help, he grabs at the opportunity and helps them (150).

Alternatively, in *Blasted*, Soldier is disheartened after learning about the death of his girlfriend Col. Instead of retreating to a safe space or becoming sensitive to potential victimization, Soldier decides not only to stand his ground and show fierceness but also decides to strike back and exact revenge (49). He enlists in the army and goes to the enemy country to seek justice for Col and himself. He perpetuates ruthless and aimless violence at random people, including innocent children, women and men (43).

In Kane's plays, we also find victims who dislike or reject their victim status because of its negative connotation. One reason to reject or avoid victim status is the desire to move on with life and leave behind the discomfort of victimization. The victims who have faced a less impactful victimizing event are more likely to move on. It was interesting to notice that it is common to avoid victim status, "even among those respondents who reported serious crimes such as sexual assault and rape" (Fohring 201). It also includes cases which do not result in serious injuries or cases in which the victims were males. Furthermore, the label of a victim connotes weakness, vulnerability, distress, and self-pity which "is not acceptable and highly undesirable" for most people, including male victims (204). It could be argued "that masculinity is driving the dissociation" of male victims from the victim status (201).

Hippolytus, in *Phaedra's Love*, is a victim of a wrongful allegation of rape. He

refuses to denounce the allegation against him because of his hurt male ego. After learning of Phaedra's suicide, he becomes indifferent towards everything. He finds it hard to digest the fact that he has made a mistake in not recognizing Phaedra's love, that her love for him was indeed true love. He has inflicted the same pain on Phaedra which was inflicted on him by Lena, a former lover who breaks his heart and he becomes a miserable and arrogant person.

Phaedra: I love you.

Hippolytus: No.

Phaedra: So much.

Hippolytus: Don't even know me.

Phaedra: I want you to make me come.

Hippolytus: Can't stand post-coital chats. There's never anything to say.

Phaedra: I want you –

Hippolytus: This isn't about me.

Phaedra: I do.

Hippolytus: Fuck someone else imagine it's me. Shouldn't be difficult, everyone looks the same when they come.

Phaedra: Not when they burn you.

Hippolytus: No one burns me.

Phaedra: What about that woman?

Silence.

Hippolytus *looks at her.*

Hippolytus: What?

Phaedra: Lena, weren't you –

Hippolytus: (*Grabs Phaedra by the throat.*)

Don't ever mention her again. Don't say her name to me, don't refer to her, don't even think about her, understand? Understand?

Phaedra: (*Nods.*)

Hippolytus: No one burns me, no one fucking touches me. So don't try (Kane 82-83).

When Phaedra looks at him, she recognizes the pain he is suffering from. But his ego has made him blind to this ugly truth that someone could hurt him after all he is royalty – a classic case of the bruised ego of a privileged male. For these reasons, he reacts sharply when Phaedra professes her love and mentions of heartbreak.

Similarly, we find a different reason for disliking the victim status in *4.48 Psychosis*. The “unwanted emotions associated with victimization” and the “psychological distress” caused by assuming the victim label (Fohring 204) explain the behavior of the unnamed protagonist of the play and their dislike of their victim status. In talking with a psychiatrist or a mental counselor, the protagonist narrates their uncomfortable experience of the effects of their victim status as:

It's not your fault, that's all I ever hear, it's not your fault, it's an illness, it's not your fault, I know it's not my fault. You've told me that so often I'm beginning to think it *is* my fault (Kane 220).

The unnamed and ungendered protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* has a history of getting abused during her childhood. Their home was plagued with intimate partner violence. They also considered themselves to be “the child of negation” (239). As a result of their upbringing, the protagonist fails to form meaningful connections with other people and their mental state continues to deteriorate up to the point of breakdown. They suffer from psychosis and hate themselves for being a cold and uncaring person. They feel like they have become like their father, the person they hate the most.

In contrast to victims who dislike and reject their victim status, Žižek talks about those who lay claim to the victim status without being victimized. These are those individuals who either are not victimized, that is, they are fake victims, or those who are victims by proxy, that is, either people of their own group – ethical, racial, etc. – have been victimized or they were victimized in the past. First, the fake victims are those who are not victimized but pretend to be victims for their own gain. For instance, the case of soviet spies, namely “Ethel and Julius Rosenberg,” who were caught by the FBI in 1950 for spying and providing top-secret information to the Soviet Union (Žižek, *Violence* 43). They denied the charges against them and pleaded their innocence with utter sincerity, though they did not succeed and were prosecuted in 1953. They even “issued a public statement: ‘By asking us to repudiate the truth of our innocence, the government admits its own doubts concerning our guilt... we will not be coerced, even under pain of death,

to bear false witness.” (Freeman). It was after the fall of the Soviet Union, that the information regarding them was declassified and proved that they were guilty, causing embarrassment to their defenders (Žižek, *Violence* 43). In *Blasted*, Ian invokes his physical ailment to proclaim his victim status to coerce Cate into having sex with him. Despite her conscious but passive protest, he succeeds in seducing Cate.

Cate: Why don't you give up smoking?

Ian: (*Laughs.*)

Cate: You should. They'll make you ill.

Ian: Too late for that.

...

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: Please stop smoking.

Ian: Won't make any difference.

...

Cate: You're making it worse, speeding it up.

Ian: Enjoy myself while I'm here.

...

Cate: (*Shakes.*)

Ian: ...

He notices Cate's distress and cuddles her. He Kisses her. She pulls away and wipes her mouth.

...

Cate: We always used to go to yours.

Ian: That was years ago. You've grown up.

Cate: (*Smiles.*)

Ian: I'm not well any more.

Cate: (*Stops smiling.*)

Ian *Kisses her.*

She responds. (Kane 11-14).

The reason Ian invokes the claim of being a victim of deadly diseases like cancer and cirrhosis is to fulfill his desire for sex with Cate. He brings Cate to an expensive hotel to impress her. Cate is amazed by the lavishness of the room. But when Ian tries to seduce her, she rejects his advances. Ian resorts to more coercive tactics. He invokes his illness to harness sympathy from Cate. His plan works. Cate responds to his kiss.

In the case of victims by proxy, that is, claiming victim status on behalf of a group or their own victimization of the past, Žižek gives a few political examples, including US justifying its military expansionism after 9/11 (Žižek, *Violence* 107), Israel justifying its claim to the land of Israel by invoking historical argument (94), and the “corrupted clerical and military regimes” from the Arab world use the oppression of Palestinians “to legitimize themselves” (107). Žižek claims that these victims claim victim status from a position of power. Their motive seems either to gain, legitimize, or stop something. In *Blasted*, Soldier is a victim by proxy. By self-claiming to be a victim of war, he tries to persuade Ian to write about his story, and how he has changed from a clean person to a stone-cold killer, but Ian is not interested in his story at all. Even though we can observe that Soldier has suffered psychological trauma after the brutal murder of his girlfriend Col. For Ian, Soldier’s story would not be interesting to people in general. He says to Soldier, “Filthy, like the wogs. No joy in a story about blacks who give a shit? Why bring you to light?” (Kane 48). This refers to the point that Van Wijk (2013) makes in his paper about the importance of the context of victimization and observer in determining who could claim the victim status (174). Soldier’s dead girlfriend Col’s story, on the other hand, interests Ian. He says that the story “has to be... personal. Your girlfriend, she’s a story. Soft and clean” (Kane 48). Col’s story invokes sympathy and credits her with an ideal victim status.

Furthermore, there are also Kane’s characters who are considered either as scapegoats or as structural victims, both of which fail to harness the sympathy of observers. Victims who are considered scapegoats are held responsible for some loss and are sacrificed for the same. For instance, in Nazi Germany, a fantasy around Jews, linking them to a repulsive and gross figure, was created to exaggerate fear and hate, such that their persecution would not generate any sympathy. According to Žižek, this is how ideology operates, that is, it is “an illusion... of an (unconscious) fantasy” that structures “our social reality itself” (*The Sublime Object* 30). The Jews became expendable

precisely because they were held responsible for causing provocative and intolerable reality for the German people (Žižek, *Violence* 57). In *Cleansed*, Carl and Rod become scapegoats for Tinker's homophobia. He victimizes Carl for expressing love to his lover Rod. Tinker's hate and "punishment displays an obsession with homosexual acts which involves both disgust and desire" (Wald 205). He is unable to come to terms with his own sexual desires, and consequently, projects them onto Carl. It is only after he witnesses intimate moments between the two lovers, Carl and Rod, that he lashes out in the cruelest ways possible. For instance, after "they [Carl and Rod] kiss" (Kane 112), "Carl is... heavily beaten" (116); after Carl professes his love for Rod, Tinker mimics and taunts him, "I love you Rod I'd die for you" (117), and cuts off his tongue (118); after Carl writes sorry in the mud to apologize to Rod for being responsible for their torture, Tinker "takes Carl by the arms and cuts off his hands" (129); after Carl performs "a dance of love for Rod... Tinker... forces Carl to the ground and cuts off his feet" (136); and in the end, after Carl makes love to Rod, Tinker removes Carl's genitals. Tinker punishes Carl for what he himself, as a lover, fails to do. Carl does not fail to show affection to his lover Rod, but Tinker, somehow, holds him responsible for his own failure to show affection to people he admires and loves.

The victims of structural violence, or what Žižek calls victims of systemic violence, are those who are not victimized by individual agents of violence but rather by the social, cultural, political and/or economic institutions. Due to its invisible nature, the victims of systemic violence suffer from indirect violence (*Violence* 11). That is, they suffer from institutional oppression and discrimination. In *4.48 Psychosis* (2000), the unnamed narrator suffers from systemic violence inside the mental institution where they are a patient. The narrator feels that the doctors of the institution are humiliating them by "judging" ... [and] watching" them (209); that the narrator is "being manipulated" (215); that the behavior of the doctors is cold and impersonal (221); that they are being roughly handled and are their medication is over-prescribed causing them numerous side-effects and suffering (223-225). While the narrator is aware of their victimization, most victims of structural violence are not. They are "the ignorant victim[s]" who do not realize that they are victimized or being victimized by the unfair system (Christie 23). In *Cleansed*, Robin is a fellow inmate of Grace in the hospital, who loves her and wants her to be his girlfriend (127). When Grace ignores his inquiries and does not respond to him despite his multiple attempts, unable to find relief from any other source, Robin gets distressed and hangs himself (144). The structural or systemic victims are considered non-ideal

victims precisely because of the absence of a human/individual agent of violence.

Furthermore, there is something peculiar about victims seeking comfort and support from the abusers with whom they were intimate. What is peculiar here is the fact that the victims also grant their help to their abusers. Sascha et al. (2002) pointed out that it is likely for the repeated victims of domestic violence to return to their abusers after the abuser shows signs of suffering/regret and seems to require the help of their partner (309). In *Blasted*, such is the case between Cate and Ian. That is, even though Ian has victimized Cate, she still helps him by not letting him die and by feeding him when he starves. This shows that the context and the observer of violence also matter in determining if the victim will lend support/sympathy to their abusers. In Kane's plays, we also find observers getting victimized for voicing support for an agent of violence. In *Phaedra's Love*, Strophe comes to witness Hippolytus's sentencing and pleads for his innocence. Her association with a criminal or her defense of Hippolytus during his execution makes her a victim. She is raped and subsequently murdered by Theseus. She fails to harness the public support and sympathy. For them, she is just as bad as the criminal itself because she merges with the agent of violence, the accused of incestuous rape. The blurring of boundaries whereby a bystander can be victimized because of their association with agents of violence highlights the negative connotations of agents of violence. Let us now explore the concept and the categories of the agents of violence in Kane's plays.

Žižek, in his typology of violence, provides us with a picture of the agents of violence. He defines two types of violence, subjective and objective, based on the visibility of their agents. For instance, subjective violence is visible because "performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (Žižek, *Violence* 1) and "objective violence is invisible" because it built into reality, which we consider normal (2). It is easy to pick out the agents of subjective violence in Kane's plays, as in real life, because they are easily identifiable. The major characters in *Blasted*, Ian and Soldier are easily identified as the agents of subjective violence because they perpetuate physical violence on Cate and Ian respectively. In *Phaedra's Love*, Theseus is the agent of subjective violence because he rapes and murders Strophe. In *Skin*, Billy repeatedly hits a black man on the head with a brick and Marcia, physically and mentally, tortures Billy to cleanse him of his sins. Likewise, in *Cleansed*, Tinker humiliates and physically tortures Carl and Rod. In *Crave*, the character A sexually assaults children. And in *4.48 Psychosis*, the unnamed protagonist is manhandled by doctors and staff of the hospital. Typically, in Kane's plays,

agents of gruesome violence are mostly men, except for Marcia in *Skin*, but this is not necessarily the case for other writers. For instance, in Will Self's story entitled *Cock and Bull*, the female character named Carol is seen as capable of horrifying violence. That is, Carol not only rapes and murders her husband but also frames her by getting him drunk and injecting his sperm into her dead husband's anus (Emig 278).

Consequently, it is relatively more difficult to identify agents of objective violence than the agents of subjective violence. It is because the agents of objective violence are not easily located and the responsibility of violence is subsequently denied. The agents of objective violence do not perpetuate violence directly, rather they help create, or sustain, the conditions in which the weak individuals suffer or are victimized through domination and exploitation. It is difficult to identify the agents of objective violence primarily because of the entanglement between the actions of the agents of violence and the workings of the system. That is, it is hard to distinguish between the two. For instance, in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Col. Kurtz is a perfect soldier and his actions identify with the actions of the military power system so much so that it is hard to distinguish the two. This overlap turns Col. Kurtz into an excessive figure, one who creates hindrance in the smooth working of the system (149). In *Kane*, we also find similar characters who mimic the objective process of the system such that their actions align with the functioning of the system. In 4.48 *Psychosis*, the actions of the doctors of the mental institution can be seen as the extension of the working of the mental health system itself. The doctors act as an arm of the institution they serve. By acting as an arm of the institution, they have lost their autonomy. The doctors as agents of objective violence act as the proxy of the mental health system. Patients, on the other hand, in addition to their own mental health problems and medication, are subjected to objective violence in the form of humiliation and stress.

Additionally, Žižek also mentions another form of violence, divine violence, which is the "brutal intrusions of justice beyond law" (*Violence* 151). Divine violence comes under the subjective category. That is, for its agents, it is divine violence, but for others, it can be merely an outburst (169). The agents of divine violence are motivated by "immediate justice/vengeance" (171). They act against the injustice that happened to them. That is, they are prior victims who have decided to take matters into their own hands. Žižek gives the example of Red Terror, in which the Russian bourgeoisie were expelled and persecuted, including anti-communist intellectuals, like Nikolai Lossky,

who was exiled. The agents of this divine violence were working-class people, who were systematically dominated and exploited by the bourgeoisie, and whose accumulated resentment exploded in a violent revolution (8). In *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus faces the wrath of an angry mob, who are fed up with the monarchy. Unlike *Losskys*, Hippolytus is not exiled rather he is brutally lynched to death by the mob.

Man 2 holds **Hippolytus**.

Man 1 takes a tie from around a child's neck and puts it around **Hippolytus'** throat. He Strangles **Hippolytus**, who is kicked by the **Women** as he chokes into semi-consciousness.

Woman 2 produces a knife.

...

Man 1 pulls down **Hippolytus'** trousers.

Woman 2 cuts off his genitals.

They are thrown onto the barbeque.

The children cheer.

A child takes them off the barbeque and throws them at another child, who screams and runs away.

Much laughter.

Someone retrieves them and they are thrown to a dog.

Theseus takes the knife.

He cuts **Hippolytus** from groin to chest.

Hippolytus' bowels are torn out and thrown onto the barbeque.

He is kicked and stoned and spat on (Kane 100-101).

The public of the kingdom, which Hippolytus is going to inherit, turns into a furious mob, into the agent of divine violence. The objective violence they undergo as the public or their miserable living conditions, while the royals live a luxurious life, has made them miserable and frustrated with the monarchy. Talking about the royal family and Hippolytus in particular, the frustration of the public is clearly visible in the following dialogues:

Man 1: String him [Hippolytus] up, they should.

Woman 2: The Bastard.

Man 1: Whole fucking pack of them.

Woman 1: Set an example.

Man 1: What do they take us for?

Woman 1: Parasites.

Man 2: We pay the raping bastard.

Man 1: No more

Man 2: They're nothing special (98).

The public wants to uproot the monarchy. Their daily frustration accumulates up to the point of explosion when they find out that the crown prince has raped his stepmother. They gathered around the court where Hippolytus stands trial. They want to make sure that justice is delivered to Phaedra. They have an attachment to her. She is not royal but rather marries into it. The public finds her character relatable because she is one of them. And when doubt is cast that the crown prince might get off, their frustration with the monarchy bursts. They take matters into their own hands, become the agents of divine violence and bestow justice. They lynch Hippolytus to death.

Furthermore, Žižek has also mentioned potential agents, whose presence threatens the subject's way of life (Žižek, *Violence* 8). The motive to perceive someone as a potential agent of violence is mostly political. According to Žižek, it is done by prescribing certain qualities to them. For instance, Nazi's dehumanization of the Jews, which were considered "as the less-than-human Other-enemy" (47). Nazis used language to create and sustain an intolerable image of the Jews through their comparison with filth, and vermin, like cockroaches (Marais 96). It is important to mention Žižek's conception of a potential agent because it erupts through fear, which Žižek considered as the "ultimate mobilizing principle" (Žižek, *Violence* 34). In *Blasted*, Ian is in constant panic that someone from the government is trying to kill him (Kane 30). So, he remains vigilant at all times and gets scared at every noise. For instance, when "*a car backfires – there is an enormous bang. Ian throws himself flat on the floor*" (281). Although no one appears in the plays, the sense of fear keeps Ian in constant agony. Similarly, in *4.48 Psychosis*, the patients of the mental care facility are perceived as potential agents of violence by the doctors so in turn they keep the patient heavily medicated, including the unnamed narrator (223-225).

As far as the figure of agents in Kane's plays is concerned, they are portrayed as reacting to a perceived threat from a threatening Other, one which is in close proximity, and an "imponderable Other," one which has foreign reasoning (Žižek, *Violence* 47). Furthermore, they display human-like qualities, such as "warm humanity and gentle care" (40) to create distraction and hide in plain sight as well as use "empty gestures" (136), which serve no purpose but to lure or coerce the weak. In *Blasted*, Soldier is an agent of violence who reacts against the threatening Ian and victimizes Ian. In scene two, there is a knock at the door. Thinking it must be food, Ian cautiously opens the door and an unnamed soldier forces himself into the room (Kane 36). Soldier easily overpowers Ian and at the gunpoint, he orders him around. He eats all of his food and demands more but there is none. Soldier narrates his story and tells Ian about his life before and amidst the war. Afterwards, he gets emotional remembering his dead girlfriend Col, Soldier rapes Ian and eats out his eyes. Through Soldier's speech, we come to know why he recruited himself in the war. It is actually a response to a disturbance that happened in his life. Before the war, Soldier was living a peaceful life with his girlfriend Col. When the war broke, it intruded into his personal life. His girlfriend was brutally raped and killed by enemy soldiers. Soldier's life was disrupted and intruded into. Now, he believes that had nothing else to do except respond aggressively (47).

Ian, in *Blasted*, also behaves in likewise manner. He is suspicious of everything and everyone. For instance, when there is a knock on the door, he becomes alert, and when a car backfires on the street outside, he ducks on the ground (28). Both male characters act against a perceived threat spontaneously, but it is not always the case with Ian. He used to be a government spy, who did all kinds of jobs that were asked of him including assisting in murders (30). Ian is not liked by his former colleagues, who want to kill him since he has left his job. A similar instance is also observed in Howard Baker's *Hated Nightfall*, whereby the character named Dancer is tasked with the murder of his employer by the Revolutionary Party, but he refuses to commit murder and ends up getting "physically abused by a female Party comrade" (Gritzner 333).

In *Skin*, the proximity of an intruding Other makes certain characters feel threatened and they react violently. Billy's gang of skinheads are influenced by white nationalism and neo-Nazism. They want to keep their nation free of non-whites, especially black people, and commit violence to achieve their goal. They gather around and go on a neighborhood stroll. On one such stroll, they confront a mixed-race wedding and beat up the black guests of the marriage (Kane 255).

Likewise, in *Cleansed*, Tinker acts against an imponderable other, a homosexual couple, whom he does not understand. For Tinker, engaging in homosexuality is an abomination and homosexuals are incapable of having qualities, such as love and affect, which he has reserved for heterosexual people. Tinker is a homophobic and Kane's typical agent of violence. He cannot stand witnessing acts of homosexuality. Every time he observes Carl and Rod engaging in romantic or sexual behavior, he unleashes horrible acts of violence on his victims. He tries everything at his disposal, including violence, to prove himself right. He tortures and amputates Carl's body parts, including tongue, hands, feet and genitals. He ends up killing Rod to deprive Carl of his lover but fails to prove himself right. By the end, Carl is dismembered but still expresses affection towards others.

If we look at Ian's victimization of Cate in *Blasted*, we find that Ian uses his human side, his vulnerability, to mask his true intentions. He exposes himself before Cate by confessing that he is dying of lung cancer and cirrhosis (11). He tries to show that despite having more power than Cate, Ian is not a monstrous figure and that he is not infallible. The diseases he suffers from make him more like a human. Through his own suffering, Ian is able to evoke Cate's sympathy on multiple occasions. It is a tactic employed by Ian to lure Cate into his plan of seduction without her finding it out. As soon as Cate falls for his trick, Ian takes advantage of it. He displays his war humanity and gentle care and succeeds in cuddling and kissing her (12). Later on, Ian employs the same tactic to convince Cate to spend the night with him and rapes her during the night. Cate is angry at him the following morning for his behavior last night. Ian again resorts to displaying his vulnerability. When a car randomly backfires on the street outside, Ian gets scared and "*throws himself flat on the floor*" (28). Cate bursts into laughter and this makes Ian ashamed of himself. He regresses into a vulnerable state of mind and reveals his fear of getting killed by the secret services. Cate cares for him and tries to cheer him up. She seduces him and performs a fellatio on him (30). By observing Ian's vulnerable side, Cate seems to ignore that only a few hours ago he pushed himself on her and raped her.

Similarly, in *Cleansed*, the character named A is an agent of violence who exhibits human-like qualities to be accepted by his victim. A is a rich old man and a pedophile who uses his money and influence to engage in sexual acts with children from economically poor sections of the population. He typically pays the fathers to have sex with their children (158). He preys on children from poor families and wants to be accepted by his victims. He exhibits that he is lonely (171), has lost hope (188), and wants

to be loved because only love can save him (174). He tries to pretend that he is also a human despite having those qualities which are considered harmful to society at large.

Furthermore, there are agents of violence in *Kane* who also employ empty-gestures to lure or coerce their victims. Empty-gestures are offers which serve no real purpose but rather serve as a pretense of freedom of choice (Žižek, *Violence* 137). In *Phaedra's Love*, the public is not happy with Theseus's rule. They want to get rid of the monarchy. Theseus is aware of this fact. He attends Hippolytus's sentencing in disguise and provokes the public by claiming that the crown prince will not be punished for raping his stepmother. He carefully diverts the public anger against the monarchy to the accused crown prince. He offers an empty gesture of kicking out the crown prince from the royal family.

Theseus Say they've rid themselves of the corrupting element. But the monarchy remains intact.

Man 1 What shall we do?

Man 2 Justice for all.

Woman 1 He [Hippolytus] must die.

Man 2 Has to die.

Man 1 For our sake.

Man 2 And hers [Phaedra's]. (Kane 99)

Theseus knows that he has planted the seeds of injustice in the public's mind by claiming that the accused crown prince will walk free and they will not accept anything less than seeing justice prevail. His real motive was to shift the focus of the public's anger from the monarchy. He succeeds in achieving his goal. The public takes matters into their own hands when they realize that the accused might walk free and horrifyingly end Hippolytus's life.

Likewise, in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, we observe the victims of domestic violence do not leave their abusive husbands. In *Crave*, the mother of the character named C is regularly beaten by her husband (179) and in *4.48 Psychosis*, the protagonist's mother does not leave her abusive husband (215). It is observed that victims of intimate partner violence or IPV often reside with their abusive husbands and even if they leave, they often return. One reason is the husband's show of remorse or promise to seek help or stop violence. Their abusers employ empty-gestures to lure them back into their private

space where they can practice violence. Most victims are aware that this is an empty-gesture but they still choose to stay or return to their abusive household mainly for the sake of their children (Griffing et al. 309).

For agents of violence, there is always the risk of getting affected by violence. Kane's characters who perpetrate violence on others also get affected by it. In *Blasted*, after victimizing Ian, we see Soldier finally getting overwhelmed by the violence such that he takes the revolver and shoots himself in the head (Kane 50). Similarly, in *Phaedra's Love*, after raping and killing his Strophe, Theseus recognizes that he has mistaken his step-daughter Strophe for a random woman. He gets horrified, apologizes to her corpse and commits suicide (102).

Consequently, some characters immunize themselves from the immediate effects of violence by resorting to a number of ways. The agents of violence require "psychological blindness" (42) or creating two sets of rules: one for their own selves, in which ethical norms are maintained; and second for their victims, in which basic ethical norms are not followed (Žižek, *Violence* 40). Furthermore, to immunize themselves from others' suffering, they require an ethical illusion, whereby agents victimize without themselves getting involved (36). Similarly, a sacred cause/reward makes victimization a trivial matter and immunizes the agents of violence (115). Likewise, the dehumanization of victims, that is, by turning them into a "less-than-human Other-enemy" immunizes the agents of violence from the affectivity of violence (47). In *Blasted*, Soldier has two sets of rules. One for himself and his dead girlfriend Col, whereby he lived a good clean life with Col before she was murdered, and whereby he "went to school" like everyone else and "made love with Col" like people often do with their romantic partners (Kane 48). His life was full of joy. The second set of rules is for other people, whereby he is a stone-cold killer. Soldier narrates to Ian his brutal instances of violence, including raping and killing a whole family of eight people.

Soldier Went to a house just outside town. All gone. Apart from a small boy hiding in the corner. One of the others took him outside. Lay him on the ground and shot him through the legs. Heard crying in the basement. Went down. Three men and four women. called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there. Turned her over and –

Then she cried. Made her lick me clean. Closed my eyes and thought of –
Shot her father in the mouth. Brothers shouted. Hung them from the ceiling by their testicles. (43)

On the one hand, Soldier is a gentle lover who cares for Col; and on the other hand, he is a vicious and ruthless criminal who rapes and kills innocent people. He successfully operates with the war and commits horrible crimes without getting much affected by the violence he commits against others. This is because of psychological blindness, that is, he has internalized the fact that at home, he is a loving person, and in the war, he is a ruthless killer. It is only when he blurs the lines between the two sets of rules, he gets affected by the perpetration of violence. He meets Ian and tries to connect with him emotionally, bringing about his own downfall. He shares his story of how he has become a brutal killer from a clean person. By narrating his own crimes, Soldier realizes the scale of destruction he has caused. He gets emotionally overwhelmed and kills himself.

The same happens with Theseus in *Phaedra's Love*. Theseus comes in disguise to witness Hippolytus's sentencing. When a random woman tries to defend Hippolytus, Theseus gets furious. Without realizing that the woman is indeed his stepdaughter Strophe, he shouts at her.

Theseus Defending a rapist.

Theseus *pulls Strophe away from Women 2 who is attacking.*

He rapes her.

The crowd watch and cheer.

*When **Theseus** has finished he cuts her throat. (101)*

As soon as Theseus recognizes Strophe and realizes what he has done, he is taken aback. This shows two sets of rules for Theseus. That is, the rape and murder of a random woman is acceptable to him but not to his stepdaughter. He stands motionless near the corpse of Strophe in a shocked state of mind (102). It takes him a while to come back to his senses. He apologizes to her and claims that if he had known that it was Strophe, he would have never done what he has done. This is the point of conflict, whereby the lines between the two rules blur when Theseus relates to his victim emotionally. He gets emotionally overwhelmed and slits his own throat with the same knife, which he used to kill Strophe.

Similarly, the characters A in *Crave* and the doctor in *4.48 Psychosis* operate with two sets of rules to immunize themselves from the overwhelming effects of violence. In *Crave*, A seeks love and satisfies his loneliness through child prostitution (157). Meanwhile, he makes children, whom he preys on, suffer for their loneliness (158). He is a rich old man who is primarily concerned with himself. He is convinced that by having sex with children, he is giving them the very love which is absent from their lives. He does not recognize that his acts of giving love are damaging the children emotionally and physically. Likewise, in *4.48 Psychosis*, the doctor who is treating the protagonist operates with two sets of rules. He is primarily concerned with his own life and does not share the same sentiments about his patients. The doctor works in a mental health hospital which is understaffed and poorly managed. Additionally, his patients often try to kill him. For these reasons, he hates his job (237). He wants to have a good life and enjoy it with his lover and friends. However, he does not realize that the patients are living under the same circumstances in which he works. Furthermore, he treats them roughly as well as heavily medicating them. As a consequence, they suffer from horrible side effects from the medication they are prescribed (209). The doctor suffers from institutional violence and becomes an arm of the same institution which perpetuates violence on the patients, including the protagonist.

Furthermore, there are characters in Kane's plays who immunize themselves from the immediate effects of violence by resorting to ethical illusion, whereby agents victimize without themselves getting involved (36). In *Phaedra's Love*, Theseus incites the public to lynch Hippolytus for raping his wife Phaedra.

As Hippolytus is taken past, the crowd scream abuse and hurl rocks.

...

Hippolytus *breaks free the Policeman holding him and hurls himself into the crowd.*

He falls into the arms of Theseus.

Hippolytus You.

Theseus *hesitates, then kisses him full on the lips and pushes him into the arms of Man 2.*

Theseus Kill him. (100)

Theseus could not punish Hippolytus himself for raping Phaedra. Killing his own son is

hard for Theseus. So, he resorts to a sort of ethical illusion whereby he refrains from killing Hippolytus but gets him killed anyway. It is easier for him to push Hippolytus into the hands of the mob who lynch him in a horrific manner than to kill his son himself. This way he gets revenge and does not get his hands dirty at first. But things do not go as he has planned. Strophe arrives at the scene and defends Hippolytus. Theseus sees his plan of revenge slipping. He has to take matters into his own hands. Firstly, he kills Strophe with a knife to make sure no one else interferes again. And secondly, he “*takes the [same] knife*” and “*cuts Hippolytus from groin to chest*” (101). Hippolytus dies a painful death (102). Theseus could not refrain from interfering. His ingenious plan of letting the mob kill Hippolytus would have been successful if Strophe had not intervened.

Theseus rapes and kills the woman, who defends Hippolytus, not knowing that she is Strophe. This act of violence is neither meaningless nor purposeless. It serves a greater cause, a way to immunize the overwhelming effects of violence. Theseus gets furious seeing a random woman defending Hippolytus. He could not afford to let his plan go awry. He decides to intervene. He rapes and kills Strophe (101). Strophe’s death serves a higher purpose. It acts as a deterrence. By publicly raping and killing a defender of a criminal, Theseus makes sure no one else tries to do the same and no one does. Instead, the public cheer when he rapes Strophe. To Theseus’s dismay, when he discovers that the woman, he just made an example of is none other than his own step-daughter Strophe, he becomes paralyzed and later commits suicide.

