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**\*\*Research Article\*\***

# ***Psychology of Belonging and Traumatized Soldiers in In-Yer-Face Theatre: Anthony Neilson's Penetrator and Sarah Kane's Blasted\****

**Mustafa Bal & Çağan Fırtına\*\***

## **Abstract**

The psychological concept of belonging (or belongingness) is a strong motive found in human nature. When not satisfied or is lost, it causes highly problematic behaviors and relationships, leading sufferers to try to satisfy their need to belong. This article studies how belongingness finds reflections in the isolated and traumatized soldier characters of the two significant plays, namely *Penetrator* (1993) by Anthony Neilson and *Blasted* (1995) by Sarah Kane, of the 1990s British drama, known as the In-Yer-Face theatre. In order to achieve this, this article analyzes the soldier characters – Tadge from *Penetrator* and Soldier from *Blasted* – found in these plays by means of the theories and related studies on the concept of belonging such as those put forth by Roy Baumeister, Mark Leary, Abraham Maslow, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Lacan. The study expands the analyses of the soldier characters in the plays by juxtaposing the theories of belonging and sense of belonging with related studies on several other psychological concepts, such as recognition, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and transference.

**Keywords:** Belonging, belongingness, in-yer-face theatre, Sarah Kane, *Blasted*, Anthony Neilson, *Penetrator*

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**\*\*Araştırma Makalesi\*\***

***Yüze Vurumcu Tiyatroda Aidiyet Psikolojisi ve  
Psikolojik Travmalı Askerler: Anthony Neilson'ın  
Delici (Penetrator) ve Sarah Kane'in Harap (Blasted)  
Adlı Oyunları\****

**Mustafa Bal ve Çağan Fırtına\*\***

**Öz**

Psikolojik bir kavram olarak aidiyet insan doğasında bulunan güçlü bir güdüdür. Bu güdünün tatmin edilmeyişi veya yitirilişi, insanların davranışlarında ve ilişkilerinde son derece ciddi sorunlara sebep olmaktadır. Bu sorunu yaşayan kişiler aidiyet ihtiyaçlarını gidermeye gayret ederler. Buradan hareketle bu makale aidiyet ihtiyacı ve aidiyet duygusu kavramlarının, Yüze Vurumcu Tiyatro (In-Yer-Face theatre) olarak da adlandırılan 1990'lar Britanya tiyatrosunun iki önemli oyunu olan Anthony Neilson'ın *Delici (Penetrator-1993)* ve Sarah Kane'in *Harap (Blasted-1995)* adlı oyunlarında bulunan yalnızlaşmış, çevrelerinden soyutlanmış ve psikolojik travmalı asker karakterler ile olan ilişkisini incelemektedir. Bu doğrultuda bu makale *Delici*'deki Tadge karakteri ile *Harap*'taki Asker (Soldier) karakterini Roy Baumeister, Mark Leary, Abraham Maslow, Sigmund Freud ve Jacques Lacan tarafından ortaya konulmuş aidiyet kavramı ile ilişkili teoriler ve ilintili çalışmalar yardımıyla irdelemektedir. Oyunların asker karakterleri ile aidiyet ihtiyacı ve aidiyet duygusu arasındaki bağlar, ilgili teorilerin, takdir edilme/onaylanma, travma sonrası stres bozukluğu ve aktarım gibi diğer psikoloji kavramları ile birlikte değerlendirilmesiyle çözümlenmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Aidiyet, yüze vurumcu tiyatro, Sarah Kane, *Harap (Blasted)*, Anthony Neilson, *Delici (Penetrator)*

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## ***Psychology of Belonging and Traumatized Soldiers in In-Yer-Face Theatre: Anthony Neilson's Penetrator and Sarah Kane's Blasted***

### **Introduction**

Psychological, social, and philosophical isolation that people, especially in the urbanized geographies of the world, have been experiencing since the end of the Second World War is today a serious phenomenon that has become even more important due to the Internet revolution and digitalization of lives and identities, political polarizations, recent unnamed wars dubbed as proxy wars, and made-up controversies to replace the conflicts of the one-time cold war. However, the last and the strongest of all the factors of human isolation has been the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic: it has radically taken the upper hand over all the other means of isolation by making each human being a potential hostile to another human being, enforcing, this time, direct physical isolation called social distancing. Belonging (or belongingness)<sup>1</sup> and sense of belonging are interrelated psychological terms that are conducive to analyzing the forms of human isolation. Accordingly, this article studies how the psychological concept of belonging finds reflections in the isolated and traumatized soldier characters of the two significant plays, namely *Penetrator* (1993) by Anthony Neilson and *Blasted* (1995) by Sarah Kane, of the 1990s British drama, defined as the “in-yer-face theatre” by Aleks Sierz (2000: 4).

Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator* and Sarah Kane's *Blasted* are open to many literary, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and cultural interpretations. In order to further the studies on these plays, this article analyses the soldier characters in Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator* and Sarah Kane's *Blasted* through the psychological theories and related studies on belonging, such as those put forth by Baumeister, Leary, Maslow, Freud, and Lacan. To achieve this, the article initially looks into the understanding and the human emotional need for belonging, through first Maslow's, then Baumeister and Leary's explanations of how belonging is a fundamental psychological motive and need. The study continues by explaining the causes and

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the terms “belonging” and “belongingness” are used interchangeably.

consequences of the lack of a sense of belonging. Then it moves to the illustration of these theories and issues through analyses of the two soldier characters, namely Tadge from Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator* and Soldier from Sarah Kane's *Blasted*.

A brief literature review shows that both *Penetrator* and *Blasted* have already been studied through several perspectives. More concretely, Rich Bryan's study called "Boys Will Be Boys: Public Language and 'Subcultures of Violence' in Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*" explores the relationship between "language and violence" (2006: 91) in *Penetrator*, while Robert Kielawski's "Between Paranoid Men: Masculinity and Violent Homosocialities in Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*" examines "the links between masculinity, paranoia, and male homosociality" (2016: 103); and Mustafa Bal's "Memory Plays: Harold Pinter's *Old Times* and Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*" studies the dynamics of "Neilson's use of memory" (2021: 156) in the same play. On the other hand, Elaine Aston in her "Feeling the Loss of Feminism: Sarah Kane's 'Blasted' and an Experiential Genealogy of Contemporary Women's Playwriting" questions "the loss of feminism" (2010: 577) in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* while Aoise Stratford in her "Reopening Sarah Kane's 'Chamber of Horrors': *Blasted* as Gothic Drama" interprets the play "through the hermeneutics of the Gothic" (2019: 25), and Sarah Ablett in her "Approaching Abjection in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*" uses Kristeva's abjection theories to argue "that Kane's carefully crafted movement from the social conventions of a domestic play to surreal imagery constitutes a regression from a symbolic to a semiotic order" (2014: 63). Nevertheless, these plays (like numerous others) have never been analyzed by means of psychological theories and related studies on belongingness, and in this sense, it is significant to do an analysis of the plays through the belongingness perspective, which stands out as a significant analysis marker for future research in the field.

While the dictionary of the American Psychological Association defines belonging as "the feeling of being accepted and approved by a group or by society as a whole" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.) or the Collins English dictionary describes belongingness as "the human state of being an essential part of something" (The Collins English Dictionary, n.d.), Abraham Maslow, as he examines the needs of human beings in his study "A Theory of Human Motivation," provides a

more sophisticated understanding and clarification for the concept of belongingness by placing it at a level of significance and priority that comes right after the physiological and safety needs such as eating and sheltering: “If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs...” (1943: 380). Connected to this idea, he also proposes that human beings have “esteem needs,” which he divides into two categories as “the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for confidence in the face of the world and for independence and freedom...” and “the desire for reputation or prestige, recognition, attention, importance or appreciation” (Maslow, 1943: 381-382). While Maslow laid the foundations of the need to belong, Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary expanded on the idea in their study called “The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation” (1995). In this article, the authors state that “human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships” which should be stable and in which each party should care for each other (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 497). This is also the fundamental motive for many emotions, behaviors, and thoughts (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 497). However, when a person experiences an undesired state change, that person is motivated to behave in a way that will restore the desired state (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 498) – a case that is also seen in the interpersonal relationships in Neilson’s *Penetrator* and Kane’s *Blasted*, which will be elaborated later in this article. The satisfaction of the need to belong comes from the belief that the other party loves and cares about the person, giving way to a mutual care and love relationship between the two parties (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 500). Even the farewells, as Goffman studies in his *Relations in Public*, are a way of saying that the relationship is not over and will be maintained (Goffman, as cited in Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 503). Also, under whatever circumstances it may be, ending a relationship, and thus creating a need for belonging, is always disfavored by humans, and people have a hard time ending even unhealthy or destructive relationships, meaning that the need to belong lies deep in human beings (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 503).

