

“Silence Shoutin the Loudest”: Intersectionality and the
“Poetics of Failure” in the Theatre of debbie tucker green

Arwa Nasser Almefawaz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 2022

This work is the intellectual property of the author. You may copy up to 5% of this work for private study, or personal, non-commercial research. Any re-use of the information contained within this document should be fully referenced, quoting the author, title, university, degree level and pagination. Queries or requests for any other use, or if a more substantial copy is required, should be directed in the owner(s) of the Intellectual Property Rights.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I express my gratitude to God, the Almighty, for His blessings and guidance throughout the duration of my PhD. His help enabled me to finish the research successfully.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Jenni Ramone, the director of the study, who pastorally guided me on how to do research and present the results of my study in the best manner possible. Her energy, vision, genuineness, and determination have left an indelible impression on me. I am incredibly thankful to her for always being there for me when I needed her, always ready to provide any assistance, particularly when my health was deteriorating. She was always willing to impart her knowledge and offer spiritual and academic support. It was such a delight and an honour to be able to work and learn under her supervision. It was indeed fulfilling!

Further, I am eternally thankful to my parents for their love, prayers, care, and sacrifices, and for educating and preparing me for future challenges. Special thanks to my father for his unwavering support throughout my whole life, especially during my PhD. journey. The expressions of sympathy and prayers that he offered were always a positive source of encouragement and support on many levels. Nothing can make up for what he has done for me, and I have no way of repaying him. I am hoping that this PhD. would serve as a “thank you” gift to him for all his labour of love, and that he would develop a great sense of pride in what his daughter has achieved.

Finally, I would want to express my heartfelt thanks to my loving, kind, and supporting husband. Throughout my PhD. journey, my husband was a wonderful companion and support system. I owe him a debt of gratitude for this. My appreciation for his love, understanding, and words of support will last for eternity. While I was working on completing this project, he was always there to offer a hand and provide his support and encouragement. His willingness to carry out all domestic chores while I finished off my job was an excellent source of comfort. He is the rock I can cling to when the wind picks up speed. I want to express my deepest gratitude to him.

I want to end with a dedication of this thesis to my son, who was only four months old when I started the path of my PhD. He is the light of my life and the joy of my days. I want him to be proud of his mother's accomplishment, which would be an inspiration for his future successes. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has assisted me in completing the research work, whether directly or indirectly.

Abstract

In this thesis I seek to demonstrate the pertinence of theories of intersectionality to the writing of the black British woman playwright debbie tucker green. I draw on some of the core arguments developed in this field of social theory, especially those put forward by its key proponents, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, with special focus on the intersection of race and gender and the complex form of patriarchal and white supremacist oppression on black women that it constitutes. Concentrating on five of tucker green's plays—*random* (2008), *generations* (2005), *dirty butterfly* (2003), *nut* (2013) and *born bad* (2003)—I argue that her work is of particular relevance to the discourse of the intersectional positionality of black women not only in Britain but across the globe. This is principally on account of tucker green's foregrounding of black women's subjectivities, which are presented emotively and phenomenologically first and foremost, with minimal explication regarding plot and social context. tucker green's experimental approach to drama often presents the blurred and often confused subjectivity of intersectionality in spatial terms—thus obliquely reflecting Crenshaw's metaphor of the road junction embodied in its name—as it manifests in the psyche, body and space, calling for innovative performative strategies which invite the spectator to share the psychological experiences of the characters. Much of this experience involves their struggle to apprehend and articulate the traumas that they suffer, which tucker green conveys through what Sara Jane Bailes refers to as the “poetics of failure” rather than social realist explication. Although the social contexts of tucker green's plays are not talked about explicitly by the characters in the plays, they are often identifiable. Fundamental to the thesis are the interviews I have conducted with theatre practitioners, upon which I draw to gain an understanding of the performance strategies that tucker green's drama encourages, and how they are employed to explore these contexts. This thesis considers intersectionality within these particular contexts, which include: British gang violence; the notion of the safe space; HIV/AIDS in South Africa; marital rape and legacies of slavery; incest and the figure of the black patriarch.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Applying Intersectionality: A theatrical project.....	1
debbie tucker green as Black Woman Experimental Playwright.....	8
Methodology: Intersectionality in text and performance.....	20
Historiography.....	26
Chapter Breakdown.....	29
Chapter One: ‘Everyman’ to ‘Nobody’: Notions of the ‘Everyday’ and Intersectionality in Constructing Black Motherhood in debbie tucker green’s <i>random</i>	34
“Particular Youngsters”: Violent crime and British politics	34
Intersectionality and Black Motherhood	38
Randomness, the Mundane, and the Domestic Space.....	45
The Characters of <i>random</i> and their Intersectional Marginalisation.....	46
From ‘Everyman’ to ‘Nobody’: <i>random</i> , the ‘everyday’, and the limits of empathy.....	52
Brother's Death and the Erosion of Private Space.....	68
Sister as Matriarch: the changing roles of <i>random</i> 's characters.....	70
<i>random</i> in Performance: Dialect, solo character on stage, and the monodramatic form....	74
Chapter Two: Silence, Family, HIV/AIDS and Intersectionality in debbie tucker green’s <i>generations</i>	87
Grief, Silence, and Trauma.....	87
<i>generations</i> and South Africa: Setting, mourning, and ‘unnatural’ inheritance	93

Family, (In)Equality, Gender, and Nation: Gendering <i>generations</i> ' South African setting.....	96
Chaos, Absence: The form of <i>generations</i> and the role of Junior Sister.....	100
Mourning and Gender	108
Truth, Reconciliation, and Silence: <i>generations</i> and South Africa's recent storytelling traditions	111
Gender, Grief, and (the Impossibility of) Testimony.....	113
<i>generations</i> in Performance: the function of the chorus and the role of the kitchen.....	117
Chapter Three: The Scope and Limits of Safe Spaces in debbie tucker green's <i>nut</i>.....	138
The Black Interior: the theatre of debbie tucker green.....	138
Metaphor and Reality: the concept of safe space	147
Safe Space Unbidden: Talawa.....	157
Safe Space in Practice: the Shed.....	165
Sisterhood and Safe Spaces: the case of debbie tucker green's <i>nut</i>	170
The Performance Strategies of debbie tucker green's <i>nut</i>	179
Chapter Four: The Intersectional Racialisation of Domestic Abuse and Rape in debbie tucker green's <i>dirty butterfly</i>	189
Representing the Obscene	189
<i>dirty butterfly</i> as Intersectional Drama.....	192
Intersectionality and the Habitus of Black Britain.....	200
Spatial and Social Intersectionalities	209
Staging and Performing Domestic Abuse	220
The Paper-Thin Wall.....	224

Chapter Five: “Say it”: Marital Silence in debbie tucker green’s <i>born bad</i>	235
Raisins in the Sun	235
Black Masculinity and the Castrated Patriarch	244
The Problematics of Sisterhood.....	249
Speech vs. Silence	261
Performing Dad’s Silence.....	268
Blackouts, Heartbeats and Snapshots.....	276
Conclusion: debbie tucker green’s Intersectional Poetics.....	282
Appendices	308
<i>Appendix A:</i> Author’s Interview with Petra Letang, 18 May 2018	308
<i>Appendix B:</i> Author’s Interview with Felix Dunning, 18 May 2018	325
<i>Appendix C:</i> Author’s Interview with Micheline Chevrier, 26 June 2018	329
<i>Appendix D:</i> Author’s Interview with Lucinda Davis, 27 June 2018	340
<i>Appendix E:</i> Author’s Interview with Leah Gardiner, 14 April 2020	348
<i>Appendix F:</i> Author’s Interview with Leah Gardiner, 24 September 2020	360
<i>Appendix G:</i> Author’s Interview with Azar Kazemi, 25 September 2020	375
<i>Appendix H:</i> Author’s Interview with Michael Rogers, 23 October 2020	390
Bibliography	397

Introduction

Applying Intersectionality: A theatrical project

Consider an analogy for traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happened in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

In her 1989 essay, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics’, the legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw coined and defined the term “intersectionality”. She derived the term itself from the word “intersection”, used in American English to mean “junction” or “crossroads”. She chose this metaphor, she explained in a 2014 interview with *The New Statesman*, for its universal relatability, since people could use it and say: “it’s well and good for me to understand the kind of discriminations that occur along this avenue, along this axis—but what happens when it flows into another axis, another avenue?” (Adewunni, 2014, para. 5). The metaphor is not only relatable, but through its relatable spatiality it emphasises intersectionality’s impingement on the ‘practices of everyday life’. Furthermore, the metaphor is also particularly striking for the way it conveys intersectionality as a spatial condition through which bodies move and encounter other bodies. Indeed, the vectors Crenshaw describes are analogous to those that converge on the stage.

It is first necessary to briefly consider the social origins of Crenshaw's theory. Crenshaw theorised the concept of intersectionality in response to the growing recognition of violence against women, long understood as an "isolated and individual" issue, as one which was "social and systemic" (1991, pp. 1241-42; see also Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 139-67). Yet, even as the discourse surrounding violence against women became politicised (insofar as it became a feature of public debate and counteractive measures were called for and imposed), Crenshaw recognised a lack of public understanding of its entanglement with broader and more complex conceptions and manifestations of identity. There was palpable neglect in the general public's consciousness of internal differences within identity groups, such as African Americans or other people of colour, a neglect also strongly felt in academia. Crenshaw observed that feminist struggles continued with little regard for antiracist struggles, and vice versa, as both projects mostly ignored the crucial *intersection* between them. This was despite the fact that the lived experience of identity politics amounted to an intersectional nexus involving gender, sexuality, class and other politicised markers of identity as well as race. Intersectionality therefore became the theoretical nomenclature for a conceptualisation of political being-in-the-world that was respectful of the multiple dimensions of identity politics through which individual subjects came to experience their sense of self (see hooks, 1992, pp. 115-32; Collins, 1998, pp. 62-92; Daniel, 2010; Crenshaw, 2017). As a political project, the aim of intersectionality can be summarised as bringing to the fore "the multidimensionality of Black women's experience [in contrast] with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139).

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality recalled the literary criticism of Barbara Smith, who advocated "a Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex, as well as the politics of race and class, are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers" (1978, p. 23; see also Mirza, 1997, pp. 1-30). Smith's statement, together with Crenshaw's more expansive theorisation of the socio-political condition of intersectionality, is foundational to this study. I argue that black women authors of theatrical productions are uniquely placed to express the intersectional condition of contemporary black women and to articulate their marginalisation in contemporary British society. In this sense, my argument accords with that put forward recently by Nicola Abram, who argues that intersectionality is vectored uniquely through the theatre because the latter builds "a model of identity through encounter":

Theatre and performance are always embodied, of course, but [...] those bodies function not to guarantee a fixed individual identity but as the public site of a subject's dynamic, interactional, formation. The dramatic arts are uniquely equipped for this since performance depends on the relationship between actor and character: the performer is identified with the character yet is not identical to her; the character is other than the performer, yet cannot exist without her. Theatre wisely teaches us that the subject is not isolated, autonomous, or pre-existent; rather, she is formed through her interactions with others (2020, p. 3).

Theatre, therefore, efficaciously captures the way that intersectionality manifests through encounters between bodies in space, and between bodies and space, and the multilayered dynamics of interaction and characterisation that these encounters entail. Indeed, Abram's (2020, p. 3) description of theatrical identities being formed out of multiple crisscrossing encounters between perspectives, subject positions and influences bears remarkable resemblance to Crenshaw's (1989, p. 139) metaphorical

explanation of intersectionality. By emphasising the cruciality of interaction as the foundation of identity, therefore, theatre as an art form invites intersectional critique.

The central aim of the thesis is to demonstrate the significance of applying intersectional theory to this neglected area of cultural activity; namely, the writing and performance of theatrical works written by black women in contemporary Britain. In doing so, I focus on one playwright in particular, debbie tucker green. I argue that tucker green's work is especially pertinent to the discourse of the intersectional positionality of black women not only in Britain but across the globe. As I elaborate in detail below, tucker green's theatre is especially pertinent to a study of the intersectionality conditioning the experience of black women due to its foregrounding of black women's subjectivities. Furthermore, tucker green's experimental approach to drama often presents the blurred and often confused subjectivity of intersectionality in spatial terms as it manifests in the psyche, body and space. By not detailing the social contexts of their plays, and emphasising instead the often-blurred subjectivity of her characters in relation to these contexts—a blurriness emphasised by their struggle to apprehend and articulate the traumas that they suffer—tucker green brings to the fore the complexity, polyvalence and amorphousness of the intersectionality of race and gender.

Although mainly born out of an American context and formulated by African American critics, it is important to stress that the theory of intersectionality is applicable to British culture, especially with regard to the intersectionality of blackness and other markers of identity through which oppression takes place. tucker green's theatre highlights intersectionality's global pertinence, not least since it tackles racial injustices beyond Britain. Furthermore, it has been championed and performed

in theatres internationally, where production teams and critics have treated it and related to it in terms of its relevance to blackness as a construct unbound by national distinctions (see Gilroy, 1993, pp. 29-40). For Leah Gardiner, for example, who directed the production of *generations*—a play revolving around a black family in South Africa suffering from HIV/AIDS—at the Soho Rep in New York in 2014, the family in the play represents a microcosm of black culture: “Family as a construct, and how family represents so much of our culture, sort of how families are made” (Gardiner, 179-80). Whilst set in a South African context, therefore, and being written by a British playwright, *generations* pertains to blackness—and the black family—as global phenomena. The play also demands to be seen through the lens of intersectionality, in particular as its theorisation is developed in Patricia Hill Collins’s influential essay, ‘It’s all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation’ (1998, p. 64), which concerns in particular how nation-states implement the family unit to breed, reinforce and naturalise inequalities based on intersections of gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality.

Along these lines, Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality—and, I argue, tucker green’s plays—can be seen to demonstrate the multiplicity of ways in which intersectionality itself intersects with what Michel de Certeau (1984) called the ‘practices of everyday life’. For de Certeau, these ‘practices’ derive much of their significance from the spaces we inhabit and navigate on a daily basis, which metaphorically map out the conditions influencing our experience of being in the world. By extension, therefore, this spatialised understanding of intersectionality pertains also to James Procter’s more recent formulation of the ‘postcolonial everyday’ (2006, p. 67), a trope in literature and ‘everyday life’ which exposes the

way that daily practices are tainted by the legacies of colonialism. Furthermore, the spatial dimensions of intersectionality, and the question of how they manifest in the theatre, are represented palpably in the conception of the safe space as a zone in which minorities can voice their opinions and exist as themselves without feeling oppressed into conforming to the status quo (Hunter, 2008, pp. 5-21; Kuribayashi, 1998). Collins, another scholar who has been foundational in developing understandings of intersectionality between blackness and gender, advocated the safe space as “one mechanism among many designed to foster black women’s empowerment and enhance our ability to participate in social justice projects” (1990, p. 110). Indeed, the performance strategies encouraged by tucker green’s plays often make use of the theatrical space as a whole (including stage and auditorium), implicating the audience as responsible witnesses to the trauma enacted on stage. For example, the concept of the safe space is invoked in tucker green’s 2013 play, *nut*, which focuses on a black woman who withdraws from the world into her home, which she construes as a safe space as opposed to the hostile world outside, raising the question of the extent to which the theatre itself constitutes a safe space for black women.

Therefore, although tucker green’s plays are invariably set in interior rather than urban or public spaces, the condition of intersectionality is performed in spatial terms that can nonetheless be aligned with those imagined by Crenshaw and other theorists who have discussed and expanded on the concept. This kind of spatialisation is elaborately exemplified in tucker green’s *dirty butterfly* (2020). In this play, the paper-thin wall between the three flats functions as a physical and spatial metonym for the matrix of socio-cultural crossovers and intersections that animate the play’s narrative. At one point, Jo, a woman physically abused by her husband, says through

the paper-thin wall, “I’m still wanting with that painful morning piss that won’t pass yeh. That I’ve got to get up to go to get rid of while I’m wondering—no—*worryin* about wakin him up. My side” (tucker green, 2020, p. 22). Thus, Jo’s suffering is given a spatial dimension as she describes the fear of going to the bathroom while referring to her position on her “side” of the wall. This fear is itself tangled up with the bodily issue of her urination, which she describes as “painful”, a word which, moreover, could refer equally to the physical pain she feels when she urinates, to the fear of waking up her husband, and to the pain of her husband’s physical abuse and the trauma and fear that it perpetuates. Furthermore, the words “My side” seems to refer at once to the part of the building in which she lives, to her side of the bed, and to a side of her body that her husband has hurt. The multiple ambiguities of meaning here highlight the invisibility of the violence inflicted on Jo, which is nonetheless sensed by her neighbours. Such obfuscation generates a quandary regarding the responsibility of the neighbours—and, in parallel, that of the audience—as witnesses to Jo’s suffering. There are thus multiple intersections underpinning *dirty butterfly*: physical, spatial, metaphorical and social—both in the sociopolitical sense understood by Crenshaw and in the more spatialised sense of the intersections between neighbours and between audience and stage, including the discourses of responsibility and witnessing that such spatial and scopic dynamics conjure.

dirty butterfly and *nut* are just two examples of plays in which tucker green has explored the intersectionality of race and gender as manifest in the black woman. As seen in the plays examined in this thesis—including, in addition to *dirty butterfly* and *nut*; *born bad*, *random* and *generations*—her means of exploring what might best be described as the black woman’s intersectional subjectivity often involve a

considerable degree of experimentation in how the drama is both written and performed. In the productions of tucker green's plays examined here, the fraught subjectivities of black women are conveyed through her innovative use of poetic language and through the bodies of the characters and the actors who play them, as well as being incorporated into the theatrical space. Rather than describe black women's subjectivities by means of a didactic and explanatory narrative, tucker green's theatre seeks to elicit in the audience a sense of the ambiguities and anxieties that pervade and define them. Her drama thus affects a kind of psychological intersubjectivity between performance and audience, while also giving rise to discussions of the socio-political context of intersectionality and its influence on the psyche.

debbie tucker green as Black Woman Experimental Playwright

Although reviews of her early work when she emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century were mixed, now debbie tucker green is considered one of the foremost British playwrights and the preeminent black woman playwright working in Britain (Goddard, 2015, p. 69; Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020, pp. 1-22). She made her London debut in 2000 with *two women* (unpublished), staged at the Soho Theatre. This was followed by *dirty butterfly* (2003a) at the same theatre in 2003, and *born bad* (2003b) at the Hampstead Theatre in the same year, for which she won an Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomer. Since this acclaimed start, her plays have been regularly staged at London's main theatrical venues, of which the Royal Court has been her most ardent institutional supporter. Here, tucker green's *stoning mary* (2005) and *random* (2008) premiered on the main stage in the Jerwood Theatre Downstairs; and tucker green directed her *truth and reconciliation* (2011) at the Royal Court's Jerwood

Theatre Upstairs. The Royal Shakespeare Company performed *trade* (2005) at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon before transferring to the Soho Theatre in 2006. *generations* premiered at London's National Theatre in 2005, later being produced at the Young Vic in 2007, which also staged revivals of *dirty butterfly* in 2007 and 2014. In 2013, the National Theatre performed *nut* (2013) in their temporary space, The Shed, a production which was also directed by the playwright. Subsequently, *hang* (2015), *a profoundly affectionate, passionate devotion to someone (-noun)* (2017) and *ear for eye* (2018) each have premiered at the Royal Court, the former two productions also under tucker green's direction. In addition, tucker green contributed to the (unpublished) collaborative play, *Laws of War* (along with Richard Bean, Aschlin Ditta, David Grossman, Kate Hardie, Rebecca Lenkiewicz, Polly Stenham, Tom Stoppard and Jack Thorne), performed at the Royal Court in 2010.

As she explains in an interview with Ellen Jones in 2021, tucker green's decision to use lower-case letters for her name and the titles of her performances is a political gesture that needs to be understood alongside her reluctance to give interviews and previous unwillingness to grant permission for subsequent productions of her plays (Jones, 2021, para. 13). This interview was the first conversation she had conducted with a journalist in six years: "It's almost like I have to be quiet to hear what's going on in here [...] I have to have clarity on what's gonna come out", she says, referring to her mind and the possible hampering effect that industry noise might have on it (Jones, 2021, para.2). The reason she gives for her preference for lower-case letters is that she would prefer herself, the titles of her work—which are also in lower case—and the work itself all to exist on the same plane, as if undifferentiated from each other, resisting hierarchies. As she says, "It's no biggie, it's just like, for

me, with storytelling, it's not like, the title, *then* the person, 'Debbie', and *then* the story. It's all ... on a level" (Jones, 2021, para. 13). As Trish Reid (2020, p. 49) has argued, these facets of her self-presentation and careful management of the public afterlife—or ownership—of her work constitute a gesture of refusal that “exposes uncomfortable connections between the subjective and the social, the emotional and the political”. Such discomfort is reflected in the repression of trauma, off-stage violence and absence of explication, especially regarding relation between text and context, in tucker green's theatre. Her use of lower-case letters might also be seen as an honorific reference to one of the foremost voices of intersectional theory, bell hooks. In much of her writing, hooks levelled a polemic against the racism inherent in feminist movements in the twentieth century, pointing out the racial exclusivity and white supremacist underpinnings of their cause (see, for example, hooks, 1986, pp. 125-138). The polemical forthrightness of hooks's writing, combined with its intersectional focus, may be aligned with the political subject matter and vituperation of tucker green's plays.

tucker green has received extensive international recognition, rare for black British playwrights. Some of her productions have been performed across Europe, North America and Australia. The extent of her recognition could be reflective of the local and global, or globally applicable, concerns in her plays, including domestic violence, incest, the HIV/AIDS crisis, mental illness, child soldiers and the practice of stoning as corporal punishment, female sex tourism, and teenage stabbings. Her emphasis on the psychological repercussions of trauma, rather than the traumatic event itself, renders the latter as a continuum reproducing itself—often down generations, such as in *born bad* and, potentially, in *random*—rather than an isolated occurrence.

By emphasising the effects of trauma on the interior of each character, the drama becomes partly delocalised, as the context is played out through the human mind enclosed within itself. For example, in *random*—a play about a family’s grief over Brother, who is stabbed to death in London’s streets—we do not see the stabbing, and much of the play is made up of monologues (delivered by the same actor) responding to the event. Thus, the play focuses on the psychology of grief over and above the streets of London, which are nonetheless present in the background.

Along with Bola Agbaje, Kwame Kwei-Armah and Roy Williams, tucker green is regarded as having been instrumental in attaining mainstream recognition for black British drama (Goddard, 2015, pp. 69-70). She stands out among these three contemporaries, however, for addressing consistently the positionality of black women, often favouring the gendered zone of the domestic arena, the home and the family, as a setting, and exploring ways in which the intersectionality of race and gender occurs within this setting. Agbaje, Kwei-Armah and Williams are also concerned with intersectionality, especially between race and gender, though their primary focus is on ‘black masculinity’ and they are set in the public sphere (Goddard, 2015, p. 70). Agbaje’s *Gone Too Far!* (2007) is set in the street and the housing estate and follows two black male protagonists. Kwei-Armah often explores the intergenerational relationships between black fathers and sons. The settings of his plays are public: a West Indian takeaway in *Elmina’s Kitchen* (2003), a black political bookshop in *Fix Up* (2004), and a black policy think tank in *Statement of Regret* (2007). In many of his plays dating from the early 2000s, Williams has grappled with ‘black masculinity’ and street culture, as well as its manifestation in the culture of sport (Goddard, 2015, pp. 21-41, 95-120).

tucker green, on the other hand, while also concerned with masculinity, takes as her primary focus the positionality of black women, as highlighted in each of the plays analysed in this thesis. In *dirty butterfly*, tucker green complicates the stereotype of the hypersexual black man through the character of Jason, whose obsessive listening through the paper-thin wall to the violence being inflicted on his neighbour, Jo, is suggestive of libidinous voyeurism. But the victim of the trauma is a woman, in this case a white woman, whose whiteness is offset by the blackness of the only other two characters present on the stage, her neighbours Jason and Amelia (Jo's abusive husband is not seen, though his presence is made known). In *born bad*, whose dramaturgical centre is the figure of the father, the latter's centrality is defined mainly by his relation to the women on the stage and the entire setting of the play is the home—the domestic arena normatively accredited as feminine. Furthermore, the figures through which the trauma is mainly played out are the women, the mother and the daughters, even though the son, and most likely the father, are also victims of abuse. In *random*, although it is Brother, a black teenage boy, who is killed, the play foregrounds the traumatic repercussions of his murder on his sister and mother, and on the relationship between the two. *generations* revolves around a kitchen, in which the women are the dominant characters, just as women in South African society bear most of the shame associated with HIV/AIDS (Dageid & Duckert, 2008, p. 182). *nut* centres on a black woman who has decided to withdraw from the world in search of a place of safety from the 'double oppression' suffered by black women.

tucker green's writing stands out also for its eschewal of social realism in favour of a more oblique—or "poetic"—form of narration, which itself is combined with an "in-yer-face" engagement with the audience (the term referring to Aleks

Sierz's definition of a kind of confrontational style of drama that emerged in the UK in the 1990s; see Sierz, 2001; Aston, 2010, pp. 575-91). The writing thus involves a considerable degree of experimentation, such that the result is hard to categorise within any one literary form. As tucker green stated in a very rare interview with *The Guardian*, her plays "start with a voice in her head that won't go away, and grow into scraps of writing that she then fits together" (Gardner, 2005, para. 1):

I never set out to write plays [...]. I was just messing about, writing stuff down and throwing it away or keeping it if it interested me. Then the writing started to get longer. I didn't know whether it was a poem, the lyrics to a song or a play. It is all much of a muchness to me. It's all words, ain't it?

In *random*, we can practically see this process being acted out on stage. The play is a monodrama, thus acted by a single actor playing multiple roles through what partly consists of a series of monologues. Or when dialogue is used, due to its monodramatic delivery, the play maintains a sense of interiority, as if the characters were nonetheless speaking to themselves, within themselves. tucker green's non-linear, fragmented approach to writing, spurred by the inner voice "that won't go away", reverberates in the confused and fragmented consciousness—cutting through multiple characters and combining in a single actor—that the play embodies. There is a reason for this experimental approach that exceeds experimentation purely for the sake of novelty or expanding the remit of dramatic form. For the confusion and fragmentation, the silences and breaks, are together constitutive of the family's mixed experience of the sudden, unexplained, traumatic and violent loss of Brother.

It is through her experimental style and performative poetics that tucker green represents the traumas that result from intersectional oppression. In this way,

moreover, her writing encourages innovative performance strategies that produce and enhance the affectivity of this trauma—such that, along with race’s intersections with gender and, to a certain extent, class, silence is a theme of comparable significance throughout her writing. This is, not least, on account of the silence that typically attends each of the traumas with which tucker green engages. Rather than didactically frame the trauma experienced by the characters within their social context in a social realist mode, tucker green therefore reveals the trauma obliquely, often in a way that relates to the taboo and unspoken nature of this trauma. *born bad* and *dirty butterfly* centre on domestic violence, in the form of incest in the former example, marital rape in the latter; *generations* revolves around HIV/AIDS, the crisis of which is not spoken about directly, even though a number of characters succumb to the disease throughout the play. In *random*, there is a pervading silence on the circumstances of the boy’s murder, which is trivialised by the authorities as being a ‘random’ occurrence and thus unworthy of vocal attention. Much of the second half of the play, following his death, involves Sister trying to break this communicative impasse, especially with regard to her mother’s silence on the issue.

tucker green’s experimentation thus has a strong and definite narrational purpose. Her poetics is born of the difficulty of articulating what is often repressed and taboo and therefore unspeakable. Due to the trauma’s status as taboo, mentioning it would threaten to break down the veneer of normalcy that the trauma-afflicted families in tucker green’s plays habitually sustain. To spell out the trauma suffered by her characters would be to corrupt the reality of how trauma, particularly as it manifests in the aftermath of a traumatic event, operates on the psyche and persists—silently—in the relations between the people it afflicts. If trauma is felt before it can

be explained, tucker green represents it realistically, eliciting the emotional effects of trauma and leaving it to the audience to decipher the details of its occurrence, which happens off-stage (Abram, 2014, pp. 115-18; Abram, 2020, p. 234). Furthermore, the poetics of tucker green's language points to her characters' difficulties in articulating their inner experience. Rhythmically interjecting throughout *born bad*, for instance, is the refrain, "Say it", expressed as a demand to the mostly silent father. The trauma to which the pronoun, "it", refers is not said, despite the repeated demands made by the play's other characters to "say it". By perpetually falling short of resolution—in the dialogue and in each narrative as a whole—each play embodies an unresolved struggle to articulate what seemingly cannot be articulated.

tucker green's plays are therefore particularly concerned with the failure inherent in language in such a way that her writing can be characterised as constituting a "poetics of failure" in the sense explored by Sara Jane Bailes (2011). As such, her writing "orders a mood, or a state determining a set of outcomes" without spelling out exactly what the nature or cause of the mood is or how it should manifest on the stage (Bailes, 2011, p. 4). However, tucker green's writing departs from the "poetics of failure" manifest in the absurdist writing of Samuel Beckett, to use an archetypal example, since rather than comment on the failure intrinsic to language itself (see Lutterbie, 1988, pp. 468-81), her poetics is born out of each particular situation that she is narrating. In tucker green's writing, the subject matter of the story, the inability to articulate trauma in a coherent and conventional flow of words, always seems to precede the experimentation.

By alluding obliquely to situations that cannot easily be explicated, tucker green's poetics are highly affecting, eliciting first and foremost the feeling of repressed

trauma even if the language refuses to say exactly what constitutes this trauma. Thus, her language has aptly been described as “both a weapon and a shield” (Billington, 2013, para. 3) and “artillery” (Inchley, 2015, p. 95). It fights against silence without revealing what the silence is hiding, for as a shield it is also protective—the result being that the words evoke the emotionally fraught struggle around expressing what, in effect, cannot be articulated in straightforward language. This conflicted and paradoxical emotion is suggested succinctly in Sister’s line in *random* (2010, p. 45), “Silence shoutin the loudest”, its intensely tremulous rhythm bringing out the sense of threat and discomfort, while alluding to and being exacerbated by the lack of witnesses and unwillingness of passersby to speak up, and by extension her deep dissatisfaction with the way the police have handled the case of Brother’s murder. What is not said is louder than what is said, perpetuating a sense of impending doom, as if the silenced voice might erupt at any moment as something beyond her control or understanding, possibly in the form of more racially inflected murders. Similarly, Dawta’s speech in *born bad* in which she repeatedly calls her mother a “bitch” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 7), like the play’s refrain, “Say it”, elicits the struggle to articulate something which itself is grounded in the paradoxical conflict of both the deep-seated desire to say it—or for her parents to say it—and the consuming fear of doing so. In this speech, Dawta expresses her anger at her mother for being complicit in the violence that Dad inflicted upon her, while also alluding to intergenerational nature of this complicity and her desire to break free from the cycle of abuse.

Elaine Aston (2010, pp. 575-91) places tucker green in the genealogy of contemporary experimental women’s theatre, a genealogy which spawned particularly from Sarah Kane’s work, pinpointing her 1995 debut play *Blasted* (whose title is

evocative of the same military and explosive imagery critics have used to describe tucker green's language). The "experimental drive" characterising the work of the playwrights who feature most prominently in this genealogy is geared at generating and eliciting emotion that impresses upon spectators through an experience over and above any kind of didactic feminist "message" or explicated narrative (Aston, 2010, p. 577). As such, the experimental purpose of *Blasted* "is to make viscerally and emotionally charged connections to thinking about the damaging and dehumanizing consequences of sexual violence and epic warfare" (Aston, 2010, p. 578). An audience of Kane's theatre, therefore, might not know what is happening to them, but they feel it. In this sense, tucker green does indeed fit into the genealogy of contemporary women's writing, but as Lynette Goddard (2007, p. 185) makes clear, it is important "to understand black women's work within traditions of black cultural production", highlighting affinities between tucker green's language and that of "African American poet-playwright Ntozake Shange, and rapper/singers such as Lauren Hill, Beverley Knight and Jill Scott". In this sense, tucker green's work exists both within and outside this genealogy which, in Aston's account, otherwise consists predominantly of white women playwrights.

tucker green enhances her poetics with the stage directions she provides, perhaps the most frequent of which are the beats or pauses which rhythmically break up the flow of the language and narrative. The pauses, as moments of silence, also represent the silence around the traumas suffered by the characters and their struggle to articulate them, operating somewhat like stoppages or blocks preventing the language from traversing uncomfortable terrain. The absence of explication places considerable onus on the actors and calls for inventive staging devices to convey the

profound affectivity of the scripts. The challenge is to allow the silence to speak—the void to fill the void. In *born bad*, in addition to the beats, the script calls for blackouts between each short scene. These blackouts, along with the refrain, “Say it”, at the beginning of many of the scenes, add a visual dimension to the silence, evoking blind spots in the memory where the characters have repressed trauma, a repression exacerbated by the refusal of the father to admit to what he has done.

tucker green’s eschewal of explication includes the relation between the traumas she represents in her plays and blackness, which she leaves mainly to the audience to figure out for themselves. The enactment of silence, therefore, encompasses and operates in tandem with a refusal to spell out the social relations at play. Race is signified in the characters, who are racially defined in the prefatory material of each script, except *dirty butterfly* which I discussed earlier, and, by extension, in the choice of actors. The scripts require the audience to have some contextual knowledge to consider the historic and social circumstances, and perhaps also the causes, of the traumas suffered by the characters, since the circumstances are not described in the scripts themselves. *random*, for instance, was first performed in 2008, one year after the British prime minister, Tony Blair, made a speech in Cardiff that included some controversial comments on gang violence among the black communities of Britain’s cities (Blair, 2007). The play emerged when knife crime was being treated by British politicians and the media as an issue of major concern—highlighted by the ongoing campaign for justice for Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager murdered in southeast London by a group of racist thugs in 1993 (Gillborn, 2008, pp. 713-25). Neither Blair nor Lawrence is mentioned in *random*, but it is hard to ignore this context, a context in which the role played by race—vis-à-vis gender

and, perhaps most pertinently, class—is unclear. By not assuming a definite position with regard to racially inflected social issues, tucker green emphasises their blurriness and open-endedness, the fact that they constitute an unfinished conversation rather than an issue to be explained in clear-cut terms.

Thus, tucker green differs markedly from her contemporaries, Agbaje, Kwei-Armah and Williams, who explicate the social conditions that are the subjects of their dramas. In this way, their plays tend to present a “state-of-the-nation” picture of British society. Agbaje’s *Gone Too Far!* makes explicit, and is explicit in its commentary on, the discrepancies between its various characters that stem from their different ethnic origins. Williams’s best-known play, *Sucker Punch* (2010), follows two black boxers, one of whom falls in love with the daughter of his white coach, who disapproves of the relationship on account of the man’s race. As Goddard (2015, p. 43) observes, the use of public and specified settings in Kwei-Armah’s plays “facilitates encounters between diverse black characters through which Kwei-Armah didactically examines the complexities of contemporary identity politics and considers a range of opinions about how an understanding of history can help to create better futures for black people in Britain”. Although tucker green’s plays are set in identifiable social and cultural scenarios, she refrains from delineating a commentary on them in the form of clear and coherent narratives with didactic and transferrable moral messages. Context is important due to its effect on the psyches of her characters, though how it sustains this effect is left unexplained. As such, tucker green presents intersectionality as a matter that her subjects internalise, and that therefore needs to be constantly present in conversations about race but not necessarily as a bearer of straightforward answers.

Therefore, while tucker green's writing certainly positions itself in the field of black British drama, it does not explicate black British scenarios as much as explore confusion and ambiguity within the subjectivity of blackness. Her experimentation seems to be primarily intended to further such exploration, but by no means in order to find answers. Her experimental drama conveys feelings and raises questions instead of acting out theories and presenting clear-cut pictures of the state of the nation or of blackness as a subject position. Thus, although her work could be described as experimental, her experimentation has a narrational purpose as well as a social one, for it seeks to narrate a story that is relevant and whose relevance—and urgency—lies as much in the struggle of telling as in the tale itself. tucker green's experimentation is thus different from that utilised by black women playwrights of a previous generation such as Bernardine Evaristo and Patricia St. Hilaire, who fought for greater representation of black women in British theatre in the 1980s (see Johnson, 2021, pp. 71-72). Although these playwrights were intensely political, their experimentation was arguably more avant-gardist, meaning that it challenged theatrical convention that had been inimical and unwelcoming to black women. tucker green, on the other hand, challenges convention primarily to narrate a story while doing justice to the problems of communication entangled within that story.

Methodology: Intersectionality in text and performance

In this thesis, I have applied a methodology consisting of two approaches. The first approach is that which characterises the thematic focus of the thesis, since it involves intersectional analysis. In each of the plays that I have chosen to examine, intersectionality—primarily between race and gender but also concerning how race intersects with class—manifests in different ways, thereby calling for a slightly

different approach. Each chapter, each considering a different play, therefore has a specific thematic framework intended to highlight the intersectional pertinence of each play. The second approach involves close analysis of certain productions of tucker green's plays, for which I have conducted interviews with various practitioners involved in these productions, some of which I have also attended. tucker green's experimental writing calls for innovative performance strategies, many of which, I argue, elicit a certain sense of intersectional subjectivity.

Three of the plays that I consider in this dissertation represent the intersectionality, and intersectional oppression, of black motherhood. With regard to *random* (2010), I am particularly concerned with the figure of the black mother and her relation with her daughter who, I argue, takes on a more matriarchal position and in effect replaces her mother, as the play progresses. My approach to *generations* also centres on the figure of the black mother, but with closer attention paid to the persistence of grief and the silence that surrounds it, and how this is played out in the context of the home, particularly the space of the kitchen over which the female members of the family preside. Since in *generations* the family members die in reverse order, starting with the youngest generation until, at the end, only the grandparents survive, it pertains to the intersectionality of black motherhood particular to the context of HIV/AIDS in which the play is set. Like *random*, the play explores the grieving black mother, whose children are lost due to a circumstantial problem with which the family is forced to live, though the nature of the problem is different (in *random* it is racial violence and police negligence; in *generations* it is disease and the socio-political dynamic within which it manifests and that exacerbates its effects). *born bad* also invites analysis through the intersectional lens of black motherhood. In

this play, the mother of the family is not a grieving mother as such but one who is entangled in a cycle of abuse inflicted primarily by the father, who abuses her children. The mother is complicit in his crime, even “choosing” Dawta for him. Here, the relation to blackness is arguably more oblique, since the injustice is ostensibly confined to the family; it is difficult immediately to identify any external influence on the father’s actions without an understanding of the broader historical context of the predicament of the black patriarch and, by extension, his suffering wife, deriving from the abuses of slavery.

dirty butterfly and *nut* represent the intersectionality of race and gender in different ways, focusing on the figure of the woman isolated in her home, though in the former this woman is white and her home is a hostile environment in which she is violently abused, and in the latter, she is black and the home is a safe space in contrast to the world outside. Although the woman, Jo, in *dirty butterfly* is white (the racial identity of her abusive husband is not specified, he never appears on stage, has no lines and does not feature in any of the play’s action, even if his presence is felt), her neighbours are black. Much of the play involves Jo’s black neighbours listening through the wall dividing the three flats and commenting on the abuse she is receiving from her husband. Thus, the play invites intersectional analysis in light of the racial (and spatial) divide, which I approach by discussing the legal history of marital rape in the context of slavery; which, in turn, provides historical background for considering the issue of witnessing and responsibility. Although the victim of domestic sexual violence in this play is white, the prominent racial component of the play—manifest in the presence of black witnesses and the text’s provocative refrainment from specifying the race of the abuser—demands that we consider the

play in this context, even if the victim's relation to it is indirect. My intersectional approach to *nut* (2013) explores the play's reflexivity, as I consider the position of not only the oppressions acting on black women in the public realm, but also the black female playwright and black women in general in the space of the theatre.

It is on account of the variety of ways in which these plays approach intersectionality, and the broad range of contexts in which they are set, that I have chosen these examples in particular. While *random*, *generations* and *born bad*, all address motherhood, they do so in very different ways, exploring a range of contexts including British gang violence, the South African HIV/AIDS crisis and black intergenerational trauma. These contexts position the black mother first as a member of a family whose isolation in British society is brought to the fore; second, in relation to the collective mourning of those who have succumbed to HIV/AIDS; and third, as both mother and wife. Although the wifeness of the mothers in *random* and *generations* is relevant to the intersectional oppression weighing on them, this status is explored more elaborately in *born bad*, where the mother's relationship with the father, her husband, is implicated in the furtherance of the intergenerational trauma central to this play. In *dirty butterfly*, intersectionality operates through comparison between the two women, one single and one married rather than families with children, and finally, in *nut*, the main character is, for the most part, alone.

In my approach to the performance strategies employed in the productions of tucker green's plays, I have looked at revivals rather than the original productions. This is primarily due to accessibility. The two plays that I saw live, of *random* and *generations* at Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018, were both revivals. It is hard to be sure if anything substantial has been lost by not viewing the original performances in

these cases, since these latter were directed by Tinuke Craig, not the playwright. In any case, I chose the immediacy of first-hand experience over originality. More importantly, Tucker Green does not like interviews, and thus to gain insight into the performance strategies behind her plays, I needed to speak to other people involved in their production. The people I was able to interview were those involved in later productions, not only in the UK but also in the USA and Canada. Conducting interviews with theatre practitioners from around the world has in fact been beneficial to this thesis. The adaptability of Tucker Green's theatre, and the appropriateness of its racial and gendered themes across the globe, have helped to finetune my intersectional approach as well as highlight the plays' intersectional significance. The relevance of her theatre is by no means circumscribed to the British context, nor necessarily to the context of her plays set beyond Britain—*generations*, for example—because her work is fundamentally concerned with race and gender as components of intersectional oppression that oversteps the remit of locality.

The interviews that I have conducted with various figures involved in the productions of Tucker Green's drama have proven to be invaluable. Since *random* is structured as a monodrama, with a single actor playing multiple roles (comprising different members of the same family), I was fortunate to be able to interview two actors who had performed the play, Lucinda Davis and Petra Letang, who respectively performed in productions of *random* at Montreal's Imago Theatre in 2015 and Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018. I also interviewed Micheline Chevrier, director of the Imago performance, and Felix Dunning, who was company stage manager of the dual production of *generations* and *random* at Chichester. Much of my analysis of *generations* and *born bad* draws on interviews I conducted with Leah Gardiner, who

directed productions of *born bad* in 2010 and *generations* in 2014 at the Soho Rep in New York. With Gardiner, I discussed how the themes of silence, grief and black motherhood were treated in the staging of these performances, and regarding *born bad*, I considered the mise-en-scène in photographs of Gardiner's production provided on her website. Gardiner and I also discussed the acting in these plays, with particular focus on the actors in *born bad*, and how they penetrated the psyches of the characters. I managed to interview one of these actors, Michael Rogers, who played Dad in Gardiner's production of *born bad*, and who offered me his profound psychological analysis of the role. For my discussion of *dirty butterfly*, I interviewed director Azar Kazemi, who staged the play in 2016 at the Halcyon Theater in Chicago, with whom I discussed ways in which the off-stage occurrence of violence can accentuate its obscenity. While I could not interview anyone directly involved with a production of *nut*, in order to gain an understanding of the need for a safe space for black women's theatre in the 1980s, I consulted a recording of a 1982 interview between the founders of the Theatre of Black Women and Thames Television.

Attending a number of UK productions of tucker green's plays afforded me certain insights into her writing, enabling me to witness firsthand some of the performance strategies that the plays encourage and some of the ways in which the characters can be acted on stage. Moreover, seeing the performances live allowed me to experience the full force of the rhythmic affectivity of tucker green's language. In 2018, I saw a double bill of *generations* and *random*, as mentioned above, at Chichester Festival Theatre and *trade* at Nottingham Playhouse; and in 2018 at the Royal Court in London, I saw *ear for eye*. Attending these plays helped me appreciate the variety of ways that tucker green's poetics encourages experimentation in

performance and acting strategies. I saw the choir that features in *generations* first in the reception hall of the theatre, singing as they entered the building and passed between the gathering audience and into the auditorium, before taking their place upon the stage. During the play, the characters, starting with the youngest generation, would leave the stage when they died. I also smelled the spices of South African home cuisine when the female characters were cooking on the stage. Before her performance in *random*, I was able to meet Petra Letang, who plays all the speaking characters in this monodrama. When I saw her on stage, not only did I see her body language, comportment and voice change between characters, but I could appreciate an additional transition—from Letang, the person I met, to the characters she was playing.

Historiography

Since the early 1990s, following its flourishing on the British stage in the previous decade, black women's theatre has received a degree of scholarly attention. The bulk of such studies initially approached the topic with the intention of surveying the sheer extent of its neglected existence and campaigning for its recognition in the national canon (Croft, 1993; Ponnuswami, 2000; Griffin, 2003; Griffin, 2006; Starck, 2006; Goddard, 2007). Goddard (2007; 2009; 2015) has provided some foundational contributions to the field of contemporary black British theatre, viewing it through a racial and gendered lens, including studies of the work of tucker green. Goddard's approach is notable for its emphasis on the entanglement of socio-cultural relevance and aesthetics in black British writing, echoing R. Victoria Arana's (2007, p. vii) concern that too often in the scholarship in this field the former is given overwhelming precedence over the latter. While Goddard considers the intersection of race and gender in black British theatre, I build on Goddard's work by placing greater emphasis

on the role of intersectionality, unpacking the phenomenon in its multifarious complexity, referring more elaborately to the theories of Crenshaw, Collins and others. As such, I engage with specific intersectional situations which arise in tucker green's work, illustrating their embeddedness in broader frameworks of intersectional theory, considering how this is developed in the poetics, affect, performance and semiotics of each of the plays studied in this thesis.

The interrelated topics of intersectionality in black British women's theatre and tucker green's plays have received their most substantial scholarly attention in very recent years. A text of standout relevance to this thesis is Nicola Abram's recent monograph, *Black British Women's Theatre: Intersectionality, archives, aesthetics*, published in 2020. This is the first book-length examination of black British women's theatre to use intersectionality thoroughly, as a lens. As explained above, for Abram, theatre is an apt medium for representing intersectionality on account of the way it encourages the formation of identities on the stage by encounter. In this way, the theatre spatially constructs intersectionalities in much the same way that Crenshaw (1989, p. 139) has described it with the metaphor of the street, since both illustrate the way that intersectionality is performed in 'everyday life'. Abram's book is much broader in historical scope than my study, covering a number of different playwrights, and is organised into chapters focusing on specific theatre companies from the pioneering Theatre of Black Women founded in 1982 to the institutional affiliations of the performance poet SuAndi. Fundamentally, Abram's research is archival, integrating critical examination of the plays of numerous authors into a history of black British women's theatre in the 1980s and 1990s, with frequent reference to later examples, such as the work of tucker green. Intersectionality is central insofar as it is

inevitably interlaced into the position of the black woman playwright and her subject matter, and Abram considers closely how this subject matter is handled. My aim is to build on Abram's theatrical understanding of intersectionality, but with a focus on the phenomenon referring to specific situational aspects of its manifestation in relation to a specific playwright. While Abram refers to tucker green throughout her book (and elsewhere), the weight of her scope is on the period preceding her emergence at the start of the twenty-first century.

It was my original intention for this thesis to be the first book-length study of tucker green, for when I began my research her work had only received scholarly attention by way of academic articles, most prominently by Goddard (2009), Abram (2014) and Lea Sawyers (2018). Since then, however, a book dedicated to her work has emerged, *debbie tucker green: Critical perspectives* (2020), a collection of articles edited by Siân Adiseshiah and Jacqueline Bolton, which is a foundational text for understanding tucker green's work. There is an emphatic focus in these essays on the fecund topic of her rhythmic and musical language and how this determines and enhances the affectivity of her work. Of these articles, Goddard's (2020, pp. 109-28) study of black mothers in *random* and *hang* is the only one to explicitly tackle intersectionality (although she does not use the term itself), which is nonetheless a constant presence in the volume, not least since it underpins all of tucker green's work. I wish to expand on these studies by contributing another book-length interrogation of tucker green's theatre, more focused on intersectionality, naming the term and giving space to its complex theorisation to which, I argue, her plays are pertinent in myriad ways in content and form.

Chapter Breakdown

Each chapter of this thesis focuses on a particular play, each of which invites a slightly different intersectional approach. In Chapter One, I focus on *random* (2010), considering the play through the intersectional lens of black motherhood. Approaching the play in this way raises a number of contextual issues, especially the issue of racially inflected gang violence in the UK, which was receiving much media attention at the time *random* premiered. I argue that such an issue weighs heavily on the figure of the black mother, on which this play centres. Moreover, I investigate the concept of ‘randomness’, framing my analysis with reference to de Certeau’s (1984, pp. 1-4) notion of the ‘everyman’ and the ‘nobody’ and Procter’s (2006, p. 31) ‘postcolonial everyday’.

In Chapter Two, I focus on tucker green’s *generations* (2005). Here, I draw on Collins’s 1998 essay on the nation state’s oppressive influence on the family unit and how this plays out within the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa, in which the play is set. I consider the culture of mourning represented in the choral component of the play, which relates to the impossibility of grief based on the taboo status of HIV/AIDS. I give particular attention to the performance strategies employed by Gardiner in her 2010 production of the play at the Soho Rep. in New York, which aimed to elicit in the audience the feeling of the trauma experienced by the characters without explicating the nature or cause of the trauma.

In Chapter Three, I consider *nut* (2013) in the context of its premiere performance at The Shed, assessing the extent to which this temporary building could be understood as constituting a safe space, a concept relevant to the subject matter of

the play, which follows a black woman who retreats into her home to avoid the hostility of public life. I consider the history of this concept of the safe space in relation to intersectionality and black women's theatre in Britain since the 1980s.

In Chapter Four, I focus on *dirty butterfly* (2020), framing my argument within the context of the legal history of marital rape among black people since the era of slavery, and addressing the issue of the representation of violence. I observe that in this play, as in her other works, tucker green chooses not to show the violence on stage; instead, she alludes to it by exploring its consequences. I draw on an interview I conducted with Kazemi, discussing the eschewal of any explicit representation of violent action. Furthermore, I consider the spatial dynamic of the play, with the stage being split between three flats and the moral issue of witnessing and responsibility to which it gives rise.

Finally, Chapter Five concentrates on *born bad* (2003b), exploring the position of the black mother in relation to the black patriarch. In this chapter, I focus on intergenerational trauma as an ancestral issue dating back to the time of slavery and its pertinence to the predicament of the father and, by extension, his family. I give particular attention to Gardiner's performance strategies and Rogers's interpretation of the role of Dad. I explore extensively the part played by silence—crucial also as a theme and to the dramatic affectivity of each of the above plays, especially *random* and *generations*—which underpins the repression of the trauma suffered as a consequence of incest, repression which is also fundamental to the play's tension echoed in the refrain, "Say it".

The reason that I have chosen to address the plays in this order, which is unchronological, requires a brief explanation. The order has been chosen to create a passage from negativity to (the possibility of) positivity: from grief and repression in *random* and *generations*, to abject depression in *nut*—combined with the positive argument that the theatre could represent a safe space for discussing intersectionality—and hope in *dirty butterfly* and *born bad*. These latter two plays end with a strong sense of hope, which is the sense with which I want my thesis to end. For it is my intention that this thesis, ultimately, conveys a positive message—that we benefit from furthering our understanding of British black women’s theatre, of intersectionality, and of debbie tucker green. I begin with *random* and *generations* because as a pair they address grief in different ways; *random* focuses on the individual, while *generations* on the collective—with the former being a monodrama and the latter a drama with multiple actors in addition to the chorus. And while concentrating on the same theme, they do so in very different contexts and thus the pair establishes the contextual scope, as well as the stylistic range, of tucker green’s theatre. To begin with *random* and *generations*, establishes the theme of silence, which is key to these plays and runs through the rest of the examples studied in this thesis. And because I saw them live, it also catalyses my methodology of engaging with performance strategies.

By introducing the themes of silence and developing an understanding of tucker green’s performance strategies, I hope to provide useful background for the themes considered in relation to *nut*, especially the concept of the safe space where black women are able to speak freely. Although the play itself is very negative in sentiment, the chapter carries a hopeful message in attempting to argue that the theatre

could embrace the concept of the safe space as a zone that might foster discussions about intersectionality. Hope sets the mood for the remaining two plays. Towards the end of *dirty butterfly*, the victim of abuse, Jo, vomits; dramaturgically, the implication of this is that she is trying to eliminate the trauma from her body. As I seek to explain, *dirty butterfly* is a deeply embodied drama, especially in the way that Jo moves and talks about her day-to-day movements within the flat, the fear she feels—and the stored trauma—dictating the way she moves. Therefore, her vomiting seems to symbolise the possibility of an escape. In *born bad*, there is also hope, since Dawta, despite her difficulties in doing so, manages to articulate her rage towards her mother, and thus also her desire to break the cycle of abuse. Like Jo's vomit, such articulation has the sense of expulsion, which in Dawta's case could be seen in terms of refusal.

This thesis centres on one black British woman playwright whose work represents intersectionality in the same spatialised sense from which the word derives its metaphorical meaning. Examining tucker green's innovative poetics reinforces and expands upon Abram's (2020, p. 3) notion that intersectionality manifests in the relations between people, and between people and the environments they navigate and inhabit; as Crenshaw explained (1989, p. 150), the often-blurred subjectivity of intersectionality—since it is irreducible to its individual components—is one reason that victims of intersectional oppression struggle to articulate their experience of it in words. Instead, it is formed out of the same bodily encounters that shape identities on the stage, over and above straightforward verbalisation. This is because intersectional oppression imposes on subjects not always by verbal means; in fact, more often, it is through the silences around matters, particularly taboo matters such as HIV/AIDS or incest, that its trauma is perpetuated. The power of silence to debilitate the oppressed

is what is expressed so artfully—and through her innovative experimentation with language, realistically and affectingly—in tucker green’s writing. This thesis, therefore, aims to provide a fresh contribution to the field of black British women’s theatre, in particular that which focuses on tucker green, and studies in intersectionality, achieving this aim by engaging head-on with intersectional theory and relating it to specific situations represented in tucker green’s writing and the way these situations are performed in the text and on the stage. Thus, I hope to shed light not only on the way intersectionality is manifest in tucker green’s theatre, but also on the way her theatre, in turn, sheds light on intersectional dynamics in the spaces that surround it.

Chapter One

‘Everyman’ to ‘Nobody’: Notions of the ‘Everyday’ and Intersectionality in Constructing Black Motherhood in debbie tucker green’s *random*

“Particular Youngsters”: Violent crime and British politics

On 11 April, 2007, at Cardiff City Hall, Prime Minister Tony Blair delivered a speech in which he declared “respect for others” as being fundamental to the wellbeing of British society (pp. 1-11). The final pages of his speech focused on crime, particularly violent crime involving knives and guns (pp. 8-11), which for Blair was a problem influenced by race above all other socio-political factors. Blair stated, “the black community—the vast majority of whom in these communities are decent, law-abiding people horrified at what is happening—need to be mobilised in denunciation of this gang culture that is killing innocent young black kids” (p. 9). Blair made clear his view that violent crime needed to be tackled as a black issue. That Blair singled out the black community as a force driving violent crime in Britain might have come as a surprise given that, in 1997, the Prime Minister had paid tribute to the parents of Stephen Lawrence, a black British teenager murdered by white racists in 1993 (Gillborn, 2008, pp. 713-25).

Blair’s pronouncements were met with criticism by those who argued that the issue was a matter of poverty as much as race (Wintour & Dodd, 2007, paras. 5-12). Responding to questions after his speech, Blair reaffirmed his contrary position that

economic inequality was a factor but not a “thing that is producing the most violent expression of this social alienation”, adding, “I think that is to do with the fact that particular youngsters are being brought up in a setting that has no rules, no discipline, no proper framework around them” (Wintour & Dodd, 2007, para. 14). If the crux of the contention within and responding to Blair’s speech potentially revolved around the intersectionality of race and class (albeit the complexity of this condition of intersectionality was by no means given adequate justice), this last statement brought the debate into the domestic arena in a way that implicated the parents of these “particular youngsters” and thereby introduced a third point of intersection: gender. Journalists Patrick Wintour and Vikram Dodd linked Blair’s words to his underlying belief, in line with the predominant stereotype (Fatherhood Institute, 2010), that the unruliness of the black household was the result of the frequent absence of the father and thus a suitable male role model (para. 15). By this implication, Blair also implied that black mothers need to do a better job of rearing their children. Blair’s speech triggered a debate on the intersectionality of not only race and class, but also gender, implicitly invoking the gendered position of the black mother.

tucker green’s 2008 one-woman play, *random*, asks to be seen in light of this debate. The play follows a day in the life of a British black family, with one black actress playing all the characters, most of whom are named according to their position within the family: Sister, Brother, Mum, Dad. These are the main characters, while the play also features Teacher, police officers and Sister’s colleagues. The play is divided in two parts. The first part presents a picture of what seems to be a typical day in the family’s life, introducing its members as Sister goes to work, Brother to school and Mum preparing porridge. The drama escalates in the second part, which follows the

arrival of news of Brother's murder, delivered to the family by the police who come to the home. The play then presents the markedly different ways that the two more outspoken family members, Sister and Mum, cope with the news, with Sister lamenting the silence surrounding the event, and Mum withdrawing into herself as a sign of grief.

random evokes the devastation visited on an African-Caribbean family whose son is murdered in an act of violence whose supposed 'randomness' is ironically questioned by the play's title and the complicity of its silent witnesses. Rather than contribute explicitly to the debate surrounding the determining social factors of the son's murder by taking any identifiable position, *random* explores the confusion and instability that pervade the complex intersection of race, class and gender, which become especially felt through the subjectivity of the mother. One does not come away from watching the play with any clear answers or argument as to how the factors of race, class and gender influence violent crime, except that these factors are all part of the mother's trauma caused by the violent loss of her son.

This chapter explores the intersectional layers of oppression affecting black motherhood through analysing the play *random*. The chapter argues that tucker green's play explores the intersectionality embodied in the figure of the mother, and how this extends to the daughter, who effectively takes on the role of the matriarch when the mother withdraws into herself after her son's death. It does so through a focus on the politics of the 'everyday' that challenges and comments on the limits of audience identification with multiply marginalized subject positions, paying attention to both the written text and staging/performance decisions that have been made in selected productions. Michel de Certeau's *Politics of Everyday Life* (1984) and James Procter's

notion of the 'postcolonial everyday' (2006) form the key theories—along with well-established intersectional frameworks for examining black womanhood and black motherhood (Crenshaw, 1989; Roberts, 1993; McClintock, 1995; Collins, 2000; Reynolds, 2005)—used to analyse the play's treatments of the mundane in constructing black motherhood.

I make several key arguments in this chapter. I begin by reviewing the key theories from feminist and critical race studies that pertain to intersectionality in general, and to the intersectional construction of black motherhood in particular. I then proceed to consider tucker green's play in the light of these observations and the concept of the 'everyday'. I argue that the mundanity of the play's opening section, in which the family's domestic routine is employed to elicit audience identification, subsequently becomes the means by which—in the aftermath of Brother's murder—the play effects an exploration of the limits of audience identification that becomes a kind of indictment of the audience. I proceed to develop this argument by considering the play in performance, and exploring the ways in which its monodramatic form and staging choices foreground the relationship between its central characters and the audience. This method ultimately provides a space of (albeit radically limited) agency. From this position, Sister, the play's primary voice, is able to articulate an identity that incorporates a black feminist view of the matriarchal mantle that she is on the cusp of assuming by the play's end.

My work on *random* is supported by four interviews which I conducted to support my analysis of performance techniques. Two of these are with the actors Lucinda Davis and Petra Letang, both of whom have performed *random*'s only part (which, as will be explained in more detail below, consists of a single actor portraying

multiple characters): Davis at Montreal’s Imago Theatre in 2015, Letang at Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018. The third interview is with Micheline Chevrier, who directed the Imago performance, and the fourth with Felix Dunning, who had been company stage manager of the production of *generations* and *random* at Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018. While I attended the performance in Chichester (which was shown as a double bill with *generations*, discussed in the following chapter), and was able to interview Letang and Dunning in person, while Davis and Chevrier were conducted online. As a monodrama—a drama with multiple characters all played by the figure of a single unaccompanied actor onstage for the entire play—*random* is an especially demanding piece of theatre in which the performance of the lead (and only) actor clearly exerts an extraordinary degree of influence over the production. The lengthy reflections of Letang, Davis and Chevrier therefore provide invaluable critical insight to the play in ways that serve to mediate the historical/theoretical discourses also deployed—and, indeed, also serve to complicate and challenge interpretative assumptions via their real-life experience.

Intersectionality and Black Motherhood

In her essay ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’ (1989), Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that intersectionality is crucial to theorising multiply marginalized positions such as that of the black woman. Rejecting what she calls the “single-axis framework” which conceptualizes the oppression suffered by black women as arising from their gender *or* race but never both simultaneously, Crenshaw argues that:

this single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. In other words, in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women. (p. 140).

Crenshaw's conception of intersectionality is crucial for situating the experiences of black women, where, as Tracey Reynolds argues, "the intersection of race and gender [and class] mean that black mothers [...] have vastly differing concerns that have often gone unrecognized in mothering discourses" (2005, p. 2).

One of the crucial points about the intersectional experiences of black womanhood that both Crenshaw and Reynolds raise is the fact that black women do not typically experience oppression and marginalisation along two axes, the comparatively self-evident axes of race and gender, but also along a third axis: that of class. The most ephemeral axis, the class status of black women is both partially determined by racial and gender discrimination, but also interacts with it in complex ways that enhance these other experiences of marginalisation. The inclusion of class alongside race and gender as an axis of intersectional marginalisation is a particularly pressing consideration in the context of black motherhood, since not only are mothers subject to oppression and marginalisation along three axes, but their struggles to support and raise their families, and to prepare their children to function in society, are complicated by interactions with fathers and children who are themselves victims of oppression, discrimination and marginalisation along multiple axes.

Patricia Hill Collins describes black motherhood as conditioned by a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, there are the negative images of black mothers as "stereotypical mummies, matriarchs, welfare recipients and hot mammas", which

permeate society having been fabricated out of a set of interconnecting social factors including race, gender, class and sexuality (2000, p. 69). For Collins, these intersecting markers of oppressive inscription imposed on black women “could not continue without powerful ideological justification”, which the stereotypes helped perpetuate (2000, p. 69). On the other hand, however, black women experience the intersections of race, gender, class and also age as fundamental to their self-identification as mothers—which exists in “ongoing tension” with oppressive stereotypical images (Collins, 2000, p. 175). Motherhood, therefore, is a paradoxical site of both oppression and empowerment, where the view of motherhood as “a truly burdensome condition that stifles [women’s] creativity, exploits their labor, and makes them partners in their own oppression” and the contrasting view in which motherhood “provid[es] a base for self-actualization, status in the black community, and a catalyst for social activism” can coexist side by side in black “communities and families and even within individual women” (Collins, 2000, p. 176).

As I shall subsequently argue in this chapter, it is this complexity that allows tucker green to position motherhood as an intolerable burden (for the character of Mum, who is confronted with the devastating news of her son's death) and as a site of potential self-actualisation, if not necessarily for Mum then for her daughter (Sister), who assumes the role of matriarch as her mother's influence over her family diminishes. In *random*, motherhood, as experienced both by Mum and figuratively by way of her embodiment of an actively matriarchal role—by Sister, exhibits the tension described by Collins (2000, pp. 175-76), which, along with the erratic and discontinuous nature of the various intersections shaping the black mother’s experience, makes mapping a straightforward relationship between a mothering role

and social status fraught with difficulty. The freneticism with which the monodrama shifts between characters, the eventual shift in dramaturgical centrality from Mum (as mother) to Sister (as matriarch), and the general precariousness with which these characters struggle to hold themselves and their family together, are reflective of being a black mother affected by grief.

Black motherhood is further complicated by the fact that—as argued, for example, by McClintock (1995)—gender, race and class are not simply categories of marginalisation that work in conjunction with each other to determine an individual's social status, but each is implicitly invoked in the idealized construction of the mainstream. Hence, “ideal” womanhood is constructed in dominant culture through the medium of racial and class norms, with blackness representing a deviation from the ideal: in colonial texts, therefore, “black women became [...] closely associated with an unbridled, lascivious sexuality” (McClintock, 1995, p. 113)—as everything, in other words, that the upper-class, chaste, white woman was not. McClintock's construction of the ideal mother underlines a mechanism by which black motherhood is constructed by the dominant culture as always-already carrying failure: black mothers “can never attain the ideal image of motherhood, no matter how much [they] conform to middle-class convention, because ideal motherhood is white. The maternal standards created to confine women are not sex-based norms which black women happen to fail. They are created out of race, as well as gendered components” (Roberts, 1993, pp. 15-16).

Stereotypical constructions of black mothers include the figures, identified by Collins, of the Mammy—“the 'good' Black mother” (2000, p. 75) who is defined by her passivity and nurturing role toward white children in white homes—and the

matriarch, "the 'bad' Black mother" (2000, p. 75) whose assertiveness, control and independence lead in turn to a perceived failure "to fulfil [her] traditional 'womanly' duties at home [which] contributed to social problems in Black civil society" (2000, p. 75). As I shall argue subsequently, tucker green's *random* both literalises and problematises this notion of intrinsic failure, by drawing affective links between Mum's failed desire to protect her children from the outside world (for example, in her comments on the role of parents to teach children to "manners their manners"; tucker green, 2010, p. 20) and the murder of Brother, whilst simultaneously foregrounding the question of the black mother's capacity to stand in for motherhood in general. *random* also makes the audience collectively culpable for Mum's failure by exposing the limits of identification between the dominant culture and the figure of the black mother.

The conflicted condition of (black) motherhood is borne out in the reflections of the two actors cast in the lead role to have acted in *random*, the British actor Petra Letang and the Canadian actor Lucinda Davis. Both actors expressed a strong conviction that *random* described a universal human standpoint transcending the specificities of race to affect a general human sensitivity to bereavement. Letang claimed: "I know that the story that I'm telling is universal in terms of family, love, loss, and grief" (Letang, 337-38) while Lucinda Davis noted: "it didn't feel that I was telling the story of a black family, I was telling the story of a family that was hit by violence" (Davis, 69-70). Yet at the same time as acknowledging the universal significance of loss, both actors referred specifically to the unique historical social conditions of the black family in Britain. For Letang, this level of specificity became clear "after what happened to the boy, it became more related to the black community,

to black motherhood” (Letang, 73-74). For Davis too, the tragic stabbing refers to the spate of stabbings of black youths in London of the 1990s (Davis, 82-84). Letang cited the example of Doreen Lawrence, the mother of Stephen Lawrence, who, for her, served as the archetypal black grieving mother (Letang, 54-59).

These deep structures of narrative which lie embedded within a class, race, gender, or national culture, were also expressed at more indirect levels related to clothing and the function of ‘everyday’ objects in both the script and the staging to establish indeed strong homologies of cultural reference, specifically to black motherhood. Davis, for example, spoke of how she knew of “several other black mamas [who] would wear scarves over their heads. You know, there's something about that covering of the hair, you know, whether you have it in braids, or whether it's natural, but there is something very natural about having the head covering” (Davis, 183-87) and this signifier—the headscarf—thus spoke powerfully as a cultural marker of the intersectionality of race and gender which could take place *within* an otherwise universally applicable understanding of loss and grief.

The motivations behind *random*—or at least the ways in which the play was received—might have differed between those involved in its staging. Such differences in points of view of the play’s production team, even the possibility of different interpretations, makes apparent the instability and irreducibility of intersectionality on the levels of reception, which are intertwined with the processes of production, given that reception and interpretation are already operating among the actors and directors of the play before it is staged in front of an audience.

Even if the actors had strong convictions that the play was universal in its portrayal of motherhood and grief, for Chevrier, the director of the Montreal

production (2015), one of the key foundations of the play was the subject matter's resonance with "contemporary society". As she explained, "everything we produce here is conversation about things that are happening now in contemporary society. So, issues that I feel are difficult to confront, difficult to discuss but that theatre makes possible, because theatre is a safe place to discuss very difficult things. So, the subject matter also really drew me ultimately" (Chevrier, 16-19). Although Chevrier does not state explicitly that Black Lives Matter influenced her decision to put on *random*, the movement had gathered considerable momentum by the time of the play's production and issues of race and racial inequality were becoming more and more prevalent in any public discussion of social justice. Davis, on the other hand, is clear that the association was coincidental and that for her *random* was universal and not necessarily a "black" play: "when we did *random* Black Lives Matter really exploded, I believe. Eric Garner had died a couple of months before, Michael Brown had died a couple of months before. So, there's really this momentum about police brutality and what was happening and then we did *random*, and it almost seems that we were doing *random* as a comment on this. And for me, it was never that" (Davis, 76-80).

The paradoxical role of the black mother examined by Collins resonates in black motherhood's continuous fluctuation between an embodiment of the universality of motherhood that she can only ever partially fulfil—and even then, only if she is passive—and of the specificity of the perceived failures of "Black civil society", which she is held to represent in proportion to the amount she articulates her individual identity and embraces her agency (Collins, 2000, pp. 175-76). It is in this paradox that the full extent of the black mother's intersectional marginalisation is revealed: it is not simply that the oppressions of race, class, and gender work together

to marginalize her—the conflicting facts of her blackness and her motherhood demand that she epitomizes a patriarchal ideal of passive, demure, privileged, white womanhood that she has always already failed to inhabit.

Randomness, the Mundane, and the Domestic Space

random initially focuses on the mundanity of the family's domestic lives: Sister anxiously awaits a call from her boyfriend, unable to make calls as she is locked out of her phone due to a lack of credit; Mum makes porridge and burns it; Brother arrives late at school and argues with his teacher. Dad wakes up late from a night shift and interacts gruffly with Mum. The mundanity of these events is punctuated by the 'random' attack on Brother that leaves him dead and his family struggling to come to terms with their sudden loss and make sense of what happened. The juxtaposition of a readily-identifiable mundanity and domesticity of the private sphere with a violent incursion of the public is a means by which Tucker Green exposes the paradoxes and limits of black motherhood and the social constructions surrounding it. This agonized account of black motherhood informs the family relationships in *random*, in which familial crisis is precipitated by the teenage Brother's death in a stabbing incident. It is possible to trace the effects of intersectional oppression by analysing the mother. The play highlights the difficulties facing the black woman as she attempts to maintain relationships with her children prior to and in the face of this catastrophic incident.

The focus on domesticity and its performance medium is characteristic of what Patricia Badir, in her article 'Playing Solitaire: Spectatorship and Representation in Canadian Women's Monodrama' (1992) calls a "monodrama", whose "private and intimate nature [...] becomes comparable to the solitary yet political acts of journal writing and diary keeping which are forms of personal expression seeking to explore

female experiences left out of history, literature and art” (1992, p. 120). Tucker Green's play uses this form, its focus on domesticity, and a foregrounded, ironized treatment of a clichéd phrase in news media reports about violence (‘a random attack’, ‘a random act of violence’) to produce a work of resistance that articulates the marginal viewpoint of the intersectionally oppressed black mother, at once emphasizing this position's marginality and affording it a kind of ‘everyman’ status. The duality of this ‘everyday’/ ‘everyman’ status situates the play's treatment of motherhood in a continual representation of sameness and difference. Thus, *random* leverages the slippage between the general and the specific—between motherhood in general and black motherhood in particular—as a means of exploring the hidden and intersectional oppressions to which Mum is subject.

The Characters of *random* and their Intersectional Marginalisation

The intersectional oppression and marginalisation that arises from being black and female results in Mum's inability to protect her son from the consequences of her situation. Indeed, a principle that is emphasized in the play pertains to the socio-cultural aspects of the killing, in that it is far from ‘random’: such an attack is more likely to happen to a black boy than to a white boy. Statistical reports of crime in Britain, which have taken into account ethnicity since 1996-97, repeatedly have shown that proportionally black people are more likely to be victims of homicide than any other ethnic group, a statistic in which social deprivation is generally seen to play a major intersecting role (Grierson, 2021, paras. 1-9). Mum's role in the family foregrounds an underlying sense of underachievement regarding raising her children in the face of these external pressures. The following extract establishes the nature of the current relationship between Mum and Sister while foreshadowing via a reference

to cyclical inheritance, Sister's eventual assumption of her mother's role:

She don't want none.

She late down –

don't think I notice

that she nah mek the time fe a proper

'eat enough' –

a proper 'drink enough' –

of a morning.

She still tink bein young –

is bein invincible.

She still tink she she young...

(*amused*) She like me.

She'll learn.

Like me (tucker green, 2010, p. 7).

“She'll learn”, suggests Mum, ominously —implying that Sister's carefree spirit and perception of her own invincibility will be broken soon enough, as has already happened to her. For all her stridency, however, Mum's interventions tend to be ineffectual —her children do not modify their behaviour and their treatment of her, while good-natured, suggests that they view her as a well-meaning but slightly irritating irrelevance.

Mum is a clear representation of the institutionalized black motherhood that, as Adrienne Rich argues in relation to motherhood in general, “demands of women maternal ‘instinct’ rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self” (Rich, 1986, p. 42). As in the discourse of the matriarch, however, Mum's imperfect grip on the private sphere is linked to failures in a “black civil society”, since it is this space that is ultimately shattered by the incursion of the brutal act of violence. This dynamic accordingly demonstrates the manner in which societal violence, hegemonic class structures, and patriarchal constructions of femininity intersect with the mechanics of racial oppression. *random* is a clear example of the “Black [mother’s] subordination in the system of race, class and gender oppression” (Collins, 1987, p. 4).

For the actors playing Mum, there were key moments when the full force of these multiple oppressions came into focus onstage. For Letang, this moment occurred on the threshold of the private domestic space, the only moment in the play when the black family is confronted directly with an institution of white power—the police. “It's like an invasion of space” recalled Letang, “and I think they are a very private family and I think she is that school of thought where if you have got something important to say, you can say it on my doorstep” (Letang, 165-67). Twice Mum refuses entry, on the third time she lets them in, and from that breaking of the boundary of the black interior issues the tragic breakdown of her domestic realm. For Davis, the threshold was the encounter with the boy’s body in the morgue: “I actually had to visualize it. So that was a difficult image to have to conjure every single night” (Davis, 31-32). The unbearable reality of

the boy's death is weighed upon her night after night through internal visualisation of the indubitable physicality of his lifeless body, which itself is psychologically received as a material manifestation of the character's failed mothering. While the trauma that might result from the death of a child may be universal, for Mum, this sudden loss effected a shattering of the private sphere which had provided the framework of her imperfect sense of self founded on the intersectional construct of black motherhood.

In the Montreal production, this fundamental shift in the story—signalled by the news and realization that the boy is dead—was conveyed physically when Davis, having been seated in a chair throughout the first act, stands up (Chevrier, 41-42). As Chevrier recalls, this moment also coincided with a shift in the roles that Davis had to play:

once they find out about the boy being killed, their lives [...] will never be the same again. [...] Also, the story in the second half is very much in the hands of Sister. And so, it becomes more personal and less performative in a way, [so that] the experience for the audience involved watching this actor move from character to character to character. And so that was also considered in terms of the style of storytelling (Chevrier, 48-54).

After this sequence of frenetic shifting from one character to another, the performance became more centred on the subjectivity of Sister. Thus, in Chevrier's view, it became more personal than performative, as it gave more time to a single character's interiority, allowing the drama to unravel more of her trauma.

In the Montreal performance, Chevrier explains, there were also "a bunch of clocks in the back" (Chevrier, 269) which symbolised the characters' fixation with

time (“she talks about time. It’s introduced repeatedly to kind of track the day”) (Chevrier, 275-76), and “when they get the news, and they realise what happened, the clocks for us started to flash and then they went out. So, the second half, there’s no time. The clocks are dead” (Chevrier, 276-78). If the different clocks all showing different—‘random’—times allude to the multiple characters existing in different timeframes as well as Mum’s decentred, intersectional selfhood, then the deadening of the clocks after the son’s death may be interpreted as representing the all-consuming void that is left over after the removal of the self’s most vital part. Indeed, the loss of Brother effectively reveals the flipside of the nameless ‘everyman’ as ‘nobody’.

The intersectional oppression of black mothers is, Dorothy E. Roberts notes, complex. Foregrounding any one tenet of identity in exploring this oppression can lead to the marginalisation of others, resulting in turn in a construction of black motherhood that lacks nuance:

Some women may experience mothering as debilitating and intrusive, even though patriarchal ideology defines it as women's instinctive vocation. Some women may experience fulfillment and happiness in mothering, even though feminist theory calls it oppressive (1993, p. 4).

Roberts makes the point that, depending on the circumstances of the individual black woman, the fact of motherhood itself is both, a source of agency and a means of curtailing agency. What remains clear, however — and what the events of *random* steadily reveal— is the fact that intersectional societal oppression renders black motherhood a qualitatively different experience from white motherhood:

There are joys and sorrows that most mothers share. [.....] There are also experiences mothers do not share, in part because of race. Most white mothers do not know the pain of raising Black children in a racist

society (Roberts, 1993, p. 6).

In contrast to Mum's withdrawal, which is influenced especially by the presence of the police (Goddard, 2020, p. 113), Dad plays a more active role, although he could initially be misconstrued by the spectator representing the stereotypical "absent" black father (Fatherhood Institute, 2010). Thus, Dad is also ambiguous and not easy to pigeonhole, suggesting that, like Mum, he is subjected to intersectional oppression which blurs his subjectivity, creating a character who is nuanced and complex. Dad is quiet, speaking less than others ("Dad the kinda dad who... / don't say much") (tucker green, 2010, p. 18), but he does speak. And in certain important instances, his role is significantly more active than the stereotype, as he shows signs of resistance to the outside world. Indeed, Goddard (2020, p. 119) compares Dad to Neville Lawrence, Stephen's father, who was "often standing quietly in moral support by [Doreen Lawrence's] side".

There are two moments in which Dad shows active resistance which stand out. First, when the police come to the house, Dad resists the reversal of the hospitality dynamic by refusing a cup of tea—offered by the police—and to sit: "an' no—mi nah want no cup a tea— / thass fe us to offer—an' no / mi noh wan' fe sit. Neither" (tucker green, 2010, p 27; see Goddard, 2020, p. 115). By attempting to reverse the usual relationship between guest and host, the police render the family as alien not just to the broader picture of British society, but also to their own home. It is a powerful act of resistance that Dad refuses to allow this to happen. Secondly, also regarding the police's intrusion, Dad gives them "too-sweet tea", which, as Mum explains, he gives to them "On purpose. / How he do- / with people he don't like"; and he does this to test their "unnatural

politeness / to let their guard... / slip (tucker green, 2010, p. 31). Therefore, giving the police officers tea that is too sweet is a way of shifting some of the control to the side of the family, an underhand way of retaining some kind of agency in the situation.

From ‘Everyman’ to ‘Nobody’: *random*, the ‘everyday’, and the limits of empathy

As effectively as *random* explores the intersectional forces that marginalize Mum and the other family members, the chief way in which it imbues these forces with dramatic tension is via its juxtaposition of the eponymous notion of ‘randomness’ and the construction of mundanity that it effects so tellingly in its opening third. The dramatic impact of the play revolves around a tension between two key notions: the notion of ‘randomness’ invoked by the title of the play— which is subsequently reinforced by the shock of the attack on Brother, and placed into question by the indifferent response of the police officers who relay the news of his death to his family, and of the inactive witnesses —and the notion of the ‘everyday’. *random* is a play that is named after a turn of phrase that is not only a cliché but also a euphemism, serving to denude acts of violence of political and socioeconomic meaning, implying that they are unpredictable or lacking in meaningful causality when, at a macroscopic level, their occurrence is both predictable and readily ascribable to causal factors. Hence, *random* satirizes the process by which:

various categories of street-level violence are framed as crime, as opposed, for example, to being represented as political acts or linked to economic conditions. Although it may seem strange to even think about seemingly random acts of violence in political or economic terms, there are plenty of reasons to do so - if only mass-mediated discourse in society were organized differently. For example, not only does violent “crime” rise and fall (almost

as a leading economic indicator) with economic cycles, but many of the patterns of violence that most elicit public demands for legal crackdowns are associated with poverty, unemployment, and low economic mobility (Bennett, 2000, p. 183).

The term 'random' is thus an ironic description of the killing, which is deeply entrenched within the intersecting layers of oppression experienced by black youths living in poverty-stricken estates and thus anything but 'random'. These layers of oppression are in turn interwoven with those experienced by the black mother, who is charged with caring for her children in poverty and on a violent estate among many other black youths who suffer from the same poverty.

Juxtaposed with the 'random' attack is the mundanity of the family's routine, which does not only precede the act of violence but persists in its immediate aftermath, as Sister struggles to reconcile herself to the seriousness of events, continues to focus on her boyfriend troubles and her phone, and, as a result, deletes Brother's final message in what will subsequently be revealed to have been a deeply poignant act:

'Come home.'

What I thought was from my man

is from my mum.

'Come home. Now.'

One message from her.

And one *stink* message from Junior

from morning.

He think he's funny – carry on

thinks he's comedian – carry on

as my finger runs to find delete.

Now *thass* funny bruv.

'Come home. Now' (tucker green, 2010, p. 23).

More poignantly still, when it begins to dawn on Sister that something out of the ordinary is happening, and she is filled with growing unease, her response is to call Brother. But her explanation when he fails to answer her call once again falls back on the mundane:

if Mum took sick

Dad should be lookin after her.

Dad would ring.

Wouldn't stop ringin.

If Dad took sick

Mum would manage.

Always has.

Text her I'm comin –

phone Junior to see if he know more'n I do

but he doin what I do

thinkin he smart –

locked off his phone.

Leave him a stink message instead (tucker green, 2010, p. 27).

The interleaving of mundanity and horrific violence in these scenes underlines the importance to the play of ‘everyday life’, a formulation that has been subject to relatively little critical and theoretical attention, especially, according to James Procter, in the study of minority and diasporic communities, where the dominance of “alterity, marginality and exoticism” (Procter 2006, p. 67) has effectively marginalized narratives focused on domesticity and routine, and limited the scope of critical engagement into what such narratives might tell us about the cultural lives of their subjects. *random* belongs in part to the subcategory of narrative through which Procter explores the ‘postcolonial everyday’, in which “repetition displaces narrative progression [...] [and] [t]he home is also a privileged symbol of the everyday [...], as a site of departure and return as well as a familiar, fixed point of dullness and stasis that grounds the narrative” (Procter 2006, p. 67). However, the play's treatment of the ‘everyday’ also recalls far older dramatic forms, in which Michel de Certeau situates the origins of ‘everyday life’ as a concern of literature and drama: the ‘everyman’ narrative of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period. In the development of this narrative, de Certeau suggests, “[t]he erosion and denigration of the singular or the extraordinary was announced by *The Man Without Qualities*” (de Certeau 1984, p. 1; referring to Robert Musil’s 1930 novel of the same name).