In *Skin*, Billy’s actions are motivated by the sacred cause of racial purity. He does not treat the black people as he does the white people. He lives in a black neighborhood and often makes silly, offensive and lewd gestures at his black neighbors as well as the wedding guests at the church. When the gang arrives at the church to crash an interracial wedding, Billy takes the initiative.

BILLY puts his hand inside his jacket and draws the banana. He peels it slowly and eats it. He throws the skin at one of the men, who smiles contemptuously and wipes the mess off his suit. The distinctive sound of monkey noises begins from BILLY. (255)

As soon as Billy makes sure that he has neutralized himself from the affectivity of violence, he attacks a black man from the wedding and brutally beats him up with a brick. The police arrive and Billy along with his gang members escape. He “gives a shout of

triumph” (256), signaling his success in victimizing black people with the affective nature of their pain neutralized. Billy’s actions are motivated by the ideology of White supremacy. Through his actions, he tries to eliminate the possibility of getting sympathetic emotions from the misery and pain of black people.

In *Cleansed*, the victims are dehumanized so that victimizing them would not affect the agents of violence. Robin is an inmate of the university hospital Tinker is in charge of. Tinker treats Robin in an inhumane manner. He strips him naked (113), orders him around, takes things from him (129), threatens him, pulls him by his hair (138), treats him like a dog (139), and rubs his face in urine (141). Tinker is not interested in Robin at all, even though Robin is his patient. When Robin’s proposal is rejected by Grace and hangs himself, Tinker coldly watches him die and goes away unbothered (144). Tinker’s subhuman treatment of Robin has neutralized Robin’s pain and suffering from affecting him. Furthermore, Tinker behavior towards Graham is also the same. That is, he provides Graham with drugs knowing well that he is a drug-addict, and when Graham asks for more, Tinker overdoses him knowing well that he will die (108). This is in contrast with the character of the doctor in Martin Crimp’s *The Country*, whereby being a drug-addict makes the doctor sympathetic towards other addicts. Unlike Tinker, who lets Graham die, the doctor goes out of his way to save an unconscious girl from overdosing (Capitani 141).

As agents of violence, Kane’s characters justify or defend their use of violence. They “blame” the victims (Žižek, *Violence* 155); project themselves “as the ultimate victim” (39); divert the blame on the institution they serve, such as they were simply following “orders” (40); enact “justice/vengeance” (171); or follow the “sacrificial logic” and see violence as a necessary evil or for greater good (149). Victim blaming is also common in Kane’s plays. In *Cleansed*, Tinker blames Car and Rod for their own victimization. For Tinker, it is Carl and Rod who bring violence upon themselves by indulging in acts of homosexuality. They push him to punish them. Tinker expects Carl to denounce his love for Rod and to give Rod up in exchange for his torture. After Carl is tortured when a pole is inserted into his anus, he wants to end his torture and gives up on Rod (117). Tinker stops torturing him and focuses on Rod. But, when Carl apologizes to Rod for giving up on him, Tinker gets furious and cuts off Carl’s tongue (118). He does not stop torturing Carl because Carl does not stop indulging in romantic acts with Rod. Even after his hands and feet are cut off, Carl has sex with Rod. This brings more violence from Tinker, who is reacting against Carl’s choice to indulge in homosexual

acts. Tinker removes Carl's genitals. For Tinker, Carl is to blame for the violence.

In *4.48 Psychosis*, the doctor is the face of the systemic violence of the poorly-run mental health facility. They admit that their job is stressful and because of it, they cannot give time to their loved ones. Additionally, the atmosphere at their job is unsafe. Their patients want to hurt them (237). In the absence of a stable work environment, they remain stressful. They blame their job for making them a crude person.

Contrarily, in *Crave*, the character named A portrays himself as a victim of loneliness (Kane 171). He admits that he is a pedophile (156) and a beast (187) but claims that it is not his fault (191). Furthermore, he claims that he is doing everything, including violence, because he has lost hope (188) and only love can save him (174). He knows that having sex with children is damaging them, they throw up after coitus (179). The character named A only knows one way to get rid of his loneliness and it is through child prostitution. He believes that he cannot get these pedophilic tendencies out of his system (173) and longs for the touch of small children (177). By deferring the blame, A is able to persuade himself that he is also a victim and justifies his acts.

Similarly, in *Blasted*, Soldier projects himself as a victim to justify or defend the horrible crime he has committed during the war. On one occasion, he confesses to raping and killing a family of eight (43). On another occasion, he "broke a woman's neck" and "snapped her spine" (46). He defends his action by claiming to Ian that he has done all this because the same thing happened to him. Soldier's girlfriend Col was buggered, her throat cut, ear and nose hacked off and nailed to the door (47), and was brutally killed by enemy soldiers (49). Since his beloved suffered a horrible death, he has no other option than to do the same to his enemies (47). Soldier believes that he reserves the right to seek justice for his dead girlfriend. He seeks validation of his actions from Ian, but Ian refuses to lend him one. This irritates Soldier and he rapes Ian.

In *Phaedra's Love*, we observe Theseus believing in his right to seek vengeance against his son Hippolytus, who is accused of the rape and death of Theseus's wife Phaedra. He makes an elaborate plan to get revenge. He disguises himself and arrives at Hippolytus's sentencing. He listens to the agitated public and fuels their emotions by claiming that the court will not punish the crown prince. The prince will apologize for his wrongdoing and will get a pat on his back and the case will be dismissed (99). His words serve as oil in the fire. The emotions of the public run high. Theseus wants to expel Hippolytus from his kingdom. But, when the public demands that the prince must die for the sake of justice, Theseus changes his mind. When he gets hold of Hippolytus, he

throws him to the angry mob. Ultimately, he gets his revenge but not what he has hoped for.

Furthermore, Theseus chooses to sacrifice his son for the greater good. To calm the public anger against the monarchy and to save his kingdom from public revolt, he chooses to give up his son's life. Amidst the calls for his death, Hippolytus breaks free from the custody of police and throws himself at the angry crowd, but ends up in his father's arms. Theseus is taken aback by this sudden turn of events. He is faced with the difficult choice, either to save Hippolytus and risk a public outrage against them as well as the monarchy; or give Hippolytus to the angry mob who demand for Hippolytus's death. Theseus choose to give Hippolytus up. He "*hesitates, then kisses him full on his lips and pushes into the arms of Man 2*" (100). He tells them to kill Hippolytus. The public beats Hippolytus up and dismembers him to his death.

As far as violence for the greater good is concerned, the agents of violence see it as a necessary evil. In *Skin*, Billy and his gang of skinheads are against the mixing of races. They usually roam around the city and act as warriors of their superior Aryan race. Whenever they come to know about people having a mixed-race wedding, they crash it. The story of the play revolves around one such wedding at a church in Brixton. The skinheads crash the wedding and beat up the black wedding guests (255). Billy gets injured and in turn, he brutally attacks a black man with a brick. Getting injured is part of the job the skinheads are doing. It is the sacrifice they are ready to make at all times.

There are agents of violence in Kane's play who divert the blame onto the institution they serve. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the character of a doctor blames his job at the mental health hospital for making his life miserable (237). The terrible working conditions have made them start to lose their sanity. In turn, they take their frustration on their patients. The patients are treated rudely and unethically. The patients at the hospital, including the protagonist, are given excessive medication which deteriorates their health. The protagonist enlists numerous drugs which are given to them over time. It includes Sertraline, Zopiclone, Mellaril, Lofepamine, Citalopram, Fluoxetine, Thorazine, Venlafaxine, and aspirin. Some of these medical drugs cause the protagonist to suffer from numerous side effects, including insomnia, severe anxiety, weight loss, anorexia, rash, paranoia, memory loss, weight gain, urinary discharge, dizziness, confusion, erratic appetite, suicidal thoughts, low blood pressure, headaches, severe stomach pain, vomiting and excessive sleep (223-25). On one occasion, the protagonist claims that they are being manipulated (215) and on another, they are humiliated and judged by numerous

doctors (209). The doctors are the agents of the institution who perpetrate violence on the patients and at the same time extend the blame to the institution itself.

To conclude, violence is latently present in Kane's characters. As victims and agents of violence, they have different attributes and behave differently. As victims, they are perceived as threatening and intrusive figures as well as have become a figure of obsession. Victims can react differently to violence, including retreating to a safe space, internalizing their victimization, becoming sensitive to future victimization and standing their ground or fighting back. As agents of violence, Kane's characters react to a perceived threat. They caress their human side, their human qualities, to hide in plain sight. Furthermore, they use empty gestures to distract or coerce their victims. Kane's characters defend or justify the use of violence by blaming the victim, or portraying themselves as victims, or diverting the blame on the institution they serve, or defending their right to seek justice or vengeance, or claiming that violence is for the greater good or requires a sacrifice. We have seen, thus far, how victims and agents of violence operate within Kane's violent world. In the next chapter, reflecting on the second aspect of the framework, the space of violence within Kane's world will be examined.

Chapter III – Space of Violence in Sarah Kane’s Plays

Kane’s world is a world of violence. It is a space in which not only acts of subjective violence take place but also the norms of the space are violent, such that, the characters emerging in it, as subjects of this violent space, through the process of violence, perpetuate the very violence, which has created them. In *Blasted*, the events take place within domestic space as well as within the space of war; in *Phaedra’s Love* and *Skin*, the events within a familial as well as public space are highlighted; in *Cleansed*, within the relationship between couples; in *Crave*, within fragmented individuals; and in *4.48 Psychosis*, within the mind of the protagonist. Throughout her oeuvre, Kane moves in a direction seemingly to observe the depth of the space of violence within the socio-cultural context of 1990s Britain.

In a space of violence, the subjects engage in “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict,” also known as subjective violence (Žižek, *Violence* 1). Kane’s plays are full of such acts. Her first play, *Blasted*, takes place within the context of a war. In the play, we see that Ian verbally and physically manhandles and rapes Cate in the first half of the play, and in the second half, an unnamed character, Soldier does the same to Ian. Ian, a middle-aged journalist, brings his former lover Cate, a naïve woman in her early twenties, to a hotel room to seduce her. Throughout the first scene, Ian uses manipulation to overpower Cate but when his efforts fail to subdue her, he resorts to physical means. Despite her verbal and physical resistance, Ian keeps on forcing himself on her and only stops when Cate suffers a seizure (Kane 14). After she recovers, Ian, still unsatisfied, takes her hand to perform masturbation and expresses his wish to have sex with her, which she refuses again (15). After the first scene ends, Ian succeeds to break Cate’s line of defense and rapes her in the middle of the night.

Contrary to Cate’s rape, which happens in a domestic setting, Ian’s rape by soldier is set in the context of a war. In the second scene, an unnamed soldier barges into the hotel room, scuffles with Ian and overpowers him easily. Unlike Ian’s manipulation of Cate, Soldier uses the threat of death to make Ian comply with his wishes. Soldier “*holds revolver to Ian’s head*” and rapes him forcefully (49) in the third scene. Ian’s complicity in saving his own life irritates Soldier. When Soldier feels hungry, after raping Ian, he finds nothing to eat in the room, so, he cannibalizes on Ian. Soldier holds Ian’s head, sucks out the eyes, one by one, and eats them (50).

Physical or subjective violence is also expressed through the actions of Kane’s

other characters. In *Phaedra's Love*, Theseus rapes and kills her step-daughter Strophe in ignorance (101), and an angry and violent mob lynches Hippolytus to a gruesome death for raping his step-mother Phaedra (100-03). In *Skin*, a skinhead named Billy along with his gang crashes an interracial wedding and beats up the black men present in the wedding (255). In *Cleansed*, it is Tinker who physically and mentally tortures a homosexual couple, Carl and Rod, to test the limits of their love (110-16). In *Crave*, the middle-aged woman named C recalls her abusive childhood when she was prostituted by her father (158). In *4.48 Psychosis*, the unnamed and ungendered protagonist recounts the abuse they and their mother suffered at the hands of their father (215).

A space is never empty/devoid of violence, rather it is inherently violent. This “inherent violence” in the “normal state of things” is what Žižek calls “objective violence” (*Violence 2*). Kane’s world is a world of violence because the normality itself is inclusive of violence. This inclusivity of violence in the spatial norm is observed in the language Kane’s characters employ and use, as well as the systemic inequality and exploitation they face in their day-to-day lives. The inclusivity of violence in the very medium of our communication is known as symbolic violence (1). For instance, in *Blasted*, the language Ian employs to express his thoughts and emotions is abusive, sexist, homophobic, and racist. He uses terms like “stupid” to call Cate (Kane 8) and compares her to “lesbos” (19), a derogatory term used for lesbians; uses “Wogs and Pakis” (4) for immigrants, “Retard,” “Spaz” and “Joey” (5) for differently abled people; and uses “coon” (13) for the waiter, “conker” and “whodat” for a black person, “dyke” and “lesbos” for lesbians, and “scum” (17) for queer people.

Violence which is inclusive in the language, also known as Symbolic violence, opens up the dimension of mental stress for the victims. It deteriorates the quality of their living experience. In *Blasted*, Cate is emotionally exploited by Ian, who uses manipulative and coercive language, which renders Cate unable to cope with her deteriorating mental health. She breaks down mentally and suffers from stress-induced seizures multiple times. Ian uses Cate’s “lower-middle-class” status to manipulate and coerce her into having sexual intercourse with him. He brings her to “[a] very expensive hotel in Leeds” (3), “offers her champagne” (4) and expects Cate to appreciate the efforts he is making for her (13). When Cate is not impressed, he expresses his love for her (5) and asks her to marry him (6), but Cate rejects his offer. Ian resorts to a more coercive method to persuade Cate to have sex with him. He tells her that he is sick and does not have much time. He succeeds in coercing Cate into kissing him. He kisses her and starts

to undo her clothes, but Cate gets uncomfortable and “*pushes him away*” (14). Consequently, Ian tries to guilt Cate by making her believe that it is she who has hurt him:

Ian That wasn't very fair.
Cate What?
Ian Leaving me hanging, making a prick of myself.
Cate I f- f- felt –
Ian Don't pity me, Cate. You don't have to fuck me 'cause I'm dying, but don't push your cunt in my face then take it away 'cause I stick my tongue out.
Cate I- I- Ian.
Ian What's the m- m- matter?
Cate I k- k- kissed you, that's all. I l- l- like you.
Ian Don't give me a hard-on if you're not going to finish me off. It hurts.
Cate I'm sorry.
Ian Can't switch it on and off like that. If I don't come my cock aches.
Cate I didn't mean it.
Ian Shit. (*He appears to be in considerable pain.*)
Cate I'm sorry. I am. I won't do it again. (14-15)

Additionally, Ian is a mid-aged journalist, a well-read and well-spoken person, when he wants to. He employs manipulative and coercive language to force Cate into doing what he wants from her. Cate, on the other hand, lacks the ability to express herself effectively. She lacks an articulative language. When she faces Ian's barrage of verbal manipulations, she either gets stressed and starts to stutter (3), or she is unable to revert and resorts to silence. For instance: After Soldier rapes and blinds Ian, he seeks comfort from Cate. When Cate refuses to do what he wants, Ian uses his miserable condition to convince Cate to stay with him and not leave him alone again in the hotel room. Cate wants to forge food but cannot express herself effectively. She resorts to silence and complies with his wishes. She walks “*to him slowly and touches the top of his head... [and] strokes his hair*” (53). The coercive language employed by Ian and her own inability to express

herself effectively due to the lack of well-articulated language make Cate appear complicit in her victimization.

Similarly, in *Skin*, we observed symbolic violence within the racist context and in *Cleansed*, we observed symbolic violence within the homophobic context. In *Skin*, Terry, one of the skinheads, calls Billy, the protagonist, to remind him of the plan to crash a mixed-race wedding and smash them (249). When Billy gets to the gathering at a café, the group verbally bully Billy to keep him agitated. They comment on his eating habits and his skinny body. Billy casually ignores them. But when they question his ability to perform because of his skinny body, Billy gets enraged and tells them to “FUCK OFF” (253). When the group arrives at the church, Billy, who is in an agitated state of mind, initiates the attack on black people. During the scuffle, he also sustains minor injuries.

Contrarily, in *Cleansed*, Tinker captivates Carl and Rod in the compound of a university. He verbally torments Carl for being a homosexual.

Tinker There’s a vertical passage through your body, a straight line through which an object can pass without immediately killing you. Starts here.

(He touches Carl’s anus.)

Carl *(Stiffens with fear.)*

Tinker Can take a pole, push it up here, avoiding all major organs, until it emerges here.

(He touches Carl’s right shoulder.)

Die eventually of course. From starvation if nothing else gets you first. (116)

Carl is shaken up by Tinker’s verbal abuse. He begs him not to torture him but Tinker does not stop. He mocks Carl with homophobic and sexual comments. Tinker asks him about his boyfriend and if he likes sucking a penis and having anal sexual intercourse (117). The verbal abuse Carl undergoes coincides with physical torture. Carl is told what is going to happen to him before it happens to him. It makes Carl tremble with fear. Tinker carefully plans the torture of Carl. He targets Carl’s specific body parts which he uses to express love for his lover Rod and makes him realize that the reason why he is being tortured is because he loves Rod. Tinker is bent on breaking the spirit of Carl and through mental and physical torture, he succeeds in breaking Carl’s spirit and makes him

give up on his love for Rod.

Furthermore, in *Phaedra's Love*, it is Phaedra's lack, her inability to convince Hippolytus of her true love for him, which causes her to suffer. Although she professes her love for him and offers him sex, he remains indifferent towards her.

Phaedra I love you.

Silence.

Hippolytus Why?

Phaedra You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night, you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and not a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you.

Hippolytus Not very logical.

Phaedra Love isn't.

Hippolytus and Phaedra look at each other in silence. He turns back to the television and car.

Phaedra Have you ever thought about having sex with me?

Hippolytus I think about having sex with everyone.

Phaedra Would it make you happy?

Hippolytus That's not the word exactly.

Phaedra No but –

Would you enjoy it?

Hippolytus No. I never do.

Phaedra Then why do it?

Hippolytus Life's too long.

Phaedra I think you'd enjoy it. With me.

Hippolytus Some people do, I suppose. Enjoy that stuff. Have a life.

Phaedra You've got a life.

Hippolytus No. Filling up time. Waiting. (78-79)

Hippolytus shuts Phaedra from accessing his inner thoughts. The more Phaedra tries to indulge him emotionally, the rougher he gets with her. Hippolytus uses aggressive language with her and when Phaedra performs fellatio to prove that she is indeed "in love with" him, he denies that she is (81). Hippolytus insults her for being with him after the

fellatio. To make a quick point, Phaedra mentions the name of the girl who has rejected him. Hippolytus snaps and grabs her by the throat. Their relationship goes downhill after this incident. From the start, Phaedra has wanted to be accepted by Hippolytus and remains passive in her approach. When Hippolytus hurts her with his words, she resorts to some clever tactic, to prove to Hippolytus that she also can be aggressive in her speech but it ends badly for her and later for Hippolytus. She gets disheartened and commits suicide, and Hippolytus is accused of raping her and gets lynched to death by the angry mob.

Likewise, in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, the agents of violence employ coercive and manipulative language to victimize their victims. In *Crave*, A is a Pedophile (156), who uses coercive language to convince his victims that he indeed loves them. He portrays himself as suffering from loneliness (171), and in dire need of love (174). He wants to get rid of it by accompanying his victims. He has made a sex month plan, whereby he would get rid of his loneliness by indulging in romantic and sexual activities (169). He admits that he is a beast (187) and indulges in child prostitution (158), but at the same time, he wants “to lie in bed and be held and touched and kissed and adored” (178). Throughout the play, he tries to convince his victims to love him back the way he loves them. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the character is the doctor who employs manipulative language to justify his abusive behavior towards their patients, including the protagonist. He diverts the blame on the working conditions of the hospital which has made his life miserable so much so that he starts to hate his job (237). There are other doctors in the hospital like him who take their frustration out on their patients. The protagonist feels that the doctors manipulate (215), humiliate and judge their patients, and even know a few doctors who have sexual relations with their patients (209). The doctors are convinced of being victims of institutional pressure and defend their character by convincing the same to the protagonist of the play.

The other form of objective violence or systemic violence is more subtle and results from the functioning of the spatial institutions (Žižek, *Violence* 1). The victim suffers from systemic exploitation, discrimination and inequality. We observe this form of violence in Kane’s plays as well. Cate, in *Blasted*, belongs to “a lower-middle-class southerner” society (Kane 3). She is financially broke (21), jobless and financially depends on her mother to survive. She has “applied for a job at an advertising agency” but Ian is sure that she will not get the job (8), as he considers her unfit for the job. She is not qualified for this particular job. Cate’s lower-middle-class background has

rendered her unable to possess the necessary skills required to get this job. She is a victim of systemic violence, which has rendered her unable to learn the skills required to perform well within the space she wants to inhabit.

Furthermore, Cate belongs to a humble background. She has never been to an expensive place like the hotel room Ian has brought her to. Her own house does not have any of these luxuries. Her family merely survives on tax-payers money. The objective violence Cate undergoes due to her poverty has sustained the normality of life. When she enters the hotel room, she seems to be “*amazed at the classiness of the room*” that Ian has booked for them in an expensive hotel (3). This is a new experience for her. She likes everything about the hotel room and upon entering the room, she “*bounces on the bed... goes around the room, looking in every drawer, touching everything... smells the flowers and smiles*” (4). Without realizing that Cate is a victim of systemic violence because of her poverty, her actions, especially her decision to accompany Ian to the hotel room for the night despite being aware of his past behavior, make her appear culpable for her victimization.

Poverty at the root of violence is observed in Kane’s other plays as well. In *Skin*, Billy has an economically humbled background. He lives alone in a small, cramped and poorly managed apartment in the underprivileged locality. He is skinny and barely eats anything. Even if the food is served to him, he ignores it. He detests the food that is served to him. He finds it disgusting. He snaps at his peers for eating the sausage and offering it to him.

BILLY

It’s pig’s arse, Tel.

...

Brain and bollock, innard and eyelid, toenail and
teeth, all wrapped up in a pig’s foreskin. (253)

The food Billy detests is the food of the underprivileged, also known as poor person’s steak. He hates his poor status and finds the racist origin of his misery. Billy belongs to a neo-Nazi group of skinheads, who believe that black people are an inferior race and have degraded the standard of their country. Although Billy lives in the same underprivileged neighborhood as the underprivileged black people, he still hates them. Billy is also angry at black people for seemingly enjoying their lives living in such

conditions which he cannot. He snaps at every black person who seems happy or smiles at him. Since he thinks of himself as a superior individual because of his Aryan race, the fact that he has to like inferior people keeps him in a sadistic mood.

Poverty also leads Grace to misery in *Cleansed*. Grace undergoes a painful sex change operation at an understaffed and ill-equipped university hospital. She belongs to an economically poor family and cannot afford to have surgery in a good and reputable hospital. She finds Tinker while searching for her brother and comes to know of his death. She is disheartened and mentally collapses. Unable to survive on her own, she decides to take on the persona of her brother. She wants Tinker to perform a sex change surgery on her. At first, Tinker is reluctant because he wants her as his sexual partner. But when her mental state degrades further, he gives up chasing her and performs the surgery (145). It is her economic status which renders her unable to seek and get proper mental treatment after the shock of her brother's death. Grace's mental health deteriorates throughout the play. In the end, she becomes hysterical and does not leave the university hospital.

In *Phaedra's Love*, the public of King Theseus's kingdom is not content with his rule. They are angry for being miserable while the royals are living a luxurious life on their taxes. They want to get rid of the monarchy. When they become aware of the crown prince's crime, they gather around the place of his sentencing and call for his death.

Man 1 String him up, they should.

Woman 2 The bastard.

Man 1 Whole fucking pack of them.

Woman 1 Set an example.

Man 1 What do they take us for?

Woman 1 Parasites.

Man 2 We pay the raping bastard.

Man 1 No more.

Man 2 They're nothing special. (98)

The public has been frustrated with the monarchy for a while. Their frustration grows over time. This is what Žižek calls the accumulation of injustices “in the sphere of the ‘divine’,” where “the tension grows more and more unbearable, till divine violence explodes in a retaliatory destructive rage” (*Violence* 152). The suffering of the public as a result of systemic inequality grows up to the point where their anger against the

monarchy bursts into destructive violence, which Žižek calls divine violence. The systemic violence the public undergo intensifies their emotions and sets grounds for the explosion of subjective violence.

This systemic inequality is also observed in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. In the former play, the rich and privileged, like character A, fulfill their wishes and desires by spending money. On the other hand, the poor and the underprivileged, like the character C, suffer as a consequence of this systemic inequality. A is a rich old man who satisfies his pedophilic desires by indulging in child prostitution. He targets the poor section of the population. He pays C's father to have sex with her (Kane 158). The economic disparity between A and C makes A more powerful, who employs this power to oppress and subjugate C. Similarly, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* also suffers from systemic violence as a result of their lower economic status. The protagonist suffers from mental disorders as a consequence of their abusive childhood. They seemingly could not afford good treatment and were admitted to a public mental health care facility/hospital, where their health only deteriorated as a consequence of poor management and treatment. The protagonist is treated by numerous doctors who are not sympathetic and do not care for them (209). The doctors prescribe numerous drugs for their condition, which results in more suffering. The protagonist suffers from numerous side effects of the medication that was prescribed to them (223-25). It further deteriorates their mental as well as physical health. In the end, the protagonist refuses all treatment and hopelessly wants to vanish from the world. Kane's world is a world of violence because the norm is sustained by objective violence.

As far as the physical/subjective violence Kane's characters endure is concerned, their ideological sources are easily identifiable, because her characters, as agents of violence, are easily identifiable. For instance, in *Blasted*, the violent actions of Ian unravel his ideological sources. He is a middle-aged white nationalist and misogynist, who hates diversity. He hates hooligans, immigrants, persons of color, and members of the LGBT+ community. His hate is directed at specific sections of people. He is truly disgusted at them and says that "Hitler was wrong about the Jews who have they hurt the queers he should have gone for scum them and the wogs and the fucking football fans" (19). Contrarily, Soldier hates everyone who shows love for their loved ones. It does not matter even if they are innocent children, women or men. He confesses to committing multiple rapes, mutilations and murders of people of all ages and genders (43-50). The ideological source of his actions is also easily identifiable, his reason for vengeance. The

medium he employs is violence because this is the only medium that would make his actions feel justifiable and would make him feel better, no matter how short the period of relief is.

Ideological sources of hidden/objective violence, on the other hand, are not easy to identify because the violence is perceived “as the result of an ‘objective’ process, which nobody planned and executed” (Žižek, *Violence* 12). Cate, in *Blasted*, belongs to “a lower-middle-class” (Kane 3) and comes from a typical nuclear English family in which her father is mostly absent and the burden of the care of the family lays on her mother’s shoulders. Although Cate is an adult, she is unable to find a job and depends on her mother for her financial requirements. The main reasons are her lack of educational and interpersonal skills. Ian is sure that she cannot and will not find a job because she is simply not qualified enough and lacks the skills of a professional. Her socio-economic background lays the foundation of her inability to secure a job and be an independent person. As per Žižek’s classification of violence, Cate suffers from objective violence, systemic violence to be precise. As it is an invisible form of violence, its effects are largely ignored. According to Žižek, we must take it into account if we want to understand violence as a whole (Žižek, *Violence* 2).

The violent acts, Kane’s characters perpetuate on others, seemingly burst out of nowhere. They seem random and instantaneous, but that is not the case. It is because the conditions for the explosion of violent acts are set and normalized by the norm of the spatial reality. That is, the roots of subjective violence lie within the norm of the space itself. Kane’s world is a world of violence because her characters are born into a space which is inclusive of violence and thus are subjected to violence. It is not their fault that they are born into space consisting of “not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (Žižek, *Violence* 8). Similarly, some characters are also “torn out of a particular lifeworld” and are pushed into another “as the result of an extremely violent process” (124). Furthermore, the space into which Kane’s characters are born and/or pushed transform them into the subjects of that particular space. The space comprises what Žižek calls “obscene underground, the unconscious terrain of habits” which “systematically creates conditions for” acts of subjective violence (143). In this underground, we find obscene images, which when over-circulate transform the subjects into overdetermined ones, capable of perpetrating violence as well as being immune to the suffering of the victims (56). Lastly, Kane’s world is a world of violence

and to act in this violent world, the primary choice of expression is to use violent means. Kane's characters perpetuate subjective violence because they have undergone the process of over-identification, that is, they have "turned into the excessive figure" of the very space they inhabit (149).

In *Blasted*, we observed that Cate belongs to a lower-middle-class society. She is circumscribed within a space of rampant violence and becomes vulnerable to victimization. Ian takes advantage of Cate's vulnerability. He is aware of the fact that the expensive hotel room and other luxuries would impress Cate and he would be able to seduce her. He makes sure that Cate appreciates his efforts to secure the expensive room. Cate's presence in the hotel room voluntarily and her amazement at the classiness of the hotel room suggest her humble and naïve character. She is not unaware of Ian's intentions. When Ian tries to assert himself on her, she rejects him verbally and physically. Kane, herself, finds Cate to be a stupid person (Saunders 58) for being in the hotel room voluntarily despite being fully aware of Ian's past treatment of her (Kane 16). Ian rapes Cate, but she, still, chooses to stay with him afterwards. It is not because Cate is stupid, rather as the victim of violence, she is a weak individual, who is emotionally dependent on her abuser (Di Napoli et al. 7910). Her vulnerabilities encourage Ian, her abuser, to engage in cyclic violence (Williams 443).

Furthermore, people are deeply influenced by the ideology of the space they inhabit and their unconscious fantasy structures their spatial reality (Žižek, *The Sublime Object* 30). Cate has always lived in a bubble, in a closed space, and in the absence of her abusive father, she has depended more on her mother (Kane 8). Without her father in her home, there is no threat, she feels comfortable in her space and does not want to leave it (6). Her values of caring, believing in goodness and God, not cheating, killing and discriminating, and liking football are the results of her upbringing in this closed space. Cate is a caring person, she cares about her mother and brother more than her own life (18), cares for people of different sexualities and ethnicities (5), cares for a baby she found outside the hotel (51), and even cares for Ian when he gets emotionally vulnerable after "a car backfires" (28) on a nearby street even though he had sexually assaulted her the previous night (31). Cate remains at high risk for revictimization throughout the play. It results from the trauma, a common trait, she has possibly faced during her childhood. Children of abusive households, like Cate, face many problems throughout their lives, like lifelong anxiety, social dysfunction, and vulnerability to revictimization, among others (Norman et. al 6-14; Williams 433). Female child victims remain at high risk of

revictimization throughout their lives (McGee et al. 3583), as we can see in the case of Cate. Their emotional and financial dependence, on others, renders them unable to break the cycle of revictimization. The younglings are one of the most vulnerable groups in most social settings and are most likely to be trapped, coerced and re-victimized. The revictimization of the younglings, including young and dependent females, is closely linked to an unstable environment (Williams 445). Cate suffers from anxiety in the absence of a stable household. Ever since her father has returned home, her seizures have returned (Kane 9-10). Her social life is a total wreck. She has no friends. As a result, she seeks emotional support from others, and that is why her emotional dependency on Ian has increased. Although Ian has treated her badly in the past (16), she still chooses to accompany him to the hotel to please him (23). She likes the feeling of being valued and voluntarily comes with Ian. Being a victim of revictimization, Cate is emotionally attached to her abuser Ian, and thinks that Ian can change when he shows emotional vulnerability at the car's backfire event. Cate believes that she can still salvage her relationship with Ian, even though Ian had raped her the last night. This vulnerability, of revictimized and emotionally dependent victims, does not let them escape the cycles of victimization because every time their abusers show vulnerability remorse, or promise to improve, they, the victims, think that the abuse can stop, the abuser can change, and their relationship can be salvaged, can somehow return to a non-violent past (Griffing et al. 309).