Another important theory for this study that Baumeister and Leary put forth is that problematic social bonds and relationships that damage one’s sense of

belonging can cause an individual to commit suicidal, immoral, controversial, criminal, or even outright violent and brutal actions in order to fulfil the need to belong (1995: 509). People who do not have adequate, thus unfulfilling relationships, in terms of belongingness, experience greater stress (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 508). As Bhatti et al. suggest, “[r]ejected children have a higher incidence of psychopathology than other children” (Bhatti et al., as cited in Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 509) and children, who do not receive the necessary love and care, whether from parents or a caregiver, and therefore, could not satisfy their need of belongingness, “show emotional and behavioral pathologies” (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 509). According to respective studies done by Hobfall and London, and Solomon et al., veterans who have better social support, and thus satisfy their need to belong, are less likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder compared to those who have lower social support (Hobfall and London; Solomon et al., as cited in Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 509). Naturally, it is understood that people who were able to satisfy their need of belongingness, whether in their childhood or adulthood, their psychological health, and thus their overall life quality, are much better than those who cannot satisfy their need in any context whatsoever.

### **Belongingness in Anthony Neilson’s *Penetrator***

Henceforth, this study starts analyzing the plays and their soldier characters in question by means of the theories that have been studied so far. The journey back home that the soldier character named Tadge of Anthony Neilson’s *Penetrator* goes through is the first point to start the analysis between the concept of belonging and the play. Tadge appears in the very first scene, although the reader infers this – that it is Tadge – only later, as it is not explicitly stated or revealed there. As a rather surreal scene, the setting changes between a male hitchhiker (Tadge) and his imagination, in which he experiences, if not dreams, a series of acts of sexual harassment by the female driver who has taken him in her car. Because Tadge’s imagination becomes rather apparent, if not transparent, it is easier to delve into his subconscious and see that although this may have been caused by a regular sexual impulse that makes him imagine such things, it later becomes more obvious that he or rather his mind is trying to satisfy not only a mere sexual need but also a need to belong, in line with

what Baumeister and Leary claim in their study when they assert that “being accepted, included, or welcomed leads to a variety of positive emotions (e.g., happiness, elation, contentment, and calm), whereas being rejected, excluded, or ignored leads to potent negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy, and loneliness)” (1995: 508). In this sense, Tadge’s imagining the woman’s welcoming him as a sexual partner signifies his wish to be accepted, which is the main reason for his return, or wish to return, to his old, childhood friend Max. Besides, Tadge’s desire to be desired sexually, as reflected in his imagination, and both romantically and close-friendly, as seen in his attempt at restoring the relationship between Max and himself, can also be interpreted through the theories of Lacan who, in *Écrits*, explains the relation between recognition, and thus acceptance and belonging, and desires:

To return psychoanalysis to a veridical path, it is worth recalling that analysis managed to go so far in the revelation of man's desires only by following, in the veins of neurosis and the marginal subjectivity of the individual, the structure proper to a desire that thus proves to model it at an unexpected depth – namely, the desire to have his desire recognized. This desire, in which it is literally verified that man's desire is alienated in the other's desire, in effect structures the drives discovered in analysis, in accordance with all the vicissitudes of the logical substitutions in their source, aim [direction], and object. But these drives, however far back we go into their history, instead of proving to derive from the need for a natural satisfaction, simply modulate in phases that reproduce all the forms of sexual perversion—that, at least, is the most obvious and best known fact of analytic experience (Lacan, 2006: 285).

As the journey progresses, another dreamy scene follows later in the third scene, but with a different concentration. This time, while dreaming of another sexual intercourse, the traveler, whom we take as Tadge, hears voices from behind a window, saying “We’re going to shoot you/Shoot you full” (Neilson, 1998: 73), which, unlike the previous scene, means quite literally shooting someone to death, referring to a traumatic past event whose details will be exposed in later parts of the play. Moreover, in the same scene, special importance is given to the window of Alan and Max’s house, specifically to Tadge, whose appearance is highlighted in the scene through the stage directions that read “The light fades on the young man, leaving only the window” (Neilson, 1998: 73). This shows the importance of that house for

Tadge as a surrogate home – a place he will be searching to satisfy his need of belonging.

