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“This Disgusting Feast of Filth”: Meat Eating, Hospitality, and Violence in Sarah Kane’s Blasted

Sarah Kane’s landmark play *Blasted* (1995) scandalised its early audiences with its staging of serial sexual violence, war crimes, and cannibalism. The *Daily Mail*’s reviewer of its first performance at the Royal Court famously described it as a “disgusting feast of filth” (qtd. in Urban 36), an appraisal which unwittingly captures the centrality of questions of appetite to the play’s ethical and political project. *Blasted* is a play which troubles distinctions between purity and filth, and the edible and the inedible, with meat playing a crucial role as an object located at the borders of these distinctions.

In this essay, I will argue that attention to the consumption of meat – both human and nonhuman, material and symbolic – is crucial to a fuller understanding of the play’s well-documented interest in sexual violence and militarism (van Rijswijk; Solga; Radosavljević). The question of dietary ethics, which has been largely neglected in the capacious scholarly literature on the play, is brought into dialogue with a broader critique of violence, and the principal characters’ orientations towards meat eating are shown to variously resist, reflect, and reproduce the patterns of gendered and racialised violence on which the play is centred. I trace how the play brings meat into an economy of exchange, hospitality, and gift-giving which, while ostensibly driven by care, is nonetheless thoroughly structured by misogyny and racism. In doing so, I aim to situate my analysis within an ongoing conversation concerning the relationship between meat-eating (or the refusal thereof), hospitality, and violence. Recent work in the emerging field of vegan theory (Salih), as well as contentious modes of activist practice (The Liberation Pledge), demonstrate an awareness that the disruption of norms of hospitality can clear a space for critical agency.¹

¹ The Liberation Pledge (tagline: Turning the Tables Against Violence To Animals) requires animal activists to refuse the hospitality of meat-eaters, inviting them to “publicly refuse to sit where animals are being eaten.”

Hospitality is conventionally centred around the sharing of food, and one outcome of this practice of hospitality is the production and maintenance of affiliation and community. Meat enters the scene of hospitality as an object which, precisely insofar as it is an object, testifies to the limits of this work of community formation. Around the dinner table, meat functions as a token of exchange by which the human animal invites its conspecifics into relationships of gift-giving and reciprocity, and, by extension, relationships of affective, ethical, and political solidarity. What is necessarily absent from this process is the possibility of a solidarity which surpasses anthropocentrism. Rendered as meat, the animal is figured as something that can be a token of exchange between humans, rather than someone who could assume a place in a revised understanding of community.

Even seemingly benign and quotidian practices of hospitality, then, are thoroughly shaped by the workings of power. Who has the power to offer their hospitality to the other, and with what conditions? Who is excluded from the hospitable community? Who gets to sit around the table, on whose terms, and what (or who) is liable to end up on the table?² These are some of the questions which Sarah Kane broaches in *Blasted*. The play figures hospitality as something which is (or, more generously, can be) deeply coercive. Kane works towards a critique which stresses the constitutive exclusions of any conditional politics of hospitality, and in doing so opens a space for a politics which might allow for hospitality without limits – including, perhaps, hospitality to other animals.

The play turns on a tense encounter between an older man – the aggressively masculine Ian, an enthusiastic meat eater – and a younger woman: Cate, a seemingly naïve ethical vegetarian. They meet in a hotel room, where they play out an uncomfortable and coercive ritual of hospitality. Cate consistently refuses his gifts (principally meat) as well as his sexual advances. Following an unstaged rape of Cate by Ian, the room is “blasted by a

² My discussion of hospitality and power in this essay is deeply indebted to Sara Ahmed’s work on “Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)”, as well as Richard Twine’s pro-animal repurposing of this analysis in his article “Vegan Killjoys at the Table”. The table image originates with Ahmed.

mortar bomb” (39). Warfare erupts into the domestic space as an unnamed Soldier, who arrives uninvited at the hotel room, commits further acts of sexual violence and mutilation, this time towards Ian. Ian turns to cannibalism to survive, and Cate finally relinquishes her vegetarianism.