What makes the dramaturgical interleaving of mundanity and tragedy all the more powerful is that everything is filtered through the singular presence of one actor. Both Letang and Davis emphasized that it was this multiplicity within unity (acting all of the characters themselves) which constituted the most challenging feature of the performance. Describing the trauma of internally reflecting on the play’s events,

Letang states: “I’m doing that every night and twice over because I’m receiving it as mum and dad and then as sister” (Letang, 126-27). In the same way, Davis explained “It’s difficult when you’re doing a show by yourself, you don’t have a dialogue or another person with which to bounce ideas off. So, you have to create it all by yourself” (Davis, 34-36). Chevrier observes how the shift between characters is written into the language: “we started to integrate that right from the beginning, it was impossible not to, because also, tucker green writes it into the text, so you can’t not do it, which is beautiful” (Chevrier, 32-34). Thus, not only on a performative but also on a textual level, *random* embodies multiplicity in unity. It might be said in fact that what the actors are describing here is a dramaturgical event analogous to the multiple blending, colliding and crisscrossing of experiences that are fundamental to intersectionality: the necessity to deal not only with a single condition but with multiple intersecting conditions/oppressions coming together and being experienced simultaneously in a single body. Indeed, this sense of dramaturgical event manifests most evidently in the use of different dialects for the different characters, the convincing imitation of which Chevrier explains was one of the first aspects of the performance that Davis had to master. This was necessary, not least because the text itself employed dialect differentiation to define the characters. As Chevrier explains:

The characters were already defined by their dialects, they were already defined by their attitudes and their rhythms in the text. What’s amazing about how she does that, that you can feel the character just in the rhythm. So right away, that’s how we develop the character. So, the text led us, and then led to a series of choices that we made about gestures, and body postures (Chevrier, 36-41).

As de Certeau sees it, an inevitable cost of the allegorical construction of the ‘everyman’ figure is the loss of the “singular or the extraordinary”, which empties the character with whom the audience is supposed most readily to identify of the

individual richness that might more readily foster and sustain this empathy. The significance of this construction to *random* becomes clear when considered in the light of de Certeau's subsequent observation that “called *Everyman* (a name that betrays the absence of a name), this anti-hero is thus also *Nobody*” (1984, p. 2). Like the ‘everyman’ of the allegorical morality play, the characters in *random* are explicitly and self-consciously identified as “types” rather than characters *per se*: named only after their familial relationships to each other, the characters are positioned as *any* father, mother, brother and sister in *any* family, a positioning that exists in tension with their very specific socioeconomic, racial, and cultural locatedness, which is made explicit in everything from the family's patois-inflected language to the setting and, of course, the murder itself. de Certeau locates the collapse of ‘everyman’ into ‘nobody’ in the (mis)appropriation of the vulgar ‘everyman’ figure by bourgeois literary form:

[The everyman character] is both the nightmare or philosophical dream of humanist irony and an apparent referentiality (a common history) that make credible a writing that turns “everybody” into the teller of his ridiculous misfortune. But when elitist writing uses the “vulgar” speaker as a disguise for a metalanguage about itself, it also allows us to see what dislodges it from its privilege and draws it outside of itself: an Other who is no longer God or the Muse, but the anonymous (1984, p. 2).

Through its initial focus on the family's domestic life, followed by the abrupt interjection of the murder and its aftermath, Tucker Green infuses this collapse of ‘everyman’ into ‘nobody’ with overt political intent, extinguishing the life of one of her characters to literalise the tension between presence and absence while also drawing a continual tension between the exploration of “universal” themes such as familial relationships—which invite audience empathy—and the tragedy that explicitly locates the family in a context remote from the ‘everyday’ concerns of a typical “bourgeois” theatre audience and have a dehumanizing impact on the

characters. This is not to suggest, of course, that tucker green's intended audience is solely the bourgeois theatregoer; it is, however, to suggest, as discussed in more detail below with reference to the play's performance, that the form and content of *random* exists at least partly to confront the "mainstream" audience as a function of the dominant (i.e. white) culture and to frame the 'everyday' in terms of exploring the limits of audience empathy and the capacity of a black family to fulfil the generic 'everyman' role.

tucker green's engagement with an audience assumed to be composed of members of the dominant culture is evident in the focus of the play "primarily on the impact of the murder as seen through the reaction of [Brother's] grieving female relatives—Sister and Mum—whose personal reflections make the subject matter accessible to wider audiences, whilst preventing easy reductions of the narrative as being about 'black on black' violence" (Goddard, 2009, p. 300). This "accessibility" is, however, far from straightforward: the audience is continually challenged with respect to the types of experience they can and cannot access, and with which they can and cannot empathise. This performative experiment with audience empathy is established in the construction of the 'everyday' that dominates the first half of the play that "present[s] black Britain at its most mundane until, unexpectedly, these familiar rituals are interrupted by news of the son/brother's murder" (Abram, 2014, p. 116). The family day begins with a humorous representation of their routines with "Birds bitchin their birdsong outside" (tucker green, 2010, p. 3). Throughout the morning scene, Brother and Sister wake and argue amongst themselves about Brother's smelly room and their mobile phones. Their day is explained in terms of its typicality and with a persistent reference to the mundane and repetition. The scene,

focused on bickering and seemingly frivolous concerns, helps to ground the characters and establish a degree of domestic contentment, thus inviting audience identification.

I discussed the limits of audience identification and empathy with the predicament of the characters in an interview with Felix Dunning, company stage manager of the production of *generations* and *random* at Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018. In the interview, Dunning confessed a concern held by the theatre that the mainly white theatregoers of a provincial town such as Chichester, who have a reputation for being “conservative, right wing, elderly”, might not respond well to plays about black trauma (although Dunning also said he was aware of his own potential prejudice as a member of “metropolitan London liberal elite” underestimating the open-mindedness of Chichester’s population):

I think [Chichester Festival Theatre] were worried that they just wouldn’t get it or wouldn’t be up for it. You know, [the public] see it in the program, they might say well, that’s not for me, you know? But actually, as much as we were worried that Chichester audience might sort of.. I don’t want to be closed minded [...] about it. I, as a sort of Metropolitan London liberal elite, you know [...] someone who is at risk of looking down on people from small villages who I see as conservative, right wing, elderly—not [that] that’s a bad thing. But I might assume that the narrow minded actually, aside from the race issues and all of that [...]. And they’ve been offered something new. And they’ve taken it with both hands. And they’ve said, “We love this. Thank you” (Dunning, 97-106).

Notwithstanding the positive result, there is an evident concern of some kind of rift in understanding, identification and empathy between the cultures represented by the play and the audience. This concern is suggestive of an understanding that the play itself has the potential to jar with British audiences who are predominantly white, the anticipated audience at Chichester being a case in point. If we understand Dunning’s words “conservative, right wing, elderly” also to encompass whiteness, the concern is

first and foremost a racial one, given low populations of ethnic minority groups in areas in Britain outside the major cities. A census taken in 2011-12 reported that 93.1% of the population of Chichester was white British, whilst 6.99% was black or of another ethnic minority, giving Chichester the highest percentage of white and the lowest of black and ethnic minority residents out of all the districts in West Sussex (Chichester District Council, 2013, p. 5).

For Dunning, the positive reception is reflective of the underlying humanity of the plays:

society is much more open to diversity and difference than we often give people credit for. And so, I think that's been really nice, and really nice for the company. I think the audience have come here and gone, "Well, these are human stories. [...] And I'm honoured that I've got the opportunity to hear these stories that don't come to me normally (Dunning, 113-17).

I would be wary of being quite so assured of the societal reasons for the play's positive reception in Chichester. Dunning says that "society is much more open to diversity and difference than we often give people credit for" and then says that the play's success was based on its universality rather than society's ability to empathise with a culture other than its own. That this society is "honoured" to hear stories rarely heard in their midst is grounded on the plays' universal humanity. However, that the play reached what is likely to have been a predominantly white audience evinces its receptibility across cultures.

The play begins with Sister, the central consciousness of the play, outstaring her alarm clock. This contest is won when "it blinked first—loser" (tucker green, 2010, p. 3). Sister is witty and lively, but also observant. These qualities are crucial for her function as the emotional centre of the monodrama, and for her forensic attention to detail, which heightens the dramatic tension when, at the key moment (discussed

below) memory fails her, betraying deep trauma. Sister's opening lines foreshadow the coming events by explicitly blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior she describes:

a rubbish night's sleep

a restless night's sleep

for no reason at all.

Birds bitchin their birdsong outside.

People already on road.

Dogs in their yards barkin the shit outta

the neighbourhood.

This ent a morning to be peaceful

and the somethin in the air–

in the room –

in this day –

mekin mi shiver– (tucker green, 2010, pp. 3-4).

Brother, who is less perceptive and relatively carefree compared to Sister and Mum, describes an identical scene in a contrasting manner – “Birds sweetin their birdsong outside. Nice” (tucker green, 2010, p. 4), but he too reports disruptive noises encroaching from the outside and a foreboding sleeplessness – “Lay bad. Slept bad” (tucker green 2010, p. 4) — even if he does not explicitly recognize it as such.

The blurring of the boundaries between the domestic space and the harsh realities outside continue to inflect the practice of the ‘everyday’, with Mum concerned about the diet of her children and insisting that they should dress in warm clothes “An’ she dress like iss summer while spring still struggling” (tucker green, 2010, p. 7). Mum anxiously watches first Sister sitting and then Brother drinking milk, complaining that Sister doesn't eat or drink enough because she “still tink bein young – /is bein invincible” (tucker green, 2010, p. 7). This operates as a pertinent allegory for the care that is required but lacking in the outside world. Indeed, the impression given is that Mum wants her children to be fully prepared, her insistence upon layers of physical insulation indicating her partial awareness that she cannot protect them from the dangers they face in the outside world.

Like Brother, Mum is presented through the gaze of Sister. The distinction between the awareness of Sister regarding the realities of the exterior world and her brother who is more irreverent and carefree is emphasized in this interplay, and points to the broader dynamic of their relationships with Mum. Mum’s intersectional oppression provides a contrast here with regards to the attitudes of her children. The children's breezy indifference to her recommendations about their clothing and attire reflects a disconnect with her children. Indeed, Sister has a greater awareness than her mother, who is already marginalized in the domestic space by a sense of her growing irrelevance even before the tragedy. Her commentary about the way her boy dresses to go to school is hardly unusual for a parent observing a schoolchild’s rebellious modifications to their uniform: “Ask mi / how yu can mek a uniform look... / not like a uniform... / a tie look—/ not like it pose to tie—/ a trouser fit—/ how you wannit to—/ not how it meant to—*so low?*” (tucker green, 2010, pp. 11-12). There is a broad

breadth of relatability in Mum's observations which is put in contrast with the more socially complex and not as universally relatable scenario invoked with the boy's subsequent murder.

Once Sister leaves to go to work, Brother leaves for school. Sister goes to her job in an office and the audience learns of her disdain for her colleagues whose vacuous comments irritate her: "If you don't wanna work—/ don't come—/ *nah*—/ if you come—/ don't reach cos your only reason is / to come by *me* and chat *your* shit / inna *my* ears / bout how much you hate it" (tucker green, 2010, p. 14). It is while at work that Sister receives her fateful "*come home*" message. The implications of the text have not yet been made apparent, at least until Sister sees the police cars outside her house upon her return. Sister's initial conclusion is that her brother has got into trouble:

Mum gonna cuss.

Dad gonna be pissed.

They ent here for me –

so

it ent my arse

thass gonna get kicked –

Junior –

better have one piece a excuse (tucker green, 2010, p. 30).

This sentiment plays with audience expectations, acknowledging that, despite a lack of evidence in the play that Brother is guilty of anything more than minor tardiness

(his teacher even emphasizes, albeit in a backhanded manner, his “potential” (tucker green 2010, p. 17), there is a pervasive societal association between blackness and crime. In a review for *The Independent*, Paul Taylor states the assumption of Brother’s criminality explicitly: “She’s [tucker green is] also skilled at bringing you up against your prejudices. On hearing that two police cars were parked outside the family home, I automatically assumed that the brother had got into trouble” (Taylor, 2008, para.6). As Gilroy explains, this assumption “legitimizes the idea that any black, all blacks, are somehow contaminated by the alien predisposition to crime which is reproduced in their distinctive cultures, specifically their family relations” (1982, p. 52).

Gilroy's explicit linkage of perceptions of black criminality with black domestic culture is significant here, since it underlines the perspectival nature of the notion of violence and its threat, which is an important component of the inherently politicized way in which the family's role in the play transitions from ‘everyman’ to ‘nobody’. At the beginning of the play, the audience is invited to identify with Mum's desire to protect her children from the outside world. Yet Sister's assumptions —and their parallels with prevailing social constructs of blackness and criminality— suggest the degree to which she has internalized a sense of her, and her family's, marginalisation: that in some undefined way their domestic space does not constitute protection from threat but also the manifestation of a vague, nebulous, but still keenly felt, threat of violence in its own right. This duality is the foundation of the play's multiple-layered, bitterly ironic take on its titular concern, the nature of ‘randomness’ itself. At its least ironic level, *random* reflects the profound shock of the Brother's murder and the violent disruption of the family's previously mundane lives. There is nothing to suggest that Brother is involved in any criminal activities that would subject

him to targeted violence — in this sense the attack is ‘random’ —though, as discussed above, the socioeconomic marginalisation of the family suggests that Brother is statistically far more likely to be the victim of a violent crime than someone white or a member of a more privileged socioeconomic class. As Mum tellingly and angrily exclaims, “random don’t happen to everybody, so. How come ‘random’ have to happen to him?” (tucker green 2010, p. 49).

The play's title also echoes at least two different kinds of clichéd phrasing that might be used to describe such an attack: the standard phrase used by police and the media to describe an apparently motiveless attack, and the habitual use of the term, especially among young people and teenagers, as slang for an unlikely yet mundane occurrence. The strands of meaning embodied by these clichés point toward the more overtly ironic treatments of the term within the text: the fact that it ignores a plethora of socioeconomic factors that make young black men like Brother far more likely to be subject to an attack, but also the notion that ‘random’ acts of brutality such as this could themselves become mundane or ‘everyday’. This is highlighted in a telling passage in which Sister recalls the traumatic experience of hearing of her brother's death, and her usually fluent style becomes broken and fragmented as the enormity of the news dawns on her and her family, and she asks a series of partial, disjointed, and repetitious questions:

Why ent we..

where he is?

'... Why ent we –

where he is –

why ent we gone?

Why ent we in one a your

flash pig cars

with your sirens on?

What if he's shook? (tucker green, 2010, pp. 33-34).

As Sister's distress magnifies, a subtle shift of perspective switches her focus towards the helplessness of the family hearing the news and an imagining of herself inhabiting Brother's consciousness (again, the monodramatic form helps here, resisting clear demarcations between characters) as she imagines him alone and reaching out to his absent family:

What if he's not sure –

and what the fuck you think he's family's

for?'

What if he's callin –

for his Dad –

his Mum –

... Me?

(Beat) (tucker green, 2010, p. 34).

Finally, she switches to a third-person narrative voice to observe the officers' inaction in a pitch of frustration that again precludes her ability to form coherent thoughts:

... And they sip their tea –

and they sat there sittin –

tryin to

pacify our worry

with a...

'There's no need to hurry,

there's no need to hurry.

There is no

need

to

hurry.'

... We already way too late.

... And never even know it (tucker green, 2010, p. 34).

As Trish Reid (2020, p. 59) observes, the final two lines quoted above seem to be spoken from a different position, as if with retrospective knowledge; they are located at the scene of account, not the scene of event. The repetition of “why ent we.../ where he is?” (tucker green, 2010, p. 33) reveals an increasingly frantic desire on the part of Sister to be with her brother and comfort him, and perplexity at the lack of urgency on the part of the visiting police officers, which, significantly, is juxtaposed with a sort of parody of domestic contentment as the officers “*sip their tea*” —at which Sister finds herself incredulous. Their calmness in the face of her mental anguish and

agitation is vividly conveyed through the tautological line “*they sat there sittin*”, which, distressingly, suggests that there is a weary routine to such scenes as far as the officers are concerned. This perception is reinforced by their willingness to fall back on their own narrative of causality— an alternate narrative that nevertheless suggests a lack of ‘randomness’ when Sister suggests that her brother might simply be with his “spars” (tucker green, 2010, p. 32). Upon being asked to explain she exasperatedly says “Friends” but has to immediately correct the officers' erroneous interpretation: “not a 'gang'” (tucker green, 2010, p. 32).

Brother's Death and the Erosion of Private Space

Mum believes she has failed her children when she receives the news of her son’s murder, and that he was believed to be a member of a gang. Mum realizes at this moment that her son’s dead body is dehumanized by these accusations because he is black. Roberts declares that:

It is impossible to explain the depth of sorrow felt at the moment a mother realizes she birthed her precious brown baby into a society that regards her child as just another unwanted black charge. Black mothers must bear the incredible task of guarding their children's identity against innumerable messages that brand them as less than human (1993, p. 6).

Throughout the scenes after the murder of the son, distress is made palpable, most notably during the lengthy, intimate and poignant discussions between Sister and Mum about Brother's birthmark—and is indicative of a symbology that recognizes the growing grief of Mum over her diminishing domestic domain. For example, the police do not take their boots off when they enter the home. Such symbolic references to the family’s dynamic in the face of the law draws a connection with the intersectional oppression that is enacted on Mum. In this respect, the police become a metaphoric reflection of the way in which the oppressions to which Mum is subject have worked

against her ability to protect her children from the outside world. In their role as representative of the white world, their behaviour becomes a reflection of that which is symptomatic of a broader institutionalized attitude. Mum shows distress when the police step on the rug, as she comments: “dark boots an' heavy shoes/ inna my house” (tucker green, 2010, p. 26), as she sees the dirt of the outside world both literally and metaphorically encroach on her home, representing the continued erosion of the boundary between domestic space—bringing to mind the African Caribbean migrant’s “front room”, characterized by Michael McMillian (2009) as a place of safety and belonging—and the malevolent external forces from which she has tried, and ultimately failed, to protect her son.

At the moment Mum learns of her son's death, the initial distinctions and archetypes established by the play are entirely collapsed. The ‘everyman’ characters of the family have been revealed to be ‘nobodies’ in the eyes of a society that treats them with contempt, the public and private spheres have become indistinguishable from each other, and the matriarch's domain —manifested both in her home and her ability to protect her children from harm— lies in ruins. The significance of this profound rupture to the ‘everyday’ can be best understood by returning to Procter or, more specifically, to David Farrier's extensions to Procter's notion of the ‘postcolonial everyday’ in his essay ‘Everyday Exceptions: The Politics of the Quotidian in Asylum Monologues and Asylum Dialogues’ (2012). Focusing specifically on the lives of asylum seekers but offering an insight that is readily transferrable to the events of *random*, Farrier asserts that “the incursions of a politics of the exception into [...] everyday life necessitates a postcolonial response that can conjure even-handedly with the exception(al) and the quotidian” (Farrier, 2012, p. 431). This is exactly what the

notion of ‘randomness’ accomplishes in the play, conjuring the quotidian as at once mundane and precarious, and black family life as an intersectionally marginalized situation in which mundanity itself is a privilege continually subject to threats of collapse.

Sister as Matriarch: the changing roles of *random*'s characters

The investigation of the term ‘random’ continues into the second half of the play, where Sister takes on much of her mother's responsibility. She can no longer protect her brother, but is fiercely defensive of his memory, resentful of the continuing incursion of public space into the family's private grief, and determined to find meaning in his murder—to forestall the insistences on its ‘random’ nature and find out what happened to him, despite the fact that:

Silence shoutin the loudest.

Cos it seem that

now no one wanna witness

what happened

to my Brother (tucker green, 2010, p. 45).

As Sister goes to identify the body of her brother with their father, she speaks of his death in terms of its public ownership and the irritation that she suffers at the support that is shown for her by her work colleagues: “and who ask Sally fe bawl /She never know my brother/ She don't even know me” (tucker green, 2010, p. 44). Sister is skeptical of emotional displays by people who had not known her brother, yet who congregate around a makeshift shrine. In addition, she becomes scornful of the media

circus and the witnesses who demonstrate their cowardice by not coming forward with information regarding the murder. Indeed, after having derided her brother for his smelly room, Sister subsequently attempts to preserve the odour in honour of his memory as she pores through his possessions, breathing in his scent - attempting, tellingly, to recuperate a private and intimate moment of their domestic life to which no one else had access. The attitude of Sister emulates that of a prototypical matriarch as she tries to come to terms with the tragedy that her mother fails to cope with.

Sister finds herself in a position where she must be strong enough to deal with the situation because her mother either lacks the capacity or has chosen not to do so in a proactive or outspoken way, which Sister regards as the optimum means of nearing the truth and giving justice to Brother's murder. The tragedy of her brother's death finds Sister on the cusp of becoming a matriarch, and inhabiting the role arguably with more success than her mother because she is more outward-looking and engaged with the world beyond her home than Mum has been. In inheriting this role—as matriarch more than mother per se—from her mother, Sister must also reject her model of motherhood in part, which itself represents a partial embrace of the social values that have oppressed her brother, and her mother's apparent incapability to do something to prevent it. Collins observes that “while daughters identify with their mothers, they also reject them, since in patriarchal families, identifying with adult women as mothers means identifying with persons deemed inferior” (1998, p.6). Mum's muteness regarding Brother's murder draws Sister into a position that is now more akin to matriarchy than her previous role as a daughter and sister.

Yet it would be simplistic to label Mum's withdrawal only as a sign of failure as a mother. For to do so would be to impose the idealistic standard of the “strong

black mother” on the play’s family dynamics. Rhaisa Kameela Williams has argued that playing the role of the invincible black mother is a legible response to trauma circumscribed by popular representations; indeed, the inability to live up to this role has often led grieving mothers into a state of emotional “silence, unintelligible responses, and vulnerability” (2016, p. 17). For Williams, this mode of grieving is a “tactic” employed by black mothers to resist the circumscribed image, which has been enforced as way “Black mothers should ‘productively’ cope with loss that is predicated on their continued presence and/or attempts for judicial redress” (Williams, 2016, p. 17). In this sense, as Lucy Tyler has similarly argued with regard to the performance of grief in *generations*, Mum’s silence could be read as an authentic and active way of communicating grief (2020, p. 145), complicating any simplistically negative reading of Mum’s apparent withdrawal.

And it is equally problematic to suggest that Sister fills the strong black mother role when she becomes the family matriarch; rather, Sister could be understood as seeking a way of expressing grief that is different from that employed by her mother—primarily because she wants to break the silence that she feels envelopes Brother’s murder—but not one that is necessarily more authentic. As I have mentioned above, the interplay of the matriarch roles between Mum and Sister is precarious and unstable, which is exacerbated dramaturgically by tucker green’s implementation of a monodramatic form in which the roles switch within the body of the single actress. One must understand the shift of the drama’s critical mass between characters as ambiguous and open-ended.

Lynette Goddard (2020, pp. 113-23) observes that Mum’s silence could easily have resulted from the overwhelming presence of figures external to the family and

thus a breach of the safety provided by the home. Examining the grief of Doreen Lawrence, Goddard argues that she “provides a way of thinking about how Black mothers respond to police and judicial processes” (2020, p. 113). Mum’s reaction to her son’s death is the opposite of Lawrence’s public campaign for justice, but both the fictional and the real case involve a black grieving mother tackling the entrenched racism of British society. Thus, Goddard explains that Mum’s constructed grief in *random* must be recognised as “symptomatic of how grief within Black families might be constrained by having to deal with their emotions within an English institutional context” (2020, p. 118). The invasive presence of the police in the house—and the broader institutional, social and political framework that the police signify—could be a reason that Mum’s grief was repressed or introverted. Doreen Lawrence explained that the presence of the police in her own house also constricted the family’s ability to express its grief (Goddard, 2020, p. 118). As Goddard explains:

English society values stoicism and control, and mourning is often regarded as a private experience of family, friends, and loved ones. African and Caribbean cultures are more permissive of overt expressions of grief, where crying and wailing are encouraged and grief is public, shared, and communal rather than private (2020, p. 118).

Considering how Mum might have grieved her son had she felt free to do so—and not constrained by the presence of the police and press—both her and Sister’s responses to Brother’s murder may be understood as efforts to grieve within a framework of suppression systemically imposed from outside the family. Mum’s way of grieving is to withdraw, but Sister is similarly oppressed and her expression of grief is not a liberated antithesis to her mother’s withdrawal. It differs mainly in the way she battles

constriction, in response not only to her mother's silence, but most of all to the system that has caused it.

Sister's view of her mother's withdrawal may be negative, but this does not mean that we should view it in the exact same way. The play retains a studied ambivalence about whether Sister's precarious adoption of the matriarchal position is a good or a bad thing: Sister has already demonstrated a far greater degree of agency than Mum in developing a professional and social life that involves both close community interactions and interaction with a more diverse set of people who gathered in front of her house after the murder. It is unclear whether Sister's agency is increased, reduced, or merely lent different qualities by her emerging role as matriarch. Sister may, though, have found a way to negotiate these layers more effectively than her mother. What *random* does make clear, however, is that the intersectional layers of oppression and marginalization associated with black motherhood cannot simply be transcended.

***random* in Performance: Dialect, solo character on stage, and the monodramatic form**

Textually, *random* is a play that revolves around several conflicts, between interior and exterior, the private and public spheres, and between specificity and generality. These thematic elements are underscored by the form of the play—a monodrama. The specific power of this dramatic form has featured in reviews of *random* during its first and subsequent performances, though reviews have sometimes failed to appreciate the extent to which the form is central to the play's message and its metacommentary on audience empathy, and they have on occasion identified as flaws and limitations performative features that are crucial to the play's success in exploring its major

themes. *random* was first performed in the Royal Court Theatre in London, directed by Sacha Wares (2010). The play garnered generally favourable reviews, with several praising the minimalist production and the subtlety of its sole actor, Nadine Marshall. Reviews of the performance describe how Marshall “stands on a bare stage wearing jeans and a simple white top” (Nightingale, 2008, p.19), an “utterly bare stage [...], [leaving] the writing to do the job” (Shuttleworth). Despite subtle differences between reviews most are agreed that this minimalist setup places the play's language —and the sole actor's delivery— at the forefront:

The production could not be more pared down: a single actress (Nadine Marshall) in street clothes on a bare stage, with lighting that starts as a general wash and dims to a single light on her body. Marshall alternately speaks the internal monologue of, and dialogue between, characters referred to only as Sister, Brother, Mum and Dad (Fricker, 2008, para 3).

Reviewers of *random* in performance note how the distinctions between characters are signalled in the one-woman play principally through subtle changes in dialect, and that “Sister and Brother use a colloquial black British argot, while Mum and Dad are Caribbean immigrants who speak in a patois-inflected accent closer to a dialect” (Fricker, 2008, para 5). Fricker's suggestion here that there is a generational divide between the younger generation (black British argot) and older generation (patois), suggesting a linguistic echo of a process by which “a sense of being black in Britain become[s] a sense of being black British” (Donnell, 2002, p. 11).

This distinction echoes the relative comfort of Sister with space outside the home compared to Mum, and Mum's correspondingly greater familiarity with “a transnational history of black experience, a history that [...] the second generation of black people born in Britain may not access with ease or even relevance” (Donnell, 2002, p. 12). It is tempting to leave this as a binary distinction and assert simply that

the differences in language use reflect an unbridgeable divide between the two generations represented in the household. This would be an oversimplification, however. Sister is an adept code switcher between British argot and Caribbean patois, as demonstrated in the excerpt discussed above, where Sister speaks indulgently but disapprovingly about her brother. In the phrase “Why he think I wanna be – / in his room – / with him – that stinkin bwoy longer than / mi haf to – ask me” Sister displays both the pronounced vowel shifts (phonetically represented as 'bwoy') and use of object form in the subject position ('*mi haf to*') characteristic of patois (Robinson, 2019, paras. 1-5).

Code-switching in fact serves as a metaphor for Sister's relative social mobility compared to Mum's: the argot she speaks during the majority of the play closely resembles the form of speech identified by Cheshire et al as 'Multicultural London English' or MLE (Cheshire et al., 2011, p. 151), a dialect heavily influenced by Caribbean English that in itself reflects some of the paradoxes inherent in second-generation black migrant life in the UK, reflecting on the one hand circumstances in which “[p]eople of different language backgrounds have settled in already quite underprivileged neighbourhoods, and economic deprivation has led to the maintenance of close kin and neighbourhood ties” (Cheshire et al., 2011, p. 153) and on the other a level of cultural mixing and disparate linguistic influences that result in a high level of 'complexity and multidimensionality' and a linguistic code that is “less homogeneous than either ‘dialects’ or ‘sociolects’ are assumed to be” (Cheshire et al., 2011, p. 152). Through the play Sister is shown to be adaptable and able to move adeptly between social contexts - home, work, and even the traumatic environs of the morgue - but she also uses MLE strategically, if perhaps unconsciously, to articulate

distance from people she disdains, as when she uses a succession of slang terms for 'friends' when confronting the police officers (which leads them, in turn, to resort to racist stereotyping):

How y'know he ent with he's

spars –

Spars?

Friends – man dem – mates – bredrins –

no...

not a 'gang' (tucker green, 2010, p. 32).

If the linguistic code in which she communicates the majority of the time already reflects a complex dialectical relationship between homogeneous and heterogeneous cultural contacts, Sister's code-switching between this code and her mother's patois reflects a still more complex relationship between her public and private selves, and between her emerging selfhood as a young working woman and a matriarchal inheritance to which she retains a profoundly ambivalent attitude but which she nevertheless assumes without question when her mother is incapacitated by her grief.

While reviews are alert to the subtle shifts in dialect that represent the different characters, and to the virtuoso performances of their actors, relatively little attention is given in reviews to the interaction between form and subject matter, and the ways in which the sole actress (literally and metaphorically) embodies the issues surrounding black womanhood and selfhood that the play explores. In his review for *The Times*, Benedict Nightingale complains that “the changes of voice are done with

a subtlety that's always impressive but sometimes too slight” (Nightingale, 2008, p.19), whilst Lyn Gardner (giving a different production, at a 2010 Royal Court pop-up event at the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, a 3 stars out of 5 review in the *Guardian*) praises “this powerful, poetic and often comic play”, but describes the monologue form as “limiting” (Gardner, 2010, paras. 2,3).

These reviews suggest that the play at best transcends its form and at worst is constrained by it, and, in particular, that the fluidity between characters and occasional lack of clarity about who is speaking at any given time is a weakness that compromises the drama, rather than being an integral part of it. Yet the value of this strategic choice of performance medium is precisely what lends the play its agency and its capacity to performatively interrogate the spaces and gender roles it constructs. This point is best explored by considering the monodramatic presentation of the play in tandem with the strikingly minimalistic set design commented on by several reviewers. Often associated with modernist theatre or experimental forms, the performative strategy of *random* as it has so far been performed can be best understood in relation to two trends: the Beckettian focus on an often-fragmented inner self from whose introspective, even obsessive examinations the extraneous matter of props would be an impingement, and the more experimental forms associated with postmodern theatre that intentionally breaks down the barriers between text and context and between performers and audience, thus inviting the audience to take part in co-creation of the drama. These aims— though apparently conflicting at first glance —can both be located in the text and performance of *random*, and contribute to its synergy of content and form.

In his article ‘Introducing the ‘Hyper’ Theatrical Subject: The *Mise en Abyme* of Empty Space,’ argues Les Essif, minimalist stage design was used to foreground

the 'hypersubjective' aspect of the plays: “Hypersubjective plays are those in which one solitary and introspective dynamic character becomes the overdetermined focal point (*mise en abyme*) of a theatrical metadiscourse based on an image of empty space” (1994, p. 74). In Beckett's work, this “overdetermination” arises from the juxtaposition of minimalist stage settings with a profound introspection that, paradoxically, empties the introspective character of selfhood. In *random* the central actor/character doubling is by definition overdetermined: a single figure delivers not only the lines of multiple characters but “[alternately speaks] the internal monologue of, and dialogue between, characters” (Fricker, 2008, para. 3). If this overdetermination does not work to create an aesthetic of emptiness that mirrors the surroundings in quite the same manner as in Beckett, it nevertheless creates an unsettled and destabilized sense of self, between the abundance of selves that the single actor seemingly struggles to contain and the emptiness reflected by the minimal setting beyond: a continual vacillation between too much and too little that mirrors what I have suggested is the play's continual slippage between ‘everyman’ and ‘nobody’.

The Beckettian echoes in *random*'s minimalist setting are juxtaposed with a postmodern impulse that is integral to the play's evocations of violated space, which as I have argued are the fundamental way by which the layers of intersecting oppression— on all characters but most especially on Mum —are brought to bear in the play. In an essay on the British experimental playwright Tim Crouch's work, Cristina Delgado-Garcia associates the empty stage with a rejection of realism that also disrupts the boundary between performer and audience, arguing that “minimalist stage design, evocative language and resistance against impersonation are [...] presented as part of a devolutionary scheme, returning part of the creative work to the

otherwise inactive spectators” (Delgado-Garcia, 2014, p. 73). Aspects of this kind of strategic deployment of empty stage space can be found in performances of *random* in two distinct but complementary ways: firstly, audience members are forced to confront the performance's radical departure from realism (itself in pronounced tension to the gritty realism of the subject matter and the dialogue itself) at every moment, and to participate in the imaginative creation of the spaces and characters it evokes; secondly, this act of participation reinforces the play's investigation of both the power and limits of its characters as stand-ins for 'everyday' experience, as the audience confronts both the limits of its own empathy and the distance imposed by the family's otherness to the dominant culture.

The monodramatic form of the play, then, exists in a symbiotic relationship with the minimalist stage design, with its structure, performance and staging each reinforcing the spatial themes of the play and its investigation of the limits of empathy and the interplay between identification and otherness. The form preserves a fluidity between the characters and ensures that the male characters are always mediated via a female voice, and very often doubly mediated - Brother and Dad are spoken *about* by the female characters more frequently than they speak for themselves. The most startling effect of this is that Brother, even before his murder, is spoken about more than he speaks —by Mum, who frets over his nutrition and poignantly laments his too-fast growth “gives it the kiss on the side a *my* head/ like I used to give it the kiss/ on the side a *his*/ when him was about ten.../ Even then him would wipe it off -/ with a smile—” (tucker green, 2010, p. 11), and by Sister, who increasingly assumes the role of matriarch as the play proceeds. This is an assertion of (albeit limited) agency on the part of the play, as it gives a public voice to the most marginalized inhabitants of the

private sphere and inverts the expected norms of who would speak for whom. This fact alone illustrates the potential of the play's form to act as a radical (if, again, limited) vehicle of black feminist agency. Indeed, the African-Canadian playwright d'bi young anitafrika suggests the woman-led monodrama is a uniquely potent form in articulating black feminist identity against a backdrop of violence against both black women and black communities, as a form of biological myth-making, the “bio-myth monodrama” (d’bi.young anitafrika, 2016, p. 28). Such a monodrama is a new language and it is important to emphasize the extent to which the actors engaged with and worked to create new forms of dramatic speech as the vehicle for conveying this “bio-myth monodrama”. For Letang, this myth-making was, in fact, a return to the mythic quality of ‘everyday’ speech, “like not finishing a sentence because you know what's coming next, or coming in the middle of a sentence because you've picked up something from a previous conversation” (Letang, 471-73) “it's so rhythmic, it's so melodic, it's got that kind of spoken word poetry flow to it” (Letang, 484-85). Such language might, in fact, be called “intersectional”—it intersects with itself, voices come in, go out, cross over and cut through each other. The order is challenging, testing on actors’ memories, yet poetic, and real.

Chevrier was emphatic about this particular poetic quality of tucker green’s language and how its intersectional rhythms inspired the very physicality of Davis’s performance. “I think, again, we took our cue from the script” (Chevrier, 340). She stresses the importance of the script, the very rhythm of the language tucker green uses, in guiding them through the gestures and postures. It is remarkable how the movements and gestures Chevrier describes resemble so vividly Letang’s description of tucker green’s language: “But it was all in the postures. [...] Because then you got

very used to both the accent, so the accent, and then the physical response. And so, it was super-fast. [...] But we found that when she was sitting, that the movement was actually really interesting, because it kept it really, really tiny, and very, very specific” (Chevrier, 343-48). The intersectionality of tucker green’s language prompted and extended into Davis’s embodiment of the multiple overlapping characters making up her part, thus permeating the (mono) dramaturgy of the overall performance.

Whilst the primary act of violence on which the play focuses is, of course, the murder of Brother—an act committed against a male rather than female character—*random* is at heart, as I have been arguing throughout, a female-centred play with an emphasis on domesticity and permutations of motherhood. In performance, this focus is made even plainer than in the written play text, as the intimate relationship between the bodily presence of the sole woman on stage, the minimalist theatrical space around her, and the cultural narrative she communicates allows the black feminist monodrama to insist that the intimate, bodily reality of the black woman's experience be accompanied by a voice that insists on its own specificity.

While the monodramatic form of *random* helps to establish and sustain its woman-focused themes and its exploration of motherhood in specific, it serves, in particular, to establish Sister's narrative voice as increasingly authoritative, prefiguring her growth during the play. Indeed, in performance—especially given the relative youth of the actors who have so far played the character, and the costumes they have worn (generally young, contemporary dress, and in one case a tracksuit)—a reading suggests itself that is not immediately apparent from the text alone: that the words we hear on stage are all Sister's, and that she acts as a (mostly faithful) ventriloquist for the other voices. These performative choices mirror Sister's growing stature in the

second half of the play as she deals with the identification of Brother's body (Mum, Sister reports, 'won't go. Point blank') and assumes the role of the dominant woman in the household, and for the powerful yet ambiguous ending where she asserts her agency in direct contrast with her broken, grieving mother:

Step down the – too quiet stairs

past the stank Dad still sittin in

from the kitchen.

Pass the socked Support Officer

struggling –

in the best room

with our...

my

destroyed Mum.

And I...

step out.

Right.

Right (tucker green, 2010, p. 50).

This passage, with its deeply resonant spatial descriptors of a broken and fragmented domestic space (her parents sit in different rooms, both alone with their grief), represents Sister's emergence as a young black woman for whom a reconciliation of public and private space might just be possible —she 'steps out', after all— in stark

contrast to her mother, whose domain has disintegrated in the wake of Brother's death, and who confronts not merely grief but the effective failure of her role as mother and by extension (within her own frame of reference at least) as a woman. Furthermore, as Goddard (2020, pp. 113-23) observes with reference to comments made by Doreen Lawrence, the British institutional context silences parental expressions of grief, and thus Mum's silence must also be seen to resonate beyond the immediate context of the play.

Yet it is not only Sister's experience that is brought viscerally to life by the play's monodramatic form and the elision of distinctions between characters. Not only are men spoken of and for by one or more female characters; so too are white characters spoken of and for by black characters. In a different format, where the white officers who visit to break the news of Brother's death were played by white actors who spoke their own lines, they might ordinarily be assumed to represent the default position of the dominant culture and the audience's 'way in' to the grieving black family at the centre of the play. However, through the audience's inevitable identification with the sole performer of the play— and its inhabitation, however partial and temporary, of the bodily experience of the black woman —their otherness becomes as palpable to the audience as it is to Mum. Here the 'everyman' function of the play is realized —even more acutely in performance than on the page— by the insistence that the audience both identify with the bodily presence and authoritative voice of the black woman (who is so radically other to the models of 'typical' personhood and womanhood advanced by the dominant culture) as a stand-in for universal experience, and *at the same time* confront the specificity of that experience by recognizing the dominant culture's representatives as radically other.

Far from an incidental aesthetic or stylistic choice, then, the monodramatic form of tucker green's *random* is absolutely a key to the ways in which it makes meaning. The aspects of the form that are considered to be limiting or deficiencies in execution (notably the interchangeability of voices and the difficulty in knowing at any one time who is speaking) are in fact the components that make space for black womanhood— and black motherhood in particular —to speak its truths and to gain the agency to 'step out' of the private sphere, finding an accommodation with public space that may have eluded Mum's generation of black mothers but, even amid the grotesque acts of violence it continues to perpetuate on black mothers and their children, seems at least possible for those of Sister's generation.

Tony Blair's 2007 speech in Cardiff regarding gang violence in Britain, together with the commentary and criticism it received, emphasised the racial nature of the issue. And yet the intersectionality of race and other social factors was inadequately recognised. While commentators, including Blair, recognised that class and poverty needed to be considered, these factors were generally regarded as separate from race rather than intersecting with it. Another issue to which commentators alluded but without giving it due attention was the intersection of race and gender, in particular the way this manifest in the figure of the black mother. tucker green's *random*, performed one year after Blair's speech, tackled this complex, nuanced and evasive issue by centring on the subjectivity of the black mother who grieves the loss of her son to street violence. *random* portrays how the mother's grief affects the family dynamic, breaking down her matriarchal position which is soon taken by Sister. The intersectional oppression that imposes on black motherhood is manifest in the silence of Mum, which Sister tries to counteract. Moreover, the play is structured in a way

that explores the limits of audience identification, as the mundanity of the play's first half allows the audience to connect with the 'everyday' existence of the family—a connection which potentially collapses with the murder of Brother. Mundanity also raises the question of the perceived 'randomness' of Brother's murder, which understood in line with de Certeau's theory of the trajectory of the 'everyman' who becomes 'nobody', is evocative of the generalised perception of racially inflected acts of violence in the eyes of power. The play's monodramatic form—comparable to other “forms of personal expression seeking to explore female experiences left out of history, literature and art” (Badir, 1992, p.120)—also enhances audience identification by creating a space of intimacy between the audience and the actress's multiple embodiments of the characters. Furthermore, the form affords Sister a dominant voice, and thus, hopefully, the agency to break the cycle of intersectional oppression.

Chapter Two

Silence, Family, HIV/AIDS and Intersectionality in debbie tucker green's *generations*

Grief, Silence, and Trauma

“Mother dear, may I go downtown
Instead of out to play,
And march the streets of Birmingham
In a Freedom March today?”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,
For the dogs are fierce and wild,
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails
Aren't good for a little child.”

“But, mother, I won't be alone.
Other children will go with me,
And march the streets of Birmingham
To make our country free.”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,
For I fear those guns will fire.
But you may go to church instead
And sing in the children's choir.”

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,

And bathed rose petal sweet,
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child
Was in the sacred place,
But that smile was the last smile
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,
Her eyes grew wet and wild.
She raced through the streets of Birmingham
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,
Then lifted out a shoe.
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,
But, baby, where are you?” (Randall, 1968, pp. 11-12)

Dudley Randall’s 1968 poem, “Ballad of Birmingham”, commemorated the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which was bombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1963 (Romano, 2006, p. 101). It relates the tragic story of a mother forbidding her young daughter to participate in a freedom march and advising that she attend church instead. But contrary to the mother’s belief that an African American church might be a safer place than the streets, it is bombed and all that is left of the girl is one of her shoes. The protest that the girl wishes to join can be associated with the Birmingham campaign organized by, among others, Martin Luther King, a peaceful protest that was met with severe brutality from the police. The 16th Street Baptist Church was the starting point of the peaceful march to City Hall where

participants intended to talk to the mayor about segregation (Romano, 2006, p. 101). The poem represents the pervasiveness of anti-black violence, from which there is no real place of sanctuary.

The previous chapter focused on the specific intersectional identity of the black mother, and the multiple marginalisations experienced by the grieving figure of Mum in tucker green's *random*, while this chapter considers *generations* (2005) to explore the oppressive constituents of black parenthood – and black motherhood in particular – across multiple generations of a single family, as they are refracted through grief and tragedy. The grief that pervades *generations* is redolent of that which is expressed in Randall's poem. In the play it is the kitchen that acts as a place of sanctuary, the choral component making it comparable to a church; nonetheless, despite being a zone of family comfort and consolation, the kitchen provides no protection from the violence outside it, which in this case manifests in the form of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, while in the poem the mother's ability to grieve might be hampered by the obliteration of her daughter's body, in the play the taboo status of the disease makes it nigh impossible for the family to talk about its losses.

As with *random*, *generations* uses the incursion of tragedy and death into a seemingly mundane domestic scene to explore intersectional identities among socially marginal groups. But the exploration of identity and marginalisation in this play is further refracted by two other key components of intersectional identity in the twenty-first-century Global South: the politics of nation, and positive HIV/AIDS status, to inflect and transform other facets of identity. This chapter builds on Patricia Hill Collins's influential essay 'It's all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation' (1998), which is an extension of Collins's earlier work on intersectionality, in

developing a theory of how the family is the central metaphorical unit around and within which a national society is able to “reconcil[e] the contradictory relationship between equality and hierarchy” (1998, p. 64) and enable nation-states to “naturalise” radically unequal relationships based on intersectional hierarchies of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Although Collins uses the USA as the particular context for her observations, this chapter argues that the family-as-nation metaphor is of central importance to the South African setting of *generations*, which interrogates the metaphor by refracting it through allusions to HIV/AIDS, a particularly trenchant motif in a country with the largest HIV-positive population in the world (UNICEF, N.D). The role of the family unit as a naturalising microcosm of the inequalities bound up in the nation-state is even more complex and fraught in apartheid South Africa than in the USA, owing to the explicit constitutional enshrinement of inequality at all levels of ‘everyday life’ in the former. Apartheid was the name given to the institutionalized system of racial segregation that existed in South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia) from 1948 to the early 1990s. Although the system officially ended in South Africa in 1993, its impact on South African society was ongoing at the time *generations* was first performed in 2005 (see Mosoetsa, 2004, pp. 1-12). In her 2004 paper on the legacies of apartheid, Sarah Mosoetsa explained, “The general lack of trust in politicians and popular representatives in the contemporary period has meant that people are retreating into families and kinship networks, a response reinforced by poverty”, and so the “family is seen as a site of stability” (p. 1). I argue that it is the uniquely fraught nature of this relationship that allows the family to function both as a reflection of and

disruptive counter-narrative to the apartheid state's own constructions of community and belonging, and tucker green's *generations* operates within this relationship.

generations is set in the kitchen of a black family in South Africa. Also present on the stage is a black South African choir, who sing intermittently throughout the play. In the original production – in accordance with tucker green's script – the choir's song calls out, repeats and mourns the names of those who have died due to HIV/AIDS, though the cause of their death is not made explicit, neither by the singers nor by the "living" characters in the kitchen (in the 2014 New York production, the chorus behaved differently, as I will discuss below). The play opens with the choir singing as a prologue, listing and repeating fifty-eight names of the deceased, and repeating the refrain, "[a]nother leaves us, another has gone" (tucker green, 2005, p. 67). The choir continues to hum the dirge as the dialogue commences. The play consists of five scenes, each repeating a similar domestic exchange between family members who are discussing the cooking abilities of the women. In Scene One, the whole of the family are together: Junior Sister, Girlfriend, Boyfriend, Mum, Dad, Grandma and Grandad. At the beginning of each of the subsequent scenes, at least one of the characters exits, to signify their death, and the sequence of deaths is roughly in reverse generational order, starting with Junior Sister who leaves at the beginning of Scene One. At the end of the play, only Grandma and Grandad remain.

The tragedy of HIV/AIDS – though never explicitly identified in *generations* – forms a means of interrogating and disrupting the family-as-nation metaphor, denaturalising the multiple intersecting ways in which the black South African family, around whom the play revolves, are marginalised at the national and regional levels through depicting a series of deaths that create explicitly 'unnatural' absences due to

the eponymous generations dying in the ‘wrong’ order. These absences leave only the grandparents to grieve for the two successive generations of family members lost. I argue that *generations* positions grief, as in *random*, as a particularly heavy burden to bear for women and mothers and that it accomplishes this through a variety of devices, including the central repeating conversation about cooking and men’s and women’s traditional roles defined by conventions around domesticity and the private/public spheres; the order in which the characters die; and the subtle differences between the degrees of suffering to which the male and female characters left behind are able to articulate their grief.

I consider the play in the context of its treatment of the relationship between family and community, and also its exploration of the processes of loss and mourning – and the multifaceted roles played by the figures of absence in the play. These devices are considered in the specific context of the historic meaning (and indeed the deferral or denial of meaning) of death and trauma in the political context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. As such, I argue that the play constitutes what Sam Durrant calls the postcolonial work of mourning, a term that derives from the work of Sigmund Freud and subsequently Jacques Derrida on the nature of mourning and its manifestation in works of art, but which transposes these insights to the specific political and emotional contexts of the postcolonial locale. The exploration of the intersectional experiences of parenthood and the nature of grief is markedly gendered in *generations*, and is facilitated, in particular, by the trope of silence. This trope has particular resonance for black women – and particularly mothers – in South Africa, a point I support by considering the history of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-2003; TRC). Scholarly literature focuses on the empowerment of

black South Africans – especially women – through the process of bearing witness to oppression and atrocity (see, for example Ross, 2003a; Young, 2004) but has also dwelled on the meaning – and even agency – located in silence as a response to trauma (Motsemme, 2016).

***generations* and South Africa: Setting, mourning, and ‘unnatural’ inheritance**

The choice of setting and subject matter in *generations* is striking in several respects and represents a marked deviation from many of tucker green’s other plays which are set in and around black British communities with which she is intimately familiar. In focusing on a black South African family – and in particular on the implied referent of HIV/AIDS and the politics of death and mourning —tucker green represents not only a distant location but also a set of historical and present-day circumstances removed from her own. What the family in *generations* does have in common with that of the families in *random* and her other plays, however, is a focus on the traumatic history and aftermath of colonialism. Likewise, it explores the effects both on black families who remain marginal to the national allegory, and the multiple intersectional forms of marginalisation that colonialism and its legacy inflicts on postcolonial mothers and their daughters. In *generations*, this legacy is explored primarily through the medium of a loss that cannot be healthily grieved. It is this unique set of circumstances that places the play within the paradigm of Durrant’s “postcolonial work of mourning”, a formulation he explores specifically in the context of South African, post-apartheid fictions in his book *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* (2003).

Durrant is concerned with the effects of trauma – particularly the traumas of colonialism in general and of apartheid in South Africa specifically – and argues that

in the wake of such traumas, traditional cultural forms based on traditions connected to home and family become strained. He focuses on a crisis of mourning rites, which may become unsustainable or wholly unsatisfactory in the face of violence and atrocity:

Funerals and associated rites of mourning are often thought of as one of the most traditional ties of community, providing an opportunity not only for members of the community to come together, united in the common purpose of remembering the dead and ensuring their passage to the next world, but also for the affirmation of the very idea of community itself, [...] However, rather than constituting a culture's most entrenched and unchanging traditions, mourning rites often reflect the instability and adaptability of colonised cultures, especially where communities are responding to new forms of death and dying. It is under the pressure of dealing with what anthropologists call 'bad' deaths, those which happen outside the home, in unexpected or unknown circumstances, that mourning rites undergo their most radical reinventions (Durrant, 2005, p. 441-42).

Mourning therefore serves a positive social function, for it binds communities together, reinforcing the value of the community. In the politically unstable conditions of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, however, mourning can also be fraught with such instability, especially when the death being mourned is caused by state-inflicted violence occurring outside of the family unit—such as the atrocities that cost the lives of so many black anti-apartheid figures. In such cases of public death, the mourning itself reflects the unstable relation between the community and the world outside it, which in turn threatens the community's own sense of stability. Hence mourning becomes less of a private practice acting as a binding agent than a political gesture of defiance, resistance and collective solidarity. This politicisation is at the expense of the kind of private familial grief that in other circumstances would serve to reinforce bonds within the community.

Nonetheless, as Durrant concludes, this situation has precipitated a “constant reinvention of traditions of mourning”, instigating cultural forms such as literature, theatre and art that carries out the work of “a non-instrumental mode of post-apartheid mourning” that focuses on the specifics of grief and loss without applying them to a cause (2005, pp. 442-43). Thus, in South Africa, new forms of mourning have been invented to mourn victims of forms and contexts of violence not readily assimilated into the narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle and its legacies. Examples of such violence include “necklacing” (a form of torture and execution in which a petrol-soaked rubber tire is fixed around the victim’s chest and arms, and then set on fire) and other punishments inflicted by the black community on its members who were believed to be collaborating with the apartheid regime. Victims of such violence were frequently denied justice, and their deaths co-opted by the leaders of the organisations directly or indirectly responsible for them. New modes of mourning were also developed for victims of the great emerging killer of the late-apartheid and post-apartheid eras: HIV/AIDS.

In South Africa, where women “bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS epidemic” (Dageid & Duckert, 2008, p. 182), HIV/AIDS have been not just a source of profound loss, but, through the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS infection, a means of disrupting the bonds which typically aid the processes of healing from trauma, whether this is mentally processing a radically life-limiting diagnosis for oneself or negotiating the death of a child or partner whose cause of death is regarded as unclean, immoral, or shameful:

The sometimes negative attitude of the churches has helped promote stigma and silence around HIV/AIDS by explaining HIV infection as punishment for sins and transgression of norms, or possession of evil spirits. For an HIV-

positive religious woman, this is a dilemma, as she tries to find support and strength in religion, but might be considered a transgressor of rules and morality, and be expelled (Dageid & Duckert, 2008, p. 186).

For black South African women like those depicted in *generations*, HIV/AIDS adds an extra intersectional dimension to the already profound intersectional marginalisation that arises from being a black woman in a profoundly racially unequal society whose modes of social hierarchy rest on various (Western and non-Western) patriarchal familial structures. No less than seeing a son or daughter undergo the violence of the state or a “necklacing” attack for complicity, loss owing to HIV/AIDS disrupts the normal, “healthy” patterns of familial and community grieving with silence and shame, creating an inability to fully articulate the extent or nature of the loss suffered because of the intersectional forces of racism, sexism, class discrimination, and HIV-related stigma. This figurative silence is given a literal dimension in *generations* in two distinct but interrelated ways. The first is in the intensely noticeable silences that arise from the audience’s increasing familiarity with the characters’ lines which are repeated in various scenes, and their expected but unfulfilled arrival as the characters disappear scene by scene. The second is in the refusal of the remaining characters to speak about their loss, except in a few devastating asides or in elliptical lines that were present in earlier scenes but are given new and more poignant meaning in the absence of the characters to which they refer.

Family, (In)Equality, Gender, and Nation: Gendering *generations*’ South African setting

For Leah Gardiner, the director of an acclaimed production of *generations* at Soho Rep in New York (2014), the main theme of the play is the family. In her interpretation, *generations* represents family as a microcosm of black culture:

Family as a construct, and how family represents so much of our culture, sort of how families are made. I was interested in how family, the joys of family, the love of family, the play of family lives simultaneously with loss in family, and sorrow in family, and pain in family. And ultimately, the construct of the unit, again, serves as a tool to rebirth, recreate, try again, offer hope. And so when the Grandparents are left at the very end, there's such utter devastation, because this family unit has been... in essence, the legacy of this family is gone (Gardiner, 179-86).

Gardiner recognises in *generations* the importance of the family as a "unit", a site of safety and homogeneity, a notion which is reinforced when considering the violent history of apartheid in South Africa (or of segregation in the US, where Gardiner's production was staged, and the oppressive systems of anti-black racism that have prevailed throughout the Western world). Thus, while the family is a "construct" of black ("our") culture, it is not necessarily reflective of life in the public sphere, but it is rather a container of values shared among other families.

In her essay Collins describes the power of the family to legitimise and naturalise hierarchies within a model of notional equality:

The traditional family ideal projects a model of equality. A well-functioning family protects and balances the interests of all its members- the strong care for the weak, and everyone contributes to and benefits from family membership in proportion to his or her capacities. In contrast to this idealized version, actual families remain organized around varying patterns of hierarchy. [...]In particular, hierarchies of gender, wealth, age, and sexuality within actual family units correlate with comparable hierarchies in [national] society. Individuals typically learn their assigned place in hierarchies of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and social class in their families of origin. At the same time, they learn to view such hierarchies as natural social arrangements, as compared to socially constructed ones. Hierarchy in this sense becomes "naturalized" because it is associated with seemingly "natural" processes of the family (1998, p. 64).

Several aspects of this description require unpacking in relation to *generations*, and to the metaphoric scheme by which a single unequal and hierarchical structure can be naturalised with reference to another structure that is itself unequal and hierarchical. The family is, of course, a primary locus – if not *the* primary locus – of oppression based on assumptions about defined, essentialist gender roles. This is true even of “functional” families – where the duties attached to motherhood, nurturing, and so on can be onerous and profoundly restricting, and where the pressures to conform to ideals of motherhood and femininity can be overwhelming (Choi et al., 2005, pp. 167-80) and does not even consider the many individual family circumstances that are defined by dysfunction and abuse. Nevertheless, Collins suggests, families naturalise hierarchy in that hierarchy is assumed to be to the universal benefit of every member, even though there is no proportional relationship between input and output, and indeed it is expected that “the strong care for the weak” (1998, p.64). The family thus functions as a means of naturalising its members to hierarchy in general – that is, to the idea that hierarchy itself is natural and inevitable – and to the specific hierarchies dictated by social norms outside the bounds of the family. The family simultaneously creates the conditions for hierarchical organisation and re-establishes the hierarchies of the social or national space. This metaphorical equivalence between family and nation-state is, according to the cognitive psychologist George Lakoff, a foundational myth of the worldview that dominates Conservative politics in the West, and is sufficiently naturalised in Western culture that opponents of conservatism who fail to understand its appeal struggle to mount effective progressive arguments (2010, pp. 154-55).

For reasons I will explore fully over the course of this chapter, these social norms – and the relationship between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the nation – are in continual flux for black South African families at the end of the twentieth-century and the start of the twenty-first, which is the context of *generations*: in the front matter of tucker green’s play text we are told that “All characters are black South Africans” (tucker green, 2005, p.66), and there are no cues anywhere in the play to suggest that the setting is anything but a contemporary one. The naturalisation of hierarchies has undergone a significant transformation since the end of apartheid, with black South Africans now the dominant force in government as well as the largest ethnic group. But the social and economic inequality from the apartheid era still persists in a number of ways, reflected in the intersections the play explores. The names of the dead sung out in the play’s prologue are dominated by those of black African heritage (including, among others, Zwelibhangile, Kwezi, Jongilizwe, Bantu, Xolani Nkosi Johnson and Makgatho Mandela), suggesting a kind of kinship between them, though given names are eschewed in the naming of the play’s central characters themselves. Like the characters in *random*, in *generations* they are given names according to their relation to at least one other character: Girlfriend, Boyfriend, and Junior Sister, for instance. Although the name Junior Sister arguably has a degree of cultural specificity—as in British naming traditions the word “Junior” is rarely, if ever, used, “Baby” or “Younger”, or simply “Sister” on its own, being used instead—the system of naming that tucker green employs nonetheless eschews individualization beyond the remit of the family. The names thus encourage an allegorical reading redolent of Michel de Certeau’s (1984, p. 1) theorization of the ‘everyman’ trope, and suggest that the characters’ most important functions are relational, defined by their relationships with other family members.

Chaos, Absence: The form of *generations* and the role of Junior Sister

There are some striking similarities between *generations* and *random*, and some equally striking differences. The allegorical names are one such striking similarity, reinforcing an identifiable tucker green trope: an arrangement in which “the audience’s understanding is mediated through the family’s pain at their personal suffering”, which manifests itself through “a visible friction between present and absent bodies” (Abram, 2014, p. 116). Like *random*, *generations* revolves around the incursion – gradual, this time, rather than sudden, but no less devastating for that – of suffering into what initially appears a happy domestic scene, in which cooking again takes a central role. The whole family collaborates on making a stew, while Boyfriend and Girlfriend row about his assumptions of defined gender roles – and this collaborative cooking serves as a channel for memory throughout the diminishing scenes in which “the opening polyphony of family voices gradually gives way to quiet” (Abram, 2014, p.127).

There are also a number of formal differences, however, and *generations* stages the intertwined relationships of its characters through the trope of repetition and difference, unlike *random*. In this respect, the play is – at least according to initial appearances – far more conventional: multiple actors play the separate characters, and the action takes place in a series of clearly demarcated scenes. Despite the unsettling presence of a choir, the first scene is a fairly naturalistic, realist depiction of a mundane domestic setting, in which a minor quarrel between the play’s young lovers Boyfriend and Girlfriend – arising from the former’s enquiry as to whether the latter can cook – gives rise to multiple intersecting and overlapping conversations on the topic of cooking and domesticity, with first Mum and Dad, and subsequently Grandma and Grandad, talking over each other with their reminiscences of their own courtships

while Boyfriend attempts to extricate himself from his awkward position but succeeds only in getting deeper into trouble. It is only when the second scene begins, repeating the first scene almost word-for-word, but with one of the characters – Junior Sister – missing from the setup, that the play’s central dramatic device and key formal experiment becomes evident. Although it is never explicitly stated, subtle hints throughout the text indicate that the scene’s characters are dying, starting with the youngest, so that each iteration of the same scene becomes a progressively more painful memory, with each character’s absence leaving a void that the remaining characters talk around – but never entirely successfully.

Junior Sister has an enthusiastic presence in the opening scene, where she provides a kind of chaotic, comedic echo, one moment narrating the argument between Girlfriend and Boyfriend with apparent glee to her mother, the next moment inserting herself into the argument. Her absence from the second scene creates an immediately odd effect, discomfiting the audience even as it makes the scene far less digressive and – superficially at least – more apparently comprehensible. The very opening lines of Scenes 1 and 2 respectively demonstrate the stark contrast between Junior Sister’s chaotic presence and mysterious absence. Her roles as narrator, agitator, and commentator both complicate and clarify at various different points in the opening scene. Junior Sister’s interjections begin in media res, after Boyfriend has apparently asked Girlfriend a question she finds objectionable, but before we eventually find out the nature of the question (which is whether or not Girlfriend can cook). Initially, her interjections create dramatic tension by deferring the audience’s understanding of the nature of the question:

GIRLFRIEND Askin me –

JNR SISTER He asked her –

GIRLFIREIND He asked me if / I –

JNR SISTER Mama, he asked her if she / could –

GIRLFRIEND askin me if I could –

BOYFRIEND ' – able.

 You are.

 You are – able.'

JNR SISTER Able?

GIRLFRIEND Thinks he can ask me (tucker green, 2005, p. 70).

After simply repeating and emphatically emphasising Girlfriend's discontent – and attempting to involve her mother in the conversation, Junior Sister then intervenes directly in the ongoing argument by challenging Boyfriend's attempts to amend the initial insult – or to “sweetmouth” Girlfriend. Junior Sister thus acquires a role that is characteristic of the Trickster figure in oral storytelling traditions from around the world, including in South Africa, where the Trickster functions as both a disruptive/transformational force and as a generative creator (see, for example, Scheub, 2012, p. 91):

JNR SISTER Thinks he can sweet you –

GIRLFRIEND Thinks he can sweetmouth me with:

JNR SISTER Sweetmouth her with –

BOYFRIEND 'You are – you is – you do – you able – you look you look like you able – to have the ability the capability, the capacity, the complete ... about you – '

JNR SISTER to what– (tucker green 2005, p. 70).

If it is initially her disruptive function that is at the fore in this scene, as her interventions cause chaos, divergence and digression from the subject of Boyfriend's question, her function as a generative, creative force becomes evident when she eventually speaks the decisive line and relieves the dramatic tension:

JNR SISTER That's not gonna work.

GIRLFRIEND He thinks that's going to work?

JNR SISTER Mama, he asked her if she could cook (tucker green, 2005, p. 70).

It is deeply telling in this context that Junior Sister speaks the line which eventually clarifies the cause of Girlfriend's (and Junior Sister's) indignation. Although she is the source of the digressions in the conversation – a chaotic presence who repeatedly defers understanding of its context – she is also ultimately the source of resolution – a creative as well as disruptive agent who appears to have the pacing of the narrative at her whim.

The critical value of viewing Junior Sister as a Trickster figure can best be appreciated by considering the Trickster in the light of Henry Louis Gates Jr's treatment of the figure in his book *Figures in black: words, signs, and the "racial" self* (1987), where the Trickster's twin impulses towards creation and disruption allow him/her to function as a mediating figure, bridging the irreconcilable worlds of the

master and slave. However, argues Gates, the Trickster is ultimately revealed to have “subverted the terms of the code he was meant to mediate; he has been a Trickster. As with all mediations, the Trickster is a mediator and his mediation is a trick – only a trick – for there can be no mediation in this world” (p. 93). This resonates deeply with Junior Sister’s role in *generations*: her mischief pervades the text – both in her presence and her absence – but it is only in the aftermath of her death that her function as mediator is revealed. By then the play has moved on to focus on the unbridgeable gaps she leaves by her absence – both among the characters, and between them and the audience.

In her absence, Junior Sister’s function as agent of chaos is missing from the play, but we realise, belatedly, that this absence does not provide clarity. If, in her presence, her chaotic, transformative Trickster function was more apparent, her absence offers a greater understanding of the creative Trickster function she fulfilled in the opening scene. Indeed, Junior Sister’s interjections – which appeared at first glance only to have distracted from and deferred the audience’s eventual understanding of the nature of Boyfriend’s question - are now revealed to have formed a vital structural underpinning of the entire exchange. Far from allowing a speedier resolution to the dramatic tension of the scene’s opening, Junior Sister’s absence causes our understanding of the snippets of dialogue and their multiple omissions to be deferred still further, increasing rather than decreasing the length of time it takes for the audience to understand the substance of Boyfriend’s question:

GIRLFRIEND Askin me – he asked me if I – askin me if I could –

BOYFRIEND ' – able.

You are.

You / are – able.'

GIRLFRIEND Thinks he can ask me

Thinks he can sweetmouth me with:

BOYFRIEND 'You are – you is – you do – you able – you look you look
like – you able to have the ability the capability the
capacity – '

GIRLFRIEND 'to what?'

BOYFRIEND 'To ... to ... '

GIRLFRIEND He thinks that's going to ...? (tucker green, 2005, pp. 77-78).

If, as an audience, our initial response to Junior Sister has been to find her endearingly frustrating – an obfuscating presence and the apparent means by which our understanding of the play's conversation is deferred – the struggle in her absence to articulate the substance of the conversation places this perception in a different light. The conversation is ultimately no more focused or functional than in its first rendition, but it does significantly lack in richness by comparison. This is more than a mere aesthetic effect: rather, it underscores the role of language as a social rather than merely functional, semantic tool. Even at her most digressive, Junior Sister contributes a sense of togetherness and familial solidarity that is conspicuous by its absence following her disappearance. The impact of this sudden absence— and the silences it enforces on the family —is analogous to the impact on the social language of families reported by sociologists and linguists studying family life under oppressive political

regimes. For example, in a study on the impact of “disappeared” family members on a family in military-ruled Argentina, Carlos Sluzki reports that the linguistic loss “disrupted the family's prior social network and made it difficult for the network to be reactivated in a period of increased stress and diminished resources, precisely when the need for social support is maximal” (1990, p. 31). Although in this chapter I argue for recuperating the signifying value of silence in and of itself as a means of expressing and resisting trauma, tucker green’s *generations* nonetheless uses the impoverishment of social language as its primary means of conveying profound loss and trauma.

As the family begins to disintegrate, so too does the text, echoing the instability caused by the inability to grieve at the formal level. The removal of Junior Sister is shocking and poignant not least because she is the first to leave the stage. In Scene One, the whole family are together, in the kitchen, discussing the cooking aptitudes of the women. The scenario is mundane like the scenario in the first half of *random*—but this mundanity is brought into question when, at the beginning of Scene Two, just as we might expect the conversation to continue from where it left off, Junior Sister suddenly exits. Since Junior Sister’s death is not mentioned, its shock is elicited by its seemingly everydayness resulting from the impossibility of grief that the play portrays. More importantly, Junior Sister’s abrupt departure raises questions about functionality and the naturalisation of predefined roles within the family, which are echoed at the level of form. Junior Sister’s interventions in the opening scene are frequently complicating rather than illuminating. But without her younger sister’s pre-emptive “That’s not gonna work” (tucker green, 2005, p. 70), Girlfriend is lost for words, with the verb that would allow her sentence to convey its central meaning replaced by an ellipsis and question mark on the page, and silence on the stage. It is eventually Mum,

in this rendition of the scene, who identifies the nature of Boyfriend's question. Junior Sister's removal is also the first significant marker of the ways in which the intersectionally-inflected experience of grief in the play positions loss as a particularly heavy burden on its black female characters and also indicates their inability to articulate this grief.

Gardiner drew on the musicality of the language and used stage directions and symbolism to hold the audience's attention while the dialogue repeated itself in her production:

You don't quite know why this repetition was happening, to really kind of use the song of language, the rhythm of language as a way to get the audience connected on a sort of visceral level, how we hear music, how we respond to music, how we respond to the music of words, the music in poetry. Actually, the mellifluousness of how those words affect our souls. (Gardiner, 334-39).

Furthermore, when characters died, the grandfather would switch off a lantern and the actor playing the deceased character would take a seat among the audience, thus further emphasising the "presence of their absence" and adding a spiritual dimension to the performance. Gardiner explained that the initial idea came from a personal experience in which she had a near-fatal car accident and she felt the protective presence of her grandparents: "I was interested in [...] that experience of them, the energy of them still being near us, with us, protecting us, looking over us. I was interested in how that physically looked" (Gardiner, 363-65). The spirits of the dead, therefore, position themselves among the audience as a way of materialising the absence of the character that has died, an absence which is not spoken of directly on the stage but whose presence is nonetheless felt, not just in the gaps in the dialogue and the missing interlocutors but also physically. Gardiner's ingenious stage direction thus adds further potency to the grief locked within the silence.

Junior Sister is the play's "odd woman out" in several ways: she is the only character who is not part of a heterosexual couple (the other characters represent three generations of heterosexual couples within the same family), and as such she therefore skews the gender balance at the start of the play towards women. The polyphony of the opening scene is due in large part to Junior Sister, whose overlapping dialogue with her sister and mother – often in counterpoint to, and even overtly mocking, taciturn or inarticulate men – helps create the sense of a 'sisterhood' prevailing over the bonds of family: "affiliative" rather than "filiative" bonds, in the terms of Edward Said's (1983, p. 23) useful distinction.

Mourning and Gender

Applying Durrant's theory on the postcolonial work of mourning illuminates what is at stake in the loss of familial and gendered community, and in terms of the gendered nature of mourning itself in the play. These themes are all thrown into stark relief by various lines changing hands as their original speakers disappear from the play, and by the refiguring of the meaning of these fragments in light of the changing contexts for their utterance. For example, the line in which the nature of Boyfriend's question is finally revealed changes roles twice between Scene 1 and Scene 3. In Scene 1, Junior Sister declares "Mama, he asked her if she could cook", followed by an amused, exasperated "oh God –" (tucker green, 2005, pp. 70-71). After several lines of back-and-forth bickering between Boyfriend and Girlfriend – repeatedly interrupted with characteristic force by Junior Sister – Mum eventually joins the conversation by repeating the information as a question: "He asked you if you could cook?" (tucker green, 2005, p. 71). In Scene 2, with Junior Sister absent, Mum speaks the same questioning line. But in the absence of Junior Sister's repeated interjections into the

conversation between Boyfriend and Girlfriend, Mum's line this time furnishes the information as to the nature of the question. She now speaks the line "oh God" but its force is ambiguous this time, as it could equally reflect the amused/exasperated exclamation of Junior Sister in Scene 1 or a private moment of grief, in which the exchange reminds her of the daughter she has lost before she moves swiftly on to her reminiscence about a similar past exchange between herself and Dad.

In Scene 3, with the absence not only of Junior Sister but also of Girlfriend and Boyfriend, the dialogue begins with Mum speaking Junior sister's summary and exclamation from Scene 1: "He asked her if she could cook. Oh God" (tucker green, 2005, p. 83). This time, with the audience's recognition that both of the referents of "He asked her if she could cook" (Boyfriend and Girlfriend) are irretrievably absent, the "oh God" becomes a naked articulation of an otherwise silent grief. The refrain "oh God" becomes the most obvious verbal trace of the increasing absences that fill the stage as the play progresses and it is telling that this is the last phrase spoken in the play, as Grandma and Grandad's lines of dialogue threaten to disappear entirely at the end of the final scene, and the empty lines of the play script convey meaningful pauses:

GRANDMA

GRANDAD

GRANDAD ... What did he say?

What did he say?

GRANDMA

Both looking for those that have gone.

Oh God.

Oh God.

Oh God (tucker green, 2005, p. 91).

Overwhelmed by their grief and overcome by remembrance of those they have lost, Grandma and Grandad are unable to utter their grief. This inability to articulate grief reflects the ongoing difficulties of mourning in post-apartheid South Africa, an issue that tucker green captures profoundly by making her play both a performance of the impossibility of mourning and – through its touching evocation of absence and its impact - a profound work of mourning in its own right. The cyclical nature of the dialogue in these scenes is coupled with the relocation of lines in a pattern that runs opposite to that of traditional inheritance – Mum “inherits” Junior Sister’s lines – until finally it is the oldest rather than the youngest members of the family who bear the burden of negotiating contemporary South African society and its history. This pattern of reversed inheritance underscores the ‘unnaturalness’ and implicit violence of the deaths experienced by the family, and disrupts the generational roles assigned to the participants: “Having lost her own offspring Mum is returned to being a daughter herself, rather than occupying the two-directional position of being both mother and daughter. Attention is rerouted back towards the preceding generation, rather than onwards towards the future as represented by the younger” (Abram, 2014, p.129). Furthermore, the eponymous theme of *generations* is especially poignant given that the generational movement is backwards and thus the family “line” is doomed to be truncated. As Gardiner puts it, “The procreation of their DNA has stopped [...] I was really interested in how when the lights are turned out, when the lights are turned off in any family, it’s really hard to turn them on again” (Gardiner, 189-91).

Truth, Reconciliation, and Silence: *generations* and South Africa's recent storytelling traditions

The relationship between the play's primary motif of silence and the very specific context of post-apartheid mourning is made apparent when it is considered alongside the prevalence of the notion of testimony in post-apartheid culture, as exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was designed to heal the rifts between apartheid's oppressors and victims, and which has become a central component in the national narrative of post-apartheid South Africa. Reconciliation and the role of testimony in healing in the aftermath of genocidal violence has been a source of explicit inspiration for tucker green: six years after the publication of *generations*, she staged *truth and reconciliation* (tucker green, 2011), a play that depicts dramatic dialogues between the victims and perpetrators of violence and genocide in South Africa, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Bosnia. Yet, while the latter play explicitly explores reconciliation as a theme, I argue here that *generations* invokes much of the psychology of the TRC, as well as illuminating the parts of private grief that remain ill-suited to the public reconciliation forum. As Catherine M. Cole notes in her book *Performing South Africa's truth commission: stages of transition* (2010), the TRC, convened as a means of healing the nation after the collapse of the apartheid regime, has become synonymous with the performative act of public storytelling: of narrating one's pain and suffering – or, for those (mainly, but not exclusively, actors on behalf of the apartheid regime) who perpetuated acts of violence during the apartheid period, of narrating one's guilt and complicity and requesting amnesty. Yet, Cole points out, these performative acts have come to metonymically represent the TRC as a whole: "every appearance in them represented countless hours spent behind

closed doors, where the commission staff busily prepared and investigated, researched and interviewed” (Cole, 2010, p. 5). However:

So successful were the public hearings at making the truth commission visible and accessible to the nation and so saturated was the media coverage they received that, for many people, both inside and outside South Africa, they became synonymous with the truth commission. [...] Against this backdrop the Truth and Reconciliation Commission performed the antithesis: here was a public airing of information that would have been forbidden under the old order; here was a multiracial public gathering that would also have been forbidden [...]; here was public acknowledgement of acts of atrocity that had long been denied, unseen, unpublished, and sequestered from public view (Cole, 2010, p. 6).

The TRC thus used the medium of performance to articulate some of the previously hidden and unspeakable truths of life in apartheid South Africa, and explicitly sought to empower those who had previously been marginalised by allowing them to speak their narratives. During and in the immediate aftermath of the apartheid, testimony from those traumatised by the violence and segregation of apartheid was generally viewed as having been an unambiguously empowering experience for those who shared their stories (see Werbner, 1998). However, the anthropologist Fiona Ross (2003b, pp. 325-41)—considering the “the ways in which testimonies circulate in public spheres in the aftermath of South Africa’s ambitious Truth and Reconciliation Commission”—has engaged with the problematic aspects of this assumption, and the limitations of narrative as a means of coming to terms with past traumas. Early celebratory accounts of the value of TRC testimony did not, for example, adequately account for the fact that “violence has a rupturing effect on language and temporality: in the aftermath, the relation between words and experiences of violence, and between words and violence’s recall, is itself fractured, damaged, ruined” (Ross, 2003b, p. 331). This points to the difficulty in articulating traumatic experience or the experience

of profound loss, and the dangers of assuming that the speaking of grief is universally empowering or even possible. Fiona Ross additionally emphasises the function of storytelling as a means of “creating sociality, generating fields that span the divides between public and private and the forms of language considered appropriate to each” (2003b, p. 326), but notes the assumption that this would be an unambiguously empowering traversal was oversimplified, given that some participants – especially early in the process – “felt that the public testimonial form they saw at hearings and on television was ‘undignified’, exposing testifiers to the potential for public humiliation as they broke with established conventions of silence and blame” (2003b, p. 329).

Gender, Grief, and (the Impossibility of) Testimony

The fraught nature of making grief public by articulating it in the space of the TRC – and the conflict between public and private spheres which is inevitably associated with this problem – underlines the gendered nature of grieving, trauma, and testimony at the TRC, and hence within the recent history and public consciousness of South Africa. If, as Collins suggests, there are complex, intersectional parallels between the family and the nation, there is also an inherent and profound disjunct between the private space of the family and the public, nation-building participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which risks restricting access to the catharsis and reconciliation on which the new nation is built on a gendered basis. Nthabiseng Motsemme explores the implications of this in some detail in her article “The mute always speak: on women’s silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”. Motsemme draws on research that identifies a fundamental distinction between the ways in which men and women who have lived through trauma and violence articulate

their experience of the past. While men tend to participate more overtly in public, nation-building acts (of which the TRC is a notable example), “[v]arious studies exploring the ways ordinary women speak about their traumatic pasts under violent regimes have consistently shown how they tend to place their narratives within everyday lived experience, rather than nationalist concerns [...]. Home, domesticity, relationships and quotidian lives are employed to map their experiences of human rights violation” (Motsemme, 2016, p. 909).

For women who have lived through traumatic events, in other words, the locus of the grief and trauma has often tended to be the home and the family, rather than wider, public-sphere loci of injustice. While it may be problematically essentialist to make a straightforward binary distinction between women experiencing grief and trauma primarily in the private sphere and men experiencing these emotions primarily in the public sphere, it is nevertheless worth considering the marginalisation of the private at the expense of the public by the performative TRC process, and the consequent imperfection of this process as a means for women in particular to articulate private grief. And, given the body of research in the social sciences showing that women who have undergone trauma actively prefer the private space of the family to the public space of nation-building (see Bozzoli, 1998, pp. 167-95; Ross, 2003b, pp. 325-41; Motsemme, 2004, pp. 909-32; Cole, 2010, pp. 167-87), the appropriation of the TRC by the latter cause provides grounds for skepticism about its effectiveness as a venue for private female grief:

The truth body took on this myth-making function in addition to its ostensible task of addressing past political abuse. The Commission thus provided another canvas on which the discourse of the new South Africa would be written, produced and visibly shown. It then became another text about nation, or more specifically “rainbow nation” (Motsemme, 2016, p. 912).

Motsemme argues that women's narratives at the TRC are valuable because, on the whole, they eschew the grand narrative of nation building, focusing instead on "the ways in which the brutality of racist and capitalistic systems such as apartheid also lay in what state terror could do to alter the ways individuals and communities relate to each other", and "allow[ing] us to bear witness to the texture of the lived experiences of self, family, and community fragmentation" (2016, p. 910). But it must also be borne in mind that, because of the problematic relationship between private, intimate trauma and the public performance demanded by the TRC, silences, and the failure to speak about a certain experience, must also be considered a part of the "text" of this experience: "evidence of these processes of fragmentation and agency can also be located in expressions of silence embodied and narrated by women during the TRC hearings" (Motsemme, 2016, p. 910).

This important argument reflects the fragile, intersectional relationship between women and the contemporary state of South Africa. Marginalised not only by the traumas they – in common with all black South Africans – have suffered at the hands of the apartheid state, but also by the demand for public performance of this trauma. Black South African women may find their grief inherently more difficult to place in the public sphere than their male counterparts. And, furthermore, it is only by paying close attention to the silences in women's discourse about pain and trauma that agency and the inarticulation of this trauma might be located.

This complex, intersectional history of grief, trauma, pain, and silence is the inheritance of tucker green's characters in *generations*, along with the silencing, marginalising aspects of HIV/AIDS stigma which further push private grief into the deepest recesses of the domestic space. And this inheritance is arguably invoked by

both the form and content of the play, in which silence becomes the chief medium by which grief is articulated. The use of silence and the circumlocution of narrated trauma is a primary motif in tucker green's work, which "demonstrates the therapeutic need to give voice to trauma while simultaneously showing the difficulty of finding a suitable form of expression" (Abram, 2014, p.118). Drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida, Sam Haddow has argued that the work of mourning necessarily involves a corruption of grief, because giving voice to grief spoils its "singularity":

In speaking we both create and destroy the singularity of our own experience by inadequately manifesting it within a language that may be presented to the future. Grief and mourning thus occur on either side of a structure of address that is broken in order to be conceived (2020, p. 282).

The characters therefore narrate their experience on the threshold of articulation, without ever quite articulating their grief—and the work of mourning is completed in the audience's interpretation of the play. This makes tucker green's work of mourning in *generations* a complex but highly effective paradoxical articulation of female grief. It is paradoxical in two senses: it performs the impossibility of performance – filling in the gaps between the inarticulable narration of the family's escalating trauma and grief with formal innovation that emphasises the progressive absences within the family through repetition – and it gives expression to the grief and mourning that eludes articulation for its characters.

While grief is virtually inarticulable for characters of both genders, *generations* nevertheless remains a work centered on feminine modes of silence and (in)articulation of that loss, not only in the way in which it is the female communities of solidarity that are most profoundly affected by the progressive losses within the

play, but also in the relative difficulties in articulating the extent of the loss. Significantly, it is Dad who is the first character to explicitly reference the loss of Junior Sister, Boyfriend and Girlfriend by eventually speaking the words “I miss them” (tucker green, 2005, p. 86). It is disproportionately female characters, meanwhile, who utter the hopeless words “Oh God” (tucker green, 2005, p. 86) — a phrase that stands in for the hopelessness and inarticulability of loss and can itself be read as a manifestation of silence. The ‘unnatural’ inheritance, therefore, is matrilineal, pointing to the matriarchal structure of the South African family. And it is thus significant that Gardiner chose to view as matriarchal not only the family dynamic in the play but also the production, in which the women led the way and were the first to speak up if they had an issue with the way the production was going: “That kind of matriarchal experience permeated throughout the entire process, and so I worked very hard to respect how the matriarchy in South African culture deserves attention, and deserves to, you know, be put forward. And so that was something that I did both in the production, but also in the making of the production” (Gardiner, 309-13).