Later in the fourth scene, all the characters, Max, Alan and Tadge, get together for the first time. However, although they are old friends, both Max and Alan feel a bit of tension with the abrupt appearance of Tadge in their house. It is not a sort of awkwardness that stems from not seeing each other for a long time, but a kind of tension that stems from a perspectival distortion Tadge employs over Alan when he thinks that Alan has lost weight – a perspective that finds no support from Max:

TADGE. He looks different.  
 MAX (*pause*). Alan?  
 TADGE. *nods*.  
 TADGE. He's lost weight.  
 MAX (*pause. Nods*). I can't tell.  
 A *long pause*. (Neilson, 1998: 78).

Actually, the change that Tadge notices is not in anyone but himself, because Max does not see or feel such a difference in Alan. Tadge, however, feels that he lost his old connection, thus his sense of belonging that he had with them, specifically with Max. Another reason for Tadge's hostility towards Alan, which is seen more and more especially in the later parts of the play as will be examined in this study, is his jealousy of Alan that stems from the perception that Alan took his place in his relationship with Max, which had both sexual and friendly aspects. Therefore, due to the reality of the lost relationship with Max, Tadge experiences a lack of belongingness, which again accords with the psychological theories that Baumeister and Leary report from earlier studies by Leary, Leary and Downs, and Tambor and Leary: "People feel anxious at the prospect of losing important relationships, feel depressed or grief stricken when their connections with certain other people are severed, and feel lonely when they lack important relationships (Leary; Leary and Downs; Tambor and Leary, as cited in Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 506). Baumeister and Leary themselves also reach a similar conclusion when they assert that "... loss of social bonds causes emotional distress, which is sufficient to show that belongingness is something people want" (1995: 508).

As the play progresses, another issue that negatively affects Tadge's psychological need of belonging takes center stage: his father. In their study



“Uncertainty, Belongingness, and Four Needs for Meaning,” Stillman and Baumeister claim that “thinking about family causes an increase in the belief that life is meaningful and that the mechanism by which thoughts of the family increases meaningfulness is the same as the mechanism by which thwarted belongingness decreases meaningfulness” (2009: 250), which shows the importance of familial relations. Furthermore, Roy Baumeister, in his book *Meanings of Life*, also expresses the importance of familial relations when he writes, “belonging to a family can be an important source of collective self-worth” (1991: 167). Tadge, by reading through his files in the army, learns that his father, whose name is Ronnie, is not his real father. The discovery of this fact, which breaks Tadge’s memories of his father into pieces, causes him to lose his integrity with his past and his family as the institution of family, for its members, is supposed to be founded upon mutual trust and care. Consequently, it causes damage in Tadge’s sense of belonging and the meaning he finds in life, illustrating the study by Lambert, Stillman et al. that Stillman and Baumeister refer to in their work when they write, “...evidence indicates that family relationships (presumably a place of interpersonal belonging) are a primary source of meaning in people's lives” (Lambert, Stillman et al., as cited in Stillman and Baumeister, 2009: 250). When considered from this point of view, Tadge’s return to his childhood friend’s house, to Max, with whom he also had some sort of sexual relation, is even more reasonable and justifiable as an action that aims to satisfy his need of belonging.

Returning to the issue of Tadge’s jealousy of Alan, it gets even more obvious as the play advances. He asks if he can rest a while and, not paying attention to Max’s showing the direction of his room to himself, asks where Alan’s room is (Neilson, 1998: 90). His choice between the rooms and his wish of sleeping in Alan’s room, on Alan’s bed, makes it obvious that he wishes to take Alan’s place in the house and in Max’s life. Tadge’s jealousy that eventually turns to sheer hostility towards Alan had earlier signs as well in the play. It is detectable in the earlier parts of the same scene where Tadge starts to become more disturbed by Alan for no apparent reason and talks aggressively to him:

*[Tadge] stares intently at him. Alan shifts again. He shakes his head. Tadge just continues to stare at him, as if trying to puzzle something out. A long pause.*

ALAN. What?

*Pause.*

MAX. So tell us more about all this...

TADGE (*to Alan*). Do you smell something?

ALAN (*pause*). Eh?

TADGE. You're looking at me like you do.

MAX. Look...

TADGE. Have you got a problem?