While there is an extensive scholarly literature on *Blasted*, existing work on the play tends to either ignore or neutralise the question of nonhuman suffering. The final scenes of the play stage the undoing of human dignity, as the mutilated and dying Ian defecates on the stage, cries, laughs “hysterically” (59), and finally exhumes and eats the corpse of a recently deceased infant victim of the war taking place offstage. Louise Lepage reads this sequence as inviting a revision, though not an abandonment, of humanist subjectivity, and Ben Brantley in the *New York Times* claims that “Ms. Kane has not created a crude bestiary of two-legged animals. For all their degradation and cruelty, her characters are complex, ambivalent and specifically, identifiably human.” Critical and journalistic writing on *Blasted* has tended to salvage a humanism (however altered) from catastrophe, framing Ian’s final condition of inhumanity as a specifically human tragedy.

In these accounts, Kane’s characters have something to lose, namely their human dignity (however compromised by their cruelty). Its loss constitutes the tragic content of the play, while its (fragile) recovery allows for something like the possibility of redemption.

Laura López Peña argues that

throughout the second half of the play, Ian undergoes both a dehumanizing and a humanizing process, as, on the one hand, he is dehumanized from his former violent, uncaring and insensible type of humanity and, on the other, this dehumanization enables him to finally embrace a new kind of humanism which makes him capable, by the very end of the play, of uttering the significant words “thank you” to Cate. (116)

I would suggest instead that there is a possibility of reading the play otherwise than anthropocentrically. Humanist readings of the play struggle to account for Cate's vegetarianism as a serious ethical orientation towards the nonhuman. *Blasted* certainly stages the abandonment of all of the ontological and ethical guarantees which are conventionally associated with human dignity, and in the final scenes Kane renders her characters as little more than surfaces on which (patriarchal, militarist) power acts—renders them, precisely, as meat. Reading through Cate's nonhumanist perspective, however, the violence onstage is tragic not because it reduces the human animal to mere meat; rather, the condition of possibility for the play's violence is the very existence of meat as an ontological and ethical category.

The play's setting—a “very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world” (3)—immediately leads us to expect a drama of hospitality. Ian has invited Cate there as his guest, and a host's paraphernalia is present on stage: “A mini-bar and champagne on ice. [...] A large bouquet of flowers.” (3) As David Grieg puts it in his introduction to Kane's *Complete Plays*,

the stage immediately suggests the kind of chamber piece about relationships with which the British theatre-goer is so familiar. And yet, almost from the play's first words, “I've shat in better places than this,” there is an uneasy awareness that the play is not behaving itself. (ix)

As an audience, we enter into a contract of hospitality with any play which is grounded in a horizon of expectations about theatre as a cultural practice. *Blasted*'s early reviewers expected good company and excellent (or at least palatable) fare, though of course that was very far from what they were going to get. The outrage with which the play was initially received seemed to derive from a sense that the norms of theatrical hospitality had been breached. *Blasted* was an unusually poorly behaved host.

This formal disruption of the norms of hospitality is repeated throughout the play at the level of content, as Ian's behaviour as host reveals the ways in which hospitality can be at best non-innocent, and, at worst thoroughly coercive and violent. Early in the play, Ian's seduction (or more accurately, coercion) of Cate is interrupted by a telephone call from his co-worker, a tabloid newspaper editor. Ian dictates his story over the phone:

A serial killer slaughtered British tourist Samantha Scrace, S-C-R-A-C-E, in a sick murder ritual comma, police revealed yesterday point new par. The bubbly nineteen-year-old from Leeds was among seven victims found buried in identical triangular tombs in an isolated New Zealand forest point new par. Each had been stabbed more than twenty times and placed face down comma, hands bound behind their backs point new par. Caps up, ashes at the site showed the maniac had stayed to cook a meal, caps down point new par. Samantha comma, a beautiful redhead with dreams of becoming a model comma, was on the trip of a lifetime after finishing her A levels last year point. (12-13, my emphasis)

This disturbing "slaughter" frames the later parts of the play by placing violence and eating in close proximity to one another. Ian's tabloid capital letters centre the story on a moment of inhospitality through which the murder is apprehended as especially heinous because of the killer's decision to eat a solitary meal. Samantha's singular status as a named person alongside six anonymous victims gestures towards the ambivalence of paternalistic models of care. She is framed as an intelligible victim through misogyny (the eroticisation of her age and appearance) and nationalism (the other victims being presumably non-British). The prurient narration of her death enacts a serial violence upon the murdered woman in a way which is linked to the murderer's "maniacal" appetite, as Ian and his readers consume her story with evident pleasure.