Generations in Performance: the function of the chorus and the role of the kitchen

In order to understand the function of the chorus to *generations* and its depiction of mourning, one has to be able to read the chorus as simultaneously central and marginal. To a contemporary theatre audience, the chorus appears marginal, a secondary commentary on the main action on stage, so that the function of the chorus (in both Classical theatre and in plays, like *generations*, that explicitly borrow from its conventions) appears to be a kind of addition to the main action on the stage. But Helen H. Bacon argues that this attitude does not reflect the choral origins of theatre, and

pays scant regard to the integral function of the chorus as a driver of the narrative and a central source of dramatic meaning and tension:

If drama is first of all choral, it follows that dramatic choruses should be seen as an integral part of the action, and not, as many modern readers and critics and most theatrical directors tend to see them, as a source of interludes and peripheral lyrical commentary on an action performed by the actors (1994, p. 7).

In Ancient Greek theatre where the chorus originates, the chorus is anything but marginal and was seen as the primary signifying mode of the performance (Spector, 2013, p. 369). Tucker Green makes use of this duality to address the central paradox of the play: loss as something that cannot be spoken of and yet must be spoken of. This duality was emphasised differently, and perhaps it was made more verbally explicit, in Gardiner's New York production. Here, the chorus did not recite the names of the deceased; instead, as Hilton Als describes:

Standing or sitting in the theatre are a number of South African-born singers, who, acting as a kind of chorus that comments on the action, raise their voices, together or separately, in Zulu, a language that I do not know but could feel as they hummed or exclaimed in counterpoint to the conversation about the love that Boyfriend starts (2014, para. 4).

The chorus was therefore more directly engaged in the action of the play, commenting and reacting to the words that the characters have spoken. Yet what they were saying precisely was less significant than the sonorous affectivity of their voices that seems to have made up for the repression that permeated the main action. Indeed, Gardiner stresses the importance of the choir as an instrument of the narrative: "When the choir sings, or when the choir moans, or when the choir makes any kind of sound, that is

inherent to the storytelling. [...] The choir was a mechanism by which we drove the story forward” (Gardiner, 63-65).

Furthermore, Lucy Tyler (2020) has elaborated the ways in which the choir is tied to the play’s narrational structure. Primarily, the choir is crucial in situating the action of the play in a specific context, giving it “geographical, cultural and racial accuracy”, since the choir is black and South African, carrying out “trans-African mourning practices”, calling the names of South African victims of AIDS (Tyler, 2020, p. 144). Moreover, Tyler (2020, p. 145) has observed that Tucker Green specifies that the choir must be silent at the start of the third and fifth scenes. “The omission of the dirge is significant since these are the moments where Mum has lost both her children and when Grandma loses Mum” (Tyler, 2020, p. 145). Thus, the silence reflects the silence that Rhaisa Kameela Williams (2016, p. 17) has argued animates black maternal grief in resistance to the stereotype of the strong black mother prescribed by the Western media and judicial systems. As I have discussed above, this notion that silence might be an active enactment of maternal mourning resonates with the silence of Mum in *random*, after she learns about the murder of her son. Therefore, although *generations* is a play largely about repression and the impossibility of grief, the choir acts as a kind of surrogate griever.

It could be suggested that the necessity to speak about the trauma that came about as a result of the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa stems from the fact that trauma itself is an ‘event’ that recurs in an involuntary fashion in individuals and communities affected by this phenomenon: in other words, it is not a phenomenon that can ever be disposed of. Cathy Caruth argues that, “trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always

the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (2016, p. 4). In *generations*, there is a sense of absent reality, embodied in the loss of lives due to the scourge of HIV/AIDS, that is permanently conveyed through the use of the chorus. Tucker Green is interested in invoking the contemporary audience’s perception of the chorus as marginal, and simultaneously reflecting the traditional Greek context, which is based on providing meaning to the actions taking place in the play. It is expected that a contemporary audience would consider the chorus as marginal, because theatre-goers do not always perceive it as a purveyor of meaning (Bacon, 1994, p. 7). However, in *generations*, there are many examples of this hermeneutical symbiosis. For instance, the chorus appears to provide a useful counterpoint to Boyfriend’s courtship as he attempts to “sweetmouth” Girlfriend in Scene Two. Whenever the two of them flirt, which involves Boyfriend telling Girlfriend how “sweet” she looks and that because of this sweetness she has “talent” and “aptitude” (to cook), the chorus hums a “melody of lament” (Tucker Green, 2005, p. 81). The melody continues intermittently throughout the scene, until the end when Boyfriend and Girlfriend leave the stage. Operating in place of a serenade, the lament prophesies their demise, while alluding to the fact that it was most likely sexual intercourse between them that brought it about. The conversation – along with the result of the sex that it symbolises – highlights the rather subdued role of women within the familial saga and enabling the audience to construct their own system of meaning regarding the relations between South African men and women and the wider societal implications. According to Cohen, the use of musical accompaniment, live or otherwise, “activates associations of both affect and denotation and that meaning at any point in time is the resultant of the total associations generated” (1993, p. 163). In the main action of the play, the characters

find it almost impossible to articulate their loss. The play therefore remains true to the impossibility of mourning.

The presence of the chorus, and the specificity with which they name those lost, conveys the kind of cathartic ritual that is denied by the characters in the main part of the play; thus the play is able to perform both the inability to mourn and the act of mourning itself, through the dualistic function of the chorus. In *generations*, we can see the abundant use of aporia as an instrument that is able to provide a useful impasse between the conversations that take place between the characters; this literary method, which is seen in an eloquent manner in Dylan Thomas' *A Refusal To Mourn The Death, By Fire, Of A Child In London* and William Cowper's *The Castaway*, serves to heighten the contradictory meanings about a particular event or a series of interactions between individuals (Zima, 1999, pp. 158-62). In *generations*, the main disjunctures that affect the characters and their environment remain unresolved, giving rise to hidden tensions that emerge, nonetheless, in very subtle ways throughout the play. The chorus appears to be an instrument that serves to heighten these contradictions, allowing the audience to form an intersubjective system of meaning that is derived from the seeming impossibility to mourn the tragedy that unfolds within the family context depicted in *generations*. The use of the chorus is also a powerful instrument in order to highlight the gradual shortening of the dialogue between the characters and their eventual disappearance from the main set. It is as if the chorus allows these characters to retain some kind of metaphysical presence after their disappearance, both as individuals and as family members. The use of the chorus in *generations* may be seen as a device that allows the characters (and the audience) to come to terms with the inevitability of irreparable loss. This is one of the main ways

in which the play creates a hermeneutical medium in order to understand the direct and indirect implications of the process of grief and the manner in which the intersubjective symbiosis between the characters and the audience is able to foment novel ways of examining the social crisis that is affecting South Africa as a result of the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Here, I turn to the tension between the diegetic action (the cyclical scene performed by the main actors) and the extra-diegetic function of the choir, which can be likened to the chorus in a Greek tragedy. I argue that the diegetic and extra-diegetic elements of the play present two mutually irreconcilable, public and private forms of mourning loss in the specific context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, to propose that tucker green's work of mourning functions as a way to process communal grief by uniting these forms in a single performative work. In the play, the chorus can be considered a collective voice, as the allegory of a community standing side by side in order to process grief and provide support to the individuals and families that are affected by the scourge of the epidemic.

The powerful depiction of mourning and its impossibility in *generations* is framed by a series of paradoxes. In the dramatic space of the play, mourning is a difficult if not impossible undertaking, but its non-diegetic elements render the play as a whole a profound work of mourning. Thus, the song of the onstage choir coexists with the omissions and elisions of the characters regarding their mounting losses; the list of names sung out by the choir insists on the dead as specific, located lives defined by familial ties even as the main onstage action constructs them as nameless, allegorical, 'everyman' figures. As I discussed in my chapter on *random*, the 'everyman' figure is a trope theorized by de Certeau to identify the "erosion and

denigration of the singular or the extraordinary” (1984, p. 1) characteristics of an individual, resulting eventually in the formation of a ‘nobody’. In *random*, the perceived randomness of Brother’s murder and attendant silence speak strongly to this notion, while he nonetheless continues to have a defined—and by no means random—position within the family. Such a contrast is similarly observed in the characters in *generations*, who are both identifiable individuals and ‘everyman’ figures. Furthermore, the keening lament of the mourners’ chant produces an excess of grief in stark juxtaposition with the resolute determination of the primary characters to overcome their losses and continue to function as best they can. These paradoxical juxtapositions of emotional release and repression, singularity and plurality may be described in terms of the “subjective objectivity” (Gardiner, 172) coined by Gardiner to describe the emotional state of the choir members, a term she relates to the phenomenology of music inherent in African culture. As Gardiner explained:

[The choir] were subjectively objective. What do I mean? I mean that inherent in African tradition, in African culture, the way music is used in any capacity, South African in particular, has an emotional capacity to affect change in you somehow. It is used as a tool to target your emotional relationship to the experience. In our case, the thirteen were not sort of physically involved in the storytelling, in so much as the emotional impact that the songs that Bongi composed were so powerful that at times, members of the choir were moved, as in any gospel choir in my tradition, as in any member of a choir in any, in my opinion, religious opportunity. So, it was very much about allowing these actors and singers to feel the music as they would in a performance, but it wasn’t necessarily about them performing the music as in a musical. So that’s why I think it was more subjective objectivity (Gardiner, 162-72).

The choir’s engagement with the music was not “as in a musical”. Although the chorus was instrumental in driving forward the narrative, and although the singers were emotionally involved in the music, there was a certain gap, or distance, between them and the rest of the performance. This disjuncture produces the condition of subjective

objectivity which in turn is a paradox reflective of the dynamic of paradoxes making up the play as a whole, especially the paradox of audible silence as the singers give voice to the grief of the characters on the stage. And if we regard the choir as representing the dead (at least insofar as they call out their names), perhaps they can also be seen as eliciting the paradoxical sensation of presence in absence.

Formally, the key to understanding the play's paradoxical relationship with grief and mourning lies in the notion of the *diegesis*, a term more commonly used in discussing film and musical theatre but one that is suitable in the context of tucker green's juxtaposition of the realist and non-realist in *generations*. The notion of diegesis is manifested in *generations* by describing, in a subtle and indirect manner, the existence of an interior mode of meaning on the part of the characters, which acts in tandem with (and sometimes in explicit opposition to) the subjective characteristics of the events that are described concretely. For example, the main purpose of the reunion between the characters is celebratory in nature; however, it soon transpires that, notwithstanding the fact that the family is congregated around a shared meal, this is not a cause for celebration. In fact, the family meal just serves to provide the background for the process of mourning that unfolds individually and collectively at the same time. The choir fulfils many of the functions attributed to the chorus in Classical Greek theatre: it provides musical pauses, comment, and a narrative framework for the main action of the play, but retreats during the play's "realist" scenes, returning to prominence only during transitions between these scenes (Arnott, 1989, pp. 23-25, 81). The way the musicality of the chorus affects the rhythm of the play as a whole—not least the interplay of the diegetic and the non-diegetic—was a feature of particular interest to Gardiner: "the level of poetic vibrancy that *generations* has really speaks to me as a poet, and so I was really interested in treating *generations*

in many ways, like a libretto in a sense, and finding ways to create a musical score around it” (Gardiner, 33-42). In the staging of *generations*, therefore, the chorus added a musical element that complemented the play’s rhythmic toing and froing between silence and exposition.

tucker green’s use of the choir as chorus seems, at first glance in both text and in performance, to stage the choral function as secondary to the scenes performed by the actors. The chorus’s part – echoing the shape of the dramatic scenes – is cyclical in nature, with each name intoned in turn followed by the words “Another leaves us, another has gone”. The lament, described as a “continuous gentle dirge”, is clearly valued primarily for its aesthetic contribution: the stage directions tell us that “*You may or may not get through the list- or may need to repeat it*” (tucker green, 2005, p. 67). Yet the chorus continually emphasises its own apparently peripheral role, by insisting on the materiality of the experience that the scenes performed by the actors elide.

To begin with, the chorus grants the dead the names that they are denied in the depersonalised, allegorised action of the diegesis. And these names indicate the complexity of South African history: alongside names of obviously native southern African heritage like Zwelibhangile, Kwezi, Jongilizwe, and Bantu, there are also names of equally obviously European heritage – Bernard, Robert – and still others that carry heavily Judeo-Christian associations: – Josiah, Moses, Zaccheus and Mary. Some of the names are simple, abbreviated nicknames – “T.J.”, for example, suggests a deceased person whose nickname is evocative of familiarity between them and the singers. The final two names on the list, meanwhile, are those of specific individuals, and their inclusion reflects the tragedy of HIV/AIDS in the South African public

consciousness: Xolani Nkosi Johnson was a child born with HIV/AIDS who campaigned for better awareness and care of the disease in South Africa before his own death at the age of 12; while Makgatho Mandela (son of Nelson Mandela and another victim of HIV/AIDS who died in 2005) intertwines the personal and public recent histories of South Africa. From the informal to the patronymic, the generic to the specific, the European to the African: collectively these names connote a diverse community united by loss. Their invocation by the chorus enables the communal and social functions normally associated with grieving – the ritual elements of the funeral – that are denied by the drama performed by the actors, which depicts only private grief, denial, and silence.

The chorus, then, is both central and peripheral: if its primary aesthetic function is as “background”, fading beneath the words spoken onstage and becoming resurgent only during scene transitions, the chorus nevertheless remains the most visible and audible indicator of the play’s status as a work of mourning, and of the centrality of death, grief and loss. The function of the chorus on the one hand, and the silence of the cyclical repetitions of the same scene by a dwindling cast of characters on the other, thus engage in a dialectical relationship – conflicting with each other and contesting for a space of articulation or silence, yet both are absolutely necessary to the play’s dramatic function as a whole.

It is possible to read the characters’ silence as the manifestation of a complex range of oppressive factors – among them not only the historical injustices of colonialism and apartheid but also the contemporary reluctance of post-apartheid governments led by the African National Congress (ANC) to acknowledge and address the HIV/AIDS crisis (see, for example, Crossan, 2013) – that have reduced the black family at the centre of the play’s action (or, *every* family) to silence and

hopelessness. In South Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has impacted on families and communities in a devastating fashion, as seen in the increase of child-headed households, the increase in the levels of mortality in informal urban areas, and the overall reduction in life expectancy (Gona et al., 2020). Overall, one in five adults of working age are infected with the virus, a fact that has significant social, cultural and economic repercussions for families and communities across South Africa (Keat, 2014, p. 2). Furthermore, the impact of HIV/AIDS also denotes the importance of *generations* as a literary instrument that projects the necessity of applying an intersectional understanding of the epidemic. To a large extent, the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa sustains and is sustained by the heteronormative values that are constitutive of daily life in South Africa. André Gacoin has argued that the discourse of HIV/AIDS prevention in South Africa deploys “a particular discursive framework in order to construct a ‘normal’ (and hetero) sexuality that validates, rather than questions, social constructions of masculine privilege with heterosexuality” (2010, p. 429). Such frameworks are in danger of silencing communities not represented, and thus failing to communicate to them a relatable discourse of HIV/AIDS prevention. Along similar lines, Marc Epprecht (2008, pp. 168-69) has explained that the hegemony of masculinism and heteronormativity in Africa has meant that “the majority population is denied safer-sex education because of misguided homophobic fears or heterosexist blindness”. In this context, the lament of the chorus may be seen as a form of resistance to the silencing forces of both historical and contemporary South Africa, loudly proclaiming the materiality and irreducibility of the tragic losses. The lament expressed by the chorus is also a manifestation of the lack of resolution regarding the tragic events that have occurred in the past and the ongoing social crisis that is taking place in South Africa as a result of the impossibility to deal with the

consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. An analogous use of the keening lament is described in David L. Eng and David Kazanjian's introduction to their book *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003), where they explore the phenomenon of ritual keening during and after the Irish potato famine, as a form of ritual mourning of and resistance to "both British colonial mastery of and loss of control over a colonized space" (p. 21):

Keening as an emotional response to famine – a famine not the result of natural disaster but the outcome of a British colonial policy evacuating the land of its productive value – indexes the disastrous loss of lives as starvation and emigration intensified. In its melancholic acoustic excess, keening contests the colonial claim that the Irish brought the catastrophe of famine upon themselves through their pre-modern ways. [...] [The] keening [represents] political possibilities in the catastrophic pain of stricken bodies (pp. 21-22).

This account is strikingly resonant with the function of the "acoustic excess" provided by tucker green's choir in *generations* – an excess that compensates for and contests, without ever cancelling out, the resolute silence of the characters about their private loss. Both the means and the function of the chorus in *generations* can be compared to the anti-colonial usage of the traditional keening lament in Irish post-Famine culture: the chorus insists on the right of the dead to be named and on the specific weight of each loss, but it also emphasises the existence of a diverse – even universal – community of loss, contesting views from outside Africa of HIV/AIDS as an "African problem" and from within the South African government as no problem at all. The use of the choir is of paramount importance in order to emphasise the ritualistic aspect of mourning. The characters' relationship with grief is personal and collective at the same time; a situation that emerges as a result of the wide ramifications of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In Gardiner's production, the choir emphasised its material presence by engaging directly with the audience before the performance began. They entered the auditorium with the audience—who were unaware of their role in the play. Besides, the audience were served Orange Fanta after the performance, thereby not only breaking the proverbial fourth wall (which they did effectively before the wall was established) but also stretching the sensory experience of the play beyond sight and sound to include taste. The way taste operates is seemingly different from the experience of sight or sound because the sensation is felt within, and any one morsel can only be tasted by one person at a time; taste is private—indeed, it is *silent*. The chorus are also performing the work of spreading secrets, or what is unheard or unspoken among the actors on the stage. The internalisation of liquid at the end of the viewing experience, by creating a physical—and yet inaudible and invisible—oneness between audience and performance, might also be understood as a symbolic reference to the spread of HIV/AIDS, a disease contracted via bodily contact and the mixing of fluids, and often during an act of pleasure. Indeed, in this sense, Fanta is thus an allegorical stand-in for sex.

The choice of drink is also pertinent, Orange Fanta having a particular place in the culture of postcolonial Africa. It features as a symbol of the commodification and dissemination of Western values in the Zimbabwean writer Dambudzo Marechera's satirical short story collection, *The House of Hunger* (1978). In one of the stories, sarcastically titled "Are There People Living There?" (pp. 149-51), Marechera lists Orange Fanta (or Fanta Orange, as it was then called) among the "the products and manufacturers of white civilization" that the families who appear in the narrator's writing (the narrator is a "penniless hackwriter") "must be seen to consume" (p. 149). The ideal black family, the narrator eventually decides, must steer away from "the

practice of polygamy, the evils of lobola, the superstitions of magic and witchcraft” and embrace “Ambi Skin-Lightening Cream, Coca-Cola, Castle and Lion Lagers, Benson and Hedges, Pure Wool Suits, and, yes, Fanta Orange Tastes So Good” (p. 151). In this way, as Ewa Macura-Nnamdi (2015, p. 98) has argued, the story “expresses cogently the mutual imbrications of consumption and colonial domination, both of which lead, inevitably, to the visceral regions of the alimentary tract”. It is through the “alimentary tract” that Gardiner’s production of *generations* affected its audience by serving them Orange Fanta, a gesture that can be traced to the perpetuation of colonialism in Africa by the importation of Western commodities—the taste of which, like sex, is difficult to resist despite the inherent dangers that it poses to the physical health of individuals and the social and political health of the community.

This enactment of sensory excess—affected also by the smell of garlic emanating from the stove in the kitchen on stage—moreover, performs a similar function to the acoustic excess of the keening. Such insistence of presence is in stark contrast to the elusiveness of the actors and equivalent to the volume of their silence. For Gardiner, this also had a strong racial dimension since black people in the US and the UK are otherwise “invisible or ignored”. As she explained:

It was more about making the choir as a device present itself the audience realise, “My gosh, there’s a black person sitting right next to me. I had no idea that they were a part of this production.” And so, [...] I was interested in exploring [black skin] as part of the silence which exists [...] within the structure of the piece. And so it’s really, in my own sort of way in which my brain works, playing with [how] invisibility and silence coexist (Gardiner, 95-100).

Seating the choristers without the audience’s recognition of their existence plays on the notion of the invisibility and silence of black bodies which rings true also for the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the silence surrounding the traumas of apartheid—especially those suffered by black women—in South Africa.

The chorus thus contests and refuses the silence about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the trauma of the losses it visits upon individual families, even as the diegetic action of the play enacts and reproduces this silence. Yet while *generations* initially seems to draw an absolute contrast between the silence of the characters and the explicit, keening grief of the chorus, this is perhaps too simple a contrast to maintain in absolute terms. As I have already discussed in relation to the TRC, the enforced articulation of private grief can be its own kind of oppression – especially for the intersectionally marginalised characters of tucker green’s play – and it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that the play represents silence and the outpouring of public grief as ultimately complementary rather than contradictory modes of mourning. In his essay ‘The value of silence’, David Eng discusses the public outpouring of grief after 9/11, and explores the vanishing spaces of silence for those who lost loved ones in the attack:

Very quickly, this silence has been overtaken by noise. Through all this incessant and increasing noise, I continue to wonder and to worry about the place of silence, a place *for* silence. [...] In this mute space, the shock of trauma slowly transforms into the reality of loss, and in this regard, silence might be considered that moment before – that limited space from which – loss is expropriated into its symbolic meaning. Silence, then, is not the opposite of speech but, indeed, its very condition of possibility, the precondition of knowing and of meaning. But what, we must ask, will happen to this silence – to the silence of countless, inexpressible, and singular private tragedies – as it encounters a public language of mourning and is reduced to a state speech wholly inadequate to the inconsolable contours of its grief? (2002, p. 86).

The *irreducibility* of grief – its “inconsolable contours” are precisely what *generations* insists upon through its exploration of the private, silent, unsayable aspects of grief in a national context where public, performative, declarative grief (much like that of America in the wake of 9/11) is expected and even demanded as part of a national narrative. Conversely, the specificity of *each* loss, and the need for communities of

loss to articulate it and express the pain that it entails, are equally necessary aspects of mourning, and are represented by the chorus.

The kitchen is a theatre of synaesthetic experience. The conventions of the European proscenium stage are dominated by the dual interaction of speech and image—an obviously powerful, yet at the same time exclusionary representation of the human sensorium. Indeed, the qualitative hierarchy according to which the sense of sight has been historically privileged above all others, and which is seen as central to the Western philosophical tradition overall, has lately been critiqued for its exclusion of the tactile and olfactory senses as ways of knowing (Levin, 2008, pp. 1-30). As theories of space by Michel Foucault, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and other postmodern cultural geographers make plain, hierarchical organisations of knowledge translate directly into the production of space itself—Foucault, for example, was able to identify a host of “heterotopias”, that is, “other spaces” in which dominant regimes of spatial organisation were subverted (Crampton & Elden, 2016, pp. 1-18). The kitchen might well be considered just such a heterotopia: a serving space, one historically staffed by servant classes, a space gendered and racialised, a space given over both to the basic work of providing for survival and for the stimulation of the necessity and the pleasure of the body. It is, moreover, a hidden space, not a space for the presentation of the public self, and therefore a repressed space. As a performance strategy, therefore, the representation of the kitchen as a theatre, or the theatre as a kitchen—even to the extent that the smells of its products circulate through the otherwise traditionally unscented air—is a radical move that inverts and transforms the theatrical, sensual, and epistemic spatial hierarchies of the history of the modern stage.

As I have mentioned, the ingestion of food played a role in Gardiner's production of *generations* before the performance began, when the choir shared a drink with the audience as they were taking their seats; this itself was a radical manoeuvre towards subverting the supremacy of sight and sound in theatrical phenomenology. Upon entering the auditorium, there was also a smell of garlic emanating from the kitchen on the stage as food cooked on the stove, thus before the performance began smell was engaged as well as taste. This diffusion of liquids and gases beyond the parameters of the stage and into the audience members' bodies carries marked sexual connotations which allude strongly to the theme of venereal disease, not least since the contraction of HIV/AIDS is a process that happens beneath the skin, it is invisible, and can remain asymptomatic for years. The kitchen is also a space of intercourse, at least on a social-familial if not on a sexual level. When I asked Gardiner what the kitchen in *generations* meant to her, her first response was that it was primarily about sex: "I mean, sex, and when the sperm hits the egg, it cooks. And penetration—again, [HIV is] passed through penetration, and so I was interested in sort of taking the metaphor that debbie was working with, and sort of showing a kind of realistic version of what that is" (Gardiner, 231-34). She even asked her set designer to make the set resemble a vagina. The result was a kind of earth-red cave with corrugated cladding, the colour made from tennis court clay, "which was very similar to the clay dirt in South Africa" (Gardiner, 222-23).

Part of the implications of the use of the kitchen as a performance strategy in tucker green's *generations* is to explore alternative spaces for cultural memory and social commentary, ones which exist outside of, and in opposition to, the normative or dominant spaces of the public realm—a strategy which has powerful political

ramifications in the South African context in which the play is set where negotiations over space, the ownership of space, and the right to inhabit space have historically been violently enacted and contested as a result of the legacy of apartheid segregation (Robinson, 1996, pp. 44-47). Onstage, the kitchen presents a communal area in which members of a family take on prescribed roles according to their function within the life of the family unit, in which female characters cook and male characters perform their appetites. The kitchen is a working kitchen: pots boil and simmer, their broth infiltrates the 'fourth wall' of the stage. The preparation and consumption of food becomes the medium of exchange among the generations present throughout the play—who cooks, who is cooked for, who knows how to cook, who teaches how to cook—cooking works as a mode of relationality, an apparatus of knowledge and empowerment, a means of survival, of seduction, of nourishment, desire, and, finally, of grief and mourning. But cooking is the abiding activity against which everything in the play—and in life—takes place and is projected against. As the characters tragically disappear from the action generation by generation, the pots continue to boil on the stove, and the work of cooking continues.

Thus in a play where the overriding theme is generations, cooking provides an intergenerational medium and the kitchen an intergenerational space which both serve to produce dramatic and social continuity in a play otherwise defined by the attrition of theatrical and social presence. This use of the kitchen as an empowering theatrical space clearly pushes back critically against the repression of the kitchen as a space of social significance which feminist historians have long identified as a feature of Western structures of patriarchal power (Friedan, 1963, pp. 1-34). One response among radical feminist thinkers has been to reject the kitchen and the work performed

in the kitchen out of hand and to argue that “in order to fulfil their potential as human beings and to contribute to their country’s leadership, women should reject domesticity and enter the ‘public’ world of work” (Stovall, Baker-Sperry & Dallinger, 2015, p. 4). Staging multiple interpretations as to its social significance, the kitchen thus serves to “conform, disrupt, and resist dominant discourses that seek to define [women’s] identities” (Supski, 2007, p. 5).

Yet it is within the specificity of the black cultural tradition that tucker green’s use of the kitchen as a performance strategy takes on its most precise signification. Olga Idriss Davis has argued that the separation of the kitchen from the main house in plantations of the American South was “a symbolic act of demarcation” that served to inscribe the spatial discrimination of white supremacy (1999, p. 368). The kitchen was also the scene of violent abuse centred on food pollution and physical punishments enacted by plantation owners on enslaved cooks (Fox-Genovese, 1988, pp. 152-69). Yet at the same time, the kitchen was a space in which black women contested power and achieved autonomy and—crucial to Davis’s thinking—may serve as a metaphor for the ongoing process of empowerment within the spatial regimes of modernity (Davis, 1999). Gardiner, a black woman who grew up in Philadelphia, remembers the kitchen as just such a space: “I grew up in a very male dominated family, and the women were always in the kitchen, and the men when they got hungry, they would come in and they would be pushed away. And then they would come in, and they would be pushed away. Or they would be called in to set the table. But otherwise, it was the domain of the woman” (Gardiner, 248-52).

It is in this light that the kitchen as a performance strategy may be appraised in *generations*. Indeed, the allegorisation of the kitchen space—by naming each

character as “Grandma”, “Mother”, “Boyfriend” etc.—is a way of allowing the specificity of the kitchen to evoke a multitude of historical kitchens: the kitchen of the slave plantation, the kitchen of the freed slave community, the postcolonial kitchen, the apartheid kitchen, the kitchen of the HIV/AIDS crisis, kitchens that existed previously, exist now, and will exist in the future. This gives the kitchen a monumental stature, comparable to the very origins of Western theatre in ancient Greece as a space situated identifiably within the *polis* where the acts of theatre and politics become indistinguishable. To understand the kitchen as just such a space of public empowerment and critique is what tucker green is asking of us in this powerful play.

When *generations* was first performed in 2005, the institutionalized system of racial segregation in South Africa, known as apartheid, had been officially outlawed for only twelve years and its impact was still very much felt by the black community. One effect of apartheid’s legacy was a lack of trust in politicians and public representatives, precipitating general withdrawal from public life and a tightening of the family unit as a site of stability (Mosoetsa, 2004, pp. 1-12). As a paradoxical consequence, however, the black South African family became a metaphorical microcosm of the nation’s inequalities and hierarchies, which is in accordance with Collins’s (1998, p. 64) theory that within the family unit, the intersection of race and gender intersects also with nation. *generations* portrays a black family in post-apartheid South Africa whose plight is worsened by the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis, a tragic situation which pervades public and private life and therefore provides an immediate connection between the microcosm of the family and the broader picture of the nation. The play represents in particular the impossibility of grief resulting from the taboo status of HIV/AIDS, which means that the characters remain silent around

the issue despite the tragedy it entails and the numerous losses it brings about within the community. Tucker Green deploys the otherworldly presence of the choir, who lament the deaths, to innovate a means of what Sam Durrant (2004, p. 8) has called the “postcolonial work of mourning” (Derrida, 2001). The presence of the choir conveys the inner pain of the characters, who cannot express it, or even reckon with it, in the diegetic action of the play, thus manifesting the pain brought about by the absence of those who have gone and their continuing presence in the psyches of the characters. The trauma of the disease, exacerbated by the silence surrounding the issue, is performed in terms that are explicitly gendered, the setting being the kitchen and the conversation primarily being about cooking aptitudes of the female characters. This gendered dynamic reflects strongly the disproportionate weight of the onus of shame surrounding HIV/AIDS on women in South African society (Dageid & Duckert, 2008, p. 186). The setting of the kitchen also has the potential to encourage innovative performance strategies, as witnessed in Leah Gardiner’s 2014 production of *generations* in New York, in which the audience smelled garlic upon entering the auditorium, and imbibed Orange Fanta after the performance. The effect of this is powerful, not least since the ingestion of food into the body can be understood metaphorically to parallel the contraction of diseases in the blood.

Chapter Three

The Scope and Limits of Safe Spaces in debbie tucker green's *nut*

The Black Interior: the theatre of debbie tucker green

“Oh that feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the edges of her yard”, wrote bell hooks (2014a, p. 41). She was describing the journey to her grandmother’s house as a child, and the relief she felt when arriving was in contrast to the fear she felt on the way:

I remember the fear, being scared to walk to Baba’s (our grandmother’s house) because we would have to pass that terrifying whiteness—those white faces on the porches staring us down with hate. Even when empty or vacant, those porches seemed to say ‘danger’, ‘you do not belong here’, ‘you are not safe’ (2014a, p. 41).

What hooks is alluding to is the centrality in the lives of black women of what has come to be known as a safe space, a zone in which they are able to exist as themselves, without the fear that is induced by intersectional oppression, without the perpetual feeling of being judged as Other, a space where it is possible to give voice to one’s opinions and particular intersectional subjectivity without the fear of being drowned out or dismissed (Collins, 1990, p. 71). The home of her grandmother was one such space, which existed in stark contrast to the threatening world outside, its boundary demarcated by the walls of the house itself. Thus, the safe space is not demarcated by its locality in the city, but by the physical interiority of her grandmother’s house.

tucker green's 2013 play *nut* is set in the interior space—both psychically and physically, in the sense that the protagonist withdraws into her home—of a reclusive black British woman. The play raises questions about what a safe space might look like for a black British woman and about the boundary between public and private space. Its performance in a temporary theatre (2013) structure extends these questions towards the concept of the theatre as a safe space for a black woman playwright, and black women in general, as workers in the production of plays and in the theatre building and as members of the audience. This chapter considers the theatre as a safe space with specific reference to Talawa, a leading black British theatre company founded in 1986, which is noted for its championing of women playwrights, and to the way black feminists conceptualise safe space. It also sets out to test the limits of safe spaces, to critique the actual safety of safe spaces, and calls for the interrogation of the socially and politically grounded assumptions which may underlie the concept of a safe space, assessing its feasibility and limitations.

While the discourse on safe spaces has been well developed in some academic contexts, especially education, it is underdeveloped in others, including theatre (see Arao & Clemens, 2013; Mae, Cortez & Preiss, 2013). This creates a need to theorise safe spaces in a new way and to investigate the extent to which theatre is able to create safe spaces that challenge, or provide shelter from, dominant heteronormative, patriarchal and racially inflected social, political and historical conditions. By the same token, there is also a need to enquire into how theatre may serve as a way of critiquing safe spaces, rendering their limitations visible and adjusting idealised assumptions about social interaction, both within and across race lines. This problem has a special priority in relation to the work of tucker green because of how directly

her work represents and critically interrogates space and the safety—or lack thereof—that it promises, in terms of both the represented world and the theatre itself. The question of safe spaces in theatre is then always a double-sided question which engages with issues of interiority and exteriority and the spatial and social elements which together constitute what a safe space is.

Investigating these ideas in the context of the theatre specifically extends to pose questions about what Michel Foucault described as a broader “heterotopology” of representational spaces in culture in general (1984, p. 25). Heterotopias (“hetero” signifying other, “topia” signifying space or place), Foucault theorised, are cultural, institutional and discursive spaces in which difference prevails, whether because the space itself—the “representational space”—is a world within a world manifesting a crucially distorted mirror of the world outside it, or because it fosters or contains differences which may or may not be fundamental to the space’s identity or dynamic (1984, pp. 22-27). The theatre is a veritable heterotopia on a number of counts. Fundamentally, the theatre’s very function is to set up a representational space that is both reflective of the world beyond it and, because it is nonetheless a theatrical representation, a distortion of it. Foucault coined various principles that define heterotopias and the theatre is in accordance with a number of them (1984, pp. 25-27): the theatre is a space that juxtaposes different spaces, namely that which is represented on the stage and the space beyond it; encapsulates a separate, albeit fictive, temporality, such that the time represented does not match real time, and yet the audience is potentially absorbed into the fictive temporality; and involves “ritual or purification”, the former in the sense that audiences normally abide by a socially accepted code of behavior associated with the viewing of theatre, and the latter if the

play induces catharsis in the audience in the sense associated with what is traditionally regarded as the function of tragedy (Belifiore, 1992, p. 300).

Spatial histories are governed by class, region, race, gender, as well as other markers and categories of difference relating to specific cultural groups. Indeed, as Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological descriptions of space demonstrate, there are few things as highly differentiated, and therefore as individualised and particular, as space (2014, p. 61). tucker green's plays describe space in precise ways as a means of detailing the subjective experiences of people who inhabit them, experiences weighed upon by the intersectionality of difference. Theatre offers a way of approaching and entering spaces, becoming accustomed to other people's individual personal history, as well as interarticulated histories of family, ancestors, and others both close and far—all of these factors are magnified by the dynamics of intersectionality that dominate the subjectivities of tucker green's characters. This chapter therefore provides a reading of the idea of the safe space across three different scales: the scale of the play (*nut*), the scale of the medium (theatre), and the scale of the social context (black cultural history). While recognising the theatre's limitations as a safe space (not least on account of its heterotopology), the overriding purpose of this chapter is to draw attention to the necessity of theatre to play a more significant role in creating safe spaces for black women.

tucker green's work offers a culturally specific representation of a category of space that the poet and critic Elizabeth Alexander has called "the black interior", which plays on the doubleness of the word "interior" to mean both the architecture of a living space and a private psychological realm (Alexander, 2004). Beginning with an immersive description of her own mother's living room, Alexander moves to the

living rooms of historical figures within African-American culture: artists, poets, social activists—and by this means brings together a genealogy, or topology, of the most intimate interior spaces which function as private *and* public arenas. Spaces such as these may express subjects' private lives: they are also semi-public stages on which the self and the family meet and interact with wider circles of relationality.

It is in this state of being at once interior and exterior, both cordoned off from the world and at the same time open to it, that the representation of safe spaces in the work of tucker green becomes relevant as a subject of spatial inquiry. The theatre itself is an interior with an exterior, set apart from the world and immersed within it—again, what Foucault would categorise as a “representational”, “Other” space, or “heterotopia” (Foucault, 1984, p. 25). Theatre also has a long history as an interior space which represents other interior spaces, melodrama being the most well-known articulation of this rich tradition (Grimsted, 1987, pp. 35-43). tucker green's work engages with the representational space (referring to the Foucauldian sense of a world within a world, the former being both a reflection and a distortion of the latter) of the interior on multiple fronts, and across multiple plays. But it is in *nut* that the most relevant case study of this kind of psychic and physical interior space becomes possible, in turn encouraging analyses of the psychic spatiality of all of tucker green's theatre. In *nut* reclusion can be read in metonymic relation to the psychic repression of not only the play's main character, Elayne, but of all of the trauma-afflicted characters who populate tucker green's plays, most of which are set in interior spaces.

nut opens in the home of Elayne, a black woman who has decided to withdraw from the world. She is accompanied by Aimee, a white woman, and the two of them are arguing about each other's funerals, arguing about who would write whose eulogy,

who would be invited, how many people would show up, and so on. In the third scene, whilst continuing the conversation, Aimee subtly encourages Elayne to commit suicide, telling her she is the “type”, a trait which she finds “admirable” (tucker green, 2013, p. 26). Devon, a black man, instigates a “party” game in which they tap ash from cigarette into each other’s hands, even though it appears that Elayne is a non-smoker and does not like people smoking in her home, and at the end of the scene, Aimee is close to burning Elayne. When we see Elayne next, her arms are covered in cigarette burns and she is smoking. After an intervening second act in which a divorced couple, named Ex-husband and Ex-wife (the latter of whom turns out to be Elayne’s sister), argue over the custody of their daughter, the remainder of the play involves Ex-wife showing concern for Elayne’s wellbeing. What began as a safe space, the home, gradually loses its status as such. By the end, it no longer provides Elayne with safety, for she appears to have become a danger to herself.

Deirdre Osborne (2020, p. 237) argues that the characters other than Elayne in fact are not real but imagined, her mind acting as a conduit for what we hear and see. Our inclination to empathise with those who have mental health issues makes us automatically perceive Elayne’s experience as real, or “as the truth of the moment”; as a result, the “people Elayne creates (as it turns out) to cope in her daily life are as real to her as they are to her witnessing audience” (Osborne, 2020, p. 237). In my analysis I have chosen to view the figures as though they were real, even if they could be imagined – and by Act Three, Scene Two, they certainly are – since they are real to her. And, as I argue below, *nut* is ultimately a staging of Elayne’s psyche – the space of her home acting as a metonym for the space of her mind, as well as for the illusory space of the theatre – such that the imaginary nature of the characters would be

constant even if they were not figments of the protagonist's imagination. Their existence is necessarily ambiguous, not least so that they become figments also of the audience's imagination, by way not only of our tendency to empathise, but also of the nature of theatre as a space of illusion.

Osborne writes that "tucker green executes a *coup-de-théâtre* when the audience realises from Act One's end [...] that these three characters [Aimee, Devon and Trey] were embodiments of Elayne's inner world" (Osborne, 2020, p. 237). But in the script this becomes clear only gradually. At the end of Act One, Aimee is lowering a lit cigarette close to Elayne's skin, threatening to burn her with it. Aimee says, "...Dare yer to dare me", which could suggest that what happens is ultimately under Elayne's control because, in fact, Aimee is a part of Elayne. At the end the scene, the doorbell rings (though faintly, because it is broken). The plotline is resumed in Act Three: Elayne is alone, visited by her sister, Ex-wife, covered in cigarette burns. At one point, Ex-wife says to Elayne, "See you still smokin", to which the latter replies "(I) don't smoke". This could suggest that her sister knows the reality of the situation – that Elayne in fact smokes – while in Elayne's mind, it is Aimee, an invented person, who actually smokes and burns her with the cigarettes. While Act Three thus can be read and seen as a direct continuation of the opening act, thereby indicating that Aimee, Devon and Trey are figments of Elayne's imagination, the interceding scened act – featuring Ex-wife and Ex-husband, at Ex-wife's home – breaks the continuity and so creates a level of ambiguity in this regard. Act Three, Scene Two (tucker green, 2013, pp. 63-73), however, it becomes clear that they are imagined, since they appear on the stage with Elayne and Ex-wife, who cannot perceive them. Most important to this dissertation is the fact that the play is about Elayne's interiority, which is

symbolised by her home – which Elayne mistakes for a space of safety. That these characters are imagined amplifies this sense of the home-as-psyche – and by extension, as I wish to argue, it supports the notion of the safe space as a moveable and transferable discourse, or even a state of mind.

While the main domestic interior which serves as the focus of *nut* is “Elayne’s place” (tucker green, 2013, p. 3), as described in the performance notes, it is also a space of collective living where friends and family mix intimately within relatively small confines. This places special emphasis on the permanent or temporary togetherness of the women characters—both black and white—who inhabit the space, and asks questions about whether such togetherness can empower—or, alternatively, silence—these women. *nut* serves as a way of framing broader questions about safe spaces for black women particularly, and about how black women have inhabited spatial frameworks within a history marked by violent and extreme forms of spatial surveillance, control, domination, oppression, and abuse—and yet at the same time have created refuges in space, *outside* of, or beyond, public space or the space of labour. Yet the presence of a single white character—Aimee, Elayne’s white female friend with whom the play begins in Act I scene i—complicates the discussion of safe space in terms of race and raises questions about the idea of ‘sisterhood’ as a form of relationality which may, or may not, extend beyond divisions of race. This, indeed, forms a point of connection between the concerns of the play and broader feminist and sexuality studies critiques of race and gender and their relationship to (shared) space. The persistence of enforced silence and “objectification as the Other”, however, calls for the urgent need to resist any oppression (Collins, 1990, p. 71). The notion of a safe space was formed to denote the relationship between black women as an essential

element in the process of self-definition that enables women to identify the intersecting forms of oppression they may face, and also as an element of empowerment that allows black women to escape from a shared oppression while at the same time developing a togetherness “by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival” (Collins, 1990, p. 103). Yet by also including a prominent white figure in the play, Tucker Green raises further questions about how whiteness and blackness mutually inflect each other and the space around them.

The most cursory overview of Tucker Green’s plays shows that the playwright has taken a critical and nuanced approach to the idea of safe space. *The Daughter*, *Sister*, *Mother* and *Grandmother* in *generations* fade physically or emotionally due to their family’s safe space being infiltrated by disease, the unspoken killer of the younger generations. It is the figure of the grandmother with whom the idea of safe space is most strongly associated in *generations*, as I discussed in the previous chapter, because she holds together the greatest number of relationships—but as those relationships are broken down by HIV/AIDS, the stage itself becomes the safe space in which the impact of this disease on women’s lives can be shared. Both *generations* and *nut* are set in safe spaces, the former in the kitchen, the latter in the home more generally—in both cases the space being used as a site of refuge and comfort from the outside world, which is perceived as a source of trauma. The home’s semblance of safety in *nut* was replicated in the location of its premier performance in the UK National Theatre’s temporary theatre, The Shed (2013), which I analyse below as a structure bearing many qualities that made it analogous to a safe space. *nut* plays on this concept more than any other of Tucker Green’s plays, closely tying the safe space to trauma and the resulting insanity caused by unresolved emotional damage.

Focused on a black female character who wishes to withdraw from the world, *nut* is fraught with the difficulty of the kinds of spatial negotiation which are required in the attempt. A careful spatial and textual reading of the play and its performance strategies invites a more general discussion of the nature of safe spaces in the theatre, and particularly in theatre conveying black women's experience, which often considers the implications of upholding traditional social norms. The concept of a safe space is a key element in identifying the loci of oppression and in outlining the textual and dramatic mechanisms that can be implemented in order to address injustice.

Metaphor and Reality: the concept of safe space

Safe spaces occupy two distinct forms of reality, and this doubleness is a key feature of the theatrical space explored in *nut*. A safe space is both a physical and a cognitive/psychological reality. In one sense a safe space has a literal, concrete existence as a demarcated area, bounded by a threshold, a real place, which designates and circumscribes an actual condition. In another sense, a safe space may have no physical trace whatsoever. It may be a 'place' in the sense that the mind is a place and holds many other places. Nigel Young has made this important distinction. An example of the version of the safe space as a physically demarcated and protected area is the Christian church which has "a long history of church-based refuge, including shelter for the homeless and sanctuary for avoiders of war drafts or military conscription" (2010, para. 2). The idea of a place as a composite phenomenon of physical location and cognitive projection has an important history within literature and theatre. As Suzana Zink has noted, Virginia Woolf contributes to this debate since her work was concerned with the detailed evocation of interior and exterior spaces which were occupied by women who, in their own thought processes, contributed to

the construction of physical and imaginative safe spaces (2018, pp. 53-69). Most obviously in *A Room of One's Own* (2014), but also in other works furnishing detailed descriptions of women-occupied spaces, Woolf argued for the necessity of being in possession of safe physical spaces in which to imagine, or enter into, safe mental spaces (2014, pp. 7-8).

One strand of thinking in feminist discourse which developed out of Woolf's work identifies the concept of a safe space with the act of writing, substituting artistic creation for the external world. Maggie Humm writes, for example, that "writing often provides a safe space where [...] standpoints can be defined and [which] also offers new categories of thought" (2015, p. 24). This fundamentally positive view of safe spaces has also been translated into institutional space, particularly within the context of education. In many educational institutions, safe spaces have emerged as protected environments which are designed to fulfil both the physical and discursive needs of students who otherwise feel discomfort with, or experience negativity in, the dominating spatial regime of the institution (Palfrey & Ibargüen, 2017). In other words, the safe space has a history as a contested space which it has been necessary to win, fight for, and reappropriate. Christina Hanhardt (2013) provides an important case study of exactly this phenomenon in their work on the urban struggles for safe spaces for gay and queer subjects. The literary critic Tomoko Kuribayashi (1998) recognises the potential of literature to embody in the acts of writing and reading a particular kind of cognitive and therapeutic safe space. And Mary Hunter (2008) has transposed the idea of the safe space from literary criticism and education onto performance, arguing that although the idea has been less explored in this area it nonetheless has considerable relevance.

It is also important to recognise critiques of the idea of the safe space because these serve to expose the concept more clearly. Jacqueline Rhodes points to the crucial paradox that, while feminism has retained a strong commitment to collectivisation as a means of performing radical action, collectivisation has itself led to intractable social and political divisions within feminism (2005, pp. 67-88). hooks explains the situation as having given rise to white feminists in positions of privilege and black and other minority feminists marginalised to more peripheral locations (see hooks, 1986, pp. 125-38; hooks, 2006, p. 76). The consequences of the unequal distribution of spaces meant that “groups sometimes disintegrated when the speaking of diverse opinions led to contestation, confrontation, and out-and-out conflict. It was common for individual dissenting voices to be silenced by the collective demand for harmony” (hooks, 2006, p. 76). In a similar fashion, in her 1979 essay, ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’, Audre Lorde spoke out against the often uncritically-accepted notion of “community” as a collectivising term whose spectre of uniformity glosses over the many differences and divisions which may exist within groups (2016, p. 118). These realities caution against uncritical celebration of the safe space, or an unreasonable expectation about its social efficacy.

In response to her own question, “How ‘safe’ are safe spaces?”, Patricia Hill Collins insists that while they have their limitations, safe spaces have played a crucial role in empowering black women:

Historically, safe spaces were “safe” because they represented places where Black women could freely examine issues that concerned us. By definition, such spaces become less “safe” if shared with those who were not Black and female. Black women’s safe spaces were never meant to be a way of life. Instead, they constitute one mechanism among many designed to foster Black women’s empowerment and enhance our ability to participate in social justice

projects. As strategies, safe spaces rely on exclusionary practices, but their overall purpose most certainly aims for a more inclusionary, just society (1990, p. 110).

The limitation that such spaces are “exclusionary” is indicative of the need for a social solution, that is, a complex understanding of the intersectional oppressions which continue to act on black women—an understanding which would lead to “a more inclusionary, just society”. It is important to highlight Collins’s statement that such safe spaces “were never meant to be a way of life” (1990, p. 110). They should not encompass the entirety of the black woman’s experience, but are “one mechanism among many”, albeit one which is limited. To engage with the concept of the safe space and incorporate the tenets of its existence into the space and temporality of the theatre constitutes this chapter’s underlying proposition: the theatre should incorporate the core values and functions of the safe space to render itself more inclusionary and just. If the temporariness of performance may circumscribe its operation as a safe space, it also speaks to its mobility and flexibility. The theatrical safe space is dependent on the mindsets of the people who occupy the space as much as, if not more than, the physicality of the space itself. Thus, as with performance, safe space is transferable and reproducible, and the theatre can operate as a nexus and source of safe space as a progressive mentality.

Safe spaces encounter resistance from hegemonic norms which regard them as separatist or un-assimilable, while professing “colour-blindness”. Ultimately, “this protracted attack on so-called identity politics”, writes Collins, “works to suppress historically oppressed groups that aim to craft independent political agendas around identities of race, gender, class, and/or sexuality” (1990, p. 100). The conservative dismissal of such politics narrows and oversimplifies the complexity of what is at stake

in the emergence and maintenance of safe spaces within the specific cultural social and political context of black women's communities—which is nothing less than the right to self-definition, and for this to be negotiated openly and equally in relation to whiteness. Both physically circumscribed and cognitively defined, the safe space has a powerful determining effect on social life. Most importantly, its presence demands recognition of the intersectional nature of the oppression acting on black women, which is fundamentally what makes safe spaces necessary. Therefore, if the main limitation of the safe space is separatism, the solution might be an inclusionary space that incorporates active recognition of the intersectionality of race and gender. In this respect, the concept of the safe space—which cannot be divorced from intersectionality—becomes a crucial one with which to approach the work of tucker green, especially the play that is central to this chapter, *nut*.

Much of Collins's work centers on the experience of space by black women. She invokes Lorde's notion that in order to survive, African-American women were required to generate a "dual consciousness" becoming familiar "with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection" (Lorde, 2016, p. 114). The doubleness of consciousness is mirrored in the doubleness of space: black women inhabited both the white world and the black world and thus became familiar with a kind of "spatial switching"—the spatial equivalent to linguistic "code switching" by means of which a speaker may switch between different modes of spoken expression depending on context (Bullock, 2012, p. 12). At the same time, the fact that black women historically performed domestic labour in white families' homes (under conditions of enslavement or paid labour) also made the

domestic interior a space of alienation, dislocating a space from its conventional signification of “home” to one of exploitative labour.

Yet while the domestic spaces of black women’s labour are certainly oppressive, as famously demonstrated in the fiction of Alice Childress (1986), they were also spaces of resistance allowing black women to gain the perspective of an “outsider within” the white household (Collins, 1990, p. 11). Or as hooks explains:

Sharing the fascination with difference that white people have collectively expressed openly (and at times vulgarly) as they have travelled around the world in pursuit of the Other and Otherness, black people, especially those living during the historical period of racial apartheid and legal segregation, have similarly maintained steadfast and ongoing curiosity about the “ghosts”, “the barbarians”, these strange apparitions they were forced to serve (1992, p. 165).

It was primarily black women in domestic service who embraced the access they were permitted to the inner worlds of their white owners and employers to empower themselves (hooks, 1992, pp. 165-78). With such knowledge normally hidden from black men, black women could counter in a variety of ways the oppressive power of patriarchal society. Citing individual acts of resistance to “controlling images” such as “mammies” and “matriarchs”, Collins points to the existence of “a distinctive, collective Black women’s consciousness” (1990, p. 97). hooks called the home as a site of black women’s resistance “homeplace”, whose function “was not simply a matter for black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe space where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination” (2014a, p. 42). Resistance could take many forms—

some of them covert, such as refusal, silence, postponement, and intentional error. Altogether, they represent a means of contesting spaces of oppression and claiming back space. Safe spaces in this sense are not found but made, they are not determined from without but rather from within and are constantly open to renegotiation and struggle.

The very idea of certain spaces being ‘safe’ relies on the idea of other spaces being ‘unsafe’. The safe space comes into being as a result of a concerted effort against the unsafe nature of space, historically, for black women. Collins has framed this situation with the key idea of the “matrix of domination” which describes a network of intersecting factors which all contribute to the powerlessness and potential victimisation of oppressed subjects (Collins, 1990, p. 228). Yet without denying the oppressive forces of such a matrix, Collins never loses sight of the obvious fact that such matrices are never complete or even entirely successful. Safe spaces are (in this context) testimonies to the power of black women to successfully contest the matrix of domination and acquire freedom for themselves.

While Collins’s research into black women’s safe spaces provides a general foundation for understanding their function and operation, other critics and scholars have honed their focus on specific examples, developing a wide-ranging discourse on the topic. Collectively, the spaces they have examined include the homes of extended families and “othermothers” (Gilkes, 1980, pp. 217-32; Naples, 1992, pp. 441-63), the hybrid “homeplaces” built through networks of black women’s labour (hooks, 2014a, pp. 41-50), black churches (Higginbotham, 1993; Beadle-Holder, 2012, pp. 248-67), schools and university campuses (Giddings, 1988; Weekes, 2003, pp. 47-61; Philips, 2005, pp. 341-62; Palfrey, 2017; Harless, 2018, pp. 329-45), black women’s clubs and

other community organisations (Giddings, 1988, pp. 65-82; Weekes, 2003, pp. 47-61; Philips, 2005, pp. 341-62). Such spaces enable respite from encounters with controlling systems and furnish space for black women to fashion themselves independently, advancing empowerment “through self-definition” (Collins, 1990, p. 101).

Theatre, however, is notably excluded from much of the discourse on safe spaces for black women. This invites further investigation of why this omission persists, to consider how exploring the theatre as a potential safe space might further our understanding of the identity of black women. The existence of safe spaces does not imply uniformity of self-definition, even if the creation of safe spaces is common to many groups. Collins has noted that earlier in the twentieth century under extreme conditions of social segregation it was especially important for black women and men to “stick together” and focus on shared struggles rather than individual differences (2003, p. 218). More recently, however, institutional spaces have grown and proliferated and this has enabled more granulation of positions within black communities which push back against the notion of an essential, homogenous, or generalisable “black space”—for example the emergence of black feminism as a way of contesting patriarchal aspects of black communities (Collins, 1990, p. 102).

Safe spaces facilitate relationships: ‘black sisterhood’ is one example of this. For hooks, writing about the development of black feminist thinking, ‘sisterhood’ has historically provided a source of strength and resistance to political oppression, evoking “the spirit of power in unity” (1986, p. 127). ‘Sisterhood’ becomes the social framework in which safe spaces can emerge and be secured. Yet hooks also recognises shifts that have taken place within the feminist community serving to negate the spirit

of unity on the basis that there are irreconcilable differences between groups of women, often based on race—and therefore to question whether feminism serves as a foundation for safe spaces to come into being. Whereas previous feminist groups bonded around a shared sense of victimisation, hooks rejects this idea as subservient and replaces it instead by the need to organise around a shared rejection of male patriarchal authority and oppression. From this point of view ‘sisterhood’ does not mean the avoidance of conflict but rather embracing difference, and inhabitation of spaces in which all forms of power can be contested. It is only when this form of ‘sisterhood’ emerges that, for hooks, spaces will become ‘safe’.

For whom are safe spaces safe? This is a question raised by the work of Regina Austin which has confronted the divisive nature of safe spaces when they fail to include group members from across the social spectrum, which stands as a fundamental question over the existence of safe spaces at all. Austin is especially critical of group cultures which produce a slippage between “difference/deviance”, for example in cases where black women sex workers are excluded from bourgeois black women’s spaces and where being “different” leads to being treated as “deviant” (1991, p. 886). Like hooks, Austin deploys the concept of ‘sisterhood’ as the binding agent which serves to connect and maintain diverse social groupings and this makes it especially relevant to *nut* given the presence of both a black sister (Elayne’s sister by blood) and a white ‘sister’ (Elayne’s friend Aimee). Like hooks, Austin is also wary of the histories of inequality within the feminist movement, privileging the white bourgeois woman as the main victim of patriarchy and the focal point of feminist attention. For these reasons it is imperative to understand that black feminist safe spaces are defined not only on the basis of their difference from, and resistance to,

patriarchal white supremacist social institutions, but also internally, on the basis of inner conflicts of class (as well as sexuality and other cultural markers of difference) which require a notion of ‘sisterhood’ in order to negotiate them and to ensure safe spaces remain safe for all black women.

What is to stop the theatre from serving a similar purpose? Theatre could play a much more prominent role in creating safe spaces for black women—and in promoting the importance of safe spaces for black women, and thereby a wider acknowledgement of the intersectionality of their position. The literature on safe spaces in education provides ample evidence and an important springboard for addressing the possibilities of theatre as a safe space. Such scholarship is well developed and contains many texts which have explored the creation and functioning of safe spaces in schools from a variety of perspectives (Giddings, 1988; Weekes, 2003, pp. 47-61; Philips, 2005, pp. 341-62; Palfrey, 2017; Harless, 2018, pp. 329-45). In this context, John Palfrey has described safe spaces as “environments in which students would find support, develop coping skills, and hone effective techniques for communicating with one another in a way that honors tolerance, avoids stereotypes, and cuts down on hate on campuses” (2017, p. 21). Indeed, there are evident structural similarities between the school safe space described by Palfrey and the spatial typology of the theatre itself: an environment set aside from the normative spatial context of a place, a space in which skills may be developed and where certain techniques for communication are displayed, with a definite programme for transformation in ideology and affect.

As mentioned above, critics such as Kuribayashi (1998) and Hunter (2008, pp. 5-21) have considered the production of safe spaces in text and performance. For

Hunter, a safe space is “a processual act of ever-becoming” (2008, p. 5). In this sense, the practice of performance is inherently conducive to the formation of safe space as a therapeutic experience. Hunter’s processual idea of safe space brings to mind the Aristotelian theory that tragic theatre induces “catharsis”—that is, a process of expiation and transformation for the purposes of social good (Auslander, 2009, pp. 13-27). I am thus urging that the processual and environmental sense of safe space be combined with a firmer and more nuanced knowledge of intersectionality, especially how it manifests on the stage. This way, we could harness the possibilities of the theatre as a safe space for black women.

In view of the fact that safe spaces have been a major concern of black feminist thinkers, alongside the lacuna which appears to exist around the subject of safe spaces and theatre, it becomes all the more interesting and promising to explore this area further, and to undertake a case study to do so. What will follow therefore is an investigation into what a safe space might look like in the context of theatre. Leading into a close reading of tucker green’s *nut*, the following section discusses the creation of Talawa, the first black-led theatrical touring company in the UK as a possible blueprint for thinking about what a real safe space in theatre might look like.

Safe Space Unbidden: Talawa

Founded by Yvonne Brewster OBE, Mona Hammond, Carmen Munroe and Inigo Espejel, all four of whom are black artists and activists, Talawa provides an exclusive opportunity for black actors to appear on British stages, contributing to the diversification of the theatre industry, at least in the UK (Smith, 2015; Hersov, 2017; Croft, 2018). Talawa is not the only so-called “alternative” touring theatre company; other companies include Carib, Temba, Black Mime Theatre, Strange Fruit and Black

Theatre Co-operative, now the nitroBEAT (Croft, 2018). All these companies had the same initial goal, namely to “reach audiences outside the mainstream” and they managed to secure Arts Council recognition and funding. Talawa has surpassed the others in prominence, becoming, above all else, the main funder and champion of black artistic literary works; a black rendition of *King Lear* (1606) was the company’s second play, following *The Black Jacobins* (1938) by Caribbean writer and intellectual C L R James (Smith, 2015; Hersov, 2017; Croft, 2018).

Talawa is an example of a safe space in the theatre sector, and drama in general, even though it did not specifically start out that way. Talawa Theatre Company is the prime black-led touring theatre company (Talawa, 2018). It was founded in 1986 and not only promotes the reinterpretation of classic plays, but also encourages new writers and directors to produce plays about and by the black British community and the African diaspora (Hersov, 2017; Talawa, 2018). Talawa describes its work as being informed by “the wealth and diversity of the Black British experience, and through that we create outstanding work by cultivating the best in emerging and established Black artists. We invest in talent, develop audiences and inspire dialogue with and within communities across the UK and internationally. By doing so we enrich the cultural life of all” (Hersov, 2017, p.3).

Talawa’s status and reputation are somewhat at odds with the company’s name, the Jamaican patois saying “me lickle but me talawa” which translates to “small but feisty” (Croft, 2018; Talawa, 2018). Doubly ironic is that the stated *modus operandi* of the touring theatre company could be said to actually clash with the concept of the safe space, because the whole point of being “small but feisty” is to go out and draw the world’s attention to black literary art, to invite it into an often-

overlooked space. Talawa is actively working with various organisations to achieve its goals, including the Theatre Museum on the Blackgrounds and Blackstage project (which took place 1997-2004), whereby the art and history of black British people and the African diaspora are preserved in video interviews recorded with elders of black theatre (Croft, 2018, paras. 3-7). Representatives of Talawa note that “Partnerships are at the heart of everything that we do. [We] work with organisations inside and outside of the theatre sector in order to achieve [our] goals” (Hersov, 2017, p.3).

To understand the cultural and political climate out of which Talawa emerged, particularly in relation to what it means to be a black woman, it is helpful to consider another group, The Theatre of Black Women. This company was founded in London in 1982 by Bernardine Evaristo, Patricia St. Hilaire and Paulette Randall, all of whom were in their third year at the drama school Rose Bruford and wanted to establish a space in which they could write, discuss and perform theatre that related to their own political interests, a space that they found was lacking in Britain at the time (Johnson, 2021, pp. 71-72). Although the group disbanded in 1988 (when the Arts Council ceased funding it), its ethos of providing a safe space in which black women were able to express concerns pertaining to the predicament and struggles of their community had an impact that persisted beyond the company’s lifetime and fed into the ethos of Talawa. Indeed, before Brewster founded Talawa, she was involved with The Theatre of Black Women. One of the earliest productions written by Evaristo, St. Hilaire and Randall was a play called *Coping*, which the writers invited Brewster to direct (ibid); when Brewster retired as the head of Talawa in 2003, Randall briefly took her place.

Coping explored the Black woman’s experience, revolving around the phrase, “I know your fada [father]”, something that Evaristo said her Nigerian father’s friend

would say to her (Johnson, 2021, p. 21). From this phrase arose the question: “If this man knows your father, then what is it he knows about you?” The title refers to the experience of “coping” with “unwanted male attention” (p. 72). Brewster recalled that the college, Rose Bruford, was embarrassed by the play: “It was these black people shining a light on these black people, as if they had a right to do that” (ibid). The focus of the play’s political message was thus first and foremost gendered. It looked at issues pertaining to the experience of black women, as a condition of being oppressed not simply in a racist white society, but also by the patriarchy, and how the latter infiltrates black society. Its politics, Brewster recalled, proved to be a problem at Rose Bruford, which expressed a preference for plays that were less overtly political, believing that staging radical plays might somehow tarnish the reputation of the college (p. 72). The work thus revealed the need for a safe space in which black women could perform the plays they wished to perform with impunity.

The founders of The Theatre of Black Women made clear the urgency of founding such a space in a 1982 interview with Thames Television as part of the Women Live Festival, a programme dedicated to the participation of women in the arts. The interview, staged as a discussion featuring Evaristo, St. Hilaire, Randall and others, took place in May in the year of the founding of their company. At the beginning of the televised piece, St. Hilaire emphasises the critical importance of writing not just about race but also gender, the condition of being a black *woman*: “So you’re not just writing about Black women. You’re writing for and about women. Women need a stronger platform than they already have. Women haven’t got a strong platform. It’s male dominated” (Thames TV, 2020). Thus, the impetus to establish a safe space for the performance of black women’s drama is referenced at the outset, as

St. Hilaire emphasises the need to write not only about but also *for* women, and for a “platform” that would provide such a space. Before the coinage of the term ‘safe space’, ‘platform’ expresses a similar meaning, though “platform” suggests a position from which to voice a specific point of view, while safe space denotes an environment in which such a platform might exist without risk of prejudiced attack. Nonetheless, The Theatre of Black Women provided what might be termed as both a platform and a safe space.

The need for such a space was considered all the more crucial because of the ‘double oppression’ of being both black and a woman. As Randall explains, “It’s like if you look at women, you talk about women being oppressed, and if you look at the Black race, they’re oppressed; if you look at a Black woman you’ve got double oppression, so, in a way, you have even more to say, so if you do get the opportunity to [...] [create such a theatrical space], then it’s brilliant if you can” (Thames TV, 2020). The Theatre of Black Women was thus providing a platform or an opportunity in the form of a safe space that is both black and female. This did not mean that non-black and non-female people were excluded from the theatre, since anyone was welcome to join the audience, but the repertoire was made up of plays written by black women concerned about the experience of black women. The theatre was a safe space for black women because it strove to operate on their terms and be free of male dominance.

But the Theatre of Black Women did not provide a safe space that was in any way depoliticised, even if, within it, one might have felt a sense of liberation from political oppression. On the contrary, the safety it provided was intended expressly for the purpose of political expression. For Evaristo, writing came with responsibility: “I

see it as my responsibility as a writer to communicate whatever I want to communicate about being a Black woman” (Thames TV, 2020). When the interviewer asked why identity was a matter of such importance to her (“What’s wrong with just being me, with just being a person?”), Randall explained that as a black woman she has “not really [been] given the opportunity to just be me” (Thames TV, 2020). The Theatre for Black Women might have provided such an opportunity, but the intention was to use the chance for free political expression, not least since this opportunity was hard to gain for women of colour. Randall explains:

[...] particularly in this line of work if you want to do anything that’s to do with entertainment, you’re first seen as a woman, which, I mean, a lot of people just don’t want to know – because you’re a woman you can’t do it – and if you’re Black, well, you know, there’s not much hope for you anyway. So that’s why I think it’s very important that you examine yourself as a Black woman, how you stand in this country, and then you can go on to do other things. It’s like you’re not really given the opportunity to just be you. Like I was born here but for a lot of people, they think oh well she’s Black so she must come from another country, and that’s not the case. And you can’t dismiss things like that because it’s around you all the time, you live it, and so you have to come to terms with it, and do something about it [...]. It’s a way of being heard, and getting people to understand. It’s not a problem for me, being Black, but other people make it a problem, and it’s just clarifying that really, that it isn’t. (Thames TV, 2020)

There is little choice, therefore, but to explore one’s racial and gendered identity because of the way that society has constructed it. With the opportunity of creative expression – a platform, a safe space – comes the responsibility to resist and subvert what has made such an opportunity so difficult to acquire.

The political motivation of The Theatre of Black Women, to create a safe space that was also a site of resistance against both white supremacy and patriarchal structures throughout society, is echoed in Talawa’s identity as “small but feisty”. The

space created by Talawa is safe but not necessarily comfortable, for to produce comfort would be to ignore and even undermine the gravity of certain issues pressing on contemporary politics and society. Similarly, and to powerful effect, tucker green's plays produce their own space of safety and discomfort. When I interviewed Felix Dunning, who had been company stage manager of the production of *generations* and *random* at Chichester Festival Theatre in 2018, I asked him about the order in which the two plays were staged, with *generations* first. His answer pertained strongly to the kind of atmosphere that the plays produced in the theatre:

[The audience are] walking into that space for *generations* [...] they've got the energy and the buoyancy of the choir, which is really lovely thing. And it sort of lifts everyone and gets them in a mood for a good night out. Of course, it kind of changes that because it leaves some quite upset, but actually it lifts the spirits first. [...] The other thing as well because *random* leaves you so shell shocked, and it's quite [...] impacting. It's very difficult to get an audience to come back in after that (Dunning, 47-54).

Despite its discomfiting theme, *generations* utilises the safe space to produce an uplifting and welcoming experience. *random*, on the other hand, takes advantage of the sense of trust created by the safe space to transform it into a site of trauma – the sense of which is magnified in contrast to the sense of safety, existing in the theatre and upheld by the previous play – to which the audience may not wish to return. In both cases, the theatre functions as a safe space in which tucker green can voice her story and the full affective and political impact of her story can be felt.

Talawa runs a Participation and Education programme which includes their annual summer schools, where new and emerging theatre makers can learn writing skills and strengthen their potential for career development, as well as their general position in the industry (Talawa Art, 2018). The company hosts a Script Reading

Service, the Talawa Firsts annual season of play readings, and the Talawa Writers' Programme, which provides participants with curriculum-based personal, social and professional development, for all ages and abilities. In other words, in a manner reflecting the way safe space emerged in the women's movement (Kenney, 2001, pp. 24-30), black artists and writers can come together under Talawa's auspices to speak freely, act freely, form collective strength and develop ways to promote black literary art and culture. In addition to its productions, Talawa describes its mission as broadening "the spectrum of work created by Black artists through commissioning new writing, and the development of ideas through seed commissions. The Company runs an annual season of play readings, Talawa Firsts, which showcase strong plays and work by Black artists looking for full production" (Talawa Art, 2018).

Moreover, past and present aside, hints of safe space can be spotted in the company's stated goals, specifically in its description of its vision for the future. The company states that its mission is "to create the physical and ideological space in which a canon of Black British work can be created, seen and shared; to provide the partnerships and stages, nationally and internationally, on which the work will flourish; to create a dialogue that widens the breadth of voices heard; engage and collaborate with communities; to develop the full range of practitioners to give the work its best expression and to do so as an integral part of the UK's theatre ecology" (Hersov, 2017, p.3). Talawa has a thirty-year history of being the only black British theatre company that juxtaposes traditional British theatre as well as international work and new plays featuring black characters, not only by recasting classical plays (such as those by William Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Miller and Samuel

Beckett) but by holding performances of new plays (such as *Girls* by Theresa Ikoko, 2016; Smith, 2015; Hersov, 2017; Croft, 2018).

Safe Space in Practice: the Shed

The 2013 performance of tucker green’s *nut* was remarkable not only for the content of the play itself but also for the site-specificity of its performance in the National Theatre’s temporary “Shed” theatre (fig. 1). Rather than taking place in one of the National Theatre’s main stages, *nut* was hosted in a temporary theatre on the periphery of the massive modernist concrete edifice of the South Bank institution. Back in 2013, the National Theatre was compelled to close down the Cottesloe auditorium for a year, as part of the NT Future redevelopment renovation programme. A temporary building was created for use in the interim (Frearson, 2013). In the tradition of art houses, however, the NT decided to hire an architectural firm to create a more long-lasting venue - even if still temporary - which could provide contrast to the greyscale concrete of the NT’s normal exterior (Architizer, 2013).



Fig. 1 Haworth Tompkins architects, *The Shed* (2013), wooden framework. Source: Dezeen. Reproduced by permission of Philip Vile.

Haworth Tompkins ultimately fulfilled the contract, creating “a monolithic red box, entirely clad with rough-sawn timber boards, [a material which] references the board-formed concrete of Denys Lasdun's celebrated 1970s National Theatre and was intended by the architects to appear as its opposite” (Frearson, 2013, paras. 1-16). The venue ended up as a large, red auditorium with four chimneys rising high up from its corners, which used the stack-effect to draw air inside through natural ventilation. The chimneys also had the benefit of referencing the NT's general architecture, with angular geometry on the riverside (Frearson, 2013, paras. 1-16). As far as physical spaces went, it unashamedly stood out on the outside, even as it strove to “be seen as a playful but thoughtful building” on the inside (ibid.):

The Shed's brilliant red colour covering the entire mass of a form without doors or windows, announces its arrival boldly against the geometric concrete forms of the NT, giving it a startling and enigmatic presence. (Architizer, 2013, para. 3).

Most relevant is the contrast between the newness of The Shed and its rough-looking architectural style, with the latter deploying a second-hand approach to the interior, using recycled materials for all surfaces and cladding, as well as reclaimed chairs for seating inside the building (Frearson, 2013, paras. 1-16; Architizer, 2013, para. 3). It was a formula that ended up resonating well with the nature of the sets used for the plays, including the modernist set that Lisa Marie Hall created for *nut*, evoking domestic spaces suspended above the stage, which hovered swaying, and huge rusty girders which threatened to crush the characters beneath. This was in sharp contrast to the bright nature of The Shed itself (Sierz, 2013, paras. 1-9), which also happened to be a very intimate physical space – the 225 seats meant that people were in such close proximity that emotional tension and pressure was naturally amplified (Fisher, 2013, para. 7).



Figure 2: The Shed interior by *Philip Vile* (Frearson, 2013). Reproduced by permission of Philip Vile.

The Shed was never intended to be a safe space, since the concept is only now infiltrating the field of drama and theatre, but it certainly had many of the characteristics of safe spaces. The Shed lacked windows of any kind, even though it was designed and placed in such a way as to be easily accessible, beneath the existing balconies of the main building and with one single entrance that led straight into the 225-seat auditorium (Frearson, 2013, paras. 1-16; Architizer, 2013, para. 3). This is not very different from pop-up theatres and cinemas appearing and disappearing in London at the time (Frearson, 2013, paras. 1-16). But it is notable that an organisation of the scope of the UK National Theatre would create such a closed physical space in which to perform plays. Tompkins highlighted the “wonderful opportunity to explore

the ways in which temporary public buildings can alter our perceptions of places and organisations” which was presented by the collaboration between the architects of The Shed and the National Theatre, stating their hope that The Shed “will be seen as a playful but thoughtful building, both challenging and complementary to the permanent cultural architecture” (Tompkins in Frearson, 2013, para. 6).

Positioned at the periphery, the Shed recalled a much deeper history of London theatre, which was traditionally situated on the periphery of the city, outside the bounds of official regulation, in the zone known as the “liberties” in Shakespearean England (Bayer, 2011. pp. 31-37). The stark juxtaposition of the Shed and the main theatre was architecturally emphatic in terms of colour and materiality, making plain that the Shed represented a distinct space from the main institutional framework of the theatre. Its scale was intimate and commensurate with the interior-focused narrative of *nut*, making it an ideal site in which to stage an exploration of marginal space.

Consideration of the architecture of the theatre as a distinct form of space within a broader topology of representational spaces is vital in establishing the social impact of tucker green’s drama. While textual and performance analysis are essential in establishing meaning and signification, paying attention to site-specificity opens up the dramatic text to wider networks of cultural references. In particular, it positions writer, play, actors, and audience within the cultural landscape of the capital, within the historical landscape of theatre history in England. One of the things this wide-angle perspective on *nut* makes possible is to see it as part of the history of theatre as a safe space which recognises difference without assimilating it. This is fundamental to the cultural logic of the London “liberties” which recognised the existence of theatrical production in proximity to the civil functioning of the city, but at the same time

excluded the theatre from full incorporation into the legislative and regulatory norms of the capital (Dillon, 2006, pp. 97-100). This gave the theatre an ambivalent—and inherently precarious—position at the margins. In one sense, the theatre was the opposite of safe, being exposed to risk, lacking protection of legal or administrative kinds. And yet, the theatre was a comparatively safe space that allowed people to vocalise and perform critique, deviance, subversion, alternative social configurations, and levels of political difference that would not have been tolerated in other mainstream locales of sociability. Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on the carnivalesque precisely realises the critical possibilities of such a marginal cultural position to “turn the world upside down” and reverse its “signifying orders” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 370).

Theatrical spaces may be architectural, but they may also be the property of groups of actors, writers, directors, and other creative workers, who may lack permanent architectural spaces but whose performances frame ephemeral, but no less powerful spaces of representation. Indeed, postmodern theories of performance confirm the particular qualities of temporary spaces in relation to cultural critique. José Esteban-Muñoz, for example, has claimed that it is precisely the ephemerality of theatrical gestures which historically has guaranteed them signifying power to evade dominant codes and produce subversive counter-narratives, particularly among gay, trans, and queer people of colour (Muñoz, 1996, pp. 5-15).

Approaching *nut* as a text, it is important to maintain a clear sense of the world in which that text is articulated. Foucault’s idea of a “topology” of spaces is important in framing the contextual space in which *nut* is viewed in this chapter, as a space among other spaces, whose ‘safety’ is partly determined by its specific relationship to adjacent spaces and the powers of inclusion and exclusion which they embody. As

much as it is a temporal art existing through language articulated in time, theatre is also a spatial art, enunciated within locations and contexts whose architectural and geographic particularities always inflect the events of the text. In the reading of *nut* which will be provided below, this sense of the play being situated in the world will be developed through a close reading that is alert to the subtle connection between language and space which together co-constitute the parameters of safe space in contemporary black theatre.

Sisterhood and Safe Spaces: the case of debbie tucker green's *nut*

It is immediately clear from the opening of *nut* that it is a play which is obsessively attentive to the configurations, relationships, codes, norms, limits, and possibilities of the self and its relation to others within particular kinds of space. The play opens in Elayne's place within a space of intimacy associated with, and constructed through the presence of, an individual protagonist, Elayne. At the same time, the first line of the play, the first utterance within that space, is "It would start with something about how I am" (tucker green, 2013, p. 3)—a clear direction that the initial function of the stage and the space it produces is the enclosure of an individual "I" and the relation of that individual to a wider context, in which the question of "how I am" points to psychological, contextual, and social questions of existence: how am I doing? How am I here? How am I perceived? It is significant that the articulation of Elayne's place in the opening of this play does not take the form of a soliloquy, or an isolated expression of selfhood sequestered from the collective realm of dialogue. Instead, the communication of the self takes place within an interior which includes both of the senses attributed to it by Elizabeth Alexander—a psychological inner space, and projection within an interior which, though private, may be shared and be the site of

dialogue with others—in this case Elayne’s friend Aimee with whom she remains in dialogue within the confined space of the room for the entirety of the scene. There is a sense here of the performativity of the self in shared spaces, or, to use the language of the anthropologist Irving Goffman, the “presentation of self in everyday life” or the version of the “self” which does not exist outside of its presentation to others within the space it inhabits (2008, pp. 1-13). Indeed, Aimee, Elayne’s interlocuter, warns Elayne that “writin your own funeral elegy? is wrong”, while Elayne insists that she would be “accurate” if she wrote her own account to be delivered during her funeral—the morbid subject of possible funeral elegies being the subject of the two friends’ discussion. Not only is Elayne’s place a shared space in which dialogue happens, but it is also a site of inscription—that is, it is a space in which two friends discuss the appropriate way for a text that is descriptive of Elayne to be written. The dialogue explores the boundaries and limits of the self and competing ideas about how to reveal and protect the self at the same time - in other words, how to keep the self in a safe space.

The stakes of this opening dialogue are high: the two friends discuss their preferences about eulogies. The two women have divergent opinions related to opposite approaches to socialising: Elayne preferring to sequester herself away and expecting only a few friends, Aimee fantasising about the crowds in funerals. They articulate differing ideas about the social space in which the self is most appropriately situated, demonstrated by this intimate ‘sisterhood’ conference between a black and a white subject. Despite the disagreements (or even because of the frankness with which they are shared), the two women explore their own attitudes to the world, encouraging (or provoking) each other to lay out their position with ever more specificity and

justification. Elayne would like her eulogy to be “discreetly good” and is concerned about keeping the “impression” people have of her “intact” (tucker green, 2013, p.5), reflecting her isolation and desire not to be exposed. By contrast, Aimee says that she would prefer Elayne to “leave a taste, leave an odour” something that is “longer than the service—an emotional stain” (tucker green, 2013, p. 5). Whereas Elayne is self-protective and wary of what others might do to her (or her reputation), Aimee imagines taking possession of the space, infusing through it and the people inside it. Aimee views space as a zone to be occupied, while for Elayne it is a place of refuge always with the potential of inflicting harm. This contrast is represented towards the end of the play when Aimee threatens to burn Elayne with her cigarette, and later we see cigarette burns—“emotional stains”—on Elayne’s arms. In short, Aimee’s relation to space is active, while Elayne’s is distinctly passive.

To a limited extent, such an intimate subject of disagreement might relate to the kind of ‘sisterhood’ which hooks argues is ideally able to *sustain* differences and to exist not only in spite of them but because of them. hooks speaks with frustration about the “abusive trashing” by feminists and “total disregard and lack of concern or interest in” women who do not participate explicitly in feminism (1986, p. 133). Wherever barriers to solidarity among women are found by hooks she aims to dismantle them, but this does not mean that she advocates a homogeneous state in which difference is eradicated. Instead, she wishes for a society in which difference may be expressed freely with a sense of shared struggle, of political organisation, and social solidarity. Although the disagreements between Elayne and Aimee are not explicitly on political grounds, that the former’s need of protection and discretion and the latter’s relative openness are in fact highly political becomes clear when we

consider this difference in relation to the exigency of safe spaces for black women. The church, for Elayne, needs to be a safe space; it needs to provide protection. At one point in their argument, she forbids Aimee from coming to her funeral, arguing on racial grounds: “People like you wouldn’t be invited” (tucker green, 2013, p.5), she says, later adding, “You don’t know my people” (tucker green, 2013, p.7). Elayne’s pronouncement of a definite political division of this kind suggests that the friendship is not exactly like that which hooks promoted. A bond exists over and above this division, but there is little sense that when politics enters the conversation the friends are united. Perhaps it is fair to argue, therefore, that the friendship between Elayne and Aimee problematises hooks’s argument, bearing resemblance with the friendships between black and white women that Sharon Monteith (2000) has observed in her study of their occurrence in Southern American novels. As Monteith notes, “despite the utopian emphasis on feminist ‘sisterhood’ that may underpin [these friendships], internal structural contradictions with subject matter work to circumvent the realization of friendship, ‘sisterhood’, and, ultimately, community and a politics of difference” (p. 10).

nut is composed almost entirely out of “Stichomythia”, the dramaturgical term which denotes “rapid verbal exchanges between two characters [...] most often at a particularly dramatic point in the action” (Pavis, 2008, p. 370). In Act 1, Scene 1, for example, more than 90 per cent of the speeches made by each character are short, single or half lines. Forward slashes (/) are frequently used “*where dialogue starts to overlap*” (tucker green, 2013, p. 2), as explained in the play’s prefatory material. This is seen, for example, after the play opens and Aimee says she will write Elayne’s eulogy:

Aimee I'd write / it

Elayne Wouldn't trust you to write it I'd write it—have something / prepared.

Aimee You can't write it—y'not meant to write / it.

Elayne I'd write / it.

Aimee Someone else is meant to write it—

Elayne someone / who?

Aimee someone else is meant to say the nice somethings that's / the (point)—

Elayne someone / who? (tucker green, 2013, p. 3).

Yet while this may generate intensity of action, it also encodes speech patterns which are not normative within Classical and neo-Classical theatre in the Western tradition. hooks has also written about the complex linguistic construction of 'sisterhood' as a condition of shared habits of speech, noting the tensions which may emerge between different social or racial groups on the basis of conflicting habits of expression and the difficulty of maintaining a space in which all speakers feel comfortable (hooks, 1986, p. 136). The issue of 'sisterhood' and speech is an important one to raise in the context of a discussion about safe spaces and theatre since the space in which *nut* takes place is evidently not only that of embodied co-habitation, but also of dialogue. Whilst connoting a certain intensity of conversation, the stichomythia of *nut* defines a particular quality of space and is the vehicle by which 'sisterhood' is established.