Likewise, in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, we observe the same revictimization of the victims of domestic violence. In *Crave*, the character named C resides in an abusive home. Her father often beats up her mother (179). He also sleeps with his daughter C (10) and prostitutes her to rich people, like the character A (158). Despite herself and her daughter being abused by her husband, C's mother does not leave him (175). Similarly, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* has an abusive household and considers themselves as "the child of negation" (239). Despite loving and caring for their mother, the protagonist complains about her. They blame their mother "for not leaving" her husband for messing up their life for good (215). These victims, the character named C in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis*, are children and blameless victims who endure violence only because they are born into an abusive household.

Violence also tears Kane's characters out of their lifeworld and pushes them into another. Cate, in *Blasted*, has been born into the space of lower-middle-class which facilitates violence on all its subjects. She faces financial hardship as well as domestic

abuse in her home primarily because of her father, who comes and goes for extended periods. In the absence of her father, the quality of her life improves. She does not suffer from seizures anymore. She has an attachment to her home and does not want to leave it because of her mother and brother. As soon as her father returns, her home becomes more volatile. She starts to suffer from stress-induced seizures (9-10). The return of her father marks the point of transition for Cate. Her home becomes more and more intolerable to live in. And when Ian reaches out to her, she sees it as a way out but remains hesitant to leave her home. It is only after Ian's manipulation, claiming to be unwell, that Cate is coerced into leaving her home. She goes out with Ian and enters a new space, where she sees and endures atrocities. She is torn out of her own home and is pushed into a more violent space, where she is subjected to mental, sexual and physical violence. Ian forces himself on her, shames her for not reciprocating his feelings and rapes her during their first night together.

The same happens to Grace in *Cleansed*, following the death of her brother Graham. Graham is the staple center around which Grace's life revolves. She is torn out of her particular world when her brother dies of a drug overdose. It forces her to leave her home and look for Graham's belongings (114). She does not know how to deal with the outside world. Her mental health gradually deteriorates and she chooses to admit herself to the same hospital where Graham was brought after his death. Grace refuses to leave the hospital because Graham's body was incinerated in the hospital. She also finds his belongings there as well. During her stay in the hospital, Grace is subjected to violence as a part of her treatment. Both Cate in *Blasted* and Grace in *Cleansed* leave their home in the hope of a better future but are subjected to more violence.

Similarly, in *Phaedra's Love*, Phaedra's encounter with Hippolytus tears her out of her safe space and into a more violent one. Phaedra enters Hippolytus's room with his birthday gifts (75). Hippolytus has no interest in the gift and behaves rudely towards Phaedra. He makes her uncomfortable at first by having a conversation about sex. But when she talks about love, Hippolytus gets uncomfortable. She professes her love for him (80) and performs fellatio on him (81) and expects to be accepted by him. But Hippolytus does not show any great interest in her. She kindles with his emotions by mentioning the name of the girl who has broken his heart. Hippolytus gets furious. He grabs her by the throat and threatens not to do the same ever again (83). To make matters worse, Hippolytus tells her about the family secrets, hinting that her daughter has had sexual relations with her step-father Theseus as well as her step-brother Hippolytus.

Phaedra slaps her in return which makes Hippolytus spill some more information about her daughter's sexual experience (83-84). Phaedra is disheartened and leaves his room. Later, she commits suicide and leaves behind a letter stating that Hippolytus has raped her. Phaedra was in love with Hippolytus from the start. She wanted to be accepted by him but was content with their living arrangement. When Hippolytus rejects her love and spills the beans about her daughter and husband having sexual relations, Phaedra is torn out of her lifeworld and is thrown into another, in which she finds it hard to survive. Following her encounter, she undergoes a traumatic experience and finds herself unable to cope with it. She finds it easier to die than to live with this information.

There are characters in Kane's plays who are overwhelmed or overdetermined by the circulation of disfigured or false images, which transform them into agents of violence as well as make them immune to the suffering of their victims. In *Blasted*, when Cate leaves home and enters the hotel room with Ian, she is subjected to the obscene underside of the new space, the space Ian inhabits. At the time of her entrance in the hotel room, Cate is a loving, caring, emotional and optimistic person. She is bothered by Ian's sexual advances and her loyalty to her boyfriend Shaun, and does not know how to deal with the world outside of her home. The false-images, Ian presents about the world from his biased and misogynist perspective, as well as her experience of the world transforms her into an overdetermined person. She becomes distant and cold. She is not bothered by Ian's misery and refuses to accommodate his wishes. When the baby dies in her arms, whom she finds outside the hotel, instead of showing despair or sorrow, she "*bursts out laughing, unnaturally, hysterically, uncontrollably. She laughs and laughs and laughs and laughs and laughs*" (57). She finds the situation funny and buries the baby mechanically into the floor of the hotel room. And when she feels hungry, she does not hesitate to exchange sexual intercourse with random soldiers for food (60). Her moral and ethical stance has altered significantly. Earlier, she was bothered by Ian's advances and wanted to remain loyal to her boyfriend Shaun; but later, she exchanges sex with random soldiers for food and does not seem to be bothered by this transaction. Cate transforms from being a victim to a fully functional overdetermined individual who knows how to operate within the space she is pushed into. She is not the same naïve person she was at the start of the play. Now, she has become aware of the changes in her spatial reality and has learned to operate in this space.

Cate is torn out of her particular lifeworld and is pushed into the violent world of war, where she is overdetermined by the obscene images, but her transition into a new

space is not fully completed. Even though she has learnt to operate in the new space, some of her traits from the previous lifeworld remain intact. For instance, she accepts Ian's request to accompany him for a while (53). She does not let him commit suicide (56) because she finds it "wrong to kill yourself" (54). Additionally, she saves an abandoned baby from the war front and brings the baby to safety (51). She takes care of the baby but unfortunately, the baby dies and she performs a funeral for the baby.

Likewise, Ian is also an overdetermined character, one who is overwhelmed and transformed as a result of his experiences. Ian is overdetermined by the false-images which generate fear – the fear that the government is trying to kill him (30), the fear that the immigrants are trying to overtake his country (4), the fear that the non-whites are polluting his white race (17), the fear that the homosexuals are degrading the family system (19), and the fear that the under-privileged are ruining the economy by relying on welfare (8). Additionally, he is diagnosed with Cancer and Cirrhosis. He is overdetermined by these experiences and to make the most of it while he is still alive, he indulges in his sexual desires. He manipulates Cate into accompanying him into a luxurious hotel and gets his sexual desires satisfied by forcing himself on Cate.

The opposite happens with Phaedra in *Phaedra's Love*. While Ian in *Blasted*, who gets overdetermined by the false-images, becomes an agent of violence and victimizes a less powerful Cate; contrarily, in *Phaedra's Love*, when Phaedra gets overdetermined by false-images presented by Hippolytus, she turns into an agent of violence who commits violence against herself. Hippolytus discloses the information about her daughter being a sexual pervert, having sex with her stepfather and stepbrother. The images Hippolytus uses to disclose Strophe's sexual perversion may contain some fact or partial truth, but his intention of hurting Phaedra makes them false. He tries to hurt Phaedra because she has humiliated him by claiming that she burned him emotionally (82). He succeeds in hurting Phaedra. She gets upset and undergoes a transforming traumatic experience. In the end, she kills herself. Phaedra becomes the victim as well as the agent of self-directed violence when she commits suicide.

In Kane's plays, we observe multiple reasons to perpetuate subjective violence. For instance, Ian seeks physical intimacy and Soldier seeks revenge in *Blasted*; Theseus and the mob express their anger in *Phaedra's Love*; Billy seeks validation from peers and Marcia seeks purification in *Skin*; Tinker projects hate in *Cleansed*; the character A in *Crave* seeks the gratification of lust; and the protagonist's father, in *4.48 Psychosis*, seeks domination within the household. The motives of Kane's characters, as agents of

subjective violence, can vary but their indulgence in violent actions shows the limits of their choice of expression. This choice of expression is limited and shaped by the very space Kane's characters exist in. Her characters perpetuate violence because it is their primary choice of expression. They have undergone the process of over-identification, which turned them into excessive figures. In *Blasted*, Soldier and Ian are the over-identified characters. They have turned into excessive figures because they can directly relate themselves to the space they inhabit. Soldier describes this space of war as a space in which he

[s]aw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town. Women threw their babies on board hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death. Inside of people's heads came out of their eyes. Saw a child most of his face blown off, young girl I fucked 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. (50)

As Soldier operates within the space, he perpetuates violence on others, including innocent women, children and men. In this space, violence was perpetuated on his girlfriend. So, he reacts in a similar manner. Soldier acts violently to seek revenge for the violent rape and brutal murder of his girlfriend Col. Soldier is bound by the very space, which not only determines his choice of expression, in what he can do but also limits his choice of expression. He tells Ian that he is there because he has no other choice but to be there (47) and seek revenge. He feels that it is only justifiable that he is behaving in a similar manner. He tells Ian: "Bastards killed her, now I'm here" (49), to do to others what was done to his girlfriend Col. As an over-identified character, Soldier perpetuates violence, which disrupts the zero-level standard of spatial norms. The stability of the space is threatened by the actions of Soldier. His actions, thus, require a pushback from the very space he operates in. This pushback comes in the form of his elimination from the space. Soldier is eliminated by the very violence he has perpetrated on others. That is, he is killed by the gun (50).

Ian is another character in *Blasted*, who has become an excessive or overly identifying figure. He also faces the same end. That is, he is eliminated in the very manner in which he behaves and identifies with the space. Ian uses masculinity to subjugate and rape Cate, and the same is done to Ian. He is physically manhandled and raped by a more

masculine Soldier.

Soldier And now you agree with everything I say.

He kisses Ian very tenderly on the lips.

They stare at each other.

...

The Soldier turns Ian over with one hand.

He holds the revolver to Ian's head with the other.

He pulls down Ian's trousers, undoes his own and rapes him – eyes closed and smelling Ian's hair. (49)

There are a few differences between Cate's rape by Ian and Ian's rape by Soldier. The former rape happens at night time, in a domestic setting and offstage, is heterosexual in nature, and between individuals who knew each other. The latter rape happens in the daytime, within a warzone and onstage, is homosexual in nature, and between two strangers. There are some similarities too. The victims are muscled down by a more masculine assailant and the perpetrators do not go unpunished. Ian is Cate's rapist and in turn, he is blinded and raped. Soldier is Ian's rapist and in turn, he dies by suicide. In the end, Ian becomes useless and depends on Cate for survival, just like Cate was dependent on him at the start of the play. Soldier, on the other hand, kills numerous people during his revenge spree and gets killed in a similar manner, by a gun.

Similarly, in *Skin*, we observe Billy serves as an arm of the institution of white nationalism and neo-Nazism. He over-identifies with the ideology of the institution.

On his right arm is a Union Jack, on his left a bulldog, on one of his forearms a series of blue dots... (249)

...

[And] a black swastika on his right fist. (251)

The symbols engraved on Billy's body have different meanings. Union Jack, also known as the Union flag, is the UK's national flag. It symbolizes unity, under which England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland unite. In addition to being the symbol of unity, it also stands for national pride. The tattoo of the bulldog symbolizes British values, courage and tenacity. Winston Churchill, a nationalist prime minister, was famously

known as the British Bulldog. Furthermore, over the years, various British fascist groups have used this symbol to signify white nationalism. The tattoo of blue dots on the forearms could symbolize that Billy has been convicted and has spent time in jail. Lastly, the Nazi symbol swastika represents their belief in the pure Aryan race. It also signifies hatred and racial bias and is frequently used by neo-Nazi/white-supremacy groups. Billy has engraved these symbols on his body because he is a Skinhead. He identifies with the ideology of white-supremacy/neo-Nazism. He acts as an over-identified agent of this institution. But as it happens to Kane's other over-identified character, Billy also gets eliminated. Marcia cleansed him by removing these symbols from his body. She scrubs them off "with a stiff brush and bleach" and later engraves "her name into his back with a stanley knife" (262). She cuts off the very connection with which Billy relates to his gang. With his connection severed, Billy does not know how to live in the same world anymore. He does not want to leave Marcia for the very same reason. When Marcia rejects him, he becomes lost. He heads home and swallows a handful of painkillers to end his life but luckily is saved by his neighbor Neville.

Likewise, Hippolytus in *Phaedra's Love* is an excessive figure. As a crown prince, he is destined to inherit the crown after his father King Theseus. Hippolytus is an over-identified character because his actions are closely associated with the functioning of monarchy. While he randomly indulges in pervasive acts, it reflects badly on the reputation of the monarchy. The public seems to be discontented with the prince as well as the state of the monarchy. They see the royals as parasitic who are living leisurely on the taxpayers' money (98), while the public is living hand to mouth. When Hippolytus stands accused of raping his stepmother Phaedra, the public anger rose to an unprecedented level. Being a prince who indulges in perversions, Hippolytus becomes a threat to the institution of monarchy. As a result, just like the elimination of an over-identified agent, Hippolytus is disposed of when Theseus incited the public to lynch Hippolytus to death.

Kane's world is ideological because the prevalent ideology distorts reality. Her characters are deeply influenced by the ideology of the space they inhabit. Their spatial reality, "the truth of Being" (Gildersleeve 2), is ideological but appears as "neutral, non-ideological, natural, commonsensical" to them (Žižek, *Violence* 31). In the conventional sense, this is how ideology functions. In *Blasted*, Cate has lived all her life in a lower-middle-class society. It is a space in which she has the scarcity of resources, life-long financial dependency on her mother, a mostly absent and emotionally detached father,

suffering from stress-induced seizures and multiple but unstable romantic relationships over a period of time. This is the norm, the zero-level standard, of her reality. Cate is neither a stupid person, as claimed by Kane herself (Saunders 58), nor is she a totally innocent person, when she accompanies ailing Ian to the Hotel to provide him with comfort. Cate is a subject of her ideological space and she acts accordingly. When she enters a new space, the luxurious hotel room. She is mesmerized by its beauty. This is a new experience for her. When she enters the room, she inspects everything and jumps on the bed. The joy of being in a luxurious place can be seen in her movements (Kane 4). Cate knows how to operate in her own space, her home where she depends on her mother for money, where she suffers from seizures in her father's presence and satisfies her sexual and emotional needs through romantic relationships. On the other hand, when she enters the hotel room, a new space for her, she does not know how to act or behave. She acts childishly. Once she enters the hotel room, she enters the private space of Ian she cannot leave. Ian locks the door and keeps the key with him. She does not know how this new space operates. She becomes dependent on Ian like she does in her home. She depends on Ian for everything. This dependency makes her vulnerable and Ian takes advantage of her vulnerability.

The space of Cate's household, though inclusive of hidden or what Žižek calls objective violence, appears to be neutral and normal. This normalization of violence in Cate's household sets the zero-level standard of her reality. Any breach of this norm would be considered an act of subjective violence. Even though the hotel room is starkly different from Cate's home. It resembles her household in some ways. In her home, she depends on her mother and a series of boyfriends for her financial, sexual and emotional needs. In the hotel room, she becomes dependent on Ian. Similarly, Cate suffers from seizures in both spaces. Ian's actions, his constant efforts to coerce Cate into having sexual intercourse with him despite her verbal and physical resistance, violate the norm of Cate's reality. It stresses her out and she suffers from seizures. Although stress-induced seizures are part of the norm of the space Cate inhabits, according to her, they happen "all the time" (9), what follows her seizure in the hotel room, is a violent breach of the norm of her space. During the night, Ian rapes her. The next morning, she is angry at Ian for breaching her safe space (25). He has violated her relationship with her current boyfriend Shaun. Cate's rape marks the point of her transition into the new space. She is torn out of her lifeworld and into a world of chaos. From being a newbie to this new space, she gradually learns the norms and how to operate in it. By the end of the play,

she emerges as an evolved character who seemingly fits this new space.

Similarly, in *Cleansed*, the character Robin behaves in a likewise manner. He is accustomed to life, but when he is pushed into a new space, unlike Cate in *Blasted*, Robin does not survive. Robin is an in-house patient in the university hospital. He often accompanies and talks to Grace, another in-house patient. Robin has been admitted because he hears voices and has attempted suicide (115). He believes that he has been cured of the problem he had and will soon get discharged from the hospital and go back home to my mother. He does not want to die as no sane person does. Robin is mentally unstable and believes that now that he has gotten better, it is only natural that he will be discharged. This is natural for him, to get admitted to the hospital when he gets sick and leave when he gets better. But after spending time with Grace, he falls in love with her. Now, he has another person to love. In his home, he loves his mother and wants to go back because of it. And in the hospital, He has started to love Grace and wants to stay there with her (128). He has accepted the new space and acts naturally. But unlike at home, where his mother also loves him back, in the hospital, Grace does not reciprocate his romantic feelings. He does not know how to operate now. He tries to linger on Grace as much as he can. When Grace's mental health deteriorates, she starts to ignore him and does not respond to his calls. Robin does not take the rejection well and hangs himself from the ceiling.

Likewise, Billy and his gang of skinheads in the play *Skin* live in a racially divided society, a society in which black people are the enemy. What the skinheads find intolerable and rage-provoking, what they react to, is not the immediate reality of the black people. Black people are discriminated against in society and are economically underprivileged with poor living conditions. The skinheads react to the image of the black people which has been circulating in their society. The purpose of the circulation of this false image is to present black people as problematic people. This image makes the skinheads realize that black people are the cause of the all-social antagonism. The solution is also provided, that is, to preserve the space of the skinheads, black people are to be eliminated.

Kane's world is ideological because her characters adhere to the prevailing ideology. While some characters are blind to the existence of ideology and adhere to it unconditionally; others, the skeptics, are aware of its presence but nonetheless follow it. The former blindly and unconditionally adhere to ideology because it is woven into the background of their reality. There is no realization of ideology. Rather their spatial reality

is perceived as natural and non-ideological (Žižek, *Violence* 36). This is because their blind adherence generates enjoyment (Dean 167). The latter, the skeptics, despite being aware of the ideology's presence, also adhere to the ideology. This is because of the anticipatory function of the ruling ideology. It anticipates and accommodates the actions of the skeptics, rendering them unable to escape it (Cook 14). In *Blasted*, Cate is a subject who adheres to the ideology of her domestic reality. At home, Cate has accepted the norm as something natural and neutral. Even though her home is poor, under-resourced, abusive and causes her stress-induced seizures, she still loves her home and does not want to leave it. When Ian proposes to her for marriage, she refuses on the grounds that she cannot leave her home.

Ian (*Looks at her, deciding whether or not to continue. He decides against it.*)
 You know I love you.
Cate (*Smiles a big smile, friendly and non-sexual.*)
Ian Don't want you ever to leave.
Cate I'm here for the night.
Ian (*Drinks.*)
 Sweating again. Stink. You ever thought of getting married?
Cate Who'd marry me?
Ian I would.
Cate I couldn't.
Ian You don't love me. I don't blame you, I wouldn't.
Cate I couldn't leave mum. (Kane 5-6)

Cate, as the subject of an ideological space, is unaware of how she has been constantly abused – through systemic inequality and discrimination – rendering her a vulnerable person. She depends on her mother and others for support of all kinds, be it emotional, financial or sexual. Cate is the person who has accepted her oppressive life as something natural. Although she momentarily and voluntarily leaves her home, she only does so under Ian's coercion (23), who takes advantage of her vulnerability and lures her out of her home. Cate does not want to leave her home forever because her ideology cannot let her. It is her attachment to her home which restricts her despite the fact the very space she loves is also abusive to her. Ian professes his love and proposes to her. He offers her

a way out of her poor lifestyle but she rejects him outright. She loves her mother and brother and cannot leave them behind. For Cate, the thought of leaving them is inconceivable because they might suffer without her in the house. So, her mere presence at home is enough for her to find meaning in her life. She firmly believes that she is responsible for the well-being of her mother and brother. This responsibility is the source of her pleasure. The more she adheres to the ideology, the more enjoyment she seems to get. It is because the more she suffers by staying in the abusive relationship, the stronger her attachment to his mother and brother gets. This is often the case with domestic victims, they are unlikely to leave the space of their abuse and even if they leave, they often return (Griffing et al. 308).

Similarly, in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, there are victims of domestic or intimate partner violence who choose to stay with their abusers or rather do not leave the abusive space. In *Crave*, the character named C admits that she has witnessed her mother get thrashed by her abusive father and did not intervene just like when she was abused by her father, her mother did not intervene (Kane 179). She could not leave because she was a child and also because her mother did not leave (175). Likewise, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* admits that her mother has failed her by not leaving her abusive husband (215). In both cases, C's Mother in *Crave* and the protagonist's mother in *4.48 Psychosis*, the victims get accustomed to their abusive reality and live in it without much protest. They are subjects who are totally submitted to the ideology of their domestic reality.

On the other hand, some characters are skeptics, aware of the operations of the ideological space they inhabit. In *Blasted*, as a former agent of the secret services, Ian is a subject who is skeptical of the ideology of his reality but nonetheless follows it. He knows how secret government agencies work because he has been a part of it. He was recruited by the agency and had done dirty work for them. He feels guilty about what he has done. Ian confesses to Cate that he has spied, given instructions, driven and picked up people, killed for the agency and disposed of bodies (30). His integration into the working of the secret government agency and knowledge of its operations has turned him into an over-identified character. It is his over-identification which has rendered the very agency, that he served, to act against him. Because he knows too much of the agency's secrets, he cannot simply quit. He fears that he would suffer the same fate as others, whom he has eliminated or helped eliminate. He fears that someone like him, a spy from the secret government agency, is following him to kill him (29). This is how, according to Žižek, "dominant ideologies" operate; they anticipate the actions of their subjects and

reorganize “their discourses accordingly so that, even if individuals do not consciously invest in ideas and beliefs, their actions of *disinvestment* still lend themselves to the sustenance and strengthening of dominant ideologies” (Cook 14). The situation Ian is in is constituted by the ruling ideology. He knows about his future prospects now that the agency has no use for him. Ian is sure that he is going to die and there is next to nothing he can do about it. So, he decides to seize the opportunity and have as much fun as he can, in the time he has left. His knowledge of his future generates the prospects of enjoyment. This is why he brings Cate to the hotel room. He knows that Cate is naïve and can be easily coerced. But when he fails to seduce her, he prevents her from leaving, by locking the door and keeping the key in his pocket (Kane 27). Later, he rapes her during the night. According to Žižek, “individuals’ conscious beliefs” do not sustain their ideology, rather their actions do (Cook 15). Ian’s belief of himself as caring and loving Cate, and believing that she is enjoying his sexual advances, do not reflect the ideology of secret services; rather his actions do, which include dominating, harassing, physically restraining and raping Cate. Ian’s actions replicate the ideology he adheres to. The ideology where once a mission is assigned, it has to be completed at all costs. That is, once he has committed to the plans of having a good time with Cate, his actions are guided by the ideology of secret services. He uses every trick in his book to lure, coerce and force Cate to submit to his sexual advances. When he does not succeed, he resorts to more violent means.

Likewise, in *Phaedra’s Love*, Hippolytus is also aware of the functioning of his kingdom or ideological space. He knows that being a prince entitles him to do as he pleases. He indulges in random sexual encounters and no one says no to him. People happily indulge in sexual activities with him because he is the crown prince. Even a priest cannot deny him.

Hippolytus	... God may be all powerful, but there’s one thing he can’t do.
Priest	There is a kind of purity in you.
Hippolytus	He can’t make me good.
Priest	No.
Hippolytus	Last line of defence for the honest man. Free will is what distinguishes us from the animals. <i>(He undoes his trousers.)</i>

And I have no intention of behaving like a fucking animal.

Priest

(Performs oral sex on Hippolytus) (Kane 96-97)

Priest is aware of Hippolytus's sexual indiscretions and the power he holds over other people. So, when Hippolytus signals another sexual indiscretion, when he opens his trousers, the priest obliges and performs fellatio on him. Hippolytus is bored of this life and has no curiosity or interest in it. That is why he "stay[s] in bed all day then watch TV all night," and roams around the "house with sleep in... [his] eyes and [has] not a thought for anyone" (79). He knows that even though he is fat, disgusting and miserable (78), women still find him attractive (77). He is aware of the limits of the power he holds as a crown prince. He knows that he can do little to nothing when it comes to stop rapes and murders and unemployment in his country, so he chooses not to care about it (75). Rather he indulges in meaningless sexual activities. His inaction in social and political matters is precisely what is expected of him. It sustains the ideology of his kingdom as it maintains the balance between the monarchy and politics of the country. Hippolytus's inactions rather than his actions serve to strengthen the prevailing ideology.

Kane's world is ideological because fear and envy mobilize her characters. As far as fear is concerned, Kane's characters are stuck in an "unsettling dimension" in which they are haunted by the figure of an "imponderable Other," an enemy, "whose very reasoning is foreign to" them and "no authentic encounter with him [Other/enemy] in battle is possible" (Žižek, *Violence* 47). In Kane's world, some of her characters are also mobilized "through fear, a basic constituent of today's subjectivity" (40). Consequently, envy is another factor responsible for making Kane's world an ideological one. Some of her characters are envious of the Other who not only possesses the object of enjoyment, also known as "*objet petit a*, [or] the object-cause of desire" (Žižek, "Invisible Ideology" 23) but is also "able to enjoy this object" (Žižek, *Violence* 77). Other's way of enjoying the object is unbearable to Kane's characters because they themselves are unable to possess and enjoy it as the Other does.

In *Blasted*, Ian is on the run because he is afraid of getting murdered by the very secret government agency he was once a part of. Ian fears that a spy is always nearby to kill him. He is a frightened and paranoid person who is "scared of dying" (Kane 28) and has to remain vigilant at all times if he wants to remain alive. This is the politics of Kane's world, which relies on the paranoia of its frightened subjects. Ian does not have control

over this situation, so he pulls back to a situation in which he can control things around him. The thought of Cate, his naïve ex-lover, comes to his mind. He confesses that whenever he is with her, she takes him “to another place,” where nothing else comes to his mind but her (22). Ian is a sexual sadist. He invites Cate to a hotel room and once they enter the hotel room, he starts seeking physical intimacy with her and controlling the narrative of their conversation. Ian shames and humiliates Cate on multiple occasions. He calls her “stupid” (8), “a nigger-lover” (5), “a lesbos” (7), a free-loader (8) and makes fun of her mentally challenged brother (5). When he fails to coerce Cate into his sexual perversions, he asserts his control physically. After Cate has a stress-induced seizure when Ian aggressively tries to undo her trousers despite her resistance, he takes Cate’s hand and masturbates (14-5). On other occasions, he starts kissing her without her consent (17), and “*stimulates sex*” on unconscious Cate (27). The next morning, Cate is mad at Ian because, during the night, Ian not only raped her but also bit her in the vaginal area and made her bleed till the next day (32). The paranoia of Ian is channeled into seeking his sexual fantasies. Despite his attempts to have control over his surroundings, the fear of death constantly lingers in Ian’s mind. He panics at every sudden sound in his proximity.

On the other hand, Soldier is motivated by envy. He envies anyone who expresses love for their loved ones. He has lost his girlfriend Col, who was brutally raped, dismembered and murdered (43). He is deprived of love and now he is out for revenge, to do the same to others what was done to his beloved Col (49). He confesses to killing a family of eight because they seem like a happy family. Soldier tells Ian that the “small boy” of the family was shot “through the legs,” other three males were held while he raped the females of the family, then the father was “shot... in the mouth” and lastly, the remaining males were “hung... from the ceiling by their testicles” (43). On another occasion, Soldier reenacts making love to Col as well as the moments of Col’s tragic end through the violence he perpetuates on Ian.

He kisses Ian very tenderly on the lips.

They stare at each other.

Soldier You smell like her. Same cigarettes.

The Soldier turns Ian over with one hand.

He holds the revolver to Ian’s head with the other.

He pulls down Ian’s trousers, undoes his own and rapes him – eyes

closed and smelling Ian's hair.

The Soldier is crying his heart out.

Ian's face registers pain but he is silent.

When the Soldier has finished he pulls up his trousers and pushes the revolver up Ian's anus,

Soldier Bastard pulled the trigger on Col.

...

The Soldier grips Ian's head in his hands.

He puts his mouth over one of Ian's eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it.

He does the same to the other eye.

Soldier He ate her eyes.

Poor bastard.

Poor love.

Poor fucking bastard. (Kane 49-50)

Soldier envies the people who possess love, the very thing he has lost. Since his beloved Col is dead and he cannot have love anymore, he deprives the others of the same. He destroys their ability to love, either by killing them, like in the case of the family of eight, or by making them suffer for loving someone, like in the case of Ian. Cate's world is ideological because her characters seek enjoyment but are unable to possess the object of their desires. Their actions are guided by the pursuit of enjoyment.

Similarly, we observe envy in the actions of Tinker in *Cleansed* and fear in the actions of the character named A in *Crave*. In *Cleansed*, Tinker has already captured Carl and Rod and regularly tortured them. Tinker is a lonely character who is in search of love. He likes one of his patients named Grace but is unable to express his feelings to her. And when he observes Carl expressing his love for Rod (110), Tinker perpetuates violence against them. He is envious of Carl for having Rod and for engaging in romantic and sexual acts with him. Tinker cannot have what Carl has because of his own inadequacy. So, he resorts to depriving Carl of the same, but despite his violence, Carl is not discouraged. This infuriates Tinker. He starts to amputate Carl's limbs. And even then, he cannot stop Carl from loving Rod. So, he kills Rod and emasculates him. Homosexuality also plays a certain role in Carl's victimization. Tinker is also envious of another patient named Robin, who also loves Grace. Tinker humiliates him by feeding

him chocolates like a dog and threatens him with a knife (138-39). When the afraid Robin urinates in his clothes, Tinker gets infuriated and “*grabs Robin’s head and forces it down, rubbing his face in his own urine*” (141). Tinker’s treatment of Carl and Robin differs in cruelty. With Carl, Tinker is more violent and with Robin, Tinker is more humiliating. It is because Carl and Rod are a homosexual couple and captives of Tinker, while Rod is a patient who is admitted to the hospital for suicidal behavior.

Like Tinker, the character named A in *Crave* is also a lonely character. He admits that he is a lonely and lost individual (171). Unlike Tinker, whose loneliness manifests in envy, A’s loneliness gives rise to fear. He believes that only love can save him (174). So, as a pedophile, he uses his power to get as much sex and company as he can. He indulges in child prostitution (158). He seems to care less that this behavior has turned him into a beast (187). And the children he preyed on have suffered. He admits to being a torturer of people he has loved and has had sex with (177). He recollects the old memories of when he had sex with a girl child and she threw up afterwards (179). A’s actions are guided by the fear of loneliness.