A few minutes before Ian recounts this story, Blasted stages another moment of eating, this time notionally hospitable, as Ian receives an order of food from room service. In this sequence, the play refuses the conventional function of hospitality as conviviality, saturating the moment of shared eating with racism, violence, and misogyny. In the first instance, following the knock at the hotel room door, “**Ian** starts, and **Cate** goes to answer it. [...] He takes his gun from the holster and goes to the door” (6). After a pause, Ian is reassured that there is no threat, announcing that it’s “Probably the wog with the sarnies. Open it” (6). The scene continues:

Cate opens the door.

There’s no one there, just a tray of sandwiches on the floor.

She brings them in and examines them.

Cate Ham. Don’t believe it.

Ian (Takes a sandwich and eats it.)

Champagne?

Cate (Shakes her head.)

Ian Got something against ham?

Cate Dead meat. Blood. Can’t eat an animal.

Ian No one would know.

Cate No, I can’t. I actually can’t. I’d puke all over the place.

Ian It’s only a pig.

Cate I CAN’T.

Ian I’ll take you out for an Indian.

Jesus, what’s this? Cheese?

Cate beams.

She separates the cheese sandwiches from the ham ones, and eats.

Ian watches her. (6-7)

Before analysing the valuation of meat in this sequence, it may be worth briefly exploring the play's uneasy relationship to place. Where one strand of ecocriticism wants to anchor our openness to the nonhuman world in the specificity of time and place (Bate), *Blasted*'s hotel room altogether refuses this possibility, offering us instead an atemporal non-place which "could be anywhere in the world" (3), and whose occupants anxiously secure it against the outside world through physical force. *Blasted*'s ecology combines this severance from place with the erasure of the material conditions of the production of commodities in general, and meat in particular. As Timothy Pachirat has argued, industrialised slaughter has followed a broader pattern in modernity which has seen the "distancing and concealment of morally and physically repugnant practices rather than their elimination or transformation" (11). In *Blasted*, even the distribution of commodities is hidden from view, as animal bodies simply appear at the hotel room door. Here we should also note how, in scenes of hospitality, the seeming beneficence of the host is often dependent on the erasure of the labour of others. The non-appearance of the (black) hotel worker at the door exemplifies the ways in which the welcome of the (white, paternal) host often works to render invisible forms of reproductive labour which are typically gendered, and in this case racialised.

Cate's refusal of the ham sandwiches in this sequence is grounded in her uncomfortably acute perception of the materiality of meat. Her rejection of meat is not quite founded on her belief in the injustice of taking a nonhuman life, understood as the injustice of killing someone who is apprehended as a subject demanding ethical consideration. Rather, and in partial consonance with much recent work in Animal Studies (Pick; Diamond), her ethical sensibility grows from her attunement to the exposure of the animal body (and later

the human body) to violence. It is an ethics of materiality rather than subjectivity, oriented towards embodiment as a site of harm: a visceral refusal to allow her body to incorporate the body of the other.

As Judith Still has argued, “Hospitality implies letting the other in to oneself, to one’s own space – it is invasive of the integrity of the self, or the domain of the self” (13).

Hospitality thus stands in a complicated relationship to both eating and sexuality. Meat eating intensifies the ambivalent power relationship at the core of hospitality. As a social practice of hospitality, it requires not only that one person (who, however beneficent, remains “master of the house”) should allow another to enter their space. In meat eating, the logic of the threshold and the dynamic of incorporation which characterises all modes of hospitality becomes the radical (and violent) introjection of the body of the other—an other, moreover, who is never recognised as such.

Sexuality too requires “letting the other in to oneself”, at least in the phallogocentric and heterosexist model of desire represented by Ian. As Still points out, “The body is the first sphere of hospitality, before the home, the city, the nation state or the cosmos, and inhospitality is often narrativized as rape” (22). Cate’s refusal of Ian’s meat thus becomes a kind of grim pun through which Kane links Ian’s sexual predation to his carnivorous appetite. Her refusal confounds Ian’s sense of sovereign authority, his inability to recognise the body of the other (“It’s only a pig”) as something demanding ethical consideration. He is the model of what Jacques Derrida refers to as the carnophallogocentric subject, believing that his carnivorous, masculine authority entitles him to use the other’s body (whether human or nonhuman) as he wishes.