In *nut* the space has an actual threshold, a demarcated enclosure with a definite boundary. Elayne's place is demarcated by a particularly idiosyncratic entry system which appears to be purposely left ineffective by Elayne. Her doorbell does not

function, not because the bell is out of order but because the battery is dead. In Act 3, Scene 1 where this is pointed out, Elayne stubbornly persists in refusing to replace the battery to make herself more accessible. It might be said that the theatre itself is an architecture of entries and exits, of demarcations between “on” and “off” stage— and is ideally positioned to portray the topographical subtleties of such liminal space. Black women have historically been situated in the home, the kitchen, the church, the mutual aid society, and other places, as being constitutive of boundaries which may protect or at least define safe spaces. The prolonged discussion by Elayne and the character referred to as the “Ex-Wife” protracts the awareness of a border or boundary around Elayne. Perhaps in line with some postmodern accounts of architecture, which posit that space comes into a more critical kind of existence distinct from the norm wherever it encounters resistance, or any disruption to functionality or normative flows of patterned behaviour, Tucker Green conveys Elayne’s clear resistance to intrusion. It is as if maintaining her doorbell in an unusable state is her way of protecting the safe space she inhabits and shares with others.

Yet, the question of the doorbell, whilst it inscribes the importance of creating a boundary and the choice to be contacted or exposed, and to be safe, also raises the pathology of safety, a degree of making safe which becomes obsessive to the point of precluding interactions of any kind. There is certainly no resolution to this issue in *nut*—and Elayne cannot be considered as a one-dimensional representation upon whom audience and readers might pass simple judgment. It is rather the case that her condition in relation to safety and space is complex and, because of her extreme sense of interiority, it is reasonable to ask whether the need for safe space can become compulsive. Indeed, this critique is put forward within the play itself:

Ex-Wife Need to sort it out – you, all inside y’yard all the time –

Elayne you don't know

Ex-Wife inside here doin nuthin.

Elayne You don’t know

Ex-Wife doin nuthin for days – that ent natural –

Elayne y’don't / know.

Ex-Wife that ent natural – that ent healthy – that ent normal there ent
nuthin normal bout that. Sis (tucker green, 2013, pp. 63-64).

According to Ex-Wife, the obsession about safety all the time is not natural. She represents a tendency toward exteriorisation which predicates a natural, healthy state of affairs oriented toward outside. Asked in the context of a theatrical performance, Ex-Wife’s probing takes on special poignancy because the theatre has a complex historical relationship to its own interiority and the exterior public realm beyond its carefully controlled environment. Richard Preiss (2013, pp. 47-70) has argued that the emergence of enclosed playhouses in sixteenth-century England effectively created dramatic interiority, provoking public distrust of what occurred within the theatres as well as encouraging intensified attention to the interior lives of characters.

In *nut*, Elayne does not break out of her space psychically or physically. There are clearly concerns among the other characters that Elayne is not safe and in the final two scenes (Act 3, scenes 2 and 3), the self-harm burn marks on Elayne’s arms become a powerful motif, as do the cigarettes she smokes which she uses to inflict the burns, under which threat she lives in a state of self-seclusion. In the same way that she rejects the offer of batteries for her doorbell, Elayne rejects offers of Savlon and TCP to help heal her burns. Throughout the exchanges between Elayne, Aimee, and Ex-Wife,

concern is displayed for her and it is not hard to read in this concern an expression of 'sisterhood'.

It can be recalled that Austin suggests "the only true communities of black females are voluntary associations of women who are bound by shared economic, political, and social constraints and find strength, economic support, and moral guidance through affective, face-to-face engagement with each other" (1991, p. 887). All of these characteristics are on display throughout *nut*, including these difficult scenes in which guidance and support are distributed even in a situation marked by friction, pain, and lack of resolution. Yet the ending of the play is a powerful, but dismal, crux of irresolution, in which Elayne's physical ailments go untreated, and the tension has erupted in her encountering the other characters (even if in the context of sisterhood). This surely raises questions about the nature of the safe space, whether or not Elayne's place can be considered an example of it, as well as the extent to which the theatre itself can be read as a safe space.

At this point it is instructive to bring in alternative feminist voices from the postcolonial school of cultural theory as a way of interrogating the space of the home as a site of safety. Both Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty have voiced criticisms of the home, even as they have recognised its appeal as a space of selfhood, possession, and security. As Kerstin Shands has pointed out in her reading of Spivak, Spivak is critical of the inevitable place which the home occupies within the capitalist economy (1999, pp. 8, 65). The safety of the space of the home must, in some way, be purchased. The dwelling place can also be read as a projection of selfhood and therefore inevitably coloured by egotism. While it is unclear from the text of *nut* what the exact status of Elayne's ownership of her property is, it is not

depicted as comfortable or stable, but rather perplexed and marked by tensions. Her self-imposed internal exile from the outside world is also clearly damaging in some respects—to her own body as well as to her relationships with friends. This recalls the proposal by Collins which situated the black female body in relation to an array of spatial conditions, all of which were linked to older historical lineages of space, many of which were marked by histories of slavery and trauma. These concerns problematise Elayne's own place as a means of retrieving safety from the oppressive legacies of the past, as well as serving as the scene of her breakdown resulting from continuing pressures exerted on black women by society.

By the time the very end of the play is reached, Elayne's place has become a site for the ritual reenactment of personal trauma as she grinds a cigarette butt into her hand as Ex-Wife looks on unable, or unwilling, to speak. This is certainly not the therapeutic end and reaggregation into the social body which discourses on safe spaces tend to work towards as part of their goals for reform. Simultaneously the place of the audience is brought into question along with their relationship to the characters onstage, a space which is now revealed as ambiguous, both intimate and exposed. Much of how this situation is evaluated depends on the way in which 'safety' itself is defined. If it is intended as freedom from pain or threats of violence, neither the space of the play nor the space of the theatre could be called safe. Yet there is another sense in which even the expression of the stories and experiences of the characters onstage becomes in itself a cathartic representation, or at least one which enables certain stories and characters—both of whom may be considered repressed by the dominant culture of representation—to achieve manifest visibility. Safety in this sense means representation: not the freedom from pain, but the freedom to produce representations.

Once considered, there can be no clear-cut separation in terms of this question, between the text of *nut* and the broader theatre and performance strategies which the play makes to construct space. It is therefore all the more necessary to look in detail at the performance strategies which were deployed in the play, thereby establishing how the spaces that theatre creates may, or may not, be adequate in themselves to provide safe spaces for black women in society. The final part of this chapter, therefore, will consist of an analysis of the performance strategies and history of *nut*.

The Performance Strategies of debbie tucker green's *nut*

Safe spaces are interior in the sense in which Elizabeth Alexander uses the concept of "interior" in *The black interior*: as both a physical space in the world with shape and extension, which can be inhabited with others, and also an "interior", existing within the self, a psychological corollary to external space (2004, pp. 1-16). The theatre presents the possibility of communicating both types of interior and the act of performance, encompassing performance strategies and stage design, presents a particularly direct way of representing what a safe space looks like, what its spatial logics are, how it is inhabited, what kinds of interaction it either makes possible or restricts. The nature of this space is also complicated by it being the collective production of directors, designers, and actors, along with the playwright, and this raises issues of interpretation and interplay between stage space and text.

Performance documentation from the presentation of *nut* at the National Theatre's Shed shows a spatial environment which in important ways connects with, and extends, the architectural context of the Shed itself, and the Shed also provides an outer limit from which to begin to focus on the performance strategies of the play. The Shed (as noted above) was designed in order to afford proximity and directness

between actors and audience which was impossible in the massive proscenium stages of the modernist National Theatre building. The architecture of the Shed was wooden inside and out—painted red on the exterior, left bare and unfinished on the inside. In contrast to the proscenium, audience seating was furnished on three sides of the stage with no intervening step between audience and actors which in itself produces directness and intimacy between actors and audience. The small scale of the theatre meant that those in the balcony were also close to the action and these facts are important to recall when *nut* is considered regarding the demarcation of a space. The setting of the first and last acts of the play is defined in the performance notes as Elayne’s place and this, by virtue of the Shed’s stage architecture, is thereby also the place of the audience in the theatre. This radical proximity makes it possible to suggest that what is at stake in establishing a safe space in *nut* is not only that which happens within the script of the play but rather nothing less than the creation of a safe space that includes, and is arbitrated by, the entire audience cohabiting the space of the stage with the actors. If stage reviews of *nut* failed to register the critical commentary of contemporary racialised society within the play (which they almost exclusively did) then this may also relate to a failure on the part of reviewers to engage fully with the nature of theatrical space produced by the play (see for example, Clapp, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Wolf 2013). By reading the performance as, among other things, an attempt to test the limits of what safe space is in the theatrical medium, the present analysis aims to offer a more critical engagement with the broader social implications of the safe space as a theatrical construct.

The refusal of the play’s director to encase the action within a boxed-in room (as might have occurred on a full-scale stage) testifies to the understanding that

Elayne's place passes out beyond the immediate circumference of the actors and encompasses the audience. Thus, the architectural markers of the space are constituted by a handful of chairs arranged within a skeletal frame of posts and spanning elements which, while it partially canopies the stage, is unobstructive to the view from any direction, leaving the space wholly exposed and suppressing any barriers between audience and action. Another way of thinking about this decision would be to say that audience is denied a safe space of their own—they are obliged to silently cohabit the space of the play and thereby to be further drawn into its complications. If reviewers of the play's original staging remarked upon the uncompromising—and uncomfortable—experience of relentless exposure to the characters' vicious and depressive tendencies (see Wolf, 2013), this only reinforces the strength of the claim that *nut* makes to perform the work—the difficult, uncomfortable work—of negotiating shared (safe) spaces.

Given that Elayne's place is a space shared by Elayne with both her black family/friends and a white friend, the issue of shared racial spaces is particularly pressing. The opening scene of the play is certainly in an intimate space, a space in which a lot is said and shared between two characters who are obviously close and who do not hold back from saying anything—yet it is perhaps ambivalent whether this space is a *safe* or a *dangerous* space. Or rather it might be said that it forces us to reconceptualise any affective assumptions we might have about what it feels like to inhabit a safe space. In this sense, the ambivalent space of Elayne's home, a space which wishes to be safe but could also be dangerous, echoes the work of Zeus Leonardo and Ronald Porter critiquing the apparent “color-blindedness” of space which exchanges “the higher goal of understanding and fighting racism” for “creating

a safe space where whites can avoid publicly looking racist” (2010, p. 139). Elayne’s home is not a place where white people can find immunity from accusations of racism, but it resonates with Leonardo and Porter’s argument by reflecting the difficulties that arise when attempting to create a safe space. There is much more to the formation of safe space than the denotive act of labelling or designation. Safe spaces such as Elayne’s home can be fragile and easily dismantled without structural support other than her own desire for safety.

There are clues in the text about the racialised tensions which—according to Leonardo and Porter as well as hooks—necessarily factor into discussion between white and black subjects. In arguing over the nature of their respective funerals Elayne makes it plain that “you don't know my people”. Elsewhere, the tension between the two women develops into what is effectively a figurative contest over space, the imaginary space of the funeral, a potentially shared space which projects into the spatial terms of the future their own present conflict: “you couldn't threaten me”, Elayne exclaims, “and your ‘arrogance’ is just annoyin and you don't know nuff of nobody to fill up a service twice and a memorial on top of that. Be you, security, a bag of empty pews and a pastor bored reading out your one-word eulogy” (tucker green, 2013, p. 10). The greatest insult, under the terms of this exchange, is to inhabit an empty space, an un-shared space, a not-safe space.

tucker green’s casting of a white character within the intimate shared spaces of a black character and her family should be treated as a performance strategy—particularly since this fact of racial difference is revealed more clearly in the performance than the text. Here Faedra Carpenter’s theories of the performativity of whiteness serve as a useful interpretative framework since she highlights the use of

“dramaturgical strategies to make whiteness ‘strange,’ thereby revealing it as a social, political, and economic construct” and as a means of resisting “the presentation of whiteness as normative and, in the process exposing the fallacies associated with racial designations” (2014, p. 3). If Aimee’s whiteness does not figure as an explicit subject within the characters’ discourse, it enters into the performative language of the play visually, as a dramaturgical sign of the racial histories and inequalities which surround the production of ‘sisterhood’ and safe space. Reviewers of the original performance may not have picked up on the signs of race and space in *nut* but they did remark—though without decisive interpretation—on the “falling iron girders and bent scaffolding” described as “rusted girders hanging above the kitchen set like Kandinsky arcs”, and an “industrial-looking set dominated by a swaying mobile” calling to mind the modernist mobiles of Alexander Calder (Clapp, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; and Wolf, 2013). There is certainly a sense of precarity which invades the nature of a space which is unfixed, which is articulated as a collection of disjunctive parts, and which appears to embody or even respond to the internal and reciprocal vicissitudes of the characters as they talk and argue together. To that extent the performance strategy adopted by Lisa Marie Hall (the stage designer for the play) can be read as one of reproducing a discursive negotiation of the safe space with a scenographic negotiation of the safe space. The stage infrastructure does enough to furnish upright supports and a basic demarcation of interiority but otherwise breaks out into expressive arcs and lines of metal.

Like Aimee’s whiteness, or like the boy who sings periodically from his position circulating throughout the audience, the stage architecture which defines the space is never referred to explicitly. Harold Pinter, whose use of silence and

obfuscation in drama is noted, has said that “I think we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves” (quoted in Wallace, 2011, p. 114). Keeping herself to herself is perhaps Elayne’s most characteristic maneuver, one that plays out not only in linguistic but also spatial terms. Yet this could also be taken as the performance strategy of the play as a whole, in the way that it withholds overt declarations or clarifications about its structure and outcomes—something which can also be extended to the scenography. Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz remind us that the theatre as a viewing device where some are observed and others observe, is always a political space stratified by power (2015, p. 4). The silences and things left unexplained which populate *nut* in both its discourse and its performance strategies can, according to this logic, thereby be read as politically significant absences. If the play is an attempt to explore a certain kind of interior space—the interior of the theatre, the interior of the home, the interior of the self—then its gaps are as important as its content. Elayne’s place—her room, the stage, her mind—is only ever partially accessed and this surely references the always partial and incomplete political nature of safe spaces themselves.

If the stage set is both incomplete and unfixed, offering only partial coverage and enclosure for the characters’ lives to play out, the audience is afforded a more proximate experience of shared space by virtue of the openness-on-all-sides of the stage design. The copious smoking by characters throughout the play provides a further, perhaps more immaterial medium of shared space between audience and characters. They breathe the same smoke-tainted air and in so doing participate in a constructed equivalent to what theorists of space have called the “commons” (Hyde,

2012, pp. 1-14). This is even more true when it is considered as a ritual of ‘sisterhood’ between Elayne and her sister in the final scene of the play. In that case smoking becomes a mode of communion, of defining a shared space, an interior which is defined in its smokiness against the fresh air of the outside. Smoking also becomes for Elayne the agent of self-harm since it is with the cigarettes she constantly smokes that she burns herself in tortured acts of desperation which more than anything define the pain and depression of her own place and express her desperate need for a safe space in which the violence of self-harm can be in some way assuaged.

In the work of bell hooks, Leonardo and Porter, and Patricia Hill Collins, the notion of the safe space is defined with reference to the violence experienced by black women through their contact with white spaces. By the end of the play the discursive violence which has marked the characters’ moaning and bickering amongst each other—especially where Elayne is concerned—enters a physical dimension through Elayne’s perverse demonstration of her tolerance for pain in the form of hot ash dropped on purpose from her cigarette. Her sister watches, disapproves, but does not intervene, and neither does the audience. Allowing this suffering to take place in this intimate space evokes a sense of complicity. By staging the act, by asking her sister if she dares her to do it, Elayne turns her sister into an audience - she theatricalises her own self-harm and in so doing makes the audience as complicit as her sister since they also are standing by and watching, with obscene interest, and without intervening, while a black woman puts herself in danger. The fact that Elayne then invites her sister to participate—as if this were an initiation rite of ‘sisterhood’ itself—and that her sister refuses, and also refuses to extend her hand when Elayne asks for it more

affectionately, signifies the ultimately complicated and incomplete nature of both 'sisterhood' and the safe space.

If Collins has advocated in the most positive terms the establishment of safe spaces as refuges for black womanhood and centres of power and affirmation, tucker green's *nut* either falls short of producing such a space or, alternatively understood, presents a more realistic portrayal of the challenges which any form of safe space—and any form of 'sisterhood'—must face. Understood within a broader social, political, and historical context, *nut*'s portrayal of linguistic and performative tension within a shared (safe) space of black 'sisterhood' reads as an unfolding of the deep divides and differences within the story of black women's struggles for freedom and equal recognition within the feminist movement as charted by bell hooks. In *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*, hooks outlines the discrepant experiences between women of different race and class, and the continual problem of white supremacist norms infiltrating liberation movements in their attempts to co-opt and appropriate the advances made by black women in organising alternative spatial logics to those imposed from without. For example, hooks explains the effect of members of the (white) women's liberation movement comparing themselves to black men to emphasise their lowly status:

for white women to demand more rights from white men and stress that without such rights they would be placed in a social position like that of black men, not like that of black people, was to evoke in the minds of racist white men an image of white womanhood being degraded [...] Their argument for 'women's liberation' [...] thus becomes an appeal to white men to maintain the racial hierarchy that grants white women a higher social status than black men (2014b, pp. 143-44).

Such a point of view tallies with earlier Marxist-oriented critiques of society and space by Angela Davis which discerned in all social relationships the tensions of underlying systems of inequality (2011, pp. 16-17). If liberation spatial narratives promise progress and ultimate safety as a result of ‘sisterhood’ initiatives, hooks has again warned that these frequently conceal normative expectations—for example that the black woman’s role is to furnish a “homeplace” (2014a, p. 42). *nut* is a play which comprehensively refuses to offer any such consolatory narrative about space. As reviewers—sometimes disgruntledly—remarked in 2013, the play ends sourly, with no redeeming gestures. If this is a disappointment to the normative theatrical imagination it should not prevent more radical social and theatrical responses seeing in this awkward ending an uncompromisingly realistic engagement with the nature of safe space and ‘sisterhood’, the limitations of both, and the necessity—shared among characters and audience alike—of continual labour to exclude violence from the experience of space.

Examining the intersectional oppression (and depression) depicted in tucker green’s *nut* is vital for our understanding of the heterotopic relation between the various spatial strata represented on the stage and in the theatre building. This relationship is intertwined with the discourse of intersectionality, raising questions related to the efficacy of the theatre as a safe space for black women. It has been the intention of this chapter to suggest the capacity of theatre to provide such a safe space. This space does not have to be exclusionary, separatist or un-assimilable, but the intersectionality of black women would need to be recognised within it. The space would need actively to support the proliferation of safe spaces for black women, both those which are exclusively black and female and those which are heterogeneous and

foreground their acknowledgement of intersectional oppression in implicit ways that are not condescending or intended to signal virtue. Critics have argued that text (Kuribayashi, 1998, pp. 1-8) and performance (Hunter, 2008, pp. 5-21) are able to serve as therapeutic means of producing safe space at the levels of cognition and embodiment; theatre has long been valued for stimulating catharsis which has a positive social influence beyond aesthetic appreciation (Auslander, 2009, pp. 13-27). Close examination of intersectional oppression in tucker green's theatre can harness suitable strategies based on this knowledge to transform theatres into safe spaces for black women.

Chapter Four

The Intersectional Racialisation of Domestic Abuse and Rape in debbie tucker green's *dirty butterfly*

Representing the Obscene

Saidiya Hartman begins her 1997 *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery and self-making in nineteenth-century America* by refusing to reproduce Frederick Douglass's account of the dramatic spectacle of the beating of his aunt in his 1845 *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (1997, p. 3). She argues that such scenes are too easily reproduced and circulated casually, and that this visibility does injustice to the suffering body, "inuring us to pain by virtue of their familiarity" (1997, p. 3). This leads her to question the role of the reader or audience in the contemplation of such scenes:

are we witnesses who confirm the truth of what happened in the face of the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortions of torture, the sheer unrepresentability of terror, and the repression of dominant accounts? Or are we voyeurs fascinated with and repelled by exhibitions of terror and sufferance? What does the exposure of the violated body yield? (1997, p. 3).

The representation of extreme violence and terror has deep roots in theatre, with its origins in the sacrifice themes of Greek tragic theatre (Ashby, 1999, pp. 42-59). It might be argued that violence has presented alongside the development of theatre in the Western tradition, and is the basis of many of its most powerful productions. There has always been a problematic relationship between the act of violence as a fundamental constituent of the (his)stories of human life and the act of its representation on the stage.

The particular instantiation of the problem of violence has its own deep history within tragic drama, given the genre's obsession with kinship networks, family power relationship, property, symmetry of family and state, and issues and contentions of succession. Few subjects, for example, obsessed Renaissance dramatists more than the rape of Lucretia—a historical narrative drawn from Roman history in which a woman's body was the site of rape, implicated within the political turmoil of tyranny and republicanism, leading to a multitude of representations on stage, in literature, and in the visual arts (Sanyal, 2019, pp. 1-14). For example, Shakespeare's narrative poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, centred on the story, while he also mentioned it in a number of his plays, including *Titus Andronicus*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline* (see Duncan-Jones & Woudhuysen, 2007, pp. 21-34). At the same time, the rise of tragic theatre in the West corresponded with the growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the mass conversion of human beings into slave chattel, stripping women and men of legal rights and exposing them to the gravest acts of violence which, due to the perverse deterioration of legal enfranchisement through the institution of slavery, incurred no criminal penalty on the behalf of the perpetrators except as a case of transgression on property rights (Feinstein, 2019, pp. 1-26). In such a legal situation there could be no rape of a slave since the slave belonged absolutely as inalienable property to the master.

It is part of the impact of *dirty butterfly* (2020)) that it deals frankly and openly with a subject which has been historically repressed in society, that is, marital rape. The very concept of marital rape was itself only legally acknowledged twelve years before the premier of *dirty butterfly*. Within the particular case of the UK legal system, although rape had long been acknowledged in law and frequently prosecuted, a long standing practice

had been to accept an eighteenth-century argument that rape was impossible in marriage since, in wedding a man, a woman had given up all her rights of refusal of sexual intercourse, existing in a perpetual state of sexual availability to her husband (Torres, 2016, p. 20). This so-called “marital rape exemption” effectively denied the possibility of a woman raising a legal complaint against her husband in the event of non-consensual sexual intercourse. Issues of legal status and representation must therefore be articulated within a specific cultural and historical trajectory in order to establish its significance as a subject of theatrical representation. tucker green’s play *dirty butterfly* offers a contemporary articulation of the problematic relationship between the limits of the stage, representability, and the specific issue of violence in marital rape and it is this specific case of marital rape and theatre which is the subject of this chapter.

The chapter takes as a starting point Patricia Hill Collins’s finding that marital rape is a condition inflected by race and one which impacts the black community in specific ways, in particular through long term trauma and resulting coping strategies (Collins, 2004, p. 3). While Collins herself does not address the subject of representations of marital rape in theatre, my project attempts to extend her analysis into this field, asking how *dirty butterfly* offers a critical commentary on marital rape in relation to matters of race, language, and performance strategies. Through a close analysis of the representation of marital rape in her play, this chapter will focus on the limits of language and stage production in the representation of the unrepresentable, and read the play within the context of the legal framework surrounding marital rape in the UK, particularly in regard to issues of race, both of which have entangled histories reaching back into the age of the slave trade. As such, this chapter requires an intersectional approach capable of thinking

concurrently about issues of race and gender in both legal structures and the aesthetic conventions and possibilities of the stage. To that extent it provides a critical reading of Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal theorisation of intersectionality and its legal bases, developing and recontextualising it in light of contemporary developments in both law and theatre, as well as the related but different social and legal situation in the UK. The fact that Kimberlé Crenshaw's 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color' was published in 1991, the same year that the marital rape exception was officially excluded from English law (after a centuries-long history of ratification), demonstrates the urgency of re-thinking these issues through the contemporary context in which tucker green's work has emerged. This chapter will proceed therefore by means of a critical analysis of tucker green's *dirty butterfly* in light of an examination of the history of the legal and cultural context of marital rape in the UK, and intersectional theory, in order to establish the conditions for the representability of marital rape in contemporary theatre.

***dirty butterfly* as Intersectional Drama**

dirty butterfly is a play about a physically and emotionally abusive relationship and its effects on those who are involved in it. The three characters who are listed in the play notes and who speak in the play are Jo, who is more often than not cast as a white woman, Amelia, a black woman, and Jason, a black man. A fourth character is not listed and never speaks but is referred to by Jo as "husband" and the acts of this "husband" figure are constantly felt and made palpable by their effects on Jo and the other two characters either directly by being witnessed—albeit not through seeing but through hearing—or indirectly

through Jo whose language, and appearance, indicate the extreme marital abuse (including rape) which she suffers.

Although Jo is specified as being either white or black in the original version of the play (tucker green, 2020, p. 8), in this chapter I discuss her as though she were white for several reasons. First, in the original production of the play, and in the 2016 Chicago production that I examine here, she was played by white actresses. Second, she is specified as white in the 2014 e-book of the play (tucker green, 2014, p. 8), and that the major productions of the performance cast Jo as white might account for the alteration, although the actual reason behind it has not been revealed. Third, all of the secondary literature on the play accessible to me discusses the character with the understanding that she is white. And fourth, as I seek to explain below, casting Jo as white complicates the play's intersectional dynamic, raising important questions of witnessing and interracial history and cultural memory.

In this play, tucker green succeeds not only in “representing the unrepresentable”, but also in conveying the internalisation of the wounds inflicted upon the abused; she evokes a sense of how these wounds exist beneath the surface, deep in the bodies and memories of victims of domestic violence. Director Azar Kazemi, who staged *dirty butterfly* at the Halcyon Theatre in Chicago in 2016, explained to me (in an interview) that, in her view, the fact that the violence takes place off stage does more than accentuate its obscenity:

I think that [the significance of it for] debbie would be: how do [the audience] imagine it? Because I think the abuse is actually so much more in *hang* [another of tucker green's plays, first performed in 2015] and in *dirty butterfly*, so much more potent because we never see it because what we as an audience imagine

will always be worse than you could depict on stage. So, she is so smart because she's not dealing with the violence itself. She's dealing with something deeper, which is the emotional trauma and after effects that never leave you, right? That violence may be a moment, five minutes, an hour, the after effects, how it stays in your body, will never go away (Kazemi, 133-39).

And, Kazemi further claims, the fact that the action of the violence takes place off stage also forces the viewer to imagine it, and thus the effect on the audience is penetrative as well as being subjective and individual: "So she is so brilliant in my mind because of how [there are] many things about the story are going to be unique to every audience member, because they're filling in the rest of the image for themselves" (Kazemi, 140-42).

The play proceeds to convey a gradual increase in the interrelation of the characters' lives, becoming both for them and for the audience, more and more intolerable. The extent and frequency of the abuse suffered by Jo increases, and the impossibility for the other characters to deal with this situation, with which they are both repelled and obsessed, becomes ever more apparent. The complexity of Jo's situation dominates the play: she is abused and yet apparently does not extricate herself from the cycle of abuse. As Amelia complains to Jo, "You let it get worse'n what it needs to be" (tucker green, 2020, p. 15)—an issue of not being able to respond adequately to the complex and difficult subject and experience of abuse. As Jennifer Lombardo explains in her recent study, *Abusive Relationships and Domestic Violence* (2019, pp. 66-77), one of the factors that makes abuse so persistent and pernicious is that victims are often unable to comprehend what is happening to them, leading them into states of inactivity and passivity amounting to denial. For the observer, the abuse being inflicted on the abused can be obvious, and the way that victims seem to perpetuate the abuse being inflicted on them—through their powerlessness to wake up to the reality of their victimhood,

powerlessness that is perpetuated by the victim's belief that they would be unable to change this reality—can be highly disconcerting. Within this series of relationships, the audience sits twice-removed from the enactment of abuse: they witness the witnesses witnessing the abuse. The abuse does not appear onstage in represented acts of physical violence—unlike the explicitly violent tragic plays of the Greek and Renaissance stage in which the tearing out of eyes and severing of limbs took place as spectacular performances of cruelty (Rehm, 2003, p. 41). Thus, in *dirty butterfly*, instead of the scene of abuse being the central spectacle or action around which the narrative plot of the drama unfolds, the audience is instead presented with the intractable difficulty of access to the scene of abuse. The fact that tucker green specifies in the stage directions that “the audience should surround the actors” only further intensifies the problem of the basic absence of the spectacle to which everything refers—a staging choice which will be discussed in detail below.

dirty butterfly is therefore concerned with the absence of an action and yet its constant presence everywhere in the lives of those who are exposed to it. This issue of absence, or invisibility, pertains importantly to the law, for it is difficult to report the invisible. Moreover, if something is not presented obviously to a witness, obscurity can be used as an excuse to deny what is happening and thus to absolve oneself of one's responsibility. The invisibility of the crime sustains a grey area in which responsibility can only manifest as an active decision on the part of the witness. In a dramatic context, therefore, the issue of absence—and how this pertains to responsibility and, more specifically, reporting what is seemingly absent to the police—raises the question of how to deal with an unrepresentable object in terms of language. Thus, it poses another

question of what the consequences are of an event which is both very close and yet not openly represented in the lives of people who can neither fully understand nor totally ignore what is going on. These questions of representation of that which is absent, dialogue about that which cannot be heard, action in relation to that which is seen but is spatially separate are also, evidently, immensely important in terms of language and theatre production. They play out through the characters' attempts to verbalise the action and the breakdown of their language as part of this attempt. They also play out through the spatial organisation of the production and the creation of physical barriers between groups of witnesses: between the scene of abuse and the adjacent scene of neighbouring homes; or between the scene of the home and the adjacent, surrounding space of the audience.

dirty butterfly is ideally suited as a cultural text to an intersectional analysis. Yet it is important to recognise that embarking upon an intersectional analysis of a stage performance is in itself a radical act since, as Nicola Abram explains in her very recent *Black British Women's Theatre: Intersectionality, Archives, Aesthetics* (2020, pp. 2-5), this mode of analysis is not well established in theatre and performance studies. Indeed, Abram's book has largely informed the intersectional methodology that I have chosen to apply in this thesis—and it is the radical potential of theatre itself, its capacity to cut through conditions of intersectional oppression, that underpins her approach. Building on the work of Barbara Smith (1978, pp. 20-27), Heidi Safia Mirza (1997, pp. 1-30) and other scholars exploring racial representation, Abram observes that “the black woman is at once overlooked—that is, unseen—and *overlooked*, or *hypervisible*”, in that she is at once objectified and invisible owing to the fact that “her corporeal characteristics become her

identity” (2020, p. 2). Her interior is unrecognised, she is *all* body. Theatre has the propensity to give agency to the black woman by “controlling the presence of bodies onstage” and thereby allowing black female performers to “make themselves visible to the audience on their own terms: as present in and part of Britain, and as successful, professional actors” (2020, p. 3). Moreover, referencing bell hooks’s (1992, pp. 115-32) important concept of the “oppositional gaze”, Abram explains that the theatre is a space in which black women can “also assert their subjectivity by looking back at the audience”.

Perhaps the most important factor supporting intersectional critique of black women’s theatre is the particular way stage fosters identity formation “through encounter” (Abram, 2020, p. 3):

Theatre and performance are always embodied, of course, but in the works studied here those bodies function not to guarantee a fixed individual identity but as the public site of a subject’s dynamic, interactional, formation. The dramatic arts are uniquely equipped for this since performance depends on the relationship between actor and character: the performer is identified with the character yet is not identical to her; the character is other than the performer, yet cannot exist without her. Theatre wisely teaches us that the subject is not isolated, autonomous, or pre-existent; rather, she is formed through her interactions with others.

By emphasising the cruciality of interaction as the foundation of identity, therefore, theatre as an art form invites intersectional critique, since the latter is also founded on the multiple perspectives and crossovers that form subjectivity. Stemming from Crenshaw’s own legal analysis, fields ranging from sociology to politics and criminology have developed intersectional critiques but theatre studies have not yet acquired a strong intersectional foundation (2015, p. 10). Crenshaw in fact distinguished between three separate forms of intersectionality. “Structural intersectionality” described how the

location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender made “their experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of white women”. “Political intersectionality” situated the issue within feminist and antiracist politics, revealing how they have, “paradoxically, often helped to marginalize the issue of violence against women of colour”. Thirdly, Crenshaw defined “representational intersectionality”, as “the cultural construction of women of colour”, a social process causing controversy over how women of colour should be represented, and one frequently leading to the disempowerment of women of colour in terms both of gender and race (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). As Lutz, Herrera, and Supik (2016, pp. 1-17) have documented, it has been the structural and political aspects of intersectionality which have found most adherents, whilst Crenshaw’s third branch of representational intersectionality has received comparatively less treatment.

Abram (2020, p. 15) points out that “black women’s work within traditions of black cultural production” (Goddard, 2007, p. 185) is a field which remains largely untouched by scholars; hence it is a gap which her book has importantly begun to fill. The intersectional approach, considering black women’s theatre explicitly and forthrightly through the combined lens of race and gender, is radical in the way that it engages with contemporary politics of cultural production. Such an approach encompasses practitioners who have “navigated their way through (or around) the British theatre industry, with its aesthetic tradition of social realism, its elevation of solo playwrights, its dearth of female decision-makers and artistic directors, and its habit of defunding black arts” (Abram, 2020, p. 5). Considering the intersectionality of race and gender, therefore, specifically in

relation to black women's theatre, makes visible the achievements of a minoritised social group, exposes systemic injustices, and lays the foundation for a more equitable future.

What makes the theatre of tucker green such a promising context in which to develop an intersectional theatre analysis is that it allows consideration of all three components—the structural, the political, and the representational. This is due to the unique qualities of theatre itself: an art form which affords reflection on the structural and political nature of contemporary social conditions, while at the same time self-reflexively engaging with its own conditions as a medium of representation. It is in view of this that *dirty butterfly* can be submitted to intersectional analysis.

In *dirty butterfly*, the experience of violence and abuse is explored at the intersection between spatial proximity and social distance. The paper-thin wall used in the set draw attention to the ways that the lives of Amelia, Jason, Jo and her unnamed partner, become connected by the awareness of violence, and yet remain distinct. *dirty butterfly* is a play physically staged around the intersection of four people's lives separated by a wall which is both a boundary which isolate the four figures and means of communication which connect their lives together: they are so audibly close that they cannot be separated, yet so physically separated that they cannot fully engage in each other's lives. So much is this the case that for Jason, the wall which both separates him and connects him to the scene of marital rape takes on the role of a protagonist in itself, turning him into a mere accessory:

It's like- / waking up with my head on the crick- back up against it, legs lying in front of me and the wall laughin like it won. Wall all triumphant it's had me against it all night as its trophy. / Upstairs on my side a that wall that's what it's like (tucker green, 2020, p. 16).

What is being witnessed here is, as it were, a dramaturgical condition which might be claimed as the correlative in stage terms of the theory of intersectionality which has played thus far such an important role in the analysis of tucker green's plays in this thesis. It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate this new aspect of performance strategy in light of the discourse on intersectionality. This is tantamount to developing a way of thinking which is able to distinguish dramaturgical forms corresponding to the overlapping of different discourses related to the position of subjects within larger communities, or, in Crenshaw's words, recognising "as social and systematic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual" (1991, pp. 1241-42). *dirty butterfly* makes a case for intersectionality being visible as a broader social problem, as everyone's problem, as a condition of cohabitation within certain social circumstances (of which this play is one). This moves the problem of intersectionality out of the ambit of discrete individuals or categories of people who are its direct victims and makes it an issue for everyone. From this perspective space becomes a social connector, mediating broad social networks through the many intersections that connect even where they appear to separate.

Intersectionality and the Habitus of Black Britain

From its first performance in Soho Theatre, London in 2003, reviewers plainly perceived that the problems which *dirty butterfly* foregrounds have to do with intersectionality understood both spatially and socially, responding to the play's overall context of urban fragmentation "in which lives interlock but never connect" (Gardner, 2003, para. 2). *dirty butterfly* is an "intersectional" play in the way it manipulates the dramaturgical possibilities of disconnecting, connecting, and intersecting which the performative possibilities of theatre inherently allow—between what happens onstage and offstage, and

what occurs between actors and audience. tucker green makes her female characters speak about the subjects of physical and sexual abuse, which are too often viewed as taboo, hence are usually left unspoken in most female discourse and rarely addressed in theatrical productions. Crenshaw argues that the intersecting forms of oppression faced by black women are exemplified in forms of aggression such as domestic violence and rape, which are common to intersections of sexism and racism. She states that these experiences of aggression fail to be adequately acknowledged by either anti-racist or feminist discourses (1991, pp. 1241-99).

Crenshaw's theorisation of intersectionality, though published twenty-five years ago, remains an influential analytical apparatus with which to dissect contemporary theatre, and the list of her inheritors is long, including, among others, Patricia Hill Collins, Sumi Cho, Leslie McCall, Vivian May, Nicol Alexander-Floyd and Julia Jordan-Zachery (see Hancock, 2016, pp. 1-24). The issues that Crenshaw critiqued in the 1990s are historically entrenched and remain problems to this day, meaning her overall approach remains highly relevant. At the same time, many events in both the history of law and societal change and its associated discourses, have evolved since the 1990s and these evolutions have led to new interpretations and revised readings of intersectionality (for example, Nina Lykke (2012) on feminist intersectionality and Anna Carastathis (2019) on intersectionality and decolonisation). One of the important aims of this chapter is to take up intersectional analysis in relation to the legal and social history of women of colour in the UK—a context which has not received nearly so much attention as in the US—a point outlined by Alba Parmar in her vital article 'Intersectionality, British criminology and race: Are we there yet?' which will be discussed further below (Parmar, 2017, pp. 35-45).

Crenshaw began her analysis of intersectionality by noting the then current historical juncture at which “battering and rape, once seen as private (family matters) and aberrational (errant sexual aggression), are now largely recognized as part of a broad-scale system of domination that affects women as a class” (1991, p. 1241), and it is certainly within this framework that *dirty butterfly* is positioned. Yet within that broad scale of recognition for violence, Crenshaw highlighted the lack of differentiation within identity politics which caused the issues particular to the experience of gender to be conflated with those particular to race—and thereby led to women of colour being doubly excluded. Noting that “feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of colour have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains”, Crenshaw observed that “although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of colour as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of colour to a location that resists telling” (1991, p. 1242). It is precisely just such a “telling”, or, rather a “staging”, which, I argue, tucker green’s *dirty butterfly* performed.

Crenshaw did not initially address the realm of theatre in her work, focusing instead upon the experience of women of colour within the US legal system. However, in considering the question of “representational intersectionality” Crenshaw referred to a case study of the 2 Live Crew controversy in which a black rap ensemble was arrested and charged in Florida under an obscenity statute before being defended in part by a testimony by the prominent historian of African-American culture Henry Louis Gates Jr.

As such Crenshaw explicitly acknowledged the “centrality of issues of representation in the reproduction of racial and gender hierarchy in the United States” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1282). There is no reason why this same concern with representation cannot be transferred to related art forms. *dirty butterfly* would thereby fit securely into a tradition of critically analysing performative modes of cultural production within an intersectional frame of reference encompassing both racial and gender politics—something which its central concern with violence and relationships clearly invites.

Given that Crenshaw’s intersectional analysis is geared towards recovering the particularity of the experience of women of colour, what are some of the key structural factors she identifies as constituting it? First, of course, is that “patterns of subordination intersect”, meaning that different factors of experience do not exist in isolation but mutually impact each other (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249). Following this is the idea that being a woman and being of colour tend statistically to place a subject in a disempowered situation, and thereby less likely to marshal resources within a situation of difficulty—a situation exacerbated by what Crenshaw at the time recorded as a tendency for potential aid to originate from white middle-class sources. Aside from material sources of aid, information access was a key factor recognised by Crenshaw (especially in regard to a subject’s rights in cases of battery or rape) and again here she observed the socially marginalised position of women of colour and the necessity of targeting information directly at them. Taken together, these factors represent what Crenshaw called “effects of multiple subordination”, which, “coupled with institutional expectations based on inappropriate nonintersectional contexts, shapes and ultimately limits the opportunities for meaningful intervention on their behalf” (1991, p. 1251).

dirty butterfly was written and produced in a cultural context permeated with concerns about the politics of theatre—stage reviews, critical coverage, articles, book-length studies of contemporary British theatre, and cultural identity discourses all underscore this fact. From the beginning of the 2000s multiple research projects were initiated in these areas, including Lynette Goddard’s 2013 anthology of black British writers, followed by their 2015 historical account of the emergence of black British playwrights from the margins of the theatre world to centre stage. At the same time, Michael Pearce’s *Black British drama: A transnational story* (2017) developed the idea of a black tradition that crossed national thresholds. *The Guardian* newspaper led the way in printing reviews of black British theatre performances (covering tucker green’s work, for example, from early 2003). New archival efforts also emerged at this time, importantly the National Theatre’s Black Plays Archive initiated by playwright Kwame Kwei-Armah, whose aim was to document the first professional production of every play by black British, African and Caribbean writers in the UK (Black Plays Archive, 2019). The British Library also began thematising and giving visibility to its black theatre collections, such as through the Black British Theatre: 1950–1979 collection (British Library, 2019). These theatre-based projects were all outgrowths of earlier cultural and institutional work which had been established in the broader fields of cultural identity studies, much of which responded to the important legacy of the African-Caribbean British theorist Stuart Hall who founded and directed the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham in 1968 (Rojek, 2003, p. 27).

As a consequence of these new cultural productions, the play must also be approached in terms of broader cultural and political intersectionality, which means

addressing further concerns. Among these is the problem of stereotyping raised by Crenshaw. The very portrayal of domestic violence—whether in a cultural representation or through the dissemination of information—invokes the risk of unfairly reinforcing racist stereotypes by attributing violence to black social groups (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1248). Yet, equally, withholding such information risks obfuscating the real experiences of victims and denying them recognition and aid. Even the attempt on the part of white groups to stress some idea of commonality in relation to domestic violence—which would seem to work against stereotyping—has the effect of papering up the real disparities and differences which exist in the lives of widely different communities. Furthermore, there exists the danger of what Crenshaw calls “tokenistic” representation, according to which the experience of women of colour finds representation not through a deep engagement with its intersectional particularities but rather as a means of gesturing towards a complete form of representation which is in fact highly limited—clearly an issue in the context of a play which deals so directly with a particular instance of life whilst also addressing a broad public assumed to have at least some degree of general social engagement. Lastly, Crenshaw calls upon us to also critique the very idea of mutual engagement itself since she claims that even the action of “allies”—that is, groups from non-minority backgrounds who work with the explicit aim of supporting minorities—may contribute to the denial of intersectional understanding by working to appropriate the struggles of women of colour into their own concerns so that the issues of domestic violence and rape become the cultural property of non-minorities (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1248). Again, this raises acute political problems for cultural representations such as stage plays which may integrate multiple stakeholders whose various positions must be negotiated.

There could be few better examples of the complexity of intersectional experience than *dirty butterfly* given the interplay between the three sets including both black and white characters. From the opening of the play, the triangular intersection onstage between Jason and Amelia (who are both black) and Jo (who is white) is also marked by the absent presence of Jo's partner (of unspecified race) who is responsible for violently abusing her. Clearly this intersection of multiple racial and gender positions and their very uncertain relation to one another—coupled with the radical unknown quantity of Jo's partner—points towards socio-cultural specificities which require elaboration in order to fully situate the work within its political context.

dirty butterfly constructs its social context tentatively but progressively through a gradual accumulation of subtle social reference points which connect it with broader social and cultural signifiers constituting a recognisable *habitus*. Race and language are the most obvious, prominent, and immediate signifiers of this context. From the start of the play their intersection sets a scene which is gradually populated by other signifiers helping to position and locate the characters within a world from which their situation derives specificity, context, politics, and history. All of these factors aid in the interpretation of the play and understanding its wider impact in drama and culture more broadly. To anyone familiar with debbie tucker green's work, the particularity of her idioms is highly culturally specific—which is not to say normalised or homogenised but rather targeted and non-arbitrary. She herself has indicated that her work derives from close first-person experience and observation of her own upbringing and communities of black British / African-Caribbean people and their worlds in relation to the broader contexts of the British nation state and the black diaspora (Gardner, 2005, para. 1).

A significant literature exists on black linguistics within the context of the British Isles and its roots in a highly diverse series of influences which have accrued over time, and have been transformed by successive waves of diaspora movements, as well as immersion in broader patterns of linguistic drift. Alison Donnell refers to an array of speech communities embedded within multilingual social groups and the emergence of idioms and patois leading to the study of black British English across a host of platforms (2013, p. 42). Patterns of linguistic diversity and specificity will not be discussed in great detail in this chapter, but it is important to note that linguistics has become fully imbricated with studies of performativity and embodiment. As multiple scholars have noted, such as Bidnell (2018), language was a site of particular violence in the period of slavery and colonialism: among the many effects of this, was the emergence of resilient cultures of embodied performative practices with and through language, which are sites of extreme cultural semiosis with close alliances to the socio-political shifts which have taken place in Britain, particularly since the arrival of the Windrush generation in the mid-twentieth-century (Bidnell, 2018, pp. 22-60). Language cannot be disassociated from its cultures of performance and both of these phenomena combined conspire to produce a specific (if not definitive) linguistic, cultural, and performative atmosphere which is essential in locating *dirty butterfly* within a metropolitan urban world of black experience. While *dirty butterfly* is not a history play in the traditional sense it is nonetheless highly historical to the degree that it can be situated within the overall collective narrative of black life in Britain and is partially constituted by the hardships, collectively-faced oppressions, systematic inequalities, and social, political, economic and racial discriminations which urban black populations have engaged with across multiple fronts

throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first-century. In a play which is so much about the condition of the domestic, space, work and the relationship between social groupings in common space, it is especially important to try to situate the figures with a suitable degree of particularity in order to try to provide context to any interpretation.

The history and sociology of black life in Britain is a subject of great complexity (Innes, 2008, p. 3). One of the major currents that has run through it is the contested nature of the classification of black life and the resistance that has emerged to terms including “underclass”, “ghetto” class, and urban poor (Ochieng & Hylton, 2010, p. 65). The danger has been that structural racism within society and politics has tended to treat black communities pejoratively, emphasising social problems over cultural life and achievements. The turning point in these debates was the work of Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall which, since the 1980s, has served to identify and characterise “black expressive cultures” and community formations formed by rich intersections of traditions and history, defined thoroughly in terms of class-based analytics while at the same time appropriately documented and treated in terms of a range of cultural practices—including visual culture, literature, and music (Hall, Evans, & Nixon, 2013, p. 13). This tradition of looking at society as both a nexus of economic struggle and a source of new cultural emergences, hybridities, and syncretism provides an appropriate context for considering the theatre of tucker green.

In his analysis of black expressive culture in Britain and its treatment in sociology, Gilroy deploys the notion of culture as a mediator among “the world of agents and the structures which are created by their social praxis. These meanings are sources of the individual and collective actions which give culture its materiality. The terrain of meaning

and action is also a field of historical development through struggle” (2013, p. 24). This serves as an adequate frame within which to understand the action of *dirty butterfly*, to see it as a “terrain of meaning and action” developed through struggle whose agents and structures are created by social praxis (including speech and performative action) which lend materiality to culture. As in culture, so onstage: *dirty butterfly* presents a specific, if non-identified, cultural and social environment by means of its language and performance strategies and it is the task of the present analysis to investigate in detail the correspondences in the play between language, performance strategy, and culture.

Spatial and Social Intersectionalities

The relationality of the characters constitutive of the aforementioned cultural framework is frequently expressed in the play itself in terms of spatiality:

Sitting up, back to the wall, ear to the glass- staying in to listen- staying up to listen- staying up to listen in on her- and her man- from my side a the wall- again (tucker green, 2003, p. 21).

Jason’s compulsions to listen in are expressed in his physical identification with the wall that separates and connects him with the lives of Jo and her husband. “Back to the wall, ear to the glass”—a grotesque coupling of man and architecture produces an image of an anthropomorphic building, a protagonist in its own right, evoked in the spatialised language with which tucker green permeates her play. Indeed, a significant portion of the lines of the play directly concern spatial arrangement. Jason and Amelia are continually talking about where they are in relation to each other—upstairs or downstairs, in this room or that room—as well as the location of Jo and her husband—are they next door, are they close, are they in bed, have they gone out. In a certain sense it is as if the space itself is

speaking through the characters—an idea which recalls the presence of the house in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), which serves as a major protagonist with a will of its own and powerful agency in shaping the lives of the people who inhabit it. *dirty butterfly* is therefore a product of a *spatial* theatre and a correspondingly spatial language.

Indeed, so prominent is the spatial regime in which the play takes place that rooms and partitions, upstairs and downstairs, correspond closely with bodily functions, states of safety or danger, violence or protection, sexual excitement or escape therefrom. There are many examples to be drawn from the play—such as Amelia and Jason’s exchanges about where Jason should sleep, and in doing so, what kind of a psychological state he should try to inhabit:

Amelia: just sleep downstairs.

Jason: Can still/ hear them.

Amelia: sleep in your downstairs Jase.

Jason: I can/ hear them

Amelia: shut her shit out and- or come over and sleep downstairs with me on my sofa at mine (tucker green, 2020, pp. 20-21).

Similarly, Jo and Amelia experience themselves in different states according to which parts of their respective houses they inhabit (which raises key questions about the relationship of domestic space to domestic violence (including rape), as in Jo’s observation that Amelia has her own “downstairs”—that is, place of safe retreat (which Jo lacks—she cannot escape to any space inside her home which is free of the threat of

rape), “Jo: you’re “downstairs’ entcha. You’re in your *downstairs*—entcha A-melia” (tucker green, 2020, p. 22). And then there is the repeated issue of the “next door” (p. 30) — the space which is contiguous yet inaccessible, close but far, which discloses information without allowing access, which represents the dangerous proximity of the other at the very limit of the intimacy of the domestic as expressed in Amelia’s fear of Jason’s obsession with listening to what happens next door:

Amelia: I can’t stand the you and your him nexuses door to me./ You and your bad- both a yers next door to me- you and your bad- sex- nex to me- nex door to me, nex door to my bedroom (tucker green, 2020, p. 14).

These issues will be discussed in terms of performance strategies below but it is also important to first acknowledge the spatial histories in which they are inscribed in the broader social world evoked by the closely-quartered urban mixed-race domestic scenario presented in *dirty butterfly*.

Space and race have an inextricable connection in the social history of Britain. This is not only a history of strict opposition between black and white lives, but also the issues emerging out of multi-racial contexts—as in this case where Jo, a white woman, is the subject of abuse from a male partner whose race remains unknown. This clearly makes a straightforward application of Crenshaw’s theories of intersectionality difficult. This inevitably raises questions about the intersectional method—how do we negotiate the representation of a white woman subject to abuse with the representation of a woman of colour who is not directly physically abused yet who is indirectly affected through her care, horror, pain, frustration, and ostensibly inadequate response? Likewise, how does the figure of Jason register, as a black male who does not perpetrate abuse yet is fascinated by the aural spectacle, of a position with which the entire audience, in fact, becomes

complicit given the fact that the stage directions specify that “the audience should surround the actors” (tucker green, 2020, p. 6).

Recognition of the complexity which emerges from the application of intersectional theory onto an unmitigated portrayal of contemporary a multi-racial British social context calls for a broader understanding of how intersectional theory itself has been received within social discourse since 1994. As noted above, the work of Parmar and Hancock provides inroads to understanding how Crenshaw’s initial work has been taken up to greater or lesser extents in alternative contexts. One of the key points put forward by Parmar is that despite their existing broad overarching concern with cultural identity politics in the UK, “overlapping concepts such as race, ethnicity and nationality remain unaddressed and there is a lag between the lived realities of minority ethnic groups and criminological academic scholarship” (2017, p. 36). Yet the close proximity of black and white lives in *dirty butterfly* provides a direct representation of the lived reality of multi-racial social groups in Britain and this constitutes part of its cultural value. Again this helps to overcome the impediment of intersectional analysis being kept at a conceptual level since the acting out of intersectional identities on stage ensures that theory is grounded in representation.

What comes across most forcefully in the text of the play is the intrusive forced intimacy of cohabitation and inhabitation in close proximity. We see in the play an intersection between sets of given socio-political circumstances with modes of behaviour and expressive culture. As specified above, the urban context in which the play is set, coupled with its references to the expressive cultures of black British history situate the play within the politics of what Paul Gilroy has framed as the “underclass”, groups

systematically oppressed by governing regimes (particularly under Margaret Thatcher who was in government when Gilroy began publishing) (Gilroy, 1980, pp. 47-62). Social life within the architecture of an underclass—literally, the physical architectural surroundings—intrudes on characters’ lives and, as noted above, begins to be identified with their bodies. Not only is the physical space spoken about as if it were a character in its own right, but the characters’ own bodies are intruded upon and exposed by their relentlessly invasive language. Again, as Jo says:

You’re in your *downstairs*- entcha A-melia . . . you’ve taken to your sofa, your side, while I’m still wanting with that painful morning piss that won’t pass yeh. That I’ve got to get up to go to get rid of while I’m wondering – no – *worryin* about wakin him up. *My side* (tucker green, 2020, p. 22).

“Downstairs” is now both a condition of the domestic interior and also the lower part of the body, just as “my side” is both a reference to the part of a building which is occupied by a particular individual and also the *side* of a person. So impacted are they by one another that body and building start to become linguistically indeterminate.

This continues to be exposed in the recurrent exchanges on the subject of pissing and bleeding—bodily processes which in some sense physicalise the leakage of sound and noise from next door. “Never got the art of pissin quietly down pat?” taunts Jo midway through the play, “it’s all about technique” (tucker green, 2020, p. 26), she explains, explicitly detailing the painful actions of her anatomy to the disgusted, flabbergasted Amelia. “It’s a little lean forward”, Jo continues, “flow against the side, little like pouring a good pint, little like that . . . flowing down quiet, smooth” (tucker green, 2020, p.26). As if intuiting Jason’s voyeuristic pleasure in listening to her abuse, Jo identifies her body with the production of an addictive substance—alcohol—which at the same time betrays

her own attitudes to her own body as a substance ultimately to be given away and consumed. The equivalence of Jo's body to a form of violence reaches its apogee in the final scene when Jo appears bleeding from her crotch, it is this blood which has become its own language, a displacement of abuse suffered offstage, in the non-linguistic but deafening language of sexual violence.

Approaching intersectional theory from the perspective of a black British play demands that not only the *how* of intersectionality but also the *what* of intersectionality is carefully examined. While there do exist broad paradigmatic and historical affinities and connections between the US and the UK contexts, it is imperative to also understand some of the differences (Christian, 2002, p. 15). One of the most important differences is the nationalism which is articulated strongly but differently in each respective context. Gilroy has been the leading figure of the theorisation of black Britishness and diasporic studies more broadly through his conceptualisation of the "Black Atlantic" and the intersection of racism and nationalism in Britain (Gilroy, 1995; Gilroy, 2013). Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* caused an outcry in the late 1980s when it was first published, delivering a scathing attack on the refusal of intellectuals and public figures to take seriously the issues of racism in the UK and their intersection of class politics under the Conservative regime of Margaret Thatcher (Gilroy, 2013, pp. 47-70).

As commentators, such as Roediger (2017, pp. 30-38), on Gilroy's work have established, his analysis is intersectional primarily in relation to his concern with race and class within a Marxist intellectual tradition, but not one which, at the time of publication, had fully embraced the multiplicity of intersectionality (including gender, sexuality, generation). Gilroy's work stands at the fountainhead of a large body of scholarship which

has dealt with race and class in a colonial and postcolonial context in Britain—one which notably attempts to account for the intersection of multiple racial identities under the label “Black” (including both African and South Asian cultural traditions) (Magubane, 2004; Sivanandan, 1978). This radical intersectionality—and the political potentialities it represents—is perhaps more germane to the British context than the American one where there are different intersections between racial groups (Kushnick, 1998, pp. 87-106). The strong tradition of Marxist intellectualism in the British context, while privileging class, does, however, have the advantage of providing a platform on which multiple racial identities and their experiences can intersect due to shared experiences of class—though equally the inverse argument may also apply, that differences of race are flattened on this plane (Cole, 2017, pp. 35-76).

Within the text of the play this intersection on the grounds of class becomes highly palpable given that there is significant “bleeding” of characters’ vocal styles into one another. Tucker Green’s blank verse is rapid, maintaining an almost constant state of stichomythia (not only in *dirty butterfly*, but throughout her oeuvre). Voice follows voice in quick succession and in ways which Tucker Green herself has claimed is modelled on heard spoken conversations in life (Gardner, 2005, para. 5). Noise of abuse is transmitted *through* the wall like an architectural vocal cord. Sound is materialised so that the interpenetrating boundaries which serve spatially to both separate and connect the characters find their equivalents in the quick exchanges of short lines. In the harrowing lines describing Jo’s screaming in response to her abuse her scream itself becomes shared by each character:

Jason: I hear - heard you was

Jo: screaming.

Jason: And screaming like that. Like that ent healthy. J-J-Jo.

Amelia: Screamin like that, like that ent normal Jo . . .

Jo: I panicked. (tucker green, 2020, p. 33).

The word “screaming” is passed from one character to another, demonstrating that the scream is something they all share, that it is part of their common situation—it is the thing, after all, the piece of non-verbal language, which travels most easily between spaces, through walls, across classes and all kinds of other sectioned-off parts of communities. The scream—the most material of linguistic operations—is the thing that most connects. And, as will be discussed, the raising of the voice is not only a signifier of violence against Jo; it also stands in for it, thus redoubling its impact as a dramaturgical device. To that extent, despite the crisis the characters find themselves in in *dirty butterfly*, it can be said that their experiences of the world closely intersect. While the history of race and class in Britain is in some respects a history of segregation, *dirty butterfly* reminds us that it is also a history of intersections produced by racial differences being subsumed by shared experiences of class—nowhere more manifest than in social housing.

In a transnational historical context inflected by an awareness of the legal institutions of slavery, the intersection of race and gender appears clear in the question of rape. Both the institutions of marriage and slavery differed in fundamental respects but they shared the condition of it being impossible to hold a man to account for enforced sexual acts performed on a non-consenting female, irrespective of whether that female was a slave or a wife (Herring, 2019, p. 174). In both cases, the woman was considered

the property of the man and therefore could be treated however he wished. debbie tucker green elected not to represent Jo as a woman of colour and instead to position the woman suffering marital rape as a white woman. Given tucker green's overall concern with race and the experience of blackness, it might appear surprising that Jo is a white woman, not a black woman. The reasons for this can be speculated upon. One reason, to return to the very opening of this chapter, may concern the unrepresentability of histories of racial suffering, and a refusal to represent violence on a woman of colour in order to prevent it being normalised. Yet other reasons may include a decision to produce a primarily class-based, as opposed to race-based, scenario, or to represent the problem of marital rape as a universal problem for women, affecting the lives of white as well as black women. It may also have been out of the wish to produce a social dynamic more unexpected than an all-black cast, or to position the black female character—Amelia—in a position of both affinity and difference with Jo, as a means of testing the extent and degree of intersectionality that may develop between two women with comparable class positions but different racial histories.

Indeed, for Kazemi, while she considered the racial difference between Jo and Amelia to be a source of conflict between them—not least in terms of Jo's relative privilege for being white—they are able to bond on account of their shared 'sisterhood' (tucker green would revisit the theme of 'sisterhood' between black and white women, in her 2013 play, *nut*, which is discussed in the previous chapter). In our interview Kazemi said:

I think it's important that the two women in the play need each other, but I think it's so important, although it's not spoken to too directly, there is a barrier between them in race. And what [Amelia sees] in Jo [are] certain privileges or

certain opportunities or certain ways in which she could get help in the situation that she's in because of the colour of her skin that Amelia could not if she was in the same situation or maybe she was [in fact] in the same situation in the past, and she resents Amelia, or she resents Jo for not taking into account that she as a white woman has many privileges just because of the colour of her skin and that she herself is choosing to be victimised (Kazemi, 70-77).

It might have been a little heavy-handed of Kazemi to say that Amelia 'resents' Jo. The frustration she feels towards her may be considered natural for anyone witnessing a victim of abuse entangled in a cycle of delusional self-perpetration. What is striking about the racial dynamic is that a black person is witnessing a white person suffering abuse and taking action, while throughout history white people have been tacitly complicit in black suffering. This is especially the case in Britain, where the play is set, much of whose wealth derived from the slave trade while the actual number of black slaves on British soil was negligible compared with the American and the British colonies. In the days of the British Empire, therefore, slavery in Britain was hidden from view, albeit behind a paper-thin wall.

But the meaning of the race divide in *dirty butterfly*, stark as it might be, is otherwise left ambiguous. And yet their racial difference also serves to accentuate what Jo and Amelia share: they are both women. The fact that the play itself does not thematise race in an explicit way leaves the significance of Jo's whiteness open to speculation, which could lead to the conclusion that it was in fact tucker green's intention to keep the play open to speculation on exactly these lines, rather than producing closure—precisely because the division between black and white is never pure. The absence of any racial specification given to Jo's husband is perhaps the most striking aspect of the play's demographic infrastructure. The lack of closure produces conflict in the audience as well

as those staging and performing the play. Working on the assumption that the husband needed to have a race even if it would never be specified to the audience, Kazemi reports that, having discussed the race of the husband, she and the cast reached a unanimous decision that he was white. Although the director accepted that it had in all likelihood been tucker green's intention to leave the race of the husband open, she decided he had to be white because, as she explains, "I so reject the idea of the dangerous black man, that narrative, that single story narrative" (Kazemi, 119-20). As she further explained:

If we automatically assume that he is black, [the reason for] me assuming he was white or telling myself he was white, could have been because I was intentionally trying to work against that narrative that is put in every society and how deeply anti-blackness and how deeply the idea of a violent black man is put all over the media, literature, television, movies, and theatre (Kazemi, 128-32).

Kazemi's comment evinces how the nuanced intersectionality of tucker green's scenario has the potential to disconcert those who wish to view the social meaning of the play in clear-cut (indeed, black-and-white) terms. While I agree that the narrative of which the director speaks needs to be challenged, I would contend that any specification of the husband's race, on or off stage, undermines the social efficacy of tucker green's rejection of closure. Indeed, the irresolution of the conflict produced by this rejection is far more effective as a means of undermining stereotypes than any racial assignment to the husband, even if it is decided that he is white. Besides, deciding that he is white as opposed to black precludes the possibility of him being of any other race or mix of races, thereby sustaining a simplistic, binary-oppositional understanding of modern demographics which fails to account for intersectionality.

Staging and Performing Domestic Abuse

Kazemi explained in interview how movement and a pronouncedly physical form of acting were employed to suggest the violence being inflicted on Jo by her husband and the extent to which her wounds were felt beyond the contours of her body—that is, not only internally but extra-bodily—by other characters in the play and even, to a certain extent, by the audience. The director noted that the almost abstract physicality of the performance led many audience members to ask if she had a background in dance because she was very smooth, or if she had employed a choreographer, “which we didn’t, I just worked with the actors very carefully to [ensure] all of the movement in the first half before the epilogue was very intentional and sometimes synchronised between the three actors” (Kazemi, 245-47). In Kazemi’s production, Jo (played by Leah Raidt) would adjust the way in which she carried herself (“her body would change”) throughout the performance. At the beginning of the play, she was laying in the foetal position, looking wounded and hurt. The foetal position signifies pain that is not only physical but emotional; it is expressive of internality, of the wish to disappear into oneself, or, more abstractly, into a place of ‘unborn’ safety.

Throughout Kazemi’s production of the play, Jo would move in such a way that would indicate that she was in pain, or in constant fear of pain being inflicted upon her. In a scene already discussed, Jo talks about how she urinates carefully so as not to wake her husband. Jo thus alludes to the threat of violence with which she lives and which she has embodied in her movements. The necessary everyday act of urination is a bodily function which, on account of the fact that it puts the subject in a position of vulnerability, is contingent on the conditions of privacy and safety normally associated with the marital

home. For Jo, however, urination becomes a physically strenuous manoeuvre fraught with danger. And this is because, in the case of Jo and her husband, the marital home, instead of providing safety and privacy, imposes vulnerability and exposure to violence (and voyeurism). Kazemi accentuated the physicality of Jo's protracted description of her 'technique' by instructing the actor to take an elaborate position, "like a yoga position, or like a ballet position and trying to hold that position and not move at all and it was very hard [...] I had the actor like doing a lot of really strenuous physical things in the play that were actually uncomfortable and hard" (Kazemi, 255-59).

Following this, sound—or lack of it—was essential for generating a sense of Jo's pain and the threat of violence: quietness, whispering, tiptoeing, and other bodily and sonic suggestions of the need to be quiet conveyed the presence of the husband. At one moment, Kazemi explains, Amelia makes a loud noise and Jo ducks, as if she were about to be hit. If silence is employed to avoid provoking from the husband, it is also the avoidance of the subject's presence: the absence of Jo (through her silence) magnifies the presence of the husband. And thus, in turn, silence stands metonymically for the silence of the abused, for Jo's unwillingness to report the acts of violence committed against her, and of the witnesses, among whom are included not only Jason and Amelia but also the audience. *dirty butterfly*, and Kazemi's directorial interpretation of it, thus incorporates dramaturgical dichotomies of absence and presence, silence and sound, setting up a signifying dynamic in which sound stands for the inevitable and physical presence of the husband which is all the more strongly felt for his absence from the stage. Hence Amelia's sudden exclamation causes Jo to recoil—as if, indeed, Amelia had transformed into her husband.

By contrast, and to further accentuate the crippling effect of violence on Jo's body and being, Amelia is shown to have a far more positive relationship with sound. This is suggested when Amelia recalls the time when she used to skate in the mop water when she was cleaning the floors, either to imaginary music or to Jason's singing. Amelia says:

Skate it dry and get rid of the pools of too soapy, too much, too wet mop water. Skate it dry like my Torvill and Dean 'cept didn't know which is which which one's the woman. Who should be Torvill who should be Dean.

We never did know did we, *Jay*.

Scatting our "Bolero" while I'm skating it dry, singin our bad version while I'm slippin round. And you'd watch. And you'd sing. (tucker green, 2020, p. 29)

Even though Amelia refers to a moment in the past, lending the scene a sense of nostalgic poignancy, and even though the types of sound in question are different, the contrast is nonetheless striking: whereas Jo is stiff and downtrodden in her movements, perpetually constrained by an invisible force, Amelia reminisces pretending to ice skate on the slippery floor; and whereas Jo shudders when Amelia raises her voice—the sound suddenly standing in for her husband—Amelia dances to Jason's singing. Kazemi in her production had Amelia do "a bunch of dance moves" to music when she recalls to Jason when she used to skate in the mop water, thus bringing the past into the present and further contrasting Amelia's "healthy" relationship with sound to Jo's fear of it; and thus the violation of Jo's body is highlighted against Amelia's embodied freedom.

At times, Jo's movements are reflected in the movements of the other characters: as Kazemi states "if Jo was doing a movement, possibly, the male actor was also doing that movement with her at the same time, or sometimes her and Amelia were doing things at the same time, or sometimes Amelia and him were doing things at the same time"

(Kazemi, 247-50). Dramaturgical mirroring of this kind conveys a potent combination of different mechanisms of receptivity. It alludes to the neighbours' empathy and voyeurism as well as the notion that Jo's injuries are to be understood both actually—as they are, indeed, actually being inflicted upon Jo who is an individual victim and, in the narrative context of the play, the only direct recipient of her husband's abuse—and abstractly, for her suffering is also the suffering of the community. In this latter sense, furthermore, communal suffering is likewise metaphorical and actual, potential and present. On the one hand, Jo's pain, her silence, and the silent witnessing and voyeurism of her neighbours and of the audience, is symbolic of social illness affecting the body politic and existing as a condition of poverty. And, on the other hand, as long as Jo's suffering is unreported, her husband is a potential danger not only to her but also to her neighbours. Hence, dramaturgically, as Kazemi explains, "The way that people moved, it's like every movement of one person rippled has an effect on the other people" (Kazemi. 251-52). This creates an intensely empathetic interrelation between the characters and the audience. Kazemi explains that this interrelation was all the more intense in the second production of the play, when the audience was much closer to the actors—in keeping with the script's opening stage direction: "The audience should surround the actors" (tucker green, 2020, p. 2), which emphasises the importance of this proximity for the playwright. While in the first production in Halcyon Theatre in 2016, the actors were positioned on a more traditional stage jutting into the audience, in the second performed at Theatre on the Lake in 2017, this formal separation was removed. The affectivity created by this proximity was so intense that one of the audience members, Kazemi recalls, began to gag and also vomited at the sight of Jo's vomit:

One time [Jo vomiting] was so close to an audience member that the audience member threw up as well. So yeah, he started gagging. He was in the front row and I was like, oh my God, because the first time we [produced the play], it was more proscenium or thrust, the second time was didn't. So the audience was much closer to the stage (Kazemi, 312-15).

While Kazemi suggests that this had much to do with the makeup and the realism of the artificial vomit they used, as well as the proximity between the actors and the audience, it is likely that the choreography of the performances and the “ripple” effect that the director describes also contributed to this visceral response.

The Paper-Thin Wall

The flow of embodied emotion between characters (and into the audience) is furthermore facilitated by the play's spatial dynamic. *dirty butterfly* is divided between four spaces, three of which are contiguous: Amelia and Jason's apartments, the apartment of Jo and her husband, and the coffee shop. The space of the coffee shop is disconnected from the first three spaces in two respects—first because it is non-contiguous in spatial and architectural terms, and second because it is separated from the main body of the text in the form of an epilogue. There is also another dimension to this difference which is that in terms of performance strategies the cafe is represented realistically whereas the housing complex is represented abstractly. In the café, all of the regular mise-en-scene of such a place is staged: cooking equipment, storage, tables, chairs, and Amelia (who works there) is also costumed in realistic attire. This in fact marks an ontological break from the rest of the play which is set in an abstract non-representational space without references, without props, scenery, or even realistic costume. What this radical reduction achieves, in terms of performance strategies, is a stripping down of the play visually, spatially, and acoustically, to basic elements which articulate the drama—and none of them is more

present and significant than the paper-thin walls which schematically represent both the spatial proximity and the social alienation and distance of the characters in the play.

In her production, Kazemi had the walls made of plastic to create a dichotomous dynamic of porosity and obfuscation: “it was a little bit like you couldn’t reach through it, but it was not a wall. And this idea that, you can’t quite see, or you can’t quite hear what’s going on, but you kind of can” (Kazemi, 460-62). This, she goes on to explain, was also an allusion to the broader problem of social disconnect in contemporary urban life: we put up walls as we become more individualistic, looking out only for ourselves. Indeed, this notion has strong implications for the audience as witness, walled off from the action on the stage and yet emotionally involved with it. The paper-thin wall is representative of the relation not only between the characters on the stage but between us and the characters. In the original production at London’s Soho Theatre in 2003, the characters were “placed at various heights on an underlit roof”, emphasising their isolation from each other, and the roof then lowered to reveal the café (Johns, 2003). Division was highlighted by the awkward footing of the characters, and the difficulty in their precarious circumstances of reaching one another, or moving at all. Perhaps the original setting was more focused on the impossibility of movement than the paper-thin division itself, which, by contrast, was represented physically by the (actual) paper-thin wall in Kazemi’s production.

In the UK as in other parts of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in reports of domestic abuse as government-enforced lockdowns have left victims with no other option than to stay at home with their abusers (see Townsend, 2020). In densely populated areas, people become more aware of the daily presence of their

neighbours as they had to stay at home—the walls between households, we might say, have become thinner. The pandemic may have highlighted the social pertinence and the urgency of *dirty butterfly*, which speaks to our inclination to ignore or deny obscenity for the very reason that it is obscene in the sense of being “off stage”, whether because it takes place behind closed doors or because it is hidden behind a brave face, or some other form of architectural or embodied façade. This, furthermore, inflects with new meaning the absence of direct visual representation of violence on the stage: its “off-stage-ness”, reflects our unwillingness to see it. The fact that this absence of violence heightens its emotive presence may in this sense be seen as an ironic gesture of moral chastisement for our self-imposed blindness.

The psychological interiority surrounding marital rape, the site of violence being the home and because of the shame, secrecy and repression to which its victims succumb, is of special importance in a play whose performance centres on domesticity—if we consider the home to be a spatial and physical manifestation of the interior of the psyche. In this latter sense, the spatial ontology of the three homes represented on the stage, which also exists as the spatial ontology of the stage itself—which in turn floods into the ontology of the auditorium and the theatre as a whole—becomes a physical metaphor representative of the trauma taking place in Jo’s mind. The seeming permanence and immovability of the home’s physicality—as Jo sees it—contrasts with the open staging in a way that is reflective of the difference between the sense of imprisonment experienced by the victim of abuse and the possibility of escape, and thus her own role in perpetuating her victimhood, witnessed by her neighbours and the audience.

Jo is white and her husband's race is not specified. However, the particular problem of black marital rape is an issue in *dirty butterfly* given the fact that its witnesses are black. Collins has referred to rape's power as stemming from "relegating sexual violence to the private, devalued, domestic sphere reserved for women", and this is certainly the case in the play and inflects its performance strategies (2004, p. 228). The singular importance of the wall as a performance strategy in *dirty butterfly* calls for a deeper understanding and investigation into the use of the wall and motifs of walls as performance strategies more broadly in theatre, including the symbolic status of the wall and its relationship to violence, property, relations, and the body. The first part of this conceptualisation requires also thinking more deeply about what a wall is and expanding our thinking to include the partition, the membrane, and the boundary. The fact that specific staging decisions were taken to avoid the realistic setting of an interior space and instead present the play in an abstract environment is the first hint that, although the play's language and expressive culture effectively situates the scenario within a historically specific social and political scenario, it is also presenting itself to be read on a more abstract and conceptual level.

The history of the partition in theatre is of course elaborate and complex with multiple origins across global traditions. Within the British history of theatre, and of theatre in Europe in general, the mostly indoor nature of the medium necessitated walls and partitions which theatrical traditions in other places (where climate dictates outdoor performances) do not (Kerr & Plastow, 2011, p. 44). Even within that tradition, there was a wall-less theatre in operation before the mass adoption of the proscenium stage which effectively separated audience from performers by a partially-screening partition, the

proscenium (Wilson & Goldfarb, 1983, p. 76). What the proscenium sets up is a division between on and off stage, and with this distance also comes a differential of action and appearance across which certain kinds of desire to see, hear, and know what happens are produced and which constitute the poetics of the theatre understood in terms of desire to participate, endorsed by a long series of dramatists and critics (Grotowski, Barba, & Brook, 2015, p. 8).

We should read *dirty butterfly* as part of the long history of modern and postmodern theatre works which have attempted to displace this separation, most notably and earliest by the Swiss modernist architect and set designer Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. For Appia, the stage became an abstract play of basic functions: space, light, movement, steps, ramps, edges, planes, expansions (1989, p. 52). Within Appia's work the stage usually referred to architectural/spatial elements in terms of their general function, and as actors onstage in performances with strategic roles to play which equal those of the characters themselves.

This is the light in which it is possible to approach the wall as a performance strategy in *dirty butterfly*. The wall in *dirty butterfly* is of course an interior wall, a wall which has insides and no outside. Although, on an official level, the wall still functions as a line of property and territory as a border between abode and community (the very idea of the *communitas* being linked to common ownership of land defined by borders; see Morley & Robbins, 2001, p. 196), it is different from the external wall that separates an inside from an outside. The interior wall which connects and separates the lives of the characters in *dirty butterfly* is more akin to a cell wall: an interior within an interior while also being a boundary of sorts. Thus, the wall carries an ambiguous status on the stage.

On one level, it is not something which gives or prevents access to an outside but which defines a level of interiority within an already interior condition; on another, it is still a partition, separating one family from neighbours and, to an extent, positioning the trauma of a family beyond the other neighbours'’ remit of control, which then raises questions as to the mutuality of responsibility between the three homes. It is this ambiguous quality of an interior wall within an interior—and yet not to the exclusion of any exteriority also permeating this dynamic—which lends the wall of *dirty butterfly* such close correspondence with the bodies and psychological states of mind in the characters. In this sense when we speak about ‘the wall’ we are speaking about less a solid masonry construction than a thin panel, a membrane or threshold which can displace itself across multiple ontological levels.

The stage wall is, of course, always relatively insubstantial and associated with states of psychological interiority, especially in its guise as a stage “flat”, a movable partition which gives access to alternative versions of a world or fictive places (Milling & Thompson, 2015, p. 9). The insubstantiality of the wall, or the penetrability, has been a quality which lends it the function of an apparatus for the voyeur: the one who is able to see without seeing, satisfying their desire for a spectacle without having to be subject to any kind of intersubjective ethical responsibility (Rodosthenous, 2015, pp. 5-8). The paper-thin wall in *dirty butterfly* has no holes in it: in fact, the spectacle that might be revealed if there were a hole would be too grotesque to watch. Jason is instead a sonic voyeur: he is stimulated by the sounds of things he would not dare or wish to see. The wall is therefore visually insulated, it allows a certain ambiguity, a muffled uncertainty where sex and violence become indistinguishable.

When Jo learns of Jason's sonic obsession with her body and its abuse she confronts him, exposing his audio voyeurism:

Jason: You know if that was me with you . . .

wouldn't have quieted you like that-

Jo: that be you still being my next door knight in shining armour That be you still being my next door knight that never moves a muscle that loves listenin in and whispers words a comfort that get lost passing through. That be you or whatever part you're wishing yourself to play in your audio version a my mornin – Jason (tucker green, 2020, p. 38)

Jo goes on to mock Jason, teasing him for having adopted a position of coitus with the wall as if it were his mute surrogate for the body of Jo herself which he cannot touch or even see but can hear. To that end Jo uses the language of sound "leaking" (tucker green, 2020, p. 46) through the wall which suggests that words are like fluids in the way they pass through membranes. Leakage and spilling are frequent motifs throughout the play, usually through descriptions of "pissin" or bleeding spoken about in ways which are at once domestic, erotic, and pathological. In the above quoted passage sound takes on the nature of another of these bodily fluids which transgresses boundaries, this time the leaky plaster membrane between the two apartments.

It is no surprise therefore to see that in the stage performance of the play the wall has been abstracted from the literal domestic wall of an urban communal housing project and reconstituted as a more abstract figurative presence on the stage in such a way that it can be touched, handled, leaned on, smoothed, pressed, sheltered against. The thinness of the wall is further enhanced by illuminating it from the inside, making its semi-translucent covering glow with a flesh tone that suggests the wall itself has a quality of vitality. It is this abstract figuration of the wall as an acoustic/corporeal membrane which constitutes

the main performance strategy in Kazemi's production of *dirty butterfly* and it is important now to reflect on how this strategy can be seen as a reading device for the devastating issues of marital rape which are the basis of the entire work.

Throughout the history of European drama since the Renaissance, the wall has been a symbol of virginity, embodied in the hymen. The story of the rape of Lucretia has already been referred to earlier in this chapter; in a similar way that story is symbolically represented through the penetration of a veil which serves as the membrane of interiority separating the body of a married woman from the world and acting as a site of violation and rape. The breaking of the wall becomes symbolic of the act of rape itself and this tallies with a long history of the correspondence between the destruction of cities and the exploitation and rape of women's bodies (Higgins, 2010, p. 89). Within the cultural traditions and histories of the Black Atlantic, the correspondences proliferate and a great deal has been written on the subject of the rape of women within the institutions of slavery and the violence enacted on women's bodies, as well as the role of spatial regimes of confinement, incarceration, and imprisonment (Kennedy, 2013, p. 43). Beginning with the slave forts in the West coast of Africa, the slave ship itself, and the regimes of plantations and their segregated realms of domestic enslavement and separation, the wall has provided a means of violent enforcement of property rights (including rights of access to that property) which has included the rights of women especially (Fett, 2002, p. 193). In the post-slavery world, the threat of rape remained and proliferated and abstracted itself beyond the physical act to structural systems of oppression and violence (which also included far higher incidences of rape suffered by black women than white) (Bardaglio, 1998, p. 225). Given the nature of multiple systematic forms of oppression, intersectional

violence has been enacted inter-generationally on black women and in general the absence of ‘walls’ to prevent exploitation across many levels of the spectrum, from an individual body to the enclosure of a collective has resulted in higher incidences and exposure to violence in the lives of black women. In the context of an urban social housing situation, the wall is now the sonically permeable boundary between lives which seep, leak, and bleed through from one space into another.

The response of cultural critics to persistent effects of slavery and anti-black racism on the legal status of violence towards black women—and the intergenerational trauma created by this historic violence and its neglect within legal frameworks—has been to make attempts to reclaim the interior from exploitative systems and to maintain it as a space apart with its own regimes and rituals designed to foster community where, in public, there is none. Elizabeth Alexander has been among the first of those to formulate and theorise the idea of the “black interior” which stands as a zone of interiority which enables a safe space in which black women’s subjectivity can be enshrined and protected against threat (2004, p. 61). While this logic may represent an ideal function of art (it produces an interior behind which one can hide oneself), tucker green’s play is a demonstration of what happens to the body and mind when that interiority is transgressed upon through sonic voyeurism. In this sense, the wall behind which the female subject constructs an interior world of selfhood is violated absolutely in the act of rape. In *dirty butterfly* what one witnesses, therefore, is the destruction of a wall, both physical and bodily, as well as inside the mind.

It may well be that the wall onstage in *dirty butterfly* is kept abstract in order to retain this sense of possibility—this is certainly the condition invoked by Adolphe Appia

(1989, pp. 1-80). What this allows is the wall of the play to take on the materiality of rape. It is both the means and the site of rape, the penetration without consent of one world by another. When, in the epilogue of the play, Jo emerges from her apartment and steps out of its regime of sex and violence, the wall of her interior breaks. In the coffee shop—a semi-public space outside of the home—her “wall” is bleeding, leading to a horrific final scene in which Amelia attempts to contain the spread of blood over the coffee shop surfaces with a wall of tissue paper. This marks a dramatic shift in the performance techniques deployed onstage as that which had formerly remained in the level of the abstract suddenly becomes present in a physical wounding. Performance notes in *dirty butterfly* indicate that the play should be set onstage in the centre of a ring of audience members—they are, of course, the outer wall, the wall of representation which walls in the interiority of the characters, framing them, allowing them to speak and achieve visibility while at the same time being a means by which Jo’s violation is completed as the total visibility and audibility of her rape becomes witnessed by all. The emergence of Jo in the epilogue may itself seem to violate the unity of the scene which has so intensified through the relentless language of interiority and sonic voyeurism, but as horrific as it is it marks a moment of extreme importance for black theatre and theatre in general in Britain as it testifies to a collective confrontation of a set of issues which have historically been repressed from public consciousness. By staging the wall in the centre of another social ‘wall’ of audience members, tucker green finds a way to activate drama and stage strategies as powerful contemporary tools for the examination of the condition of black life in Britain today. The question then becomes: how does society in general deal with its walls, with the acts of violence committed between and on them, and what kinds of

spaces—the coffee shops, if you will—can it provide or stage to allow some kind of healing, or at least acknowledgment, of the crimes of the past? Perhaps the theatre is the first of these spaces.

