The Unburiable
Representations of pain and violence in selected works of Sarah Kane and Caryl Churchill

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Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Arts with Honours
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Abstract

In this thesis I intend to answer the question of how representations of pain and violence in the selected plays of Kane and Churchill assist the critical understanding of those works. The works I have selected are Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* and Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children: A play for Gaza*. To assist the understanding of the spectator and to enable me to engage with the plays in closer detail I draw on a selection of theories from the philosophers Judith Butler and Arne Johan Vetlesen. In particular I discuss Butler’s theorisation of grief, vulnerability and responsibility to (and for) the Other. I also discuss Vetlesen’s responses to pain and torture, with emphasis on his notions of pain transference. From my reading and analysis of the plays, I find that both works provoke a complex set of responses to issues of communal responsibility and identity. The reference in the title to ‘the unburiable’ is a term coined by Butler to explain the efforts of some people to dehumanise the Other. Applying the theoretical ideas of Butler and Vetlesen to the plays provides a way to negotiate the fragile gap between those that matter and those who have become the unburiable.
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**Warning:** Some of the content of this thesis may offend or disturb some readers.
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