Later, and in dialogue with their discussion of the ethics of meat eating, Ian describes his work to Cate. In addition to being a journalist, Ian has been secretly employed by the state to undertake clandestine activity. The precise nature and context of this work is never made

explicit, but it is clear that it has involved targeted killing. Ian's motivation for this work is patriotic, a motivation which is closely aligned to his racist anxieties about "Wogs and Pakis taking over" (4). He kills, he says, "because I love this land" (30). "It's wrong to kill," Cate tells him (32).

Ian When are you going to grow up?

Cate I don't believe in killing.

Ian You'll learn.

Cate No, I won't. (32)

Ian's employment as a killer, and Cate's consistent rejection of killing in both cases, assimilates his violent work to his dietary practice. As Laura Wright (28-42) has recently shown, meat eating is closely linked to nationalist imperatives, so that the refusal of meat is identified with a suspicious lack of patriotic fervour. Ian's willingness to kill contrasts with Cate's generalised pacifism (which encompasses her vegetarianism) as the attitude which is necessary to secure the state and its citizens (or at least, its white citizens).

Ian's belief in the desirability of killing reframes their earlier discussion of meat eating so that his incomprehension at her vegetarianism becomes a form of coercive inducement to eat meat. The room-service scene is very far from the hospitable ideal of welcoming generosity, and is instead thoroughly structured by an authority which is grounded in the condescending pedagogy of the older man ("You'll learn"). It is "a conjugal model, paternal and phallogocentric. It's the familial despot, the father, the spouse, and the boss, the master of the house who lays down the laws of hospitality" (Dufourmantele and Derrida 149).

Later in the play, following the outbreak of war outside which announces the intrusion of the Soldier into the hotel room, Kane intensifies this sense of the overdetermination of hospitality by power. On arriving at the hotel room, the Soldier asks:

Soldier What's that?

Ian looks down and realises he is still holding a rasher of bacon.

Ian Pig.

The **Soldier** holds out his hand.

Ian gives him the bacon and he eats it quickly, rind and all

The **Soldier** wipes his mouth.

Soldier Got any more? (36)

Here, the relationship between meat and (masculine) power is intensified. Meat is a privileged token of exchange between men, with the Soldier, archetype of masculine authority and force, receiving the larger share. As Carol J. Adams has shown, the rationing policies of Western governments during the wars of the Twentieth Century have emphasised the supposed necessity of supplying fighting men with meat at the expense of the civilian population (55-56), aligning meat eating, masculinity, and physical force within the biopolitics of the militarised state.

In this connection, the deeply ambivalent description offered by the scandalised Daily Mail reviewer (inadvertently) encapsulates the core of the play's ethical and political project. *Blasted* is a "disgusting feast of filth" not only because it concerns itself with the "filth" of violence, bodily functions, and the abject. It is also, quite self-consciously, a "feast"; that is, it is deeply concerned with practices of sharing (particularly of food) which variously constitute, reproduce, and dissolve relationships and affinities. For Kane, though, this feasting lacks the customary connotations of abundance and conviviality. *Blasted*'s hospitality is more closely aligned with a quasi-paternalistic power which, in the end, also supplies an alibi for patriarchal violence. The image of a "disgusting feast of filth" is apt because it refuses to imagine a benevolent hospitality which is disrupted by the intrusion of violence (perhaps by the bomb blast which breaks open the stage mid-play). Hospitality in the play is not some

benign thing which is supplemented (or erased) by power; instead, hospitality is already and necessarily a manifestation of power relations.

Blasted transforms the scene of hospitality into a spectacle of violence, and in doing so it raises the question of our own complicity in (or indifference towards) various kinds of harm. As Peña suggests, the play can be read as “a firm condemnation of the passivity with which society contemplates and continues perpetuating violence in its multiple and equally destructive manifestations” (112). The play frames violence in a manner that calls us to account for ourselves, and yet I wonder here about the relationship between its staging of violence and the epistemological and ethical work performed by the act of framing.