ALAN (*pause*). Not with you, Tadge. (Neilson, 1998: 83)

This hostility becomes quite violent as it is put into action while Tadge is re-enacting his escape from the penetrators (a group of people that can make anyone vanish with no traces left behind and commit tortures of impalement/penetration), and he insists that Alan assume the role of one. This is a scene where the mimetic role of art stands out and, as art is a way of expressing one's subconscious (Freud, 1908/1959: 179-180), it is possible to argue that here Tadge thinks or takes Alan as a penetrator, as he openly states it later when he directly calls him "Penetrator" (Neilson, 1998: 105). While they are re-enacting Tadge's escape, Tadge, not so jokingly, first thrusts an imaginary pole he mimes breaking into two pieces to Alan's eye, and then grabs Alan by the hair and acts out hitting his throat in a way that "[e]ach blow comes dangerously close" (Neilson, 1998: 86-87). As Tadge continues with the dramatization, even Max, who, up to this point, has been defending Tadge against Alan, understands the graveness of the situation. This act of violence stems from Tadge's jealousy of Alan, which he cannot contain anymore. After this, when they start talking about Tadge's father again, Tadge says, to the others' surprise, that his father is "Norman Schwarzkopf" (Neilson, 1998: 89) – the top general of the coalition army during the Gulf War. This signifies that Tadge tried to satisfy his need to belong by searching for a home and a father figure in the army. He voices this more emphatically once again in the last scene of the play, where he accuses Max of leaving him by going to college (Neilson, 1998: 107), giving him all the reason to join the army and replace the void left after Max's departure and satisfy his need of belonging. Nevertheless, it seems that Tadge experiences worse betrayal at the hands of the penetrators (compared to Max's) in the army, where even Schwarzkopf,

whom he assumes to be his father, did not do anything to prevent this violent betrayal that happened to him. Such forsakenness is also a catalyst for Tadge's losing his sense of belonging, which Freud, in his *The Future of an Illusion*, explains while he expresses the importance of the father figure as a protector, who, in Tadge's case, failed his fundamental duty of providing protection:

When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate, and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness (Freud, 1927/1961: 24).

In the last scene of the play, Tadge's hostility towards Alan turns to sheer violence as he, as if declaring war against an enemy, starts behaving threateningly towards Alan with a knife in his hand that he stole from a penetrator. The triggering event that causes Tadge to become so violent, however, is his seeing Alan and Max's dancing to a song, which is not even a romantic dance but an occasion Alan and Max share in harmony that eventually had to stop with Tadge's ominous penetration into the harmonious atmosphere of the two (Neilson, 1998: 96). Tadge exhibits such violent behaviour because social exclusion, which, in this case, is his exclusion from the dance, "can be considered a robust risk factor for aggression [...]" whose reason "is that socially excluded people perceive ambiguously hostile behaviors as aggressive, which in turn predicts their aggressive behavior" (DeWall et al., 2011: 983). Such an ambiguous hostility towards Tadge can be seen when Alan is disturbed by Tadge's sitting right next to him, after which Alan's attitude changes negatively (Neilson, 1998: 96), and when Alan remarks that Tadge's real name should be Schwarzkopf when Tadge wants to be identified with neither his nickname – Tadge – nor his father's name – who is revealed to be not his father (Neilson, 1998: 98-99). To increase the tension even further, Tadge then asks Alan if he has a girlfriend and, somehow, knows he is dating Laura, Max's former girlfriend, and Tadge obviously does this just to spite Alan and show Max that Alan does not deserve to share such intimacy with him (Neilson, 1998: 97-98). Also, Tadge's constant questioning of whether Alan has a girlfriend or not is a way of knowing if Alan is in a romantic relationship with Max or

not. Tadge's pulling out the knife corresponds to his blaming Alan for being a penetrator and signifies that Tadge's jealousy, which leads him to think that Alan is a penetrator, is becoming more obvious and expressed. When Tadge asks Alan to confess before mutilating one of Alan's teddy bears, he either wants Alan to confess that he is a penetrator or that he is dating Laura, both of which would give Tadge a reason to separate him from Max and take his place (Neilson, 1998: 105). After the symbolically brutal scene of the mutilation of the teddy bear, Alan tries to leave the house, but Tadge prevents him by pointing his knife at Alan's chest and says, "That's right, Penetrator. You're no friend of mine. You're no friend of Max" (Neilson, 1998: 106), which is another clear expression of Tadge's wish to oust Alan completely from his and Max's lives. After Tadge's one more attempt to express that Alan is not their friend, Max tries to calm him and warm his heart by trying to remind him of the nice memories they all partook in. Yet, Tadge abruptly rejects Max's words by saying, "But what about *us*?! It was *better* before! You were the brains, I was the brawn! We were friends, we were *real* friends, tell me about *that*, tell me what you remember about *that*!" (Neilson, 1998: 108). The memory about Tadge's beating up a boy who "bust [Max's] lip open" for Max (Neilson, 1998: 108) and his expression "No one else ever did that for you!" (Neilson, 1998: 109) also indicates his wish to be special for Max. All these signify Tadge's wish to satisfy his need to belong by restoring a one-time good relationship with Max, a very old friend, in line with Baumeister and Leary's aforementioned theory in which they explain that such "consequences that alert the individual to undesired state changes that motivate behavior to restore the desired state," and the consequence of lacking belongingness, which is "exhibit[ing] pathological consequences beyond mere temporary distress" (1995: 498).