Kane’s world is a world of violence because it is an abyss to her characters. Kane’s characters are “constantly exposed to a multitude of” torments (Žižek, *Violence* 36). These torments are caused by an Other, who is imponderable. It not only makes “ominous intrusion” in their space (8) but torments them by possessing the very prized object which they do not have (76). Kane’s world is an abyss to her characters because they are stuck in a space, with the tormenting Other, where there is no way out. This prepares “the grounds for the notion of diabolical evil” (47), whereby the characters act/react violently against the tormenting Other. But they cannot simply use violence to get rid of this tormenting Other. Because of the Other’s human status, any attempts to destroy or eliminate it through violence would generate sympathy and can make the violence unacceptable to the observers as well as the agents of violence. Thus, it becomes difficult for Kane’s characters to get rid of this imponderable Other. However, according to Žižek, this dimension of the imponderable Other or the tormenting neighbor can be demolished by reducing the Other to a non-human status (38). That is, violence against the imponderable Other becomes acceptable and does not generate sympathy for the victimized when the victimized is a non-human entity (47). In short, their pain or misery is neutralized (38).

In *Blasted*, Ian and Soldier are stuck in the hotel room with each other. Soldier intrudes into Ian’s space and despite multiple attempts, Ian fails to push Soldier out of

the room. On one occasion, Ian tries to scuffle with Soldier for his gun but is easily overpowered by Soldier (Kane 39). Ian can't get rid of Soldier because Soldier is armed and more masculine and authoritative than Ian. Ian resorts to another tactic. He prevents himself from being sympathetic towards Soldier's miserable past. He achieves this by reducing Soldier to a less-than-human status. Ian is a racist person. He uses discriminatory slurs against blacks, migrants and people from the LGBT+ community. Ian shows no interest in Soldier's story of how he turned from a clean and educated person to a stone-cold killer. In Ian's eyes, Soldier is "[f]ilthy, like the wogs. No joy in a story about blacks who gives a shit? Why bring you to light?" (48). Ian uses a derogatory term *wog* for Soldier and shows him no sympathy because he does not consider him his equal. Ian designates him to a lower or a less-than-human status so that his life or his past does not affect Ian and makes him sympathetic towards Soldier. Likewise, Ian considers Cate to be his unequal, a person who is stupid, who is dependent on others for her emotional and financial needs, and who is easy to coerce and manipulate. He sees her as a second-class citizen with whom he can do whatever he wants without feeling any remorse. This is why he brings her to the hotel room to fulfill his sexual desires and employs every trick to get what he wants.

The victims and agents of violence are also stuck with each other in *Cleansed*. Carl and Rod are captives of Tinker. Although they become the victims of Tinker's violence, it is Tinker who is constantly exposed to the torments posed by his victims. Carl and Rod are a homosexual couple who love each other, and Tinker is intolerable for their relationship. He tortures them to prove his point that says that homosexual people are incapable of loving each other and their love is nothing but a sham. The more Carl and Rod express their love for each other and engage in romantic activities, the more Tinker's intolerance is triggered. He reacts violently and tortures them. Unlike Carl and Rod, who are physically captivated by Tinker, he, on the other hand, is stuck in a mental prison of torment. A space he cannot escape. To get some of the control back, Tinker engages in sadistic activities. He torments the homosexual couple to the point of one's death and the other's dismemberment (110-18).

Meanwhile in *Crave*, the character named A is constantly tormented by the loneliness perpetuated by the absence of the character name C. A is a pedophile who sexually engages with C, who is regularly prostituted by her father (158). Unlike Ian in *Blasted*, who is threatened by Soldier's presence, A is not threatened by C's presence but rather agonized by her absence. He feels lost without her (171) and wants C to be with

him at all times so that he can satisfy his sexual desire as well as get rid of his loneliness. C has become a prized object for him which he cannot possess forever nor can he enjoy it because she is always out of his reach. He can possess her for some time and try to convince her of his love but he cannot make her love him. He is disheartened when he finds her vomiting after their sexual encounter (179). He even makes a six-month plan for them to be together where he would shower his love on her to make her his but C finds it distressing (169-70). The character named A knows that he is damaging C by having sexual intercourse (177) with her but he never stops pursuing her. He admits that he is a beast for doing this (187), but he cannot get her out of his system (173). He does not care for her feelings. His primary concern is to get rid of tormenting loneliness and fulfill his sexual desires. By focusing on his problems and being unsympathetic towards C's problems, A successfully neutralizes C's pain, which is caused by his constant pursuit of her.

Kane's world is an abyss because her characters are laden with the burden of the very freedom they possess and employ while making decisions. They do not have the safety of a higher power but rather have "the terrible burden of freedom and responsibility" (Žižek, *Violence* 157). That is, they have to "assume full responsibility for" their actions and decisions (6). In *Blasted*, Soldier's conscience is burdened by the atrocities he has perpetuated on numerous people, including innocent children, women and men. He is a strong, masculine and authoritative person with a gun. Amidst the warzone, he is free to do any atrocity he can think of, and he does on multiple occasions. On one occasion, he raped innocent children and killed their parents and siblings in front of them (Kane 43). On another occasion, he "broke a woman's neck. Stabbed up between her legs, on the fifth stab snapped her spine" (46). Even though he does everything he wants to do, he still remains unfulfilled because the very object of his enjoyment, his intimacy with his girlfriend Col, is lost forever since she is dead. He tries to recreate the same intimacy with other people, mostly at gunpoint. After he rapes Ian and eats his eyes, the burden of the freedom he has enjoyed, the responsibility of his actions, finally overwhelms him. He cannot carry on like this anymore and shoots himself dead (50). Soldier was stuck in an abysmal space where he could not shed the burden of responsibility for his actions. So, he decides to take his own life.

Similarly, in *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus's conscience is burdened by Phaedra's death. He has rejected Phaedra's love and insulted her in the cruelest manner possible. He tells her about the sexual endeavors of her daughter Strophe with her husband

Theseus as well as with him. Soon after her humiliation, Phaedra commits suicide and leaves behind a letter accusing Hippolytus of rape. After her death, Hippolytus recognizes his miscalculation. He has misjudged Phaedra's feelings towards him. He finally realizes that she truly loves him (91) and decides to own the allegation against him. He rejects any help from Strophe (91) as well as the priest, who visits him in the prison (92). He owns the allegation and with it the consequences.

Hippolytus I've chosen my path. I', fucking doomed.

Priest No.

Hippolytus Let me die.

Priest No. Forgive yourself.

Hippolytus (*Thinks hard.*)

I can't. (95-96)

Hippolytus knows that his actions have led Phaedra to commit suicide and accepts the consequences. When the crowd boos him on his sentencing, he frees himself and throws himself into the crowd (100). When the crowd turns into a mob and lynches him, he finds it exciting and wishes that there were more moments like this in his boring life before he dies of his wounds (103).

Likewise, in *Skin*, the gang of skinheads assume the burden of the cost of the responsibility. They are white nationalists and want to keep their country white. They take it upon themselves to cleanse their land from the intruders or the black people. According to them, diversity is the cause of all social antagonism and decay. Skinheads regularly gather at a café to make plans to achieve their goals. They roam around the city to right what according to them is wrong with the society. They abuse black men, women and children. Once, they also crash a mixed-race wedding and beat up friends and relatives of the black bride. Skinheads consider themselves as the soldiers of the ideology of white nationalism and neo-Nazism. They are burdened by the responsibility to propagate their ideology.

Contrarily, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* is burdened by the guilt of hurting their loved ones. The protagonist is an unnamed and ungendered person suffering from mental illness. They dislike their body and gender (207) and think that it is because of them, their illness to be precise that their family and friends are getting hurt. The protagonist feels shame and guilt for their incompetence in making progress. Their

unstable mental health is the product of the domestic abuse they endured during their childhood (215). They feel that their current behavior towards their loved ones is nothing less than that of their abusive father (240). The protagonist's psyche is filled with the guilt of not being able to improve themselves. They want to own their incompetence. According to the protagonist, the apt punishment is to vanish from the lives of those whom they have pained (245).

Kane's world is an abyss because her characters are stuck using a language which is paradoxical in nature. A paradoxical language is one which "opens up and sustains the abyss" of the imponderable Other/neighbor (Žižek, *Violence* 62). That is, it keeps them in the proximity to an intruding Other (57), the proximity is not just physical but also conceptual (38). The language they use to communicate with others also serves as a source of escalation and violence. For instance, the use of derogatory stereotypes in the conversation can make the situation volatile and prone to violence. For Žižek, "the inherent logic of symbolic communication" (52) is "reconciliation and mediation" (51). In other words, communication leads to "the renunciation of violence," but "under the influence of contingent "pathological" circumstances," the inherent logic of communication can get distorted (52), and language becomes a source of violence. That is, although language is designed to renounce violent confrontation, the potentiality of violence remains alive because of disruptive contingencies.

In *Blasted*, the language Soldier employs serves both purposes. Soldier communicates with Ian to show him a clean picture of himself before the war. Before enrolling into the army, he was a clean person, who "went to school... [and] made love to Col," his girlfriend (48). Soldier wants to be perceived as a human, who was struck by a tragedy, and not as the monster he now is. But at the same time, he also narrates the atrocities he has perpetuated on innocent civilians (43). Moreover, Soldier threatens Ian with the threats of death to subdue him. He avoids violent confrontation by using violent language. And when he has control over Ian's actions, he employs the same violent language, such as the threats of rape, to keep Ian subdued, before he perpetuates sexual and physical violence on Ian. Soldier rapes Ian at gunpoint (49) and bites off and eats his eyes by sucking them out of his skull (50).

Furthermore, Soldier has committed numerous crimes, including rapes and brutal murders of innocent children, women and men. The language he employs indicates his separation from his victims. When he perpetuates violence, he does not feel sympathy for his victims. He sees himself as a separate individual from other people. He

indifferently narrates to Ian the atrocities he has committed. Even though his victims are nowhere near him, the language he employs hints at their proximity to him. They are always close to him, they are always in his mind, no matter where he goes. He appears to be haunted by his victims. In the end, he could carry on with his life and he shoots himself in the head (Kane 50). For Žižek, this is a paradoxical language, which separates the subject from the Other but at the same time keeps the subject with the Other. Violence results when a distortion in communication occurs. This distortion results from the condensation of “humiliations and frustrations” (Žižek, *Violence* 51), as was the case with Solder in *Blasted*. Soldier felt humiliated for what was done to his girlfriend Col. She was brutally raped and murdered. It also frustrated him for not saving her. He is as angry at himself as he is at other people, his enemies. He blames them for his girlfriend’s death. So, he decides to punish them. He also punished himself for his incompetence. Soldier admits that he has come to avenge his dead girlfriend (Kane 49). He perpetuates violence until he cannot and ends his own life in the end.

Similarly, in *Phaedra’s Love*, Phaedra is stuck in the abyss of the paradoxical language. On the one hand, she wants Hippolytus to accept her, and on the other, the words she chooses to make him angry with her and drive him further away. Phaedra is in love with Hippolytus and wants him to reciprocate her feelings. Hippolytus is a spoilt prince who is not interested in her. She professes her love for him because he thrills her (80). Despite her many attempts, she fails to make him realize that her intentions towards him are true. During her attempts to indulge him emotionally, she mentions the name of the girl Lena who has broken Hippolytus’s heart. This makes Hippolytus furious at her. Things fall apart between them from that point onwards. Hippolytus insults her and discloses the illicit relationship between her husband and daughter (83). Phaedra could not stomach this betrayal and commits suicide. Her language, which is supposed to improve her relationship with Hippolytus, fails her and she ends up dead. It is interesting to note that while her words fail to convince Hippolytus of her true love, her action, her suicide to be precise, makes Hippolytus realize that she indeed loved him (91). The language, Phaedra and Hippolytus employ to express their emotions and feelings, ends up damaging them in the cruelest way possible.

Kane’s world is a world of violence because it is sustained by obscene fantasies. That is, the discourse of her world “is accompanied and sustained by a whole nest of obscene, brutal, racist, sexist fantasies” (Žižek, *Violence* 86). These obscene fantasies, or the implicit innuendos and practices, inform the explicit actions of her characters. These

fantasies remain hidden from the public eye and are not openly admitted but are essential for the existence of the discourse of the space. In *Blasted*, Ian brings Cate to the hotel room with the intention to spend the night with her. Ian's actions are informed by his secret desire to seek sexual intimacy with Cate. He is aware that she has no interest in it. Cate has come to see Ian to comfort him in his difficult time because he is suffering from deadly diseases (Kane 23). Ian interprets it as a green signal for sexual intercourse. This self-assurance informs his actions. Ian's explicit practices throughout the day consist of his quest to sexually subdue Cate. Ian's obscene fantasies, which sustain his explicit actions, are visible in his treatment of Cate, such as his belittling of Cate's actions and beliefs (Kane 8) and his unwanted sexual advances towards Cate (9) and her subsequent rape (31).

In *Cleansed*, we observe Tinker's strange fascination with homosexuality. On the surface, he does not mention if he hates homosexual and homosexuality but through his actions, we become aware of his strange fascination. He has captivated a homosexual couple and his behavior is different from that of his other patients. The violence he perpetrates on homosexuals differs in its intensity and cruelty. This is visible in his treatment of Carl and Rod on the one hand and Grace and Robin on the other. In the former case, he thrashes them physically and dismembers their limbs and genitals. Furthermore, he kills Rod for not giving up on Carl and to deprive Carl of expressing his love for Rod (142). In the latter case, he uses relatively less lethal violence. He orders to thrash Grace (130) and humiliates and threatens Robin for showing romantic interest in Grace (138-39). This difference in Tinker's actions is informed by his obscene homophobic fantasies. Furthermore, Tinker's homophobia can also be observed in his innuendos about Carl's homosexuality during his torture.

Carl's trousers are pulled down and a pole is pushed a few inches up his anus.

Carl Christ no

Tinker What's your boyfriend's name?

Carl Jesus

Tinker Can you describe his genitals?

Carl No

Tinker When was the last time you sucked his cock?

Carl I

Tinker Do you take it up the arse?
Carl Please
Tinker Don't give it, I can see that.
Carl No
Tinker Close your eyes imagine its him.
Carl Please God no I
Tinker Rodney Rodney split me in half.
Carl Please don't fucking kill me God
Tinker I love you Rod I'd die for you. (117)

Tinker mocks the sexual intercourse between the homosexual couple. His language connotes it negatively. His actions against them are motivated by his implicit practice, such as his innuendoes about the act of homosexuality. And it is precisely this implicit practice which sustains his explicit homophobic behavior.

The same is observed in *Phaedra's Love* as well. During Hippolytus's trial, Strophe arrives in disguise. When the public calls for his death, Strophe comes in defense of Hippolytus. King Theseus, Hippolytus's father and Strophe's stepfather is also present there in disguise. He does not recognize Strophe and takes her as a common peasant. He could not stand the fact that an ordinary woman could defy the common consensus and stand in support of an alleged criminal. He gets furious and, in a frenzy, he rapes and slits her throat. Strophe's rape and the subsequent murder are celebrated by the witnessing crowd (101). Theseus finds it easy to set an example out of Strophe precisely because she is a defiant woman of low status. His actions inform us about his obscene misogynistic and sexist fantasies.

Kane's world is a world of violence because the obscene fantasies, which motivate the circulation of false-images and overwhelm her characters. A false-image is partially based on factual truth, but the prejudicial or biased motive behind its circulation is what makes it false (Žižek, *Violence* 85). The circulation of false-images makes the space volatile or prone to violence, which Žižek calls the "fantasmatic dimension" (57). The images are essentially false because of the "pathological ideological condition," that is, whatever is commonly perceived as wrong or sinful, is projected into these images (85). The circulation of these images affects the psyche of her characters and makes them violent individuals.

In *Blasted*, we observe a war going on in the background of the play. For Ian, a

certain section of people in his country, including himself, are upright citizens because they pay their dues to the well-being of the country. But some are a liability to the country and are responsible for its eroding condition. It includes the underprivileged section of the population, like Cate and her brother, who depend on welfare money to survive and the people from minority communities, like the immigrants and the LGBT+ community, who have crumbled the social fabric of the society. He is angry about the country's condition. His fears are partially true, especially if his country is on the verge of a war or is already in a war. However, his fears about the cause of his country's situation are wrongly projected into the images of the underprivileged and the minorities. There is a certain amount of bias in his understanding. For instance, the thinking that the source of Cate's income is social security and it is making his country poor. (Kane 8); or the LGBT+ community is degrading the family system because Ian's wife has left him for a woman (18); or the immigrants are taking over the jobs that are meant for the natives (6,8); or the non-whites are weakening the fabric of the society by getting involved with his white women, including Cate (16). So, Ian becomes abusive towards the underprivileged and minorities because of the over-circulation of these false-images, which are motivated by his obscene fantasies, such as his misogyny, Xenophobia, racism and white nationalism. He is overdetermined by them and becomes an enraged agent of violence. He uses discriminatory slurs to address the people he hates/dislikes. Cate, as a spectral figure, acts as the screen on which Ian projects his fears, anxieties and secret desires. He brings Cate to the hotel room to fulfill his secret sexual desire and he is fully committed to it. He is stuck in a dimension in which if the obscene fantasy remains unfulfilled, subjective violence erupts. This is what exactly happens with Ian. He tries to coerce and manipulate Cate into sexual intercourse, but when he fails to achieve his goal, he resorts to subjective violence and rapes Cate in the middle of the night (31).

The dimension of Kane's world, in which false-images circulate in abundance, marks the transition between objective violence and subjective violence. For Ian, it starts with his broken home, indulgence with secret services, diagnosis of lung cancer and cirrhosis, and Cate's relationship with other non-white men. He retains the guise of a home journalist and nationalist who is serving his country. But at this level, he is overdetermined by the circulation of anti-underprivileged and anti-minority images. It substitutes the cause of all social disintegration and chaos with a figure who resembles the underprivileged and the minority. Ian reacts to these over-circulated images because he is also unable to distinguish between what is real and what is constructed. That is, he

cannot distinguish between the real underprivileged and minorities, and their constructed false-images. The circulation of these images is politically motivated and results from the accumulation of individual miseries and wrongdoings. We have already seen How Ian's personal failures manifest as hate against others. He blames others for his broken marriage and the state of his country and society.

Such is the case with Soldier. Just like Ian, Soldier also reacts to the anti-enemy images, which has been over-circulated in his ideological space and has overdetermined him into the perpetrator of violence. Like Ian, Soldier also fails to distinguish between his real enemy and the constructed anti-enemy image. The over-circulation of anti-enemy image results from the accumulation of individual miseries and wrongdoings. For Soldier, it starts in the aftermath of the death of his girlfriend Col. Earlier, Soldier lived a relatively peaceful life as an honest person (48). After the brutal murder of Col, Soldier enrolls into the army to fight the enemy. On the surface, he is in the guise of a soldier fighting for this country. Afterwards, he is transformed by the circulation of false-images, which has substituted the cause of all social chaos into the figure of his enemy. Soldier's enemy has deprived him of love and physical intimacy, and at the same time, his enemy is enjoying the same. Not only has his enemy given him the wound but is also rubbing salt in it. Thus, it keeps his wound bleeding, prolongs his pain and turns him into a perpetrator of violence.

In *Skin*, we observe false-images being circulated in Billy's ideological space. Billy is a skinhead and a proponent of white-supremacy. In this ideological space, white people are considered as a superior race and the non-whites are given a lower status. Furthermore, the non-whites become the reason for social antagonism. The false-images, which consist of non-whites being the cause of social antagonism, circulate in the ideological space and overwhelm the people who reside in it. Billy and his gang of skinheads are those people who are heavily influenced by these false-images. These images are motivated by obscene fantasies. That is, the discourse of Billy's ideological space is accompanied and sustained by obscene racist fantasies. This is visible in the behavior of the skinheads towards the black people, especially the mixing of the races. The skinheads often crash mixed-race weddings and beat up black people attending the weddings (255). This is the discourse of their ideological space, which is motivated by their obscene racist fantasies, including maintaining their race purity.

There is another aspect of obscene fantasies. They operate within the boundaries of an ideological space and also expose its limits. For instance, blasphemy "only works

within the contours of a religious space” (Žižek *Violence*, 110). The obscene fantasies can engulf anyone who resides within the very ideological space in which they exist. In *Blasted*, we observe that in Soldier’s obscene fantasies – his fears, anxieties and secret desires – exist in his ideological space. In this space, there is an Other in the guise of Ian, with whom Soldier is obsessed with and who possesses Soldier’s prized object of enjoyment. It is love and physical intimacy, which Soldier has lost ever since the death of his girlfriend Col. Soldier’s actions are derived from his ideological space. He confesses to Ian that he is out for revenge against his enemies, whom he has deemed responsible for Col’s death (Kane 47). This statement is not entirely true because if it was then why does he kill innocent children and women who have nothing to do with Col’s death? However, indeed, he is out for revenge against his enemies, but these enemies are not those who have killed Col but rather possess the prized object which he has lost. This is why killing his enemies is not good enough for Soldier. He wants to deprive them of enjoying the very prized object, which he has lost. That is love and physical intimacy. He wants to destroy their ability to enjoy this prized object. This is the reason why he rapes and kills innocent people, including women and children, who has nothing to do with his girlfriend’s brutal murder. He perpetuates horrible acts of violence on them because they seemingly possess love and physical intimacy. He also admits that he is doing the same thing that was done to him (48). That is, he was deprived of his treasured object and since he cannot have it anymore, he is returning the favor – not only depriving his enemies of the prized object but also destroying their ability to enjoy love and physical intimacy. That is why, he rapes (49) and blinds Ian (50), to render him unable to enjoy sex. Soldier’s actions, thus, work and make sense only within the contours of an ideological space.

Soldier is also an overdetermined character who perpetrates violence because he is stuck in the Fantasmatic dimension in which his loss has become a way to satisfy his obscene desires through violence. Soldier gets satisfaction as long as he is operating within the contours of the ideological space. That is, as long as he remains emotionally unattached to his enemies, he can successfully perpetrate violence without getting affected by it. But as soon as he gets emotionally attached to one of his victims, he exits the ideological space and gets overwhelmed by the affecting emotions. In the end, he cannot carry on and ends his own life. This shows the limits of the ideological space. That is, Soldier satisfies his obscene fantasies as long as he operates within the boundaries of the ideological space. It ends badly for him when he tries to do the same

once after he breaches the boundaries of the ideological space.

In *Skin*, we observe the obscene racist fantasies of Billy and his gang of skinheads operating within the contours of their ideological space of white-supremacy. Their explicit behavior, which is motivated by their obscene fantasies and implicit practices, also exposes the limits of their ideological space. That is, their obscene racist fantasies can only be pursued and satisfied within the boundaries of their ideological space. Within the contours of ideological space, Billy is a racist individual and a member of a gang of skinheads. As a skinhead, he hates black people and the mixing of races. He makes offensive gestures at his black neighbor Neville and lewd gestures at another black neighbor Marcia (250). He even shouts vulgar slang at “an eight-year-old mixed-race BOY” (252). Later that day, along with his gang, Billy crashes the wedding between a black woman and a white man at a church and beats up black wedding guests (255). Billy also has another side where he exits his racist ideological space and enters the private space of his black neighbor Marcia. Here, Billy is a needy and lonely person, who requires of love and affection, and race does not matter to him. When he arrives at Marcia’s place, he hesitates a little at first but soon becomes so comfortable that he does not want to leave. He wants to be accepted by Marcia and wants to remain with her. Marcia sees tattoos on his body signifying white nationalism. She scrubs them off harshly and peels off his skin. She also feeds him dog food and humiliates him. She shows him what it is like to be an inferior race. Billy endures the mental and physical torture and still wants to be with her (264). But she rejects him nonetheless. Disheartened Billy goes home and attempts suicide but his black neighbor Neville saves him (268). This contrast in Billy exposes the limits of an ideological space. He is only strong and abusive in the ideological space of white supremacy. Outside, he is a weak and vulnerable character.

Likewise, the character named A in *Crave* is a rich and successful man who enjoys his life because he has everything he needs. What else he wants, he buys it. To the world, he is a successful man who is also attentive towards his family. Nothing appears to be wrong with him. It is only when we enter his mind, his dark fantasies and his perverted endeavors, we become aware of his kinks and misadventures. When he is not with his family, he lurks around the underprivileged area, where the children are prostituted. A is a pedophile who also suffers from loneliness. To get rid of his loneliness, he spends his time in the company of children (174-77). There is a clear distinction between him as the world sees him and him as he sees himself. It has clear boundaries, whereby he acts upon his desires only at a certain time and place.

The same is true for the doctor of the protagonist in *4.48 Psychosis*. The doctor works in the mental health institution, where the protagonist is admitted. To his patients, the doctor appears intrusive, judging and cold (209). His patients want him to be more attentive and sensitive towards them. For them, he is the agent of institutional violence. But the doctor is not just a cruel character. Through his conversation with the protagonist, we become aware that the doctor is also suffering from the same violence his patients are. The doctor works in a hospital which is ill-equipped and understaffed. He has many patients on his watch. He is overworked and burnt out. He does not have time for his family and friends. They are fed up with him and so are his patients. The doctor dislikes his job because it has made his life miserable. There is a clear distinction between the patient's perception of the doctor and the doctor's own. We become aware of this only when we enter the boundaries of the doctor's psyche.

To conclude, Kane's world is a world of violence not just because of the existence of subjective and objective violence, but also because her characters are born into violence and live with it. Kane's world is violent because it is ideological. Her characters are plagued with fear and envy of an imponderable Other, who keeps them in a never-ending abyss. Kane's world is a world of violence because it is a nest of obscene fantasies which exist in a censored form but are essential to sustain the space of violence. And finally, violence erupts in Kane's world because of the fantasmatic dimension, in which false images circulate and transforms her characters into perpetrators and victims of violence. We have seen, thus far, how Kane's world facilitates violence. In the next chapter, reflecting on the affectivity of violence, the examination of how violence affects and transforms Kane's world will take place.

Chapter IV – Affectivity of Violence in Sarah Kane's Plays

Violence is a major theme in the plays of Sarah Kane. Her characters are directly or indirectly affected by violence. In Slavoj Žižek's theory of violence, several ways have been identified in which violence affects Kane's characters. One of which is through emotional responses, such as fear, envy, terror and trauma. Either directly in its physical manifestation or indirectly in its abstract form, like the threat of violence, violence generates certain emotions which, in turn, affect the subjectivity of the individuals. Žižek, in his monograph *Violence*, demonstrates the link between violence and emotions.

According to Žižek, one constituent of human subjectivity is fear (*Violence* 34). Fear of an intrusive and threatening Other affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters and makes them react in certain ways. For instance, it is seen that populist movements often portray immigrants and refugees as a threat to the nation's identity and equilibrium, resulting in people becoming fearful of them. Kane's characters undergo an emotional inflammation and their emotional state constantly deteriorates. In *Blasted*, Ian is already discontent with the way his life is going. He fears his upcoming death. He is suffering from lung cancer and cirrhosis (Kane 11). Additionally, he is being hunted by the secret agency. He recognizes the fact that one way or the other, he does not have long to live. Ian decides to make the most of the time he is left with and persuades Cate to accompany him into the hotel room. His irritation grows when, despite multiple attempts to persuade Cate to have sexual intercourse with him, Cate turns him down. At one point, he seems annoyed and at others, he is angry at Cate. His patience and restraint finally break and he rapes Cate during the night. What underlies Ian's state of mind is an emotional crescendo, in addition to her passivity, is Cate's constant resistance. Ian never achieves satisfaction and always falls short of it. It is like adding fuel to the fire of Ian's emotional dissatisfaction up to the point of its explosion unleashing his wrath on Cate, his victim.

In the case of Soldier, we observe a similar emotional inflammation, which transforms him into the figure of an agent of violence. However, the motivation behind taking advantage of the presented opportunity is not the same. For Ian, it was the fear of dying; and for the Soldier, it is revenge. Soldier is motivated by the cruel death of his girlfriend Col. He is already in an agitated state of mind when he enters the hotel room. All it takes is a nudge to turn his anger into rage.

Soldier You never fucked a man before you killed him?

Ian No.

Soldier Or after?

Ian Course not.

Soldier Why not?

Ian What for, I'm not queer.

...

Soldier Proving it happened. I'm here, got no choice. But you. You should be telling people.

Ian No one's interested.

Soldier You can do something, for me –

Ian No. (47)

Ian displays his disdain for homosexuality and refuses to publish Soldier's story. It triggers Soldier's emotional crescendo. He dislikes the picture Ian paints of him. Ian calls him filthy and asserts that there is "[n]o joy in a story about blacks who gives a shit? Why bring you [Soldier] to light?" (48). Soldier becomes enraged and he rapes Ian (49). When Ian inquires if Soldier is going to kill him, Soldier gets angry and bites and eats his eyes (50).

Similarly, other characters of Kane, as agents of violence, also go through an emotional inflammation. In *Phaedra's Love*, Theseus exerts violence on Strophe. He is angry at Hippolytus for allegedly raping his stepmother Phaedra. In disguise, he joins the crowd in Hippolytus's sentencing and calls for his death (100). When Strophe, also in disguise, steps forward to defend Hippolytus, Theseus becomes furious. He does not recognize Strophe and in rage, he rapes her and slits her throat (101). His anger at Hippolytus is wrongly manifested into violence towards Strophe. Likewise, the mob is also angry at Hippolytus for the incestuous rape and discontent with the royals in general. For them, all royals are corrupt and evil-doers, who live on taxpayers' money and could not tolerate the fact that a commoner like Phaedra could be their queen. Theseus alleges that Hippolytus is a prince and nothing will happen to him. The crowd becomes enraged. Their fury is triggered by Theseus's manipulation of their fear, the fear of injustice. They fear that the prince might get off for the crime he has committed. In response to their fear, they take things in their own hand and mercilessly lynch Hippolytus to death (101).

In *Skin*, Billy is among the skinheads who are instructed to be ready for physical confrontation with non-whites by three in the afternoon by their gang leader Terry. Billy

fears that he might be left out of the group if he fails to perform. His emotional inflammation is triggered when others smile at him. He wants to appear strong and tough, but when people around him smile at him, he feels insulted and instantaneously gets furious. For instance: when having breakfast at a café,

BILLY notices an eight-year-old mixed-race BOY outside the café. He is holding a cuddly polar bear and staring in at the group, his face pressed up against the glass. He is smiling.

...

BILLY
FUCK OFF

The others stop talking and barking down their mobiles, and look at him, then at the BOY. BILLY holds up his fist, showing the BOY his swastika. The BOY bursts out laughing. BILLY gets up, furious. The BOY runs off, laughing. (252-3)

Following this, Billy accompanies the gang to a church where a white man and a black woman have got married. The gang confronts the two families. Billy throws a banana peel “at one of the men, who smiles contemptuously and wipes the mess off his suit” (255). Billy gets triggered and starts to mock them. His gang soon joins in the mockery and the fight breaks between them until police arrive and disperse the fighting crowd. The single most important element in Billy’s emotional dynamics, resulting in the exertion of violence, is the affective inflammation triggered by getting smiled at. In the café, Billy shouts curses at the kid and in the church courtyard, he mocks the black man for smiling at him. He sees it as a sign of disrespect. He wants to be taken seriously. For Billy, one way to be taken seriously is by showing anger but he falls sort of initiating physical violence.

The figures of the father, C’s father in *Crave* and the protagonist’s father in *4.48 psychosis*, perpetrate domestic violence. In the former play, it is not clear what triggers his emotional inflammation but he screams at C for what she has become (181). The father is provoked by something C or her mother does and he resorts to physical and sexual violence. After he exerts violence on C, he covers his tracks by buying her “a make-up kit, blushes and lipstick and eyeshadow” to hide the “bruises and blood and cuts and swelling” (180). In the latter play, the father plays a significant role in shaping the

life of the protagonist. It is also not clear what triggers his emotional crescendo but he is held responsible for messing up the life of the protagonist (215), possibly signaling domestic violence and neglect (239). As a result, the protagonist is suffering from a mental disorder and cannot seem to sustain their relationships. The protagonist feels that they have turned into their father (240) in their inability to sustain a healthy relationship. We can observe the affectivity of violence in so far as the emotional inflammation of the agents of violence is concerned.