A frame is a device which allows for certain concerns to be centred in the field of vision, while necessarily moving other concerns to the periphery or excluding them altogether. As Judith Butler claims, “If certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense” (1). The practice of framing always risks the possibility that “the frame never quite contain[s] the scene it was meant to limn, that something [is left] outside which makes the very sense of the inside possible, recognisable” (9). Kim Solga’s powerful article “Blasted’s Hysteria” thematises this problem of framing by attempting to account for the strategic non-representation of Cate’s rape by Ian. In the context of Blasté’s heterodox theatrical realism, Solga point out that “Realism relies not so much on the power of the visible as on the strategic elision of everything outside its defined visual field in order to guarantee the singularity of its projected reality” (356).

This insistence that an appropriate frame is necessary in order for violence to appear as such seems to me to be a useful way of thinking through the absence of violence against animals as a theme in the scholarly literature on Blasté. This omission does not belong to the play itself, which as I have shown, is deeply concerned with violence against animals as an

ethical problem.³ Rather, the omission reflects a broader cultural investment in anthropocentrism. In her essay “Room Service,” Helen Iball produces a perceptive analysis of the play which nonetheless misses the centrality of meat eating to its broader ethical project. She shows how,

With the onset of war, expectations of compartmentalisation shift or are refused. Skin is ruptured, bodies leak blood from violently torn orifices, brains are blown out, flesh is eaten, the soldier urinates on the bed, Ian defecates on the bedroom floor – an action given ironic presage in the line with which he opens the play: “I’ve shat in better places than this.” (327)

In positioning flesh eating as something which erupts onto the stage after the onset of war, this analysis occludes the scenes of flesh eating that introduce the play. Anthropocentrism renders the animal invisible; the eating of flesh (and indeed the rupturing of bodily boundaries that is its precondition) hides in plain sight on the stage. In this frame, animal bodies are not ethically intelligible, and the violence of flesh eating is reserved for the horrifying spectacle of cannibalism which concludes the play.

Drawing on Carol J. Adams’s work, Dinesh Wadiwel refers to the production of meat as entailing a kind of epistemic violence: “If violence can be smoothed in such a way that it does not appear as violence, then the process of converting an animate sentient being into a ‘thing’ is complete, and resistance and war become hidden under a veneer of peaceability” (13). *Blasted*’s key conceptual and narrative device is the bomb blast which announces the transformation of the space of hospitality into a warzone, puncturing what Kane refers to as the “paper-thin wall between the safety and civilization of peacetime Britain and the chaotic violence of civil war” (qtd. in Iball 323). The blast reorients the frame through which we apprehend the violence onstage, inviting us to identify Ian’s sexual predation, his racism,

³ Although I am by no means attempting a biographical or intentionalist reading of the play here, it is worth noting that Kane herself abstained from meat eating (Sierz).

aggression, and indifference to nonhuman suffering—all of which, however odious, are sadly familiar—with the spectacular violence that follows. The play closes (or rather, renders illusory) the gap between a practice of hospitality which is grounded in (masculine) authority and the shared consumption of meat on the one hand, and the violence of open warfare on the other. In doing so, it renders obsolete the anthropocentric frame that it identifies with patriarchal violence, refusing the epistemic violence that allows us to claim, with Ian, “It’s only a pig.”

In assimilating meat eating to other forms of violence that are more readily recognisable as such, *Blasted* risks forfeiting the specificity of violence against animals, turning nonhuman suffering into “a metaphor for someone else’s existence or fate” (Adams 67). Conventionally enough, the various infra-human forms of violence in the play are made intelligible through recourse to a rhetoric of species difference: militarism leads to refugees being packed onto trains “like pigs” (50); Ian’s proprietorial attitude towards Cate becomes a racist anxiety about her supposed desire for “black meat” (17); and Cate herself becomes sexualised “meat” to the predatory Ian, literalised by his biting of her vagina during the unstaged sexual assault (32).

Blasted certainly deploys meat as a metaphor for other forms of violence, but Cate’s insistent vegetarianism renders problematic any attempt to reduce the nonhuman suffering that the production of meat entails to a metaphor for human trauma. In the opening scene, meat is introduced in the play as an exemplary object on which power acts, though this cannot be read merely as a rehearsal for the violence against humans which will follow, but as a thing which demands our ethical attentions in its own right. Cate’s rejection of meat must certainly be read in relation to her rejection of Ian’s chauvinism and militarism, but we must resist a move that would dissolve the former into the latter; taking Cate at her word, it must also be read, quite literally, as a rejection of violence towards animal bodies.