In addition, the memory, which features Max and Tadge staying out in a forest at night and having a sexual experience (Neilson, 1998: 109-112) is the most important catalyst that seems to have determined their all-time relationship. Tadge, as a character who has been deprived of nearly every relationship that would satisfy his need to belong, shows a tendency to return to a time when he did not suffer from the lack of the need, which is also emphasized at the end of the play where Tadge, while eating sweets and seemingly having restored his old relationship with Max by managing to drive Alan out of the house (Neilson, 1998: 115), reminisces about how

Max's mother used to give them sweets (Neilson, 1998: 117). What is more, the core of the importance of the sexual experience he had with Max seems to be related to what he may have felt during the experience. Larsson and Svedin's findings put forth in their article "Sexual Experiences in Childhood: Young Adults' Recollections" are illuminating about this: "The most common feelings connected to sexual activities together with other children were excitement, feeling silly/giggly, pleasant body sensations, feeling good/fine, and appreciation of the event as natural... Boys more frequently reported pleasant body sensations than girls did..." (2002: 268), which, in Tadge's case, may signify his wish to return to, remember, and remind Max of the time he/they felt/shared the excitement of the activity. Consequently, Tadge finally calms down when Max remembers their experience in the woods and lets Alan grab the knife and point it at himself. Despite facing a threatening knife, Tadge looks serene, due to having been understood and that Max indeed remembers all the moments they had together, which means that their relationship is not completely lost.

In the last moments of the play, Max's crucial question to Alan about his former girlfriend Laura's setting his giraffe-toy on fire forces Alan to reveal his secretive dating with Laura, and to leave the house eventually. After Alan leaves, Max and Tadge start eating sweets while reminiscing the old times when Max's mother would give them some. Alan's departure and Tadge's retreat in the present with Max to the warmth and sweetness of the past finalizes Tadge's search for satisfying his need to belong.

### **Belongingness in Sarah Kane's *Blasted***

The other play – also an In-Yer-Face play of the 1990s British drama – that this article examines through the belongingness perspective is Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, and the focus of the analysis is again on a soldier character in the play named Soldier. Soldier appears halfway through the play. In order to put the arrival of Soldier to the hotel room and the general setting of the play into context, a short introduction to the other two characters, Ian and Cate, will be helpful. Ian, who seems to be a former operative of some sort and has been carrying out illegal actions such as assassinations on the orders of the government, if not a journalist, takes a woman,

Cate, about half his age, with whom he has had affairs, to an expensive hotel room. His very first actions in this opening part of the play are enough to understand that Ian is a racist, as he calls a hotel worker “wog” (Kane, 2001: 3). He tries to have sexual intercourse with Cate many times and eventually rapes her that night. Cate, on the other hand, is a sensitive person with occasional fits like epilepsy attacks that visit her as a defense mechanism whenever she feels insecure, uncomfortable, or distressed. Cate describes her fits as “Don’t know much about it, I just go. Feels like I’m away for minutes or months sometimes, then I come back just where I was” (Kane, 2001: 10).