Similarly, the envy of Other's possession and enjoyment of a prized object affect the subjectivity of Kane's characters and influence their actions. Envy or resentment is a "constitutive component of human desire," that can make the subject act against their own interests (Žižek, *Violence* 74). For instance, a neighbor, possessing something of importance, like wealth or a car, can make us jealous and influence our actions. In *Cleansed*, Tinker is envious of anyone who shows affection and intimacy. In response, he exerts violence on them. In the first scene, Graham, a junkie, comes to Tinker to buy an opioid drug. Graham tries to be friendly with him but Tinker distances himself from him and upon his request, he overdoses Graham with the drug. Later on, when Carl and Rod, a homosexual couple, get intimate with each other and kiss, Tinker gets affected by their affection and intimacy and punishes them. Carl is severely beaten on Tinker's orders and his tongue is cut off (118), while Rod is thrown "from a great height" (117). Tinker's emotional crescendo is triggered and he exerts violence when he observes homosexual tendencies or the act of homosexuality itself. He gets angry at their display of affection and intimacy but at the same time is somewhat fascinated and obsessed by them. When Carl apologizes to Rod, by writing it on the ground, for diverting some violence onto him. Tinker "takes **Carl** by the arms and cuts off his hands" (129). Violence follows whenever Tinker is confronted with acts of homosexual intimacy. In scene thirteen, Carl and Rod are listening to music,

Carl stands, wobbly.

He begins to dance – a dance of love for **Rod**.

*The dance becomes frenzied, frantic, and **Carl** makes grunting noises, mingling with the child's singing [background music].*

*The dance loses rhythm – **Carl** jerks and lurches out of time, his feet sticking in the mud, a spasmodic dance of desperate regret.*

Tinker is watching.

*He forces **Carl** to the ground and cuts off his feet. (136)*

Tinker attempts to stop Carl's pursuit of Rod, by punishing him, but does not succeed. Even after he cuts off his tongue, hands and feet, Carl still pursues Rod. In scene sixteen, when Carl kisses and has sexual intercourse with Rod, and when Rod professes his love for Carl, Tinker "*pulls **Rod** away from **Carl***" and cuts off his throat (142). Later on, Tinker transplants Rod's genitals onto Grace's body during a sex change operation. We observe Tinker's same behavior towards Robin, an inmate of the facility. Robin is in love with Grace. Tinker treats him roughly. He burns the paper rose Robin has made for Grace (129), pushes him to eat the chocolates Robin has bought for her until he wets himself (138-9) and then rubs "*his face in his own urine*" (141), and when Robin hung himself after getting rejected by Grace, Tinker looks from a distance and does not intervene (144). Tinker is plagued by loneliness and cannot stand others' pursuit and gratification of love and intimacy. It triggers his emotional inflammation and turns him into an agent of subjective violence.

Additionally, being terrified also affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters. It lures their attention from "the contours of the background which generates" the outbursts of violence to the outburst itself (Žižek, *Violence* 1). That is, we become fascinated by the subjective violence and tend to ignore the reasons why it erupts in the first place. Kane's characters who are victimized go through emotional turmoil. In *Blasted*, Cate is sexually victimized by Ian. As a victim, her emotional state is constantly overwhelmed by Ian's coercion and sexual advances. At the onset of the play, Cate enters the hotel room in a jovial state of mind. She does not sense any danger. She is amazed by the luxurious room and is excited to be there (Kane 4). Her excitement fades away when she discovers Ian's real intentions behind his invitation. At first, Ian makes her feel comfortable by ordering expensive food and drinks and giving her some space, but as soon as she feels comfortable, he starts to invade her private space. His first attack is on her mental state. He interrogates her on her financial dependency on her mother and her inability to secure a job due to her lack of skills. She goes through mental turmoil and suffers from a stress-induced seizure (9), also known as psychogenic non-epileptic seizures or PNES (Anzellotti et al. 1).

***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 up 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 by helplessly.*

After a few moments, Cate comes around 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.) (Kane 9)

The psychogenic seizure overwhelms her state of mind, shuts her body down and puts her in an auto-control mode, as a defense mechanism. It protects Cate from Ian's mental torture. Ian cannot comprehend what is going on with Cate. His laughter stops and he backs off. But he soon realizes that Cate appears to be more vulnerable after she undergoes the stress-induced seizure. He plans to exploit her weakness. In his next move, Ian makes a sexual advance towards Cate. Ian evokes self-pity to coerce Cate but when it fails, Cate rejects his advances, he tries to subdue her physically.

Ian *kisses her [Cate].*

She responds.

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

With 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 w- 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- 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. (14)*

Ian's physical advances towards Cate, despite her protest, overwhelm her emotional state of mind and aggravate her fear. Her unconscious defense, once again, comes into play. Cate stutters and starts to tremble. Cate is on the brink of undergoing a second seizure when Ian notices it. Cate's fight back, her fierceness in the face of Ian's violence, which fends off Ian, is not a conscious effort. Ian stops and retreats out of her personal space. But this does not stop Ian from fulfilling her sexual desires. Ian makes several attempts to persuade Cate to have sexual intercourse with him, all of which she averts but one. During their night together, Ian breaches her defense line and rapes her.

Ian, on the other hand, endures as well as exerts violence. As a victim of violence, Ian is victimized by Soldier, who forces himself into the room, overpowers Ian, holds him at gunpoint and rapes him. Soldier uses intimidation and threats to generate fear in Ian. Soldier's actual act of violence, his physical intimidation followed by rape, when he physically holds Ian onto the ground at gunpoint, renders Ian unable to do anything.

*He [Soldier] kisses **Ian** very tenderly on the lips.*

They stare at each other.

...

*The **Soldier** turns **Ian** over with one hand.*

*He holds the revolver to **Ian**'s head with the other.*

*He pulls down **Ian**'s trousers, undoes his own and rapes him – eyes closed and smelling **Ian**'s hair.*

...

Ian's face registers pain but he is silent. (49)

This experience of physical abuse transforms Ian's emotional state of mind, from fear into being terrified. Following the rape, Soldier tries to talk to Ian but he is unable to reply. Ian resorts to silence. Ian does not have a space to recoil. He lies on the floor helplessly and hopelessly. Through the perpetuation of violence, his emotional transformation into the figure of a terrified victim is completed. He is no longer the person he was when he entered the hotel room the previous day.

In *Phaedra's Love*, Strophe becomes the circumstantial victim of Theseus. She is at the wrong place and at the wrong time. She has come to the place where Hippolytus is being sentenced for allegedly raping Phaedra, his stepmother. She knows that Hippolytus is innocent and tries to defend him. Theseus attacks her for "[d]efending a rapist" (101). She tries to fight back but is overpowered by Theseus, who rapes and kills her in anger. Although she dies, she dies fighting. She is aware that it could be a dangerous place, the place of Hippolytus's execution, but she nonetheless goes there. She has a strong sense of seeking justice. Even when she dies, she does not feel pity for herself nor she is afraid/terrified. Her last words seek justice for Hippolytus. Contrarily, the characters of Phaedra, Theseus and Hippolytus, who endure violence, undergo emotional turmoil. Phaedra and Theseus become victims of self-directed violence. For Phaedra, her emotional turmoil is triggered by shame. She could not mentally recover from Hippolytus's rejection of her and commits suicide. For Theseus, it is regret. He unknowingly rapes and murders his stepdaughter Strophe. When he becomes aware of what he has done, he regrets his actions before committing suicide (102). Hippolytus, on the other hand, becomes the victim of mob violence. The emotional turmoil he undergoes is triggered by Phaedra's death. he realizes that she truly loved him (91) and it is his rejection of her proposed love that pushes her to take such a drastic action. He feels guilty and accepts the accusation of rape even though he has not raped Phaedra. While Phaedra and Theseus endure self-directed violence in the heat of the moment, they have no space to recoil, and Hippolytus chooses not to. He does not retract his decision even after days of persuasion by Strophe and the priest and is later lynched by the angry mob.

In *Skin*, the black men, attending a mixed-race wedding at a church in Brixton, endure racial violence perpetrated by the skinhead, including the protagonist, Billy. The black men are confronted and mocked for their skin color by the skinhead gang. When Terry, the gang leader of the skinheads, smashes a ketchup bottle into the head of a black

man, others, emotionally enraged, decide to fight back (255). The first act of physical violence, the smashing of the bottle, transforms their fear of violence into fierceness instead of terror and helplessness. The black men are faced with a situation in which they can either flee or fight. Their instinctive decision to fight back results not from their own safety but rather from the safety of the women and children present at the wedding. They cannot take chances in fleeing and risk exposing the vulnerable section of their group, the women and children, to violence.

In *Crave*, Carl and Rod are captives of Tinker and endure multiple cycles of violence. Tinker is a watcher, who observes others and acts accordingly. He tests the love between Carl and Rod by punishing them for it. Both are tortured and are allowed to divert the violence; they are facing onto their loved ones. After a few cycles of physical violence, Carl's emotional state is transformed from fear to being terrified. When the opportunity is presented, when he is provided the space to recoil, he chooses to give in and diverts the violence onto Rod and breaks off his promise.

Carl (*Closes his eye and puts the ring on Rod's finger.*)

Rod What are you thinking?

Carl That I'll always love you.

Rod (*Laughs.*)

Carl That I'll never betray you.

Rod (*Laughs more.*)

Carl That I'll never lie to you. (110)

Tinker sees their every move from hiding. In the next scene, he tests Carl's promises and thus, his love for Rod. Carl is beaten several times on Tinker's orders (116). Furthermore, Carl is threatened with more extreme forms of torture when Tinker tells him what he plans to do with him.

Tinker There's a vertical passage through your body, a straight line through which an object can pass without immediately killing you. Starts here.

(*He touches Carl's anus.*)

Carl (*Stiffens with fear.*)

Tinker Can take a pole, push it up here, avoiding all major organs, until

it emerges here.

(He touches Carl's right shoulder.)

Die eventually of course. From starvation if nothing else gets you first.

Carl's trousers are pulled down and a pole is pushed a few inches up his anus.

Carl Christ no.

...

Carl Not me please not me don't kill me. Rod not me don't kill me ROD NOT ME. ROD NOT ME.

The pole is removed.

Rod falls from a great height and lands next to **Carl**.

Silence. (116-7)

In the face of escalated violence, Rod gives in. Tinker succeeds in breaking his will and promises. Carl apologizes to Rod repeatedly for diverting punishment onto him. In the end, Rod accepts it and professes his love for Carl, who hugs, kisses and has sexual intercourse with him.

Rod I will always love you.

I will never lie to you.

I will never betray you.

On my life.

...

Tinker *is watching.*

He pulls Rod away from Carl.

Tinker You or him, Rod, what's it to be?

Rod Me. Not Carl. Me.

Tinker *(Cuts Rod's throat.) (142)*

Contrary to Carl, who is terrified of the violence exerted on him by Tinker, Rod shows fierceness while facing violence and the threat of it. He chooses himself over Carl and is killed by Tinker.

Likewise, being traumatized also affects the functioning of Kane's characters. It

makes them factually unreliable, confused and inconsistent (Žižek, *Violence* 3). Their narrative appears truthful to them but to others, it “signal[s] that the reported content [is] ‘contaminated’ (4). C in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* are unreliable characters. They have endured domestic violence and are affected by it throughout their lives. Their speech is factually unreliable, confusing and inconsistent. It is underlined by an abusive and traumatic childhood. Both C, in *Crave*, and the unnamed and ungendered protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* are victims of domestic violence. While the former was sexually and physically abused (180) and the latter was neglected throughout their childhood (239). The abuse over time has affected them psychologically. As a child, C wetted her bed (167) and now, she is suffering from Anorexia and Bulimia (173) as well as nervous breakdown (182). She was prostituted as well as sexually abused by her father (158). On the other hand, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* was a child of neglect and physical abuse (239). Similarly, the protagonist’s life in *4.48 Psychosis* is ruined by their father’s actions (215). As an adult, they are having a hard time sustaining relationships and feel empty inside (207). They are suffering from depression (212) and are suicidal (210). It has been observed that while “childhood abuse is positively related to adult” mental disorders, including “depression, aggression, hostility, anger, fear, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders” (Springer et al. 866), neglect, on the other hand, is “a stronger predictor of adult depression compared to both physical and sexual abuse during childhood” (Radell et al. 2).

Both of their fathers were the abusers and both of their mothers were the victims of IPV (179, 215). The trauma of facing cyclic domestic violence was manifested in them getting physical and mental illnesses (183, 223). Their unstable mental health adds to their unreliability. Furthermore, their unreliability could be seen in their speech. It is fragmented with no sign of time and space. They appear contradictory (165, 240). For instance, they hate their family but also want to be loved by them (160, 207). They found their mothers to be complicit in the abuse but also see them as victims (157, 243). At times, they want to get better but at others, they just want to die (165, 244). Their traumatic childhood underlines all their present-day problems.

There are also characters in Kane’s plays who witness or observe the violence. Depending on their emotional affectivity, they could choose to intervene in the violence they observe. That is, if they are horrified by the violence they are witnessing, they are unlikely to intervene because they are no longer the third pole, observing violence from the outside, rather are transformed into virtual victims, perceiving themselves as being

targeted by the violence (Ciocan 216). Contrarily, if they are not emotionally shaken and are not displaced from the position of the third pole by the violence they perceive, they could intervene in the violence if they choose to do so.

In *Blasted*, when Cate escapes the hotel through the bathroom window, she witnesses the violence and destruction of the city in the ongoing war. She finds a baby and returns to the hotel room. She displays fierceness but despite her efforts, the baby dies of hunger. We observe a sudden emotional change in Cate. Instead of showing negative emotions, like sadness or remorse, she starts to laugh hysterically (Kane 57). This is because she has been dually affected by the violence, once as a victim of Ian and secondly, as an observer of war. Her emotional state appears to be in a fragile state when the baby dies. Her fierce efforts of intervention in the war and providing a secure shelter to an innocent baby prove to be futile. She sees the comic side of the tragedy and bursts into hysterical laughter.

In *Phaedra's Love*, Strophe arrives to witness the sentencing of Hippolytus. Amidst the calls for Hippolytus's death and the danger of getting hurt, Strophe shows fierceness and intervenes to stop the injustice. She is aware that Hippolytus is not guilty of the crime he is accused of and prosecuted. Her efforts are in vain. Instead, she is accused of defending a criminal and ends up getting raped and killed. Contrarily, the crowd, who witnesses the rape and murder of Strophe, does nothing to prevent the violence instead they "*watch and cheer*" it. The crowd was not affected by fear or horror rather they were disgusted at Strophe, the victim, for trying to save "an in-bred" and "a rapist" (101). They find Strophe at fault for bringing the violence upon herself.

In *Skin*, when the skinheads attack the black folks attending the wedding, the wedding photographer is the only neutral third pole present at the church when violence breaks out. He does not intervene in the violence directly but rather resorts to another option. At first, he hesitates to do anything, afraid that he might get hurt. He soon overcomes his fear and shows fierceness.

The PHOTOGRAPHER hesitates, then turns his camera on the fight and clicks the shutter rapidly. MARTIN [one of the skinheads] notices, snatches the camera and smashes it in the PHOTOGRAPHER's face, breaking his nose. MARTIN takes a picture of him, then drops the camera on his sprawling body. (255)

The photographer has no intention to stop the violence but at the same time, he cannot resist capturing the moment in his camera. Like Strophe, the fierceness he shows in capturing the violence, does not end well for him and he ends up getting hurt.

In *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, it is the children of the households, the character C in *Crave*, and the unnamed protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis*, who witness the intimate partner violence perpetrated by their fathers on their mothers. At times they also become the victims of domestic violence – C is sexually and physically abused and the unnamed protagonist of the last play is neglected. Thus, like Carl and Rod in *Cleansed*, they are also not the neutral third pole, witnessing violence from the outside, but rather acting as potential victims, who could and do become actual victims in no time. As children of abusive households, they are horrified by the violence they observe in what is supposed to be a safe space, their homes. As an adult, at times, C experiences anger at herself for not helping their mothers out (179), and at other times, she is angry at her mother for being victimized (157). The protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* hates her mother for the same reasons. It is important to notice that while hatred towards both parents of the abusive households is observed in these plays, the fathers, who exert violence on their partners, are blamed for messing up the lives of their children, it is the mothers, as per the children, who receive more hatred, as if they are solely, or more so, laden with the responsibility to provide a safe space for their children, a space where they do not have to witness or experience violence. This shows gender disparity in households plagued with violence. The mothers are blamed not only for not leaving the abusive households, which results in their own repeated victimization, thus affecting their children who observe cycles of intimate partner violence but also for creating or extending the scope of violence, spilling onto their children. As far as the affectivity of intimate partner violence or IPV on children is concerned, the mothers, the victims of IPV, are blamed for their role in failing to protect the children from observing, and thus getting affected by the violence.

Additionally, the presence of an observer could also emotionally affect the other two parties or poles, namely the victims and agents of violence. As far as the emotional affectivity of the observer's presence on the agents of violence is concerned, it could either act as a deterrence, halting or stopping the agents from perpetrating violence, or act as a stimulator, supporting or boosting the agent to perpetrate violence. The former provides a break or pause in the emotional crescendo and the agent of violence is pushed out of the emotional inflammation. In *Skin*, the arrival of police acts as deterrence in the ongoing fight between the skinheads and black men on the church premises. Billy, the

protagonist, is emotionally overwhelmed by the violence so much so that he is frantically beating a black man with a brick. He is not aware that the police have arrived. Terry, the gang leader, sees Billy smashing a black man repeatedly. He pulls Billy away. Billy becomes aware of the surroundings and they escape together (Kane 255). The latter maintains the emotional crescendo, the emotional inflammation of the agent is peaked and physical violence erupts. In *Phaedra's Love*, outside the court, Strophe defends Hippolytus during the latter's sentencing. This antagonizes Theseus and he attacks and rapes her. The crowd watches and cheers the violence. This bolsters Theseus's anger into full-blown rage. After he finishes raping her, he gets up and cuts his throat (101). The cheer of the crowd feeds Theseus's emotional inflammation and in a frenzy, he murders Strophe.

In the case of the emotional affectivity of an observer's presence on the victims of violence, it could either encourage or discourage the victim to fight back or evade or endure violence. In Kane's last two plays, the children of the abusive households, C in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* observe IPV between their parents and at times become victims of domestic violence which has profound effects on their lives. It is seen, in general, that children, as observers or potential victims, play an important role in a victim's decision to evade, or do not evade, the IPV (Zink et al. 587). In Kane's last two plays, the mothers, victims of IPV, do not seek help or try to evade IPV. The children blame their mothers for their incompetence to escape their abusive fathers. It is not clear what are the reasons that render the mothers unable to seek outside help, but it is not uncommon among the victims of IPV to continue their violent relationships with their abusers given their children are involved somehow. These reasons may include but are not limited to, a need for the presence of a father figure in their children's lives, children's attachment to their fathers, and the safety fathers provide for mothers and their children, even if it is abusive at times (589). On the other hand, some victims of IPV, who have managed to escape, return to their abusive partners or get involved in similar abusive relationships for the same aforementioned reasons and hence are unable to escape IPV.

Next, violence affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters via their economic situation or "economic status," that is, the materialistic capital they own or the resources they have at their disposal, which could determine their fate (Žižek, *Violence* 11). Kane's world is the world of capitalism, where the capital is unevenly distributed. The more resources people have at their disposal help them in turning the wind in their favor, even if things are against them, while people with less or no resources are always at a

disadvantage. For instance, at the onset of the twentieth century, some of the Russian haute bourgeoisie, the upper-middle-class, including the Lossky family, were essentially living in the bubble, enjoying a comfortable life, amidst the crumbling social fabric (8). They were insensitive towards the prevalent systemic violence and thus, blind to its blowback, in the form of sudden subjective violence. When their bubble burst, when they were stripped of their resources and forcibly expelled, they found themselves to be victims of sudden and irrational violence (9). Contrarily, the liberal communists, the ultra-rich of the twenty-first century, are also living in exclusive communities amidst the disintegrating world with “universal devastation and pollution” (23). They are not insensitive towards the prevalent misery but rather actively participate to postpone its blowback. In this way, they are able to keep their bubble intact. They participate in the act of charity, that is, they disperse a part of their immense stock of resources to the needy. By re-establishing some balance in the unbalanced world, they are able to postpone their bubble from bursting (20). Likewise, the crumbling social fabric of Losskys and the disintegrating world of the liberal communists form the poor and the underprivileged class. They have little or no resources at their disposal. When left on their own, their misery intensifies over time and explodes violently (81). We observe the same in Kane’s plays.

In *Blasted*, Cate belongs to the disadvantaged group of the population. She is jobless and has no financial source of income. He lives with her mother, who provides her with the money she needs (Kane 8). She wants to work but does not possess the skills to acquire the job. In the absence of her abusive father, who has left the home for some time, she has grown to adapt and like the lifestyle of her lower-middle-class household. It changes when her father returns home. Cate faces objective violence on the regular, in the changed dynamics of her house, and starts to have stress-induced seizures. She has no resources at her disposal to escape domestic violence. When the opportunity presents itself, when Ian returns to her life and invites her to the hotel, she jumps to grab it. Even though Ian has treated her badly in the past, when he ended the relationship with her, she still chooses him over her abusive father. Cate’s actions are derived from her economic status and her inability to fix the problem at home or escape it. She accompanies Ian to the hotel only to discover his intentions behind his invitation, to seek sexual gratification from her. It is her socio-economic status which pushes her out of her home and into Ian’s violent world. Ian, on the other hand, has enough resources to make his life relatively safer and more comfortable than that of Cate. He invites Cate to the hotel with the sole

intention of having sexual intercourse with her. He showers her with luxuries which she has never experienced. He brings her to a “*very expensive hotel room in Leeds*” (3) and buys her expensive food and champagne. Cate is mesmerized by the luxuries. Ian utilizes the resources at her disposal to fulfill his desires. He exploits Cate through her lower-middle-class status. At first, he employs manipulation tactics and he fails to seduce her, he resorts to physical violence. Unlike Cate, who always remains on the brink of being victimized due to her socio-economic status, Ian has the safety bubble of capital within which lives a comfortable life amidst the war. But his insensitivity towards the systemic violence becomes the reason for his fall. He is so busy exploiting Cate that he ignores the dangers of subjective violence or war around him. His bubble bursts when an unnamed enemy soldier enters his hotel room. Without the safety, which the resources he has at his disposal provide, he becomes the victim of subjective violence. The soldier physically assaults him, rapes him at gunpoint and eats out his eyes.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, we observe how Theseus is able to secure his safety bubble, provided by his immense capital, by delaying the crisis erupted by his insensitivity towards systemic violence. Theseus is a monarch and the public is discontent with his rule. In the last scene of the play, when Hippolytus is being sentenced, the anger of the public appears to be on the brink of explosion against Hippolytus and the monarchy, but Theseus manages to divert it towards Hippolytus.

Outside the court.

*A crowd of men, women, and children has gathered, including **Theseus** and **Strophe**, both disguised.*

...

Man 1 String him [Hippolytus] up, they should.

Woman 2 The bastard.

Man 1 Whole fucking pack of them.

Woman 1 Set an example.

Man 1 What do they take us for?

Woman 1 Parasites.

Man 2 We pay the rapist bastard.

Man 1 No more.

Man 2 They’re nothing special.

...

Theseus Might go in his favour. Sorry your honour, reading my Bible every day, never do it again, case dismissed. Not going to lock a prince up, are they? Whatever he's done.

Man 2 That's right.

Man 1 No justice.

Theseus Member of the royal family. Crown against the crown? They're not stupid.

Man 1 Pig-shit thick, the lot of them.

Man 2 She [Phaedra] was alright.

Man 1 She's dead.

Theseus You don't hang on to the crown for centuries without something between your ears.

Man 2 That's right.

...

Theseus Say they've rid themselves of the corrupting element. But the monarchy remains intact.

Man 1 What shall we do?

Man 2 Justice for all.

Woman 1 He must die.

Man 2 Has to die. (98-99)

Theseus distracts the public's attention by inciting Hippolytus's lynching (100), the alleged incestuous rapist prince, allowing the purgation of their hatred towards monarchy. He satisfies his anger towards his son and the public's hatred, against the royals for leeching them through tax money, by scapegoating Hippolytus. Theseus rebalances the unevenly distributed power by giving some of it back to the people, who seem content with the justice they have extracted by lynching Hippolytus. Thus, Theseus secures his safety bubble but even then, he does not survive. Theseus's demise does not result from a breach in his safety bubble but rather from his emotional crescendo. After being aware that he has raped and killed his step-daughter Strophe, he becomes emotionally overwhelmed and in the heat of the moment, he commits suicide.

In *Skin*, we observe a young man named Billy who is full of dissatisfaction and belongs to the lower-middle-class section of the population. He is a member of a violent and racist gang of skinheads. These skinheads belong to a subculture who are influenced

by white supremacy and actively take part in racial violence, primarily against blacks. Billy's living conditions are miserable. His room is small, stuffed with junk and messy. And the food, he could afford, he is disgusted at it. At the café, where he hangs out with other skinheads, Billy gets triggered when Terry, the leader of their group, tells him to eat sausages.

BILLY

It's a pig's arse, Tel.

TERRY and BILLY stare at each other. BILLY touches his cigarette end to a sausage skin, burning through it, then squeezes the meat out.

BILLY

Brain and bollock, innard and eyelid, toenail
and teeth, all wrapped into a pig's foreskin.

He drops the empty sausage skin in disgust. MARTIN spits out a mouthful of sausage and looks at it closely. He puts his fork down. Everyone stops eating.

(253-4)

Billy does not eat properly. As a result, Billy "is painfully thin" (249). It is not clear what Billy's occupation is or if he has any. He lives in an underprivileged neighborhood with black people, including Neville, his old neighbor, and Marcia, who lives across from his building. He makes obscene gestures at them when they make eye contact with him. Billy points at Neville with his hand gesturing shooting the gun and at Marcia, he "grabs his penis and makes wanking gestures" (250). His lower socio-economic status keeps him discontent and agitated. His dissatisfaction with life is transformed into violence through anger towards the black people.

In *Cleansed*, Grace visits the sanatorium of an unnamed university, where her addict brother has died of a drug overdose and wants to have a sex change operation. A university hospital is not well equipped with the necessities of a sex change operation and thus, is not the right place for her. Grace seems to be aware of the fact and consents to it, suggesting she might not afford the operation elsewhere. Tinker, who works there, informs her that he is not responsible if things do not go the way she wants (114). Before the operation, she suffers violence from other inmates (133) and undergoes electric shock therapy (135). After the operation, she suffered from an immense amount of pain that rendered her unable to speak properly (145). The lack of resources pushes Grace to seek

cheap treatment. She takes advantage of Tinker knowing her brother and her. She persuades Tinker to help her out with her mental problems and the sex-change surgery. She undergoes cheap treatment and surgery and consequently, suffers physical pain and mental trauma.

In *Crave*, the character named A is a rich old man. He is also a pedophile who employs the resources at his disposal to fulfill his dark perverted desires. He narrates one incident where he used his money as a tool to buy sexual intercourse with children, who were prostituted by their fathers.

A In a lay-by on the motorway going out of the city, or maybe in, depending on which way you look, a small dark girl sits in the passenger seat of a parked car. Her elderly grandfather [A himself] undoes his trousers and it pops out of his pants, big and purple.

...

A And when she cries, her father in the back seat says I'm sorry, she's not normally like this. (157-8)

The character A is aware of the effects his sexual acts have on the children. It pains him, finds it unforgettable and tragic, but he cannot seem to be stopped. According to him, all he is looking for is love and is suffering from loneliness but is also aware of the fact that his "pain is nothing compared to" the ones he engages with sexually (177). He regrets his actions but confesses that he is the way he is (182).

In *4.48 Psychosis*, the unnamed and ungendered protagonist, like Grace in *Crave*, cannot afford good mental health medical care. They are admitted to a mental health institution which is understaffed and underfunded. The doctors and the staff are burdened with extra work. They behave roughly with the patients. As a result, the protagonist does not get better but rather suffers more. They are overprescribed, leading to multiple side effects, and their problems intensify over time, pushing them to suicidal thoughts. They cannot carry on with their constant mental breakdown and want to vanish (244).

Next, violence affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters via "their socio-symbolic identity," an identity based on "performance efficiency" (Žižek, *Violence* 62). Their worth is judged solely on their performance which is measured through a particular metric. Any hindrance, for instance, physical violence or discrimination, which would affect their performance, would definitely affect their identity.

Kane's world is a world where the normative favors heterosexual, nationalist, able-bodied and rich white men. Characters failing to align with these characteristics are unable to perform effectively and are judged as inferior individuals. In *Blasted*, we observe Ian as a middle-aged white nationalist who is also misogynist, racist, xenophobic and homophobic. He is abusive towards Cate when he fails to subdue her. He repeatedly calls her stupid knowing well that it will trigger Cate (Kane 8). And he gets angry at Cate when she mentions the name of Andrew, possibly her black ex-lover.

Ian What do you want to know a conker's name for?

Cate I thought he was nice.

Ian After a bit of black meat, eh? Won't do it with me but you'll go with a whadot.

Cate You're horrible.

Ian Cate, love, I'm trying to look after you. Stop you getting hurt.

Cate You hurt me.

Ian No, I love you. (17)

He sees her as a naïve girl who does not know any better and it is upon him to take care of her. The only reason Ian has invited Cate in the first place is to fulfill his sexual desires. He manipulates, coerces and even uses physical force to subdue her to his will. Ian judges Cate's performance efficiency through the prism of white misogynistic nationalism. Cate fails on many accounts as far as Ian's judging metrics are concerned. She is financially dependent on the state-sponsored scheme. She is jobless and lacks the skills to obtain one. She has had multiple sex partners, including non-whites. She is kind and non-discriminatory towards the people from immigrant or queer communities. And she dares to resist Ian's sexual advances despite being from an economically lower class. All these elements prevent Cate from being a proper white woman in Ian's eyes. He is hell-bent on breaking her spirit so much so that when she refuses his advances, he rapes her and bites her vulva (32). Additionally, Ian is racist towards black people, including Cate's ex-boyfriend and the unnamed soldier who has broken into his room and is holding him at gunpoint. He calls him a wog, a derogatory term used for non-whites and refuses to write about him and his endeavors.

Soldier You can do something, for me –

Ian No.

Soldier Course you can.

Ian I can't do anything.

Soldier Try.

Ian I write... stories. That's all. Stories. This isn't a story anyone wants to hear.

Soldier Why not.

...