Chapter Five

“Say it”: Marital Silence in debbie tucker green’s *born bad*

Raisins in the Sun

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up?

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over—

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode? (Hughes, 1999, p. 238)

Langston Hughes’s 1951 poem “Harlem” sums up a particular condition of repression associated with the plight of people in mid-twentieth-century America. The “dream” is the mythic American dream promised to all but from which American black people were excluded (Dualé, 2018, p. 2). It is also the dream of social cohesion envisioned most famously by Martin Luther King (Miller, 2015, p. 5). And in Hughes’s poem the dream deferred becomes a burden, which is emphasised in the manner in which the poem is at

such pains to separate the different metaphors and struggles to make sense of the feeling that the dream deferred bears; and penultimately when, in a tone that is partly of resignation, Hughes writes, “Maybe it just sags / like a heavy load”.

In her 1959 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, the title of which is drawn from Hughes’s poem, Lorraine Hansberry wrote about the inability of a young black man to become self-reliant and thereby achieve the dream of success. Hansberry portrayed this condition of being held back as something intrinsic to the black American family. Walter grows up with his mother while his father, Big Walter, is dead. The absence of the father figure reflects the situation of many black American families affected by trauma handed down from the era of slavery, during which fathers were forced to be apart from their families. As the sociologist Orlando Patterson (1998, p. 21) explains, “to the degree that slavery, and later racial discrimination in the employment sector, prevented them from meeting their material obligations as providers”, for black American men, “fatherhood [was] a site of shame and humiliation”. Fundamentally, Patterson argues, this problem has its roots in slavery’s denial of the male parental role in enslaved men, because slavery was “quintessentially about one person assuming, through brute force and the legalised violence of his government, absolute power and authority over another”; fatherhood, therefore, could not exist, “since this meant owning one’s children, having parental power and authority over them” (Patterson, 1998, p. 27). The play presents the lack of a paternal presence in the family – an issue too often mythologised as an essential trait of black men, rather than a problem pertaining to ancestral injustice – and in turn the dominance of the matriarch, as a source of Walter’s emasculation and inability to move forward

(McDonough, 2006, p. 141). This impasse might be described as an American dream that, for African Americans, is always deferred.

Further, “Harlem” is equally about silence, the repression of trauma and the toxicity it creates, as if the deferral of the dream and of acknowledging or opening up about one’s repressed pain were somehow in correlation. The trauma in question is intergenerational, inherited from the time of slavery. As a number of scholars—most prominently Joy DeGruy in her 2005 book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s legacy of enduring injury and healing*—have demonstrated, the inheritance of slavery continues to affect black people today, manifesting in a lack of self-esteem, persistent feelings of anger and internalised beliefs imposed by and through the legacies of anti-black racism (DeGruy, 2005, p. 1-24; Pouissant & Alexander, 2000, p. 15). According to DeGruy’s definition:

Post traumatic slave syndrome is a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to this condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them (2005, p. 109).

Thus, the silence surrounding trauma passed from one generation to the next operates in conjunction with deferral since it fosters the persistence of this trauma’s effects on the ability of the individual to function in society—both within and outside the home—thus perpetuating a historical cycle of abuse. The pain preventing the individual from moving forward will continue to inflict harm on them and defer the dream as long as this pain is shrouded in silence. The repressed suffering that underpins the narrative of tucker green’s second play, *born bad* (2003b) and the silence surrounding the crime that haunts the

family's members has all the properties of the deferred dream portrayed in Hughes's poem. Leah C. Gardiner, the director of the play's US premiere in 2011 at the Soho Rep, New York, referred to this poem when I interviewed her about the production:

Langston Hughes has a poem where he talks about a raisin in the sun [that] festers like a wound, and then it runs. And it really is like their [the family's] relationship, the silence in their relationship. I believe I used this analogy with the actors, if I recall, [the silence] was like this wound that was just getting sicker and sicker and smellier and smellier until it just began to run. At that stage when a wound is that sick and unhealthy and that, you know, that decayed, it's very hard to repair (Gardiner, 148-53).

born bad follows a “blood-related” black family over an unspecified duration, being structured around a sequence of short, vignette-like scenes set within the family's home. The characters comprise only the family's members, who are named according to their position in the family: Dad, Mum, Dawta, Sister 1, Sister 2, Brother. As stated in the preface, “DAWTA is also sister to the SISTERS and BROTHER who are also son and dawtas of MUM and DAD” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 4). Dawta's ‘daughterhood’ is marked out because it was she, the plot slowly and indirectly reveals, whom Mum ‘chose’ for Dad to rape—thus her relation to the parents is highlighted. Each scene is fraught with tension, although little is said, the main topic of conversation being spoken around without being said out loud. And although little happens (even if much *has* happened), it is this tension that makes each scene compelling and drives the narrative. Towards the end, it is revealed that Brother, too, was raped by Dad.

It is in the obfuscation of facts that the wound becomes increasingly toxic, burdensome and irreparable, and in the gaps—the breaks, the beats, the blackouts—that it seeps through. The pain elicited echoes the “load” that threatens always to “explode” in

“Harlem”. The silence that prevails throughout *born bad* is summed up in the opening scene, and the repeated words, “say it”, become the play’s centre:

DAD is sitting in the chair, confidently.

DAWTA is not.

Silently she demands eye contact.

He finds it difficult.

DAWTA Say it.

 Say it.

 Daddy . . .

 Say it.

They make eye contact.

She gains his lost confidence.

The hymn draws to an end.

Black out (tucker green, 2003b, p. 6).

Despite the repeated calls to “say it”, it—the violence that Dad has committed on his family—is never said. This reiteration of silence is the radically simple, brutal logic that underwrites *born bad*, first performed at the Hampstead Theatre in London in 2003. The quest for some form of resolution is encapsulated in this demand, which is made throughout the play over and over again and pitted against the silence of Dad. As in the case of many if not all of tucker green’s plays, *born bad* explores pathological compulsive responses to traumatic events such as rape and incest, with a focus on how these events engender a collective wound when the violence goes unchecked or unacknowledged as a result of complicity and repression (Sawyers, 2018, para. 5). Thus, *born bad*

problematizes how to see, read, and interpret the play; in this prolonged single act of saying nothing, language proliferates in a barrage of sharp, short lines which reviewers have referred to as “artillery” (Isherwood, 2011, para. 1). In this way observers are challenged to make sense of the experience, and thus the audience—made to guess and second-guess what has happened—become caught in the dual dynamic of recall and repression.

born bad is a play that demands that something is said yet in which nothing—or, almost nothing—is said. It is this condition of nothing being said, and yet there being everything to say, which defines the relationship between husband and wife, as well as between parents and offspring, and its imbrication with ideas of ‘double oppression’ and ‘black masculinity’. At the core of the play’s dramaturgical dynamic is the relationship between wife and husband in which the two figures are present together but are not interlocutors. In approaching this dynamic, therefore, the task shifts from dealing with what is said in the play to confronting the problem of the impossibility of speech itself, and the social, historical and familial contexts out of which this impossibility emerges. The attendant disruption of language, space and relationships, and how these are played out on stage through language and performance strategies surrounding the wife and husband convey the repercussions (dramaturgical and fictional) of the disconnection between these two characters on the rest of the family. Language is a powerful paradox that is confronted with the problem of the unspeakable; through its obfuscation of the truth and inherent failure, especially when it is (un)spoken, gains, rather than loses, its potential to express conditions of psychological, social and historical experience.

This chapter focuses on the dramatic use of silence in *born bad* and how it interplays with voice to intensify the affectivity of repression in a narrative about rape, incest and trauma. According to Lea Sawyers (2018, para. 5), the theme of trauma in tucker green’s work is instrumental and serves as a “federative force” that “is paradoxical but operates effectively on tucker green’s stage. The playwright’s writing is able to accommodate highly sensitive uncomfortable questions without provoking general outright rejection” (Sawyers, 2018, para. 19). I wish to explore this notion that trauma and repression in *born bad* are “federative”, by which is meant that the pain felt by the characters and elicited in the audience creates “a sense of communion with the audience, through a shared In-yer-face experience of trauma” (Sawyers, 2018, para. 19) — (“In-yer-face”: a term coined by Aleks Sierz). For Sawyers, this communion protects the playwright from accusations of didacticism. I would like to elaborate on this point, focusing more deeply and explicitly on the dramaturgy that produces this communion, considering not only tucker green’s script but also Gardiner’s performance strategies. I also wish to contextualise the vicarious experience of trauma within histories and theories of the intersectionality of blackness and gender. Intergenerational trauma, I argue, is witnessed in both the husband and the wife in *born bad*. The husband’s castration can be understood as a product of his own inherited trauma from slavery, since the man is powerless outside of the home and abusive and domineering within it, while nonetheless remaining powerless to take responsibility for his actions. The predicament of the wife is a product of this same trauma, her silence perpetuating the violence she has suffered at the hands of her husband, in what her daughter appears to recognise as tantamount to complicity.

This vicarious experience of trauma is especially achieved, as this chapter will show, via the leveraging of silence as a dramatic tool. As John Lutterbie (1988, pp. 468-81) has argued, silence in theatre can be deployed to produce images of interiorisation and to both demarcate and blur the limits of subjectivity, often responding to and commenting on the inherent failure of language to encapsulate consciousness. Such failure as a dramaturgical mode is apposite not only to the repression of trauma but also, more specifically, to trauma's intergenerational inheritance. Due to the silence surrounding such trauma, the subject's experience of it is constantly obfuscated by their ignorance of its origins—which are both internal and external—and the extent to which it is shared. To articulate this particular trauma as subjective experience is thus very difficult if not impossible. Along similar lines, tucker green exploits silence to navigate the psyche and highlight the limitations of language (Sawyers, 2018, para.8), imbuing it with an excruciatingly repressive quality, eliciting in the audience a yearning to know what is not being said. The audience is thus led to guess and question—and perhaps, at times, doubt—the nature of the trauma to which the play constantly alludes but does not explicate, and they are drawn into a state of confusion mirroring the lack of clarity and cognitive obfuscation of the truth in the minds of the characters.

The action of *born bad* is condensed into a single act which takes place on a single day, featuring a cast of six who remain onstage from beginning to end and who represent what is described in the notes as a “blood-related black family” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 4). In its staging at the Hampstead Theatre the play was sparsely designed and darkly lit, consisting of abbreviated references to the setting of a non-specific but brown-toned domestic interior arrayed with six chairs in which characters sit or leave empty—not in

the naturalistic mode of a soap opera, but in a formal, stylised manner that illuminates the powerful underlying codes of behaviour and taboos which characterise domestic space and, ultimately, make it a loaded carrier for people's most intensive and traumatic relations to those closest to them. In the analysis of this chapter, therefore, the complicit relationship between what is said, and where and in what configuration it is articulated onstage and within the family interior, can never be fully separated. Silence operates as one of the fundamental keys, including atmosphere and lighting—which is punctuated throughout with 'black outs'—a highly poignant dramaturgical device. This is frequently combined in the play with beats, what would become a signature of tucker green's stage strategies, manifesting as brief silences or pauses in the script, which create a rhythm of key moments during the play. I discuss such performance strategies below, referring to my interview with Leah Gardiner.

Drawing on theories of 'double oppression' and 'black masculinity' (Crenshaw, 2017, p. 4; Collins, 2004, p. 78; Daniel, 2010, p. 160), I begin the following discussion by analyzing the specific intersection of race and gender that underpins Dad's silence. I argue that he is representative of the castrated black patriarch whose emasculation and oppression are codified in his lack of speech, explaining that the paradox of his power over his family and inferable powerlessness outside of it is inseparable from the legacy of slavery. Dad breaks the Western stereotype of the black man and yet he is also produced by such stereotyping. Continuing the theme of the intersectionality of race and gender, I then discuss Mum and Dawta's silent reaction to it. I interpret Dawta's speech in which she repeatedly calls her mother a "bitch" as castigation for the latter's complicity in Dad's crime and thus her instrumental role in continuing the cycle of abuse. As such, Dawta

presents a rebuke to the notion of ‘sisterhood’, developed by second wave feminists to argue for an equally shared solidarity between all women, which was deconstructed by third wave feminists who argued that such seeming solidarity can amount to one generation of women being complicit in the previous generation’s traumas. Dawta’s aggression towards her mother can be aligned with this critique, which I elaborate through an exploration of the semiotic and dramaturgical significance of the gospel hymn that is sung as a choral prelude to the play and which Mum hums to herself. Furthermore, I argue that the emotionally uninhibited relationship exhibited by Dawta towards Mum contrasts with—and perhaps even strengthens—Dad’s position of privilege which he enjoys by remaining silent while his daughter can challenge him only with the request to “say it”. Finally, I undertake an in-depth analysis of the performance strategies that Gardiner employed to enhance the audience’s vicarious experience of the family’s trauma.

Black Masculinity and the Castrated Patriarch

The representation of Dad as a castrated patriarch can be broadly understood in terms of how black drama, through the prism that it offers, has tended to position itself in confrontation with faulty representations of black trauma—in which black men are presented as pathologically prone to criminality, hypersexuality and violence—captured in European-American narratives. The “brute” or “buck” stereotype, for instance, popularized by the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), was born of and spurred the fear that physically powerful black men would enact sexual revenge against their white oppressors by fornicating with their daughters (Bogle, 2001, p. 10-18; Jackson, 2006, p. 41-44). As Ronald Jackson (2006, p. 41) explains, “The brute or buck’s primary objective was raping

White women. He, essentially, refused to even attempt to control his insatiable sexual desires and urges; hence, the Black body of the brute was scripted to be nothing less than an indiscreet, devious, irresponsible, and sexually pernicious beast”. The stereotype of the hypersexualized black man presents him as a figure whose sexuality outwardly defines him over and above all else.

Rather than show the traumatised black patriarch as sexually extraverted or explosive, tucker green renders him implosive—castrated, mute—partially aligning him with the black men struggling to achieve personal agency in the mid-twentieth-century plays of Hansberry and Amiri Baraka, and in more recent decades in the work of August Wilson. Nonetheless, tucker green’s portrayal of black male suffering also steers away from these examples, since the father in *born bad* has surrendered to his predicament and there is no assumption of the origins of his castration, a matter which is left to the audience to consider. Conversely, reflecting on the works of Hansberry, Baraka and Wilson, Carla McDonough (2006, p. 143) explains that their “male characters are affected by the assumption that manhood is often conferred upon or denied a man by women, but they also view their manhood as imperiled by white animosity”. In *born bad*, the father’s thwarted masculinity is different from that archetypically represented in Hansberry’s aforementioned *A Raisin in the Sun*, for instance, in which Walter, a boy growing up with his mother, is emasculated under the pressure of the matriarchy, an issue that is resolved towards the end of the play. In *born bad*, no culprit is given for the father’s castration, and no resolution is offered.

tucker green manages to represent emasculation without explicating its cause—since its cause is so tied up with silence and intergenerational trauma and thus cannot be

pinned easily to a particular character (such as the mother in *A Raisin in the Sun*)—and without resorting to, or being affected by, stereotypes. McDonough (2006, p. 141) explains that the idea that matriarchal dominance in black families prevents young men from reaching maturity and attaining a responsible position in society ran in accordance with the culturally biased image of the black family in America in the mid-twentieth-century:

[...] the fact that the main conflict in Hansberry's famous play occurs between Mama and her grown son Walter for control of the insurance check further reflects American perceptions of how matriarchal control affects black manhood. Walter's firm belief in his right to the money and his sense of being oppressed by Mama, who initially takes control of the check, reflect the idea of black manhood being limited by the power of the matriarchy (McDonough, 2006, p. 141).

While the idea of the castrated patriarch may also serve to empower tucker green's female characters, in *born bad* it is not the mother who dominates the son, but Dawta who is given dramaturgical dominance over her father so that she might give voice to the abuse that she has experienced. This departure from the matriarchal model employed by Hansberry is significant because although Dawta is dominant in terms of her use of speech, she is by no means partially responsible for her father's emasculation. Her behaviour is always in reaction to abuse she has received from her father, which is the ultimate, unspoken dominating factor in the drama.

These ideas of 'double oppression' and 'black masculinity' have merged within critical race studies in the wake of Kimberlé Crenshaw's and Patricia Hill Collins's work on intersectionality in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and have more recently been taken up by G. Reginald Daniel. As Daniel (2010, p. 160) has written, black women are subject to "a convergence of social inequities based on race and gender" which relegates them to

subordinate positions within society. *born bad* is a staging of just such a ‘double oppression’ and it will be argued in this reading that the fundamental materialisation of this ‘double oppression’ in theatre is in the act of speech, since it is the agency to speak or not to speak which defines conditions of oppression and non-oppression on the stage. *born bad* presents a study in ‘black masculinity’—that culturally constructed paradigm of identity which concerns the experience of black men in society that affects their marital lives. Although Dad in *born bad* is essentially silent throughout the entire play, this lack of speech is in itself a powerful expression of the problem of ‘black masculinity’: not only manifesting in the subject’s withholding of the sense of shame and other emotions precipitated by his perennial trauma and powerlessness, but perhaps also commenting on the lack of voice afforded to black men—especially on the topic of ‘black masculinity’—in public discourse (Lemelle, 2012, p. 3). Collins (2004, p.78) has located the problem of masculinity and blackness within the context of how ‘black masculinity’ has often been conceptualised from a Western-centric perspective and through a particular lens applied mostly in the case of white men. She links this skewed conceptualisation of ‘black masculinity’, within the context of the legacy of slavery, and the desire of black men to reclaim the patriarchal power that they were once denied. Collins (2004, p. 78) also notes:

Because enslaved African men were denied the patriarchal power that came with family and property, they claimed other markers of masculinity, namely, sexual prowess and brute strength. Foreshadowing contemporary images of Black masculinity that celebrate hyper sexuality and athletic ability, Black men were permitted dimensions of masculinity that most benefited Whites.

From a historical viewpoint, the underlying challenge concerning ‘black masculinity’ pertains to how it has been constrained within the straitjacket of Western stereotypes. This is an observation proposed by bell hooks (2004, p. 3) who further argues that the inability

of black men of expressing their *own* masculinity in the same way that their white cohorts are able to, has culminated in portrayals of black men as violent, chauvinists, hyper-sexualised, aggressive and criminal. This is a common conceptualisation that has been represented in drama, as black dramatists have devised strategies that are predicated on the aim of re-claiming these skewed narratives—such as the British playwrights Roy Williams and Kwame Kwei-Armah, both of whom present black male stereotypes to then dismantle them and critique the socioeconomic conditions of their perpetuation in British society (see Goddard, 2015, pp. 112-27). In the latest edition of *New Black Man* (2015), as well as in *Looking for Leroy: Illegible black masculinities*, Mark Neal (2013, p. 3; 2015, p. 4) offers a critical analysis of how notions of ‘black masculinity’ are being revised in response to previous conceptions, and these revisions include the embracing of homophobia and feminism. In presenting these ideas, Neal engages in a nuanced discussion about the complex ways in which ‘black masculinity’ is being reframed. Such a discussion, naturally, is juxtaposed against a discussion about how ‘black masculinity’ has been misread in the past. Despite Neal’s (2015, p.4) positioning, concurrently, some black men, and indeed, black writers, have tended to internalise Western ideas about ‘black masculinity’ insofar as the identifiers that are linked with being a “black male” are concerned. Judith Butler’s (1988, p. 519) ideas on gender as performative are particularly important for understanding how ‘black masculinity’ becomes constructed through social and cultural norms, including those replicated in theatre or drama, which are then ritualised. tucker green also embodies what might at first seem to be Western constructs of ‘black masculinity’ in her drama, though she complicates the relation between her male characters and the stereotypes from which they might seem to derive. The libidinous Jason

in *dirty butterfly*, for instance, expresses his sexual interest in his neighbour through the language of fantasy, rather than through the physicality of his body which is abstracted into the paper-thin wall separating him from the object of his voyeuristic fixation.

Intersectional critiques of literature have two alternate tendencies. The first, of which Crenshaw's scholarship used throughout this thesis is a stand out example, presents a recognition of the absolute particularity not only of an overall racialised experience but of a complex intersectional issue that needs to be recognised as such if justice is to be done to minority identities, and if they are to be protected from having their differences go unaccounted for (Crenshaw, 1991). The second tendency is to assert that considering art produced by black artists as representative only of a black cultural context is to limit its significance and relevance within the broadest national and international audiences. As Paul Gilroy has argued, the "racialisation" of work by black artists can manifest forms of dominance by political regimes determined to limit black art to a minoritarian role in society (2001, pp. 11-53). With these critical concerns in mind, the following analysis attempts to pursue a close textual analysis of speech and performance as modes of representation through which the experiences of 'double oppression' and 'black masculinity' are communicated onstage represented in the wife/ husband relationship in *born bad*.

The Problematics of Sisterhood

'Sisterhood' has already been established as a critical socio-cultural construction inflecting the relationships within tucker green's plays: it was specifically discussed in chapter three analysing *nut* (2013), signifying bonds of female-female alliance productive of safe spaces. The mother/daughter relationship has shaped the marital bonds from two

angles, from the father's passivity towards the daughter's brutal speech although he is the responsible one for this ruptured relationship, and also as an opposed representation to the silence as she is the one who assertively delivers the speech in the play, compared to her silent parents. Dawta's speech to her mother illustrates a breakdown in 'sisterhood', due to the lack of support she receives from her mother. Mum's silence is effectively in solidarity with Dad and her complicity, complacency and refusal to confront the status quo, evoking the theme of silence yet again. In Mum's case, silence represents a common acknowledgement of what Dad has done, while also undermining any semblance of 'sisterhood'. This seems to be Dawta's opinion when she repeatedly calls her mother a "bitch" in the speech discussed below. Scholars such as Lucy M. Candib (1999, pp. 185-201), in discussing therapeutic approaches in relation to family violence and the complicity of mothers, offers a feminist analysis and demonstrates how abuse should be conceptualised as a form of female victimisation that is derived from patriarchal structures within households.

Due to the fact that men exercise control over women and children in the patriarchal household, female victimisation becomes perpetuated when mothers are unable to acknowledge the established system of abuse. Therefore—as reflected in the fraught relationship between Mum and Dawta in *born bad*—as opposed to maternal bonding in response to the experience of abuse, what happens is that daughters experience feelings of betrayal, hatred and anger because they have been deprived of the protection they might conventionally be expected to enjoy (see Jacobs, 1990, pp. 500-14). Akin to the positioning of Dad as a castrated patriarch, Mum is also emotionally castrated as she distances herself from Dawta's experience. The analysis of the mother/daughter

relationship in this regard reveals the problematic positioning of mothers in particular, who are aware of their daughters' experience of sexual abuse but fail to act. Through an analysis of the relationship or the breakdown of the relationship, the debilitating effects of trauma also become apparent. Drawing parallels between complicity in the case of sexual abuse and maternal complicity as regards cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, foot binding, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide, Candib (1999, p. 185) demonstrates how mothers' individual psychology in the context of family rape or incest must be understood from a historical and cultural standpoint. This necessity for such an approach owes much to the "structural context of other instances where mothers participate in or have participated in harm to their daughters" (1999, p. 185). Maternal complicity is problematic because of the notion of 'sisterhood' that exists between women, but which is betrayed due to the acceptance of such practices, all of which "are closely connected with women's survival in families within the intergenerational context of male domination" (1999, p. 185).

Invariably, this proposition suggests that the various ways in which mothers participate in the abuse and subjugation of their daughters must be critically examined from a cultural and historical standpoint; according to which, therefore, the family dynamic in *born bad*—particularly the violence inflicted on Dawta and the latter's response to it—must also be examined. Dad enjoys patriarchal privilege in terms of how the unequal power relations between him and his family has placed him in the position to commit sexual assault and not claim responsibility for his actions. Dawta, her sisters and brother, as well as her mother, are placed in a subordinate position to him. Dawta clearly does not perceive her mother in a sympathetic light as a co-victim of patriarchy. Rather,

she perceives her mother to be partly responsible for the trauma that she has experienced by bending to the patriarchy and perpetuating the intergenerational trauma it has caused. Thus, for Dawta, her mother is a “bitch”, a word she repeats in an angry outburst:

If yu actin like a bitch

I’ m a call yu it

if yu lookin like a bitch

I’ m a call yu it.

If yu lookin like a bitch as you lookin on me—I see yu and yu bitch ways—mi a go call you it again mi noh business.

Watchin yu watchin me like the bitch bitch yu is

and I’ ll say it two times.

Then two times that.

Then two times that again—for yu—yu mudda, and yu mudda’s mudda—those bitches that bred yu off before and before that—and from before that again.

From whenever your bitch bloodline started.

From whenever bitch beginnings y’ had.

Bitch (tucker green, 2003b, p. 7).

Dawta’s repetition of the word “bitch,” and her expressed intention to continue saying it, along with the anger that her words exude, are suggestive of her desire to break free from

an ancestral chain of women who have been subordinate to patriarchal power and are all responsible for the abuse she has received from Dad in her eyes. The phrase “Watchin yu watchin me like the bitch bitch yu is” and Dawta’s insistence on saying the word “two times” imply an awareness of her mother’s potential to create a double of herself in her daughter as her own mother had done to her. And Dawta’s insistence that “I’m a call yu it”, in contrast to Dad’s silence, thus manifests her vocal attempt to break the cycle of violence.

Dawta’s need to differentiate herself from her mother evokes arguments put forward by third-wave feminists such as Astrid Henry who, in her *Not My Mother’s Sister; Generational conflict and third-wave feminism* (2004), questioned whether mother-daughter relationships should really be thought of in terms of ‘sisterhood’. Normally the notion of ‘sisterhood’, a major feature of second-wave feminism, would suggest equal power relations between women—thus dissolving the hierarchy that might otherwise exist between mother and daughter—the solidarity of which is based on shared histories of gendered oppression (Henry, 2004, pp. 1-51). For Dawta, however, her mother has been complicit in a history from which she wishes to disentangle herself, even if doing so involves dismantling at least part of the mythic ‘sisterhood’ between her and her mother. In tucker green’s *random*, discussed in chapter one, we see a comparable relationship play out between mother and daughter in which the latter takes control after her brother’s murder; here, the dominance of Sister’s voice can equally be read in terms of her desire to take the reins and create a vertical rift in the family dynamic in the hope of precipitating change (even if, in the case of *random*, the violence on the family is inflicted from without).

Dawta understands the position of her mother as ‘superior’ in her role as a parent and expects a degree of protection from her which eludes her. Whether a sympathetic interpretation of Mum should be offered is a complex question. However, ultimately, the mother-daughter relationship, much like the breakdown in Dawta’s relationship with her father, symbolises a breakdown in trust. Ironically, the consequences of sexual abuse appear to have a greater impact on the relationship between Dawta and Mum than on either woman’s relationship with Dad, a disparity which can be interpreted in terms of patriarchal privilege and how Dad is able to elude his responsibility through his silence. When Brother asks Dad, “You gonna say sumthin...” Dad makes this privilege explicit by responding, “I don’t have to, Son” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 30).

Owing to the breakdown in their relationship against the backdrop of the dynamics noted above, Dawta’s speech to her mother at the beginning of scene 2 pushes at the limit of the representable and the kinds of structures of taboo which structural anthropologists have long considered the basis for comparative kinship studies and the very postulation of a universal human condition—that is, love of one’s parents. The most prominently known of such studies is perhaps Claude Lévi-Strauss’s classic *The elementary structures of kinship* (1969, pp. 29-41), which in its discussion of the importance of the “incest taboo” in structuring intra-familial bonds both criticizes and builds on the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (2001) (which emphasizes the unconscious desire for incestuous relations) by presenting an argument for the universal structural necessity of such a taboo (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, pp. 29-41). According to Lévi-Strauss (1969, pp. 29-41), the incest taboo is fundamental to holding the family together as a unit. In *born bad*, however, this taboo has been broken—incest has been committed; the taboo continues to

exist as such only insofar as it is unspoken. The silence surrounding the incest therefore stands in for its prohibition. If the above-quoted powerful barrage of vitriol takes place within the universal structure of kinship (mother-daughter), it assaults it with vividly styled language that pushes towards breaking, but is nonetheless imprisoned by, the family's silence on the matter. In this sense, Dawta's speech reinforces the 'double oppression' of the black mother's experience of gender and race, as she is bound by a structural code to remain silent as a means of holding the family together. Mum thus can be compared to the mother in *random*, who after the death of her son similarly remains silent in order to uphold an image and sense of stability, in contrast to Sister's desire to speak out in order to get closer to achieving a more profound understanding of what happened to Brother.

The elementarity of kinship structures in *born bad* is signified (as in other plays by tucker green) by the substitution of names with titles of kin—Dad , Mum, Dawta, Sister 1, Sister 2, and Brother. At the same time, Dawta excruciatingly repeats the abuse with the term “bitch” which, combined with the heavy black vernacular, aggressively describes the aforementioned 'double oppression'. Literally meaning a female dog, the term of derision targets both the gender and the reproductive role of a mother figure, drawing on deep structures of ambivalence and fundamental gender prejudice in Western society against women, femininity, and motherhood—all subjects of anthropological study (Strathern, Franklin, & Butler, 2016).

Repetition is a noted aspect of tucker green's prosody. She herself has commented upon the function of repetition in her work, noting that it derives from a close—one might say, anthropological—interest in observing and overhearing everyday speech in black

vernaculars. In the same interview referred to above the playwright remarks: “That’s how people speak . . . listen to a group of kids – just repeat and repeat and repeat . . . it’s hot outside . . . it’s really hot, innit? I bet it’s really hot . . . suddenly, you’ve got half a page of dialogue” (quoted in Isherwood, 2011, para. 5). At the same time, repetition has the effect of reinforcing a given structure. In the case quoted, repeating a remark about the weather three times communicates something not only about the weather at that particular moment but about the elementary social structure of commentary about the weather—a way of solidifying group relations, of establishing an ecological context, of passing the time. In the same way, the repeated accusation of “bitch” at the beginning of *born bad* effects not only a harrowing insult of a mother by a daughter, but by exhausting the term through multiple grammatical deployments (Mum “is” a bitch, has “bitch ways”, and is “lookin” like a bitch), the daughter’s anger is developed into a kinship-scaled trauma which it takes the rest of the play to exhume. Dawta’s ability to speak to her mother in such a manner does not necessarily undermine her position as oppressed but illustrates the aftermath of the trauma that she has experienced. As has been stated elsewhere, it is imperative to note that in many of tucker green’s works her focus is primarily on the *effects* of violence, abuse, trauma and loss—this means that the language Dawta uses in relation to her mother must be situated in this context. It is important to recall that tucker green’s focus is on the emotional aftermath of abuse, and that she consequently explores this issue by portraying her characters in terms of how they have been impacted by their experiences. Dawta’s failure in communication can be conceptualised as symbolic of her trauma, and the violence she experienced through rape is projected through her language.

Her language use illustrates how she responds to trauma and does not negate her experience of oppression.

The silence of the husband figure throughout the play increasingly emphasises the wife's isolation and the inoperative relationship which exists between the couple. Before this vicious verbal onslaught begins, the mother is the first to emerge onstage following a choral prelude during which the black gospel hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus" is sung, migrating from the background to the mother herself as she takes over the tune and hums it to herself. By doing so she presents an image of maternity within the specific iconography of the black diasporic tradition. The aural surround sound with which the play begins is prominent and powerful in performance, yet potentially overlooked in reading the text. Its cultural resonance travels far and wide throughout a trans-Atlantic tradition of black spirituality in the multiple African-American and black British church traditions which have collectively sustained the gospel choir movement, blending Baptist and Evangelical Christian spiritual traditions with Afrogenic cultural traits consolidated in a well-known canon of hymns (among other cultural productions) of which "What a friend we have in Jesus" is a preeminent example, dating back to the mid-nineteenth-century. Alan Young (2012, p. xvi) has explained that the uniqueness of gospel music derives from the "singers' belief in God and faith in his blessings". By humming the song, therefore, Mum performs her socio-cultural inheritance as a black woman, connecting herself to a chain of people who have sung or hummed the song before her. In light of the intergenerational trauma she suffers and represses, the humming can be seen as a coping mechanism, a notion which would explain the anger it provokes in her daughter.

Mum therefore can be compared to the mother in *random* (2010), who refrains from inquiring into Brother's murder as a way of coping with her loss. Until the murder of Brother, though, the mother in *random* more closely corresponds to what Collins (1987, p. 5) defines as a stereotypical black "too-strong matriarch who raises weak sons and unnaturally superior daughters". "When she protests, she is labelled aggressive and unfeminine, yet if she remains silent, she is rendered invisible" (Collins, 1987, p. 5). The mother in *random*, at the start of the play, is forthright, assertive and loud in the stereotypical manner of the black matriarch in her numerous interactions with her son, daughter and husband. Her vociferousness is pronounced, for instance, when she comments on her daughter's eating habits: "She late down— / don't think I notice / that she nah mek the time fe a proper / "eat enough"— / a proper "drink enough"— / of a morning" (tucker green, 2010, p. 7). However, after Brother's murder, his mother withdraws in a manner comparable to the withdrawal of Mum in *born bad*, with Sister—like Dawta in *born bad*—taking the mother's position of dramaturgical dominance.

Mythologies of matriarchy within African-derived social structures have constituted a well-studied facet of black cultural life and multiple works of critical literature explore the multi-faceted nature of such formations, providing a double to alternate studies of black masculinity (Willie & Reddick, 2010, p. 111). Within broader cultural traditions, black femininity has been a site of contested meaning, particularly among feminist artists and writers who have systematically deconstructed the nexus of stereotypes, sexism, prejudices, and multiple oppressions which have frequently accompanied images of black women in interior space in relation to the family and broader social groupings (Wallace-Sanders, 2009, pp. 1-12). Religious devotion has also

been argued to be part of the constitution of black motherhood and has been both problematised and celebrated in different quarters of black studies among different voices (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2005, pp. 309-45). Its relation to an oppositional black masculinity within the domestic interior (often equally imbricated in roles related to the church) is a well-studied theme—especially, for example, in the literature of and about James Baldwin (Hardy, 2009, pp. 103-8).

Merging the voice of Mum with the gospel choir as the play opens, tucker green intends this array of associations and multiple oppressions regarding black interior spaces and theologically-scaled themes to frame the play. The specificity of her selection of the hymn itself must also be acknowledged. Its first two stanzas read:

What a friend we have in Jesus

All our sins and griefs to bear

And what a privilege to carry

Everything to God in prayer

Oh, what peace we often forfeit

Oh, what needless pain we bear

All because we do not carry

Everything to God in prayer (The Seventh Day Adventist Hymnal, 1985).

The deep, tragic, ironic, oppressed relationship this song text and mood bears to what follows in the play sets up a profound antiphony of destinies. The allusion to Jesus in the hymn further evokes his status as the bearer of pain which consequently, through this imagery, evokes Dawta's experience of rape and incest. In the hymn the "needless pain

we bear”, which is hidden within the self, is assured of being alleviated by a divinely beneficent higher power who is also intimately close. The hymn offers the hope of salvation through relationships. The play is also about a pain which is born and which causes a family to forfeit its ancestral pain—originally bestowed on the family on account of its race—but it denies the hope of salvation because, following the logic of the hymn, the family does not carry everything to a place where it can be expiated. That is, the “sins and griefs” of the family are never shared, never fully described in the play, never named, never spoken about explicitly. It is therefore a play—a family—without a divine “friend” to bear away its “sins and griefs”. In this respect it is the failure of the wife and husband to relate to one another—their failure to even speak—which defines the entire play in a gesture of silent rupture. For Dawta, it is her mother’s humming of the hymn which so infuriates her:

Each and every and any opportunity opening that this up turn down duty bitch mout’ and I’m hearing nuthin but your bad bitchisms bouncin off your tongue - trippin off yu bitch breat’ rippin thru to me - through yu bitch teet’ - rippin me with your bitch prayers an ‘alf a bitched out hymn - rollin over to where I’m at, like I’m meant to hear. (tucker green, 2003b, p. 9)

For Dawta the hymn is a “bitchism”, a constituent part of her mother’s “bitchness”, which makes her mouth “duty [dirty]” as if it were an obscenity. Indeed, this is where a crucial insight about the play, and its use of language might be made, which is that it inverts—at least in the character of Dawta—the conventional relationship between language registers and obscenity. Whereas conventionally “hymn” is associated with “sacred/true” language and “bitch” vitriol associated with false obscenities, for Dawta it is the hymn which is a “bitchism” and her own obscenities are the bullets of an attempt to find out the truth of what has happened. The prayer—the silent, introspective and socially unshared

confession—has become a bitch language which only the most aggressive and transgressive forms of kinship-destroying language can hope to control.

Speech vs. Silence

The absence of any intervention from the husband throughout Dawta's tirades is one of the most shocking aspects of the play—far more impressive onstage than it is encountering the text in written form. In the initial scene in which Dawta repeatedly calls her mother a “bitch”, the director Leah C. Gardiner recalls arranging the actors so that Mum was in a chair and “the daughter [was] kind of going around her, spewing, if you call me a bitch, be acting like a bitch [...]” (Gardiner, 491-92). One can imagine this arrangement creating a kind of vortex separating the characters from the rest of the stage as the tirade escalates and the word “bitch” is repeated—as if between Mum and Dawta there was a magnetic impulse from which Dawta were fighting, in words if not in movement, to sever herself. Throughout the play, though, it is increasingly felt that the real centre of dramaturgical gravity—insofar as he is the instrumental cause of the trauma about which the characters struggle to speak—is Dad.

Onstage, Dad's silence takes on the form of an abiding physical presence without speech. Placed alongside the mother's oppressed status as a black woman, the husband's silence testifies to a recognised rupture in the construction of ‘black masculinity’ in terms of expressiveness. The tenor of this argument is that Dad's silence indicates a ruptured ‘black masculinity’ whereby he is powerless to stop his daughter. Interestingly, despite Dad's silence, there is a bifurcation of speech along the lines of gender, whereby ‘black masculinity’ is portrayed as passive and almost cowardly, as suggested in the effort it takes Dawta to make eye contact with him and gain his “lost confidence” (tucker green,

2003b, p. 6) in the opening scene as she repeatedly asks him to “say it” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 6). This interplay between voice and silence is also observable in *random*. Towards the end of the play, Sister is given a voice while Brother’s voice is silenced through his death. His voice only becomes audible through the accounts of his life as narrated by Mum and Sister. The implication of this is that the women are ascribed dominant voices as part of this narrative.

Frantz Fanon has memorably theorised the problems of speech facing black men from a psychoanalytic point of view, arguing that centuries of oppression and insults in regard to the conditions of black speech have inscribed a fundamental trauma around the act of speaking (Fanon, 2004, p. 208). Fanon’s work also introduces the gendered characterisations of female/wife as an authentic bearer of a culture and male/husband as agent of violent resistance, a somewhat problematic dichotomy concisely summarized in the following words from *The Wretched of the Earth*: “The memory of the anti-colonial period is very much alive in the villages, where women still croon in their children’s ears songs to which the warriors marched when they went out to fight the conquerers” (p. 114). These polarities are generally understood to be more problematic aspects of Fanon’s work and to relate to the condition of revolutionary war in which he wrote (Ehlen, 2000, pp. 33-48). In *born bad* tucker green disrupts this dimorphic gender configuration and redistributes violent revolutionary energy to Dawta—the one who comes closest to acting with efficacy, whereas wife and husband remain speechless in respect of one another.

The father’s silence is in fact central to the play, not only thematically but dramaturgically, and in respect of the wife/husband relationship overall. In its evocation of the domestic interior *born bad* invokes spatial conventions of the ordering of power

within the home and the patriarchal norm of centrality as a position of power (Campbell, 2004, p. 63). Yet whereas traditional psychoanalytical accounts of patriarchy and ‘black masculinity’ make the association of power, centrality, patriarchy, and *logos* (i.e. speech), this structure is inverted in *born bad* so that the father/husband figure is, as it were, a castrated patriarch, a figure of ‘black masculinity’ with no word. Dad’s silence can also be understood as a lens through which we can observe how women must grapple with men’s inability to take responsibility for their actions, embodied in Dad’s psychological castration. Judith Butler’s (1988, p. 1098) propositions on gender being performative provide nuanced insights into the construction of gender in the context of theatre. Butler (1988, p. 1098) conceptualises gender as constructed through performative, ritualised and corporeal acts that are inspired by social and cultural norms.

Emphasis on ritualised corporeal acts positions the human body as a tool that is instrumentalised (Harris, 2003, p. 20). Indeed, Butler proposes the view that gender is “real only to the extent that it is performed” (1988, p. 527) and argues that because “gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as a part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed” (Butler, 1988, p. 1103). Through these propositions, it becomes apparent how gendered identity is a performative act and how this identity becomes crystallised in reality through repetition (Harris, 2003, p. 20). Further, it provides a framework for understanding how theatre, through a series of rituals and acts that define masculine and feminine images and bodies, has tended to make certain gender formulations that invariably intersect with race and

class so that portrayals of ‘black masculinity’ have been portrayed, historically, in a particular way (Crenshaw, 2017, p. 4).

tucker green’s presentation of Dad as an abuser appears to internalise such narratives and departs from the quest of black dramatists to offer alternative narratives, though she does this less out of conformity with Western stereotypes than as a critical framework that positions blackness as a predicament akin to “social death,” whereby histories and legacies of anti-black violence render black people devoid of subjectivity (Wilderson, 2020, pp. 1-14). tucker green appears to reject such stereotypes and notions of hegemonic masculinity in the case of black men, whereby they are portrayed as violent and hypersexual. This relates to the fact that while Dad is an abuser, he is never shown to engage in any violent act; on the contrary, his silence, as well as his emotional and psychological castration, distances him from the crime he has committed. As such, Dad is *dramaturgically* distanced from his crime so that the family’s repression becomes metatextual. Woven into the formal fabric of the drama, the emotional repercussions of such repression are thus transmitted more strongly to the audience whose vicarious experience of the characters’ thwarted articulation of feeling is enhanced. Given the silence around the sexual violence, the audience might even be inclined to wonder whether Dad actually committed the crime at all (especially after Sister 2 accuses Dawta of lying in Scene 4) (tucker green, 2003b, p. 12), and thereby re-enacts the kind of second guessing that typically accompanies the repression of trauma. Thus, as has been noted by Marissia Fragkou: “abuse is often presented in the form of linguistic speech acts performed by means of a series of confrontations between the victims and the members of their families or communities who have evaded responsibility by remaining silent

witnesses” (Fragkou, 2012, p. 26). By adopting this strategy, the onus is placed on the audience, to examine the inter-relation between abuse and responsibility (Fragkou, 2012, p. 26).

Nevertheless, the portrayal of Dad in this way performs an important function; the loudness of his silence places Dawta’s experience of abuse, as well as her trauma, at the forefront of the narrative. While tucker green’s portrayal of Dad as silent can be conceptualised as a rejection of the fetishised, hyper-sexual black male stereotype, it can also be understood through a feminist lens, as a tool for illustrating his complicity through his silence. His position as a castrated patriarch does not necessarily suggest emasculation but rather, symbolises his lack of responsibility for his actions. This makes the struggles of Dawta more apparent, and his detachment from the status quo appear extremely sinister, given what he has done. His deafening silence effectively symbolises the weight that Dawta must carry.

As the play progresses and it is revealed that Dad has also abused his son, Brother, the dramatic use of silence becomes evident. It also suggests that the positioning of Dad as a castrated patriarch who is silent and detached from the trauma he has inflicted on his family is not necessarily about presenting an alternative vision of black male masculinity (by not depicting him as directly engaged in violent acts), but is rather about positioning the victimised other at the centre of tucker green’s stage. Psychological castration in relation to men is always related to women’s behaviour causing them to be silenced but perhaps, in this case, it can be conceptualised as self-inclination. This is not to suggest a single instance of self-denial but possibly, an ongoing strategy of denial. In psychology, two classifications of abusers are identified, “admitters” or those who admit their

offences, and “deniers”, or those who do not (Brown et al., 2009, p. 5). Dad’s unwillingness to engage with what he has done through his silence, and the consequences of this for the trauma that his children experience, is reflected in the various provocations that are exchanged between the characters, excluding him. It is ironic that the rest of the characters are forced to engage in these provocations in order to work through their traumatic experiences, while “the father sits as an eerie backdrop to these heated conversations. He remains silent except for a few brief exchanges” (Abram, 2014, p. 114).

The suggestion that silence “operates as a space in which the dialectics of presence and absence in the theatre are foregrounded and [...] a point at which the theatrical event is most phenomenally present” (Garner, 2001, p. b10; quoted in Fragkou, 2012, p. 33), is especially evident here. The absence of any linguistic exchange that involves Dad makes it challenging to gain a nuanced understanding of his positioning as a castrated patriarch. However, the complicity of his wife, her complacency and her refusal to confront the status quo, evokes the theme of silence yet again, which in this case almost appears to be an acknowledgement of what he has done. Indeed, as noted by Fragkou (2012, p. 33): “silences carry phenomenological rather than semiotic significance, as the signifier is absent from the printed page and cannot be accounted for”. In as much as Dad’s silence and departure from dominant ideas about hegemonic masculinity suggest a form of castrated patriarchy, he nevertheless enjoys patriarchal privilege whereby patriarchy can be explained in this case as male supremacy or “a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females; with various taboos to ensure conformity with specified gender roles” (Ademiluka, 2018, p.

340). Dad enjoys patriarchal privilege in terms of how the unequal power relations between him and his family has placed him in the position to commit sexual assault and not claim responsibility for his actions. Dawta, her sisters and brother, as well as her mother, are placed in a subordinate position to him. It is especially telling how the play opens with Dawta challenging her father to admit his guilt. By repeating the challenge three times, the scene evokes Peter's denial of Christ in the Bible, "another decisive moment in a relationship" (Abram, 2014, p. 123), thus highlighting that by not saying it Dad effectively denies it and giving the seeming passivity of his silence an active role. By remaining silent, Dad imposes such silence on his family; the family's silence is Dad's silence.

The fact that she "gains his lost confidence", seems to indicate that his silence may not necessarily be an indication of his patriarchal privilege but rather an indication of his shame. Due to this shame, he has been rendered voiceless or has chosen to remain so. As the excerpt above suggests, she seeks to secure eye contact with Dad as a form of tacit acknowledgement of his abuse but it becomes clear that she does not receive the response and confession that she hopes for. Nevertheless, the verbal silence on his part is a form of "surrogate language" that involves the body but which nevertheless communicates words that are unspoken (Abram, 2014, p. 121). In doing so, a degree of kinaesthetic expression is involved which enables the audience to gain insight into the nuances of this silence not only visually but aurally as well (Abram, 2014, p.121). This invariably suggests a correlation between sight and speech in *born bad*. There are parallels in terms of how tucker green uses silence as a dramatic form between *born bad* and *random*. In *random*,

in the aftermath of Brother's murder, Sister's grieving process becomes shrouded in silence.

In the case of Brother's death, the silence is deafening and places Sister's grieving process at the forefront of the scene. By using silence as a dramatic technique in this manner, it becomes difficult for the audience to escape her pain and her grief in the same way that Dawta's clear trauma becomes difficult to ignore or escape—the fundamental difference between Sister and Dawta being that, while Dawta actively struggles to break the silence, Sister laments the silence but is unable to speak out beyond this lament. Rather than try to break the silence, Sister listens, hoping in vain to hear this silence being broken by a source external to herself, but since all she can hear is silence she is brought back into herself. Abram's (2014, p. 121) claim that tucker green leverages silence as a strategy for inspiring action offers a useful analytical framework here. Abram (2014, p. 121) suggests that silence ensures that the audience cannot escape from the plight of the character and in doing so, "If spectators remain quiet, trained in contemporary British theatrical convention, they become complicit in the very failure to speak that Sister derides. Silence, then, acquires a perlocutionary force: it demands action".

Performing Dad's Silence

The instrumentality of Dad's silence was embodied efficiently by Michael Rogers, the actor who played him in Gardiner's 2010 production. Gardiner recalls speaking to Rogers at the start of rehearsals:

I turned to him and I said, "I know this is going to be a difficult process for you I imagine because you only have one or two lines" [...] and he turned to me, and he said, "Actually, I have more to say than anyone in the play, you just never hear me speak, and I will sit here throughout the rehearsal process, and I hear what everyone else has to say because it will inform what I say without saying

[...] The answers to questions or the way in which my family views me will be based on my facial expressions and my physical gestures” (Gardiner, 40-48).

When I interviewed the actor, he gave a similar rendition of his approach to rehearsals: “So, I had to listen and live. That’s basically what we began with. And from there on, it was all about me accepting the stimulus and responding to the stimulus” (Rogers, 231-32). Although as I am about to explain, Dad, as portrayed by Rogers, is listening and reacting, as he explains in the interview I conducted, his gestures and expressions reverberate throughout the actions and words of the other characters with equal force.

I asked Rogers for his view on Dad’s silence. His reply revealed a remarkable level of empathy not least in light of the violence he has inflicted. For Rogers, Dad’s silence needs to be understood from the perspective of his pain, in relation to the fact that he, like the rest of his family, cannot find the words to articulate his feelings.

Why is dad so silent? Perhaps he has no language to express his inner desires—could be. Maybe he has no language to describe his dilemma. Without language, without verbal language, that is, we tend to resort to physical language [...] But when we lose words, the next thing we do is something physical in the deafening silence. No one can read one’s mind. So, by staying silent, you can have a power to confirm or to deny (Rogers, 11-17).

Indeed, the physicality of Rogers’s interpretation of the role can be understood to stem from a linguistic deadlock, which might also relate to the physicality of the abuse he has inflicted. Rogers describes the nature of Dad’s dilemma as stemming from his powerlessness and subservience to “rules” outside the home, and thus his need to establish his own “rules”, or assert his own power, within the home:

When you are living through all these rules, you have very little control over your own destiny, very little control over your own destiny, and you have a deep desire to do, but you feel you’re locked in, you have little control. So, what

happens? One can only control one's own environment, that is, his house, right? (Rogers, 63-66).

Rogers also explains that Dad's primary means of wielding power over his family is silence, which manifests dramaturgically in the physicality of his performance and his silence in contrast to the speech of those around him. Rogers sees this contrast in terms of "revolution" (Rogers, 112): "It is also a war against women's liberation in his mind" (Rogers, 109-10). Dad's way of fighting this revolution is by going into his "shell somewhat and he let the battle rage all around him. He let the battle rage around him and create all this great confusion in this battle by saying nothing" (Rogers, 114-16). Thus, despite Dad's appearance of passivity, such passivity is in fact active, a means of creating instability whose function is based on his knowledge that he, more than anyone else on stage, is responsible for the chaos he has caused. Hence Rogers clarifies that Dad has "more to say than anyone in the play". This tension between having more to say and not saying it is crucial to the dramaturgical power possessed by the character of Dad. And yet if Dad were to speak, despite having so much to say, he would not know how to say it:

Dad is simply trying to puzzle out life for his own self, "How do I give them what they want, my children?" He has no answer or words for his deep desires. All he can think about is that whatever they are looking for, whatever that is, he does not have it to give them, and they are tying themselves up in confusion. They should understand that he doesn't have that to give them and they should free themselves of the confusion, but that's not what happens (Rogers, 124- 29).

That the confusion is shared by all is suggestive of the intergenerational nature of this trauma. For Dad, too, has the same questions he is being asked: "Now they know what it's like to live in pain, the way he has been living in pain, unable to use language to describe his state. Unable to free his desires, that he ends up taking it out on his own family, he births a child and uses that own child, abuses that own child" (Rogers, 133-36).

In one of the photographs of Gardiner's Soho Rep production (2010), we see Dad at the centre right of the stage, Dawta on the floor between his legs, Mum looking on from a standing position behind them to the left, one sister at the right of the stage, perched with her feet on her chair, one hand over her mouth in shock, and the other sister in the far-left corner looking away, unable to deal with the reality in the foreground. Strips of light (through wooden slats above the stage) shine downwards diagonally onto the father, and then horizontally out towards the audience along the floor where Dawta is sitting, one shoulder propped on her father's thigh. The father leans his head so that it is in line with the light from above, which is also parallel with his chest, left arm, Dawta's arm on his thigh and her face. The light suggests a connection between father and daughter, and his expression combined with the light in which his face seems to bask is suggestive of sexual ecstasy. As Gardiner explains, "So you see how I have him leaning in this strip of light as if he's having an orgasm or he's enjoying sexual pleasure while she's giving him fellatio" (Gardiner, 402-03). That Dawta looks blankly into the distance beyond the audience elicits both procedural matter-of-factness and repressive dissociation in relation to the sexual act to which the scene alludes, while her proximity to her father suggests enduring, even jealous, love or some other form of attachment or dependence. But the affective gravity of the tableau hinges on the father's expression and alignment with the light.

The dynamic is similar but more complex when it is revealed that Brother too has been a victim of Dad's incestuous violence. Gardiner explains regarding another tableau:

So, see, at one point, I have the mom facing in this direction, like, she doesn't want to hear what they have to say, right? And then when the mom learns about the son... So, do you see how I have the son sort of leaning as if he's receiving it in his anus, and the mother's reaction to that, and this daughter here, the oldest who just doesn't want to know, the educated one, see how she's behind the mom here, facing in the other direction? It's too devastating for her. And then see how

the baby up all the way up here is facing this way, she is refusing to leave the proximity to the dad because she loves him so much [...] then do you see how I have them on a diagonal? And see how the daughter has her back to mum? (Gardiner, 413-22).

As in the previous tableau, the light is implemented to centre the audience's focus on Dad and his relation to Dawta, which is intensified by Dawta hugging Dad's leg and Dad's downward gaze directed at Dawta. Dad's expression is one of profound sadness "because of the baby [Dawta] and how she felt" (Gardiner, 537-38), though in my view the expression is ambiguous, and can be read as both loving sympathy and post-coital depression. Yet there is another diagonal incorporated into the arrangement of actors that illustrates the new additional focus of attention. The diagonal manifested by the light intersects with another, described by Gardiner above, that expands triangularly from the sister huddled on the chair (facing away from Dad, head between her shoulders) through Dad and Dawta, then Mum (facing away from Dad, weeping into her hands, which also cover her eyes to prevent her from seeing her son), and finally reaching Brother in the foreground, whose back is turned to Dad, "as if he's receiving it in his anus" (Gardiner, 415-16). For Gardiner, the arrangement of Dad and Dawta is iconographically comparable to images of God and Christ, as if Dawta were "the chosen one [...] yet, the son then reveals well, no, actually, he really wanted me" (Gardiner, 539-40). The diagonals—each of which operates as what Gardiner calls a "tension belt" (Gardiner, 526)—thus communicate with one another, together channeling the crisscrossing tensions between Dad, Dawta and Brother, and their associated secrets and revelations. And the point of their intersection is Dad's illuminated head.

Gardiner explained that she deployed the actors on the stage with a close eye on their composition, which generally revolved around the father, with the aim of exploring “what silence could potentially look like physically” (Gardiner, 528-29). She points to a frame in which Brother and one of the sisters are standing close to Dad: “see how close they are to dad when they’re sort of yelling at each other” (Gardiner, 527). This was how the “tension belt” worked, proximity to Dad often heightening the tension as though it correlated to an equivalent proximity to revealing the truth they cannot face. Brother points at his sister, his finger right up close to her nose, his eyes furious, while his sister is equally enraged, her body erect, resisting Brother’s finger. Dad has his back to us as he sits in a chair, leaning slightly to the right (towards Brother), and they, standing, are shouting over him. It is a remarkably tense image, the father’s leaning position suggesting his influence over Brother, perhaps even his incestuous bond with him.

In another image, by contrast, the actors are far away from each other not just in terms of distance but also in their attention, the distance accentuated when the actors turn their back to the father. There is a considerable degree of discordance between the characters in this composition, unlike the two described above where Dawta sits between Dad’s legs. Dad leans pronouncedly to the left. We cannot see at what or whom he is looking, though in the corner of the room towards which his lean is directed are two figures, one of the sisters, who sits in a chair with her back to Dad, and Mum, who is blocked by the son who stands closer to the audience, his back to the father. To the right of the father is the other sister, who stares seemingly in the direction of Brother, though her expression is vacant. Dawta is closest to the audience, seated in a chair, her back to the rest of the actors. For Gardiner the composition represents the “complicity of silence

and everyone's inability to hear him [Dad], and so even the baby sister [Dawta] who's trying to hear them is still quite far away. They're looking away because they really don't want to deal" (Gardiner, 532-34). Although Dad is not audibly saying anything, his emphasised gesture bespeaks a felt lack of balance in the family (balance that has thus far been grounded on his crime and the voluble silence surrounding it), as if he senses a misbalance of his dramatic centrality that his leaning, as if physically rebalancing the familial unity with his body weight, seeks to correct. But for the rebalancing to occur, the rest of the family must 'listen' to him (or to his silence), which at this point they are unwilling to do—silence, space, distance and gaze working correlatively together. As the characters try to relieve tension between themselves, they can only do so at the cost of unity.

The deceptive—we might say violent—passivity of Dad's role was highlighted in the way Gardiner directed Rogers to perform "through his back, how he leaned from side to side, how he used his elbow to support his head at times so there are a lot of, again, physical gestures that communicated to the audience his state of being. And they saw him through his back" (Gardiner, 128-30). Dad's role performed in this way, his presence becomes almost spectral, partly invisible, but nevertheless central, so much so that, at times (such as when the audience "were very close to his back" (Gardiner, 395), as Gardiner recalls), he might seem to block some of the audience's view. He becomes an obstacle to be navigated by the characters as well as by the audience's gaze. Such obstruction is affectively correlative to the workings of silence and repression, the blank spots in consciousness—which are at once self-imposed and imposed by the perpetrator of the trauma being repressed. The silence is not entirely passive but forced upon the

family by Dad's presence. Dad's silence and partial invisibility may also have served to intensify the voices, movements and facial expressions of the characters by causing the audience to work harder to concentrate on them. Gardiner recalls this especially being the case regarding Elain Graham's performance of Mum:

I mean, she was very deadpan for the majority of it. [...] Elain Graham was a dancer, so the way that she physically moves, she's very fluid in movement and how she... even in her facial expressions, there's a kind of a sort of a dancer's fluidity to her. So, if she turned her head one to the right, say, or to the left, you saw her, you watched her because she's all presence. And the subtlety that she brought to the character worked so beautifully with the subtlety that Michael Rogers's father brought to the character. So, they communicated and spoke in this very sort of gentle physical language that spoke volumes. And the simpler it got, the more we paid attention (Gardiner, 133-40).

Furthermore, Rogers's performance permits a semiotic interpretation of Dad's silence: other than being dramatic shorthand for shame, Dad turning his back to the audience could also be interpreted as a metatextual unwillingness to perform, such entitled recalcitrance embodying his patriarchal privilege—his 'not having to' speak. But *born bad* contains almost no action. 'Black masculinity' is de-operationalised and reduced to silence, black maternity is confronted with multiple paralysing oppressions. As a spectacle onstage it is muted. For everything that is said, little happens. Rather than being an actionless play, however, it is a play which has displaced all action onto its own language. Language is now the site of oppression and of the traumas of cultural identity. This confines and intensifies the function of language within the play as a mode of articulating both 'double oppression' and 'black masculinity'. Since nothing is done everything must be spoken about—but also, furthermore, since even the main subject of speech is never itself directly mentioned, even the speech that is uttered takes the form of speech about the unspeakable.

At the centre of this unspeakable speech is the figure of the father who is, for all but a few lines, entirely silent.

Blackouts, Heartbeats and Snapshots

The effect of silence is more powerfully present in the performance of the play than the text—a medium where silent presence is less palpable than in the theatre. In the context of the theatre setting, it is difficult for the audience to escape this silence and consequently, it almost becomes deafening. This point is evident in the case of Dad’s silence concerning his abuse of Dawta amidst her incessant demands for some form of acknowledgement, confession or apology. These dynamics are evident in the first scene of the play. The following excerpt from Sawyer’s (2018) work sheds much insight on how silence and language are intertwined in the context of the play:

in the cracks and gaps of the text, language seems to concede defeat and its failure to accommodate the whole of the human experience. The proliferation of silence in both quantity and quality is symptomatic of a diseased “logos”, fraught with motifs of fragmentation such as slashes, dashes, blanks, beats, pauses, line breaks, commas, ellipses, intention and blackouts. This atomization of the very fabric of language is to some extent the correlative of the shattered psyches of tucker green’s characters who stand trapped in the grips of traumas the origins of which remain for the most part threateningly elusive and obscure. In this poetics of trauma and disruption, silence seems to eat away at language, a constant threat to the integrity of the play (para. 8).

In her production of *born bad*, Gardiner implemented the fragmentary motifs, not least the blackouts, fulfilling their affective potential as symptoms and signifiers of a “diseased ‘logos’” (Sawyer, 2018, para. 8) and means of eliciting in the audience a vicarious experience of the trauma and repression governing the family’s collective psyche. During each blackout, the light dimmed to the point of almost being total darkness, except that Gardiner maintained a slight glow around the actors so that they could see where they

were going as they changed position on the stage. When the lights came up again, the actors would be in a new configuration; their chairs would have moved and they would be standing by or sitting on their chairs (except for Dawta, who was usually on the floor), and the new configuration would anticipate the dialogue—or interrogation—about to take place. Understanding the blackout—a motif called for at the end of each of the fourteen scenes that make up the play—as representing “a silent moment”, Gardiner “knew that the blackouts would somehow inform how silence existed within the context of the play” (Gardiner, 166-67). For Gardiner, the play presents itself as “a series of snapshots, photographs. And so, I used each blackout the way light of camera takes a photo, and so it drove the actors crazy because the lights would make them blinded” (Gardiner, 176-78). Such an understanding of the way that the blackouts are deployed correlates with how the play’s fragmentary and staccato rhythm is constructed and broken up, governed by breaks, beats, pauses and silences.

Implementing the blackout as though it were a “snapshot” affected the audience in a number of ways ultimately to elicit a psychological experience equivalent to that experienced by the characters. During a blackout, although there was enough light for the actors to change positions and shift the furniture for the next scene, this light was not available to the audience, for whom the stage was in complete darkness. Gardiner explains how the snapshot affected the audience’s vision of the stage:

I made photos, snapshots because, see, what happens always when someone takes a photo of you, and then the flash goes off, and then it goes to black, your eyes immediately remember where you are, and that image of the flash. That is what I did each time. And then when the lights went dark, you as the audience were still remembering what you just saw, because of the way the light was reflected on your iris (Gardiner, 217-21).

The effect recreated a sense of remembering: “It’s a recall, like when we were, you know, children, we had these little albums, right?” (Gardiner, 238-39). The blankness of silence is combined with the visual blankness produced by the blackout, which in turn works on the memory in the same way that a montage of images might do. Thus, the psychological dynamic of remembering and repression of memory is acted out on the stage as well as imposed on the audience’s senses, heightening the vicarious experience that the silence already elicits.

In addition to the psychological resemblance to visual recall, Gardiner explained how the snapshot would also affect the audience’s bodies: “we were feeling something viscerally, which was the heartbeat” (Gardiner, 205). The sound of a heartbeat is an effective representation of silence, for it is what one hears when there is no other sound. The way that a heartbeat increases in volume the more silent the environment is metonymical, implies the ‘loudness’ of Dad’s silence, the silence that speaks volumes—which in turn reflects, or perhaps even perpetuates, the loudness of one’s heartbeat when one goes through trauma. As Gardiner explains:

I think it [the heartbeat] is contrasting the silence in the sense that, as I say, when you go into a room and you can hear pulsing, or when you meditate, you get very quiet, you can hear your heartbeat and you can hear your blood flow. That’s contrasted against the presumed silence around you in the air, right? When you are in a traumatic experience, the more traumatic the faster your heart and the louder your heartbeat (Gardiner, 343-48).

Gardiner recalls that such a sound would be played during the blackouts at increasing volume throughout the play, at the start “so faint and so quiet that you couldn’t hear it. And then as the transitions and the blackouts happen, it came closer and closer to you, louder and louder” (Gardiner, 331-33), building up a sense of trauma that reverberated in

the chests of the audience. “Every time a blackout came”, Gardiner recounts being told by audience members, “their hearts would beat faster” (Gardiner, 256). Thus, the blackouts also incorporated beats which were felt in the body of the spectator. Initially the audience would be disorientated by the blackout, the sudden removal of sight, but, as Gardiner explains, “you’re hearing the heartbeat, so, you’re in dark, you’re in black, but as the audience, you’re not quite aware, because you’re instantly shocked of where you are, what’s happening, it’s not until the heartbeat, pulse increase, reminds you” (Gardiner, 222-24). This sense which interplays between disorientation and reorientation can be likened to the dichotomous processes of presence and dissociation that are integral to the repression of trauma acted out on the stage. As such, the ultimate aim of the blackouts combined with the heartbeats was to produce a vicarious experience operating through the senses to penetrate the psyche:

What I was hoping for, which is how the audience described it to me, when you hear of someone being violated, after the violation, they can’t breathe. It’s like, they’re choking [...] I wanted that feeling for the audience, I wanted them to feel that, and that is what was described to me by many, they felt that they just couldn’t get out of their seats, they were just traumatized (Gardiner, 260-67).

In *born bad*, if the mother figure represents the doubly oppressed embodiment of song/prayer as a mode of speech, and if the father represents the embodiment of silent speech, it is Dawta who represents speech in its most active, powerful aspect. Heather Simms’s portrayal of Dawta in Gardiner’s production channelled the kind of speech she represents through the physicality of her performance, the boldness of her postures and movements contrasting with the more reticent performances of her sisters (played by Quincy Tyler Bernstine and Crystal Dickinson). For Gardiner, Dawta represented a certain groundedness.

I just think that she had an ability to [...] deal with truth, in a very grounded way, I wanted her to be grounded. So, that's why we put her on the floor a lot. [...] Look at her here when she's sitting in the chair, that kind of bold confidence, because she knows the truth, no one else in the family wants to accept it, she knows the truth (Gardiner, 472- 79).

Such groundedness parallels the powerfulness and activeness of her speech, which is, ultimately, the speech which steers closest to the truth. This investment of verbal power in a daughter figure establishes a dramatic intervention in contemporary theatre, ballistically reoriented attention towards new synthetic and multitudinous registers of language integrating patois, street talk, lyric, and obscenity.

Therefore, despite the nigh impossibility of articulating the central subject of the play—the incest inflicted on Dawta and Brother by Dad and witnessed, complied with and partly instigated by Mum—Dawta triumphs. Tucker Green invents a hybrid and convincing form of language, which she bestows on Dawta, to convey and all but break the silence on the trauma that is not only a matter of taboo but also, partly as a result of its taboo status, deeply repressed. Language fails to articulate trauma, but in its failure manages to convey it perhaps more truthfully—by being truer to the struggle to articulate it—than if it were articulated in conventional speech or prose. The patois lends Dawta's language its racial inflection. Highlighting linguistically what is hinted at by the appearance of the actors, the use of patois hints at, without explicating, the play's important dialogue with racial discourse, not least in terms of race's entanglement with speech and language. Moreover, given the (albeit problematic) association between patois and what is known as the “mother tongue” (see Avram, 2019, pp. 116-33), Dawta's use of language is pertinent also to the intersectionality of race and gender. Thus, in the speech in which Dawta repeatedly calls her mother a “bitch”, this use of patois gives added

gravity to the line, “Then two times that again—for yu—yu mudda, and yu mudda’s mudda—those bitches that bred yu off before and before that—and from before that again” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 7). It is in this sense telling that the word “yu”, and the word to which it refers, “mudda”, are the only patois words in the whole speech. This calls for a continued deeper investigation into the particularity of the language in *born bad* as an exercise in the power of ‘not saying it’.

Conclusion

debbie tucker green's Intersectional Poetics

Attention to debbie tucker green's performance strategies, contexts, themes and settings reveals the distinctiveness of the playwright's contribution not only to black British drama but to contemporary drama as a whole. The cultural significance of tucker green's work rests in its relation to the complex intersectionalities of race, gender and class, inviting interpretations through the lens of critical race studies in the wake of Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991; 2017) and Patricia Hill Collins's (1990; 1998; see also Daniel, 2010) work on intersectionality in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This thesis has explicated this relation by exploring the way in which it manifests in several of her plays, focusing in particular on *dirty butterfly* (2020), *born bad* (2003b), *generations* (2005), *random* (2010) and *nut* (2013). Approaching each play with an intersectional theoretical framework, I have paid attention to the most prominent themes and contexts. For instance, *dirty butterfly* called for an analysis of marital rape at the intersection of race and gender, regarding the legal position of black women in the historical wake of slavery; while *born bad* also invited an analysis of marriage and domestic violence, though in this case with an emphasis on the representation of the black patriarch. Each of the plays analysed explored the intersectionality of race and gender in a domestic context, whose staging in the theatre encouraged innovative performance strategies.

Although her work explores issues of family trauma that can be understood as representing intersectionality, first and foremost her style and performative poetics are the

means through which she engages with intersectionality, which in turn motivates innovative performance strategies that produce and enhance the affectivity of this trauma. As the plays reveal the traumatic subject of the drama, they invite the audience to question that traumatic subject's historical and contextual origins. In *born bad*, for instance, the play alludes to the fact that the father has sexually violated his children, but at no point does it spell out the relation of this traumatic reality to blackness. And the way that the trauma is still not explicated but hinted at and alluded to, the way that the traumatic action (the rape) occurs off-stage, encourages a process of questioning which, in turn, invites the audience to draw connections between the action and a broader context. This eschewal of clear-cut explication effects a resistance to clichés of the black family (examined in Wallace-Sanders, 2009, for example).

For the answers are not clear; the causes of the trauma are ambiguous and hidden, and their ambiguity and hiddenness exacerbate and perpetuate the trauma, vivifying the way it is experienced vicariously by the audience. As Abram explains: “tucker green does not stage climatic events, nor even catalogue their causes; instead, she explores their effects, focusing on the psycho-social depths of her complex characters” (2020, p. 234). For instance, in *dirty butterfly*, we know that Jo is a victim of assault, but rather than express this fact directly, the play presents it as a mosaic-like cluster of allusions for the audience to piece together. Meaning is ambiguous; and such ambiguity ties in with the fact that the violence is hidden, both from the audience and Jo's neighbours, a hiddenness accentuated by the division—between apartments and between the stage and the audience—articulated by the words “My side”.

As it is revealed by my analysis of the plays and specific staged productions—drawing on interviews that I conducted with directors and other members of various production teams—the performance strategies prompted or inspired by her scripts stand out because of the demands they place on the actors and the incorporation of affect into theatrical space (including the auditorium as well as the stage), which in turn corresponds with the socio-political discourses to which the drama gives rise. tucker green’s *nut*, for example, a play about a woman who withdraws from the world in her home, premiered at The Shed (2013), a temporary space built outside London’s National Theatre by Haworth Tompkins architects. Although it was never intended as a safe space as such, as I explained in chapter three, The Shed shared many of the characteristics of a safe space—that is, a zone in which minorities are able to make heard their political views and exist without the conformism of the status quo forcing them into a particular shape or categorising them as other than the norm (Hunter, 2008, pp. 5-21; Kuribayashi, 1998). tucker green’s plays often incorporate the theatrical space, including not only the stage and auditorium but, as in the case of The Shed, the architecture of the building as a whole, as well as the building’s location and relation to its surroundings. By speaking to the ecology of the theatre in this way, tucker green’s drama raises questions as to the extent to which the theatre itself constitutes a safe space for black women. tucker green’s plays therefore encourage innovative performance strategies, instilling safe space discourse into the mainstream framework of British and international theatre, thereby enabling new conversations about the physical spaces through which this framework operates.

Since silence, repression and the failure inherent to language are major themes in tucker green’s plays and dominate the dramaturgy of her characters, the texts are

antithetical to conventional linguistic communication. tucker green's writing thus manifests an example of what Sara Jane Bailes (2011, p. 4) calls the "poetics of failure", since it "orders a mood, or a state determining a set of outcomes" without explicating what the cause of that mood is or how exactly it should manifest on the stage, thereby placing considerable onus on the actors to embody these poetics so that the performance properly represents the script's emotional and psychological complexity. This requirement on the actors does not mean that the text fails to carry such complexity on its own, but the conversion of its poetics through speech and bodily gesture is especially challenging given the almost total absence of direct denotation. It is crucial, therefore, that tucker green's plays are studied not simply as texts but also as performances. Hence, to inform my analysis of each of the plays on which I have focused here, I have interviewed people involved in their production, gaining insight into their manifestation on the stage.

tucker green's plays are not easily pigeonholed in any particular theatrical tradition, though they overlap with several. While bearing some resemblance to the experimental drama of the Beckettian type, they both borrow and steer away from this tradition by prompting experimental dramaturgical modes to unearth and narrate what is often buried, unspoken, and thus inimical to linear narration—while still adhering to a fundamental narrative that remains indispensable from beginning to end. *random*, for instance, is a monodrama in which a single actor embodies several roles, each of which is conveyed via the use of monologue, itself conveying each character's feelings over and above the narrative action. And yet the poetics and affect are underpinned by a firm story: the murder of Brother. Her writing's resistance to explication, its "poetics of failure" and its minimal presentation on the page certainly position it in the category of experimental

drama; her writing prompts experimental performance strategies, incorporating various staging techniques to carry the narrative and to elicit vicarious psychological experiences. And yet the experimentation, in the writing and in the performance, is always geared towards overcoming issues of articulation and expression raised by and included in the narrative. It is necessary because the traumas that are at the heart of each narrative are so difficult to articulate and it is this difficulty with which tucker green's theatre engages. The narrative and the inherent failure of language to represent it call for experiment; the plays do not manifest a modernist commentary on and exploration of the problems of language *per se* but are rooted in particular societal issues of race, gender and communication.

tucker green's drama is therefore experimental only insofar as experimentation is necessary to tell stories that are real, present and urgent, rather than to unpick the human condition in more abstract or symbolic terms. For instance, while Samuel Beckett might expose the failure of language *per se* (see Lutterbie, 1988, pp. 468-81), tucker green remarks on the failure of language specific to the context to which her work relates, which is usually that of the black family or household fraught with a legacy of trauma. The tension throughout *born bad*, for example, is fostered by the inability of the family members to vocalise the trauma they have suffered, the words that they do utter constantly skirting but never explicating the issue. tucker green's mode of experimentation is thus different from that witnessed in the experimental plays written by Evaristo and St. Hilaire and performed by Theatre of Black Women in the 1980s (see Johnson, 2021, pp. 71-72). These latter works, while deeply political, employ experimental means to challenge a convention that has been inimical and unwelcoming to black women; whereas tucker

green, while also challenging convention, does so first and foremost in order to convey a narrative in a way that is true to the problems of communication entangled within that narrative—and it is in this way that tucker green tells a story that has yet to be given representational justice.

For example, the refrain—“Say it”—throughout *born bad*, expressed by some of the characters (initially and most prominently Dawta) to Dad who remains silent despite their repeated demand, captures the communicative impasse that stifles the family’s dynamic and underpins the play’s tension. The experimentation is evident in the refrain’s rhythmic repetition and the persistence with which nothing is said despite the ostensible textual presence of speech. The impossibility of articulation is further manifested in Dawta’s outburst at her mother, in which she repeatedly calls her a “bitch” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 7). Much of this speech is repetition, Dawta repeating the accusatory word over and over, without making her meaning explicit in conventional descriptive or explanatory language. However, the repetition metonymically points to the context of intergenerationality: “for yu—yu mudda, and yu mudda’s mudda—those bitches that bred yu off before and before” (tucker green, 2003b, p. 7). Dawta does not spell out that she is angry at her mother for failing to protect her from her father or that she regards this as an intergenerational issue; she does not explicate the context of intergenerational trauma. But it is through her struggle to articulate these things, the repetition of the same word that she struggles to move beyond, that—paradoxically—she nonetheless expresses them.

However, although they centre on black families and pertain strongly to blackness, it may be argued that the trauma central in tucker green’s plays is not exclusively black. The trauma in *random* (brought about the murder of Brother) or *born bad* (the father’s

incestuous abuse of his daughter and son), for example, could occur in any family. But because it occurs in the context of a black family, it gives rise to urgent race-related questions: racist violence in the case of *random* and ‘black masculinity’—and its role in the construction of what Mark Anthony Neal (2013, p. 132) has termed “black respectability” in domestic spheres—in *born bad*. In *dirty butterfly*, the victim of violence is in fact a white woman while the onlookers are black, and we are left to guess the race of the abuser, thus creating an open-ended racial discourse around stereotyping, responsibility and the racialisation of trauma—in this sense exploring the “illegibility” of black masculinity as an important discourse of counteraction against stereotyping (Neal, 2013). tucker green seems to demand that we question the limits of black British drama, which she renders porous, like the paper-thin wall in *dirty butterfly* that separates the flat lived in by Jo, the woman abused by her partner, from that of her neighbours, Jason and Amelia, who are listening through it. One particularly effective way in which she makes this demand is by leaving out any direct explication of the dialogue between her writing and critical race theory, and yet such a dialogue is nonetheless evident in the various ways each play approaches the intersectionality of race and gender. In *dirty butterfly*, for instance, the characters do not mention or discuss the race of the abuser, and yet Azar Kazemi, director of the 2016 production of the play at the Halcyon Theater in Chicago, saw it as an important issue in need of discussion with the cast.

Therefore, it could be said that tucker green’s plays cannot be categorised: they are certainly experimental and certainly examples of black British drama, and yet they also deliberately overstep these categories. They overstep the category of experimental drama by underpinning each play with a solid and indispensable narrative. And, as

evidenced in the example of *dirty butterfly*, they overstep conventional definitions of black British drama, exemplifying its possibilities beyond mainstream categorisation, by exposing the porosity of its parameters.

One of the most distinctive elements of tucker green's drama is her way of relating how psychological trauma is absorbed, manifested and represented by the body. In *random*, for example, multiple characters are performed by one actor, the characters distinguished by dialect and rhythm. The multiplicity within unity that this performance strategy conveys correlates with the theme of intersectionality as the body of the actor itself becomes a dramaturgical intersection mirroring the thematic crossovers between race and gender. It also accentuates the effect of internalisation, the body representing not only the different characters but also the family, and the home, as a unit. Hence, one of the key turning points in the narrative is when the police enter the house; the sense of personal invasion felt by the family at this point is conveyed through the actor's performance as an invasion of the body. Because of the monodramatic form of the performance, when Mum complains, "dark boots an' heavy shoes inna my house" (tucker green, 2010, p. 26), repeatedly lamenting their intrusion "on my clean carpet / in my good room—/ in my front room" (tucker green, 2010, p. 26) and so on, the imagined space of the house and thus the police's invasion of it are carried in large part by the body of a single actor. Throughout *born bad*, to take another example, the character of the father very rarely speaks. His silence—amplified by his bodily presence in Michael Rogers's interpretation of the part in the 2010 performance of the play at the Soho Rep—both dominates the dramaturgy of the play, in such a way that it accentuates and extends the perpetual repression of the violence he has inflicted on his family, and signifies his

weakness as a patriarch. Powerless outside of the home, he inflicts harm within it, and due to his debility he is unable to take responsibility for his actions, thus perpetuating the trauma through his and his family's silence.

Moreover, in lieu of direct communication or explication, other performance strategies in addition to the work of the actors were employed to diminish the distance between actors and audience, stage and auditorium—transforming the entire theatrical space into an extension and embodiment of dramatic effect. Even though the audience was physically separate from the actors (if the conventional division between stage and seats is to be understood as constituting a separation), performance strategies were adopted to enhance a sense of ontological and phenomenological overlap. To this effect, the audience's experience of viewing the plays and productions, as discussed here, often involved some sort of bodily engagement; in many examples, the spectators perceived the action on stage with not only their ears and eyes—across a representational threshold or suspension of disbelief—but through smell, taste and proprioception. Such kinaesthetic engagement is intended to elicit affective vicarious experiences and put the audience in a position of responsibility as witness to the traumatic action.

Smells, tastes, heartbeats, blackouts, clocks and a paper-thin wall were among the devices implemented to produce such an experience. In the 2015 production of *random* at the Imago Theatre in Montreal, the use of several digital clocks at the back of the stage symbolised the obsession with time fixed into the consciousness of the characters as a measure against which to map the traumatic event that occurred offstage and is being remembered and relived. Time collapses, though, with the news of the murder of Brother (the traumatic event), and the clocks stop. The simple implementation of the clock to

present a conception of time onstage is an effective way of bringing the audience into the psychic ontology of the action owing to the specific nature of the temporal disjuncture between the action onstage and life in the auditorium. While it is a matter of habit for an audience to surrender to the fictional temporality onstage, when that temporality is skewed it must also give in to the skewed *conception* of time and thus enter the psyches of the characters. In the Soho Rep's 2014 production of *generations*, the smell of garlic issued from the kitchen onstage as the audience entered the auditorium, while orange Fanta was served after the performance. Such immersion is more than a gimmick or a strategy employed to make the audience feel welcome (though welcoming is part of its function), but the internalisation of liquid and smells as part of the viewing experience correlates with the unspoken subject matter of the play: the spread of HIV/AIDS unwittingly contracted through the mixing of (bodily) fluids.

These examples are just two of those examined in this thesis that demonstrate how tucker green's plays encourage a breaking down of the fourth wall. While the scripts do not explicitly prescribe such means of staging them, it has been one of the main intentions of this thesis to demonstrate how the poetics and thematic content of tucker green's writing conduces performance strategies that not only include but also, to a certain degree, implicate the audience as witness to the violence represented on stage. Perhaps this implication is most prominently manifest in the presence and dramaturgical function of the paper-thin wall in *dirty butterfly*, which separates Jo's flat from the ones lived in by Jason and Amelia who can hear the violence being inflicted on their neighbour but do not directly intervene, her vulnerability having a libidinally arousing effect on Jason. Thus, as an audience, we are reminded of the paper-thin fourth wall between us and the drama

onstage, and by implication between us and the violence in the world, both near and far, to which we might be inclined to turn a blind eye.

Furthermore, the contexts, themes and settings addressed by tucker green's theatre are remarkable in how they grapple with the intersectionalities of race, gender and class, thereby unearthing the ambiguities that run through these identifiers—especially when they are seen through the prism of intersectionality—and complicating racial clichés. Although tucker green addresses primarily the themes of blackness and the black family, she constantly positions her drama in relation to the neighbouring and overlapping issues of gender and class, causing us to question the exceptionality of race as a determining factor of identity and, perhaps more importantly, of a family's predicament. The discourse prompted by her writing is never reduced to a marginal or 'race' issue, but instead reveals the complex and often elusive ways in which racism intersects with sexism. Thus, tucker green engages with issues such as 'black masculinity', black motherhood and the way that race intertwines with the problematics of 'sisterhood', a concept championed by second wave feminists which stands for an equally shared solidarity among all women, deemed problematic by third wave feminists due to its inability to account for the conflict between some women's complicity in misogynistic violence (whether such complicity is conscious or unconscious, acknowledged or repressed) and those who wish to call out and counteract this complicity; such a conflict is perhaps most evident in intergenerational contexts (Henry, 2004, pp. 1-54). Race intersects with this concept on two important levels, the first regarding intergenerational trauma as a condition inherited from slavery; the second taking into consideration black feminist critiques of feminist movements favouring white

privileged feminists to the exclusion of black or other minority feminists (for a foundational example, see hooks, 1986, pp. 125-38).