The play positions the human body as something altogether inhuman. Like meat, it is the site of violence and decay, and its materiality and fragility repeatedly asserts itself, as when Ian is made insensible by a coughing fit that leaves him “making involuntary crying sounds” (24). Ian is terminally ill, with lung cancer we surmise. Although he “Can’t stand” the thought of “Death. Not being” (10), he continues to smoke and drink heavily, despite Cate’s protests. Shortly after the scene with the ham sandwiches, Ian recounts his medical history to Cate:

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. (11)

Derrida’s analysis of carnophallogocentrism in “Eating Well” describes a structure of subjectivisation which produces the masculine, dominant subject who asserts his power through the sacrifice of animality, including the literal incorporation of animal bodies as meat, the subordination of women (coded as natural), and the restraint of his own animality (understood as the subordination of desire to reason, id to ego). In his assertion of sovereign authority, his provision of meat and drink, and his (not always successful) attempts to coerce Cate, Ian instantiates this adversarial subject position. This subject position—which desires to transcend and master animality, including human animality—is always haunted by the possibility of failure. Ian’s illness reveals the ways in which the fantasy of the sovereign subject remains tied to materiality. No matter how vigorously he asserts his independence from and mastery of the animal, he still inhabits (or rather is) an animal body which is subject to decay and injury; subject to the inevitability that it will one day become, as he puts it, “rotting pork.”

Ian's adversarial relationship to animality is foregrounded through his positioning of animal products in the scenes of hospitality discussed above. I have tried to show how violence is rendered unintelligible (or at least, not ethically salient) by drawing on Adams's and Wadiwel's analyses of the framing of violence towards animals. For Adams, this violence is made possible through linguistic strategies which erase the trace of the once-living animal in processes of meat production and consumption: "Animals in name and body are made absent as animals for meat to exist" (66), so that we eat "beef" rather than "cows." Ian pointedly acknowledges the violence entailed in meat eating by refusing the prophylaxis of what Adams calls the "absent referent" (66-69); it's "pig," and not bacon or ham, that he uses to refer to the flesh in his two scenes of exchange with the Soldier and Cate. This reassertion of supremacy is belied by a fraught recognition that he, too, is a body made from meat, not least when he dissociates himself from the "rotting pork" of his tumour.

The apotheosis of this anxiety comes towards the conclusion of the play, after Cate has fled and Ian is left alone with the Soldier. The Soldier, claiming he is "starving," "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" (50). Ian, the phallogocentric host who procures meat for his female guest (and tries unsuccessfully to enforce its consumption), becomes meat in turn for another, more powerful figure of masculine authority. After the Soldier's suicide, the blinded Ian disinters and consumes an infant's corpse (60). The violence (however occluded) that is involved in the production of meat becomes, by the end of the play, the generalised condition of social existence. Every body becomes potential meat for the other.

The final moments of the play see Cate return from the warzone offstage, eating sausage and bread. In an ironic inversion of the room service scene, she revives Ian by feeding him the remains of the food. With the last line of the play, the grateful Ian offers her his thanks. This sequence, which has been read as the redemption of hospitality, and more

generally, the redemption of humanism (Peña 116), resists easy interpretation. My sense is that Cate's turn away from her vegetarianism, and her final breaking of bread (and meat) with Ian, cannot be straightforwardly read as providing a more equitable account of hospitality. Importantly, Cate's meat eating takes place under conditions of extraordinary scarcity. Moreover, the conditions of patriarchal hospitality remain in effect: she acquires the sausage by exchanging it for sex with a soldier, an encounter which leaves her wounded (58; 60). In spite of the conciliatory tone of this final encounter, then, *Blasted's* most affecting moment of hospitality remains within an economy of exchange which is governed by male power.

In her book on Jacques Derrida and hospitality, Judith Still observes that "Hospitality between men is a human virtue that helps to define humanity" (205). Of course, as Still goes on to point out, this model of hospitable exchange figures hospitality as a relationship between men—that is, as a mode of relation which reproduces gender as well as species distinctions. In problematising the sovereign pretensions of the humanist subject (particularly concerning its imagined rights to the animal body), and in linking this questioning to a critique of patriarchal authority, *Blasted* asks whether it might be possible to imagine a less violent, more equitable practice of hospitality.

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