Ian I do other stuff. Shootings and rapes and kids getting fiddled by queer priests and schoolteachers. Not soldiers screwing each other for a patch of land. It has to be... personal. Your girlfriend, she's a story. Soft and clean. Not you. Filthy, like the wogs. No joy in a story about blacks who gives a shit? Why bring you to light? (47-8)

Ian tells Soldier that no one in this part of the world, including Ian himself, would care for his side of the story, like, why he is on a rampage, raping and killing many innocents, including women and children. For Ian, non-whites are savages and there is no point in interacting or knowing their lives. Ian is also Xenophobic towards immigrants, thinks that they stink and calls them wogs and Pakis, derogatory terms for non-whites (4). He, also a homophobic, gets triggered when Soldier asks him if he had sex with a man before or when Cate mentions his wife Stella, who comes out as a lesbian and has left him for a woman. He uses terms like lesbos, dyke or sucking gash in a derogatory manner for lesbians and terms like cocksucker and queer for gays. Ian tells Cate that Hitler "should have gone for" homosexuals, non-whites and violent low-class football lovers and not the Jews (19). For Ian, the non-whites and homosexuals are responsible for the condition his country is in because these people have disintegrated the value systems of the country. Furthermore, they are poor and stinky and are getting involved with white women and the homosexuals are ruining the traditional family system. Ian's words and actions align with the socio-symbolic identity of a misogynist, racist, xenophobic and homophobic white nationalist.

In *Phaedra's Love*, we observe Theseus's misogyny when Strophe, in disguise, comes in defense of Hippolytus. For Theseus, it is a strange experience. He does not recognize Strophe and believes her to be a woman of low status. He cannot stand the fact that an ordinary woman could defy the common consensus and stand in support of an

alleged criminal. He gets furious and, in a frenzy, he rapes and slits her throat. Strophe's rape and murder is celebrated by the witnessing crowd (101). They held her responsible for what happens to her because she has defied the role of an ordinary citizen let alone the role of an ordinary woman. As an ordinary citizen, she must have stood with her brothers and sister in the crowd and against the rapist prince, and as a woman, she must not have raised her voice in defiance. On both accounts, Strophe has failed and thus, deserved the punishment that was bestowed upon her by an ordinary male citizen, Theseus in disguise. Theseus takes on the socio-symbolic identity of a man standing against the breach of societal norms when he calls for the death of the incestuous rapist and when he punishes a defiant woman of low status.

In *Skin*, Billy displays racism towards non-white people. He shouts curses at "an eight-year-old mixed-race BOY" (252) and acts violently towards black men at a wedding (255). He is a member of a violent skinhead gang and is influenced by white supremacy, that is, they hold white people, mostly of the Christian faith, superior to other groups and reserve the right to dominate and subdue them. It is visible in Billy's looks and actions. He displays white nationalism, has "a Union Jack" and "a bulldog" tattooed on his arms (249), signaling British pride, as well as neo-Nazism, has drawn "a black swastika on his right fist" (251). By having these symbols on his body, Billy is transformed into a socio-symbolic individual who as a proud nationalist is meant to be taken seriously and be feared by all. His abusive outbursts and violent actions are the manifestation of his socio-symbolic identity as a skinhead.

In *Cleansed*, we observe Tinker's homophobia towards his captives, namely Carl and Rod. Tinker is intolerant of physical intimacy between other people, but homosexual intimacy brings out the worst in him. Although intolerant, he displays a relatively calmer approach towards heterosexual intimacy. For instance, he behaves rudely towards Robin after he professes his love to Grace and does not intervene in Robin's suicide when she is rejected by her. Contrarily, when Carl displays his love for Rod, Tinker takes a more violent approach. He amputates Carl's body parts one by one which he uses to display love and intimacy. He cuts off his tongue (118) after Carl professes his love for Rod. He cuts off his arms (129) after Carl writes an apology to Rod for diverting torture on him. He cuts off his foot (136) after Carl dances a love dance for Rod. And he cut off his genitals (145) after Rod had sexual intercourse with Rod. Hate towards homosexuality develops the socio-symbolic identity of a homophobic person, like Tinker, which manifests in his gruesome behavior towards Carl.

The character named C, in *Crave*, and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* have internalized hatred towards their own gendered body. The character C dislikes the female gender because her first experience with it was the relationship between her mother and her father. C is a product of an abusive household where her father beat her mother. She finds that the female gender is weaker than the male gender. Her mother did not dare to leave her father (157) and she did not have the courage to stand with her mother, she regrets doing nothing to stop her father's abuse (179). As a young woman, C feels like she is stuck in her life because of her gender. She is still angry at her mother (155). She also hates herself and wants to be anyone but herself (183). She wishes to be born in a male body (182).

Similarly, the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis*, whose gender and age are not known, is also a product of an abusive household. They are angry at their father for ruining their life and angry at their mother for not leaving the abusive household (215). Like, C in *Crave*, they also have had a negative experience of female gender. It signifies weakness while the male gender portrays dominance and violence. As a result, *4.48's* protagonist is unable to sustain relationships with the men and women in their lives. Furthermore, they dislike their genitals as well as their body (207). The violence women, as socio-symbolic beings, experience in both of these plays has rendered C and *4.48's* protagonist to internalize the drastic contrast between men and women, where the latter's exposure to violence has affected their performance efficiency in the given space.

Next, violence also affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters via their constant internal struggle. Her characters are in crisis mode because of the tension within their identity, between the particular and universal dimensions of their identity (Žižek, *Violence* 129). The former projects a specific position and is different from other people because of historical roots and origins, while the latter is the common experience of negativity which unites them with others. These conflicting aspects of their identity have a profound impact on their subjectivity. In *Blasted*, we observe this internal conflict within Soldier as well as Cate. Before victimizing Ian, Soldier expresses hate towards Ian and his kind and held them responsible for the death of his girlfriend Col. He confesses to Ian that this is the only reason why he is on the rampage, raping and murdering people (Kane 49). After Soldier rapes Ian and eats his eyes, he shares a common experience of negativity with Ian.

Soldier He ate her eyes.

Poor bastard.

Poor love.

Poor fucking bastard. (50)

Soldier remembers Col and tries to imagine what she went through when the enemy soldiers did the same to her by correlating it with the same experience Ian goes through. He feels sorry for both the victims, Col and Ian. He gets emotionally overwhelmed and unable to carry on his revenge anymore, he shoots himself in the head. Similarly, Cate also shares a common experience of negativity with Ian which affects her actions and thus, her. Cate is angry at Ian the next morning because Ian has raped her during the night. She wants to leave the hotel room but Ian does not let her (27). He tries to talk her out of it. During their conversation, “*a car backfires*” on the street outside with “*an enormous bang*” and fearing it might be a gun, he “*throws himself flat on the floor*” (28). Ian gets emotionally overwhelmed by the sudden blast and regresses into a vulnerable stage which Cate could relate to. Cate comes from a household with an abusive father where she suffers stress-induced seizures. In this moment of Ian’s vulnerability, she shares a common experience of negativity with Ian. Even though he has raped her the previous night, Cate comforts him with seduction and performs oral sex on him.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, Hippolytus rejects Phaedra’s love and insults her character (83) after she performs oral sex on him (81). She feels dejected and commits suicide, leaving behind a letter accusing him of rape (86). When Hippolytus learns about her death, he realizes that she was indeed in love with him (91). In this moment, he shares a common experience of negativity with Phaedra, the rejection of love. Hippolytus also experienced a similar experience when he was rejected by a girl named Lena (83). He feels sorry for Phaedra and relates to her misery, realizing that they both were heartbroken. This realization has a profound impact on him. He accepts the allegations of raping his stepmother Phaedra and is lynched to death by the angry mob.

In *Skin*, Billy is a member of a skinhead group that gets together to perpetrate violence on black people. After they crash the wedding between a white man and a black woman, they beat up the men and leave when the police arrive (255). Billy goes home to tend to his injuries and looks out of his window.

The black woman [Marcia] appears at the window opposite. BILLY smiles tentatively. She looks back, then beckons him. They stare at each other and she

disappears. BILLY looks at himself in the mirror. (257)

Billy suffers from loneliness and longs for company. When his feelings are reciprocated by Marcia, he contemplates for a moment and decides to pursue her. In the exact moment of his contemplation, Billy transcends his roots of hate against black people and is able to unite with Marcia, who also longs for company. Their shared experience of negativity is their loneliness which ultimately unites them. Billy's ability to desire the company of a woman affects his skinhead identity from within and he goes to Marcia's building.

In *Cleansed*, we observe Tinker as a conflicting individual. We see him pursuing intimacy yet he cannot seem to digest when others do the same. Their pursuit and gratification of love and intimacy seem to remind him of his own failures. He detests intimacy and punishes any other who displays it. He overdoses Graham with the opioid drug when he tries to get close to him emotionally (108), brutally dismembers Carl and slits Rod's throat when they profess their love for each other (142) and does not stop in Robin's suicide after Grace does not return his love (144). Although Tinker perpetuates violence on others when they display intimacy, he also appears to be following the very thing that detests him. Tinker occasionally visits a dark room where he watches an unnamed woman dancing. He wants to get close to the woman but she rejects him at first (122), but when she does, Tinker behaves rudely towards (138). And when she mimics Grace, Tinker gets turned on and has sexual intercourse with her (148). The unnamed woman realizes that Tinker is not attracted to her anymore, she shares the same experience of negativity with Tinker, who wants Grace but she is not attracted to him. So, she takes on the role of Grace, reciprocates Tinker's feelings, and gets intimate with him.

In *Crave*, the character named A is an old man and a pedophile (156). He is in search of love and longs to be touched (167). To overcome his loneliness, he buys love in the form of sex from the poorer sections of the population. He pays the economically poor fathers to have sexual intercourse with their children (157-8). He believes that these children, who are prostituted by their fathers, are also devoid of love. For him, these children are alone and no one loves them. This is the common experience of negativity he shares with these children, the absence of love, and it unites him with them. He wants to shower his love on them (169). In his own perverted way, he wants to give them love knowing well that it might damage them in other ways (179).

In 4.48 *Psychosis*, the unnamed and ungendered protagonist is a "child of negation"

(239). They hate their father for ruining their life (215). As an adult, they are suffering from severe depression and are undergoing treatment but to no avail. Their deteriorating mental condition has rendered them unable to sustain healthy relationships with others. They find themselves responsible for neglecting the people in their lives (207). In these moments of withering relationships, the protagonist realizes the common experience of negativity and is able to relate to their father. They believe that, although damaged, they are just like their father (240), hurting the very people who love them.

Next, violence affects the subjectivity of Kane's characters via the perception created by disfigured- or false-images (Žižek, *Violence* 57). These images are based on social antagonism and make a particular section of the population appear as the culprit (85). They are over-circulated to create a "Fantasmatic dimension," in which physical violence erupts and in which the subjects are overdetermined or transformed into agents of violence (57). We observe the circulation of disfigured-images in Kane's plays. In *Blasted*, Ian, as an agent of violence, is a product of a constructed perception created through disfigured-images. Ian is homophobic, xenophobic, racist and misogynist, which results from the contemporary public antagonism against them. For instance, his homophobia results from the contemporary perception of the eroding traditional family system. Ian's own family was broken when his wife Stella came out as a lesbian and left him for a woman.

Cate Are you upset?

Ian Yes. His [son's] mother's a lesbos. Am I not preferable to that?

Cate Perhaps she's a nice person.

Ian She doesn't carry a gun.

Cate I expect that's it.

Ian I loved Stella till she become a witch and fucked off with a dyke, and I love you, though you've got the potential.

Cate For what?

Ian Sucking gash.

Cate (*Utters an inarticulate sound.*)

Ian You ever had a fuck with a woman?

Cate No.

Ian You want to?

Cate Don't think so. Have you? With a man.

- Ian** You think I'm a cocksucker? You've seen me. (*He vaguely indicates his groin.*) How can you think that?
- Cate** I don't. I asked. You asked me.
- Ian** You dress like a lesbos. I don't dress like a cocksucker.
- Cate** What do they dress like?
- Ian** Hitler was wrong about the Jews who have they hurt the queers he should have gone for scum them... (Kane 18-9)

Ian is emotionally hurt by the experience of his wife leaving him and expresses anger against his wife and hate against all homosexuals. His own experience has affected him to generalize the whole homosexual community as homewreckers. Similarly, Ian's racism and xenophobia against the black people and the immigrants arise from the fear that they are taking over his country and the women. Ian is also misogynistic, believing that women are incapable of taking care of themselves and thinking for themselves. He also blames the women for their compliance in destroying his white nation by getting involved with the non-whites. Ian is a white nationalist and is influenced by the ideology of white supremacy. In this space, he gets emotionally disturbed by the circulation of disfigured-images of homosexuals destroying the traditional family system, of black people corrupting and seducing white women, of immigrants taking over the country and of women who are unable to provide for themselves and depend on the government money. He gets overwhelmed by these images and transforms into an agent of violence against a selective section of the population.

In *Phaedra's Love*, we observe a similar pattern as far as the circulation of disfigured-images is concerned. The public of Theseus's kingdom is discontent with the monarchy. During Hippolytus's sentencing, a crowd is gathered outside the court. They are angry at Hippolytus for his alleged crimes as well as at all the royal members and call them parasites, immoral, extremely stupid, abusive, in-bred and criminals with no accountability. They want to seek some accountability for their ill behavior. When Theseus, in disguise, to avenge Phaedra's death, tells the crowd that the prince might get off with a minute punishment. The tensions run high outside the court with disfigured-images circulating in abundance, creating what Žižek calls a "Fantasmatic dimension" (*Violence* 57), in which violence erupts. The crowd is transformed into a mob who lynch Hippolytus to death (Kane 100-1).

In *Skin*, like Ian in *Blasted*, Billy is also influenced by white supremacy but being

a skinhead, he is more aggressive and violent than Ian. In his small circle, where he hangs around with other skinheads, there is a growing hate and call for violence against black people. The skinheads see black people as a threat to their white culture and nation. They are against the mixing of the races. Their antagonism against black people, a product of the circulation of disfigured-images in which black people are projected as enemies, is intensified when they are confronted with real-life experiences. For instance, on one occasion, Billy gets angry and shouts at a mixed-race small boy when he smiles at him, he finds it repulsive (252-3). And on the other, Billy, together with other skinheads, crashes a mixed-race wedding and beats up black people (255).

In *Cleansed*, we observe Tinker's homophobia against a homosexual couple, namely Carl and Rod. Tinker is a single heterosexual man looking for intimacy and gets jealous whenever he sees others engaging in affection or romance. But he gets extremely violent against the only gay couple in the play. He mutilates Carl without killing him, cuts off his tongue (118), hands (129), feet (136) and genitals (145), and kills Rod by slitting his throat (142). Tinker perpetuates violence on Carl and Rod to prevent them from denouncing their love for each other. In a way, Tinker tests if the love between the gay couple is real or if it is merely sexual and thus, not real. Homosexual people have been constantly ridiculed socially and religiously. For centuries, misconceptions have been constructed that they are nothing but sexual freaks. Tinker appears to be sure that homosexuals are incapable of real love, maybe because of the constructed perception about them being sexual freaks, but he fails to achieve the result he desires despite perpetrating extreme violence.

In *Crave*, we observe the normalcy of domestic violence, where the male heads of the households abuse their partners and children. The financial and emotional dependency of the female partners and their children have rendered them unable to leave the abusive space. They live in a space in which a perception has been created that the house is the domain of the male heads of the family who are the only ones who can provide economic and physical safety. The abusive fathers see their houses as their fiefdom where they have total control over the family members with no accountability whatsoever. Their role as a ruler and dominator is set and so do the roles of the other members of the family, as their subjects and property. This reality is tolerable only if the roles ascribed to the subjects are followed. Any changes in the ascribed roles constitute a disfigured-image of the subjects and make the reality appear intolerable. The over-circulation of these images results in the explosion of domestic violence, which we see

in the play.

In *4.48 Psychosis*, we observe the discrimination against mentally ill people. The unnamed and ungendered protagonist is mentally disturbed and undergoing medical treatment. They experience discrimination on a regular basis by their doctors (209), their loved ones (243) and the people in general (210, 215). There is a constructed perception about mentally ill people that they are “strange and uncomfortable while their behaviour is seen as unpredictable, dangerous and violent” (Lauber 11). As a result, most people are prejudiced against people with mental illness, see them as a threat, and engage in a more subtle form of violence, through discrimination.

Lastly, violence affects the subjectivity of Kane’s characters via false narrative. The narrative, her characters are engaged in, creates a deadlock, which provides them with a “pathological libidinal profit” so that they do not stop the violence (Žižek 104). In Kane’s plays, we observe a similar deadlock within the households with intimate partner violence, within female victims and male agents of violence. The female victims of intimate partner violence undergo cycles of abuse. It is observed that victims of domestic abuse are often revictimized primarily because they are likely to either stay with their abusers or return to their abusers again even after they leave them (Griffing et al. 306). The same is true for Kane’s characters who are stuck in repeated domestic abuse.

In *Blasted*, Cate is mentally upset and emotionally vulnerable because of the stress-induced seizures caused by the return of her father (Kane 9-10). This is the underlying reason why she leaves her house to accompany Ian to the hotel but she has no desire to stay with Ian. She wants to go back to her house even though it has caused her immense mental stress. She wants to go back because of her mother and brother. This is often the case with domestic abusers. They return to the space of abuse because they are emotionally attached to the family members and cannot leave them behind because of the fear of their safety (Griffing et al. 309). For Cate, it is her attachment to her mother and brother that she cannot see them getting sad (Kane 18), which compels her to return to her house (26). Her attachment to her family and hope for a better future act as libidinal gain for her reluctance to leave the abusive space. Contrarily, the abusers of domestic violence perpetrate abuse in cycles, with cooling-off periods between them. In these periods, the abusers project a possible end of violence and can lure the victims back into the abuse space (Griffing et al. 308). The abusers employ the tactic of cooling-off periods because they do not want to lose their dominance in the household and it acts as their libidinal gain for their reluctance to end the abuse. Cate’s father also employs the tactic

to achieve his libidinal gain. He goes away for some time so that other family members do not leave the home. His exit provides false hope to the members of the family that things will get better and they do for a while. Cate does not suffer from stress-induced seizures during the time his father is away from the home. But it does not last, her father returns and with him, her seizures (Kane 10).

Similarly, the character named C and her mother in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* and their mother are also the victims of abusive households. The mothers in these plays were unable to leave the space of their abuse, their homes, and thus, failed to protect their children from the abuse. In *Crave*, C complains that if her mother had left her father, life would have been better and nothing bad would ever happen to her (Kane 157). She is referring to the abuse she suffered by her father due to her mother's incompetence. She also confesses that her mother was also abused and there was no one to help her either (179). Similarly, in *4.48 Psychosis*, the protagonist's mother did not leave their abusive father (215). They believe that their mother's inability to leave is the reason for their messed-up life. The protagonist undergoes cyclic violence at the hands of their abusers (239). The mothers stayed with their abusive partners in the hope of better living conditions in the future. It is observed that abused mothers stay or return to their abusers for the sake of their children and their safety (Griffing 309), not knowing that the violence could be transmitted to their children as well (Williams 442).

Apart from domestic violence and intimate partner violence, Kane's characters from other parts of life are also stuck in a deadlock of violence because of their libidinal gains. Hippolytus and Phaedra are stuck in such a deadlock in *Phaedra's Love*. Phaedra is in love with Hippolytus. She sees him getting hurt by Lena and wants to be accepted by him. Contrary to her expectations, she is rejected and abused by Hippolytus. After being rejected by Lena, to ease off his suffering, Hippolytus indulged in regular sexual activities but to no avail. He rejects Phaedra of the danger of getting hurt again (74-83). On one hand, Phaedra derives emotional satisfaction by flirting with Hippolytus, even at the expense of her humiliation. On the other hand, Hippolytus derives satisfaction from humiliating her at the expense of losing moral ground. They do not stop engaging in interaction with each other because both are getting some satisfaction from it. It is until they cross the boundary between the stepmother and stepson and engage in sexual activity. Things fall apart from there. Phaedra wants Hippolytus to open up to her and mentions Lena's name. Hippolytus reverts sharply and discloses the family secrets.

In *Skin*, we observe Billy's pursuit of love and intimacy that keeps him in the

abusive space of Marcia. He is reluctant to leave her and wants to be accepted by her, despite being humiliated, starved and physically abused. After getting home from crashing an interracial wedding, where he has repeatedly beaten a black man (Kane 255), Billy goes on to pursue Marcia after she beckons him through the window (257). Marcia is a black woman and is aware of the fact that Billy has smashed a black person in the neighborhood. She perpetuates violence on Billy to cleanse him of his crimes. In Marcia's flat, Billy undergoes cyclic violence, gradually increasing in intensity, starting with gentle seduction and sexual intercourse to slapping, battering, scrubbing tattoos forcedly and humiliation, with cooling off periods in between them, signified by Kane's use of "cut to/" (260-263). These cooling-off periods, where Billy satisfies his pathological libidinal gain of physical intimacy and sexual gratification, keep him in the state of a deadlock. Despite being violated, he does not want to leave. He is hopeful that things will get better between him and Marcia. It is only after being utterly humiliated, whereby Billy is starved, fed dog food and rejected coldly, the cycle of repeated violence is broken when Billy decides to leave Marcia's flat. Billy leaves the space of abuse only because he is kicked out of it by Marcia. It is the abuser who has terminated the cyclic violence. If it were to him, he would never leave. Billy wants to be loved by Marica at all costs. He leaves because he has lost hope of a favorable future. Being dejected, he goes home, gulps down the pills with a beer (266) and drops down on the floor but is saved by Neville, his black neighbor (267-8).

In *Cleansed*, we observe Tinker perpetrating cyclic violence on Carl and Rod, a homosexual couple. Both of them are Tinker's captives. They cannot leave even if they want to. Tinker is particularly fascinated with Carl, whom he considers the weaker between the two. In his own perverted way, Tinker is trying to disprove Carl's love for Rod. It appears that Tinker is influenced by homophobia. Through cycles of violence, which he perpetrates on Carl, Tinker seems to be stuck in a deadlock with him. He cannot stop perpetrating violence on Carl because it is providing him with a pathological libidinal gain. By beating and mutilating Carl, Tinker is satisfying his secret desire to annihilate homosexuality. Contrarily, Carl is enduring cyclic violence because he wants to prove his love for Rod (110) after he has extended Tinker's violence on him (117). His remorse and desire to make it up to Rod acts as Carl's pathological libidinal gain. Knowing well that his acts of affection would bring out Tinker's violence, Carl still engages with Rod romantically and gets his tongue, limbs and genitals chopped off by Tinker.

To conclude, violence is present in every stratum of life in Kane's world. The subjectivity and intersubjectivity of her characters are shaped by violence and transform them into victims and agents of violence. As victims and agents of violence, her characters are affected by the presence of observers of violence, who simultaneously are also affected by the presence of victims and agents of violence. Furthermore, violence affects them through their emotional response, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, internal conflict, perception and false narrative. We have seen, thus far, the multilayered affectivity of violence in Kane's plays in which the subjectivity of her characters as well as their actions, or intersubjectivity, are profoundly affected by violence. In the next chapter, reflecting on the role of gender and language, the domain of kinship relations in Kane's plays will be examined.

Chapter V – Language and Gender in Sarah Kane’s Plays

Sarah Kane’s world projects the contemporary picture of the Western kinship system. The basic kinship relations in Kane’s world comprise conventional and alternative kinship relations. While, conventional kinship refers to traditional kinship relations, like biological and marital relations; on the other hand, alternative kinship refers to non-traditional kinship relations, like fictive/choice-based relations. Biological relations are also known as consanguineal kinship relations, referring to relations by blood (“Consanguinity”). For instance, the relations between parents and their children. Marital relations are also known as affinal kinship relations, referring to relations by marriage (“Affinity”). For instance, the relations between spouses and among their families and extended relatives. Consequently, fictive or choice-based relations refer to putative kinship relations that are based on emotional bonds. It “involves the extension of kinship obligations and relationships to individuals specifically not otherwise included in the kinship universe” (“Fictive Kinship”). Examples of fictive kinship relations include godparents, fostering, adoption, blood-siblings, live-in partners, etc. Kane portrays a grim picture of kinship relations, be they conventional or alternative, in her plays, which reflects the contemporary situation of Western kinship.

Western kinship system refers to the organization of familial relationships that are prevalent in Western societies, most particularly in Europe and Northern America. The basic features of the Western kinship system include monogamous marriages and relationships, family organization in nuclear units, post-marital neolocal residence pattern, bilateral descent and motive is love, happiness and autonomy. Kane’s plays take place in the European setting, especially in the Britain of the 1990s. Let us briefly look into the features of the Western kinship system within Kane’s world.

Monogamy or monogamous relationship refers to the union or “marriage between two persons” and is considered “the most common form of marriage” in the whole world (Stone 18). It is not an exclusively human phenomenon. Many species exhibit monogamous relationships, such as penguins, swans, wolves, gibbons, etc. In humans, there are variations within monogamous relationships concerning exclusivity, fidelity, sharing of resources, mental and physical well-being and support, and parenting and partner roles. There are of course challenges within monogamous relationships, such as infidelity, communication breakdown, dullness from routines, and imbalanced or oppressive roles which we also see in Kane’s plays. Monogamous relationships have

evolved in Western societies. Earlier, only heterosexual couples were permitted to marry but after the sexual revolution, the perception about homosexual couples has started to change. Furthermore, changing gender roles within societies has affected relationships. There has been a rise in extramarital affairs, divorces and remarriages. Social institutions and religious institutions have also played a part in the evolution of monogamous relationships. We observe variations within monogamous relationships in Kane's world as well along with their challenges and evolutions.

In *Blasted*, we observe some of the variations as well as challenges of monogamous relationships. Cate is a twenty-one-year-old woman with a strong attachment to her mother and brother. She has a boyfriend named Shaun with whom she is loyal. She expresses fidelity and sexual exclusiveness with Shaun to Ian, who is an ex-boyfriend of hers, with whom she arrives at a hotel in Leeds (Kane 16). But she is easily coercible. Ian is a dominating character, who employs different tactics to coerce and pressure Cate and gets physically intimate with her. Ian is a middle-aged divorced man who did not have good relationships with his wife and son. It turns out that he was neither a good husband, as he had an affair with Cate while he was married, nor was and is a good father, believing that his son Mathew hates him (18). Ian's life is affected by changing gender roles. His wife comes out as a lesbian and leaves him for another woman. Ian blames her wife for ruining their marriage (19). He does not seem to care that he cheated on his wife during their marriage. Ian brings Cate to the hotel to rekindle his previous relationship with her, not knowing that she already has a boyfriend. Cate comes from an abusive home. His father comes and goes for an extended period. She suffers from seizures whenever he returns home. It is one of his stays at home, when Ian gets in contact with Cate and persuades her to meet him. She agrees to meet him and makes it clear to him on several occasions that she is only visiting as a concerned person and has no romantic inclinations towards him. Ian wants her to breach her code of sexual exclusivity and fidelity to her boyfriend Shaun. However, Cate constantly denies his sexual advances. He employs tactics to coerce her, such as showing vulnerability by admitting that he is dying or shaming her for arousing him but not finishing the job. He succeeds in kissing Cate but is unable to coerce her into sexual intercourse. After the whole day of coercion, Ian uses physical force to subdue her and rapes her during the night. After the war breaks, Cate is still stuck with Ian, who wants her to stay with him but she refuses. She wants to return home to her family and does not want Shaun to know about what happened to her (52). In her mind, she is still maintaining a monogamous relationship with him.

Contrary to Ian, Soldier projects himself as a clean person before the war, who loved his girlfriend Col and was loyal to her. Before Col's death, Soldier was in a monogamous relationship; but after her murder, something inside him changes. He wants to avenge her death and commits terrible crimes, including torture, murders and rapes of children women and men. For him, once his girlfriend has died, he no longer needs to be monogamous. Rather, he resorts to avenging the loss of her partner from his enemies.

In *Phaedra's Love*, monogamy is observed but is not maintained. King Theseus has remarried a woman from a lower community, who has an adult daughter Strophe from her previous marriage. Theseus has a son Hippolytus from a previous marriage and adopts Strophe from the new. The relationships within the newly formed royal family are somewhat complex. Although Phaedra has married Theseus, she is in love with Hippolytus, who is a spoiled and sexually active prince. He has had sexual encounters with numerous people without forming any kind of relationships, Phaedra's daughter Strophe is also sexually active and is involved with multiple people, including her step-brother Hippolytus and her step-father Theseus. She does not want Phaedra to know about her sexual perversions and is angry at Hippolytus for disclosing the information to Phaedra.

Hippolytus ... I told her about us.
Strophe You what?
Hippolytus Yes. And I mentioned that you'd had her husband.
Strophe No.
Hippolytus I didn't say you fucked him on their wedding night, but since he left the day after –
...
Strophe You're a heartless bastard, you know that? (88-89)

Hippolytus does not have a good relationship with his father and thinks it is the same for everyone. He dislikes his father because he has neither been a good husband nor a good father. Being a King, his father was mostly absent from his life and was a pervert like him. He is aware that his father had sexual intercourse with his new stepdaughter and that too on his wedding night. He questions Phaedra for the reasons she has married a jerk, like Theseus (77). She professes her love for him and does not want him to call her his mother (78). She proposes to have sex with him and perform fellatio on him and

afterwards feels guilty because she has “never been unfaithful before” (81). Unlike other characters, Phaedra seems to care a bit more about monogamous relationships. In addition to her guilt of infidelity and the following rejection by Hippolytus, she gets more distressed after she finds out about her daughter’s sexual perversion with Hippolytus and Theseus in particular. Unlike the frigid relationship between the father and the son, she has a more cordial relationship with her daughter and finds it hard to digest Strophe’s behavior. Phaedra now has no one to share her feelings with, not after her knowledge of her daughter’s perversions. Earlier, she used to share her feelings with her daughter, but afterwards, she finds herself alone. Her husband is also away on state matters following their marriage. They have been physically apart ever since their wedding night and have a communication gap between them. This isolation affects Phaedra’s mental well-being and overwhelms her emotionally. She cannot endure anymore and commits suicide.

Similarly, in *Skin*, Billy is a proponent of monogamous relationships. Despite being a racist and a gang member. He falls for a black woman in his neighborhood named Marcia. They have a strictly sexual relationship for a few days. Billy is very much attached to her and does not want to leave her home despite being physically and mentally abused. Marcia tortures Billy to cleanse him of his racist characteristics. She violently scrubs off his tattoos (262) and humiliates him to show what it feels like to be treated in an inhumane manner (261). In the end, Billy feels cleansed but Marcia still rejects him. The breakage of their monogamous relationship profoundly affects Billy, who returns home and attempts suicide but is saved by one of his black neighbors Neville.

In *Cleansed*, we observe another variation of monogamous relationships, that is, a relationship between a homosexual couple. For a long time, monogamy and monogamous relationships were traditionally associated with heterosexuality as homosexuality was and still is stigmatized in many parts of Western societies. In the play, Carl and Rod are a homosexual couple. Carl believes in monogamous relationships and wants a commitment of fidelity and sexual exclusiveness from Rod, but Rod is reluctant to commit.

Carl *takes off his ring.*

Carl Can I have your ring?

Rod I’m not going to be your husband, Carl.

Carl How do you know?

Rod I’m not going to be anyone’s husband.

Carl I want you to have my ring.
Rod What for?
Carl A sign.
Rod Of what?
Carl Commitment. (109)

Rod finds it absurd because they only know each other for three months but this does not dissuade Carl. Despite getting no assurance from Rod, Carl professes his love for him, pledges his loyalty to him and expects Rod to do the same for him. After getting annoyed with Carl's constant calls for Rod's ring, he gives up on resisting and gives the ring to Carl but on the condition that he cannot commit to him forever but rather assures Carl of his love for him (111). There is a contrast between Carl and Rod. While Carl is young and optimistic, Rod is older and a cynical person. He understands the challenges of monogamous relationships, such as legal and social recognition, dullness from routines and communication breakdown. He is the older one in the relationship and most likely has more experience with the world than his partner Carl. Since Rod is cynical about their future, he refrains from committing to things that he knows he cannot know in advance.