The analysis of Soldier through the theories of belongingness can be initiated with the moment of his arrival at the hotel door in scene two. When he appears there, he catches Ian off-guard and takes his gun, leaving him defenseless. He immediately starts questioning Ian, who is still standing with a piece of bacon in his hand, about food and a woman that might be staying there. Even though Ian implies that there is no one else, Soldier rejects this by saying “I can smell the sex” (Kane, 2001: 37). His sense of smell, which may have been sharpened by the wild, survival atmosphere outside, seems to be one of Soldier’s strong suits in getting in touch with his environment. In this sense, the need to belong for Soldier, who obviously suffers severe detachment from his intact self due to all sorts of cruelties that war inflicts, first shows itself when he finds Cate’s underwear and smells it. Alongside being an act of sexual perversion, this action can also be interpreted as Soldier’s subconscious search for his girlfriend who was killed in the rather intangible war that is taking place in the play. After all the traumatic experiences and atrocities he has been a part of, such as rapes, tortures, and massacres of people regardless of their ages and genders, Soldier seems to be seeking after healing, after the safety of a healthy, regular relationship, of a warm connection with a person, as he once had with his girlfriend. In accordance with this, Judith Herman’s observations in her book *Trauma and Recovery* about the recovery processes of traumatized people describe what severely traumatized Soldier is trying to accomplish in *Blasted*: “...in the course of a successful recovery, it should be possible to recognize a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection” (2015: 155).

Other than merely satisfying his carnal needs – for which Ian, in all his civilized manners, appears as a foil for him – Soldier seems to be pursuing something he lost. Knowing the death of his girlfriend is irreversible, he seems to be lost in the chaos of a perpetual state of depression, hopelessness, and anger, all of which result in the lack of his sense of belonging, causing his violent, brutal, cruel outlets. Such outlets are the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, as expressed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013: 271-272). The study by Elbogen et al. on war veterans who experienced post-traumatic stress disorder is also illuminating in understanding Soldier's case (2012: 1097-1102). The memory Soldier narrates to Ian about an attack on a house where he committed rape while thinking of his girlfriend is an example of his cruel outlets (Kane, 2001: 43). The fact that he cannot even say his girlfriend's name at that moment and is unable to think of anybody else even when committing such cruelty, shows to what extent he has been obsessed with uniting again with his deceased girlfriend. This and his perception of this event as a routine action, which is seen when he asks Ian "Never done that?" so casually (Kane, 2001: 43), make his behavior even more psychopathological, which is another sign of his need to belong.

Psychologically traumatized Soldier, who is exhibiting sheer psychopathological actions, is undoubtedly suffering from loneliness and isolation as one of the negative consequences of his lack of belonging. Drawing correlations between psychopathology and loneliness, Solomon et al. argue that "... loneliness was found to have a direct effect on psychopathology and social functioning, after controlling for redundancy. It thus appears that loneliness, an inner feeling of distress, is the most direct antecedent of psychopathology and social dysfunction in [Combat Stress Reaction] casualties" (1990: 468). These findings also support Soldier's friendly attitude towards Ian, which, for instance, is seen when he asks him "Your girlfriend did that, angry was she?" (Kane, 2001: 41), or when he says, "I'll have to shoot you. Then I'd be lonely" (Kane, 2001: 44) as Ian makes a move towards his gun. These examples clearly show that Soldier, who is obviously suffering from severe psychological problems and exhibiting abnormal, psychopathological behavior,

refuses to be lonely even on enemy soil, and his search for a relationship that would satisfy his sense of belonging is not only a romantic one, but a friendly one as well.

Although Soldier joins the war in order to quench his urge for revenge, and hence, get rid of the lack of sense of belonging he suffers from, all caused by his girlfriend's death, it seems that the war does not help much with subsiding these psychological situations. The outcome is rather a feeling of indifference, if not a total lack of empathy or contact with reality. Consequently, he does not care how many people he kills or hurts, as he says, "At home I'm clean. Like it never happened" (Kane, 2001: 48). His indifference to the land he invades, which is Leeds, his dehumanization of the people of Leeds, and his apathy towards his cruel actions show that he has not yet been able to satisfy his need to belong, and his inability to do so and his vengefulness manifest themselves through violent actions.

As Soldier's part in the play is about to end, he kisses Ian on the lips. He smells his dead girlfriend in this kiss because Ian smokes the same cigarette she used to. The most notable expression Kane uses here to describe Soldier's kiss is the adverb "very tenderly" (Kane, 2001: 49) – a discordant manner of action for the Soldier known until then – by which one can deduce that it – this slight, olfactory semblance of uniting with his girlfriend – is the only moment in the whole play when Soldier feels having found what he has been searching for almost crazily since and even before the moment he appeared on the hotel door. However, a fleeting moment of the feeling is not enough for Soldier to satisfy his sense of belonging because "people seem to need frequent, affectively pleasant or positive interactions with the same individuals, and they need these interactions to occur in a framework of long-term, stable caring and concern" (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 520). Therefore, he immediately reverts to his wild self, which was characterized by his unquenchable hunger he had when he entered the room, and this time "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" (Kane, 2001: 50). This cannibalistic action implies that Soldier puts Ian, whose lips smell like his own girlfriend's, in her place. Since his girlfriend's eyes were also eaten, which the reader/viewer learns when Soldier utters "He ate her eyes" (Kane, 2001: 50), his eating Ian's eyes is an indication that he reenacts the scene with Ian as his



girlfriend he can now touch. He seems to be feeling that this is the closest point he can ever get to being next to his girlfriend again.