An overarching theme in tucker green's plays is the silence that is inseparable from trauma, especially when such trauma is ingrained into the fabric of a family. tucker green's implementation of silence as a theme and performance strategy is innovative, and is perhaps the most distinctive feature of her poetics, in the way that its thematic and performative functions are entangled. In tucker green's plays, silence, what is not said, becomes a dramaturgical metonym for trauma. It is often through silence, rather than through the action of violence itself, that traumatic affect is elicited. "Silence shout in the loudest", says Sister in *random* (2010, p. 45), lamenting the unwillingness of the public to face the deeper, societal issue of her brother's murder and its perceived "randomness". In *random*, at least through the eyes of Sister, silence is thus entangled with randomness, because it is the silence surrounding certain personal, private and especially racial issues that allow the authorities (namely the police) to perceive the murder as random. The turn of phrase, "random", is both cliché and euphemism, denuding acts of violence of any political, social, or cultural meaning, implying that such acts are unpredictable and lacking in meaningful causality when, at a macroscopic level, their occurrence is in fact very predictable and ascribable to causal factors. As W. Lance Bennett (1999, p. 183) has observed, this perception of criminality stems largely from its portrayal in the media as divorced from the broader political and economic contexts, as a way of absolving the non-criminal public of their responsibility for the actions of criminals.

Throughout *generations*, silence functions in multiple ways: literally, to reflect the silence surrounding HIV/AIDS in South Africa; as a means of coping with the trauma and

shame caused by disease; to represent the inability to articulate the extent or nature of the loss suffered; and figuratively, since the disease itself operates ‘silently’, in the sense that it is undetectable at the point of contraction. Similarly, in *dirty butterfly* and *born bad*, silence stands metonymically for the silence of the abused. In *dirty butterfly*, when Jo is silent, the presence of her abusive husband is dramaturgically magnified. The silence also chimes with Jo’s unwillingness to report the acts of abuse against her and a comparable unwillingness among the witnesses, including both the neighbours Jason and Amelia and the audience. In *born bad*, the thematic and dramaturgical functions of silence are similarly intertwined, except in this case it is the silence of repression.

Moreover, in *nut*, the protagonist Elayne withdraws from a world that she feels does not listen to her. Thus, the play’s plot and dramaturgy revolves around the silencing of black women—embodied in society’s refusal to listen to black women—inviting interpretations pertaining to the discourse of the safe space as a zone in which marginalised, and silenced, people can express themselves freely and be heard (Collins, 2000); and how the safe space might be aligned with Elizabeth Alexander’s (2004) conception of the “black interior”. As I argued in my analysis of *nut* in relation to this concept, focusing particularly on its premiere at The Shed in 2013, the play exhibits a strong degree of self-reflexivity in how it raises questions as to the status and history of the theatre itself as a safe space (see Hunter, 2008, pp. 1-21; Kuribayashi, 1998). *nut* is thus representative of tucker green’s overall mission against silence, and more specifically against *silencing*, in which silence is not overcome as much as shown to be an issue that needs to be overcome. The safe space offers a possibility for the silenced to speak, while also critically highlighting the need for such a space and—in tucker green’s plays—causes

us to be attentive to the efficacy of the theatre in carrying out this purpose. Although *nut* is the example from tucker green's plays that most directly relates to the notion of the safe space, given her overall output's engagement with issues of silence and repression, it might be said that it repeatedly brings into question the capacity of the theatre to provide such a zone.

Of particular pertinence to the theme of silence in tucker green's work is her employment of a dramaturgical strategy in which violence is not explicitly shown. In each of the plays I have analysed here, the violent acts take place off-stage, and thus their persistent, immitigable effects are sustained in and by the pervading silence. The obscene is tied up with understandings of what can and cannot be (re)presented before an audience, with the notion that there is a limit to what an audience should and should not see. Deriving from the Latin, *obscaenus*, and the French, *obscène*, the word etymologically describes something that is "ill-omened, abominable, disgusting, indecent", while it can also be a term used in augury (Onions, 1966, p. 620). What is obscene, therefore, is very powerful when considered in relation to the word's etymology; not only can it disgust on a superficial level, but it can profoundly influence those who witness it. Perhaps the obscene even has a demonic or oracular power.

This is notion is especially pertinent to critical race studies; seen through this contextual lens, issues of what can and cannot be seen, and of what counts and does not count as violence, take on reinforced significance. Examining the violence historically inflicted on the black body, Saidiya Hartman (1997, p. 3) has argued that visibility can do injustice to suffering bodies by "inuring us to pain by virtue of their familiarity". Furthermore, reflecting on the history of the transatlantic slave trade, questions of the

visibility and invisibility of violence inflicted on the black body are complicated by the legal history of the period in which the slave trade was in operation, as well as by the repercussions of this history. The violence—such as rape, for instance—inflicted on slaves did not legally count in the same way as violence inflicted on non-slaves (Feinstein, 2019). Thus, its status as an act of violence, in the eyes of the law of the time, was tenuous. Representing violence in a racial context vicariously as opposed to doing so more directly, its invisibility pertaining to issues of validity, witnessing and civic responsibility, speaks to this history—which, as the activism of the Black Lives Matter movement testifies, remains highly relevant today.

In tucker green's theatre, silence as a theme and dramaturgical function is, more often than not, inextricable from taboo, the prohibition of which often extends to its mention. In the plays examined in this thesis, the taboos she addresses include: the racial inflection of what is otherwise considered a "random" murder, HIV/AIDS, incest, marital rape and other forms of domestic violence. Often the shame attached to the traumatic act's status as taboo derives from its association with gender. For example, in South Africa, the shame deriving from HIV/AIDS weighs more heavily on women than it does on men (Dageid & Duckert, 2008, p. 182). tucker green uses silence and the "poetics of failure" as a strategy to highlight the violence beneath a taboo subject's gendered unspeakability. It is thus a distinctive feature, and achievement, of her writing that she speaks about taboos while engaging with the problem of them being taboos, and thus unspeakable. According to this logic, in tucker green's theatre, the fact that something is not mentioned is partly indicative of its taboo status, which is based on the gravity and nature of its violence and, ultimately, the way it is perceived in society. In *generations*, for example, the taboo

subject of HIV/AIDS is not spoken about as such, and yet the trauma and violence of the disease, which are not unconnected from its status as taboo, are poignant and clear.

In *born bad*, the very concealment of incest exacerbates and perpetuates its gravity and alters its nature so that the initial violent act continues in the form of its repression. The linguistic failure that permeates her work is especially conducive to producing this effect; failure to articulate becomes figuratively and affectively representational of the impossibility of putting something into words on account of its status as taboo. On a dramaturgical level, tucker green's treatment of taboo corresponds with her off-stage representation (or concealment) of violence. Thus, the occurrence of violence off-stage is more than a racially inflected usage of an ancient dramaturgical device; it is tied up with the action's status as taboo, with society having a key role in determining its unspeakability.

One way in which tucker green addresses taboo subjects is through the voice of a particular character, invariably a girl, inclined to break the silence as a way of distinguishing herself from her mother. Sister in *random* and Dawta in *born bad* are manifestations of such a character. Although in each instance the silence is not broken as such, in that the characters are not explicit about the subtextual issues they bear, they exhibit an evident urge to speak and to be heard. Thus, by creating a familial dynamic in which a daughter speaks instead of, and in spite of, her mother, tucker green critiques the second wave feminist notion of 'sisterhood'. In this way, the author incorporates discourses of silence, taboo and violence into feminist discourse, leading us to question how and to what extent 'sisterhood' intersects with race.

In the second half of *random*, after the murder of Brother is disclosed, Sister becomes the *de facto* matriarch of the family, asserting her dramaturgical dominance. While *random* does not involve family secrets in the same way that *born bad* does, Sister feels the need to seek, face and protect her brother's memory and the truth about his death. The need to do this is all the more imperative since her mother is unable to come to terms with the tragedy. In *born bad*, Dawta is the dramaturgical counterpart to Dad. While Dad is silent, dominating the stage with his silence and presence, Dawta tries to fill this silence with speech. By acting as the patriarch's "mirror", Dawta thus plays the role conventionally assigned to the matriarch. Her role operates in contradistinction to her father, and thereby also to her mother. As I have explained, in Dawta's speech in which she repeatedly calls her mother a "bitch", the subtext to her vitriol constitutes a desire to sever herself from the lineage of which her mother is a part: she wants to break the cycle of abuse. Although Dawta only indirectly refers to the abuse she received from her father, this speech is a direct attack on intergenerational 'sisterhood'. Therefore, far more than a device for revealing what is taboo and silent, tucker green's deployment of the character of the loquacious daughter, in contradistinction to her mother, is fundamental to creating a family dynamic dealing head-on with feminist discourse.

tucker green's theatre refrains from explicating how such a dynamic relates to the intersectionality of race and gender, but it makes us question the nature of this relation—the extent to which the feminist issues raised invite an analysis through the lens of critical race studies, and the extent to which the gender relations portrayed are possible and equally significant in non-racial contexts. More often than not, what tucker green creates is a relation in which such lines are blurred, highlighting the complexity, ambiguity and

impurity of the intersectionality of race and gender. There are no clear answers, and yet the two categories, race and gender, can never be completely disentangled. This notion is in accordance with the pioneering theories of intersectionality that Crenshaw put forward in the 1990s. Crenshaw's arguments were directed chiefly at the public's ignorance of the particular intersection of "patterns of subordination" affecting black women (see Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249). Therefore, to view in non-racial terms the domestic violence in *born bad*, for instance, although such violence could occur in any family, would be to miss the intersectional dynamic governing the context of such violence and the way the family tries to cope with it. The historical origination of the intergenerational wound, and the socio-political meaning of the father's silence and silencing of his wife and children, all demand to be understood in *both* racial *and* gendered terms.

A distinctive feature of tucker green's theatre is her renovation of traditional theatrical conventions in ways that make them especially pertinent to the themes that her work tackles. The two most outstanding examples of this are the invocation of the 'everyman' character in *random* and the utilisation of the chorus in *generations*. The perceived randomness of Brother's murder and attendant silence speak strongly to notions of the 'everyday' theorised by Michel de Certeau (1984) and the 'postcolonial everyday' more recently formulated by James Procter (2006). De Certeau explored the position of 'everyday life' as a concern of literature and drama, arguing that the 'everyman' narrative developed in the Medieval and Early Modern periods manifested the "erosion and denigration of the singular or the extraordinary" (1984, p. 1). Procter argues that in the contemporary era such a trope has proven to be highly applicable to the postcolonial condition, especially in literature concerning marginalised subjects, in which repetition

serves to ground the narrative as well as provide some kind of ontological grounding for the characters (2006, p. 67).

random explores notions of the everyday as both a theme and a performance strategy. Understanding Brother's death through Procter's theoretical lens, the perception of it as random or 'everyday', by the police and the boy's mother, functions in the first instance as a means of stabilising the status quo and in the second as a coping mechanism. In both cases, the everyday is invoked to hold a situation in place and sustained by denial. Dawta, on the other hand, seeks to destabilise all these things. Moreover, the dramaturgy of *random* is constructed in such a way that the audience could be led to perceive the event as mundane. A sense of mundanity is elicited in the play's opening section, which concentrates largely on the family's domestic routine. In this way, the play invites audience identification, which subsequently becomes the means by which—in the aftermath of Brother's murder—the play effects a kind of indictment of the audience as witness to the death as well as bearer of the same perspective as the police and other authorities who deem it to be random.

Through drawing on the concept of the 'everyday', tucker green invokes the 'everyman'. As de Certeau (1984, p. 1) argues, the 'everyman' character is one and the same as the 'nobody', on account of the character's loss of the "singular or the extraordinary". Paradoxically, this loss has the potential to make the character universally relatable while also denying them the individual richness that might sustain the audience's empathy with them. As such, tucker green critiques not only the perception of violent acts as random, but also its racial implications, with 'everyman' being deemed 'nobody' as a reflection of society's perception of marginalised people of colour. The deployment of

the ‘everyman’ trope is accentuated by the play’s monodramatic form and the absence of personal names for the characters (as seen also in *generations* and *born bad*), this latter quality being also common to everyman characters appearing in traditional morality plays. This everyman-producing dynamic exists in tension with the characters’ very specific socioeconomic, racial and cultural locatedness, which is made explicit in everything from the family’s patois-inflected language to the setting and the murder itself. This tension operates in such a way that the condition of being ‘nobody’ is a constant threat to the specificity—that is, to everything that makes the boy’s murder *not* random. Moreover, extinguishing the life of one of the play’s characters literalises this tension—which can be seen in terms of presence and absence—as a force playing out between the universal themes of familial relationships (inviting audience empathy) and the tragedy that explicitly locates the family in a context remote from the everyday concerns of a typical “bourgeois” theatre audience.

tucker green’s utilisation of the choir in *generations* is an example of a way in which she exposes and exacerbates the trauma about which the characters are otherwise silent. It is unsettling how she deploys this ancient theatrical device—traditionally used to propel the narrative from a position seemingly outside of it and yet also integral to it (Bacon, 1994, p. 7)—in a contemporary context. “Another leaves us, another has gone”, the choir sings in an extended prologue the names of those who die, thus highlighting the principal theme of loss that runs through the play and accounting for the theme’s overarching presence in spite of it being unspoken. What is particularly effective about the dramaturgy of tucker green’s use of the chorus is its potential to seem of little consequence beyond being a device to add a degree of musicality, which is often how the

chorus in ancient theatre has been misinterpreted (Bacon, 1994, p. 7). tucker green therefore plays with the expectations of the audience, who may be inclined to view the chorus somewhat superficially before the reality of its message dawns on them.

Moreover, the chorus in *generations* enhances the play's capacity to represent trauma, its repression and its mourning. It accords with Cathy Caruth's (2016, p. 4) conception of trauma as a pathology that is "always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available". In this sense, the chorus operates in a way that is comparable to the urge to speak and be heard that is manifest in the characters of Sister and Dawta in *random* and *born bad*, both of whom do not explicate their trauma but represent a similar kind of crying out. In *generations*, the diegetic and extra-diegetic elements of the script are respectively embodied in the characters and the choir, the first being silent and repressed, the second being vocally more explicit. As a result, the play itself effects a realistic representation of the repression of trauma while also performing a communal act of mourning.

The attributes I have discussed above contribute to tucker green's unique contribution to theatre. The performance strategies and the physicality of acting motivated by her scripts differentiate her plays from work of previous generations of black playwrights including Lorraine Hansberry, Amiri Baraka and August Wilson, whose innovation was primarily to fill the absence and define the position of the black body in mainstream Western theatre, an exigency which called for narratives that were more politically didactic and thus linear in form (McDonough, 2006, pp. 133-54). The minimal level of explication in tucker green's work, combined with the "poetics of failure" imbued

in her language, means that their political message is not articulated directly but still very much felt. *dirty butterfly*, for instance, raises many questions about civic responsibility, even implicating the audience in the process, since the play follows a couple who witness violence being inflicted on somebody else, this act of witnessing mirrored in the audience watching the play.

The process by which exposition takes place involves the truth rising to (without necessarily verbally reaching) consciousness, instead of a linear movement of cause and effect: the focus is often on the *situation* and its effects on the characters' and audience's consciousness. Even in *random*, which is split into two parts by an event, namely the murder of Brother, because of the monodramatic form, it is as if the experience were being relived, a sense that is heightened by the characters' fixation with time (highlighted by the digital clocks at the back of the stage in the 2015 production in Montreal). And despite the evasive poetics of the language, each of the plays is grounded by a defined narrative. While the meanings are multiple, unclear, overlapping and ambiguous, the narratives of *what* happened, by the end of each play, can be clearly delineated by the audience even if they are not always conveyed directly by the characters. *random*, for instance, superficially resembles a poetic monologue, perhaps inviting comparison with the work of Bernardine Evaristo or Patricia St. Hilaire. The play is monodramatic and the language is artful and indirect. However, the key motivation behind the narration is clear—the murder of Brother—and the play nonetheless relates a series of events.

The context into which tucker green's work fits most observably is black women's drama, and yet her treatment of the intersectionality of race and gender highlights the complexities and ambiguities of this relation in a way that stretches and challenges the

boundaries of black women's drama as a category. That tucker green is concerned with blackness beyond the geographic specificity of London is perhaps suggested by *generations*, a play about blackness as much as the rest of her output, but set in South Africa. Exploring the traumatic subject matter of HIV/AIDS, *generations* in large part concerns the relation between the internal and external trauma, and between the social and the biological. While exploring the spread of racial discourse beyond London, tucker green also develops a dramatic discourse on how the dynamics of race are played out on and through the body. *generations* was staged first in London in 2005. In 2015, it was staged at the Soho Rep in New York. When I interviewed the director of this latter production, Leah C. Gardiner, she noted that although the play was set in South Africa, it was ultimately about family, in particular the black family as a unit fostering homogeneity and safety. The pan-African significance of this notion is reinforced when considering not only the violent history of apartheid in South Africa but also segregation in the US and the oppressive systems of anti-black racism that have prevailed throughout the Western world.

tucker green can therefore be seen to write collectively about the intersection of race and gender, following Evaristo, St. Hilaire and others involved in promoting black women's theatre since the 1980s. But tucker green's approach is unique in that, by leaving much to the audience to untangle, interpret and discuss, she operates collectively with her audiences—in particular those who are not black, given that one of the chief concerns of the discourse of intersectionality as defined by Crenshaw (1990, p. 1241-99) is the lack of public understanding, especially among white people, of the crucial and specific interactions between race and gender. Lynette Goddard (2009, p. 300) observes the way

random engages with different demographics, at times challenging what they call the “wider audience”:

[T]he narrative focuses primarily on the impact of the murder as seen through the reaction of [Brother’s] grieving female relatives- Sister and Mum- whose personal reflections make the subject matter accessible to wider audiences, whilst preventing easy reductions of the narrative as being about “black on black” violence.

On the one hand, tucker green plays with the universal and what would be familiar to the wider (predominantly non-black) audience; while, on the other hand, she contrasts universality and familiarity with specificity and what the wider audience might find unfamiliar—without necessarily making it any more familiar in the process.

As a strategy of communication, therefore, tucker green compels the audience to reflect actively on an issue that is both phenomenological and political, and thus to internalise and digest it by a process of active participation rather than didactic learning. In other words, she reaches the audience at the level of affect prior to that of cognition, leaving the audience to apply the latter of their own accord in order to make sense of what they have seen and how it made them feel. Although tucker green resists explicating the role that race plays in her work, the presence of race, indicated first and foremost by the visible race of the characters, is definitely felt. The murder of Brother in *random*, for instance, resonates poignantly with the real and much publicised murder of Stephen Lawrence in London in 1993. The actress Lucinda Davis, who starred in the 2015 production of *random* at the Imago Theatre in Montreal, drew inspiration from Doreen Lawrence, Lawrence’s mother—whom she saw as the archetypal black British grieving mother—when she embodied the mother in the play. Moreover, also in *random*, the

mother's angry and protective reaction to the police entering the house, as if the police were the enemy as opposed to working in the family's interests, can be viewed in connection with the perennial suspicion held by black communities towards the police in light of the many recorded incidents of anti-black violence that the police have perpetrated, neglected or otherwise mishandled. Lawrence's murder is a case in point. As Goddard (2009, p. 302) writes, "[the family's] initial suspicion towards the police echoes criticisms of the Metropolitan Police for their mishandling of the inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence". By handing responsibility to the audience to comprehend the broader racial context of the narrative as well as its significance with regard to intersectionality, tucker green both challenges and indicts the audience, obliging it to take part in piecing together the significance of race and gender in each play and to recognise its own responsibility as witness.

Formal innovation, captivating and emotionally fraught poetics and a unique way of engaging with the intersectionalities of race, gender and class make tucker green's theatre of great cultural significance. Her writing manages to be both experimental—often verging on poetry in its obliqueness and opacity, not to mention the particular verticality of its *mise-en-page*—and realistic, arguably more so than it would be if she were to use a more straightforward form of prose. For her writing captures the impossibility of straightforwardly verbalizing the pain that her characters suffer, pain born of intersectional oppression. Thus, tucker green invites critical interpretations based on key works of intersectional theory—most prominently the writings of Crenshaw, Collins and hooks—and yet she does so without being explicit about how she engages with this theory, or whether she intentionally engages with it at all. She does not indicate, in her plays or

the rare interviews that she has given, having purposefully drawn on intersectional theory to inform her work. And yet, as this thesis has attempted to show, the application of this theory to her drama helps untangle the complexity of its political content. By utilizing what may best be described as a “poetics of failure”—which, in turn, gives rise to experimental performance strategies—she conveys the psychic trauma that is at the heart of intersectional oppression, much of which is exacerbated by the struggle to break through the silence and confusion that obfuscates it. This reluctance to explicate in clearcut terms the way the traumas represented pertain to race and gender is crucial to her work’s affectivity, which is the primary force that drives home her political message. In sum, this message is that the intersection of race and gender, as it manifests in the lives of black people across the globe, is not something that can be categorized and tabulated. Choosing to explore this subjectivity, tucker green takes an approach that is cognitively indirect whilst being affectively direct; its political content is felt before can be understood, and understanding it is the responsibility of the audience.

Appendices

Appendix A: Author's Interview with Petra Letang, 18 May 2018 at the Minerva Theatre

1 **Petra:** Okay so, have you read the play?

2 **Arwa:** Yes, I did. I actually wrote the first chapter of my thesis about *random*.

3 **Petra:** Really?

4 **Arwa:** Yeah, it's all about *random*.

5 **Petra:** And this was before you knew it was gonna be on...?

6 **Arwa:** Yes. So, I was very glad when I found out that it was being performed here. That's
7 why I wanted to take this opportunity to come watch the show and meet you.

8 **Petra:** Excellent! How did you stumble across *random* then? Are you a fan of debbie's?

9 **Arwa:** Yes, I read about her—I read her plays before.

10 **Petra:** Okay!

11 **Arwa:** So I focus in the first chapter on motherhood in *random*; the concept of
12 motherhood. What is the relationship? How did the intersectionality, the intersectional
13 oppression that she had in real life affect her relationship with her son and daughter, and
14 how did her daughter take a part of her role after the death of the boy, and how both of
15 them reacted about that.

16 **Petra:** So, obviously, to answer that question, this is a personal choice that I have made
17 for this character. So in terms of wanting specifics about the mother, it might differ to
18 what debbie says to what the writer would say. But the choices that, I guess I made with
19 the mother character is that...Sorry, ask the question again.

20 **Arwa:** This is just actually an introduction to the question. Did you find something
21 specific about the mother, the character of the mother? And you as a black lady, do you
22 relate to this mother as : being a kind of presentation of a typical black mother in the
23 British community?

24 **Petra:** Okay, so in terms of relating to the mother, absolutely. I am a mother. I'm
25 expecting at the moment so...My daughter is five years old; she's not a boy so I guess,
26 one, she still very young and so I don't have the same worries that maybe mother has in

27 the play. But I think from the moment you're expecting, there's this kind of protection
28 and worry and concern that you have for your unborn child, and then when the child
29 arrives there's another set of worries that a mother has and carries. So I think those
30 definitely are similarities.

31 And then in terms of the mother in *random*, compared to just the role of black mother, I
32 would say any black mother that has a teenager, a teenaged boy is constantly concerned
33 and worried when the child goes out. I know some parents that have sent their kids away
34 to boarding school because of that fear of not wanting their child to be a target or to fall
35 into the wrong company, environment, peer group. And then there are the ones who
36 cannot afford boarding school or don't wish to send their children away to boarding school
37 who just have that constant fear. But then I also have friends who have 20-year-old sons
38 who are really driven and really focused and didn't give them any of the troubles that you
39 sometimes get from adolescent boys; but even with that, they're still concerned because
40 they can be a target because they're not involved in certain peer groups. I think to answer
41 your question just in general; I think motherhood is just a worrying job. It's a job that you
42 take on that is full of worrying, concern and fears.

43 **Arwa:** Continuously.

44 **Petra:** Yes, continuously, and not just from the events of what happened in *random*, but
45 even for their mental health, or them being accepted by the society or treated unfairly
46 because they're black - just succeeding and being happy within themselves. So I think the
47 concern and worries and fears that the mother has in *random* are generally the concerns
48 and worries and fears of every mother, and regardless of your race even. So yeah, I guess
49 in a nutshell that would kind of answer that question about just the mother's role.

50 **Arwa:** So do you think after the death of the boy it becomes more related to the black
51 mother more than motherhood in general?

52 **Petra:** I think that any mom that experiences the loss of her child, especially the way
53 happens in *random*, it would definitely had an effect on that mother and her peers and her
54 family in general. You look at Stephen Lawrence's mom, Doreen Lawrence, and then I
55 watched the documentary of the 25 years anniversary that was on the other day, and she
56 kind of just summed up that her life has never been the same since her son was taken way
57 from her, and just in my eyes, I think, "Well, of course". Because I think death in general
58 is a difficult thing to deal with, to actually comprehend that someone that you know,
59 you're never going to be able to speak to, see them, touch them ever again. But for that to
60 be your offspring, for that to be your child, someone that you gave birth to, I can't even
61 imagine what kind of...

62 **Arwa:** Pain.

63 **Petra:** ...Pain that person would be in. And I don't think that pain would ever ease up. I
64 don't think that pain would ever disappear, like, it's just—I think it's incomprehensible
65 to even imagine how Doreen Lawrence feels on a day today or how mother would feel
66 and continue her life after such a catastrophic event in her family's life and her family's
67 day, and you know, for a day that just started out as a normal making porridge for the
68 family; "Oh, I messed up. I burnt the porridge. Ooh, my daughter is—she's running late
69 again, or she's not dressed properly. My son, he's so demanding", and to actually have
70 such a huge void in your life after getting used to your normality with your family and
71 routine of what happens around your home. I can't even imagine.

72 **Arwa:** Yes, so I'm arguing in this chapter that at that point, with that everyday routine it
73 maybe relates to every British family, but after what happened to the boy, it became
74 more related to the black community, to the black family and black motherhood.

75 **Petra:** Yes.

76 **Arwa:** Because it happens more to black boys, teenage boys, than other boys.

77 **Petra:** In London, yeah. But I think if you look at knife crime in general across the UK,
78 it's actually not just exclusive to young black boys. We hear about young black boys
79 because we're in inner city London, and if you think about it, black people only make up
80 3 percent of the UK, so yeah, the stabbings are really prevalent in the black community
81 in London, and I guess in built up cities like maybe Manchester, Birmingham. But on a
82 whole, I don't think young black boys are the majority, if you include the UK. If we're
83 talking specifically about London, absolutely, that is, you know, it's a problem. It's
84 definitely something that affects our community widely. And it's a scary thought. There
85 are loads of incentives and programmes and youth groups that are kind geared towards and
86 at teenaged boys because of this problem.

87 They're never usually highlighted though because it doesn't make for good journalism,
88 doesn't make for good news to show the positives that happens in the community, and
89 that doesn't mean to say that it's not issue because it is. And why it is happening? I don't
90 know, I wouldn't be able to answer that, but I think it's every family's fear; it's not even
91 just a mother's fear, it's every family, and especially the women in the family because we
92 need our men, we need our men to be strong for us. We are very strong, yeah, but we need
93 the family unit, you need the family on a whole, and if a lot of our young black boys are
94 getting killed off, what's the legacy that we're leaving behind.

95 **Arwa:** Okay, so which of the characters in *random* do you feel more personally attached
96 to?

97 **Petra:** Okay, so this is a difficult one; mainly because I think there are different points in
98 the play that I relate to; something that each character does or says. In terms of, like, if
99 you want to be literal then I guess a straight answer would be sister, because one, she's
100 female; two, she's black; and three, we're around the same age. Then I just think that that's
101 easy because there were moments that in the play where sister would react in a way that I
102 wouldn't necessarily react and I might feel like actually I think the way the man reacted
103 there was something that would be more kind of my reaction. So yeah, I think just at
104 different place in the play I have a personal connection or similarities that I see in my
105 character traits with all of them, which I think is a good thing as well because it enables
106 me to like the characters that I'm playing.

107 In terms of performance, I enjoy playing the mom and brother, but that's because they're
108 so different to me so it's fun as an actress to play a young teenage boy, because in reality,
109 I would never go up for a party like that. So I like to play that part because it's so different
110 to who I am as a person, and it's not often as an actress you would even get the opportunity
111 to do that because they would just cast a young teenage black boy. And then with mom,
112 yes, she's female but she's quite a bit older and she has a very Jamaican accent. So
113 again, that's completely different to who I am and how I speak, but I think that she's so
114 fun, like, she's so charismatic, she's so strong. It's fun to play her than dad, although he
115 doesn't say much, his mannerism to me are, like, they're just hilarious. So yes, the
116 personal connection – I don't know. I connect personally to all of them, I guess is the
117 answer to that.

118 **Arwa:** So, which of the scenes or events in the play have been most challenging for you
119 to perform?

120 **Petra:** Most challenging...I think on an emotional level, from the point mother and father
121 have been told that brother has been murdered, and it happens at different times for when
122 mother and dad find out and for when sister find out. I think both those moments were
123 very difficult because I have to find a place in my imagination—there's actually a
124 really...It's a disturbing place to go to, because imagining that and receiving that news
125 about someone you love and care about, having to go there every night is tough; it is tough
126 because you're reliving just a catastrophic moment in someone's life, but I'm doing that
127 ever night and twice over because I'm receiving it as mom and dad and then as sister. So
128 yeah, I would say emotionally those have been the challenges in the play, but for good
129 reason because debbie's obviously written it so descriptively that it's not difficult for me
130 to reach that emotion; it's not difficult to reach that emotion, but it's difficult to have to
131 portray that every night.

132 **Arwa:** So, do you feel a difficulty in showing this and acting this emotion, this specific
133 emotion every night?

134 **Petra:** No, it's not difficult to find it, it's difficult emotionally, it's draining. So I would
135 say, it's not a difficulty finding that emotion and doing the emotion every night, it's
136 draining doing it every night because for me to actually portray what is written, I have to
137 really go there, and so it's really living that news, that feeling of lost, of grief, of shock,
138 of initial disbelief. And that's tough you know, imagine having to cry everyday because
139 you've received that news and sometimes twice a day for four weeks, it's tough.

140 **Arwa:** And you find it more difficult with your pregnancy?

141 **Petra:** It's difficult to say because I haven't done before pregnancy.

142 **Arwa:** Or does it help, because hormones make women more sensitive?

143 **Petra:** Possibly. I guess if I had done the play not being pregnant and then done the play
144 pregnant, I'd be able to compare, I have nothing to compare it to. So, I was already three
145 months pregnant when we started rehearsals. So, it maybe the hormones that's helping
146 me even reach that point every night, who knows.

147 **Arwa:** Because I remember myself personally when I was pregnant...

148 **Petra:** Emotional.

149 **Arwa:** Yeah, very emotional. Okay, so what do you personally feel are the key themes in
150 the play? Which of them have you responded to the most?

151 **Petra:** What was the last thing?

152 **Arwa:** Key themes. So personally, what do you feel are the key themes in the play?

153 **Petra:** The key themes in the play are family, love, loss, grief, strength. I would say you
154 get a sense of community at points, I guess when—yeah, I don't know, you were going to
155 say.

156 **Arwa:** Where do you find strength?

157 **Petra:** Strength, I find in brother from the top; he's very brave, he's very bold, he's very
158 charismatic and also strength in mom when she doesn't want to let the police in. The police
159 come to her door and say, "Can I come in?" And she says, "No", twice. Eventually she
160 lets them in, but it's like no, actually.

161 **Arwa:** Why do you think so? Is it because she thinks that this is her private space?

162 **Petra:** I think they are a very private family; I think that they...

163 **Arwa:** Or do you think that they are having this immediate response towards the white
164 community by responding to the policemen.

165 **Petra:** Right, so, I think she says no twice because it's like an invasion of space, and I
166 think they are a very private family and I think she is that school of thought where if
167 you've got something important to say, you can say it on my doorstep, I don't think you
168 need to get into my personal space to watch the problem. And I think it's a defensive
169 response – the two no's are definitely defensive, and I just think there's mistrust with the
170 black community and police in general. You're not gonna invite a group of people that
171 you've just grown up feeling like they're against you, you're not gonna invite them in
172 your house; "Yeah, come in, come in BMP". Do you know what I mean? It's no, actually.
173 If you want to elaborate on why you need to come in, then possibly, but not with no
174 explanation; you're not just gonna turn up on my doorstep and I'm going to feel like I
175 have to let you in.

176 So yeah, I think mom shows her strength. I think dad also shows his strength in his
177 defiance to even believe the news that they've given him; there's the whole, "Sit down,
178 do you want a cup of tea?" And they're both just really just defiant like, "No", you don't
179 come in here and try to make this delivery of bad news comfortable for yourself, actually.
180 No, just say it; I'm not gonna comply.

181 **Arwa:** So, do you think that the dad had an active role in the family?

182 **Petra:** Yes, absolutely.

183 **Arwa:** Or do you think that he represents this absent dad, that doesn't talk much, that
184 doesn't communicate?

185 **Petra:** I think dad's very present; I think he's very present and only speaks when he needs
186 to, but I think—yeah, I think he's very present. And in my kind of back story, my idea of
187 dad is that he was a real hands-on dad with the kids when they were younger and I think
188 just over time his work, society have just worn him down to that point of I'm just fed up
189 of speaking. So, I think, no, I think he's very present but just very old school Caribbean
190 and will speak if he has something important to say but not just speaking for the sake of
191 speaking.

192 **Arwa:** Okay, so have you performed a one-woman show before?

193 **Petra:** I never have. This is my first.

194 **Arwa:** How is acting in this play solo similar to or different from performances you have
195 done before?

196 **Petra:** It's very different to anything else that I have ever done. I just compare it to other
197 plays of the theatre shows that I've been in because there's no point in make the
198 comparison of TV or film. So, doing a one-woman show is like starting the first term of
199 school by yourself with the teacher and there are no other kids present. That's what it's
200 like; you're literally, like, you've turned up to school to learn and there are no other
201 students.

202 **Arwa:** So, is there a teacher? Because you have to take all the roles and the control.

203 **Petra:** Well, I guess my teacher would be the director, Timmy. If I use that metaphor of
204 [inaudible 23: 51] then Timmy would play the role of the teacher, our director.

205 **Arwa:** But I mean when you are on the stage alone, do you feel that you have to be in
206 control of everything because there are no aids, even the costumes and the lighting, they
207 don't serve that much, you know.

208 **Petra:** The costume, itself is a great deal because I've got to be very comfortable in what
209 I'm wearing in order to perform this.

210 **Arwa:** But I mean, this costume doesn't tell a lot, you know?

211 **Petra:** No, no, no, it's a blank canvas.

212 **Arwa:** Yes. So, you have to make all the efforts, there's no help at all.

213 **Petra:** No, it's a very demanding - don't get me wrong - it's very demanding role. And
214 when you're doing an ensemble piece, you're in rehearsals, you bounce off of other actors,
215 you gain ideas from other actors, you get to sit back for a bit and watch maybe a scene
216 that you're not that heavily involved in. You know, there is time in between where you
217 can just sit back; and with the women show there isn't that, it's relentless, like, my whole
218 time is like eight-hour days, because I just don't think it would have been productive. It's
219 shorter days, but it's still like you're basically on the treadmill from the moment you get
220 in in the morning because there is no rest apart from obviously your tea breaks, but it's
221 just constant, it's so demanding. I feel like I have used a completely different path of my
222 brain for this show than for any other jobs that I have done.

223 **Arwa:** Collectively.

224 **Petra:** Any other jobs that I've done...

225 **Arwa:** No, I mean that you have to think collectively of all the characters together at the
226 same time.

227 **Petra:** Yes. What we did in the first week was we did a timeline of all four characters so
228 we knew what each character was doing at certain points and times in the day. And that
229 really helped. It was spread across our rehearsal, it was massive like the first row had like
230 7: 37, which is the first time I say, and then it had mom, dad, sister, brother and what we
231 think that they were doing at that time. And so, it was like a massive sheet across the
232 rehearsal space, and that was brilliant because it helped me, kind of, in my mind, work
233 out the demographic and the geography of the house, also what each character was doing
234 when maybe another character was speaking.

235 It was just a really massive—it's a massive thing to take on; not no small feat at all. For
236 all the time I was in rehearsals, thank God I was pregnant because I didn't have a social
237 life, like, usually when I'm working, you know, you'd go out for drinks at the end of
238 rehearsals with your other company. I didn't have any of that. I literally was coming into
239 work working on the script, the play and blocking, going home, doing more work at home,
240 having to deal with my husband and my daughter, you know you give some family time.
241 Going to sleep, waking up, coming to... It was like nonstop; I didn't feel that I had time
242 to...

243 **Arwa:** Communicate with others.

244 **Petra:** Yeah, to be sociable, to go out and meet friends. If I had some free time, I always
245 felt like my head should be in this and I should be looking at this and studying this. So a
246 completely different discipline required for a one-woman show, which I think it's been
247 brilliant for me; not that I wasn't disciplined before, but I think this has just put me into
248 another gear of; okay, if I can bring this to every job, the level of discipline and
249 commitment that I had for this job, if I can bring that to every job, I think I would just—
250 not that I haven't aced my jobs in the past, but I just feel like it's opened up a whole new
251 way of working, work ethic for me. And it's been really nice, actually, having
252 conversations with my director, my assistant director, so Timmy and Max, and then also
253 my stage manager. They have been kind of the equivalent to what my actor peers would
254 have been

255 **Arwa:** Yes.

256 **Petra:** Because it was just me and them. But yeah, very demanding but in a good way. I
257 loved it. I loved it, and I feel like I'm just on different level of performance now.

258 **Arwa:** And do you think that it added to your personal confidence, like, if I can do this, I
259 can do anything?

260 **Petra:** Yeah, I guess so.

261 **Arwa:** Because sometimes when we accomplish a difficult mission, it adds to our
262 confidence.

263 **Petra:** Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I guess so. And I think I will be more confident, like, I've
264 never done a Shakespeare play. I think after doing something like this I feel like, you
265 know what, so I've got the tools and I have enough time to research.

266 **Arwa:** You've discovered something new.

267 **Petra:** Yeah, it's just like, "I can do this".

268 **Arwa:** When you talked about the director and the help of other members of the team, it
269 leads me to ask you how the work of others in staging the play, from director to the set
270 designer, impacted on your performance, and the way you approach this characterisation?

271 **Petra:** So, it was really integral actually to have all of the production team; they were just
272 all just at the end of the phone and just easily accessible and easy to speak to and I had a
273 few meetings with costumes and they really good kind of—I thought that in order not to
274 take away from any of the characters, I wanted a blank canvas for her costumes. So
275 initially, when costume first came to my first fitting they had loads of logo stuff like
276 Adidas stripes and Nike ticks and stuff and I like; "No, I think it needs to be—you need
277 to take all of that back and it needs to be neutral and a blank canvas because, yeah, if we
278 were focusing specifically on brother, maybe yeah, we could go for the sporty Nike,
279 Adidas, but that would be a distraction for when I'm playing mom or dad. And so yeah,
280 they were brilliant and was like, "Yea, okay, understand, that's great", and then they went
281 away and came back with the ideas and then they decided on what we've got now. And
282 obviously, Tino was just—she knew the play like the back of her hand, so any questions
283 or suggestions it was definitely a collaborative process, and collaborative in that everyone
284 in the room actually had the freedom to kind of just chip in and give their suggestions or
285 ideas.

286 So yeah, and that would have been mainly myself, Tino, the director, Max, the assistant
287 director and Naomi our stage manager. So yeah, without them—I mean, they're integral
288 really. I think just without a production crew it would just be amateur, wouldn't it?

289 **Arwa:** Yeah, of course.

290 **Petra:** The lights, the set, the costumes—and I could've been acting my heart out, but if
291 all of those things didn't come together, it just wouldn't be that interesting for people to
292 sit and watch for an hour.

293 **Arwa:** Yeah. I like the spirit that you have, because this is a one-woman show and most
294 of the focus and the work is on you, but you're not saying that, I expected that you would
295 say "Most of the work was on me", but you impressed me now with this team spirit that
296 you have.

297 **Petra:** Oh yeah. I couldn't do it by myself; it's definitely a collaborative piece of theatre.

298 **Arwa:** Okay, what about the audience, did you meet any of the audience and get their
299 impressions?

300 **Petra:** Yeah, funnily enough, especially after Matinees—obviously, because they're in
301 the daytime, straight after Matinees, probably time for me to eat. I don't really like eating
302 for at least an hour before the show because then I just feel full and I'm not concentrating,
303 and I just wouldn't be in the headspace of any of the characters because I would be
304 focusing on how full I am. So yeah, straight after a Matinee I would go out and...

305 Like, people have been tweeting me. I hardly use my Twitter. But I was getting loads of
306 emails from updates saying this person has mentioned you in a tweet, or liked a tweet.
307 And then the response has been overwhelming actually, it's been really positive. And so
308 as well as meeting people after the show and then just congratulating me and saying they
309 just can't believe how I did it and stuff. There's just been people that have been really
310 emotional as well like I'm kind of speechless, am I able to even articulate how they felt
311 about it but it's visibly clear that they were moved by it.

312 **Arwa:** I can't wait to see the show.

313 **Petra:** Yeah, I think you'll enjoy it, and if you've read it, then you'll know along the lines
314 of going, but there's some people that don't even have a clue what that theme is, and so
315 literally--it's like a force has just hit them and they're watching it because they didn't
316 realise what it was going to be about. So, audience reaction has been amazing, it has been
317 brilliant. And it's really a warm feeling. It's nice to know that I'm doing something that
318 people are really enjoying and believing in because I mean, let's kind of get it straight to
319 have one person on stage playing four characters and to actually get someone to a point
320 where they cry, means that that person is fully committed to my world and the story that
321 I'm telling, which is great.

322 **Arwa:** Of course.

323 **Petra:** As a performer you couldn't ask for anything more because it would be easy to
324 just say "Well, yeah, but she's just putting on a voice" or "She's just changing her
325 physicality" or "She's just...." And so I'm just happy that I've had audiences that are just

326 really opened to coming into my world and believing in all of those different characters
327 that I play. It's good.

328 **Arwa:** So what I understood from Felix is that most of the audience are white?

329 **Petra:** Yeah.

330 **Arwa:** And I noticed this while I was....

331 **Petra:** Yes, there was a very...

332 **Arwa:** Very white.

333 **Petra:** Very white, middle-class town.

334 **Arwa:** Yes, it is. So, did you feel that you have delivered a message from the black
335 community to this white community? Or did you feel that they received it as you being a
336 part of them?

337 **Petra:** I guess that's difficult to answer because—obviously, I don't know how they're
338 receiving it. But I know that the story that I'm telling is universal and in terms of family,
339 love, loss, and grief. So that in itself is a story that is just relatable to everybody. So, I
340 don't feel like I'm playing the role of a black woman giving a message to this white
341 demographic at all. I just feel like I'm telling the story of something that you guys should
342 be able to relate to, anyone should be able to relate to because we've all experienced loss,
343 we've all experienced family and love, and sometimes just unfair things that happen in
344 your life, maybe not even that you've lost someone but just one of those things that just
345 has happened in your life and you just think this is just so not fair, like, for no reason, why
346 has that happened? And so maybe the people that come to watch and are crying and have
347 a reaction to the show are relating it to something personal that's happened in their life but
348 not necessarily like....

349 **Arwa:** Losing a beloved person.

350 **Petra:** Losing a child. Do you know what I mean?

351 **Arwa:** So maybe the concept of loss itself.

352 **Petra:** I think so. I think that's what I would like to see, as I think it's great that Daniel,
353 the artistic director has put on two of Debbie's plays in such a white kind of town, I think
354 it's brilliant. It's brilliant to them because if they're not...

355 I think there's this risk in areas like this, not having black community or even just a non-
356 white community, if it's just these types of people in your community. How can you have
357 empathy or relate to any other culture or any other person if this isn't brought into your
358 world, like, to actually see that there's not that much difference between us. Do you know
359 what I mean?

360 **Arwa:** So this is a challenge, don't you think?

361 **Petra:** Yeah, I guess so. I mean it's a bold move by Daniel just in general. It's a bold move
362 because the language, the fact that it is a black playwright with black performers. Yes, it
363 was a bold decision for the artistic director to make, but I don't feel like I've had a part to
364 play in that, if you know what I mean...

365 **Arwa:** Yes.

366 **Petra:** ...Because that decision wasn't with me. And so, in terms of if he was doing it to
367 affect them or educate them or enlighten them, I don't know.

368 **Arwa:** So, do you think that this was one of the purposes of the director?

369 **Petra:** The director didn't, Daniel, the artists director, yeah, he chose to put it on here.

370 **Arwa:** So, did he run it on purpose?

371 **Petra:** Well, it must be though, it has to be because it's like—I think this is a first for
372 Chichester, and so it must be intentional but I think with great intention. And I think
373 diversity is definitely needed. So yeah, it's great that he has just taken that risk.

374 **Arwa:** Yeah, especially in this time where you can find wars all over the world. Such a
375 message is very needed.

376 **Petra:** Definitely.

377 **Arwa:** Okay. So, there are two different ways to read the performance in *random*. It's
378 possible to read it as an entirely non-realist performance, in which a single performer
379 plays all the roles, or it's possible to assume the performer on stage is the sister only
380 imagining the other characters. So, which one do you go for?

381 **Petra:** Yeah, this is tricky because there are moments where—obviously, sister is the
382 character that seems to be narrating the majority of what happens in that day, but then
383 there are quite a few moments where you're in the real time in that space where you're
384 speaking as where I'm speaking as mom, as brother, as dad. And so, I would say for the
385 most part, yeah, it's a day in the life of sister and her thoughts and narration of the day;
386 but because there are moments where you actually—it's like plucking that character out
387 of sister's narration and actually seeing it in real time. I would say it's a combination of
388 narration and having to allow your imagination to take you there, and also naturalistic,
389 this is what's happening, even if it is conversations between two people.

390 **Arwa:** So, it's both: the non-realist narration, which is that taking all the roles separately
391 and the sister, herself narrating what happened, both of them...

392 **Petra:** I would say is a combination of the two. It's a combination of the two, definitely,
393 because you do get moments of the sister explaining and describing what has happened

394 or what is happening, but then you also get moments where mother is speaking and
395 describing how she felt and what she did and what the police did and husband did and
396 said. And so I don't think you can pin it down to one character's story.

397 I think more than anything, you get a snippet from all four characters from their
398 perspective, and obviously, dad doesn't say as much but he has a voice in it too. So you
399 will from his perspective see and understand what pain he's going through at certain
400 points. But put on a whole, you hear sister's voice more.

401 **Arwa:** So, this is theoretical but when you were working on practicing these roles, were
402 you focusing on the sister? Were you imagining yourself as the sister narrating others and
403 copying their voices? Or did you practice it as a separate character?

404 **Petra:** So there were moments where sister speaks about mom in the third person and so
405 she would mimic mom's voice. There are moments where mom speaks about dad and
406 mimics dad's voice, but in the rehearsal process, I never once made sister the dominant
407 storyteller because I wanted to stay true to what was on the page. So whatever was written
408 on the page is how I would view it. And there might have been times where it was
409 conflicting or I felt like; "Oh, I'm not sure, so who I'm I saying this to? Who I'm I saying
410 this as?" But then the answers were there. And that's all to do with kind of dissecting and
411 looking through the script. But I guess to answer your question, there isn't any one person's
412 voice, it has to be from everyone's.

413 **Arwa:** Yeah, so this also leads me to another question which is do you think the sister's
414 roles became more dominant after the death of the boy.

415 **Petra:** Her roles?

416 **Arwa:** Yeah, do you think that she took the place of her mother, that she was stronger
417 than her mother in her reaction towards what happened to her brother, or do you think that
418 they were equally strong?

419 **Petra:** I think they just handled it in different ways because—yeah, I think they just
420 handled it differently, and I wouldn't say that mother or sister was stronger or weaker than
421 the other. I think they both had moments of strength, they both had moments of weakness
422 once they found out because there's an outburst where sister gets the revelation about
423 brother being killed and this is phone and there's blood on his phone and there's nothing
424 else we can do. And I think although her reaction is really kind of fierce and it's much
425 like a bullet when she's firing these questions at the police officers about why are we not
426 with him, that also shows weakness because you can be shouting and screaming at
427 someone but actually, you're letting off a lot more vulnerability than you would believe.

428 There's a lot more strength, I think, in sitting back and saying; "Why did this happen?"
429 As opposed to "Why! Why!" You're showing so much vulnerability there. And so, I

430 think—I wouldn't say that either are weaker or stronger than the other, and I don't think
431 that sister takes on mother's role either. I don't think you can compare the two because I
432 think that a sister will always have a completely different relationship and reaction to
433 losing a sibling than a mother would have to losing a child. So, I don't think it's so fair
434 comparison to say who's stronger and who's weaker. Does that answer your question?

435 **Arwa:** Yes, of course, it does. Okay, what about you as a black woman, you have to
436 convey various subject positions of black men and white men as well, and so how do you
437 find this shifting to another gender? And do you find that there is a difference between
438 performing this white man and the black man, or do you find them the same?

439 **Petra:** To be honest, I don't really play the role of the white man there.

440 **Arwa:** The policeman.

441 **Petra:** No, because with the police officer, I've made it that sister is describing what the
442 police officers are doing, you don't ever have a voice of the police officers, even her white
443 colleagues, when Jon is talking about something or says something or Deepak says
444 something, it's sister start saying that they said it, so the race thing, it didn't come up. In
445 terms of switching from sister to dad to mom brother, it wasn't difficult at all, it wasn't
446 challenging, it was just different, it was just watching young boy or young men or older
447 men, how they carry their self, or even thinking about the men in my family and how they
448 carry themselves in terms of physicality.

449 And yeah, I wouldn't say it was a challenge per se, I think I just needed to feel confident
450 and comfortable with how I was portraying those characters because I don't want them to
451 be caricature, I want them to be believable men in this family. So that was important to
452 me. And I guess for me the trick behind that was to not overdo it, to not over act the
453 masculinity of both characters, it's not necessary because I could go up a octave, and it
454 was quite descriptive but that's obviously no longer sister or mother. So yeah, that's...

455 **Arwa:** Okay. I have one last question, it's about the dialogue.

456 **Petra:** Okay.

457 **Arwa:** How did you practice the dialogue? And how challenging do you find it to shift
458 from one to the other?

459 **Petra:** So for the dialogue—debbie's writing in general is very tricky to learn, because
460 although when you're speaking, it sounds so naturalistic and so conversational, it's actually
461 really hard to learn a script that way because, I guess, when we read books, when we read
462 magazines, everything is so structured. It's not written as a conversation when you read a
463 book, a script, any literature. So debbie's writing, because she focuses so much on the
464 kind of natural way that people speak, we have a lot of stop-starts when we speak, we
465 don't always start off at the beginning of a sentence or jumped him halfway through,

466 someone else will interrupt. Obviously, it's not happening much here because this is like
467 an interview, but just in general, in kind of social setting. Half the time people don't get
468 to finish their sentences, someone else will say he will finish the sentence for you because
469 they want to reassure you and let you know that they're listening and they understand, or
470 you don't get to finish it because the person knows what you're going to say.

471 And so debbie's writing is very much like that. What it is like in a social setting like not
472 finishing a sentence because you know what's coming next, or coming in in the middle of
473 a sentence because you've picked up something from a previous conversation. And so, it
474 was such a challenge to learn it because debbie is so specific and there's a flow and like
475 debbie comes from like a musical background, so she is very clever, genius in fact but a
476 real challenge to learn. Like, I would come in—so because Tino was directing both plays,
477 the other plays *generations* and *random*, there would be days that I wasn't called in to
478 rehearse but I would still come into work just to run lines with the assistant director
479 because I knew I need to drill this, I need to drill this, if I don't work on this because there's
480 destructions at home and I just know it wouldn't have been a productive day had I stayed
481 at home expecting or thinking that I'm going learn lines.

482 So, yeah, the dialogue was tricky to learn but once I nailed it, it was like; “Oh, my God,
483 hallelujah”, because it sounds amazing. Once it's all in and you actually get to deliver it,
484 it's like I said, it's so rhythmic, it's so melodic, it's got that kind of spoken word poetry
485 flow to it. So, although really challenging, I would hands down do debbie's work again
486 because it's so beautiful once it's right.

487 **Arwa:** What about having the Jamaican accent of the mother, how did you find that?

488 **Petra:** It wasn't a challenge at all, it was fine. My parents are not even Jamaican, they're
489 from Dominica, it's another Caribbean Island, but the Jamaican accent is so prevalent in
490 our community regardless of what Caribbean Island you're from, you just know Jamaican
491 accent, you just do. Like, I have a lot of Jamaican friends, I have like a Jamaican in-law,
492 family members that have married into Jamaican family. So yes, it wasn't a challenge at
493 all, it was fine, it was actually really exciting. I loved it, doing something that's just
494 different to my own accent. Having something to play with and it was a joy.

495 **Arwa:** Thank you very much, Petra.

496 **Petra:** Thank you.

497 **Arwa:** I came to conduct this interview as a work, as a part of my thesis but I really
498 personally enjoyed it. I felt that it's a friendly chat with a very knowledgeable person and
499 you're a real artist.

500 **Petra:** Thank you.

501 **Arwa:** Some actors focus only on acting and delivering this performance but you were

502 very deep in your analysis.

503 **Petra:** Thank you.

504 **Arwa:** While I was writing the questions, I was wondering did the actress go that deep to
505 the topic and to the themes, but I found that you went further than I expected.

506 **Petra:** Thank you.

507 **Arwa:** You're very knowledgeable, very educated. You are the best representative of the
508 black woman.

509 **Petra:** Thank you, that's so sweet.

510 **Arwa:** So these are the type of woman that I'm writing this thesis for, to show the strength
511 of the black woman, because I suffer also from intersectionality as a Saudi girl.

512 **Petra:** Yeah, of course.

513 **Arwa:** Maybe you've heard about my country and what's going on. We just gained our
514 right to drive in my country.

515 **Petra:** Only just?

516 **Arwa:** Only just, and it hasn't started yet. It will start like—we are now in Ramadan.
517 Yeah, after Ramadan there is Eid, then we will start to drive.

518 **Petra:** Yeah, that's insane.

519 **Arwa:** Yeah, so we're deprived of a many of our rights, and I'm sure that black women
520 here in this community are also...

521 **Petra:** Oppression is definitely—obviously, it's not to the level of not being able to drive
522 cars here.

523 **Arwa:** Of course, it's hidden.

524 **Petra:** It's subtle. Right, exactly.

525 **Arwa:** Yes.

526 **Petra:** It's more subtle here. So, our discrimination and oppression is like...you kind of
527 read the signs and you have to kind of just kind of figure things out and work around and
528 think; "Okay, right, I know how I'm going to handle that. I might not be able to go to it
529 directly but I'll go around it".

530 **Arwa:** And this is the challenge that I found. For example, if I studied American
531 Literature and dealt with intersectionality, it would be much, much easier because they
532 used to have rules for black people and for white people, but here it doesn't happen in the

533 same way.

534 **Petra:** Well, it was funny. I was watching a documentary about the Nina Simone, and
535 saw the black rights movement and all of that was heavily themed in the Nina Simone
536 documentary, and you're right, in the UK we haven't had a version of that. So, in the UK
537 it's like we're still trying to find equality, we're still trying to...And because it is so subtle,
538 because it is so underground, it's more difficult because there isn't a spotlight on it. So,
539 because there isn't a focus or a spotlight on it, someone hasn't kind of stood up and said
540 this is—those laws haven't been changed or...Not that there are any laws that are
541 explicitly against the black female, but just the hidden things of even like your level of
542 pay and things like that getting exposed to....

543 **Arwa:** What else do you encounter as a black woman?

544 **Petra:** Because of the subtlety, it's really difficult to... Okay, so let me just go on like a
545 general cliché version which is that the black woman is very aggressive. So because I try
546 to play against that and do not want to feed into that stereotype, there may be situations
547 where I would be well within my rights to be upset and angry about something but I have
548 to think about how that will be received by whoever it is that I'm speaking to because I
549 don't want to be labelled that angry black woman, but if a white woman was to be treated
550 in the same way and she reacted in an angry way, she wouldn't have that that label of
551 angry white woman because it just doesn't exist for her. So, I guess that's one example of
552 a conscious-like effort to just go, "Let me not react the way that I would like to react to
553 that". I guess that's the easiest example.

554 **Arwa:** Because I find it challenging to discover this hidden kind of oppression. I was
555 surprised when I go to seminars or talks for black women who express their suffering. I've
556 found this surprising because it's not something obvious that you can touch and see.

557 **Petra:** Yeah, exactly. It's not tangible, and because of that—because it's not tangible,
558 because it's so subtle, it's really difficult to have a platform to discuss it. And it's probably
559 only when things like that happen that it will just all be exposed. It's like every black
560 woman knows it but we just deal with it, it's just a way of life like putting on your slippers,
561 you just kind of go, "Okay, well, that's the way it is". And without even saying it to
562 another black women; we just know how it is.

563 **Arwa:** Yes.

564 **Petra:** It's a like nonverbal kind of thing that the black woman just knows of. It's like the
565 example I just gave you, all of them out there will be able to say; Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah",
566 because it just makes life so much easier. Do you know what I mean?

567 **Arwa:** Of course. Thank you very much, Petra. It was very exciting talking to you.

Appendix B: Author's Interview with Felix Dunning, 18 May 2018 at the Minerva Theatre

1 **Arwa:** How did the audience receive the plays?

2 **Female Speaker:** Generally, I think that people liked them. Generally, the audience here
3 are... Some of the people find the dialect quite difficult so they've said they couldn't hear
4 what...

5 **Felix Dunning:** Did they find it difficult for both plays?

6 **Female Speaker:** Particularly the first one, I think, they struggle with it. Not so much the
7 second one because she's [Perta], you know, she's able to be more aggressive.

8 **Arwa:** Yes.

9 **Felix Dunning:** And also, it does help Petra to turn up to different accents so not used to
10 it.

11 **Female Speaker:** [Inaudible]

12 **Felix Dunning:** [Inaudible] so that they're already getting... They've got a South African
13 accent in one show, and then the sort of Caribbean in the other.

14 **Female Speaker:** That's right. So, they didn't seem to worry about that at all. A couple of
15 people said they didn't really like it, that it wasn't for them. But they saw that it was a great
16 performance. And generally, the response has been pretty good, I would say. I would say
17 if you watch percentage of it, probably 75 percent of the response has been good.

18 **Arwa:** Of both of the plays?

19 **Felix Dunning:** Pretty much, yeah. People said it's a good evening.

20 **Arwa:** So, do you usually have the same positive comments on both?

21 **Female Speaker:** We've had people who have [inaudible 01:46] so did not like it. So
22 yeah, so it's really nice.

23 **Arwa:** No, I mean, are they expressing their positive reaction towards both of the plays
24 equally? Or do you think that...?

25 **Female Speaker:** I think that might be swayed by the second one, to be fair, because it's
26 so powerful. And sometimes they come out, and they actually can't say anything, they
27 can't speak because they're so moved by it. And a lot of people came out in tears.

28 **Felix Dunning:** We had our production manager routinely showed about six times. And
29 then the press night I came out, and it was a good performance. And it was a very busy

30 house and very responsive house. And I came out and he'd seen me about five times.
31 And he's a man in his late 40s. And he was loving it. He was very touched.

32 **Arwa:** Why did you decide to do *random* at last?

33 **Felix Dunning:** So, there was a lot of discussion about this. Originally, the director
34 thought that she would do it in that order. In her mind, she always thought it was this
35 order; *generations* then *random*. And then actually the theatre wanted it the other way
36 around. And then what happens is they went ahead with all the marketing, and the
37 marketing was *random generations* in this order. And in that process, she'd had wanted
38 it the other way but it was going to be this way, and she kind of forgot what she wanted.
39 And the big, big discussions in previews about whether or not to switch the order. On
40 the whole, it came down to a couple of things. One was that you would ...More than a
41 couple of things. One thing you had to—when you walk into the set of *generations*,
42 you're seeing, although it's a slightly obstructed set, you're seeing a theatre set, you're
43 seeing a room, you're seeing a conventional set. And that's reassuring to an audience
44 who are more used to more conventional plays, and also plays which are more set-in-
45 territory, they recognise, you know, plays that set. [Inaudible 03:35] Garden is set
46 somewhere much more recognisable for this sort of audience and that's all fair to say.

47 They're walking into that space for *generations*, they're basing the set they've got the
48 energy and the buoyancy of the choir, which is really lovely thing. And it sorts of lifts
49 everyone and gets them in a mood for a good night out. Of course, it kind of changes that
50 because it leaves some quite upset, but actually it lifts the spirits first. It also, by the time
51 you get to *random*, they've been introduced to debbie's sort of poetic language and just
52 makes things a lot easier in some respects to sort of get into it. The other thing as well
53 because *random* leaves you so shell shocked, and it's quite mostly impacting. It's very
54 difficult to get an audience to come back in after that. They want time to process it, they
55 want time to think about it to then say, "Okay, forget that. Forget that woman who lost
56 her brother, the mother who lost her son". It's quite a big ask. And then on top of that,
57 what you also have is *generations* poses so many questions, which you can come back to
58 a later day. But actually, if your audience are leaving on and particularly...Not reviews,
59 we don't do it for the reviewers, but with the audience leaving with a slight fog of
60 confusion, you're in danger of losing sight of all the work that happened in *random*.

61 And also, another thing which was quite nice, actually is that thematically and in terms of
62 the staging of the pieces, you're stripping away, you start with the family, you've got a
63 family of seven in a choir and you lose them during *generations* one by one by one. So,
64 you've just got the central couple, which is down to two. And then you pick up *random*
65 and you've just got the one on the stage. So, it's kind of taking the layers of an onion to
66 reveal.

67 **Arwa:** Which I think is a great to put them in this order.

68 **Felix Dunning:** Yeah.

69 **Arwa:** So why did you choose Chichester?

70 **Felix Dunning:** Oh, I didn't... We didn't.

71 **Arwa:** Do you know anything about this?

72 **Felix Dunning:** Daniel Evans is the artistic director at Chichester, who came here, how
73 many years ago?

74 **Female Speaker:** Two years ago.

75 **Felix Dunning:** Who's a wonderful he was an actor. And then he was also director and
76 artistic director running Sheffield Crucibles for many years. And he's a very, I mean, if
77 you look them up, you'll be able to learn much more than I could say. But he's a very
78 dynamic, very big hearted, very exciting, very interesting theatre maker. And was very—
79 all I can say is that on the first day that he came to our read through, I mean, he
80 programmed it so he chooses with the managing director, which is Rachel, they choose
81 what plays are going to be across the whole season which is nine shows. And it was his
82 choice very much to present the Chichester audience with something new and something
83 they haven't heard from. And also trying to attract a more diverse audience to the theatre,
84 try and give the regular patrons something different, represent a community that they've
85 not heard from, and to really do something exciting. And debbie is a phenomenal
86 playwright. And it's just to give them something new and exciting. And it's great. I mean,
87 it is it absolutely inspired. Because it's a place where, you will see the reviews which
88 [inaudible 08:03] is going to meet you up to, you don't hear these narratives in this
89 environment. And it's a very monocultural town so it's great to have these voices.

90 **Arwa:** I have one last question. Do you think that presenting these plays here in
91 Chichester, that it carries this message to the white audience about diversity and race?

92 **Felix Dunning:** Yeah, yeah.

93 **Arwa:** Was this one of your intentions?

94 **Felix Dunning:** It's not our... We can't take the credit for it. [Inaudible 08:33]
95 programmed it. We cast it. It went really well. We've had great reviews on this. I think
96 the theatre is really happy with it. I think the theatre is over the moon with it. It's gone
97 down really well. I think they were worried that they just wouldn't get it or wouldn't be
98 up for it. You know, they say it in the program, they might say well, that's not for me, you
99 know? But actually, as much as we were worried that Chichester audience might sort of...I
100 don't want to be closed minded choices about it. I, as a sort of Metropolitan London liberal
101 elite, you know, I kind of know what the word is for it, but basically a London way. But
102 you know, someone who is at risk of looking down on people from small villages who I
103 see as conservative, right wing, elderly—not that's a bad thing. But I might assume that

104 the narrow minded actually, aside from the race issues and all of that, where they've
105 actually come and they've been offered something new. And they've taken it with both
106 hands. And they've said, "We love this. Thank you".

107 We went to the market the other day and the choir, South African [inaudible 09:42]
108 choir who were phenomenal, was singing there. I met two women. They lit up the
109 market, which was wonderful. And then I met two women who saw that performance in
110 the market and bought tickets based on it. And stop me to say, can you tell everyone we
111 bought it because of that. We absolutely loved it. It was so incredible, not seen anything
112 thing like it". And there's a thirst and hunger for new things. And there is actually,
113 society is much more open to diversity and difference than we often give people credit
114 for. And so, I think that's been really nice, and really nice for the company. I think the
115 audience have come here and gone, "Well, these are human stories. And these are
116 beautifully told in this is phenomenal. And I'm honoured that I've got the opportunity to
117 hear these stories that don't come to me normally".

118 **Arwa:** And this is the role of theatre.

119 **Felix Dunning:** The role of theatre, yeah, and I think we as the people performing it or
120 helping make it have gone, oh, do you know what? Just because that's of 80-year-old
121 white woman from Chichester, actually, she's open, you know? And so, it's two
122 communities rethinking their assumptions about another community, so it's great.

123 **Arwa:** Thank you very much. That was very informative. Thank you both for your time

Appendix C: Author's Interview with Micheline Chevrier 26 June 2018 via Skype

1 **Arwa:** So, it's great to meet you and talk about your production of *random*. Could you
2 briefly describe the creative process by which you and Lucinda arrived at your
3 interpretation of the play, and the key performance decisions you made together?

4 **Micheline:** Okay, so I was first introduced to debbie tucker green is specifically to
5 *random*, I read it, I didn't see it, I just read the play. And I was immediately drawn to the
6 incredible poetic nature of the piece. So, the language was the thing that leapt out at me
7 first. And it's what I basically fell in love with. And so, I was very moved by... I love great
8 language in the theatre, I love really heightened writing in the theatre, and writing that
9 evokes really powerful images also becomes a type of—the text becomes music, because
10 of its strong rhythm. So, I'm very drawn to the oral and visual, of course, that's why I
11 make theatre. And so, I find that language can be intensely visual, especially in the hands
12 of somebody like debbie tucker green. So that was the first thing that I responded to. The
13 second part was finding the actor who could in fact perform it, understand its rhythm,
14 understand its power, and that was Lucinda. So, I knew that there were two things that I
15 had to begin with. And also, of course, for us here at Indigo theatre, everything we produce
16 here is conversation about things that are happening now in contemporary society. So,
17 issues that I feel are difficult to confront, difficult to discuss but that theatre makes
18 possible, because theatre is a safe place to discuss very difficult things. So the subject
19 matter also really drew me ultimately. But as an artist, the language and then finding the
20 partner was where the key things to start the process.

21 Once that was in place, then Lucinda and I started to... She started to learn the play before
22 we were even in rehearsal, she familiarise herself with the text because she needed to start
23 rehearsals already having a sense of being off book, because it gave her more freedom.
24 But she had made no decisions about interpretation. She also had to start working on the
25 different accents.

26 **Arwa:** This is my main question actually, it's about the dialects. How did you manage to
27 work on that?

28 **Micheline:** So, she consulted with people who... I mean, she has connections in the
29 community already, here in Montreal, who have those accents. She has an incredible ear
30 for accents. And this is the other reason I cast Lucinda, because she has a very musical
31 ear. So, she understood both the rhythm of the text and the different rhythm of the different
32 dialects. And so, we started to integrate that right from the beginning, it was impossible
33 not to, because also, debbie tucker green writes it into the text, so you can't not do it,
34 which is beautiful. So right away, we integrated that. And just using the rhythm of the
35 language, based on that, we started to actually see how we could move it. So, there was a

36 whole vocabulary of gesture. I wasn't very interested in having... Like, the characters
37 were already defined by their dialects, they were already doing defined by their attitudes
38 and their rhythms in the text, what's amazing about how she does that, that you can feel
39 the character just in the rhythm. So right away, that's how we develop character. So, the
40 text led us, and then led to a series of choices that we made about gestures, and body
41 postures. Because the whole first session, the whole first act, she was seated, and she never
42 moved from the chair. And the second act, the chair got pushed aside, and then she was
43 standing for the rest of the day when...

44 **Arwa:** After the boy's death you mean?

45 **Micheline:** Yes.

46 **Arwa:** So, you make a transition from the mundane daily routine of the family to the
47 tragic condition of the family after the death of the boy, right?

48 **Micheline:** Yes, once they find out about the boy being killed, their lives are never the
49 same again. Also, the story in the second half is very much in the hands of the sister.
50 And so, it becomes more personal and less performative in a way, because the first act is
51 such an amazing. It was an experience for the audience watching this actor moving from
52 character to character to character to character. And so that was also considered in terms
53 of the style of storytelling Yeah.

54 **Arwa:** Was it your first time directing a solo performance onstage?

55 **Micheline:** No, I've done quite a few actually, and they're a very particular brand of
56 theatre. It's very important that the partnership between you and the performer when it's
57 a one-person show, you are also functioning so much as the audience because that's who
58 they are connecting to. So even in the rehearsal hall, you have to play the role of the
59 audience in an even greater way because the actress feeding off of your own energy. But
60 also, they have to own the show in a very different way because they are every character,
61 they are embodying the entirety of the story, they are carrying the entire world. One of
62 the things that I talk about when I talk about the script analysis, and I teach it, I teach text
63 analysis to emerging artists and whatever. And we talk about how each character in the
64 play carries a different part of the story. And if you take away- if you say you cut a
65 character, what part of the story disappears with them? And sometimes that helps you
66 understand what the character actors' action is in the play? Well, in this case, she's
67 carrying all of it.

68 And so, it as a director, when I work with a solo performer, the lines get blurred really
69 fast because she's... It's not that she's directing the play, and I'm acting it, but we're
70 both in each other's seats in a way. So, we're constantly trying to understand the
71 universe of the play together. So, she has to completely understand the whole vision of
72 the piece. And I have to understand it from the actor's point of view, even more
73 completely than if I have a large cast of characters, which is a very different. So yeah, so

74 it wasn't the first time but I always love doing it. It's such a beautiful, intimate
75 relationship.

76 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, did you find that experience very interesting, or very challenging?

77 **Micheline:** I mean, I don't think it's more challenging than any other play. I think plays
78 in themselves are more challenging than other plays, potentially. But in this way, no.
79 But I find it interesting in terms of the variety of going from a large cast to have that
80 kind of intimacy, the same way that you go from a play that is very, very text based to a
81 play that is actually quite living in the cinematography or into like, it depends on what
82 each play brings you. But I mean, I always try to well to pick plays, then give me
83 something to chew on, that is different from one experience to another.

84 **Arwa:** So how did you find rehearsing the dialects? Did you find that easy or difficult?

85 **Micheline:** No, it was in this case, sometimes it can be, it can be quite a daunting task
86 for the cast. In this case, again, Lucinda is an extremely rigorous performer, and so she
87 had done an enormous amount of prep. And again, she has a gift, she has a gift for it.
88 And also, we weren't really necessarily looking for perfect, perfect dialect, we were
89 looking for a consistent dialect. And so, to the Canadian audience, for a lot of them, the
90 British accent of the sister or the brother is less familiar. Like, we picked an area of
91 London, like we went fairly specific so that Lucinda could actually, you know, talk into
92 that. When it came to the Caribbean accent, that's a whole other—because there are
93 quite a few people here who would recognise that accent. So that one, we had to be a bit
94 more rigorous with in terms of specificity. But really, for us, it was more about the
95 musicality of the piece, and making sure that it was consistent. And Lucinda had it from
96 the very beginning.

97 **Arwa:** So, was it more difficult to rehearse the Caribbean or the British dialect?

98 **Micheline:** In Lucinda's case again, neither. I would say if she struggled a bit more, it
99 might have been with the British because the Caribbean, it was more familiar to her.

100 **Arwa:** What about the audience?

101 **Micheline:** I mean, maybe she'll answer something different. Maybe she struggled and
102 she didn't tell me. But she certainly didn't look like she was.

103 **Arwa:** But what do you think about the audience? Which dialect do you think was more
104 familiar to them? Was it the Caribbean or the British?

105

106 **Micheline:** I think it depends on who showed up. For the black audience, I think the
107 Caribbean was far more familiar, because as I say, like the community here is drawn
108 from a variety of origins. But certainly, there is a strong Caribbean community here.
109 And for the British, probably for to the white audience that might have sounded more
110 familiar, but I don't think they were in any position to be critical; you know? Because to
111 you know, like for them, they wouldn't have understood this, like nuances, you know?

112 But no, it became more music than trying to be factually specific, to became about
113 playing with the musicality of it and what debbie tucker green has written in her text.
114 **Arwa:** If you had the chance to produce the play in the UK, do you think the audience
115 would be more critical about the accents?
116 **Micheline:** I mean, it depends who's performing it. You know, if you're doing it in
117 London, then you're obviously using a British actor so that's a completely different
118 story, and the context is completely different. So, I don't think it would be more or less
119 challenging. I think that the play itself is... That's the beauty of it, is that when I read it, I
120 didn't think "Oh, my God, you know, this is a UK play. I don't know if people are going
121 to get it. It's London". No, there's violence here. It's the same situation. It's an urban
122 context. The communities are diverse here as well. This is very familiar. So that's why
123 there was no separation. So, I don't think the challenge would be more or less depending
124 on where you put it.
125 **Arwa:** Okay, so my next question is... *random* is a play about the everyday and the
126 mundane, and about a terrible event that broke into a family's daily routine? Yet it's
127 written in a very non-realist style as a one woman show. How did you, as a director,
128 ensure that both the experimental elements of the production and the emotional impact
129 of the play, the realistic and the non-realistic are shown onstage?
130 **Micheline:** I don't think I would separate any of those elements, although in an analysis,
131 absolutely, you would see that. But for me, once you... The way to view it, the world is
132 the world of the play, right? So, the world of the play has its own rules, and its own
133 realities. It has familiarity in terms of content. And the presentation, the style of it is
134 where the theatricality comes in. And I think, if you respect that, there is no... I wasn't
135 really concerned about, oh, is that going to be too weird? Are people going to get it? For
136 us, it was approaching it like when you do any play, where you say, are the characters
137 clear? Are their actions clear? Do I get a sense of what they want, a sense of what their
138 lives are like? And so, we approached each character that way. And so, it just happens
139 that you have one actor doing it. And I know from experience that, you know, as an
140 audience, you stop thinking about it being one actor, you're just engrossed in the story.
141 And then the first thing, you know, you're meeting all these different characters, and
142 you don't think, oh, it's one after playing it. So, I don't think we spend a lot of time
143 thinking about reconciling the different needs, I think it just happened naturally.
144 **Arwa:** Okay, so how did you deal with *random*? Did you deal with it as a black story
145 that happened in a specifically black family? Or did you deal with it as a play presenting
146 a universal grief?
147 **Micheline:** I mean, I think in casting, it was important for me that the actor be black. I
148 think that there was something about the context, their cultural context that dictated that
149 that's where the character came from. I think it would be fairly odd if I had cast, I don't
150 know, a South Asian actor or an indigenous actor. I think that in terms of the cultural
151 context of the play, there was a real need, I think, for me to have that as a connection for

152 the audience. Beyond that, I didn't think much about the cultural specificity. In terms of
153 its message, I think that it spoke to me a great deal. And from what we saw, it spoke to a
154 number of audience members, regardless of age, or background, or even social standing,
155 right? Because it was very... The impact was actually quite the tremendous on people
156 because quite a few people who came had been touched by this kind of violence. And so
157 obviously, culturally speaking, it spoke to everyone. So that was less of a concern in
158 terms of the power of the story. The casting, though, it was important for me that I
159 respected a certain context in the play.

160 **Arwa:** So, do you agree that *random* is a play starting with a typical British family,
161 which then changes after the death of the boy to be very specific to the *black* British
162 family? it started generally, in the mundane morning of the British family and then it
163 turned to the specific way of dealing with the trajectory of the worries of that of black
164 families trying to raise their children in the dominant white society.

165 **Micheline:** I never went there; I have to tell you. For us, it was... Even like Lucinda and
166 I talked about it. And for us, it was less about the black community and more about a
167 community that is, including the black community, but many communities who are
168 living in a very different... Oh, my God, sorry. Oh, dear, hang on a sec. Okay, here we
169 go. Killed that one. So, because I don't think it's necessarily- it's not necessarily a black
170 problem, this kind of violence, and people being involved in that. It felt more political in
171 the second half. So, in terms of the happier, right, it's a family, what they do their daily
172 thing, their tensions, their fights, their whatever, their every day. And the second half
173 then became about a family being touched by something going on in the outside world,
174 that is death that they are vulnerable to. And so that sense of her suddenly leaving the
175 house, and moving into the world and being confronted by everything that's happening,
176 made it more political. So, I would say, I think for us here, that was more the reality we
177 looked at, as opposed to saying, "Yes, we need a family". But then in the second half,
178 we really deal with the fact that there are a black family living within a society that
179 doesn't necessarily recognise them or...What's the word I'm looking for? Yeah. I don't
180 like these words, but they feel disenfranchised, or that they feel marginalised or
181 whatever it is. To me, it was more about like several cultures, actually. It was very
182 recognisable to us here in Montreal anyway as several cultures, not only the black
183 experience.

184 **Arwa:** So, a different culture.

185 **Micheline:** Yeah. And also, a kind of a culture that is... Yeah, like what gives way...
186 Like, we talked to a lot of kids that these kids came, and they were talking about how
187 they had to let go of their violent life. And so, for me, it's coming from communities
188 where the violence is a fact. And that it's something you will have to deal with,
189 something you will have to confront. It's a tension that will always be there. And how
190 do you not get sucked into that way of life? And how do you remove yourself from that?

191 And are able to lead a different life? And does that mean leaving the community in
192 which you live? Or does that mean, changing your ways within that community? So that
193 was an interesting conversation that we came up against. And I think that's part of what
194 she's starting to examine—the sister starts to see that she's been kind of oblivious to the
195 world in which she... Like, she just goes along and suddenly she's been politicised
196 because she starts to realise there's a problem here.

197 **Arwa:** Do you think that the problem is that she feels she's different now, that she is not
198 like the majority of people who have the right to protect themselves, that she belongs to
199 a different culture which is considered the "other", and which is marginalised. Because
200 what I think, this is my point of view, I don't know if you agree, that the word *random*
201 is ironic, it is not actually a random event but it happened to them because of the
202 intersectional factors acting on them. They are black, British but they belong to a
203 different cultural background, and they are middle class; all these intersectional factors
204 have affected them and created this higher chance of death for the son.

205 **Micheline:** I think the communities are more vulnerable to these events, for sure. I think
206 that you are... However, it's interesting, because I think that what we wanted to avoid
207 was to make it a black problem. And we wanted to make it all of our problem. And so
208 that, for here, certainly in Montreal, there's a variety of neighborhoods with a variety of
209 people who are part of certain of these situations that make them vulnerable to
210 something like that happening. For me, what I think is interesting is that what I liked
211 about *random* is that it was random. And because often we think that, oh, if he's black,
212 then, of course, he's involved in something like this. As opposed to it being a kid who's
213 just on his way to school, kind of ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time and
214 somehow gets... And this is what was happening in London, where there were these
215 stabbings of kids that have nothing to do with any of the gang warfare, they just got in
216 the way and some happened. I mean, that's what I had understood is that this was a...
217 And nobody was doing dealing with any of it. So, these kids who were completely
218 uninvolved became a target or became random targets.

219 **Arwa:** So, this is a very typical image of the black boy who is involved in gangs, and
220 this is what people have in mind and that it is not the case here in *random*. He was just a
221 normal kid who was walking on the street.

222 **Micheline:** Yeah. And so, he ended up at the wrong place at the wrong time. And then,
223 so then you start to think, okay, well, what kind of world do we live in that this can
224 happen? And I think

225 that that's what interests me is to say, well, it's not just kids' problem, that could have
226 happened to me, I could end up in the wrong place at the wrong time. It doesn't matter
227 where I come from, what my colour is, what my age is, it's a random act of violence that
228 was not pre planned, it was not targeted. And it's much more when it is, right? Like, we
229 all feel much more comfortable, we would say, "Well, you know, they were involved in

230 crime”. And so it was, of course, one thing leads to another. Well, in this case, this was
231 just a kid who went to school, in a normal family, you know, and in this case, he happens
232 to be black, which I think also heightens the conversation in terms of our, as you say, our
233 prejudices are, like when we make assumptions about things. So that was interesting as
234 well. But to me, that's the thing that I found very discomfoting, is the idea that, is that the
235 kind of city that I think I want to live in? Is that acceptable to me? So that's the kind of
236 conversation we had around this idea of random acts of violence that are not targeted.
237 **Arwa:** So, could I say that your production had a message against racism in the way you
238 framed the incident of the boy's death, as you wanted to empathy of this mother and this
239 family? Is this the way you wanted to agitate against racism?

240 **Micheline:** And against an indifference for me that... I think the play touches on
241 indifference that you think, “Oh, well, whatever. Like, he was just a boy in that
242 neighbourhood”. And you think, “Well, no, he was just a boy, like, in my
243 neighbourhood”. And so, there's an indifference I think, sometimes when we deal with
244 certain neighbourhoods or certain cultures that we have accompanied by those
245 prejudices. So, to me, the play was more about a wakeup call that it can happen to
246 anyone and so our indifference as citizens is not acceptable. It touches us all. That knife
247 was equally in me as it is in him. So, against racism, maybe, but mostly for me against a
248 kind of... What's the word? Apathy. An apathy towards others' tragedies. And so,
249 colour in this point shouldn't matter but sometimes it's an excuse. You know, social
250 standing shouldn't matter but sometimes it's an excuse. So, I think that for me, what
251 moves me is action, like, why are we so indifferent to those things? And why do we
252 think it would never happen to me? And why is it acceptable that it happens in my city?

253 **Arwa:** Okay, I want to ask about something else. How did you approach Lucinda's
254 costumes? Was it based on one particular character, or was it based on the multiple
255 characters she played?

256 **Micheline:** So that was a big conversation, the costumes was very complicated, in fact.
257 So, we talked a lot about the fact that there should be a kind of performer neutrality.
258 And so even this set, like, because I can't separate the two, the set had a kind of
259 performance presentation. So, there were lights coming from behind, and we saw them.
260 It was a three quarters stage so she was completely surrounded. There was a light box
261 above her, like she was very much on a stage as the storyteller. And so, there was this
262 kind of, we tried to embrace the fact that we weren't denying that this was an actor who
263 was performing for roles, even though there was never the actor as a character.