We also observe imbalanced/oppressive roles and communication breakdown within families in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*. In the former play, the parents of the character named C and in the latter play, the parents of the protagonist have a problematic monogamous marriage. There is a complete breakdown of communication between the couples. Communication is one way, from the position of power to the subservient. The male partners are in dominant positions and do not shy from practicing violence to show their dominant positions. They are abusive towards their partners and sometimes their abuse extends to their children as well. In *Crave*, C's father is sexually abusing her and her mother does not intervene (179), and in *4.48 Psychosis*, the protagonist suffers because of the neglect of their parents (239). One important point to note here is the internalization of the subservient position by the female partners. They endure abuse and do not show resistance towards their abusive partners nor do they protect their children from the abuse. They choose to remain rather unwilling/unable to leave their abusive household.

Post-marital homes in the Western kinship system usually have nuclear family and neolocal residence patterns. A nuclear family refers to the immediate family consisting

of parents and their children. Neolocal residence refers “to a postmarital residence pattern in which a married couple moves to a new location,” away from both husband’s and wife’s kin to establish an independent household (Stone 326). Both nuclear family and neolocal residence provide the married couple with privacy and reduce interference from the extended families. They also require the couple to work as a unit to tackle everyday challenges and can strengthen the bond between them. Alternatively, they can also facilitate domestic violence as they reduce the interference and influence from extended families. They are considered the norm in Western kinship and also observed as such in Kane’s plays. Her plays also portray the dark side of having a nuclear family and a neolocal residence.

In Kane’s plays, the arrangement of kinship is in nuclear family units with neolocal residence and no extended family and relatives. In *Blasted*, we observe Cate living with her family, including her mother, brother and mostly absent father. On the other hand, Ian and Soldier have broken families, Ian’s partner is divorced from him and taking their son with her, and Soldier’s partner is dead. Cate’s home provides privacy to her and her family members. She likes her home so much that she does not want to leave it, not even after her marriage. Furthermore, there is no sharing of resources between the spouses. Unlike Cate’s mother, her father is not attached to his immediate family. He does not provide for his family but rather goes away for extended periods. Cate’s mother gets money from social security and she shares it with her children. (Kane 8). The power dynamics of the house change when Cate’s father returns. It reduces the influence of Cate’s mother because now, he has all the decision-making power. There is an imbalance of power dynamics and the atmosphere becomes more intense and abusive. Cate starts to get stress-induced seizures whenever her father returns home (10). Cate also does not have the support of the extended family and relatives. In her oppressive home, there is no release or escape from the stress and she develops a mental condition where her conscious mind is shut from the stressful environment. It is a defense mechanism to save her overall mental health. The mental and physical well-being of her mother, on the other hand, is not known but Cate’s attachment to her mother shows a strong bond between them.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, Theseus is the head of the royal family. His estranged son Hippolytus is not respectful towards him primarily for being absent from most of his life and also for being a pervert. Theseus resides in a palace with his immediate family, consisting of his son Hippolytus, his newly-wedded wife Phaedra and his step-daughter

Strophe. He is the head of the family and provides them with all the luxuries except for emotional support. His family enjoys the privacy within their residence. The uncaring prince Hippolytus and the step-daughter Strophe occasionally indulge in random sexual encounters, including with each other (84). On the other hand, Theseus's wife Phaedra is a bit different from the rest of the family. She is in love with Hippolytus but maintains her sexual integrity for some time. She slips on one occasion, professes her love for him and performs fellatio on him, but gets rejected and disheartened. Theseus is mostly absent following his marriage with Phaedra as he has state responsibilities. His absence has weakened the bond with his wife. Instead of relying on each other for support, they seek connections with other people. As a result, Phaedra often spends time with Hippolytus and has grown attached to him. Meanwhile, Theseus already has sexual relations with Phaedra's daughter Strophe as well as other people.

In *Skin*, we observe further disintegration of kin ties in the form of breakage of nuclear families. Billy lives alone. He has no ties with his kin except for her mother. He has a tattoo engraved on his chest dedicated to his mother (249). But the ties with her mother are also minimal. Her mother often calls him to check up on him (250). Other characters in the play are also seen as living alone. Marcia is a black woman who lives across from Billy. Like Billy, she also does not have any kin around her. Both Billy and Marcia have formed alternative ties mimicking the traditional kin relations. Billy hangs around at a café and spends time there with other members of his skinhead gang. He shares a brother-like bond with the members of his gang. Similarly, Marcia shares a close and sisterly bond with one of her neighbors named Kath. Both Billy and Marcia form a temporary family-like unit with each other but it does not work out. Marcia rejects Billy after they spend a few days together. They return to their original residing formation but at the same time are affected by their failure to form a new family-like unit.

In *Cleansed*, Grace and Graham are siblings who share a strong bond between them. There are no parents or other relatives in the picture. Graham is the head of the family and Grace depends on his authority. When Graham goes missing, Grace is unable to make decisions for herself. She looks for him and finds out from Tinker about his death from a drug overdose (112). She fails to function without him and refuses to leave the hospital where his body is incinerated. To feel close to him, she wears his clothes and later undergoes a sex change operation. In the end, she finally finds the peace she has been looking for. In contrast, Carl and Rod are a homosexual couple and form a family-like unit between them. But unlike Carl, who is looking forward to their future together, Rod

is a bit reserved in reciprocating the same feeling. Their relationship improves when they undergo tremendous amounts of physical and mental agony. Their dependency on each other during the difficult times strengthens their bond so much that to protect Carl from further torture, Rod sacrifices himself (142).

The families of the character named C in *Crave* and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* have a nuclear family system and reside in a neolocal residence, which provides them with privacy. However, due to power imbalance within the families, the neolocal residence pattern becomes the perfect place for domestic abuse. Because these nuclear families reside in neolocal residences, the chances of external interference decrease. If the victims of domestic abuse are not able to defend themselves and are unable to get external help, the situation becomes more and more dire, which we see in these two plays. In both plays, the male perpetrators enjoy a tremendous amount of power and control within their homes. In *Crave*, C's father controls the economic situation of the family. He prostitutes her adolescent daughter for money (158) and beats up his wife for control and obedience (179). His regular abuse of his family deteriorates the mental health of his victims. C's mother becomes uninterested in her child's wellbeing and C starts "to piss on the carpet" (167) as well as develops health issues, such as anorexia and bulimia (173). As a victim of regular domestic abuse, the condition is much more dire for the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis*. She undergoes a total mental breakdown and gets admitted to a hospital where she is treated roughly and unsympathetically, making her worse and worse. She resorts to ending her life to end the misery.

Bilateral descent is another feature of the Western kinship system. A bilateral descent system traces the descent "through both males and females, but without the formation of corporate descent groups" (Stone 166). A corporate descent group encompasses a kinship group which operates like a corporation or business and can function as a political or religious unit. Most societies in the West are bilateral in nature. That is, children have strong ties with extended families of both parents. Furthermore, although Western kinship is bilateral, it also has a patrilineal twist (24). That is, there is gender asymmetry in Western kinship which favors the males and puts the females in disadvantageous positions. It is visible in the use of the father's last name, or the father giving away his daughter at her wedding, or emphasizing more on genealogical records on the father's side, or forming a family tree along the father's line.

Furthermore, the goal of having and forming kinship in the Western kinship system seems to be the achievement of love, happiness, autonomy and independence. That is,

marriages are often “rooted in the traditions of romantic love” (190), and seen “as a means of securing happiness” (200) and fulfillment (228). Alternatively, the fading of romantic love and unhappiness between couples may disrupt their relationship with each other as well as with other kin. Furthermore, the church has played a major role in defining this characteristic of Western kinship. It promoted free choice and autonomy for people to choose partners as well as proposed liberation from marriage in the form of spiritual chastity (247), which reduced the influence of descent groups over newly formed household units. It provided the couples with greater autonomy and independence to make decisions and mold their lives as they saw fit. It can have both good and bad consequences. We often observe the bad consequences in Kane’s play primarily because of gender asymmetry within the households.

In Kane’s plays, we observe the disintegration of bilateral descent. Her characters do not have strong ties with extended families and for many, the bond between the immediate family is also crumbling. In *Blasted*, none of the characters have ties with their extended family. Everyone is preoccupied with their immediate family. Cate is very fond of her mother but is distant from her father. Furthermore, Cate also has a boyfriend named Shaun, with whom she is loyal. She resists Ian’s sexual advances because she is sexually exclusive with Shaun. She sees a future with him. But at the same time, she does not want to leave her mother. It is the same reason she gives to Ian when he asks her to come live with him.

Ian Don’t want you ever to leave.
Cate I’m here for the night.
Ian (*Drinks.*)
Sweating again. Stink. You ever thought of getting married?
Cate Who’d marry me?
Ian I would.
Cate I couldn’t.
Ian You don’t love me. I don’t blame you, I wouldn’t.
Cate I couldn’t leave mum.
Ian Have to one day.
Cate Why?
Ian (*Opens his mouth to answer but can’t think of one.*) (6)

Cate is constantly worried about her mother and thinks that her mere presence at home is enough for her mother. She has a sense of belongingness to her home provided her mother is there with her. On the one hand, she has a loving and over-protective relationship with her mother and on the other, she is estranged from her father. Cate's father is not a stable person in her life while her mother is. He comes and goes for extended periods as he sees fit while her mother provides her with emotional and economic support (Kane 8). When her father returns from one of his long absences, Cate's life gets more stressful and she starts having fits induced by stress. It is one of these visits, when Ian reaches out to her and convinces her to meet him. He agrees to meet Ian for a night but does not want to stay away from her home for long.

Contrarily, Ian, a middle-aged journalist and well-read person, is emotionally distant from his twenty-four-year-old son Mathew (18). And he blames his ex-wife for breaking their marriage (19). The relationship between father and son has deteriorated so much that even after finding out about his fatal cancer and cirrhosis, Ian does not want to talk to his son. He would rather engage in sexual acts with Cate than go to his son and amend the broken relationship.

We observe a similar kind of father-son in *Phaedra's Love*. King Theseus and Prince Hippolytus do not have a profound relationship. Theseus does not like his son because he does nothing all day and does not contribute to the management of the monarchy. Hippolytus does not like his father because he is "a wanker" (77). His father's absence from his life and sexual perversions with random people, including his stepdaughter Strophe, degrades his relationship with his father. The trust between father and son is at the minimum level. It is visible in the aftermath of Phaedra's suicide. Theseus unhesitatingly believes the allegations against his son that he has raped his step-mother Phaedra. Even though Hippolytus is the crown prince who would inherit the kingdom after him, Theseus plans to take revenge. He instigates the public during his sentencing and calls for his death. The crowd lynched Hippolytus to death. Although relationships are based on love in Western kinship; in the world of Kane, lust has taken over the people and has become one of the reasons for their unhappiness. The relationship between Theseus and Phaedra has lost its luster. Theseus has been away since his marriage and engages in random sexual acts, while Phaedra gets emotionally attached to her stepson Hippolytus.

The unhappiness between couples is also observed in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, where the love for the kins has eroded and paternalistic dominance has erected in its

place. The characters of C's father in *Crave* and the protagonist's father in *4.48 Psychosis* have attained a dominating position within their households. Even if their relationship with their partners was predicated on love, it has degraded over time and resulted in unhappiness. This unhappiness manifests in their abusive treatment of their spouses. Furthermore, their unhappiness with each other also disrupts their parental roles, causing their children to suffer as a consequence of their unhappy relationship. There is gender asymmetry prevalent in their households. All the females rely on the male head of the family because they are dependent on them. The male heads enjoy autonomy and independence from kin groups within their homes, while the females have lost it to a greater degree. In *Crave*, C's father is an authoritarian figure and acts accordingly. He prostitutes his daughter for money (158) and beats up his wife for more control over her (179). There is no one to challenge his authority. His wife and daughter have given up on resistance. Similarly, in *4.48 Psychosis*, the protagonist and their mother have also given up on resisting. The protagonist's psyche has been severely affected by years of abuse, and they have started to think that they have been "born in the wrong body" (215). They hate their very body and wish to be dead soon.

The same unhappiness is also observed in *Cleansed* but for the opposite reasons. The unhappiness arises when Grace finds out that her brother Graham has died. Graham was a drug addict who had died of an overdose. His body lies in the hospital, which incinerates the body as nobody claims it for days (112). Grace gets upset and her mental health deteriorates after she finds out about Graham. She is dependent on Graham and has gone, she does not know what to do with her life. Her brother was the main attraction of her life. She existed around him. She has a strong sense of belongingness towards Graham. She wants to recreate him through her body. She wears her brother's clothes (113) and undergoes a sex change operation (145). It is only after her transformation into her brother that a smile erupts on her face (151). She finally feels that she can live in the world now that Graham is with her all the time.

In *Skin*, we observe Billy's loss of sense of belongingness when he gets rejected from Marcia's house. Billy is a racist and a gang member who falls in love with a black woman named Marcia. Although, he loves his mother but does not live with her, which makes her worried about him (250). Billy suffers from loneliness and by luck manages to form a relationship with Marcia. But it does not last for long. It was predicated on lust and when the lust fades away, so does their relationship. Billy is disheartened about it and feels lost without it. He wants to carry on the relationship but Marcia is not interested.

Here, the gender asymmetry is reversed. That is, the female is in a dominating position while the male is subordinated. But there is a twist. Despite rejecting Billy, Marcia is sympathetic towards him. She cries her heart out after rejecting Billy (267). Both Billy and Marcia suffer as a consequence of their broken relationship.

These features of Western kinship within Kane's plays are underlined by paternalistic dominance or paternalism, which is visible in the overall dominating position of males and the subordinating position of females. Paternalistic dominance or paternalism "describes the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights" (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 239). That is, "in exchange for protection and privilege," the subordinates can accept their subordinate status (234). According to Gerda Lerner, paternalism is "a subset of patriarchal relations" and Western kinship is underlined by patriarchy (239). It is the ideology of Western civilization (10) and is widely defined as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (239). As an ideology, patriarchy not only has institutionalized male dominance but also has encouraged females to adjust to their subordinate positions (28).

In Kane's plays, we observe that the males have a superior and dominating status when compared with the females. It is visible in the asymmetrical relationship between males and females. In *Blasted*, Cate and her mother are dependent on the money they receive from social security, while her father has the financial freedom to come and go as he sees fit. Cate is not only a naïve young woman and dependent on her mother for emotional and monetary support, but she is also unskilled and easily coercible. Ian manipulates her into accompanying him into the hotel and seduces her against her will. When she resists his sexual advances, he guilts her into thinking that it is her fault for arousing him (Kane 15). She is silenced first by coercion and then by force. Ian restricts her from leaving and rapes her during the first night they spend together. Similarly, in *Phaedra's Love*, Strophe is silenced through sexual violence when she tries to defend her step-brother Hippolytus against an angry crowd (101). Her rape is cheered by the crowd. The patriarchal norms against which she, as a female, tries to stand her ground, puts her in her designated inferior place. The same inferior place of the females is also visible in Kane's other plays. In *Cleansed*, Grace is the sister of a drug addict Graham who dies of an overdose. She is unable to function without her brother in the world. Her mental health

deteriorates and she ends up changing her gender through a sex change operation. Similarly, in the last two plays, namely *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*, the male heads of the families practice unlimited power and their dominance manifests in the form of domestic violence against their wives and children. The wives show little to no resistance and have gotten accustomed to their subordinate positions within their households.

According to Žižek, an ideology is “an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself” (*The Sublime Object* 30). It refers to a set of beliefs, values, practices and structural norms, both conscious and unconscious, that shape our understanding and actions. So, as an ideology, patriarchy structures the reality of the Western kinship system. It sustains the norm, or what is also known as the “zero-level standard” of the reality, of the Western kinship system (Žižek, *Violence* 2). That is, it does not make the norm appear oppressive and violent rather makes it appear as “neutral, non-ideological, natural, [and] commonsensical” (31). It does so by naturalizing the power relations, by framing inequality and concentration of power as a natural and inevitable aspect of Western kinship. For instance, males tend to have bigger physiques and more physical strength than females make them more powerful and more suitable for positions of power, rendering the females in a subordinated position. For Žižek, the norm of a system is always inclusive of violence, or what he calls objective violence. It is an invisible form of violence which is “precisely the violence inherent to” the norm of the system and which “sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive” subjective or physical violence (2). Just like the norm of the system is inclusive of objective violence, in the form of symbolic and systemic violence (1), the norm of the Western kinship system is also inclusive of objective violence, which is visible in its language usage and kinship practices. The Kinship system in Kane’s world is inclusive of this objective violence, which is visible in the usage of sexism in language and its usage as well as gendered kinship practices.

In Kane’s plays, the objective violence or sexism in language and kinship practices is unraveled by androcentrism, gender asymmetry and bias. Androcentrism or male-centeredness “refers to the tendency to prioritize men as a seemingly ‘gender-neutral’ standard, while ‘othering’ women as gender specific” (Bailey et al. 103980). That is, the male experience or role is treated as a generic human experience and the female role exists as the gendered form. For instance, the tendency to relate generic masculine to the position of power. Like, using male pronouns for gender-neutral professions, such as a doctor, professor, engineer, etc. It has excluded women from representing the human

species as well as has invisibilized or side-lined them (Miller and Swift 178). In *Blasted*, the presence of Cate's father at home reorders the power dynamics of the family. Cate's distress hints at her father's assertion of his dominance at home. Her father sets the zero-level standard of their home and becomes the measure of all things. In her father's presence, Cate is no longer the center of attention and exists as an individual who is sidelined. It pushes her to leave home when Ian gets in touch with her and invites her to a hotel. She wants to feel special and cared for, which she enjoys at first when she enters an expensive and luxurious hotel room (Kane 2). But the same gender asymmetry is repeated which tries to run from. When Cate enters the hotel room, she enters a new space in which Ian is the center and the norm. Things exist for him, such as the food, the alcohol and the other services. Ian is the authority in the hotel room. He has ordered champagne and flowers before their entry. And when the food arrives it is his choice of food. Cate does not drink alcohol and eats meat. Instead of ordering something else for Cate, he tells her to eat the ham sandwich (7). Cate's choices and beliefs do not matter to Ian. He is always preoccupied with himself and what he wants. He also asserts his claim over Cate and tells her that she belongs to him more than her current boyfriend (16). Till the end, Ian wants to fulfill his wishes and does not let go of his claim over Cate. The play itself is presented from Ian's point of view. He is the center of all the action. He is never absent from the stage for long enough to be noticed, whereas Cate is absent for most of the second scene and also leaves for a long time in the fifth scene. As a woman, Cate's invisibility is also portrayed through her rape which happens off-stage. We only become aware of it the next day through their dialogues and gestures. Contrarily, Ian's rape takes place on stage, whereby he is physically manhandled and raped by Solder, showing the tendency to prioritize men and male experiences while hiding women and their experiences.

In *Phaedra's Love*, the male head of the family is King Theseus. As a king with unlimited resources at his disposal, he has control over his family members, including his wife Phaedra and his stepdaughter Strophe. He is the most important person in the family and thus, has access to the females. In addition to his wife, he is also sexually involved with Strophe (88). He enjoys the extent of his power. Contrarily, Phaedra is sidelined throughout the play. After marrying Theseus, Phaedra's life gets worse and worse. The king is never home. Phaedra spends time with Hippolytus and falls in love with him. Although the play is entitled *Phaedra's Love*, she is not the main character of the play. Instead of her, Hippolytus is the protagonist of the play. The male characters of

the family hold the center of the stage and their experiences are highlighted more than that of the females. In the eight scenes, Phaedra appears only in three scenes and her death happens off stage. Strophe also dies but her death, although happens on stage, results from silencing the females. While Phaedra is invisibilized and Strophe is silenced; on the other hand, the males of the family die at the end. Out of the four, only Hippolytus's death is portrayed in a gruesome manner and takes a long time to die (100-02).

Sexism in language and practices is also inclusive of asymmetrical gender marking and gender biases (Mills 45). It is visible in the usage of stereotypes, expletives, superciliousness and silence. As far as gender stereotypes are concerned, it is more common to represent males "as active and acting upon other[s]" as well as in the subject position; and represent females as being acted upon by others or as "the recipient of others' actions, [and] in the object position" (Mills 69). For instance, in representing a sexual encounter, it is often the males who actively do things to the passive females. The use of stereotypes of women and men reinforces the hypothesized "set of features, roles and possible narrative sequences" that are associated with them (Mills 126). For instance, common stereotypes characterize males as active and rational, and females as passive and emotional (Morgan et al. 359). The common gender stereotypes associated with women connote individuals who belong to the domestic sphere and are weak, emotional, sexual-object, victim, etc. Stereotypes of women are also visible in jokes, whereby they are often the butt of the jokes. Similarly, there are not only more insult terms associated with women but also the insults are directed at their intelligence, competence and sexuality. In contrast, the common stereotypes of men are associated with their masculinity. It includes them being aggressive, hard and engaging in battle and warfare (Mills 130) as well as being "direct, plain-speaking and obsessed with sex" (143). Gender asymmetry is also visible in sexuality, whereby females are stereotypically associated with sexual shyness and ashamed of their bodies and genitals. It signifies their subordinate status. They are perceived as being weak, docile and needy. On the other hand, males seem to enjoy sexual freedom and are proud of their genitals, a sign of their strength and aggression.

Furthermore, terms such as competent, rational and assertive are often associated with male stereotypic traits, whereas female stereotypes indicate warmth and expressiveness (Ashmore 37). Furthermore, stereotypical masculine speech is characterized as being direct, forceful, dominating, highly intense, abusive and "aimed

at establishing a position in the hierarchy” (Mills 130). In contrast, stereotypical feminine speech is “nonassertive, tentative and supportive” as well as contains “more euphemism, politeness forms, apology, laughter, crying, and unfinished sentences” (Haas 623). As far as the usage of language is concerned, gender asymmetry is also observed between women and men. That is, there are certain words which when associated with females and males project them in a certain stereotypical light. For instance, words connoting excessiveness, unpleasantness, immaturity, and negative emotions/characteristics are often attributed to women; while men are attributed with words connoting independence, strength, sex-credentials and positive/less-negative characteristics. The asymmetrical and stereotypical speech patterns of males and females can also be observed in their use of sarcasm and irony. There is also a common perception that sarcasm and irony not only are more likely to be associated with male speech and behavior than their female counterparts but only women are judged more negatively (Taylor C. 419).

In *Blasted*, Ian is portrayed as an assertive figure who acts stereotypically. He is characterized as an active and aggressive character, who is obsessed with sex even at the end of his life. He is suffering from fatal lung cancer and cirrhosis (Kane 11) and instead of rectifying his relationship with his son, he chooses to pursue Cate for sexual pleasure. Being a middle-aged journalist, he is independent and a strong man with the freedom to pursue his sexual desires. He is the embodiment of male and agentic stereotypical traits, such as competence, rationality and assertiveness. Throughout the play, Ian is more agentic than Cate. It is he who invites Cate to the hotel (4), who initiates mental and sexual coercion of Cate (7), asserts his authority and claim over Cate (16), and who restricts her from leaving the hotel and rapes her when she resists his advances. Likewise, Cate is depicted as a stereotypical feminine character. She is naïve, weak and unskilled. Because of these qualities, she cannot get a job and depends on others to survive. She is also portrayed as a stereotypical woman who lacks the intelligence and competence to secure a professional job (8), who is perceived as a sexual object by Ian (15), who possesses warmth and expressiveness and is considerate of others feelings, including Ian (4) as well as her mother and brother (18). Furthermore, it is Ian who practices his sexual freedom while Cate is associated with sexual shyness. From a position of power, he initiates Cate’s seduction and overpowers her whenever she lets her guard down.

Ian Thought you’d like this. Nice hotel.

...

Ian I'm not well anymore.

Cate (*Stops smiling.*)

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 Why not? You're nervous, that's all. (13-14)

Cate is impressed with the luxurious hotel room that Ian has booked for them. Earlier, she was dependent on her mother and upon entering the hotel room, she starts to depend on Ian. Being a stereotypical feminine figure, she is influenced by Ian's lucrative and manipulative gestures. Even after being the butt of Ian's jokes and patronizing behavior, she still behaves the same way. She even helps Ian recover from a traumatic incident, when Ian mistakes a car-backfire for a bullet and breaks down emotionally (28).

In *Crave*, the character named C and her mother are the female family members in a family of three. Her father is the head of the family and asserts this full authority over the female members of his family. He is depicted as the stereotypical abusive head of the family from the poor section of the population. Although he is at the lower section of the male hierarchy when it comes to power; in his home, he holds unlimited power. There is little to no resistance against him. He beats up his wife whenever he feels like it (179). He also sleeps with his daughter and prostitutes her to old rich men for money (158). We only observe him through C's dialogues. Contrary to C's father, C and her mother are stereotypical victims of domestic abuse. They have internalized her abusive life. C's mother does not interfere when C's father beats C, sleeps with her or prostitutes her. Likewise, C does not interfere in the thrashing of her mother by her father. Both the victims have learnt to live with the abusive and authoritative male head of the family.

Kane is not alone in using stereotypes in her plays, especially the sexual exploitation of females. Cate is exploited by Ian in *Blasted*; Strophe is publicly raped by Theseus in *Phaedra's Love*; Grace is physically exploited by Tinker in *Cleansed*; the character named C is sexually exploited by her father and the character named A in

Crave; and the protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* is taken advanced of by their father. Other contemporary writers have also highlighted the stereotypical exploitation of females. Suzan-Lori Parks has portrayed the racist stereotype in her play *Venus*, whereby a black woman is portrayed as having large buttocks and is poked and groped by people (Mihaylova 215). The purpose of using a stereotype is to highlight the colonial dehumanization and objectification of women.

Similarly, Kane uses the stereotype of the association of shame with the female body and sexuality. The protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* and C in *Crave* are ashamed of her body and gender; in *Blasted*, Ian continuously shames Cate for having a sexual partner; in *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus points out the sexually deviant behavior of Phaedra and her daughter Strophe; in *Skin*, fetishism is associated with Marcia's sexuality; and in *Cleansed*, Grace is seeking reunion with her brother Graham. Contrarily, in Mark Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids*, we observe the stereotype of the association of pride with male body and sexuality, whereby a homosexual male character "exposes his body to other characters by emphasizing how fantastic and sexy it is" (Kansiz 279). The use of stereotypes highlights the gender asymmetry, how distinctly male and female bodies and sexuality are perceived.

Since expletives or swear words are seen as verbal aggression and males are considered more aggressive than females, the use of expletives or swear/vulgar words seems "to have a stereotypical association with masculinity" (Mills 130). It is also "observed that men use stronger expletives such as *shit* and *damn*, whereas women use weaker or softer profanity such as *oh dear*, *goodness*, or *fudge*" (Haas 617). In *Blasted*, Ian is a well-read person and the language he employs is also authoritative and stereotypical. Being a stereotypical masculine character, he uses stronger expletives, uses them more, and uses them to assert his authority and show his anger/frustration. He uses swearwords that relate to sexuality such as fuck, fucking, fucked, cunt, cock and wank; that relate to sexist terms of abuse such as lesbos, queer, witch, dyke, tart and bitch; that are based on intelligence such as tosser, stupid and thick; that is considered blasphemous such as fucking Jesus; and that refer to disgusted objects and offensive slangs such as shit, shitting blood, bloody, bastard, scum, cocksucker and sucking gash. Contrarily, Cate is not a well-read person and the language she employs is less assertive. Not only does her speech has fewer expletives, but they are also trivialized/weaker expletives. She tries to correct Ian when he uses expletives targeting certain groups of people. She uses the word unhappy instead of sad, uses learning difficulties instead of retard, and uses weaker

expletives such as silly, stink and cruel. And even if she has to use stronger expletives, she uses them rarely. For instance, the morning after the night, when Ian pushes himself on her and rapes her, she is mad at Ian. She calls him a *cunt* and “[m]akes a noise of disgust” (Kane 25). Only then, she uses terms of scatological references such as piss and shit (34). On another occasion, when she returns with food and finds Ian “sitting under a hole,” she calls him a stupid bastard (60) and shares food and drinks with him (61).

In *Skin*, Billy employs a stronger language as compared with Marcia’s language. Billy needs to prove his worth among his skinhead peers and he does it by cursing and using a threatening voice. When his gang members tease him for being too skinny, Billy acts out aggressively.

BILLY
FUCKOFF

...

It’s a pig’s arse, Tel.

...

Brain and bollocks, innard and eyelid, toenail,
teeth, all wrapped up in a pig’s foreskin. (253)

Billy needs to prove to his peers that he is a tough individual. His whole personality depends on it. He knows that he cannot remain in the gang and earn respect if his peers make fun of him. So, when the boys start making fun of his petit physique, he shouts at a mixed-race boy standing outside the window and turns the table on his peers by making fun of what they eat. His words are so powerful that one of his peers spits the sausage in disgust. Billy tries to replicate his macho-man persona when Marcia asks him if he ever touched a black woman. Billy reacts sharply that he has “with a baseball bat” (259). Marcia does not react back. She employs a more subtle approach and averts a confrontation. She takes his hand and later, they end up kissing and having sex.

While Kane’s female characters are normally associated with weaker expletives, it is not true for other contemporary playwrights. For instance, “Lulu’s violent outburst (both rhetorical and physical) against male homosexuality” in Mark Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking*. She uses strong expletives such as *fucking*, *fucker*, *fuck*, *arsehole*, and *shit-stabber* (Emig 276). If we take the gender of these authors into account, the same stereotypical view about males using stronger expletives is upheld.

Similarly, supercilious or condescending speeches and gestures are commonly associated with sexist speech and body language. They include objectifying, patronizing and stigmatizing women. Objectification can be done through fixation on their appearance such as hair, clothes and other features. Patronization can be done using terms of endearment, like *my dear*, *darling*, *love* and *honey*. And stigmatization can be done “through abusive and discriminatory labelling,” such as using stereotypical insults for women (Ilia 594). In *Blasted*, Ian is a supercilious individual. It can be observed in his usage of the language, which is condescending, patronizing, stigmatizing and objectifying against women, including Cate, his wife Stella and a murdered tourist named Samantha. He insults and degrades them whenever possible. On dictating the gruesome murder of a nineteen-year-old Samantha to the newspaper he works for, Ian laughs and calls her a *tart* (Kane 13), a slang for a woman with loose sexual standards. He uses the same term for Cate as well (26). Similarly, he calls her ex-wife a witch who engages in activities such as *sucking gash*, or cunnilingus (19). Ian also degrades Cate by calling her stupid time and again. He also objectifies her by commenting on her appearance.

Ian Don't like your clothes.
Cate (*Looks down at her clothes.*)
Ian You look like a lesbos.
Cate What's that?
Ian Don't look very sexy, that's all. (7)

Ian insults Cate by labeling her to a substandard position, the stereotypical positions lesbians are stigmatized within society. Ian's supercilious attitude is also observed when he objectifies and patronizes Cate by asking her if she “ever has a fuck with a woman,” but when she asks him the same question that if he has even been with a man, Ian gets up and questions her if she thinks that he can be “a cocksucker” (19). He has no issue with Cate sexually indulging but he cannot bear it when his heterosexuality comes into question. Ian patronizes her by telling her what and how she feels (14), that she belongs to him (16), that she needs her mother to survive (21), that she loves him as well (31), and that what she wants to do (55). Furthermore, Ian patronizes her by using terms of endearment for Cate such as *pet* (16) and *love* (17).