The next scene starts with Ian lying right next to Soldier who committed suicide. Soldier's suicide may be interpreted as that he finally understood that all the cruelties he has committed in order to both avenge and get his girlfriend back have been futile. Therefore, he decides to put an end to this struggle by giving an end to his life, right next to the person who feels similar to his late girlfriend. With all that he shared with Ian, including his and his girlfriend's stories, his violent actions in the war, and lastly with his rape of Ian, who smells like his girlfriend, he assumes to have found the necessities to satisfy his need to belong. In more psychological terms, such behaviors by Soldier can be summarized as transference, and Stolorow et al., in their work called *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Intersubjective Approach*, put forth an explanation for Soldier's assumption of having found his girlfriend, in other words, his transference of his feelings for his dead girlfriend to Ian:

Thus transference, at the most general level of abstraction, is an instance of *organizing activity* – *the patient assimilates* (Piaget, 1954) the analytic relationship into the thematic structures of his personal subjective world. The transference is actually a microcosm of the patient's total psychological life, and the analysis of the transference provides a focal point around which the patterns dominating his existence as a whole can be clarified, understood, and thereby transformed (Stolorow et al., 2013: 36).

Therefore, the patterns dominating Soldier's life, that is, his loss of his girlfriend and his lust for revenge, become apparent with the transference of his feelings (love) to Ian. However, it is also important to note that "... transference is neither a regression to nor a displacement from the past, but rather an expression of the *continuing influence* of organizing principles and imagery that crystallized out of the patient's early formative experiences" (Stolorow et al., 2013: 36). In this sense, Soldier's transference is not merely a regression to a past where he was happy with his girlfriend, but rather a voicing of the lasting influence of his girlfriend's brutal murder on himself. He also becomes sure that neither the euphoria nor the satisfaction would last long, as the source of resuming his sense of belonging cannot be nurtured with violence and in the violent atmosphere of the ongoing war outside. Therefore, unable to withstand such a loss once again, and believing, if not hallucinating, that he was

with his girlfriend for the last time, he commits suicide, probably with the hope that death may provide a better chance than the physical world to reunite with his girlfriend.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study, by means of psychological theories and related studies on the concept of belonging, observes that the two In-Yer-Face plays of the 1990s British drama, namely *Penetrator* by Anthony Neilson and *Blasted* by Sarah Kane, problematize the especially emotionally deconstructive and traumatic effects of war through the soldier characters found in these plays, who have been mentally maimed, broken, and injured severely, losing their fundamentally significant sense of belonging. The soldier character in Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*, Tadge, is both a victim and a perpetrator of violence. While it is uncertain whether a special unit that he calls "penetrators" is real or fabrication of a series of distorted memories made up by his disturbed psychology, one thing is clear: Tadge wants to retreat to a past where he had an intact relationship with Max, far away from the ills of the fragmentation of his integrity he experienced in the later periods of his life, and which, hence, was satisfying in terms of his sense of belonging. In line with this objective, and not finding the belongingness he expected in the army, he takes a journey back home, to his one-time best friend Max's house, where he first needs to ward off the malignant Alan. In *Blasted*, on the other hand, the soldier character is a nameless Soldier, who, having lost his girlfriend to cruel torture and murder, joins the brutal war in search of revenge he will take from the killer through extremely cruel deeds and crimes he commits. The insatiableness of his appetite and his sharpened sense of smell are indications of his instinctual search for his girlfriend in the wilderness of the war, which ends up with his desperation. The moment he eventually commits suicide is when he believes he can be closest to his girlfriend. All in all, both plays stage the search of the soldier characters after (their lost) belongingness, which can help heal their shattered integrity as a person. The plays illustrate that the feeling of love, either of a good old friend, as in the case of the relationship between Tadge and Max in *Penetrator*, or that of a girlfriend, as in the case of Soldier and his killed girlfriend in *Blasted*, is the major necessity to restore the lost sense of belonging.

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