264 **Arwa:** Did you present her as a narrator more than an actor?

265 **Micheline:** The setting and the costume gave it a kind of presentational style so that it
266 kind of went with the kind of spoken word, rhythm that sometimes I find, like the poetry
267 of debbie tucker green, that there was a kind of performative element to it, that we didn't
268 shy away in the set. So, there was a chair, there were a bunch of clocks in the back, lights

269 coming... Like it was quite performance art in a way, the way that we set it up, because
270 you're in multiple locations. And it doesn't matter, but you are in the reality of the moment
271 of those characters as they're living it. And what we are is what we said is we're kind of
272 stuck in the event, like there is a moment in time where their lives changed. So, we had
273 the clocks were running different times in the back. Because, you know, she refers to time
274 a lot in the play, 2:15. Like she talks about time. It's introduced repeatedly to kind of track
275 the day. And then when it changes, when they get the news, and they realise what
276 happened, the clocks for us started to flash and then they went out. So, the second half,
277 there's no time. The clocks are dead. And so, the idea was to kind of have a performative
278 space. So, the same thing was for the costume is that there needed to be a kind of
279 neutrality, where I would say, "Yeah, Lucinda would wear that. Lucinda could wear that
280 as a person", because that's what I'm seeing. Because couldn't do the father, the mother,
281 the son and the daughter. So, she, if there was a kind of neutrality in terms of... You know,
282 she had a kind of a jeans and a hat and she was very casual, but she was very urban. So
283 that was the whole idea is that she's an urban woman with a kind of neutrality in terms of
284 gender but she's very visibly a woman. But to kind of make it more of a... It's not a hip
285 hop look but it was almost that; something that also Lucinda felt she was comfortable in,
286 and that she felt was kind of hurt too that she felt really at home and comfortable. So that
287 was the way for us to nod... It was a nod to the set and the costumes to how do we
288 recognise that this is theatrical? And that in no way is it realistic. It's all about the words
289 and the performance of the words and the performance of the story, if that makes any
290 sense.

291 **Arwa:** Yeah. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to watch the show. There aren't any
292 video records, as far as I know. So, can you tell me more about how you used this lack of
293 props on the stage? And what exactly did you use? You told me that you used more than
294 one clock to indicate time.

295 **Micheline:** And they weren't touch. They were like set decoration. It was more the set
296 than props. And so, the clocks were on the floor. And I mean, I'm happy to send you
297 some clips, if you want to look at some clips of the show, I can send you that, no
298 problem. Because we do have that and so you get a sense of what it looks like.

299 **Arwa:** So, what else? What about the lighting? You told me you used one chair and
300 many clocks.

301 **Micheline:** There was one chair in the centre, it was kind of a square, one chair in the
302 centre, and then the audience all around. And then behind her upstage are all these, you
303 know, those little clocks that you set for alarm, like beside your bed, there's all these
304 little like alarm clocks back there that are digital. And then there was lighting coming
305 from behind. We had trees of lights coming from behind and the satellite, so she was
306 very much in a performative space.

307 **Arwa:** So, did the digital alarm show the time or not?

308 **Micheline:** Yes. Different times.

309 **Arwa:** So, when she said the time, did it appear on the clock, or was the time on the
310 clock random?

311 **Micheline:** They're just running. So, we plug them in, and they're all different times.
312 And so, it's just to kind of get a sense of the day, the passage of time. And that's it. And
313 so, the chair was the only actual physical thing that Lucinda interacted with, there were
314 no props. And so, she just talked to us in different... We choreographed who she would
315 talk to, what gestures she would do. It was highly choreographed. And so, she included
316 the audience at different times. And then when characters were speaking to each other
317 was a different focus than when she was speaking to us as an audience. So, it was all in
318 the choreography of gesture and focus, no props. Yeah.

319 **Arwa:** Okay, how would you describe the mother in *random*? Do you see her as the
320 typical image of the black British mother, the image that people have in mind about
321 mothers from a Caribbean origin? And how would you describe her relationship with
322 her children? What I understand from our conversation is that you didn't deal with the
323 character of the mother as specifically black, but as a mother in general, right?

324 **Micheline:** I mean, I think it was there in the language and the dialect and also in the
325 presence of Lucinda, so we didn't spend a lot of time on that. And I think for me, I would
326 say, for all the characters, I really use the text very closely. And I think Lucinda will be
327 in a better position than me to actually address some of the character questions, because
328 she lived them intensely. And I was constantly just outside trying to make sure that the
329 rhythm and the posture and the communication was there. All the characters in this play
330 are beautifully strong and clear, which is very important, because you don't want to worry
331 about them, you want to be able to know that they're going to come through, but that it
332 will be a very, very difficult road, and they will be forever changed. If they are feeling too
333 fragile from the beginning. It's difficult then to witness, right? And so, all the characters
334 are very strong, were very funny, were very healthy, were very clear. That's what made
335 it possible. But then Lucinda will be in a better position than me to...

336 **Arwa:** I will talk to her tomorrow and we will discuss this. So, I have two other questions.
337 The first one is, did you find that there was a flow when Lucinda went from one character
338 to another? Or was there a distinction, a clear distinction? What did you attempt to do?

339 **Micheline:** I think, again, we took our cue from the script. So, for us, the play had a
340 rhythm that we could not resist and so the flow was very fast, it was very fast. And
341 Lucinda is super talented and able to do it. And we can send you some clips to show you
342 how she managed that switch. But it was all in the postures. It was very specific
343 postures. That's why we worked on the gestures and the postures for a long, long time.
344 Because then you got very used to both the accent, so the accent, and then the physical
345 response. And so, it was super-fast. And so that's my party. But we found that when she

346 was sitting, that the movement was actually really interesting, because it kept it really,
347 really tiny, and very, very specific. And I think instead of trying to be on your feet and
348 moving around, then you start to wonder where you are and what's happening, like
349 avoiding all of those props is very beneficial.

350 **Arwa:** Yeah. Okay, my last question, did you notice the race of the majority of the
351 audience?

352 **Micheline:** I think in the end a lot... I think I would say it was probably... I don't know
353 what the average would be. I would say maybe two thirds white and a third black. This
354 was a collaboration between Indigo Theatre and Black Theatre Workshop. Black
355 Theatre Workshop, obviously, by its name, presents plays that deal with the black
356 experience. And so, their audiences are predominantly black, but not exclusively by a
357 mile. For us at Indigo Theatre, this is a new audience, our audience is mixed but mostly
358 white, I would say; mixed mostly in gender and age and social standing, less in terms of
359 colour, although that's quickly changing for Indigo. So yeah, when we came together
360 our audiences together came together, so...

361 **Arwa:** Why did you decide to work in collaboration with the Black Theatre?

362 **Micheline:** It's something that is... It's extremely enriching when you meet up with
363 another company, because you can pool your resources together, and also you learn
364 from each other. And this felt like the perfect project to collaborate on. What it also did
365 in like purely financial terms, is that it meant that we could share the costs, allowing us
366 to do a bit more in the rest of our seasons. So, the partnership actually allowed for some
367 something. And also, it was common interest. I love to play, I went to Quincy and I said,
368 "This is obviously also a great match for you. We should probably do this together".
369 And so that's what we decided to do.

370 **Arwa:** So, did a play like *random*, which talks about black families help this
371 collaboration?

372 **Micheline:** Yeah. I mean, it's obviously like, as I said, the play is very much about that,
373 in terms of who the people are. But then what it discusses goes way beyond that, which is
374 what makes it so powerful.

375 **Arwa:** Did you talk to any of the audience after the show?

376 **Micheline:** We had a talk back. We have talk backs after every show. And so, Lucinda
377 would come out with me, or Quincy, the artistic director of Black Theatre Workshop,
378 and we would have conversations with the audience. So, we talked to the audience after
379 every show. It's amazing actually, and that's when we learned that, I would say that at
380 least, I don't know if I'm exaggerating, but close to every audience, there was one
381 person at least in that audience who shared a story of losing a young person to violence
382 or being involved themselves as a young person in a violent situation or neighbourhood.
383 So, the conversations were incredibly enriched...

384 **Arwa:** So, they were emotional about the performance, because they could relate to it,
385 right?

386 **Micheline:** Yeah, it was very powerful. So, people were very moved by Lucinda's
387 performance as well. She was arresting, she really was. But also, they were ultimately
388 very moved by the topic. Even despite the accents, they never felt that it wasn't a play
389 that was not talking to them, or about them, which was remarkable.

Appendix D: Author's Interview with Lucinda Davis, 27 June 2018 via Skype

1 **Arwa:** I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Arwa. I come from Saudi
2 Arabia and now I'm in the UK to continue my studies. I'm working on a PhD about
3 intersectionality in debbie tucker green's work. So, I'm dealing with *random* in the first
4 chapter, which revolves around the mother and the intersecting factors shaping the
5 relationship with her children. You acted the role, obviously, all the roles of *random*. So
6 please tell me about your experience.

7 **Lucinda:** *random* was wonderful and challenging and scary. There will be me by myself
8 on stage, I've never done a one woman show before. And so, there was that fear of this
9 whole story is on my shoulders. And if I don't do a good job, no one's gonna have a great
10 time. But I was very well supported.

11 **Arwa:** I read fantastic reviews about the performance. I'm pretty sure you've done great.

12 **Lucinda:** Thank you.

13 **Arwa:** I would love to see the play but unfortunately, when I asked for it, I was told that
14 they have only some clips from it. So maybe you can tell me about the experience.

15 **Lucinda:** I'm sorry.

16 **Arwa:** So maybe you can compensate for that by telling me about the experience.

17 **Lucinda:** Sure. What can I help with?

18 **Arwa:** Which of the characters in *random* did you feel more personally attached to and
19 why?

20 **Lucinda:** Possibly the sister. I mean mostly because she's the only one who really seen
21 the full journey. You know, her day starts off as all their day start off very integrated,
22 mundane way, just getting up, showering, breakfast, going to work, the brother goes to
23 school, the mother starts her domestic chores and tasks. But it's the sister who then sees
24 the brother, the sister who goes into the room, and the sister who watches her in the
25 beginning as her parents' relationship fall apart because of the loss. So was really with
26 her that I anchored myself to perhaps because, you know, I'm also female, and it felt very
27 familiar to me. But she was the only one that we really got to follow as completely in the
28 journey.

29 **Arwa:** Okay, so which of the scenes did you find more challenging than the others?

30 **Lucinda:** So yes, the most challenging scene was describing the finding the brother's
31 body at the morgue, especially with the storytelling, I actually had to visualise it. So that
32 was a difficult image to have to conjure every single night. And certainly, building the
33 tension towards receiving the news that the brother was hurt, and having it play through

34 every [inaudible 07:37]. It's difficult to do when you're doing a show by yourself, you
35 don't have a dialogue or another person with which to bounce ideas off. So, you have to
36 create it all by yourself. And then the images stayed with you. So yeah, certainly finding
37 the brother was the most challenging scene.

38 **Arwa:** Have you performed any one-woman shows before? Or is it your first time?

39 **Lucinda:** Yeah, it's my first time.

40 **Arwa:** First time, yeah. So how did you find it? Did you find it more challenging? Or did
41 you find it easier?

42 **Lucinda:** No, it's not. [Laughter] I always said that once you've done a one-person show,
43 you can do anything. You don't have a cast that can support you, there isn't a dialogue that
44 you can, you know, these are much easier—not easier but the energy kind of goes back
45 and forth, as opposed to staying with you, it needs to be created by you. If you're tired,
46 you know, you still have to keep going. It was physically and emotionally challenging to
47 be up there by myself, to perform an entire story by myself with you know, again, I was
48 supported by the stage manager and the director. Also, I was recovering from an ankle
49 break. I'd just broken my ankle.

50 **Arwa:** Sorry to hear that.

51 **Lucinda:** I wasn't very mobile either. So yes, I would say anyone who hasn't done a one
52 person show yet once they do that, you know, any other theatrical challenges?

53 **Arwa:** Yeah, so was this injury behind the decision to use the chair, to sit on the chair in
54 the first scene?

55 **Lucinda:** It was. My director was very, you know.... I, of course, wanted to push through
56 and wanted to be there and be present. And she liked the idea of me just being isolated
57 and just sitting back and let being comfortable proceed. Because it's just the mundane,
58 everything's fine, everything is fine. And then to stand and face, you know, the reality of
59 what's happened to their family. So, in part, it was decision to helped me with my injury,
60 but also it became very part of the storytelling. So that I didn't feel like I was just sitting
61 in a chair because it hurt, it was very much part of you know, we're comfortable and then
62 the world is shattered and we have to face it.

63 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, it was both?

64 **Lucinda:** It was both. I think it started as a, well, let's just have a seat. Have a seat to you
65 know what, let's use this.

66 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, I think it was a very successful decision, you know, because it gave this
67 shift, from the mundane, every British family daily routine, to something related to the
68 black family after the death of the boy. So, do you agree with this?

69 **Lucinda:** For me, it didn't feel that I was telling the story of a black family, I was telling
70 the story of a family that was hit by violence. I sort of leave the social commentary to the
71 audience. I can't play a black character, unless I'm responding to a social phenomenon.
72 I'm just a person, I'm just playing a character, I'm just playing a daughter, a son, a mother
73 or father, I'm only playing these people. And so, I sort of feel that it really is watches this
74 and wants to apply it to the black British experience or what it is to be a black youth that
75 allowed them to have that judgment or have that look. For me, it was always a family, and
76 they happen to be black. I know that around the time when we did *random* Black Lives
77 Matter really exploded, I believe. Eric Garner had died a couple of months before, Michael
78 Brown had died a couple of months before. So, there's really this momentum about police
79 brutality and what was happening and then we did *random*, and it almost seems that we
80 were doing *random* as a comment on this. And for me, it was never that. I felt that the
81 police brutality and the violence occurring amongst black men in the states were separate
82 from *random*. And when I was doing my research, I read that Debbie Tucker Green was
83 inspired or route calling back to the amount of stabbings that occurred in the 90s in clubs
84 in London at the time. And that was what propelled her to write this spoken word piece.
85 So, for me, it didn't feel that this was violence that occurred because they were black. It
86 was violence that was tragic because he was young. And if others wanted to feel that, you
87 know what this part of the systemic racism that occurred, and it was, you know, and if
88 that was what fueled them and inspired them to want to be proactive in their lives or be
89 proactive with kids, then then that's great. But for me, it was never that, it wasn't them. It
90 was a story about a family affected by violence.

91 **Arwa:** Okay, what about the lack of the props on the stage? Do you think that this was
92 challenging as well?

93 **Lucinda:** You know, as an actor, I don't like props. So, it was great to not have it. It was
94 very freeing just be a storyteller. And because, again, there is no dialogue, there was no
95 home, there was no school, there was no office. So, there was no, it was just me telling
96 people we were in an office right now and everyone accepts, and we're in a classroom
97 right now and everyone accepts us. The magic of theatre is that I can have nothing in my
98 head and say there's a cat and everyone will say, yes, there's a cat there, you know? So
99 yeah, it wasn't. The story wasn't necessary, because it was just the words and the rhythm.
100 We didn't need the realism.

101 **Arwa:** It gave you more freedom, you think?

102 **Lucinda:** I feel it did, yes. Whenever I have a prop on stage, I always wonder, how do I
103 get it? What do I do with it? Where do I put it? Because that's always what I think about.
104 Because it seems so foreign to all sudden had this object. And so how did I get this? What
105 do I do with it now? And you know, that's always what I worry about as an actor, so it
106 was great to not have to think about having a pen, where do I pick up a pen? Where do I

107 leave the pen? None of that. Just the story. And just the connection with the audience was
108 great.

109 **Arwa:** Okay, so there are two different ways to read the performance of *random*, is it
110 possible to read it as an entirely non-realised performance, in which a single performer
111 plays all the roles? Or it is possible to assume that the performer on stage is the sister from
112 the play. And she is relating or imagining all the other's points of view, from her own
113 perspective. What's your interpretation? And do you think that it matters on how you
114 approach the performance?

115 **Lucinda:** Well, I mean, debbie tucker green had written it as a spoken word piece. And
116 there was something... I certainly enjoyed the challenge of being able to give so many
117 perspectives, just as myself, you know, that I could...Could I morph into the brother and
118 with the audience believe it? Could I morph into the mother? Could I become the sister?
119 It was a challenge, but I liked that challenge. I also do a lot of voice work for cartoons and
120 video games and such. And so, there was something about being able to play all of these
121 characters without needing costume, without needing some sort of visual aid to let the
122 audience know, "Oh, by the way, I'm the brother now. Oh, by the way, I'm the mother".
123 I love being able to just become them fluidly since that's how debbie tucker green wrote
124 it. You know, there isn't a break for costumes. There isn't a break for line changes, just rip
125 thick and it floats you know, so I tried to honour that. Yeah, I love it.

126 **Arwa:** What about dialects? So, we have different dialects and you are shifting between
127 these dialects. So how did you rehearse for these different dialects?

128 **Lucinda:** So, as you can hear, I'm Canadian. I listen to a lot of Sophie Okonedo interviews
129 because she's a black London actress. So, I was listening to her a lot to really get her
130 temper and the accent for the sister. The brother, I listened to his name. And Nathan, Jared
131 Smith, who was in the Misfits, he was playing a London character with the Jamaican
132 influence, because there was something very, it's almost been the worst. Again, the thing
133 is the brilliance of debbie tucker green, where you could almost hear the shift in the way
134 the brother spoke, and then the way the sister spoke, and that he was a bit more laid back
135 a little bit more. And the sister is, you know, trying to go their office, you know, so I it's
136 something I'm the way that debbie technically wrote it, I heard the difference in voices I
137 heard them will scheme naturally. So just try to, to observe with people of that culture and
138 not that area to try and be as close and as authentic as I could. And the mother, I am
139 Caribbean though I'm not Jamaican. So, I use my own knowledge of Caribbean culture
140 and Caribbean accent to be able to give the mother and the father voices.

141 **Arwa:** Which of them was more challenging?

142

143 **Lucinda:** Challenging? Probably the mother. It is hard to not imitate my own. And

144 obviously, I couldn't imitate my mother completely. So yes, it was trying to not have too
145 much of my mother's voice in my head as I was trying to get this very Caribbean, living
146 in London, mother. But probably the mother. I was relatively comfortable with the
147 London accent, having the London accent influenced by the Jamaican, for the brother
148 that was...And also, I had to lower my voice for the brother. It was more fun to work on
149 but I would say the mother's voice without trying to pull so much in my own life into the
150 show was a challenge.

151 **Arwa:** Yeah. So yesterday, I interviewed Michelle, the director.

152 **Lucinda:** Michelle is an amazing director.

153 **Arwa:** Yeah. Yeah, she is. She praised you a lot. And she said that she was very glad to
154 work with you. And I can see now why; you have a very friendly manner.

155 **Lucinda:** Thank you.

156 **Arwa:** So, I would like to hear from you how you chose the costumes that you wore.

157 **Lucinda:** That was left to the costume designer. I know that she wanted to have accents
158 of red. She wanted to have accents of Greg, because that was what the set was going to
159 look like. And so he produced many pieces for me to choose, and what was comfortable,
160 what I could sit and move in and layered enough to sort of had elements of the mother
161 and the sister and brother as part of the costume. So yeah, we just try it on a bunch of
162 pieces and everyone looked and decided what would work.

163 **Arwa:** Was it based only on being comfortable? Or neutral as well?

164 **Lucinda:** I think neutral... Hmm. I mean, I wouldn't say it was complete whenever I think
165 neutral, I think all blacks, you know? And I felt with the cap and the vest and the red shirt
166 and the pants and the cargo, almost like army boots it had a bit more of a character than
167 just neutral, but it was almost a casual warrior and modern without beings of a particular
168 time necessarily, you know, you didn't know what time live at this was the 80s and 90s,
169 you didn't really know. But it... I don't know, it felt more mutual, just saying all blacks are
170 a white shirt. You know, there was a character even though you couldn't necessarily
171 pinpoint where she was, or what time she was in based on the costume. But I mean, for
172 myself, I always leave the costume decisions to the designer. I don't really like to influence
173 how my character will look. For me, the most important thing is comfort, I need to be able
174 to move in it, it needs to feel that this is something I can wear all the time. And if it's only
175 a design piece that I can't move in, then I can't do my job. And so because also I was
176 dealing with the painful ankle, it was all...

177 **Arwa:** How is it now?

178 **Lucinda:** My ankle is fine now is that it gets stiff and it hurts. But it's when it gets cold.
179 But yeah, it's fine. So yeah, I had started rehearsals that day after they removed my cast.
180 So, I was still in a lot of pain and getting physio therapy doing rehearsals. Yeah,

181 **Arwa:** Good. So don't you think that some details and the costumes like the hat that you
182 wore made you different from the mother, who's older and from Caribbean origins?

183 **Lucinda:** Well, you know, at the same time, no, because my mother and I know several
184 other black mamas would wear scarves over their heads. You know, there's something
185 about that covering of the of the hair, you know, whether you have it in braids, or whether
186 it's natural, or you know, but there is something very natural about having the head
187 covering. That was certainly something that I would have grown up with my mother
188 would have worn a scarf, but she's doing household chores, or she's just going quickly to
189 the grocery store she would just tie a scarf around her head. So, it still felt like a call back
190 even though...

191 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, the choice of the scarf was because both generations, you mean, use it
192 but in different ways?

193 **Lucinda:** I mean, I think the designer likes the hat. I think there was something about
194 wanting... I mean, I don't really remember the exact decision for the hat other than that
195 this was the sort of

196 **Arwa:** Cool look.

197 **Lucinda:** Yeah, cool look at that he wanted.

198 **Arwa:** How did you as a woman act male roles in the play, both black and white men?
199 So, what performance strategies did you use to signify these shifts? And did you find any
200 differences between doing another gender from different races?

201 **Lucinda:** I guess as an actor, I never really played myself ever. You mean, even if the
202 character is female black, and that we share many other socio-economic similarities, I'm
203 still not really playing me. And so, the challenge for playing the brother was more
204 vocally, you know, making sure that I was in a vocal range that I could sustain for 90
205 minutes and not injure myself and still convey to the audience that I'm playing a brother
206 from a Jamaican family living in London. And the cops, I don't recall them having a
207 voice. I believe they're a presence that I was responding to...
208 I guess I didn't necessarily feel that the challenge of playing someone that was not of the
209 same race or not the same sex to me any more challenging than playing any other role
210 that isn't me. So yeah, I didn't know to a difference of playing a white character and a
211 black character, because I was still just playing young boy, a teacher, a mother, I didn't...
212 For me, again, *random* is just not a black show. It is a family show and the characters
213 happened to be black, at least for me anyway. Though, I understand in the climate that

214 we're living in that we want to attach ourselves to art that has a message that is pushing
215 something across. And for me, *random* has always been about a family affected by
216 violence, and that it could be any family. As soon as you say that it's a black family, I
217 always feel that I'm afraid—I'm worried that people are going to distance themselves
218 from it and feel like this couldn't happen to me. When I feel with *random*, it's random. It
219 could happen to anybody.

220 **Arwa:** Did you find anything specific about the character of the mother

221 **Lucinda:** You know, I--- And again, a lot of the challenge of playing mother...

222 **Arwa:** Do you relate to her as a typical image of the Caribbean mother?

223 **Lucinda:** I do. I do. Absolutely. In that, continuing to cook the traditional foods, you
224 know? Make sure you have your breakfast, you need to have something warm and, “Oh,
225 kids nowadays”, and, Oh, my husband”. “Oh, going to the market”. You know, I thought
226 the mother was hilarious and delightful and warm, and just the Caribbean pride, pride in
227 her children and pride in her family and the pride in what she does your family, making
228 sure that the laundry is folded just so, making sure that the oatmeal didn't burn, you know,
229 just making sure that everything is right and perfect for her family. And being that she's
230 an immigrant, and trying to, you know, pave a strong road for her kids to continue to walk
231 on and not talk about the injustices that she faces or the injustices that she continues to try
232 and shield her children from that she's just like, “Nope, I'm just going to trudge along
233 straight and make sure that everyone is taken care of and my kids are going to have the
234 opportunities that I didn't have”. And still with that humour and that grace, you know?

235 **Arwa:** Yeah. Did you talk to any of the audience after the show? And what was their
236 reaction towards the show?

237 **Lucinda:** Yes. So, there was I believe a talkback every single night, which gave audiences
238 a chance to connect, speak with me. I remember one woman in particular described that
239 her son was killed violently. And she was saying how much in the moment of the show
240 when the sister was describing finding the brother at work and she said how much that
241 was very much exactly like what she went through.

242 **Arwa:** That is so touching.

243 **Lucinda:** Yes, it is.

244 **Arwa:** Do you have anything to comment on about your experience in *random*?
245 Something that you would like to say?

246 **Lucinda:** I want to do anything debbie tucker green does. I love her words. I love the
247 way that even though I felt daunted by the task, that there is an ease and a rhythm to the
248 words that it made my job easy. In that all I had to do was share and let the words and

249 the rhythm just affect the audience without too much distraction. You know, it was just
250 a woman in a chair recounting a story, and yet it was still full. And that's because of
251 debbie tucker green. I love my experience in *random*. I'm glad I survived it. I'm glad that
252 it touched so many people. And yeah, I hope that the I hope the legacy lives on.

253 **Arwa:** So, do you have any intentions to play another play by debbie tucker green?

254 **Lucinda:** If anyone wants to produce one, I will.

255 **Arwa:** Okay, thank you very much Lucinda. That was so lovely. I truly appreciate you
256 giving me this chance to chat with you.

257 **Lucinda:** You're very welcome. It's nice meeting you.

258 **Arwa:** Thank you. You too. Thank you very much.

Appendix E: Author's Interview with Leah Gardiner, 14 April 2020 via Zoom

1 **Arwa:** So, I would like to talk about your production of *generations*. I read the wonderful
2 reviews about it.

3 **Leah:** Thank you.

4 **Arwa:** I want to ask you some questions about your experience, because I'm writing a
5 chapter about *generations*.

6 **Leah:** Okay.

7 **Arwa:** So, each chapter of my thesis discusses one of the plays of debbie tucker green.
8 I've discussed *random* in one chapter, and the second chapter is about *generations*, and
9 then I discussed *nut*, and the fourth chapter is dealing with *dirty butterflies* and *born bad*.

10 **Leah:** Oh, so you also need *born bad* here?

11 **Arwa:** Yeah, but I wonder if we can do another interview about *born bad*?

12 **Leah:** Absolutely.

13 **Arwa:** Thank you very much. Yeah. Because I didn't start writing about *born bad* yet.
14 I'm just in the planning stage, but for *generations*, the chapter is almost done. So, I know
15 the direction of the chapter and feel more confident to talk about it.

16 **Leah:** Okay.

17 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, in general, I would like to ask you about your experience in directing
18 *generations*. Why did you choose it specifically?

19 **Leah:** I chose it with the theatre, so they asked me would I be interested in doing a piece,
20 I think mainly because debbie's work, I really seem to understand on a very deep and
21 visceral level. It's sort of somehow responds to my creative DNA, and so I was... Any
22 opportunity to direct debbie's work, of course I will jump at it. And so, I was absolutely
23 thrilled to have that opportunity.

24 **Arwa:** Yeah, so...

25 **Leah:** So, Sarah Benson, the Artistic Director of Soho Rep, is British, and I think that,
26 you know, she was familiar with debbie's work. But also, I've known debbie for probably
27 twenty years I think, when we were first starting in the business. She and Roy Williams
28 came over as fellows at New Dramatists, which was a center for playwrights here in New
29 York, and I was one of the directors on residences at the time so we got to know each
30 other very well. And I think they had maybe a two-week, one month leave (but don't
31 quote me), and so we spent a fair amount of time together, and I... yeah, just really fell in
32 love with her and with her work.

33 **Arwa:** Yeah. Well, was there anything specific about *generations*?

34 **Leah:** One of the things I was excited by, which was different to *born bad*— and *stoning*
35 *mary* is another one of her plays that I know quite well—how she uses the choir and how
36 she used music. There’s an inherent musicality that lives in *generations* that is sort of in
37 many ways, in the poetic structure and nature of the language itself, its own song in many
38 ways. And so, to layer on top of that a choir—in our case, it was a 13-piece choir—excited
39 me, because I loved doing plays with music and movements. And sort of the level of
40 poetic vibrancy that *generations* has really speaks to me as a poet, and so I was really
41 interested in treating *generations* in many ways, like a libretto in a sense, and finding ways
42 to create a musical score around it.

43 So, it was in many ways very complicated how I went about it, because I believed—I was
44 looking for the script, I couldn’t find it—but I believed she had asked for some 20 plus
45 person choir. So, I was really interested originally in how the sort of organic nature of
46 black choir lives and reigns as an entity within the poetic structure of the piece.

47 **Arwa:** Mm-hmm. So, this will lead us to some questions about the choir, which is very
48 important, because a part of my thesis and a part of each chapter is to write about the
49 performance strategies, and obviously the choir is very vital as it is one of the main
50 performance strategies that debbie tucker green used. So - is it possible to read the choir
51 as quite incidental to the main action? Or as an equally important element to the action
52 itself?

53 **Leah:** It’s its own character. The choir is, in essence, it is its own character, in my opinion.
54 It offers... there’s the Boyfriend, the Daughter, the Mother, the Father, the Grandmother.
55 Is there anyone else?

56 **Arwa:** Uh, the...

57 **Leah:** Five characters, yes?

58 **Arwa:** The Mother, The Father, and the Boyfriend, and two sisters, then the grandparents,
59 so seven.

60 **Leah:** So, seven in total?

61 **Arwa:** Yes.

62 **Leah:** Okay. So, the choir is really an eighth character in my production, and I believe it
63 serves as a... When the choir sings, or when the choir moans, or when the choir makes
64 any kind of sound, that is inherent to the storytelling. It basically... The choir was a
65 mechanism by which we drove the story forward. In my production, I had the choir enter
66 in as the play people walked in, and they were given I believe soda if I’m not mistaken.
67 Have I lost you?

68 **Arwa:** Could you just repeat the last sentence? Because I lost you.

69 **Leah:** Sure. I was saying that we had specific food and specific also enter, so the audience
70 really didn't necessarily know that they were participants in the play. And for me, that
71 was intentional because I wanted these bodies in space, these black bodies that are so
72 often, in our society and I know it happens in the UK as well, so how we are invisible and
73 ignored. And so, I was really interested in what that would look like as they came in
74 amongst the crowd and took their seats. And so, once the show was ready to begin, the
75 choir, actually while seated, these 13 people scattered throughout the theatre began to sing
76 "Ahhhhh", in a very particular song in Zulu.

77 **Arwa:** Yeah.

78 **Leah:** And my composer, Bongzi Dube and I worked very specifically with Thuli
79 Dumakude and Kona on, sort of, what all of that meant. And then Tanya...Tanya—I
80 forgot Tanya's last name, Anawansa, I believe, who is now in her final years as an opera
81 student in Kentucky, I believe. She hasn't graduated—really worked hard, she was the
82 associate, Bongzi's associate, and we really worked hard to kind of make the music be that
83 thing which each time action happens, and there was a moment where... It was so long
84 ago, so bear with me. Maybe at the beginning, the women were cooking, and then I had
85 some of the choir moving and dancing a bit in traditional dance. And so that was also a
86 part of, "We are not invisible. We do not live in silence. We are here. We are present, and
87 we are not going away, and we are actually the catalyst for moving this story forward".
88 So, it was all sort of intricately planned, if that makes sense.

89 **Arwa:** Yeah.

90 **Leah:** Sorry to give you such a long-winded answer, but I hope that makes sense.

91 **Arwa:** No, no, It's OK. I would like to have your detailed answers. So, you mean that
92 you focused on that visibility of black people in general? Was this a message that you
93 wanted to send to the audience by focusing on the choir?

94 **Leah:** Sure. I wasn't intentionally trying to say to the audience as I made the... "We are
95 invisible, and so therefore you need to see us". It was more about making the choir as a
96 device present itself the audience realise, "My gosh, there's a black person sitting right
97 next to me. I had no idea that they were a part of this production". And so, of black skin
98 that I was interested in exploring as part of the silence which exists within—in my
99 opinion—within the structure of the piece. And so, it's really, in my own sort of way in
100 which my brain works, playing with invisibility and silence coexist.

101 **Arwa:** Yeah. So...

102 **Leah:** Because ultimately, they were not quiet.

103 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, were they seated at the beginning, then moved after the action took
104 place?

105 **Leah:** Yeah, they came in and they were audience members, and you know, we had
106 Arnolfo, the Set Designer, there were crates, and there were also milk crates, and there

107 were some chairs...I think? Yes, because we needed some for backs for older folks. And
108 so, the cast, the choir was scattered around the entire theatre, interspersed within and
109 among audience. So, you know, at the very beginning at pre-show, I had food cooking on
110 the stove. You could smell garlic; it was delicious, when you walked in. It was very
111 immersive, intentionally immersive. And so, they sat down like regular audience
112 members, and then there was a cue that they all saw from the stage management from the
113 booth. They stood up, they started to sing, and then the lights came down.

114 **Arwa:** Mm-hmm. I think that's great.

115 **Leah:** Thank you.

116 **Arwa:** So, did you think that it took the audience's attention away from the action of the
117 play? Or did it help to push the storytelling?

118 **Leah:** No. Yeah, no. That initial moment, it was cacophonous. It was uprated and it was
119 spectacular, and the audience was just in awe because the voices together was like heaven.

120 **Arwa:** Yeah.

121 **Leah:** And that was the intention...

122 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, what about the names mentioned by this choir? Did you have any
123 strategies used? Did you use them, for example, as a background? Or were they only sung,
124 or what?

125 **Leah:** I would have to go back and ask someone who saw the show. Let me write that
126 down, because I can't remember.

127 **Arwa:** Yeah, because it was a long time ago.

128 **Leah:** Yeah. It's okay. How did we do that? I can't remember. There were 25 names,
129 something like that. There were a lot of names in the beginning, right?

130 **Arwa:** Yeah.

131 **Leah:** Do you happen to have the script in front of you?

132 **Arwa:** No, not now.

133 **Leah:** Okay. All right. I'll just ask someone who will probably remember how did we
134 treat the names, or did I treat the names with the choir.

135 **Arwa:** And what do you think is the effect of mentioning all these names? Because some
136 of the names have, religious references, some of them are African, and some of them are
137 familiar, like the names that the audience is hearing every single day. So, what do you
138 think is the dramatic element or the importance of these names in the choir's role and in
139 performing the play in general?

140 **Leah:** Okay. Naming as a religious construct is really... it's that, you know, Mary begat,
141 Jesus, Joseph begat, and it's, I think, sort of connotes a kind of Biblical experience that is
142 necessary to help us understand that the choir, unto itself, represents a very transformative
143 and religious experience, and that the play itself represents a very transformative and
144 religious experience. We don't know that when we're experiencing the Begats at the
145 beginning, we don't know why. We don't understand that in actuality, we are about to
146 undertake a journey towards death. But, in our production, I felt that [inaudible 22:00],
147 that it's actually like what you and I are dealing right now with this pandemic. Mother
148 Earth is cleansing. Mother Earth is needing to weed out a lot to make us stop and recognise
149 what it is that we have done to her, and through that will come opportunities for rebirth
150 where hopefully, in our country in particular, we will be smarter and wiser. Since, you
151 know... And for you guys, my goodness, in the Arab as much as in England, the necessity
152 to cleanse is vital, and I think that that's really, in many ways, what Debbie was doing
153 when she used the Begats at the beginning. That's what I call them - the Begats.

154 **Arwa:** Okay, and I have another question also.

155 **Leah:** And Genesis is the first book of the Bible.

156 **Arwa:** Yeah.

157 **Leah:** Sure. Because it's Genesis of the play, and therefore, you know Genesis is the...
158 okay, first book in the Bible.

159 **Arwa:** Yeah. So how explicit are the emotions of the members of the choir? Were they
160 showing any emotions, any grief? Were they subjective or objective in delivering the
161 emotions?

162 **Leah:** They were subjectively objective. What do I mean? I mean that inherent in African
163 tradition, in African culture, the way music is used in any capacity, South African in
164 particular, has an emotional capacity to affect change in you somehow. It is used as a tool
165 to target your emotional relationship to the experience. In our case, the thirteen were not
166 sort of physically involved in the storytelling, in so much as the emotional impact that the
167 songs that Bonggi composed were so powerful that at times, members of the choir were
168 moved, as in any gospel choir in my tradition, as in any member of a choir in any, in my
169 opinion, religious opportunity. So, it was very much about allowing these actors to feel,
170 and singers to feel the music as they would in a performance, but it wasn't necessarily
171 about them performing the music as in a musical. So that's why I think it was more
172 subjective objectivity.

173 **Arwa:** Yeah. I like this term and the way you are putting it. So, what about...?

174 **Leah:** I just made it up. [laughs]

175 **Arwa:** Yeah. [laughs] It was very clever of you. So, what is the main idea that you wanted
176 to deliver in this play? Was it the South African culture? Was it the idea of AIDS? Was it

177 the idea of the shared human endemic? Or is it the grief, the human grief? What
178 specifically was the main theme that you focused on, and you wished to deliver?

179 **Leah:** Family as a construct, and how family represents so much of our culture, sort of
180 how families are made. The mores and values of a family unit are very family lives and
181 exists. I was interested in how family, the joys of family, the love of family, the play of
182 family lives simultaneously with loss in family, and sorrow in family, and pain in family.
183 And ultimately, the construct of the unit, again, serves as a tool to rebirth, recreate, try
184 again, offer hope. And so, when the Grandparents are left at the very end, there's such
185 utter devastation, because this family unit has been... in essence, the legacy of this family
186 is gone.

187 **Arwa:** Yeah.

188 **Leah:** And they will not, this particular family, will not be able to... The procreation of
189 their DNA has stopped, and that is so much, I feel, a part, and I think it's sort of
190 thematically, I was really interested in how when the lights are turned out, when the lights
191 are turned off in any family, it's really hard to turn them on again...

192 **Arwa:** Yeah.

193 **Leah:** ... When death comes. And we are hopeful that in the end, these two older people
194 will find some redemption, some way of moving forward.

195 **Arwa:** Some peace.

196 **Leah:** Peace? Some peace. Exactly. But because the youth, their young people are gone.
197 That's a lot. That's a large pill to swallow. And so, I was really, really interested in sort
198 of what the juxtaposition of emotion and construct, familial construct meant in this
199 particular play.

200 **Arwa:** Mm-hmm.

201 **Leah:** Does that make sense?

202 **Arwa:** Yes, of course. Yeah. And what about the elements that you and your crew used
203 to reflect on South African culture? Was there something specific? Like some props, the
204 costumes? Or did you want it to be more as a universal theme, a universal play reflecting
205 a universal theme?

206 **Leah:** Right, great question. Sure. I absolutely wanted it to be set in South Africa. My
207 cast, I intentionally cast South African—as many South African actors as I could. I told
208 my set designer that I wanted it to be in a township in South Africa, and we... I believe,
209 somewhere outside... I want to say Pretoria; I can't remember though. It's where Bongi
210 is from. And I was really interested in sort of the idea of inside, outside, and what that
211 looks like, and how that translates in space, because AIDS, of course, is penetrative. It's
212 transmitted through penetration, and so when I first met with my set designer, who is an

213 openly gay man, I said to him, “I really itself into like a vagina”. And he kind of looked
214 at me like I was crazy, and he said, “I don’t know what that looks like”. [laughter]

215 I said, “You know, they’re like two doors and then you make your way into a cave”. And
216 I said, “It’s like the sperm, you know, making its way up to the eggs”. And so, what we
217 did was we literally... The theatre got permission from the landlord to take out a wall that
218 is currently in there in the walker space. So, when you walk in with any production, you
219 walk through a small little hallway, and then the box office is to the left, and then you’re
220 met by a wall, and then you walk around it, and walk into the theatre on the right.

221 Remove that wall, and so when you walked into the theatre, dirt red—it was actually a
222 dirty... Arnolfo found was tennis court clay, which was very similar to clay dirt in South
223 Africa, in this particular part of South Africa. And so, you literally sort of walked in, and
224 you were immediately immersed. There was corrugated siding as soon as you walked in.
225 The smells were wafting, so you knew something was cooking up; you didn’t know what.
226 And then as you got closer, you sort of saw this kitchen right in the middle of outside, and
227 tables, and the dining table. And it was a really beautiful set. I believe Arnolfo won an
228 award for it, if I’m not mistaken, because it was so unique, and he really took my vision
229 and sort of drew it out, which is fantastic.

230 **Arwa:** Mm-hmm. And what is the importance of the kitchen as a setting, in your opinion?

231 **Leah:** So much of... I mean, sex, and when the sperm hits the egg, it cooks. And
232 penetration—again, it’s passed through penetration, and so I was interested in sort of
233 taking the metaphor that debbie was working with, and sort of showing a kind of realistic
234 version of what that is. But also, everything happens in the kitchen. In our culture, in their
235 culture, the world exists in, you know, around the kitchen, and clay, and where do you
236 cook, and the food, and then that which sustains us and keeps us alive. And so, I was
237 really interested in the sort of vibrancy of what a kitchen represents. I think that’s what
238 debbie was going for.

239 **Arwa:** Do you think that the kitchen, as a setting...?

240 **Leah:** There is a kitchen in the original script. Yes? I didn’t just put that in there, did I?

241 **Arwa:** Yes. Yeah. No, no. It is. It is there.

242 **Leah:** Okay, great. That’s what I thought. Okay.

243 **Arwa:** So, do you think that the setting of the kitchen carries any message about the
244 gender rule in African culture, and of black women? And how did you put this in the
245 production?

246 **Leah:** Yes, indeed. The kitchen... Yes, so you can see on my website, there are photos,
247 and the women are gathered around the kitchen. In my directing, the man would—say this
248 is the kitchen, the women are around and the man, no come and go. I grew up in a very
249 male dominated family, and the women were always in the kitchen, and the men when
250 they got hungry, they would come in and they would be pushed away. And then they

251 would come in, and they would be pushed away. Or they would be called in to set the
252 table. But otherwise, it was the domain of the woman.

253 One of my absolute best friends lived in London for a year, and one of my absolute best
254 friends is Nigerian-British, and one of my fondest memories of her and her family, her
255 father was a

256 statesman and they had one of the statesmen from France over for dinner, and no one
257 spoke French. I speak French, or spoke French, better at the time, and so all the women
258 were gathered in the kitchen preparing nervously for this meal. “What do you make a
259 Frenchman? What do you make a Frenchman? Because we eat only Nigerian food, so
260 what Western food do we make? Do we serve the cheese before we serve the salad?” You
261 know. So, I worked with them on that, and their dining room door that swung like this,
262 right, and I found myself on that day constantly going from the kitchen with all the
263 women, “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh”, swinging the door to the men setting up
264 the table.

265 **Arwa:** Yeah.

266 **Leah:** And that is one of my fondest memories, and I used that image, and I described
267 that to my set designer, and I used that in my thinking as a director about how I wanted
268 the men to come and go. So, when the boyfriend, that I again don’t know if it’s in the
269 script or if I just directed it, but when Mamoudou, who played the boyfriend, went to taste
270 the food, he went in and his hand was slapped and put away.

271 **Arwa:** So, do you think that the kitchen is a source of power to the black woman?

272 **Leah:** Absolutely. I don’t think it’s just the black woman, I think the kitchen is a source
273 of power for all women, but it is a sort of... It is an anthropological source of power for
274 women, because the food was hunted by the men and brought to us, and we nurtured it,
275 we cooked it, we prepared it if they didn’t cook it, but we were the ones. It was brought
276 *to us*, so the food—that the Biblical say, “Food is the sustenance of life”, is actually true.
277 Our breasts are the sustenance of life. Our breasts are food, and so we carry kitchens with
278 us. We are kitchens. So, I think that it sort of transcends every culture, every religion,
279 every language. It is a human anthropological essence of womanhood.

280 **Arwa:** Yeah, but don’t you think that there is something specific about the black woman
281 throughout history?

282 **Leah:** I think that if you... I can speak about African American more so than I can speak
283 about South African.

284 **Arwa:** So, I mean from the time of slavery until our time.

285 **Leah:** That’s right. That’s what I was about to say.

286 **Arwa:** Yeah.

287 **Leah:** In African American tradition, you know, it's the same kind of... I mean, in terms
288 of the black woman being the one who cooked. When, you know, those black women who
289 were in the big house did the cooking, and the slaves who actually worked the fields and
290 the plantations along with everyone else, you know, they still did the cooking. And it's a
291 very... The power behind it, I think, exists as nourishment, nurturing, as much as
292 sustainability, attempt to keep the family together, you know? You will eat, I will eat last.
293 I need to make certain that everyone has had a chance to eat. That is a very traditional,
294 historically traditional part of our culture that I imagined must be the same in black South
295 African culture.

296 **Arwa:** Okay, and this leads me to another question. Did you focus on carrying a message,
297 a specific message, about the black woman in particular? I know that the general idea
298 revolves around the family as a unit, but did you have any specific focus on showing or
299 representing a certain image, like a specific image, about the black woman on stage?

300 **Leah:** There was focus on matriarchy, and it was something that was not only... Are you
301 still with me?

302 **Arwa:** Yes.

303 **Leah:** Okay, you're still there. Great. That was something that was not only inherent in
304 the actual production, but it was also intentional in how I directed it. The Grandmother,
305 the actress Thuli Dumakude, who plays the Mother, there was something as a woman
306 director, and I don't recall what it was exactly, but something came up that was gender-
307 related, and the women in the production came to me and talked to me about the issue. It
308 wasn't my composer, who was a man, it wasn't any other male on the show. It was the
309 women who came forward, and then brought the men in. That kind of matriarchal
310 experience permeated throughout the entire process, and so I worked very hard to respect
311 how the matriarchy in South African culture deserves attention, and deserves to, you
312 know, be put forward. And so that was something that I did both in the production, but
313 also in the making of the production.

314 **Arwa:** Mm-hmm. So, I want to ask a question about the repetition of the dialogue. So, at
315 the beginning, it's a full conversation between the members of the family, and then after
316 the death of each of the members, then it is cut to be shorter. So, do you think that this
317 repetition helped to reinforce the idea of death and grief? Or do you think that it was,
318 like...? What do you think? How do you think that the audience received this repetition,
319 and what did you do to keep the attention of the audience while it is a repeated
320 conversation?

321 **Leah:** Can you remind me of some of the words?

322 **Arwa:** Well, I don't have the text with me now, but it is a long conversation dialogue at
323 the beginning, and then some sentences were cut. And also, the tone, I also would like to
324 ask you about the tone, because at the beginning it was full of joy, and after that it was
325 full of grief, and the tone of the grandparents who are left, at last, alone on the stage.

326 **Leah:** Right.

327 **Arwa:** So, the question is in two parts. The first one is: how did you make sure that the
328 audience didn't lose interest while the dialogue was repeated, and to make it a benefit, as
329 something that pushed the action forward, not as something boring, or something that
330 made the audience bored? And the second thing is about the tone of this repeated
331 conversation from the beginning to the end.

332 **Leah:** Okay. Great question. So, to answer the first part, initially, as I recall, the
333 monologic moment of repetition was light and bright, and I think if I recall, it was really
334 intentional. Like, you didn't quite know why this repetition was happening, to really kind
335 of use the song of language, the rhythm of language as a way to get the audience connected
336 on a sort of visceral level, how we hear music, how we respond to music, how we respond
337 to the music of words, the music in poetry. Actually, the mellifluousness of how those
338 words affect our souls. And so initially, I really asked deep in and in sort of the musicality
339 of the storytelling, and so that carried through three-quarters of the way of the play.

340 And then those same words, I'd say about three-quarters of the way in, and to the second
341 part of the question, the tone really began to shift. And it began to shift because musically
342 and the compositions that we made, and also visually, the audience at the stage I believe
343 seeing three or four actors crossing over in our production. What they did was, or in my
344 production, they said their last line, and then they turned, and then they walked, and then
345 they sat next to the audience in seats. And the grandfather got up, I had lanterns
346 throughout, and he would get up, and he would, in the direction of that actor where the
347 actor sat, he would go and he would turn off a lantern. And so visually, the audience over
348 time was sort of seeing lanterns being turned off, actors exiting the stage but not sitting
349 down, no longer engaged in storytelling using words, just sitting there. Where had they
350 gone? Why aren't they talking? And so, it was a very active choice and intentional choice
351 on my part to make the repetition of sound and movement work on a kind of subconscious
352 level for the audience, in the same way that poetry does.

353 **Arwa:** But why did you choose to seat the actors with the audience? Why didn't you
354 choose to just let them leave the stage?

355 **Leah:** Very good question. Very good question. I had a near death experience when I was
356 in my twenties, and I felt my grandmother and my grandfather—it was a car accident—
357 and I felt... Even as I talk about it, you know my body gets chills.

358 **Arwa:** I'm sorry about this.

359 **Leah:** They came into... That's okay. Their spirits came into the car, and it was as if they
360 were on either side of me, carrying me through, protecting me. They were talking to me,
361 and when they departed after I was safe, they sort of physically, I felt them leaving me
362 and they kind of went into like a tunnel. And I was interested in how those who—and they
363 were both dead, by the way—I was interested in how those who crossover, that experience

364 of them, the energy of them still being near us, with us, protecting us, looking over us. I
365 was interested in how that physically looked.

366 **Arwa:** This is, I think, a very smart choice. I really like it. Like, to reflect that those people
367 who left us are physically absent but not spiritually. They are still with us, because we all
368 have some lost members of our family, or friends, or those who are dear to us, and they
369 are still affecting us after they left. So, I think that these performance strategies that you
370 used were very excellent and very smart. I really like it; I'm going to use these in the
371 chapter. Okay, so I have a last question that I would like to ask you about.

372 **Leah:** Yes, please do. As long as you quote me. [laughs]

373 **Arwa:** Yeah, of course! Of course, I will. Of course, I'm going to analyse this, and to
374 quote, of course, everything. Yeah, by the way, I'm going to ask you for consent form,
375 because of course as a researcher, I do care a lot about the ethical and copyright, ethical
376 issues, and my university also does. So, I'm recording our interview now, so I will make
377 sure that I'm quoting you by word, specifically by word.

378 **Leah:** Great.

379 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, the last question that I would like to ask you about - Did you have a
380 chance to meet any of the audience after the show? And what did you think was their
381 reflection, their point of view about the play in general? And did they pick up the idea of
382 AIDS and death?

383 **Leah:** Some did, some didn't. And yes, to answer your question. When I, the artistic
384 director and I, I was really interested in, you know, plays like this, people do talk backs,
385 because they offer, you know, opportunity to discuss AIDS or what it means for workers
386 who live in the townships, who go into the cities and come home bringing AIDS to their
387 families, what some sex on the DL means... Do you know what that means? The DL?

388 **Arwa:** No. No.

389 **Leah:** The DL is when two men who consider themselves straight have sex, or a man
390 considers himself straight has sex with another man. And sort of how that played into the
391 transference of the disease. And there was a lot that could very well be discussed, and I
392 would have to go back to the production calendar to see if we did actually have talkbacks.
393 But I was really interested in the caterer that Sarah Benson, the Artistic Director, found
394 for Brooklyn who actually catered food. So at the end of the production, which was very
395 short I believe they were serving Orange Fanta, and I think beer maybe, wine, and I talked
396 and stayed, and stayed, and stayed, and then stayed. And they were at home, they were in
397 their townships, wherever their townships were. They were Irish-Catholic from the upper
398 West side, or they were actually South African from South Africa visiting, or if they were
399 from London visiting.

400 The actress Shyko, who played the Older Daughter, her mentor was the gentleman who
401 played Snape in Harry Potter, and before his passing, he came and he saw, and stayed,

402 and stayed, and stayed. And so, it was intentionally... I intentionally wanted to sort of
403 create community, and family, and celebration of life and hope, because you know, it's a
404 devastating—at least in my production—it was a devastating experience. When it was
405 over, I directed another play right after this, so I didn't get to stay to see it. And we
406 extended, if I recall, a couple of times, and so I got to see it because I finished with
407 rehearsal on my other show. And I remember watching it, not having seen it for maybe a
408 month, and after it was over, I was like shaking hysterically. It was so moving because it
409 really dug into, as I said the intention from the beginning, sort of our collective DNA, and
410 really forced the audience to grapple with their own responsibility to the disease, and the
411 economics of the disease, and the impoverished nature that so many people, particularly
412 black South Africans, experience. In this, you know... And so, I was really convinced that
413 if we were able to keep people afterwards, that it would be cathartic. And what better way
414 to do it than to offer food?

415 **Arwa:** It was a really, really amazing interview. I really enjoyed it very much. I'm really
416 grateful for your time, and for all the information, and for all your thoughts, sharing with
417 me your thoughts. There are some points that I really liked; it was well said and well
418 analysed, and I wished that I had this opportunity to attend the show. But maybe one day,
419 I will attend one of your shows.

420 **Leah:** I would love that.

421 **Arwa:** Yeah, I'll be honoured to attend one of your shows in the future.

422 **Leah:** Thank you, thank you.

423 **Arwa:** Thank you very much for your time, and I will really appreciate it if you can give
424 me the chance to do another interview about the play, *born bad*.

425 **Leah:** Absolutely.

426 **Arwa:** Yeah, no problem. Okay, thank you very much.

427 **Leah:** You're welcome. Such a pleasure to meet you.

428 **Arwa:** Thank you. I'm looking forward to see you.

429 **Leah:** All right, be well and stay safe. Yeah?

430 **Arwa:** Yeah, you too. You too.

Appendix F: Author's Interview with Leah Gardiner 24 September 2020 via Zoom

1 **Arwa:** I saw all the reviews about the play, it was amazing, and everybody was thrilled
2 about it. So, I'm very excited to talk to you today about it.

3 **Leah:** Absolutely, so ask, ask away. I have your list here in front of me.

4 **Arwa:** Yeah, I have also added more points. So, my whole thesis is focusing on the plays
5 of debbie tucker green, each chapter is dealing with one play and I'm focusing on both
6 textual and performance analysis. My main purpose is to celebrate the work of black
7 women playwrights in the contemporary period and their talent in presenting female
8 bodies in theatre. In *born bad* I decided to focus on silence in the relationship between the
9 husband and wife.

10 I think it's also – maybe we can consider it the second most important theme in the play.
11 I saw one of your interviews about *born bad*, you were talking about the language and the
12 silence between... the fragmented language, these pauses and silence between the
13 characters, and how does it affect this relation between the husband and wife? So, how do
14 you see this? How did you reflect this in your direction?

15 **Leah:** So, I want to circle back quickly to your statement about the rape being the main
16 theme, I actually think that if I might adjust that language slightly, and suggest that the
17 rape is actually the catalyst for several other themes that exist within the play. And one of
18 them is incest and the silence of incest. And how the silence of incest and pretense,
19 protects and preserves the male hierarchy in any family. And so, in my production, I was
20 really interested in examining the preservation of the father, and how the wife's silence
21 and the wife's complicity led to the rape of the daughter, and the Son. And the actual...
22 sort of how the hierarchy exists within the family to protect and preserve that sick
23 behavior. And so, with the mother and the father, pretending the mother's ability to act as
24 if nothing ever happened, knowing what he was doing to her children, within this family,
25 presented as if it was acceptable behavior.

26 And that was necessitated by her need to keep her family together and keep her
27 relationship with her husband intact, socially how it's presented, but also emotionally.
28 There was nothing in the play that I recall where she said that she didn't love him. And I
29 think that how her love was manifested, was through the cover-up and being complicit.
30 It's tragic, it's absolutely tragic.

31 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, this will lead me to another question regarding the father. So, as you
32 said, the father is the cause of this tragedy. As Patricia Hill Collins has stated, black males
33 are compensating for the lack of power in the outside world by taking advantage of their
34 hierarchy in the family. What were the actor's preparations for the father in performance?
35 And how did you present his black masculinity on stage?

36 **Leah:** Good question. Okay, so in our case, I was working with one of our... I believe
37 one of our most brilliant actors, his name is Michael Rogers, he's Trinidadian-American,
38 I believe Trinidadian came to America— incredibly intelligent man, Yale School of
39 Drama graduate. So, around the table first day of rehearsal, I kind of turned to him, and
40 I'd worked with him before mostly on Shakespeare, and I turned to him and I said, "I
41 know this is going to be a difficult process for you I imagine because you only have one
42 or two lines" I can't recall, and so, very few lines, and he turned to me, and he said,
43 "Actually, I have more to say, than anyone in the play you just never hear me speak, and
44 I will sit here throughout the rehearsal process, and I will hear what everyone else has to
45 say because it will inform what I say without saying".

46 And that is indeed precisely what he did. He always gave, you know, what he said was,
47 "The answers to questions or the way in which my family views me will be based on my
48 facial expressions and my physical gestures". And so, I am a student of Jerzy Grotowski,
49 and so he and I worked without him, of course, knowing sort of my intellectual directorial
50 approach, physical gestures to inform choice. And he was an easy actor to work with,
51 because he's so intellectual, and he knows how to connect his body in his mind. So, it
52 wasn't really difficult in sort of the performance study of his work, because he really
53 already knew, and we both agreed on the direction he should take. One of the things that
54 I perhaps discovered in perhaps in the process, but forgotten, just remembered in talking
55 with you now, with his raping the son that, you know, Debbie is showing that this is a
56 tradition that is passed down, and a pattern that their son could easily perpetuate in his
57 own family.

58 And so, when you talk about Hill Collins's Theory, that black men wield power within
59 their own homes, because of the lack of power that they have outside, I understand your
60 theory in relation to this play. And I agree with it, and I would also potentially add that
61 it's the same with the black woman, and in this case, again, circling back to their
62 relationship, she has to uphold his ill behavior...

63 **Arwa:** And blackness.

64 **Leah:** Right, to make him feel empowered, as any woman would in her, you know, to a
65 man in her home. He's very... I'm just trying to think, I think that...

66 **Arwa:** So, do you mean that her silence is a way to compensate for his castrated
67 masculinity? She's trying to give him this power by her silence? Do you think that it is
68 intentioned silence?

69 **Leah:** Well, it's also a weapon, it's a weapon that she uses for her own self. It's how she,
70 as a woman fights her place in society as a black woman. So, she is weaponising her own
71 defense in a way to sort of justify his behavior and her own behavior. And I think that if
72 she didn't present this complicit if she didn't sort of make it seem like she was someone
73 who was in... she's not really in support of his behaviors, she's accepting of it, even
74 though she doesn't know that she is. And it definitely gives him an elevated sense of self,
75 it necessitated to keep his place in his family in a way that he doesn't have in society.

76 **Arwa:** So, do you think her silence works both as a weapon of defense, and at the same
77 time it is a presentation of oppression? Or do you think it's only a kind of defense?

78 **Leah:** In our production, I don't recall us ever talking about her being oppressed. We
79 always talked about it as a choice. She had a choice, she could have said something, she
80 could have done something, but she chose not to, the actor, Elaine Graham, who again, I
81 mean, I just had absolutely brilliant actors on this production. And Elaine Graham, you
82 know, made it very clear that, as I recall, this was her choice, the complicity was her
83 choice.

84 **Arwa:** So, why do you think she didn't defend her children, while she knows that they
85 are
86 raped, while this was happening, why do you think she didn't do anything at this time?

87 **Leah:** So, you're using the word rape, nowhere in the place that word used. So, let's
88 examine that, and let's deconstruct that to answer your question. So, what do you think?

89 **Arwa:** I think that she is silent because there are some kinds of oppression that prevented
90 her from defending them. Because as you said, she wants to keep the family together,
91 because she wants to keep the social norms, because she wants to be under her husband's
92 wing, and to stay in her position, she doesn't want to face the reality. Sometimes people
93 use this way of denial of the things that are happening just because they don't want to
94 change their life. They're not brave enough to proceed with other options in life. I don't
95 know, this is just a suggestion, but maybe you see it from a different point of view.

96 **Leah:** I suppose I see it slightly differently, which is that Debbie chose to never use the
97 word rape. You and I perceive it as rape. Does the mother? What does the mother say to
98 him at the very end of the play, she says one thing to him, do you have the play near you?

99 **Arwa:** No, unfortunately.

100 **Leah:** Neither do I, there is something... I might have it accessible, can you give me just
101 a minute, because there is something that the mother says at the very end, that is, I believe
102 admittance but the word rape is never used.

103 **Arwa:** Yeah, as the word AIDS was never used in *generations*.

104 **Leah:** That's right, these people inside of this play are not using these words, we have to
105 honour that, but that's how they are, that's the world in which they live.

106 **Arwa:** So, can we consider this as a kind of silence as well?

107 **Leah:** As in *generations*?

108 **Arwa:** No, no, I mean, here in *born bad*, can we consider not saying the word *rape*,
109 frankly, a kind of silence in the black marital relationship and silence of the black woman?

110 **Leah:** Sure, I don't know necessarily that it's silence as it is, hmm, the way it is, this is
111 the way it is. And it's not until we meet this family, when daughter for 21 times within
112 two pages within one and a half minutes, calls her mother a bitch. That kind of rage, that

113 initial rage informs us
114 that there's something that's hidden, that needs to be peeled away, unraveled, just
115 discussed, discovered. And it is over the course of the play that we learn that her rage,
116 the silence that is in response to her rage is a silence that the family lives the construct of
117 this family. So, we can say yes to your question about the mother's silence, but I think
118 it's more familial and cultural and generational than it is the black woman mother as
119 black woman's relationship to the world per se. I think that there is something in the
120 structure of this family that makes silence a key component of how they communicate or
121 don't.

122 **Arwa:** Yeah. So, can you specify gestures or specific body language used by the father?

123 **Leah:** Yeah, so I blocked him... I was just trying to remember.

124 **Arwa:** I know it's a long time ago.

125 **Leah:** It's okay, I believe... I would have to go on my website and look at photos, but I
126 believe that I blocked him initially if you were in the audience away, and then his back
127 was to us, for maybe the second half of the play or something like that, I believe. And
128 so, he did a lot of acting through his back, how he leaned from side to side, how he used
129 his elbow to support his head at times so there are a lot of again, physical gestures that
130 communicated to the audience, his state of being. And they saw him through his back.

131 **Arwa:** What about the mother, her facial expression in response to her daughter calling
132 her a bitch? So how did she respond, how did she use her skills as an actress?

133 **Leah:** If I recall, I mean, she was very deadpan for the majority of it. Also, another you
134 know, Elaine Graham was a dancer, so the way that she physically moves, she's very fluid
135 in movement and how she... even in her facial expressions, there's a kind of a sort of a
136 dancer's fluidity to her. So, if she turned her head one to the right, say, or to the left, you
137 saw her, you watched her because she's all presence. And the subtlety that she brought to
138 the character worked so beautifully with the subtlety that Michael Roger's father brought
139 to the character. So, they communicated and spoke in this very sort of gentle physical
140 language that spoke volumes. And the simpler it got, the more we paid attention.

141 **Arwa:** That's great. I think you had great communication between you in preparation for
142 *born bad*.

143 **Leah:** The actors were unique.

144 **Arwa:** So how would you describe the silence between the husband and wife?

145 **Leah:** Unhealthy and mendacious. I think it's very unhealthy, and it's incredibly
146 mendacious.

147 Their lack of communication and their inability to—or not inability, perhaps it's unwanted
148 ability to not talk and not talk about things, it's like, Langston Hughes has a poem where
149 he talks about, a resin in the sun festers like a wound, and then it runs. And it really is
150 like, their relationship, the silence in their relationship. I believe I have used this analogy
151 with the actors, if I recall, was like this wound that was just getting sicker and sicker and

152 smellier and smellier until it just began to run. At that stage when a wound is that sick and
153 unhealthy and that, you know, that decayed, it's very hard to repair.

154 **Arwa:** Or to heal.

155 **Leah:** Like gout and, you know, an antibiotic can't even fix it. And that is how I would
156 describe their relationship a festered wound.

157 **Arwa:** What was your plan to compensate for the silence between them? Were there any
158 things other than the body language and the gestures?

159 **Leah:** Sure, I didn't know, that was my intention going in. I remember with this project
160 because debbie wasn't with me, we were first in a very tiny room, and it was maybe half
161 the size of our stage, and I remember trying to find a way into this play. And that's the
162 thing about debbie's work, as an artist, she's painted the most incredible landscape, but
163 how you manifest the colours, and the choices and the lines, whether sometimes wide or
164 sometimes thin, in the hopes of sort of recreating that landscape is not always easy. And
165 with *born bad*, I just remember thinking about the transitions, as you know a blackout is
166 a silent moment. And so, I knew that the blackouts would somehow inform how silence
167 existed within the context of the play in, relationship to the actors.

168 **Arwa:** Can you elaborate this point specifically, because it was my next question?

169 **Leah:** Sure.

170 **Arwa:** Because I'm analysing the role of the blackout and how it is used. What was the
171 purpose, in your opinion, of using the blackout? And how frequently did you use it
172 between the scenes?

173 **Leah:** Sure, so, I think that blackouts are, as I say, they're in place used for several
174 different reasons, either to sort of create moments of silence to ask the audience to sit, to
175 say, end of the play, to suggest the end of thought, to suggest transition. But I really felt
176 that this play was a series of snapshots, photographs, and so I used each blackout like how
177 light, took a camera, took a photo, and so it drove the actors crazy because the lights would
178 go, and then they would be blinded. And then they would move, the configurations of
179 chairs would move, we were in what seemed like a very small space, and so that each time
180 when the lights came back up, they were in a different configuration. And so it was usually
181 the person who was being interrogated, sometimes it was the interrogator. And each actor
182 had their own chair, and in these blackouts with Elaine, because she was night blind, so
183 she couldn't see in the dark, so the younger actors, assisted her, if she had to move, they
184 would run over to her move her get her into place, and then they themselves would go
185 back to their chairs and move themselves in all of this sort of happening in the dark. I had
186 over the course of the play, my sound designer created like a heartbeat...

187 **Arwa:** Yeah, this is another question.

188 **Leah:** ...A pulse.

189 **Arwa:** I'm sorry, but if we can focus on each point separately because I want you to
190 elaborate on them, I'm really benefiting from every single word you're saying. So,

191 you're saying that you have two things, the contrast between the shadow and the light,
192 and also the blackout, which is between the scenes. Did you have an actual blackout, or
193 a contrast between darkness and light, or actual blackouts used?

194 **Leah:** I believe I'd requested actual blackouts, and they did sort of to us as audience
195 appears as blackouts, but we did give the actors enough light to be able to see, to move
196 but we as the audience did not see them moving in black.

197 **Arwa:** So, you used the actual black blackout, right?

198 **Leah:** Yeah, let me try again, so, as you and I as an audience, understand how what a
199 blackout is how we are watching a stage, and then suddenly it goes dark, and then lights
200 come up again. To that effect, Yeah, I used a blackout. But in terms of performance, and
201 for the actors, we never actually went to full black, we couldn't because they couldn't
202 see. So, we gave them a glow... So, we gave them a glow because they had to move
203 furniture in the dark and move their bodies in the dark. So, I had to give them enough
204 that they could move, but for us as an audience what we were seeing was black because
205 we were feeling something viscerally, which was the heartbeat. So, I took it off of our
206 sight sense and put it onto our hearing sense. So, it took us out of that and moved us into
207 a different psychological experience.

208 **Arwa:** So, let's make this clear just for me, so you mean that you didn't use the actual
209 blackout that drops from the ceiling? Because I saw this in one of the performances in
210 London of *ear for eyes* by debbie tucker green, that they used blackouts that come from
211 the ceiling, you know like an actual blackout?

212 **Leah:** Sure, we call those blackout curtains, and no.

213 **Arwa:** I thought that those curtains are the real curtains that I see in the theatre, so, okay.
214 So, you've compensated for this with the darkness. So, the darkness with the audience
215 being able to listen, what's going on, to feel that the characters are there to be connected
216 to them, not disconnected, throughout the play.

217 **Leah:** I made photos, snapshots because see, what happens always when
218 someone takes a photo of you, and then the flash goes off, and then it goes to black, your
219 eyes immediately remember where you were, and that image of the flash. That is what I
220 did each time. And then when the lights went dark, you as the audience was still
221 remembering what you just saw, because of the way the light was reflected on your iris.
222 But you're hearing the heartbeat, so, you're in dark, you're in black, but as the audience,
223 you're not quite aware, because you're instantly shocked of where you are, what's
224 happening, it's not until the heartbeat, pulse increase, reminds you.

225 **Arwa:** What speed was it? Was it very quick or slow? How would you describe it?

226 **Leah:** It was pretty quick as I recall, I'd have to ask my lighting designer, brilliant guy,
227 Michael Hubusky.

228 **Arwa:** Brilliant, I think that this is more effective than real curtains which are traditional.

229 **Leah:** Thank you.

230 **Arwa:** How do you relate using these blackouts, and these flashes as you described, to
231 the relationship between the husband and wife? In creating this tension, were you
232 compensating the silence, or reflecting on silence?

233 **Leah:** Well, as I described it to the actors, it's very much about sort of snapshots, right?
234 I mean, every day in your relationship, it's like a snapshot in the day of, and so that's how
235 I articulated it to the actors. And it's as if in this marriage, each time we have a snapshot,
236 have a photograph, capturing that moment, and over time, like in a photo album...

237 **Arwa:** When we recall.

238 **Leah:** It's a recall, like when we were, you know, children, we had these little albums,
239 right? And or we would make these books, I think I described them also as... oh, I forgot
240 what they're called, but I also described that to the actors, these photo books where you
241 would put a paper on top of each other, and then as each picture, you'd make a different
242 picture, and then when you flipped it, it made its own story. So, I described it that way,
243 also, I don't know if I just answered your question, if not I apologies.

244 **Arwa:** Yeah, it's like how they started to make cartoons, when they were putting many
245 different pictures together, one after the other to create the movements. Is that what you
246 mean?

247 **Leah:** Yeah, absolutely, and so I figured, if we did our job right, it would over the course
248 of play, create that kind of album or word picture or overall story through each one of the
249 snapshots, photographs.

250 **Arwa:** Great, amazing. And I like your analysis and engagement with this idea. So, was
251 it used in certain places or certain scenes in the play, or all through the play from the
252 beginning to the end?

253 **Leah:** Any time she called for a blackout.

254 **Arwa:** And how do you think that the audience was engaged with that? Have you talked
255 to any of the audience or the press, did you hear something specific about the blackouts?

256 **Leah:** Every time a blackout came, their hearts would beat faster, they would get more
257 and more, like they couldn't breathe, it was like... what's that word? This is going to
258 sound very visceral, but I hope you understand it.

259 **Arwa:** Yeah, of course.

260 **Leah:** What I was hoping for, which is how the audience described it to me, when you
261 hear
262 of someone being violated, after the violation, they can't breathe. It's like, they're
263 choking.

264 **Arwa:** The shock of the trauma, you mean?

265 **Leah:** And yeah, and I wanted that feeling for the audience, I wanted them to feel that,
266 and that is what was described to me by many, they felt that they just couldn't get out of
267 their seats, they were just traumatised.

268 **Arwa:** So, this is the way that you see that the audience is witnessing the abuse that is
269 happening, the story of the abuse, which is put on a stage but not said frankly. So, this is
270 your way of engaging the audience.

271 **Leah:** It is, as Michael Rogers described, it's what is said in the silences, that is what
272 makes it so painful for us. Every one of our families has it.

273 **Arwa:** Yeah, or we have heard about it, we have it in society, we can relate to it in a way
274 or another, it can happen to our daughters or sons.

275 **Leah:** Well, just silence in general, silence as a construct within a familial structure exists
276 throughout their secrets. All families have secrets. There is lack of communication, there's
277 sibling rivalry, there's trauma, and the list goes on. And within those subcategories, if you
278 do not talk about it, and deal with it, silence becomes the leading controller of
279 communication. And most family structures, no matter what culture, no matter what
280 economic background, are controlled by silence.

281 **Arwa:** And do you think that the black woman has a special position when talking about
282 silence? I mean that, do you mean that silence in black women is intensified more than
283 others, like other white women and compared to black men?

284 **Leah:** I think that's too general a question for me to answer.

285 **Arwa:** No, I mean, in *born bad*.

286 **Leah:** Oh, okay, ask again, sorry, because my mind went to a very general black woman
287 in *born bad*, with the Jamaican woman.

288 **Arwa:** Yeah, especially the mother figure, do you think that she's using silence more than
289 others, more than the male character who is the father and more than the younger
290 generation, and what is the difference between generations in regards to silence? And do
291 you see that the daughter is expressing her rage as to contrast her mother's silence? That
292 the daughter has a rage towards this silence and counteracts it by shouting her anger
293 loudly, but even then, she is not able to utter the word rape frankly. So, it's a question of
294 two parts, do you see that the mother, the black female figure, is more silent than the
295 others? And do you see that her daughter is a contrast to her?

296 **Leah:** So, what I see in debbie's plays, in *born bad*, and *generations*, the older women,
297 of those generations are yes, more complicit in their silences. And the younger, who are
298 more vocal, more able to talk about rage, and the silences that exist within families can
299 do so, because one, it's a younger generation, and there's some progress that's been made
300 in terms of, you know, women's relationship to their culture. But also, I think, and I never
301 thought about this before until now, there's something about a more westernisation of the
302 younger generations within her plays, at least these two plays that afford the younger

303 daughters, the granddaughters, specifically in *generations* to speak with a different level
304 of confidence, to have more words and to be bolder, in choice of words and how they
305 communicate.

306 **Arwa:** But do you think that they will inherit their mother's silence when they grow older?

307 **Leah:** That question is so profound, I, again, would say it's a 50/50, because debbie's
308 work is all about patterns, right? And if you are able to change the pattern, progress has
309 been made. If you are not able to change the pattern, like, if that son becomes a dad, he'll
310 do the same thing if he doesn't change his pattern. Those daughters will be complicit in
311 their silence, as adults, as mothers and wives if they don't change the patterns.

312 **Arwa:** And we can change patterns by being conscious of what was going on.

313 **Leah:** And I mean, through Freudian Western culture, through therapy, right?

314 **Arwa:** Yeah, sometimes we need therapy in different ways, like, meditation, Yeah, many
315 different ways.

316 **Leah:** Right, Ayah, so, forgive me in saying Western culture, I meant, specifically
317 psychotherapy, in Freudian Western culture. Because you're right, in Eastern culture,
318 meditation, there are many forms of therapy.

319 **Arwa:** Yeah, so, talking about the music, the throbs of beats, so, how can you relate it to
320 the silence?

321 **Leah:** If you allow yourself to go into a room where it's very, very, very quiet, and it's
322 just you, in your body, what do you hear? You hear your blood flow and your heartbeat,
323 and that's it.

324 **Arwa:** So, you think that it is the best representation of silence? So, reflecting actual
325 life, that's what you mean?

326 **Leah:** Correct.

327 **Arwa:** Yeah, so can you describe it in more words? How did you use it on the stage?

328 **Leah:** Sure, at the very beginning, in this production, the heartbeat was so quiet in
329 transitions, you never knew it existed, because there was other music.

330 **Arwa:** There was other music, not only the heart beat?

331 **Leah:** I think... I don't know, but I think. But what I know is that the heartbeat was so
332 faint and so quiet, that you couldn't hear it. And then as the transitions and the blackouts
333 happen, it came closer and closer to you louder and louder, and it built the kind of trauma
334 that I was talking to you about.

335 **Arwa:** So, it was there all the time, but increased and intensified when the blackout came,
336 but it was there all the time?

337 **Leah:** Yeah, so, by the time you got to the end of the play, your brain was just going
338 to... and your heart like everything was just in conflict with the other because you
339 were... it was still very difficult to digest, because of the way that the heartbeat worked
340 in relationship to what you were watching and experiencing.

341 **Arwa:** So, do you think that this heartbeat is contrasting the silence in one way or
342 another, or is it a reflection of the trauma?

343 **Leah:** I think it's doing both, and I think that it's contrasting the silence in the sense
344 that, as I say, when you go into a room and you can hear pulsing, or when you meditate,
345 you get very quiet, you can hear your heartbeat and you can hear your blood flow.

346 That's contrasted against

347 the presumed silence around you in the air, right? When you are in a traumatic
348 experience, the more traumatic the faster your heart and the louder your heartbeat. So, I
349 was trying to do both, and I think it was very successful because it started in that one
350 place, and then it ended up in that other place.

351 **Arwa:** Brilliant. Okay, can we talk about other performance strategies used? I read a
352 review by Martha Waite written in 2011, she described the stage as having wood slats
353 and black box carpet on the playing stage, wallpaper for upstage, and a pool of simple
354 lights. So, I was wondering about, the wood slats, what were they, and the black box?

355 **Leah:** You are going to have to hold for one second, I'm going to have to... I'm not
356 sure, give me one minute.

357 **Arwa:** Okay.

358 **Leah:** Thanks. I'm just going to look. Okay, let me come back to you, let me share
359 screen.

360 Okay, can you see?

361 **Arwa:** No.

362 **Leah:** You can't see the screen, no?

363 **Arwa:** Yeah, I can see but then, I don't know, is it this one?

364 **Leah:** Yeah, great you can see. Give me one minute... Where's *born bad*? Here we are.
365 Sorry, I just have to look back to see photos. Okay, yeah, no, there were no... so you see
366 the carpeting on the floor, and the slats that they're talking about, I don't know about
367 wood slats. I know that the lights sort of offered... oh, there they are on top, that's how
368 Michael was able to this with the lights. See how many like a ceiling? She made those
369 spots.

370 **Arwa:** This was made with lights, not actual...

371 **Leah:** So, can you see where my cursor is? I'm circling here.

372 **Arwa:** Yeah.

373 **Leah:** We use wood slats on the ceiling, and the floor was carpeted. And then do you see
374 these here? These are actually strip lights that we put on booms. See that?

375 **Arwa:** Yeah.

376 **Leah:** And they're on all sides, and then up here inside, I believe Michael, my lighting
377 designer, put strip lights up there too if I recall.

378 **Arwa:** And there was something about the black box?

379 **Leah:** This is it. So, if you can see, look at this photo here, it's not so black, right? It just
380 looks, it feels like a box, but it's just a rug, and a square, and then the back is... see this
381 on my cursors over to the left of the wallpaper.

382 **Arwa:** Yeah.

383 **Leah:** And see the wallpaper peeling here slightly, and it's just a box for 1-2-3- 4-5 actors,
384 exactly how many were in this?

385 **Arwa:** Five chairs and six actors.

386 **Leah:** Five chairs and six actors, okay. So, you can see how he's leaning the dad here?
387 And then I would do things where I would pull the actors, sometimes close... so see, oh,
388 I did this spread, I was right. So, see how the dad starts all the way upstage?

389 **Arwa:** Yeah, so, he started by facing the audience, and then he gave them his back. Is that
390 right?

391 **Leah:** He started by facing not just the audience but his children. And then by the time
392 the play was getting bolder and bolder, they were coming closer and closer to the
393 audience. The audience was sitting... see where the cursor is?

394 **Arwa:** Yeah.

395 **Leah:** This is where the audience so they were very close to his back. So, see I think at
396 one point, I did this very sexual, where the mum is here and her silence see the daughter
397 who pretends that she doesn't want to know anything? See, she's over here facing away,
398 and then the daughter who's shocked to learn the baby is here watching while the daughter
399 is in between the dad's legs. So, remember when I said to you about how the facial
400 expressions, with Michael?

401 **Arwa:** Yeah.

402 **Leah:** So, you see how I have him leaning in this strip of light as if he's having an orgasm
403 or he's enjoying sexual pleasure while she's giving him fellatio. And that's the mother's
404 expression.

405 **Arwa:** Wow, brilliant. I'm thrilled by what I'm seeing.

406 **Leah:** Oh, good.

407 **Arwa:** Can I have these pictures sent to me, please?

408 **Leah:** Yeah, just go to [www. my name, leahgardiner.com](http://www.myname.leahgardiner.com).

409 **Arwa:** So, I will find all this? Great, amazing.

410 **Leah:** Yeah. So, you can analyse it, from there. I don't think you can take them from the
411 website though.

412 **Arwa:** Oh, no, no, no, I just want to analyse it. Yeah.

413 **Leah:** Let's see what else there is? So, see, at one point, I have the mom facing in this
414 direction, like, she doesn't want to hear what they have to say, right? And then when the
415 mom learns about the son...So do you see how I have the son sort of leaning as if he's
416 receiving it in his anus, and the mother's reaction to that, and this daughter here, the oldest
417 who just doesn't want to know the educated one, see how she's behind the mom here,
418 facing in the other direction? It's too devastating for her. And then see how the baby up
419 all the way up here is facing this way, she is refusing to leave the proximity to the dad
420 because she loves him so much. I just can't imagine. And at one point in the play, she
421 says, "Why didn't he do it to me", I believe. And this is the mother and then do you see
422 how I have them on a diagonal? And see how the daughter has her back to mum?

423 **Arwa:** Yeah, so in this picture, do you think that the daughter is surrendering to her father?

424 **Leah:** Well, in incestuous relationships, right? There's the jealousy and the struggle, and
425 I was interested in this moment, the daughter... he chose me, and I suppose surrender is
426 a word that we can use, acceptance, temporary acceptance, the joy that comes from it, the
427 ill, the sickness of that.

428 **Arwa:** Amazing. Okay, do you think that this design that you're describing is reflecting
429 the middle-class room?

430 **Leah:** Yeah, that was the idea, it was supposed to be a middle-class living room.

431 **Arwa:** So, did you have this idea in your head, class, when designing?

432 **Leah:** Yeah, I did economics, it was a big issue, you can see how in this photo with the
433 daughter see how the son, he's a... I sort of saw him as a very well educated you know, I
434 guess here we call him a Harvard man or a Yale man and the oldest daughter at the same,
435 Ivy League. The young one is very hippie kind of, you know, child and then the one
436 daughter... I sort of saw her as you know the young one is like the artist type and then the
437 daughter was sort of like shouldn't really much care about money and not in the same way
438 that her brother and older sister, you know? And then the dad, see, I put him in a very
439 cardigan sweater with a collared shirt, a very turned out you know very sort of good solid
440 church-going people see the mum, she is in this sort of sweater shirt, dressing that's
441 buttoned-down here, so with pearls. Yeah, I like this production.

442 **Arwa:** It's amazing, you have to be proud of it, it's amazing. Even the choice of their
443 costumes are amazing, it can show everything about the characters just by looking at them.

444 **Leah:** Exactly, right?

445 **Arwa:** Yeah, because I didn't see these pictures before, I saw just short video clips on
446 YouTube, that's the thing that I found, but I didn't see it and the way you are analysing
447 it, I'm really thrilled about it.

448 **Leah:** Oh, I'm so glad, I'll show you also, you can see... oh, here's a Roy Williams play.

449 **Arwa:** The facial expression of the father is amazing.

450 **Leah:** Yeah, right. So here you can see, this is my *generations*. So, all right, to take you
451 back, where are we going, what is this play again? *born bad*. Okay, let's go back to
452 Michael's facial expressions, yes, you can see very much look, can you see?

453 **Arwa:** Yeah, he's amazing.

454 **Leah:** And then in comparison to here.

455 **Arwa:** Yeah, here it is like a solid look.

456 **Leah:** Just at the daughter, right, and she's going on and on, and then here...