In *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus acts as a supercilious and condescending individual during her encounter with Phaedra. He objectifies her by comparing her to a sexualized

object, who is chased by all the males of his country (77). Hippolytus also stigmatizes Phaedra by commenting on her sexuality (74), reasons for why she married his father (77) as well as on her role as a mother. He tells her to love her child and not him (78). Furthermore, he patronizes her by asking about how recently she had intercourse (74); by questing her reasoning (77); by telling her to have sex with someone else because she is irritating post-coital (82); and by sarcastically asking her about the gift she got for him (84). Hippolytus' sharp verbal attack cuts deep into Phaedra's psyche. She tries as much as she can to tolerate his foul tongue. But when he sarcastically asks her if he can get his present after she has already given him oral sex (80), Phaedra loses her cool and calls him "a heartless bastard" (85). This is one of the rarest moments when Phaedra uses an expletive language. Despite being his stepmother, Phaedra is very gentle in her approach. She calmly listens to Hippolytus and tries to convey her romantic feelings towards him, but Hippolytus does not lend her an ear. He squashes her every act of professing love. In the end, she gives up and leaves. It is only after her death that Hippolytus learns that she was indeed in love with him.

The use of silence, especially by the females, also highlights the gender asymmetry. Silence can take "the form of a pause, omission, understatement or falling silent" (Dambaska 317). It can be observed within the speeches and actions of the people, especially in their conscious/unconscious choices or inability to express themselves. It can reveal various aspects of their lives, such as the status of their mental condition, internal conflict and regression to comfort. In *Blasted*, we observe that Cate's speech and actions are filled with silence in the form of gaps, inability to speak, and her conscious and unconscious choice to speak. Silence reveals her internal characteristics as well such as the state of her mental health. The play starts with Ian and Cate entering an expensive hotel room. Ian asserts his dominance by leading into the luxurious room and calling it a crappy place. With Ian asserting his dominance, she silently follows him and resorts to silence when he asks her a question. Cate is portrayed as a stereotypical feminine character. It is only after Ian exits the room and enters the bathroom Cate utters her first words. Later, when Ian "*offers her champagne,*" she does not say a word, but rather answers by shaking her head (4). Throughout the play, whenever Ian expresses his love for her and expects her to do the same, she resorts to silence and answers through her gestures such as a smile (5). She also uses a smile to answer Ian's questions which she deems unanswerable. For instance, when Ian asks about her seizures, she smiles (10); when Ian tells her that she has grown in the last few years, she smiles (13-14); and when

Ian tries to seduce her by telling her that he is soft with the people he loves, she smiles (20). Cate also resorts to silence when Ian patronizes her, like commenting on her clothes (7). She is silenced by her dominating partner. Furthermore, Cate resorts to silence to escape her distressing reality. Ian pokes fun at Cate for her inability to get a job. When she replies that she has “applied for a job at an advertising agency,” Ian calls her stupid and tells her that she is “never going to get a job” (8). Cate gets stressed out and undergoes a stress-induced seizure. For a few moments, everything gets silent. When she gets around, she describes it as a kind of sleep (10). She even tells Ian that she would not mind staying in that state of sleep for a long time. Similarly, Ian only resorts to silence whenever he is in a state of powerlessness. For instance, when he is in pain (15) or when Cate challenges his morality (22), Ian resorts to silence.

In *Cleansed*, we observe Grace getting silent whenever Tinker orders her to do something. Following the disappearance of her beloved brother Graham, Grace aimlessly searches for him. She does not know how to act because she does not have anyone to follow. Upon learning that Graham has died in the hospital, Grace does not wish to leave the hospital. She has internalized her subordinated position and has become dependent on others. Earlier, she followed Graham and after his death, she submits to Tinker. Whatever Tinker tells her to do, she silently does (114). During her stay in the hospital, Grace’s mental condition gradually deteriorates and by the end, she becomes silent. In scene seventeen, Robin tries to talk to her but she does not respond. This stresses him out. He calls for her repeatedly but Grace still does not respond to him (144). Distressed Robin hangs himself but she sits there and does not try to save him. Tinker comes to take her away and Grace is led out by him in silence (145). It is only after having a sex change surgery that Grace utters words from her mouth. Now that she is not a woman anymore, she is not repressed and does whatever she wants. She even helps Carl when he asks for her help (150).

The unnamed and ungendered protagonist of *4.48 Psychosis* resorts to silence whenever they get uncomfortable. The protagonist is a patient in a mental health facility where they interact with the doctor. During one of their interactions, the protagonist is asked about their relationships with their friends.

(A very long silence.)

But you have friends.

(A long silence.)

You have a lot of friends.

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer?

(Silence.) (205)

The topic makes the protagonist uncomfortable because their relationships have deteriorated ever since they started having mental problems. The protagonist blames themselves for it (207). Their mental illness is traced back to their abusive childhood. The domestic abuse they have endured has finally started to show its face in the form of mental illness. The protagonist is not at ease in discussing their past with the doctor. So, they choose to be silent.

Gender bias is also observed in sexist language and practices within Kane's plays, whereby the male characters are privileged, that is, they have a more superior and dominating status when compared with the female characters. They also possess the freedom to take advantage of situations because of their masculine gender. It is visible in the sexual double standard and female subordination (Miller and Swift 178), whereby men and male activities are valued and are laden with power/control over wives and children (Stone 237). We also see that the privileged males assert sexual freedom, which is linked with the pride of their genitals, showing it as a sign of strength and aggression. Contrarily, female characters in Kane's plays have a relatively inferior status when compared with her male characters. It is visible in their exclusion and invisibilization, that is, women and their activities, including sexual and reproductive, are devalued and controlled (Lerner 224). It renders them unable to acquire skills and perform effectively. Without skills and resources at their disposal, they become dependent on males and are seen as an extension of the male authority. Their weak, needy and docile status is associated with shame of their genitals and bodies.

In *Blasted*, we observe gender-bias, whereby Ian takes advantage of situations because of his gender. He is privileged, well-read and holds a good job while Cate is underprivileged, unskilled and jobless. Gender bias is also visible in Cate's low self-esteem, poor education and poor mental and physical health. As an underprivileged, she is abused without redress and even has to stay with her abuser. Cate is often at the

receiving end of stereotypes, while Ian is in a dominating position and attributes those stereotypes. He asserts his dominance by telling her that it is he who booked the luxurious hotel room for her (Kane 13). Immediately afterwards, he shows his vulnerability or his fatal diseases to lure Cate into his manipulation and succeeds. Cate responds to his kiss and pushes the extent of his seduction but is cut short by Cate. He then patronizes Cate by telling her that she is nervous maybe because they are meeting after a long time, and is able to kiss her again. The key is Ian's position of power. He seduces Cate because of this position of power. In the next scene, when Ian gets shocked by the sound of a car-backfire, which he thinks is a gunshot, the roles are reversed (28). Ian is traumatized by the blasting sound and is unable to control his emotions. He gets upset that Cate is laughing at him and his mental state regresses even more. Cate is now in a position of power. She controls the narrative but she does it differently. Unlike Ian, who asserts his power when he is in power, Cate tries to tend to Ian. She is neither condescending nor patronizing nor stigmatizing rather tries to make him feel better. Cate only knows one way to make Ian sane again, through sexual interaction. He kisses Ian, seduces him, performs a fellatio on him, and brings Ian back to his senses. Furthermore, Cate has internalized her subordinated status. That is, even if she is in a position of power, she does not act in likewise manner as does Ian, who has raped her the previous night. Her internalization is visible in her staying with Ian, talking and laughing with him, performing fellatio on him, stroking his hair and feeding him when he is starving.

The entry of Cate's father in *Blasted* also marks the disparity between the position of males and females in the domestic space. The return of Cate's father reorders the power dynamics of the family. Cate's distressed mental state hints at her father's assertion of his dominance at home. Her father sets the zero-level standard of their home and becomes the measure of all things. In her father's presence, Cate is no longer the center of attention and exists as an individual who is sidelined. It pushes her to the point of leaving home. When Ian gets in touch with her and invites her to a hotel, she agrees to meet him. She wants to feel special and cared for, which she was enjoying at home when her father was absent. She feels rejoiced upon entering a luxurious hotel room (Kane 2).

Likewise, in *Phaedra's Love*, King Theseus is the male head of his family. As a patriarch with unlimited resources at his disposal, he controls the family members, including his son Hippolytus, new wife Phaedra and step-daughter Strophe. He is the most important person in the family and thus, has access to the females. In addition to his wife, he is also sexually involved with Strophe (88). He enjoys the extent of his power.

Hippolytus, on the other hand, enjoys freedom and power in the absence of his father. The play revolves around her. It is interesting to note that although the play is entitled *Phaedra's Love*, she is not the main character of the play. Instead of her, Hippolytus is the protagonist of the play. The male characters of the family hold the center of the stage and their experiences are highlighted more than that of the females. The total scenes in the play are eight, but Phaedra appears only in three scenes and her death takes place off-stage. Strophe also dies but her death, although happens on stage, reasserts the dynamics of silencing the females. The play highlights the inferior status of the female characters, that is, Phaedra is invisibilized and Strophe is raped, silenced and murdered.

Grace, in *Cleansed*, is also an embodiment of female subordination. She is the sister of a drug addict Graham who dies of an overdose. She is dependent on her brother for every need and is unable to function without him in the world. After his death, her mental health deteriorates gradually, and she ends up getting admitted to a poorly managed university hospital. She goes to the hospital to get the belongings of her deceased brother but decides to stay there to feel close to her brother. Even death does not decrease his influence over her sister Grace (107-08). Graham, when he was alive, was a carefree individual. He was a drug addict and did as he pleased with life. He is the epitome of androcentrism, while her sister Grace exists as his extension. When nothing comforts her, she decides to change her gender through a sex change operation. She realizes that she cannot exist as herself and transforms into a transgendered person who resembles her dead brother Graham.

In *Skin*, Billy is the center around which the female characters revolve. There are two female characters in the play, including his mother and his neighbor Marcia. Billy lives alone and is not interested in her mother at all, although he has tattooed "Mum" on his chest (249). When her mother calls, Billy does not respond and lets the call go to the voicemail. Billy's mother is portrayed stereotypically, that is, as a worrying mother (250). She does not make an appearance in the play and exists as an invisible person. The second female character Marcia is a young black woman, who only exists to unburden Billy of his sins. Billy is a racist skinhead who has severely injured a black man. He is sexually attracted to Marcia and pursues her to her home, where she lives alone. While pursuing her, he lets go of his superior white man image and has sex with her. He gets emotionally attached to Marcia, who turns the table of power dynamics on him. Unlike other places, Marcia's home is a space where female activities are not devalued and controlled. She acts as an agent of violence when she tortures him mentally and physically, replicating

the humiliation Billy bestows upon black people. Marcia controls the narrative but her home is the only space where she is not inferiorized. She is aware of the extent of her power. After she cleanses Billy of his skinhead identity, she lets him go.

The devaluation of female activities is also observed in *Crave*. The character named M is an older woman who is unable to conceive a child of her own (167). She feels incomplete and suffers as a consequence. She is willing to do anything to get pregnant, including inventing lies to convince herself and others.

I keep telling people I'm pregnant. They say How did you do it, what are you taking? I say I drank a bottle of port, smoked fags and fucked a stranger.
(155)

The character M is a desperate woman who believes that she is running out of time. She visualizes having a child with strangers but she is not interested in a man. She just wants a child of her own. She is afraid of getting old and dying alone (166). Her existence is incomplete without a child. The subordinated position of the character M is visible in her valuing her worth only in her reproductive role. She seems all ready to get into the cycle of getting pregnant, birthing and rearing the infant, and does not seem to be bothered with who the male is or her dependency on him for food and protection.

Consequently, the male character, C's father in *Crave*, practices unlimited power at home. His dominance manifests in the form of control over the activities of his wife and child as well as perpetrating domestic violence against them. C's father physically thrashes her wife to make her obedient. He also uses her young daughter to make money for himself. He prostitutes her out to rich old pedophiles. He uses physical violence to control his family members. His wife shows little to no resistance and has gotten accustomed to her subordinate positions within the households.

Lastly, body and gender issues are highlighted in *4.48 Psychosis*. The protagonist is an unnamed and ungendered person with body issues. They believe that their "hip is too big" and they also dislike their genitals (207). They also believe that they are "born in the wrong body" (215). This subordinated position is shown in their description of feeling being used and manipulated all their life. The protagonist believes that they have no problem in providing what others need from them but when it comes to their turn, no one has ever done a thing for them. Not even their parents have done much for them rather than messing up the protagonist's life. The protagonist considers themselves a child

of neglect (239). The gender bias is visible in the protagonist's underprivileged, in their home and the hospital where they are admitted where they are victimized without redress. It is also visible in their low self-esteem, poor mental and physical health as well as being ashamed of their body and genitals.

Thus far, we have seen that the kinship system within Kane's plays is sustained by the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy makes the norm or the zero-level standard of the reality of kinship appear natural. That is, it renders Kane's characters to accept their oppressive domestic reality as natural and not inclusive of objective forms of violence. The objective forms of violence are also naturalized against other, unacceptable forms of Kinship relations in Kane's plays such as pre-marital sex, underage sex, adultery, prostitution, incest, homosexuality, etc. In Kane's plays, the features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations are underlined by paternalistic dominance in which the male is privileged and the female is underprivileged. We observe the disparity between the two genders, shown by the sexual double standard and female subordination, in male-centrism/androcentrism as well as gender asymmetry and biases in the world depicted by Kane. This gender disparity within kinship in Kane's plays is also known as objective violence, consisting of sexist language and gendered practices, and is invisibilized by the ideology of patriarchy. The next chapter will revise and conclude the thesis.

Conclusion

In the present research work entitled “Interpersonal Violence in the Plays of Sarah Kane: A Critical Study,” various aspects of violence in Sarah Kane’s plays have been explored through the interpretation of Slavoj Žižek’s theory of violence presented in the monograph entitled *Violence* (2009). The study presents a framework based on Žižek’s theory of violence in the first chapter. In chapter two, the figures of victims and agents of violence within Kane’s plays are explored, including how victims are perceived and how they react to violence as well as how agents are immunized from the effects of violence, how they victimize and justify/defend violence they perpetrate. Chapter three examines the space in which violence erupts in Kane’s world, which includes it being ideological, abyssal and a nest of fantasies. In chapter four, the ways violence affects Kane’s characters are investigated such as via emotions, such as fear, envy, terror and trauma; via economic situation; via socio-symbolic identity; via conflict between the particular and universal aspects of identity; via perception created by the circulation of false-images; and via false narrative which creates a deadlock so that violence does not stop. Furthermore, in chapter five, the general theory is particularized to the kinship system in Kane’s plays and the roles of language and gender are examined among the kins. The present chapter entitled “Conclusion” inspects the body of critical literature on violence in Kane’s plays and presents the aim of the study. The chapter also discusses the novelty and relevance of the present thesis, and presents a scope for further study in the future.

Kane’s plays have been explored from various critical approaches. Capitani (2013) and McCorry (2017) have investigated the treatment of the body. While Capitani focused on Kane’s use of body of her characters to problematize the contours of corporeality (137); on the other hand, McCorry focused on Kane’s use of body as food in addition to being a source and recipient of violence (12).

Likewise, Baraniecka (2013), Ablett (2014), Roberts (2015) and Kansiz (2017) have investigated the language employed in Kane’s plays. Baraniecka focused on the fragmentation and formlessness of language in *4.48 Psychosis*, which renders the protagonist incapable of forming concrete thoughts (171). Roberts also inspects the language of *4.48 Psychosis* to demonstrate the use of linguistic diversity to the play’s significance, especially in blurring the reality (98-99). Kansiz has also explored the role of fragmented language in *4.48 Psychosis* to expose the gap between the protagonist’s

perception and others' (277). Unlike others, Ablett inspects the language of *Blasted* to reveal Kane's use of derogatory language to upset the narrative of the play (63).

The characters of Kane's plays have also been examined by a number of critiques and scholars, including Saunders (2004), Lepage (2012), Delgado-Garcia (2012), Harari (2013) and Guerrero and Calvo (2019). Saunders inspects the dual nature of Kane's characters in *Blasted*, including being agents of action who are prone to errors and being individuals with certain traits such as having moral conflicts (69). Guerrero and Calvo investigate vulnerability of the character of Cate in *Blasted* to expose it as a trigger to resistance while facing abuse and oppression which helps her survive (2). LePage employs the Cartesian or liberal-humanist model to inspect the paradoxical qualities of the characters of *Blasted* such as Ian and Cate (272). On the other hand, Delgado-Garcia inspects the other characters in Kane's plays such as Grace and Graham in *Cleansed* and the protagonists of *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* to contradict the claim that her characters are based on Cartesian model (245). Harari explores the characters of *Phaedra's Love* and maintains that it is their experience of the reality they reside in which shapes their identities. For instance, Hippolytus's actions of consumption and seeking pleasure replicate the capitalist reality (318).

Urban (2001), Wixson (2005), Woodworth (2005), Lepage (2008), Radosavljevic (2012), Gritzner (2015) and Mangold (2019) have investigated Kane's plays from the perspectives of dramaturgy and theatre. Urban explores Kane's dramaturgy of ethics as a tactic to make her audience question their own ethics (37). Mangold and Lepage inspect Kane's depiction of failure on stage. The former sees it as a personal trait (36), while the latter maintains that failure is instilled by the social-cultural reality and cannot be averted (402). Wixson and Woodworth, on the other hand, inspect the depiction of violence on stage. The former explores the spatial shift in *Blasted* caused by depiction of violence and sex which destroys the notion of private space (87); while the latter examines the effect of using blood in the proximity of the audience (18). Radosavljevic also examines the affecting aspect of stage violence in *Blasted* and maintains that what shocks the audience is precisely the transition of domestic space into a warzone (503). Furthermore, Gritzner inspects the collapsed dramatic form of Kane's last two plays and finds that it relates to the fragmentation of character's subjectivities (336).

Kane's plays have also been examined from the perspective of performance and post-dramatic studies by Farrier (2005), Kaplan (2005), Barnett (2008), Claycomb (2013), Roberts (2015) and Harries (2017). Barnett claims that the purpose of using

unstructured time and space in *4.48 Psychosis* is to appeal to the audience's own personal memories (22). Similarly, Claycomb claims that the play's unstructured form makes its staging almost infinitely flexible (166); for Roberts, the unstructured text of Kane's last two plays creates numerous interpretive possibilities (19); and for Farrier, the fragmented text of *Crave* creates powerful performances because by enacting fragmented identities, the performers are able to relate to them (133). Meanwhile, Kaplan and Harries examine the representation of mental illness and stillness on stage respectively. The former finds that linguistic disjunctions represent mental illness on stage and transform the performance, make it more powerful (120); and the latter claims that stillness in contemporary performances makes the performances more powerful because the focus is not on the action but the words (17).

Watson (2008), Tycer (2008), Newlin (2013) and Ablett (2014) examine Kane's plays from the perspective of psychoanalytic studies. Watson sees Kane's use of psychotherapy in *4.48 Psychosis* as a tool to expose discrimination against mental patients within mental health institutions (210). Tycer correlates Kane's death with *4.48 Psychosis*, whereby the mental health system is critiqued for their subhuman treatment of the patients (24). Meanwhile, Ablett correlates the transition of the plot of *Blasted*, from domestic setting to war or dreamlike scenario to the transformation of its characters such as Ian, who also changes with the plot and goes from a fully functional adult male to a childlike state (69). Newlin also inspects *Blasted* but from a different point of view by comparing the play with *King Lear* and sees it as accessing reality through the symbolic (89).

Similarly, feminist perspective has been employed by Solga (2007), Aston (2010), Rijswijk (2012), Ward (2013) and Mihaylova (2015) to investigate Kane's plays. Aston finds the victims are not innocent nor are they glorified in Kane's plays and for Kane, everyone is going through a crisis of their own, be they males or females (584). Mihaylova finds that Kane avoids identity politics in her plays by refraining from the populist feminist movement (227). Meanwhile, Solga finds that Kane's plays, especially *Blasted*, deliberately engage with social anxieties about rape (349-50). Similarly, Ward inspects rape within Kane's plays to unravel Kane's efforts to bring public attention to the myth surrounding the rape (227). Rijswijk finds that Kane has used sexual violence in *Blasted* to comment on the distinction between our understanding of sexual violence within war and within domestic settings (110).

Violence has also been investigated in Kane's plays, including Seller (1996),

Rabellato (1999), Sakellaridou (2000), Saunders (2003), Singer (2004), Iball (2005), Carney (2005), Alber (2009), Harrison (2009), Oldham (2013) and McCorry (2017). Sakellaridou finds that Kane was one of the few playwrights who brought problems of the younger generation onto the stage (47). Harrison focused on Seneca's influence on Kane's plays especially in her preoccupation with violence (169). For Saunders, violence in Kane's plays creates despair which is a way for her characters to "connect and experience genuine human feeling with the world" (103). Rabellato inspects the real-life sources for violence in Kane's plays (28). Similarly, Seller finds that depiction of sex and violence in Kane's plays expose the social structures which facilitate violence (32). On the other hand, McCorry correlates sexual violence with the economy of meat (1). Iball finds that the exposure to violence resulted in *Blasted*'s bad reception (328). Meanwhile, Carney investigates the raw violence in *Blasted* and finds its significance in its social and political contexts (276). Alber reads *Cleansed* allegorically and finds the virtues and dangers of love between Grace and Graham (88). And Oldham explores the dramatic use of violence in Kane's plays to study its cathartic, purgative and political effects.

While conducting the review of literature, it is found that the existing research has employed different perspectives to explore violence in Kane's plays, including Aristotelian catharsis, absurdism, feminist, psychoanalytical, characterization, dramaturgical, post-dramatic and the investigation of language and body. Various aspects of violence such as sacrifice, scapegoating, institutionalization, effects of violence on mental and physical health have also been investigated independently but the present study provides a unified view to explore violence by employing a theory of violence which assimilates and carries forward a body of exploration of violence. The previous body of research takes violence for granted – hinting at the permanence of violence in the world – and the focus on violence in Kane's plays has been dispersed. These views can be seen to cohere within the body of thinking on violence as far as Kane's plays are concerned.

In exploring violence in Sarah Kane's plays, a view is presented in the form of the framework which is distinctive from other critical approaches. The present framework is nothing but an interpretation of Slavoj Žižek's theory of violence. In *Violence*, Žižek presents us with a typology of violence consisting of subjective and objective violence, with objective violence further divided into symbolic and systemic violence (1). According to Žižek, subjective and objective violence are two sides of the same coin, with the former as the visible or physical form of violence and the latter as the invisible

or subtle form of violence. Furthermore, objective violence remains hidden because it is inbuilt in the fabric of the society, that is, the language we use, which is a medium of communication and reconciliation, can also facilitate violence; the functioning of our institutions also facilitates discrimination and inequality. In other words, objective violence is inclusive of the norm, or what Žižek calls the “zero-level standard” of our reality (2). He also finds that it is ideology which renders the inherently violent norm of reality appear as “neutral, non-ideological, natural, [and] commonsensical” (31). That is, it hides objective violence from the common eye. For Žižek, it is the objective violence which sustains our reality. Subjective violence, on the other hand, is experienced against the very reality which is already inclusive of objective violence (2).

Although in the introduction of *Violence*, Žižek provides us with a typology of violence but the chapter scheme does not have continuity as far as exploration of the typology is concerned. Rather the chapters are based on the theme of Beethoven’s favorite string quartet, number 14 in C# major opus 131 to be precise. The monograph comprises the six chapters, or what he calls “six sideways glances” (3). The reason why Žižek does not confront violence directly is because of its overwhelming ability. That is, violence generates empathy towards the victims and restricts a dispassionate evaluation. The present framework uses the plethora of Žižek’s examples and interprets his monograph with respect to the three aspects of violence. Furthermore, the general theory is particularized to inspect the roles of language and gender within the kinship system. The present thesis explored research objectives which are based on the construction of a framework based on Žižek’s theory of violence, its particularization to kinship system, the application of the three aspects of violence explained within the framework, and the application of the particularization of the present theory to kinship system.

The first objective of this research work aims at the interpretation of Žižek’s theory of violence. A framework has been developed using Žižek’s critical insights from his monograph *Violence*. Three paradigmatic elements of violence are identified, all of which appear in Žižek’s monograph. These include victim-/agent-hood, space and affectivity of violence. The first section of the framework explored Žižek’s depiction of the victims and agents of violence – their attributes, categories and courses of actions. It comprises how the image/figure of the victims is constructed, how readily they are, or not, given the victim status and how they react to their victimization. It also comprises how the agents of violence victimize the weak, how they are immunized from the effects of violence such as the pain and suffering of the victims, and how violence is defended

or justified by the perpetrators and their supporters. The second section explored Žižek's examination of the space of violence and its various aspects such as the space being ideological, abyssal and a nest of obscene fantasies. Various distinctions of space are observed, including open and closed space, private and public space, social and political space as well as cyberspace. The third section explored Žižek's take on the affective nature of violence such as how violence affects the subjects of a space via their emotions, economic situation, socio-symbolic identity, constant internal conflict, perception created by false-images and false narrative leading to a deadlock. It is also observed that violence can transform victims into agents of violence as well as witnesses/observers into either virtual victims or into ones who intervene to stop violence.

The second research objective aims to particularize the general theory into the Western kinship system. The roles of language and gender within Western kinship are explored. It is observed that patriarchal ideology makes the norm of the reality of kinship appear natural. That is, it renders the objective violence to remain hidden in the features of kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations, which are underlined by paternalistic dominance in which the male is privileged and the female is underprivileged. This disparity, sexual double standard and female subordination, is depicted in male-centrism/androcentrism as well as gender asymmetry within the sexist language and gendered practices of the Western kinship.

The third research objective is an applicational objective which analyzes Kane's plays using the three aspects of violence proposed in the framework. These three aspects are extensively detailed in chapter two, three and four. The second chapter examined the first aspect or the victim- and agent-hood within Kane's plays. The figures of victims and agents of violence are investigated in Kane's plays, including their attributes and behavior. As victims, Kane's characters are perceived as a threatening and intrusive figure as well as have become a figure of obsession. They react differently to their individual victimization, including retreating to a safe space, internalizing their victimization, becoming sensitive to future victimization and standing their ground or fighting back. As agents of violence, Kane's characters react to a perceived threat and to victimize, they caress their own human side and qualities. They employ empty gestures to distract or coerce their victims; and defend/justify their action by blaming the victim, or portraying themselves as victims, or diverting the blame on the institution they serve, or defending their right to seek justice or vengeance, or claiming that violence is for

greater good or requires a sacrifice. The third chapter examined the space of violence within Kane's world. Her world is a world of violence not just because of the existence of subjective and objective violence, but also because her characters are born into violence and live with it. It is observed that Kane's world is violent because it is ideological because her characters are plagued with fear and envy of an imponderable Other, who keeps them in a never-ending abyss; and also, because it is a nest of obscene fantasies which exist in a censored form but are essential to sustain the space of violence. The fourth chapter examined the ways violence affects Kane's world. It has been observed that violence affects Kane's characters through their emotions, socio-economic status, socio-symbolic identity, internal conflict, constructed perception and false narrative. Furthermore, as victims, agents and observers of violence, her characters are also affected by the presence of each other. There is a multilayered affectivity of violence in Kane's plays.

The last objective of the thesis explored Kane's plays through the connection between language and gender as far as violence is concerned. The kinship system in Kane's world has been extensively detailed in chapter five. It has been observed that the kinship system within Kane's plays is sustained by the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy makes the norm or the zero-level standard of the reality of kinship appear natural. That is, it renders Kane's characters to accept their domestic reality as natural and not inclusive of objective forms of violence. The features of the kinship system, such as monogamy, nuclear family, neolocal residence, bilateral descent and the goal of kinship relations are underlined by gender-disparity. This gender-disparity within kinship in Kane's plays, also known as objective violence and comprises sexist language and gendered practices, is invisibilized by patriarchal ideology.

The present thesis is novel in its approach as it examines Kane's plays using an interpretation of a theory of violence. By employing three aspects of violence namely victim- and agent-hood, space and affectivity of violence, all of which can be observed in WHO's typology of violence as well as Žižek's theory of violence, a framework is developed to explore Kane's world, which is based on the world she lived on. The examples are used from Žižek's monograph to support the argument. Furthermore, Žižek's theory is a general theory. That is, it does not distinguish between various kinds of violence nor does it distinguish between the various spheres of life such as political, social, economic, etc. As a general theory, it can also be particularized. That is, if a theory can be applied to one aspect of human behavior, it can also be applied to others. So, the

general theory is particularized into the sphere of kinship system, Western kinship to be particular. Like Žižek's theory of violence finds ideology at the root of violence, this research finds patriarchal ideology at the root of violence in Western kinship within Kane's world. Thus, the study brings insights that affirm the existing piece of literature which depicts patriarchy as the root of kinship violence.

The significance of the present study lies in its contribution to create awareness about the aforementioned aspects of violence as well as the role language and kinship practices play in sustaining the patriarchal norms. Firstly, by exploring the figures of victims and agents of violence as well as their language and actions/reactions, the study makes us aware of the typical habits and behaviors. Secondly, by exploring the space of violence, the study makes us recognize the ideological and oppressive nature of the space of violence. And thirdly, by exploring the affectivity of violence, we become aware of the ways violence affects us. Furthermore, by exploring language and kinship practices within the kinship system, we learn how patriarchal ideology subtly operates and controls the norm of the kinship system.

The study enables us to understand the sustenance of the oppressive norms through the hidden form of violence. If we can become aware of the operations of the patriarchal ideology, it would help us tackle the violence prevalent within the sphere of kinship relations and society at large. Parallel to Žižek's thinking about how to bring improvement in our society, the study also emphasizes that to have an impactful change for the betterment of humanity, we must learn the ways patriarchal ideology operates within our kinship system. We must recognize that it is patriarchal ideology which renders us unable to see the objective forms of violence, such as disparity caused by sexist language and gendered kinship practices.

As far as the relevance of the present study is concerned, by looking into different aspects of violence within Kane's plays which capture the reality of the late twentieth century, the study provides valuable insights which are relevant to the present time. That is, although some progress has been made in recognizing the hidden forms of violence within the Western societies, the disparity still exists between sexes, races, ethnicities, etc. If we look at the gender dynamics, we find that the females are facing subtle forms of discrimination and inequality through stereotypes and supercilious behavior.

To conclude, the present study has provided us with a framework to explore violence through the three aspects of violence, consisting of victim- and agent-hood, space and affectivity of violence. The framework is based on the interpretation of Žižek's

theory of violence, which finds ideology at the heart of the very violence which sustains the norms of the space. The study has employed the aforementioned framework to investigate Kane's plays. Furthermore, the general theory is particularized into the sphere of Western kinship to explore the state of the kinship system. Using this particularization, the study has investigated kinship relations within Kane's world. The study has suggested that the ideology of patriarchy lies at the core of the very violence which sustains the gender disparity within Western kinship. Lastly, the study has provided us with a scope for further research. The same framework can be employed to inspect the state of gender disparity within other kinship systems.

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