457 **Arwa:** And he is scared of what is coming.

458 **Leah:** Well, no, he's never scared.

459 **Arwa:** Wasn't he?

460 **Leah:** I don't think so. No, because this is his home, he can do what he wants. Is that him
461 up here? Yeah, oh, yes, I love this one. See how he's turned towards the older daughter
462 who's turned away, when the son is confronting the daughter and saying "he did it to me
463 too", I love that, there was like, they had all of this sort of silent communication in body
464 language. With other characters outside of the ones that were speaking, I'd forgotten that.

465 **Arwa:** Amazing. What about the daughter? What were her tools? I see that she is sitting
466 on the floor.

467 **Leah:** As for her physical actions, I mean, she's just such an incredible actress, just her
468 profound ability to use her body. Yeah, I mean, I don't think she ever sat in a chair. If I
469 recall, did she?

470 **Arwa:** What message does this carry? What does it mean that she sits on the floor while
471 others are sitting on chairs?

472 **Leah:** I just think that she had an ability to— oh, that's pretty I didn't realise I could do
473 that— she has an ability to sort of deal with truth, in a very grounded way, I wanted her
474 to be grounded. So, that's why we put her on the floor a lot. Because look how much
475 power she has here, look at that expression, look at her, she's incredible, look at that facial
476 expression, you know, Spike Lee cast her in a movie. I believe after this; she was so
477 powerful. They all have gone on to just incredible careers. Look at her here when she's
478 sitting in the chair, that kind of bold confidence, because she knows the truth, no one else
479 in the family wants to accept it, she knows the truth.

480 **Arwa:** And do you think that knowing the truth is a kind of power?
481 **Leah:** Absolutely, truth to power my friend, yeah.

482 **Arwa:** Yeah, and ignorance is a weakness.

483 **Leah:** That's right. Now I have to figure out how to get out of this, bear with me... Yeah.
484 **Arwa:** Yeah, and talking about the daughter, so what is the strategy that she used in the
485 monologue at the beginning of the play? Was she standing up, sitting, using her body?

486 **Leah:** If I recall, I think I had the mom in a chair, you know, because in the back, I don't
487 know if you can see, look, there's a door, a secret door that people would enter and exit
488 through, I think there were maybe one or two doors. I think there were two doors on either
489 side, and actors would go away, you can sort of see the scene here. And so, I believe at
490 the very beginning, it was just mom on stage, maybe sitting where the dad is now with
491 the daughter kind of going around her, spewing, if you call me a bitch, be acting like a
492 bitch, I'm going to call you one, if you look like a bitch, something, something one, and
493 gosh, brilliant language. So yeah, that's how I blocked that one.

494 **Arwa:** And what about the chairs? Did they use them... did they slam the chairs?

495 **Leah:** I believe yes, because I recall us having to replace them through the course of the
496 production. At some point, someone slammed it. I think it might be this chair. And I think
497 I used them for... I think I did it all the time, and I think I used it for the stage manager to
498 start the scene. So, it would go with lights *boom* like an old-fashioned photography sound
499 or camera sound *boom* like that.

500 **Arwa:** So, at the beginning, not at a certain time of hitting.

501 **Leah:** At the beginning of every scene, I believe.

502 **Arwa:** So, it wasn't used in heated conversation or at critical points?

503 **Leah:** Not that I recall, but I don't know. I want to tell you, at one point, the chair was
504 thrown down, I thought someone knocked a chair down. You see, these are like dining
505 room chairs as if they're sitting around the dining room table. And he is the only one I
506 recall, dad, is the only one with arms.

507 **Arwa:** Does this indicate anything?

508 **Leah:** Yeah, he's the man of the house, he's at the foot of the table.

509 **Arwa:** Amazing, all these details.

510 **Leah:** That is my work, I'm very detail-oriented.

511 **Arwa:** Yeah, amazing. I really like people who care about every single detail, and that's
512 what I say here.

513 **Leah:** Yeah, I do.

514 **Arwa:** Great job.

515 **Leah:** Yeah, thank you.

516 **Arwa:** So, do you remember anything about the beginning of the monologue? Was she
517 on the floor? Was she standing up?

518 **Leah:** I can't recall, I think maybe she was sometimes on the floor or standing or I just
519 don't know. I so wish you could get your hands on the tape, but I don't know, I can't
520 remember. We have to get our hands on the book.

521 **Arwa:** Well, was there any other performance strategy used other than the things we have
522 discussed? I think we covered most of them.

523 **Leah:** Yeah, as I say I mean proximity and all of your sort of directorial, you know, one
524 on one composition, this production was really as you can see, based on composition. It
525 was also based on relationships... sorry, give me one second... proximity in terms of as
526 tension belt, they would get closer to each other and further away. So, towards the end
527 of the play, see how close they are to dad when they're sort of yelling at each other here,
528 when actors did not want to deal in families, so I even built-in sort of what silence could
529 potentially look like physically. So, do you see how far away from mom and dad are?
530 See mom? Is that mom? No, that's the oldest sister. And I think maybe mom is standing
531 behind him if I recall. But I'm just the sort of complicity of silence and everyone's
532 inability to hear him, and so even the baby sister who's trying to hear them is still quite
533 far away. They're looking away because they really don't want to deal. Here where the
534 baby asks the Father... she hasn't asked the father why me? But I think if maybe she
535 does, I can't recall, but there's the implication of that, and that daddy would never do
536 anything like that. So, I wanted to sort of show this relationship and you can see here is
537 complete alter sadness on his face, because of the baby and how she felt. The daughter
538 in this photo, it's like, she's the chosen one, right? He chose her and the whole play isn't
539 it so much about it, having been the chosen one, like Jesus, but yet, the son then reveals
540 well, no, actually, he really wanted me.

541 **Arwa:** So here you think because there was, if I remember, there was something about
542 Jesus in the play. So, do you think that this is the connection that Jesus was the chosen
543 one, and the daughter was chosen? Do you think that this is their connection?

544 **Leah:** Very much so, but in actuality, the son was really the chosen one, because if the
545 pattern in the family will be perpetuated because the son will perpetuate the pattern.

546 **Arwa:** Amazing. So, I really like analysing the pictures, and the way you are putting it,
547 you're inspiring me with lots of ideas and opening wide horizons for me...

548 **Leah:** Oh, good, I'm so happy.

549 **Arwa:** I'm really glad, I can't express my appreciation to you for every single word and
550 your analysis and your cooperation. It really means a lot to me.

551 **Leah:** Absolutely, my pleasure.

Appendix G: Author's Interview with Azar Kazemi, 25 September 2020 via Zoom

1 **Arwa:** The connection is better now. So, let's return to our question about your choice of
2 this particular play, what attracted you to this play?

3 **Azar:** Yeah, so I originally wanted to do *hang*, and I wasn't given the rights because it
4 was a new play, but I had seen the premier of that. And it was the first time I'd ever heard
5 of debbie tucker green or seen her work, and I was immediately just so drawn into the
6 story. The acting was phenomenal, the simplicity of the staging and the emotions were
7 just, you know, I think her plays created kind of emotional potency that a lot of other
8 writers just aren't able to create only through their words and that they don't need a lot,
9 like almost very minimal design can go a long way that like, the less that's there actually,
10 the more important it becomes.

11 And it reminded me a lot of Sarah Kane, I've worked on a couple of Sarah Kane plays
12 and she's one of my favorite playwrights, and also Caryl Churchill. Then I saw that when
13 I started researching debbie tucker green, that Carol Churchill is her mentor and that she's
14 been compared to Sarah Kane on many occasions. And so, I was immediately just like, of
15 course, I'm going to love everything about this person, and she's a black woman and so
16 that really resonates with me as a person of colour, having grown up in America, being in
17 a very white area where I was very much "othered" by people. So, I think I had just had
18 a lot things in my personal life that drew me to her.

19 When I saw *hang*, I was sitting in between two people who had both experienced sexual
20 assaults, and I myself had not, but they also had no idea what the play was about. They
21 had never met debbie tucker green. I had asked if we could go see a show at the Royal
22 Court, because I really love so many of the shows that I know have premiered at the Royal
23 Court and their reaction and how emotional they became from that play was a real
24 testament to how she was reaching out. And my friend told me later, "There's no
25 way...Like, this writer understands this so deeply because some of the words that they
26 were saying, it was like my own thoughts that I've had, my own feelings that I've had,
27 that I've never shared with anyone, you know, that only someone who's deeply
28 understanding or maybe experienced sexual assault themselves would understand".

29 So already it was clear to me how moved I was and how the audience was affected by it.
30 So, when I couldn't get the rights for *hang*, I looked, I did a lot of research on her other
31 plays and I found *dirty butterfly*. And it was also three people. It was also two women and
32 one man, which in *hang* it's similar, I think *hang* could be with three women though, if
33 you want it as well. And I read it, I loved it and I thought, well, if I can get the rights to
34 this play, then I can do it because I just wanted to do debbie tucker green. I thought it was
35 important. And I was producing it for my own company in co-production with another
36 company called Halcyon Theater in Chicago. And so, then we've started. So, I got the
37 rights, it took over a year of like writing into her agency, getting the rights, but I was very
38 drawn to *dirty butterfly* because of how abstract it was. It reminded me of *Crave* like Sarah

39 Kane of people speaking and finishing each other's sentences. You're not quite sure who
40 is speaking to who, and there's many different ways in which you could interpret it. So, I
41 could direct the play many times and it would be very different. And I have directed *Crave*
42 twice, and it was very different even with a simple, like three of the four people being the
43 same actors from the first production.

44 Also, I was interested in how *dirty butterfly* went beyond the abstract in the final scene,
45 where we go from abstract, possibly this is not conversations happening in reality, but in
46 their own minds, we don't quite know like, are they speaking to themselves? Are they
47 speaking to each other? What are we truly witnessing? Where every audience member is
48 going to interpret that differently. So, it was a challenge. How am I going to build that
49 with the actors? How can we make it concrete for our production? So that we, as the actors
50 and myself, have a through line and the designers of what the world is to us, but then what
51 the audience receives, we can't really control that.

52 But then the final scene, the epilogue being, in my opinion, hyper-reality, a kind of hyper
53 realism where then we are in a deep, deep. Like, there's no...I tried really hard to make it
54 as real as possible. So, a lot of that epilogue, we were dealing with trying to make the
55 vomit and the blood as real as possible, but also the relationship between these two women
56 and what it is that they both need from each other so deeply. And why is that the
57 relationship between the two women is so volatile. And so why is Jo triggering? Oh, my
58 gosh, my head just went blank. What is the other woman's name in the play? Amelia,
59 thank you. Oh, my gosh. I was like, what just happened to my brain. Amelia, I think a lot
60 of what the actor and I spoke about is that there's something from Amelia's past that is
61 triggering her with Jo and why she needs to get Jo out. But that she doesn't completely...
62 she tells her to go away, but she doesn't force her to go away.

63 So, what she says to Jo, but then she still let leaves the door open. She still, you know,
64 she tells her to go, but she doesn't make her go. So, there is a need, they do need each
65 other. And as actors, we focused on why they need each other, even though the barrier,
66 right? Like, you want to play the need, not the obstacle. So, for Amelia, it's you need Jo,
67 but the obstacle is you don't want any Joe, you know, like she's bringing up something
68 for you, that's such a conflict, but you also need her. And for Jo, I think it's more obvious
69 why she needs Amelia for comfort, for many, many things for safe Haven for I think it's
70 important that the two women in the play need each other, but I think it's so important,
71 although it's not spoken to too directly, there is a barrier between them in race. And what
72 does Amelia see in Jo as certain privileges or certain opportunities or certain ways in
73 which she could get help in the situation that she's in because of the colour of her skin
74 that Amelia could not, if she was in the same situation or maybe was in the same situation
75 in the past, and she resents Amelia, or she resents Jo for not taking into account that she
76 as a white woman has many privileges just because of the colour of her skin and that she
77 herself is choosing to be victimised.

78 **Arwa:** So, you think that it is Jo's choice to be silent?

79 **Azar:** I mean, I don't think it's totally her choice. What I think is that a white woman
80 who's being abused over a black woman, that's being abused, is treated in our world and
81 in our society differently. And that Jo doesn't realise or recognise that. And so when she
82 comes to Amelia to save her essentially, or to be whatever she is for Jo. She's not taking
83 into account that there's still a power dynamic between these two women, in which in
84 society, Jo will be taken care of in a different way than Amelia will be taken care of. And
85 that she's actually putting Amelia's life in danger by involving her in all of this. I don't
86 know if you're following what happened in Louisville, Kentucky, but the people who've
87 murdered Brianna Taylor were not indicted that came out on Wednesday and they were
88 only charged with endangering the neighbours of Brianna Taylor.

89 **Arwa:** And this also reminds me of the famous incident in Central Park of the white
90 woman who was raped. They accused five black boys, and they were sent to jail for a long
91 time.

92 **Azar:** Yes. And they were called the Central Park Five. There's a Netflix series called
93 *When They See Us*.

94 **Arwa:** Yeah, I've watched it. So, this will lead me to another question talking about
95 colour. So why do you think, in your opinion, debbie tucker green didn't specify the racial
96 identity of Jo's husband? Do you think that she doesn't want to enforce this idea of the
97 black male being hypersexual and aggressive and a rapist? Or do you think she has other
98 intentions? And how did you put that in your performance? How did you indicate or refer
99 to the husband?

100 **Azar:** Are you saying you think her husband is black, but debbie didn't want to put that
101 in the play?

102 **Arwa:** Because most of the characters that debbie tucker green introduced in other plays
103 were black. So, in this specific play, she didn't specify the colour of the husband and also,
104 she used a white woman to be abused. So, I'm still analysing the reasons behind these two
105 choices. Why didn't she make the racial identity of the husband clear? And why did she
106 use the white woman as the abused character? Do you think that she wanted to show this
107 contrast between the privilege of the white woman above the black woman? Or do you
108 think that her aim is to make the theme of the play universal?

109 **Azar:** I don't think her aim is to make it universal. I don't. I think debbie tucker green is
110 speaking very specifically about how racial dynamics work in our society. I think she does
111 have a play... something Mary.

112 **Arwa:** Yeah. *stoning mary*. An all-white cast.

113 **Azar:** What's interesting is that I always believed her husband was white. I never thought
114 the husband was black. But I think it's interesting. And I think it's done on purpose that
115 because the other two people in the play are black and because they are obviously of lower
116 class, we know that because of the dialect. And because of the way, I think that the thin
117 walls indicate that it's some kind of projects or some kind of living situation that's not

118 ideal. That's not right. They're living very close to one another in apartments. It's not
119 single-family homes. But how I always saw it in my mind, because I so reject the idea of
120 the dangerous black man, that narrative, that single story narrative, that to me and her
121 husband was white. And that's why it was even more dangerous for Amelia, I thought,
122 because you and your husband are white and you're in our area, and now we are being
123 infected by this. And why aren't the police stepping in and why aren't people doing
124 things?

125 I believe that the abuse is allowed to go on as long as it has, for me and I could be wrong.
126 And I honestly think if we asked debbie, she would say, that's up to them. That's part of
127 that experience of how you imagine the husband is a racial conversation and a racial
128 grappling that we have to deal with. If we automatically assume that he is black, or me
129 assuming he was white or telling myself he was white, could have been because I was
130 intentionally trying to work against that narrative that is put in every society and how
131 deeply anti-blackness and how deeply the idea of a violent black man is put all over the
132 media, literature, television, movies, and theatre.

133 And I think that part of it for debbie would be how do they imagine it? Because I think
134 the abuse is actually so much more in *hang* and in *dirty butterfly*, so much more potent
135 because we never see it because what we as an audience imagine will always be worse
136 than you could depict on stage. So, she is so smart because she's not dealing with the
137 violence itself. She's dealing with something much deeper, which is the emotional trauma
138 and after effects that never leave you, right? That violence may be a moment, five minutes,
139 an hour, the after effects, how it stays in your body will never go away.

140 So, she is so brilliant in my mind because of how she is able to put a lot of how the story—
141 many things about the story are going to be unique to every audience member, because
142 they're filling in the rest of the image for themselves.

143 **Arwa:** This brutal experience in the story can be related to their personal experiences.

144 **Azar:** Right. And maybe their personal biases or their personal epistemological racism
145 that we all inherit. You know, like, I mean, I know that this summer, for example, I went,
146 I did a workshop called Unlearning Anti-Blackness for the MENA Community, the
147 Middle Eastern North African community. I'm sure you know how racist people in the
148 Middle East are towards black people, extremely racist, Asian people as well, Hispanic
149 people, Latinx. Every minority is extremely racist towards black people. Anti-Blackness
150 is a completely like a subcategory of this already racist world that we live in. So, I think
151 debbie didn't tell us his race, because part of it is kind of implicating the audience. Did
152 you automatically assume he was black? Why? Did you automatically assume he was
153 white? Why? Does it matter? What if it's not just black or white? Could he be of another
154 ethnicity, right? So that's a question that the audience then has to grapple with on their
155 own.

156 **Arwa:** So, do you think that there is a message, a hidden message by debbie tucker green
157 to tell the audience. To ask the audience why do you assume if you heard such a story that

158 the rapist is black? You have to rethink it. It can happen by anyone, this kind of male who
159 abuses his wife can be of any colour. Why enforce this idea that the black man is
160 dangerous?

161 **Azar:** I don't know if she has a hidden message, I honestly don't, but I think that all
162 playwrights set up... The great playwrights are asking questions. The great playwrights
163 are allowing artists to make productions their own are leaving it open enough for each
164 production to be unique and to discover and to be inspired by the people in the room that
165 are making that piece of art and what it will become. I don't know if there's a hidden
166 message. I imagine, as a black woman who has to deal with the extreme biases that are
167 just up against her that sure, she may...but also, we could ask her and she could say, oh,
168 in my mind, he was black, but that doesn't mean that all black men are violent abusers. It
169 means that there's not enough stories out there about the black experience. I mean, I don't
170 know if you've seen the Ted talk, *The Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Adichie?

171 **Arwa:** No.

172 **Azar:** It's really incredible. I recommend you watch it's like 18 minutes. Yeah. It really
173 informs a lot of the work that I do. And a lot of the ways in which I approach plays and
174 how to tell stories, and the point of it is that there are many stories about the group in
175 power, which in this case will be white people. We have many stories of white people.
176 We specifically have many stories of Americans because of America's global and
177 economic power and probably the UK as well. But we don't have a lot of stories of other
178 places and because of that, there's a single-story narrative, right? So, for the Middle East,
179 there's a single-story narrative around the terrorist because there's not enough stories.
180 There are not enough stories to show the completeness of an entire group of people. And
181 when we only see one story over and over the dignity of those people start to go away and
182 how everyone sees them.

183 So, I think debbie, it's interesting. I mean, she's very private, so I don't want to try to
184 guess what I think she was trying to do, but what it made me do is we made decisions in
185 the room and our cast decided that Jo's husband was white.

186 **Arwa:** Yeah. You know, people are dealing with debbie tucker green's plays in different
187 ways. Have you read her play *random*?

188 **Azar:** I have not read *random* yet. I have it though. I need to read it.

189 **Arwa:** So, it is about a mother who passed through a trauma of losing her teenaged son.
190 He was stabbed in London. So, this chapter was dealing with the idea of black
191 motherhood. So, I totally believe that it really reflects the story of the black mother and
192 how she is working hard to protect her family while she is also suffering being from the
193 middle class. Perhaps she didn't have the chance of being educated. So, the intersectional
194 oppressions lead her to really struggle in her motherhood and being unable to protect her
195 children.

196 So, strange enough when I met the Canadian director who directed this, she said that
197 *random* is a universal story, and it doesn't reflect the black community. And also, I met
198 two actresses, one is Canadian and the other is British. Both of the actresses said that they
199 see *random* as a universal representation of motherhood. So, I totally agree with you that
200 it is reflecting the idea of a black woman. And this is what my whole thesis is about. It is
201 about the representation of ~~the~~ female black bodies on the stage. So how would you
202 comment on this, that people sometimes receive debbie's plays as a universal?

203 **Azar:** Were the two actors that you spoke to black women?

204 **Arwa:** Yes, they are. And I asked one of them, "Do you relate to your personal
205 experience?" She said, "Yes, I can relate to it". I was asking about the discrimination that
206 they went through. So, they said that it wasn't obvious in their lives, but it was hidden. It
207 was there. They feel it. So, they have this experience of being critically judged by their
208 colour. But at the same time, they are denying the idea that this play is presenting the
209 oppression of the mother, the black mother, or talking about the black community.
210 They're trying and insisting to make it very universal.

211 **Azar:** Well, it's interesting to me, because if those people are black women, I want to
212 listen to them because their experience is their experience. And I wonder if what they're
213 saying is, yes, this is a specific story about a black mother. And until other mothers
214 understand that our pain, or our losing our children... Losing a child or your child being
215 in pain or being... In *random*, is he killed? Is he...? What happened?

216 **Arwa:** Stabbed.

217 **Azar:** Just stabbed? Okay. So, your child's being stabbed, right? Any mother would be
218 terrified if your child is killed. Any mother would be devastated. The issue becomes the
219 way in which black mothers have to deal with this at such a higher rate, because of
220 statistics that we understand and know, not only does it happen more often, but especially
221 in America, maybe not the UK, has ended with the death of many young black men at the
222 hands of police, that when your kid is killed, I don't think that the black women feel the
223 death of their children more than any other mothers. That's not the question.

224 **Arwa:** Of course, but their experience will be different.

225 **Azar:** Their experience is different and why their children are being targeted.

226 **Arwa:** And the way the police deal with it.

227 **Azar:** Right, is different. And so, I don't think that how a white mother, you know, deals
228 with her son leaving the house to go to school is the same as a black mother, letting her
229 son leave the house and go to school. If a white mother hears that her son was stopped by
230 the police, she may not jump to the worst conclusion as a black mother would because of
231 the data and statistics that we have around these things happening disproportionately to
232 black communities.

233 **Arwa:** Okay. So, let's talk about specific aspects of the performance. So, of course, this
234 abuse was off-stage. I know that you said that the whole idea, it's not about the violent
235 act itself, but it is about the effect on the human being after the trauma that they are
236 suffering from, and that they might suffer from their whole life, and which is very, very
237 difficult to heal from. What can you say about the abuse being off-stage and what are the
238 tools that you use to deliver this to the audience?

239 **Azar:** So, it was a lot about how Jo was behaving in the play, how her body would change.
240 The position that we started her in, which was, she was lying down. She was in a fetal
241 position. She looked wounded, she looked hurt. She was carrying herself in such a way in
242 certain points to indicate that she had pain. She has a whole part where she talks about the
243 butterflies and how much it's hurting. And we did a lot of stylised movement. Actually, a
244 lot of audience members asked if I had a history in dance, or if we had a choreographer
245 for the play, which we didn't, I just worked with the actors very carefully to all of the
246 movement in the first half before the epilogue was very intentional and sometimes
247 synchronised between the three actors. So if one person, like if Jo was doing a movement,
248 possibly, the male actor was also doing that movement with her at the same time, or
249 sometimes her and Amelia were doing things at the same time, or sometimes Amelia and
250 him were doing things at the same time.

251 The way that people moved, it's like every movement of one person rippled has an effect
252 on the other people. There was one moment, for example, it was very abstract when she
253 was talking about how she had to be so quiet because he was asleep. Instead of like,
254 because he's not there and what does it mean to be careful, or, you know, she was actually
255 taking like a position, like a yoga position, or like a ballet position and trying to hold that
256 position and not move at all and it was very hard, and Amelia was sort of mocking her in
257 that moment and trying to get her to get off balance. The part where she talks about how
258 she hovered over the toilet so as not to make noise, I had the actor like doing a lot of really
259 strenuous physical things in the play that were actually uncomfortable and hard. So, it was
260 like very, very movement-based.

261 Also, tone, so volume when we were quiet when we were loud. So, if everyone was
262 whispering and everyone was trying to be quiet, it indicated more the presence of her
263 husband. And then I think I've, I remember, because this was about four years ago, the
264 first production, we actually had a remount in 2017 that had a different set and the actor
265 for Jo changed, it's remounted on Theater on the Lake. And so, I can also send you more
266 photos of the production other than what they had... I think one of them had quite a few
267 pictures in one of the reviews, but I can certainly send you a few more. Where Amelia
268 makes a very loud noise and Jo recoils. Like, Jo thought she was going to be hit, so she
269 ducked. But then she was like, "That wasn't what was going to happen".

270 **Arwa:** Did you intend to make it like she is hit by the truth? She gets hit by the truth that
271 she has to do something to herself to help herself in a way or another?

272 **Azar:** No, it was more just to show that if someone is hit a lot, that if someone does a
273 quick movement or as loud, they have PTSD surrounding. Based on some of your
274 questions, I don't know if it... because you said, which appears to be significant, the wall
275 that separates the two households. I envisioned it as three households because I didn't
276 believe that Jason and Emilia lived together. I believe that the way I imagined it, based
277 on the language in the play and how it's spoken about is that Jo's house is maybe like a
278 townhome, where they have upstairs downstairs. All of them are townhomes. Jo is in the
279 middle and Amelia is on one side and Jason on the other.

280 **Arwa:** Okay. I'll just finish discussing Jo and I will come to the paper-thin wall as it's an
281 essential aspect in my chapter. So, talking about Jo, you said that movement is one of the
282 essential tools that you used to reflect abuse. Did you use any specific makeup on her face
283 or body to show the injuries caused by the abuse?

284 **Azar:** The script says that it shouldn't be...I'm almost positive. The script in the first half
285 before, I think before in the epilogue, she applied some on her face and then we had the
286 blood bag, but I'm almost positive, maybe not, but we just didn't do it for the first half,
287 because in my mind, in the first half, it's not reality, what we're seeing is not happening
288 in real, in any real place or time. They're not actually talking to each other. The only time
289 that in reality, they are talking to each other is the epilogue. So in the first half, I did not
290 have any sort of like the lighting was not realistic. We were not going for any kind of
291 realism at all in like their movement and how they spoke to one another and how volume
292 works. Even the set was very abstract.

293 Then the final scene, then we went for that. The actor had very little time between the two
294 of Jo. So, she quickly applied what she could, but it wasn't extreme. It was a little bit on
295 the face, but because she speaks specifically about how badly her stomach and
296 specifically, her lower stomach, which is causing the bleeding. A lot of it was in how she
297 walked. She was walking very slowly and just in and doubling down in pain. So, we were
298 actually able to use that idea, like her kind of... we use that and actually helping us with
299 the special effects so that she could bend down to release the blood pack. And then also
300 go back down to close the blood pack when she needed to close it. And that also helped
301 her in the vomit moment as well, which I thought the blood was going to be the most
302 difficult part, but the vomit was actually much more difficult, than it was.

303 **Arwa:** Can you talk about this?

304 **Azar:** Yeah, it's just hard to have realistic vomit because we didn't want to put anything
305 in her actual mouth. So, what happened is she had it kind of in her sleeve...or no, she had
306 it in the pocket, sorry of her jacket. And there had to be a time where she was very much
307 earlier, kind of put her hand in her pocket. It was small enough to fit in her hand. And in
308 the point where she finally vomited, what we did was like, she was about to vomit, but
309 she wanted to catch it. So she'd go, like, she'd make the noise go like this and kind of pop
310 that little baggy in her hand, which was like oatmeal with some food colouring and then
311 suddenly it would come out. But a couple of times, I mean, it wasn't always consistent.

312 One time it was so close to a audience member that the audience member almost also
313 threw up, almost threw up as well. So yeah, he started gagging. He was in the front row
314 and I was like, oh my God, because the first time we did it, it was more as thrust, the
315 second time we did it, it was an L. So, the audience was much closer to the stage. So, it
316 changed, how it was done, the audience got much closer to the actors. Whereas in the first
317 production, there was quiet, usually more distance between the audience and the actors.
318 Although I did bring the audience or the actors into the kind of alley between the two
319 sides of the audience to try to create dynamics. We had a lot of levels as well in the set.

320 **Arwa:** So, did it happen only once that one of the audiences threw up?

321 **Azar:** Yeah, that was just in the second time we did the show because, because he was so
322 close to her.

323 **Arwa:** Do you think he was disgusted or that he was so much into the story?

324 **Azar:** Yeah, I think he was really in it. And so that he thought it was real. And when he
325 saw that he got sick, also the blood probably wasn't helping either because she had been
326 bleeding up until that point. I didn't ask him afterwards, but many, many people were
327 deeply moved by the play. And I have to say that specifically several sexual assault
328 survivors were hit in a way that I did not expect because the play does not depict any
329 violence. There were several people who, after the show, they wouldn't leave right away.
330 Or they were just sort of uncontrollably crying because the play hit them in a place where
331 they had pushed so much of the...It's not that they hadn't dealt with the abuse and they'd
332 probably spoken about what happened, but they'd never confronted how much it's still
333 lived inside of them and how much they push it down. And in this play, it is so obvious
334 how it manifests and it never really leaves your body. That one of my friends specifically,
335 she said, "It hit me in ways, I would have never understood it. It made me remember
336 things I had never remembered before. It made me realise why I was mad at certain people
337 in my life, because I thought they knew and they never said anything and how angry I was
338 at them, at my neighbours, you know, at my family members". So, she, she was saying,
339 this is different than how, if I've seen like a rape in a movie or something, and it's hard,
340 this was different because it was hitting me in a place that I wasn't expecting. And so all
341 of these emotions and all of these hidden feelings that I had never worked through, came
342 to the surface.

343 **Arwa:** This can tell us a lot about how successful the production was? You know, if
344 people are getting that engaged. Of course, the text is brilliant, but it is also about the way
345 you produce it. It is amazing to reach this level of the connection between you and the
346 audience. Talking about the audience now, I'm discussing the idea about witnessing the
347 witnesses witnessing the abuse. So, it is mainly about the audience witnessing these
348 witnesses, knowing about the abuse, but doing nothing about it. So, what can you tell us
349 about this idea?

350 **Azar:** I mean, it was at a time right where Trump had just been elected in our country and
351 a couple of the reviews, I mean, appropriately said that this plays like a slap in the face,

352 because it's all about those of us who have been silent and haven't done anything,
353 knowing the danger, knowing the violence around us, and we don't say anything. And
354 then what happens, or should we say anything? What are our responsibilities to our
355 neighbours? And I think what Debbie does so well is she adds that layer of, and what's the
356 responsibility of a marginalised, oppressed neighbor next to their white neighbor. If a
357 black person doesn't speak, right? Like, let's say you're on a train and someone starts to
358 abuse someone. Now, a black person may want to step in, but they may not because
359 they're afraid of what will happen, if they get involved. So why are people of colour
360 always being asked to be the ones to step in? But because Jo lives in a low income, not to
361 say that in low income, it's only people of colour, but there's more are usually people of
362 colour in low-income areas than white people. And so, it's just this interesting question
363 of who needs to stop this abuse so that the repercussions are not devastating for them.
364 Amelia and Jason, Jason, who I think has some kind of mental, right? I mean, he has
365 trouble speaking. He has trouble expressing himself. He pees himself. He doesn't leave
366 his house. He is also maybe having some kind of disability or mental issue. So why is it
367 the responsibility of Amelia and Jason who are already marginalised by society to save
368 this woman?

369 **Arwa:** So, they are already deprived of their own rights, and then they have to do
370 something towards a white woman. You know, you have opened horizons for me in
371 thinking about the choice of the white woman. Now I'm starting to view it in a different
372 way, you know, inspired by what you have said, that I can analyse this choice in different
373 ways. That this privileged white lady is in a position that she is accused. And those people
374 who are already deprived of their rights, they are blamed for not helping her.

375 **Azar:** I mean, Jo is not economically privileged as far as we know, right. So economically,
376 we know she's not privileged...

377 **Arwa:** By her colour.

378 **Azar:** Right, by her colour, her racial privilege. And also, that she's asking... and we
379 don't know Amelia's history. And me and the actor who played Amelia, spoke at length
380 about the fact that Amelia's anger towards Jo is from a deep-rooted abuse, that she herself
381 has suffered in the past. And is it fair for Jo to ask for her help? You know, because Jo
382 doesn't know Amelia's story either, and we don't get to know what Amelia's story is. But
383 I think the most telling part about Amelia in the whole play, which is a really weird part,
384 or was when she's talking about pretending to make the drink. In the set in the epilogue,
385 she talks about "Sometimes before they come in, I pretend that I'm making a cappuccino
386 and I could talk to". She pretends she's giving it to a customer that she like that... Her
387 aspirations in life are she's a janitor, she cleans a coffee shop and she's asked to clean it
388 before anyone else sees her, come in and do your work in the middle of the night, basically
389 4:00 AM before anyone shows up, because we don't ever want anyone to have seen that
390 you were even here. And that her wish in this world, her greatest wish is to be a barista,
391 to be allowed, to just connect with customers and serve them a drink.

392 And then Joe comes into this space and he's asking and taking from Amelia's emotional
393 labor, messing up the floor that she just cleaned with her blood, so messing up her
394 workplace. And if her boss was to come in, would she lose her job? If Joe was there, most
395 likely, if Joe had thrown up and bled all over now, she has to re-clean the whole place.
396 And on top of that, Joe asks her, will you make me a drink? And then you ask yourself, is
397 Joe asking her that because she loves Amelia and she knows how much Amelia would
398 like to make a drink, or is she being selfish and just asking for her to make her a drink? I
399 truly believe Jo loves Amelia. I actually think Jo deeply loves Amelia. Like, Jo, I don't
400 know if romantically, but she sees Amelia in some way, either as like a mother figure,
401 sister figure, she deeply wants to connect with Amelia. And she doesn't understand at all
402 why the big difference between the two of them because of their race. And I think that's
403 why Amelia cannot let Jo in.

404 Although at the end, I think in our production, I think they may have held hands briefly
405 or something happened where at the very end of the play, they got very close to one
406 another and they either, they touched and then maybe Jo moved away or Jo tries to touch
407 Amelia and Amelia moves away, but there was an attempt at connection, physical
408 connection, but not really able to connect. Also, which is, this is kind of strange, but music
409 is really important to me as a factor.

410 **Arwa:** Yeah, I was about to ask you about music. How did you use it in this play?

411 **Azar:** Well, in the play, she actually has a specific song that she says should play in the
412 writing of the play. So, it's like during the difference between like the play and the
413 epilogue, she played a specific song. She gave permission that we didn't have to use that
414 song, that we could use a different song that worked for our production. And I found this
415 song, and I will send it to you, that truly hit me deeply. And I couldn't... like, that song
416 is just so essential to the play. And so, it played during that time where she sets up those
417 sets between the two Amelia set it up. So, what happened was, I don't know all the pictures
418 you saw, but we had like a kind of black, it was raised in the middle part. There were ways
419 to disconnect it and it unfolded. And then it became a white floor. And then also she had
420 a radio that she brought out; the lighting changed drastically to very fluorescent looking
421 lighting. And then she brought on the props of the mop and a bucket that had water.

422 And so, we had very little props, but most of the props that were used were in that scene.
423 And there was a little cupboard we had made that opened that people; they'd never seen
424 it open before. It just looked like a cupboard, but it opened. And she had like the pads,
425 she had some paper towels, she had the radio, she had a few cleaning supplies. So, the
426 things for her shop were there, but there was no like cappuccino machine. There was no,
427 there was other than just like the white floor and the change in lighting some props, there
428 was nothing else to indicate that it was a cafe other than the language itself, the script.

429 **Arwa:** So, it didn't look like something would indicate that actually. The setting of the
430 coffee shop was imaginative. Right? What about the music? Did you make it loud in some
431 moments, did you make it slow? How did you use it?

432 **Azar:** The only music was during the scene; in-between I did not play any music really
433 during the play... Did we? Actually, there may have been sound effects, but not music.
434 Oh, there was some music at the time when Amelia... Oh, but I think that was in the
435 second part too. So on the radio, the music changed and then there was a moment possibly
436 where she talks about the ice skating. Oh, that's not in the epilogue. I remember the part,
437 I don't know if you remember the part, but there's a part where she talks to Jason about a
438 certain ice skater and she's like, "Remember when we used to pretend that we were this
439 ice skater and you would come to the shop when I was cleaning the floors and we would
440 slide on the floors?" So, at that moment, I did this really cool thing with that actor, Amelia,
441 where she kind of does a bunch of dance moves. And there was a little bit of underscoring
442 there and there were some sound effects of like, I think creeks, or just like some sounds,
443 but it was pretty stark as far as sound effects. The only time there was like a music was,
444 and it was loud was in between the regular play and setting up the epilogue. And then at
445 the very end for curtain call, it was the same song that played in between.

446 **Arwa:** Can you remember some specific sound effect, like the whispers? Did you use any
447 sound effects? What about the noise that the witnesses were hearing? Did you create any
448 noises happening in Jo's house?

449 **Azar:** I would have to go back and look at the sound design because I cannot remember
450 right now what it was.

451 **Arwa:** Don't worry. What about the most important thing, which is the paper-thin wall?
452 This will be our last point. So how did you decide to make it in boxes? Because I always
453 imagined it to be only two walls separating the three characters. So, it's only a wall, but I
454 liked the idea that you put it, kind of in a transparent box. Was it nylon or plastic?

455 **Azar:** It was plastic. There was an image I saw of like...and I could send you that image
456 too. I just have to go dig up all this stuff. I have no problem sending you stuff. But there
457 was like this image where like someone was reaching through a wall, it was this really
458 interesting image that I found with a designer. And so that was like the sort of our idea of
459 like that you can reach through the wall. And so that's why we decided that we wanted
460 the plastic because it was a little bit like you couldn't reach through it, but it was not a
461 wall. And this idea that like, you can't quite see, or you can't quite hear what's going on,
462 but you kind of can was important. So that's where we got that idea. And it also helped
463 for lighting to have a lot of cool images of where things were lit and where they weren't.

464 I'm not sure how a lot of the theatre people who saw the show did not like the set, which
465 I thought was interesting because most of the people who weren't like theatre practitioners
466 who saw the play really liked it. Like my husband's friends who saw it, who are all like
467 computer guys, they were like, "This was a ministry. This is a thriller". Like they stayed
468 for hours after, at like a bar discussing, like, "so what did you think this..." like, they
469 thought it was a puzzle that they were supposed to solve, which was really interesting to
470 me that they were so into it, as if it was a game that they needed to try to figure out, which
471 was interesting reaction.

472 But the set, I think we have very little money. So, like on one hand, part of it was just
473 trying, we have very low production value for the set, like, I think our set was made with
474 like less, like maybe \$1,500 or something like, very low budget. So, we were looking for
475 materials that we could get that would work. So, it was like a lot of wood that was painted.
476 We wanted levels, levels were really important to me, that there were stairs and there were
477 levels because it was so abstract to get a lot of movements that the audience wouldn't just
478 be bored as if it's just three people walking around saying lines. I wanted there to be
479 shape. And I wanted it like there were walls. So, I don't know how effective it was.

480 **Arwa:** I really like it. I think it's more like showing the idea of being separated more than
481 just using walls. You're placing them as if it's an actual house, covering them from all
482 sides and also the use of a plastic. I think it gives some indication of a lower class because
483 the materials are not fancy materials. So, I think it also helped in reflecting this indication
484 of the lower class.

485 **Azar:** Yeah. That's what I was, you know, we were kind of going for that. And also, just
486 that in our minds, the middle of the set was the highest point of the set and sort of Jo's
487 house. And then there was Jason and then there was Amelia on the other side. And then
488 when would they go into each other's spaces or not, or it's a lot of times it would circle.
489 And then there was that part of the end where Amelia really shames Jason. In our
490 production, Amelia was in love with Jason but Jason was in love with Jo. And so, when
491 Amelia realises that Jason was masturbating while listening to Jo's abuse, that's what
492 we....

493 **Arwa:** How did you put this on the stage?

494 **Azar:** We didn't have him do the actual full action, but just that he was ashamed. So, he
495 kind of went and she went towards him, she was standing above him and he was begging
496 her kind of to forgive him, if I remember the words correctly, and she just completely,
497 like, she loses respect for him because suddenly he's not this helpless man that is just
498 sweet and innocent and naïve, that he's another potential rights abuser or sexualiser of
499 women, and so then she just completely abandons him.

500 But again, that whole moment is it actually real? Does that actually happen? Does Amelia
501 actually know that? Or is that in Jason's mind? So also, we talked about like, which parts
502 of this narrative during the abstract part of the play, what parts was it like, this is now
503 Joe's world, this is now Joe's mind, this is what Jo thinks is being is happening. When is
504 it Amelia? And when is it Jason? But for our production, I tried to really put Amelia as
505 front and center as I could as like, she was sort of my protagonist. Even though I think Jo
506 kind of seems like she's the protagonist because the abuse is happening to her. I think that
507 it's more about Amelia and how Amelia is receiving what's happening to Jo. So, I tried
508 to make that clear. I do think it's about the two women and that the relationship.

509 **Arwa:** The sisterhood.

510 **Azar:** Yeah, right at the end, Jason is not there and that's intentional that like, even though
511 they have these differences in race, they are still women. And that the experience of
512 women has a sort of connection that men could not understand.

513 **Arwa:** Did you make any noise while the witnesses were listening and especially when
514 Jason was listening to what was happening? I presume that you didn't use actual sexual
515 noises, but yeah, of course, no, it could be vulgar on a stage, but how did you compensate
516 this?

517 **Azar:** Well, not that it would be vulgar. I don't care about that. I mean, I think for me
518 again, because it was abstract and it wasn't reality, we weren't quoting realistic sound or
519 realistic lighting in that first half, only in the second half was there hyper realism, but
520 there was no, we were not trying to, we were not trying to depict that this is real. We were
521 really trying to depict what is the emotional life. So, if there were any sounds, it was
522 connected to the emotional journey of the actors and not to actual sounds, because I was
523 really trying to create the idea that this space, this conversation, this play is happening on
524 another level of consciousness. It's not reality. It may be talking about some of their
525 realities, but it itself is not reality.

526 **Arwa:** As I remember the pictures, the plastic boxes were not close to each other, right?
527 They are not related, not connected.

528 **Azar:** I'm not sure which that, I'm not sure. Can you show me which picture you've seen?

529 **Arwa:** I can't show it right now. I can send it to you later. But as I remember in the play,
530 it was sandwiched, that Jason was squeezed in the middle and the three are on the same
531 level. So...

532 **Azar:** That might've been pictures from... oh, I'm trying to think, because since there
533 were two productions that had very different sets, I'm not sure. So, I wonder maybe,
534 because I know we're at the hour point maybe, and I may have a student coming at 12:30,
535 could I send you some photos of both of the productions? I can also send you the song
536 that I use and a few other things, and then we could have a follow-up conversation. I don't
537 mind at all. I mean, it's my pleasure to talk about the play, but I want to make sure that as
538 we talk more about specific production stuff that we kind of are in the same page, because
539 I can't quite remember. And I'm also going to go back to my script. I kind of looked
540 through to find some of the, if I can remember some of the lighting and sound cues, but
541 I'm not sure if I

542 **Arwa:** So, you did not use thin walls in your productions.

543 **Azar:** We didn't necessarily use the paper-thin walls. We showed the paper-thin walls,
544 but we didn't use it. We really made it so that there were no walls between them in that
545 beginning part. The set showed walls that were reflective and that you could see through
546 and light could go through, but there were not actual walls between people.

547 **Arwa:** Why did you choose it to be transparent?

548 **Azar:** Because I wanted to give the effect that what was happening was affecting all three
549 spaces. That they weren't separated, that they were connected. And I guess that's a bigger
550 comment on society, which is just because we put up walls in our homes or we put up a
551 wall between a country, it doesn't mean that we're not responsible for one another, we
552 are. And that the walls that are being put up both figuratively or metaphorically are to
553 divide people because dividing people or societies that rely on individualistic view where
554 you're only looking out for yourself may help a capitalist economy, but it does not help
555 the wellness, the mental health and the physical health of its citizens.

556 I think one of the points of this play is there are many walls dividing these people, racial
557 walls, actual walls, economic walls you know, I guess we could say gender walls, right?
558 There are many things that are dividing people, but that ultimately when we care for one
559 another, when we connect with one another, when we listen to one another, when we're
560 able to share the deep despair that we have with one another, we gain a kind of humanity,
561 shared humanity that I don't think we have. Many people are suffering in silence and
562 many people are suffering alone. And that our society has said, "It's not my problem. I go
563 into my house; I locked my door. I shut my windows. It's not my problem". And now
564 people are on the streets saying. "It is your problem it's everybody's problem, and when
565 one part of your society is sick, all of your society is sick".

566 **Arwa:** You concluded the whole thing with wonderful words. You summarised
567 everything that I am attempting to say in this chapter. It is this shared human experience
568 that we are all involved in like Coronavirus. It came and it affected the whole world and
569 made it like a small village. So, it is teaching people a lesson that you have to share your
570 problems and solve them together. And it's everyone's problem because it is affecting
571 everyone. So, thank you very much.

572 **Azar:** I'll send some materials to help you, hopefully and feel free to email me any follow
573 up.

574 **Arwa:** Thank you. Thank you very much. I really appreciate your time and the way you
575 have analysed and explained your perspective, it was so deep and so inspirational. Thank
576 you very much.

577 **Azar:** Thank you. Have a great day.

578 **Arwa:** You too. Thank you very much. Bye-bye.

Appendix H: Author's Interview with Michael Rogers 23 October 2020, (Voice Records)

1 Silence. What is silence? From silence, you build the word; from the word, you build the
2 world. Silence. Thinking versus speaking. Silence. There is power in silence. The still
3 tongue keeps a wise head. Silence is golden. There are reasons for silence. Some people
4 are silent because they have a limited vocabulary, others are silent because they are afraid
5 or they want to appear smart, or they want to let others fill in the blanks, other ways to
6 hide their true thoughts, right?

7 Talk is cheap; another thing we hear about silence. Silence can be used because
8 silence could be deafening. I learned this from Geraldine Fitzgerald many, many years
9 ago. I was in a company called the Everyman Company and she talked about silence, and
10 I learned how to perform silently, not mine, in silence.

11 Why is dad so silent? Perhaps he has no language to express his inner desires—
12 could be. Maybe he has no language to describe his dilemma. Without language, without
13 verbal language, that is, we tend to resort to physical language. There's a documentary
14 about Cicely very cold, where words prevail. And we know that where words prevail,
15 violence doesn't exist. Well, it could exist, right? But when we lose words, the next thing
16 we do is something physical in the deafening silence. No one can read one's mind. So, by
17 staying silent, you can have a power to confirm or to deny.

18 And in silence, the senses do battle. The husband and the wife live a life they can
19 be silent with each other after having spoken for so long. They have an understanding;
20 they have a new life now. They may be silent, but there's a lot of language going on.
21 There's a language in this sense, the feelings, the smells, the looks of the husband and
22 wife, the silence.

23 How do we intend to silence the work? Another one of your questions. I would
24 say this: When we go to a party, we dance to music, right? As an actor, we dance to words,
25 and those words inform our movement. While rehearsing this play, I remember one day
26 I'm talking to one of the actresses in the play. And I said, "I know exactly what I want to
27 do." We had been working for a while, I started to understand the process and I said, "I
28 know exactly what I want to do, in this chair," because I'm sitting in this chair, right?

29 But now, how to make it look good for the audience? How to seduce the audience
30 with it? How to bring them in to what I'm doing? Because what I'm doing ultimately is
31 for an audience. How to attract and seduce the audience through prop and what I have,
32 right? I have myself. How am I going to sculpt space with myself? And that I want to
33 sculpt space in order to feed the storytelling. I have my body and a handkerchief, a
34 wonderful little prop, and I'm sitting in an armchair. I also have my feet and my fingers

35 to help me sculpt space—additional ways of joining the audience, additional ways of
36 seducing them.

37 William Gaskill, who ran the Royal Court Theatre in London has written a lot
38 about his experiences at the Royal Court. In working with him, I got to understand how
39 to share the experience with the audience so that they are drawn in. That’s a discussion
40 for another time. But it is important that you bring the audience in consciously. It must be
41 something pleasant for them to watch. It must not be disgusting, or they will turn away in
42 shame. You have to be able to draw them, and they must be attracted to you in a kind of
43 a way. And you have to find a way to do that. And you use yourself, your props, the given
44 circumstances, and all you have at your disposal, but it’s important that you share it with
45 them, be conscious that they are there.

46 Masculinity. Masculinity. The black man’s power is what he makes for himself.
47 No one is going to empower him; he has to empower himself. Now we have a play about
48 a Jamaican black man in the 20th century, living in the United States. There is a legal
49 expression called “extreme rendition”. Extreme rendition is when you can take a prisoner
50 or you can take a physical person from one country to another country, to do something
51 to them that you cannot do in the other country. That’s something that was discussed
52 somewhat with the Iraq/Iran war or something like that, with extreme rendition, you can,
53 you know? For example, I know a history of a gentleman who took someone from one
54 country, a woman in particular from one country to another country in order to abuser,
55 because in that country, it was okay to abuse. So that’s an extreme rendition.

56 Now, I wanted to be clear, when I’m talking about a Jamaican man living in
57 America in the 20th century, and who that Jamaican man is, where he comes from, he has
58 a sense of faith in himself. But however, he has been under the gun of many different
59 things. He’s a colonial person with all the ramifications of that. He is living through rules
60 and laws, like we say in the Caribbean, one way is the policeman and the other way is the
61 preacher man, between the church and the law, with all these rules, you try to live within
62 these rules and try to be free within these rules, right?

63 When you are living through all these rules, you have very little control over your
64 own destiny, very little control over your own destiny, and you have a deep desire to do,
65 but you feel you’re locked in, you have little control. So, what happens? One can only
66 control one’s own environment, that is, his house, right? There are deals made between
67 the husband and the wife, right? In a protective environment, the protective area that is
68 called the home. He somewhat makes the wife dependent, in order to control her subtly,
69 he has to be able to control her, threaten her with being alone, “I could leave. If I leave,
70 what are you going to do by yourself?”

71 Of course, she has the power of the pot. She cooks the food, therein lies her power
72 and all those ramifications, positive and negative, and there are many positive

73 ramifications. But he is the provider, and the provider has the most power and they tend
74 to defer to the provider. The black man's power is what he makes for himself. No one's
75 going to give him anything. So, there's a singularity of power in the Jamaican man's
76 history.

77 For example, there was a leader in Jamaica, who at 78 years old, married his
78 secretary. And she had been his secretary for over 30 years, which tells me she waited for
79 him for so many years before he would make her legal, and she was patient. In a nutshell,
80 that's kind of the issue man and woman in this born bad situation, in this Jamaican
81 situation where she defers to the man, she waits for the man to make his decision. Now
82 this particular character I was speaking about, made his decision because he had become
83 a great leader of a country, that all eyes were going to be on him now so he had to have a
84 legal life.

85 But think of that, 78 years old and he married his secretary of over 30 years.
86 Something must have been going on all those 30 years to have that sense of deferring,
87 waiting, you know? Also, to help me with all of that, I listened to a lot of the arguments
88 of the Jamaican dub poets. The Jamaican dubpoets gives me an insight into the life in the
89 world of Jamaica. Some of those dubpoets: Mutabaruka, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Michael
90 Smith, Breeze, the female poet who talks about having a radio in her head.

91 While listening to those poets gives me an insight into Jamaica, which gives me
92 an understanding of the men, and also I'm from the Caribbean, so coupled with my own
93 interest and my own thoughts, I put that together to help to create this sense of Dad in this
94 play.

95 Now, let's talk a little about the husband and the wife. Now, standing between law
96 and faith, can create a helplessness in some. So there's always again, the deep down
97 desires begging to come out, but rules, rules again keeps them hidden. So what do you
98 do? You call on the power of the house, the castle, the ownership of the castle. I am the
99 king in my castle, I am in control, I am in charge.

100 We had a New York City governor who was found to have paid a prostitute for
101 sex. He was discredited, he was dragged through the mud and degraded. And in reading
102 up about him, I heard a comment that he said, "But my wife is cool with this, why is
103 everybody so concerned?" What I read from that was that there were things he wanted to
104 do that his wife didn't want to do, so she said, "Go somewhere else and get that." In *Born*
105 *Bad*, the woman births the daughter and gives it to the son, to the father.

106 She births a child for Dad; Dad who had desires screaming to come out, Dad, who
107 is locked into rules. But it is not lost on Dad that these rules that he is living by are
108 continually being broken by those making the rules. That's not lost on that at all. So, Dad
109 chooses to make his own rules for his castle. It is also a war against women's liberation

110 in his mind. Certain colonial people have a hard time with progress and with moving
111 forward. Something I put in the bank as well to use for the play.

112 When the revolution looms, this guy on this particular day that *Born Bad* takes
113 place. This man has a revolution on his hands. How is he going to fight this revolution?
114 It seems to me that he goes into a shell somewhat and he let the battle rage all around him.
115 He let the battle rage around him and create all this great confusion in this battle by saying
116 nothing. And if he comes out of that shell, he looks at them and says, “What are you guys
117 talking about? I don’t know what you’re talking about.” While all this confusion has been
118 raging around him, this war, this revolution has been going around him. The husband and
119 wife have found a way to live.

120 It’s almost like the drama we’ve been talking about here and the new forms and
121 stuff, right? The husband and his wife, they have found a way to live together. But then
122 they birth these children, they birth these new characters, they bring these new characters
123 into life. And these new characters challenge their parents. Their minds make demands.
124 Dad is simply trying to puzzle out life for his own self, “How do I give them what they
125 want, my children?” He has no answer or words for his deep desires. All he can think
126 about is that whatever they are looking for, whatever that is, he does not have it to give
127 them, and they are tying themselves up in confusion. They should understand that he
128 doesn’t have that to give them and they should free themselves of the confusion, but that’s
129 not what happens.

130 One of the lines that Dad says at the end of the play is that: “You made the wrong
131 choice.” Well, the wrong choice is to ask questions that have no answer, in Dad’s mind.
132 Now they all know since they’ve asked all these questions, there’s no answer and they’re
133 all confused and they’re all over the place and they’re all in pain. Now they know what
134 it’s like to live in pain, the way he has been living in pain, unable to use language to
135 describe his state. Unable to free his desires, that he ends up taking it out on his own
136 family, he births a child and uses that own child, abuses that own child.

137 He can say he justifies it by thinking he is just trying to relieve his own inner pains.
138 And by trying to relieve his own inner pains, it lead to abuses. And the abuser begins to
139 abuse and the abuse becomes abusers later on. Now, you also asked a very personal
140 question about the father and the sister. Well, here’s my comment on the sister. The abuse
141 of the daughter from Dad’s point of view, you say abuse, Dad doesn’t say that.

142 Here’s Dad’s response: “What abuse? This is flesh of my flesh. I love my flesh
143 and blood as I love myself. I gave my flesh and blood love. I give them love as I see it. I
144 give them myself. I prepare them for the world. I love them, and I give them love
145 physically and mentally. I connect with my children in the ultimate. How could this be
146 abuse? They will grow into understanding, just like I had to grow into understanding.
147 They will grow into understand it because that is the world they’re going into.”

148 Okay, let's talk a little about *Born Bad*. Now, before I even get to *Born Bad*, I
149 have to let you know the context, how I come to the work, because, like I wrote to you in
150 that email, and I said to you that it's all about the approach, right? If we don't approach it
151 correctly—well, correctly is not really the good word, but if the approach isn't solid, you
152 end up in a different place.

153 Just to give you a sense of my approach and context, right? In short, I'm a slave
154 to the art, if you know what I mean, right? I'm always looking at it again, always looking
155 at it at different angles, trying to figure out different ways of doing it, because I really
156 consider myself someone new in this art, and a type of person that this art was not really
157 prepared for, it was not really made for.

158 My coming to all of this, while I was in graduate school, I had a dear friend, Dr.
159 Charles Martin now, he wrote a dissertation on the de-miniaturization of black characters
160 in literature. That's one influence they arrived; he's talking about us walking around the
161 university chatting about these things.

162 In addition, my Dean was a man named Lloyd Richards. Lloyd Richards, have to
163 introduce Athol Fugard and August Wilson. Now the thing about these particular authors,
164 why I mentioned these particular authors, August Wilson's characters were not traditional
165 characters per se. But August Wilson's plays for the most part, function in what we know
166 as the traditional sense of drama. However, the character was somewhat new.

167 If you look at his play, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, you will see that within the
168 tradition of the original play, the way it's working, like the traditional European play,
169 when this character Herald Loomis enters, he explodes the play in a different kind of way,
170 and takes the play to a whole different place, where we never were expecting it to go.
171 That's what new characters do to us, right?

172 So, I use August as one of those people who found new characters, but he used
173 new characters within the context of the traditional kind of drama, right? And Fugard -
174 Fugard, also use the traditional form, but also, when Fugard collaborated with John
175 Carney and Winston Shona, they came up with a different form, they use the protest form,
176 in order to get their plays told in a particular way. I'm thinking of plays like *The Island*,
177 and *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*.

178 Now, these new forms that come as a result of new characters—these new
179 characters, I should say, these new characters emerge in the drama, right? What we call
180 unheard voices, when they appear, these new characters, most of the times, they form
181 oppressed peoples from wherever, right. But these characters enter the drama and bring
182 new ideas with them. So they need their own form, right? They do need a word form, I
183 believe, and supposedly character dictates form. If the character dictates form, we must
184 find a form for these new characters, right? The new characters require a new form. And

185 they push the form forward, the current form that's there, they would push it forward,
186 these new characters. Just like I'm telling you, Herald Loomis, in *Joe Turner's Come and*
187 *Gone*, push the form forward.

188 So, when the form is going in this other way now, they need their own form,
189 because they burst out of the traditional plays. When these new characters push the form
190 forward, they open our eyes to the new. We have fresh eyes.

191 Now about new characters, that is not something that is original to me. That is
192 something that came to me from my own reading and stuff as a young man, in particular
193 reading C. L. R. James, who was considered a modern-day Plato. And he wrote a book
194 called *Marinas Renegades and Castaways*, which is about Melville's *Moby Dick*. If you
195 interested in that, you can go and investigate that further on, but that's one of the places
196 that the discussion of new characters in literature emerges a bit. Now, when these
197 characters emerged, they have to get out of the form. We had a play at the O'Neill, the
198 National Playwrights Conference where I worked for many years, I was a member of that
199 company and was in touch with many new plays. There was a play by a group of
200 Aborigines from Australia, terrific play, which was written in the form of the traditional
201 O'Neill play, or what have you. And within the play, while watching it, you could see that
202 the characters tried to burst out of the form, that the form was holding them back
203 somewhat, and they were trying to fit into this form.

204 Well, I consider debbie tucker green, to have helped to give us a new form for
205 these people, allowing these characters to sing in a form that is new to us. She's allowing
206 these characters to have their own form, and they can sing loud even in silence. First part,
207 everything is always within the context of the play.

208 Now let's get into *Born Bad* proper now. One of your first question is about
209 accepting the part and preparing for the part and stuff, right? Well, I auditioned for the
210 part reading a speech from *Othello*, which I found very interesting. I was auditioning for
211 a play that was not a traditional kind of play with one of the most traditional speeches in
212 drama, that's interesting. And that might be an interesting question for Leah, the reason
213 she chose a traditional speech for someone auditioning for the role of Dad, a character
214 who speaks maybe seven, eight lines for the entire play. But that's a power in itself coming
215 to that?

216 Why did I accept the play and how did I prepare? Well, first, I knew Leah, I met
217 Leah at a Cicely Berry workshop at Theatre For New Audience, I liked her. I was curious
218 about her mind, and I liked her spirit, and it was a chance to work with, someone I liked.
219 It also made good sense because the play is about incest, abuse, which is controversial.
220 People will pay attention. That's a practical thing, right?

221 Also, Soho Rep was a special theatre that I had known and was interested in, in a
222 long, long time, and they had done a lot of challenging work. So I Soho Rep, a place that
223 I tend to like, and Leah, I figured we could go on this journey and work together. It was a
224 somewhat of a comfortable Association, I would say, because I felt that Leah would allow
225 us to work things out together.

226 Now, when we got into the rehearsal now, one of the early things we talked about
227 was that those who have been abused tend to abuse in turn. Well, that was a very hot
228 stimulus for me because I need a hot stimulus to get me going. Also, the character spoke
229 very little, which is another hot stimulus for me because I thought, "Ha-ha, an opportunity
230 for very terrific acting, living."

231 So, I had to listen and live. That's basically what we began with. And from there
232 on, it was all about me accepting the stimulus and responding to the stimulus, okay? and
233 being silent, which brings us to the next section, Silence.

234 And I mean, if you have questions and you want to ask about other particular
235 things, you can always write to me and I will always be happy as the slave of the drama
236 that I am, to reply to you and help you as best I could. Okay, fantastic.

Bibliography

- Abram, N. 2014. 'Staging the unsayable: debbie tucker green's political theatre'. *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, 2(12): pp.113-130.
- Abram, N. 2020. *Black British Women's Theatre: Intersectionality, Archives, Aesthetics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ademiluka, S.O. 2018. 'Patriarchy and women abuse: perspectives from ancient Israel and Africa'. *Old Testament Essays* 31(2): pp.339-362.
- Adewunni, B. 2014. 'Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality'. *The New Statesman*. 2 April [Online]. Available from: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/welfare/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could> [21 February 2022].
- Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. 2020. 'Change ain't fuckin polite, scuse my language': situating debbie tucker green'. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-22.
- Agbaje, B. 2007. *Gone Too Far!* London: Methuen Drama.
- Alexander, E. 2004. *The Black interior: Essays*. Saint Paul, Minn: Graywolf.
- Als, H. 2014. 'debbie tucker green's "generations"'. *The New Yorker*, 15 October. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/theatre-debbie-tucker-greens-generations>.

- Anitafrika, D. Y. 2016. 'Black plays matter: Watah Theatre, creating safe space for Black artists in these dangerous times'. *Canadian Theatre Review* 165: pp. 26-31.
- Appia, A., Volbach, W. R., & Beacham, R. C. 1989. *Adolphe Appia – Essays, Scenarios, and Designs*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press.
- Arana, R. V. 2007. *“Black” British Aesthetics Today*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
- Arao, B., & Clemens, K. 2013. 'From safe spaces to brave spaces'. *Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators*. Landreman, L. M. (ed). Herndon: Stylus Publishing, pp. 135-150.
- Architizer. 2013. 'National theatre “The Shed”'. Architizer. N.d. [Online]. Available from: <https://architizer.com/projects/national-theatre-the-shed/> [Accessed 13 December 2018].
- Arnott, P. D. 1989. *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Ashby, C. 1999. *Classical Greek Theatre: New Views of an Old Subject*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.
- Aston, E. 2010. 'Feeling the loss of feminism: Sarah Kane's “Blasted” and an experimental genealogy of contemporary women's playwrighting'. *Theatre Journal*, 62(4): pp. 575-91.
- Auslander, P. 2009. *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Austin, R. 1991. 'Black women, sisterhood, and the difference/deviance divide'. *New England Law Review* 26: pp. 877-887.
- Avram, A. A. 2019. 'The Influence of Patwa on Grenada English Creole'. *Languages in Action: Exploring Communication Strategies and Mechanisms*. Burade, M., Tatu, O. and Sinu, R. (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 116-33.
- Bachelard, G. 2014. *The Poetics of Space*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Bacon, H. H. 1994. 'The chorus in Greek life and drama. *Arion: A journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 3(1): pp. 6-24.
- Badir P. 1992. 'Playing solitaire: spectatorship and representation in Canadian women's monodrama'. *Theatre Research in Canada* 13(1-2): pp. 120-133
- Bailes, S. J. 2011. *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure: Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Elevator Repair Service*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. M. 1984. *Rabelais and his World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bardaglio, P. W. 1998. *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Bayer, M. 2011. *Theatre, Community, and Civic Engagement in Jacobean London*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.
- Beadle-Holder, M. 2011. 'Black churches creating safe spaces to combat silence and stigma related to HIV/AIDS'. *Journal of African American Studies* 15: 248-267.
- Belifiore, E. S. 1992. *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Bennett, W. L. 1999. 'Media power in the United States'. *De-Westernizing Media Studies*.
Curran, J. and Park, M-J. (eds). London: Routledge, pp. 178-94.
- Bidnall, A. 2018. *The West Indian Generation: Remaking British Culture in London, 1945-1965*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Billington, M. 2013. 'Nut by debbie tucker green. Reviewed'. *The Guardian*, 6 November [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/nov/06/nut-review-debbie-tucker-green> [21 February 2022].
- Black Plays Archive. 2019. 'Black plays archive'. *Blackplaysarchive.org.uk*, n. d. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/featured-content/about> [Accessed 30 October 2019].
- Blair, T. 2007. 'The Callaghan memorial lecture'. *Guardian*, 11 April. [Online]. Available from: <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2007/04/11/blairlecture.pdf>. [Accessed 21 February 2022].
- Bogle, D. 2001. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. New York and London: Continuum (4th ed.).
- Bozzoli, B. 1998. 'Public ritual and private transition: The Truth Commission in Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1996'. *African Studies* 57(2): pp. 167–95.
- British Library. 2019. 'Black British theatre: 1950–1979'. *British Library*, n.d. [Online]. Available from <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/black-british-theatre-1950-1979> [Accessed 30 October 2019].
- Brown, A. S., Gray, N.S. and Snowden, R.J. 2009. 'Implicit measurement of sexual associations in child sex abusers: Role of victim type and denial'. *Sexual Abuse* 21(2), pp.166-180.

- Bullock, B. E., & Toribio, A. J. 2012. *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, J. 1988. 'Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory'. *Theatre Journal* 40(4), pp.519-531.
- Campbell, K. 2004. *Jacques Lacan and feminist epistemology*. London: Routledge.
- Candib, L. M. 1999. 'Incest and other harms to daughters across cultures: maternal complicity and patriarchal power'. *Pergamon*, 22(2): pp. 182-201.
- Carastathis, A. 2019. *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Carpenter, F. C. 2014. *Coloring Whiteness: Acts of Critique in Black Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Caruth, C. 2016. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S., Torgersen, E. 2011. 'Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: The emergence of Multicultural London English'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15: pp. 151–196.
- Chichester District Council. 2013. *Census 2011: Chichester District Analysis* [Online]. Available from: https://www.chichester.gov.uk/media/19419/Census-2011-report--March-2013/pdf/2011_Census_Report_Chichester_District_v2.pdf [3 December 2021].
- Childress, A. 1986. *Like One of the Family: Conversations from a domestic's life*. Boston: Beacon.

- Choi, P., Henshaw, C., Baker, S., Tree, J. 2005. 'Supermum, superwife, supereverything: performing femininity in the transition to motherhood'. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 23: pp. 167–180.
- Christian, M. 2002. *Black Identity in the 20th Century: Expressions of the US and UK African Diaspora*. London: Hansib.
- Clapp, S. 2013. debbie tucker green [sic] captures the pain and poetry of everyday speech in her powerful new play Nut". Performance review. *The Observer*. 10th Nov.
- Cohen, A. J. 1993. Associationism and musical soundtrack phenomena, *Contemporary Music Review*, 9(1-2), pp. 163-178
- Cole, C.M. 2010. *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission: Stages of Transition*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Cole, C.M. 2017. *Critical Race Theory and Education: A Marxist Response*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2nd ed.).
- Collins, P. H. 1987. 'The meaning of motherhood in Black culture and Black mother/daughter relationships'. *Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Woman* 4(2): pp. 4-11.
- Collins, P. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. 1998. 'It's all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation'. *Hypatia* 13(3): pp. 62-82.
- Collins, P. H. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. London and New York: Routledge (2nd ed.).

- Collins, P. H. 2003. 'Some group matters: intersectionality, situated standpoints, and Black feminist thought'. *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*. Lott, T. L. and Pittman, J. P. (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 205-29.
- Collins, P. H. 2004. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Crampton, J. W., & Elden, S. 2016. *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*. London: Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. 1989. 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. Lott, T. L. and Pittman, J. P. (eds). *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1): pp. 139-67.
- Crenshaw, K. 1991. 'Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43: pp. 1241-1299.
- Crenshaw, K. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. New York: The New Press.
- Crenshaw, K. W. 2017. *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. New York: The New Press.
- Croft, S. 1993. 'Black women playwrights in Britain'. *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958: A Critical Handbook*. Griffiths, T. R. and Llewellyn-Jones, M. (eds.). Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 84-98.
- Croft, S. 2018. *New Black theatre companies* [Online] Webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk. Available from: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131205021331tf_/http://www.movi

nghere.org.uk/galleries/histories/caribbean/culture/theatre4.htm [Accessed 13 December 2018].

Crossan, A. 2013. 'Here's why Mandela came late to the AIDS crisis in his country'. *Public Radio International* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-12-06/heres-why-mandela-came-late-aids-crisis-his-country> [Accessed 5 June 2018].

Dageid, W. and Duckert, F. 2008. 'Balancing between normality and social death: Black, rural, South African women coping with HIV/AIDS'. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(2): pp. 182–195.

Daniel, G. R. 2010. *More Than Black? Multiracial identity and the new racial order*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Davis, A. Y. 2011. *Women, Race & Class*. New York: Vintage.

Davis, O. I. 1999. 'In the kitchen: transforming the academy through safe spaces of resistance'. *Western Journal of Communication* 63(3): pp. 364-381.

de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

DeGruy, J. 2005. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. Oregon: Uptone Press.

Delgado-Garcia, C. 2014. 'Dematerialised political and theatrical legacies: rethinking the roots and influences of Tim Crouch's work'. *Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts* 8: pp. 69–85.

Dillon, J. 2006. *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Donnell, A. 2002. 'Nation and contestation: Black British writing'. *Wasafiri* 17: pp. 11–17.
- Donnell, A., & Donnell, A. 2013. *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Dualé, C. 2018. 'Langston Hughes's poetic vision of the American dream: a complex and creative encoded language'. *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World* 7: pp. 1-17.
- Durrant, S. 2005. 'The invention of mourning in post-Apartheid literature'. *Third World Quarterly* 26: pp. 441–450.
- Ehlen, P. 2000. *Frantz Fanon: A Spiritual Biography*. New York: Crossroad Pub. Co.
- Eng, D.L. 2002. 'The value of silence'. *Theatre Journal* 54: pp. 85–94.
- Eng, D.L. & Kazanjian, D. 2003. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Essif, L. 1994. 'Introducing the "hyper" theatrical subject: the *Mise en Abyme* of empty space'. *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism, Kansas* 9(1): pp. 76 – 87.
- Fanon, F. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth: Frantz Fanon*. New York: Grove Press.
- Farrier, D. 2012. 'Everyday exceptions: the politics of the quotidian in asylum monologues and asylum dialogues'. *Interventions* 14: pp. 429–442.
- Fatherhood Institute. 2010. 'Fatherhood Institute research summary: African Caribbean fathers'. *Fatherhood Institute* [Online]. Available from: <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2010/fatherhood-institute-research-summary-african-caribbean-fathers/> [Accessed 21 February 2022].

- Feinstein, R. A. 2019. *When Rape Was Legal: The Untold History of Sexual Violence During Slavery*. New York: Routledge.
- Fett, S. M. 2002. *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fischer-Lichte, E., & Wihstutz, B. 2015. *Performance and the Politics of Space: Theatre and Topology*. London: Routledge.
- Fisher, G. 2013. 'Sharlene Whyte – nut, The Shed, National Theatre'. *Afridiziak Theatre News* [online]. Available from: <http://www.afridiziak.com/theatrenews/interviews/october2013/sharlene-whyte.html> [Accessed 13 Dec. 2018].
- Foucault, M. 1984. 'Of other spaces: utopias and heterotopias'. *Diacritics* 16(1): pp. 22-27.
- Fox-Genovese, E. 1988. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fragkou, M. 2012. 'Precarious subjects: ethics of witnessing and responsibility in the plays of debbie tucker green'. *Performing Ethos* 3(1): pp. 23-39.
- Frearson, A. 2013. 'The shed at the National Theatre by Haworth Tompkins'. Dezeen. Available from: <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/04/06/the-shed-at-the-national-theatre-by-haworth-tompkins/> [Accessed 13 Dec. 2018].
- Freud, S. 2001. *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Translated by J. Strachey. London and New York: Routledge.

- Fricker, K. 2008. 'Random'. *Variety*. 11th March [Online]. Available from: variety.com/2008/legit/reviews/randon-1200535906/amp/ [Accessed 21 February 2022].
- Friedan, B. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell.
- Gacoin, A. 2010. 'Sexuality, gendered identities and exclusion: The deployment of proper (hetero) sexuality within an HIV-prevention text from South Africa.' *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 12(4): pp. 429–444.
- Gardner, L. 2003. "Dirty Butterfly [*sic*]." Theatre review. *The Guardian*. 3rd March [Online]. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/mar/03/theatre.artsfeatures1> [Accessed 1 July 2019].
- Gardner, L. 2005. 'I was messing about: interview with debbie tucker green'. *The Guardian*. 30th March [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/mar/30/theatre> [Accessed 1 October 2019].
- Gardner, L. 2010. 'Random | Theatre review'. *The Guardian*. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2010/mar/10/random-review> [Accessed 18 August 2017].
- Garner, S. B. 2001. 'Theater and Phenomenology'. *Degrés: Revue de synthèse à orientation sémiologique* 107/108: pp. b1-17.
- Gates Jr, H.L. 1987. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self*: New York: Oxford University Press.

- Giddings, P. 1988. *In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement*. New York: William Morrow.
- Gilkes, C. T. 1980. “‘Holding back the ocean with a Broom’: Black women and community work’, *The Black Woman*. Rodgers-Rose, L. (ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, pp. 217-32.
- Gillborn, D. 2008. ‘Tony Blair and the politics of race in education: whiteness, *doublethink* and New Labour’. *Oxford Review of Education* 34(6): pp. 713-725.
- Gilroy, P. 1980. ‘Managing the ‘underclass’: a further note on the sociology of race relations in Britain’. *Race & Class* 22(1): pp. 47-62.
- Gilroy, P. 1982. ‘The myth of Black criminality’. *Socialist Register* 19: pp. 47-56.
- Gilroy, P. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Gilroy, P. 1995. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Gilroy, P. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Gilroy, P. 2001. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.
- Gilroy, P. 2013. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Routledge.
- Goddard, L. 2007. *Staging Black Feminisms: Identity, Politics, Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goddard, L. 2009. “‘Death never used to be for the young’”: Grieving teenage murder in debbie tucker green’s *random*’. *Women: A Cultural Review* 20: 299–309.

- Goddard, L. 2013. *The Methuen Drama Book of Plays by Black British Writers*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Goddard, L. 2015. '(Black) masculinity, race and nation in Roy Williams' sports plays'. *Modern and Contemporary Black British Drama*. Brewer, M. F., Goddard, L and Osborne, D. (eds). London: Palgrave, pp. 112-27.
- Goddard, L. 2015. *Contemporary Black British playwrights - Margins to Mainstream*. London: Palgrave.
- Goddard, L. 2020. "'I'm a Black woman. I write Black characters": Black mothers, the police, and social justice in *random* and *hang*'. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 109-28.
- Goffman, E. 2008. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Gona, P.N., Gona, P.N., Ballout, S. Rao, S. R., Kimokoti, R., Mapoma C. C., & Mokdad, A. H. 2020. Burden and changes in HIV/AIDS morbidity and mortality in Southern Africa Development Community Countries, 1990–2017. *BMC Public Health* 20: 1-14.
- green, d. t. 2010. *random*, Nick Hearn Books, London.
- green, d. t. 2003a. *dirty butterfly*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2003b. *born bad*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2005. *generations*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2005. *stoning mary*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2005. *trade and generations*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2008. *random*. London: Nick Hearn Books.

- green, d. t. 2010. *random*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2010. *laws of war*. Unpublished.
- green, d. t. 2011. *truth and reconciliation*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2013. *nut*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2017. *a profoundly affectionate, passionate devotion to someone (-noun)*.
London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2018. *ear for eye*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- green, d. t. 2020. *dirty butterfly*. London: Nick Hearn Books.
- Grierson, J. 2021. 'Killings of black people in England and Wales at highest level since 2002'. *The Guardian*, 25 February [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/feb/25/killings-of-black-people-in-england-and-wales-at-highest-level-for-decades> [2 December 2021].
- Griffin, G. 2003. *Contemporary Black and Asian Women Playwrights in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Griffin, G. 2006. 'Theatres of difference: the politics of "redistribution" and "recognition" in contemporary Black and Asian women playwrights in Britain. *Feminist Review* 84: pp. 10-28.
- Grimsted, D. 1987. *Melodrama UNVEILED: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grotowski, J., Barba, E., & Brook, P. 2015. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. London: Bloomsbury.

- Haddow, S. 'debbie tucker green and the Work of Mourning'. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 277-95.
- Hall, S., Evans, J., & Nixon, S. 2013. *Representation*. London: Sage.
- Hancock, A.M. 2016. *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hanhardt, C. B. 2013. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Hansberry, L. 1959. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Random.
- Hardy, C. E. 2009. *James Baldwin's God: Sex, Hope, and Crisis in Black Holiness Culture*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Harless, J. 2018. 'Safe space in the college classroom: contact, dignity, and a kind of publicness'. *Ethics and Education* 13(3): pp. 329-45.
- Harris Sr, J. R. 2003. *The Performance of Black Masculinity in Contemporary Black Drama* (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University).
- Hartman, S. V. 1997. *Scenes of subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Henry, A. 2004. *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Herring, R. 2019. *Law and the Relational Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hersov, G. 2017. 'Talawa: information for prospective board members'.
Amazonaws.com, n. d. [Online] Available from: https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/talawatheatre/Board_Member_Information_Pack_2017.pdf
[Accessed 11 December 2018].
- Higginbotham, E. B. 1993. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Higgins, L. A. 2010. *Rape and Representation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hill, J. H. 1998. 'Language, race, and white public space.' *American anthropologist* 100(3): pp. 680-689.
- hooks, b. 1986. 'Sisterhood: political solidarity between women.' *Feminist Review* 23: pp. 125-138.
- hooks, b. 1992. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. 2004. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. California: Psychology Press.
- hooks, b. 2006. *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. New York and London: Routledge.
- hooks, b. 2014a. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge.
- hooks, b. 2014b. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. New York: Routledge.
- Hughes, L. 1999. *Hughes: Poems*. Edited by David E. Roessel. London: Everyman.

- Humm, M. 2015. *Readers Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge.
- Hunter, M. A. 2008. 'Cultivating the art of safe space'. *Research in Drama Education* 13(1): pp. 5-21.
- Hyde, L. 2012. *Common as Air: Revolution, Art, and Ownership*. London: Union.
- Ikoko, T. 2016. *Girls*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Inchley, M. 2015. *Voice and New Writing, 1997-2007: Articulating the Demos*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Innes, C. L. 2008. *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Isherwood, C. 2011. 'Unspeakable truth, unspoken': Review of *born bad*. *New York Times*, February 2020 [Online]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/theater/reviews/born-bad-opens-at-soho-rep-review.html> [Accessed 21 February 2022].
- Jackson, R. L. 2006. *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jacobs, J. L. 1990. 'Reassessing Mother Blame in Incest'. *Signs* 15(3): pp. 500-14.
- Johns, I. 2003. 'Exclude Me; Dirty Butterfly'. *The Sunday Times*, 6 March [Online]. Available from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/exclude-me-dirty-butterfly-ts0k6wpc092>.
- Johnson, D. V. 2021. *Talawa Theatre Company: A Theatrical History and the Brewster Era*. London: Methuen.

- Jones, E. E. 2021. 'debbie tucker green: "I'm still hustling the same hustle. You're fighting to get your stuff made.'" *The Guardian*, 14 October [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/oct/14/debbie-tucker-green-sometimes-it-feels-a-little-trite-a-little-rat-tat-tat-to-say-your-film-is-activism> [Accessed 4 September 2022].
- Keat, M. 2014. 'The impact of HIV/AIDS on families in South Africa'. *Bstrust.com*, n.d. [Online]. Available from: www.bstrust.org/blog/the-impact-of-hiv-aids-on-families-in-south-africa [Accessed 16 July 2018].
- Kennedy, R. 2013. *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kenney, M. 2001. *Mapping Gay L.A.: The Intersection of Place and Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kerr, D., & Plastow, J. 2011. *African Theatre: Media & Performance*. Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer.
- Kuribayashi, T. 1998. *Creating Safe Space: Violence and Women's Writing*. Albany N.Y: State University of New York Press.
- Kushnick, L. 1998. *Race, Class & Struggle: Essays on Racism and Inequality in Britain, the US, and Western Europe*. London: Rivers Oram Press.
- Kwei-Armah, K. 2003. *Elmina's Kitchen*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Kwei-Armah, K. 2004. *Fix Up*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Kwei-Armah, K. 2007. *Statement of Regret*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Lakoff, G. 2010. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- Lemelle, A. J. 2012. *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. 2010. 'Pedagogy of fear: toward a fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue.' *Race Ethnicity and Education* 13(2): Pp. 139-157.
- Levin, D. M. 2008. *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lincoln, C. E., & Mamiya, L. H. 2005. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lombardo, J. 2019. *Abusive Relationships and Domestic Violence*. New York: Lucent Press.
- Lorde, A. 2016. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Connecticut: Tantor Media Inc.
- Lutterbie, J. 1988. 'Subjects of silence'. *Theatre Journal* 40(4): pp. 468-81.
- Lutz, H., Herrera, V. M. T., & Supik, L. 2016. *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-faceted Concept in Gender Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Lykke, N. 2012. *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*. London: Routledge.
- Macura-Nnamdi, E. 2015. 'The alimentary life of power'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21(1): 95–120.
- Mae, B., Cortez, D., & Preiss, R. W. 2013. 'Safe spaces, difficult dialogues, and critical thinking.' *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 7(2): pp. 5.
- Magubane, Z. 2004. *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Marechera, D. 1978. *The House of Hunger*. London: Heinemann.
- Maxwell, D. 2013. 'More sketch than true portrait: performance review'. *The Times*, 7th November.
- May, V. M. 2015. *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. London: Routledge.
- McClintock, A. 1993. 'Family feuds: gender, nationalism and the family'. *Feminist Review* 44: 61–80.
- McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McDonough, C. J. 2006. *Staging Masculinity: Male Identity in Contemporary American drama*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- McMillian, M. 2009. *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home*. London: Black Dog.
- Miller, W. J. 2015. *Origins of the Dream. Hughes's Poetry and King's Rhetoric*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Milling, J., & In Thomson, P. 2015. *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mirza, H. S. 1997. 'Introduction: Mapping a genealogy of Black British feminism'. *Black British Feminism: A Reader*. Mirza, H. S. (ed.). London: Routledge, pp. 1-30.
- Monteith, S. 2000. *Advancing Sisterhood? Interracial Friendships in Contemporary Southern Fiction*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Morley, D., & Robins, K. 2001. *British Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Morrison, T. 1987. *Beloved*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Mosoetsa, S. 2004. 'The legacies of apartheid and implications of economic liberalization'. *Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper 49*. London: London School of Economics.
- Motsemme, N. 2016. 'The mute always speak: on women's silences at the truth and reconciliation commission'. *Current Sociology* 52: pp 909–932.
- Munoz, J. E. 1996. 'Ephemera as evidence: introductory notes to queer acts'. *Women and Performance* 8(2): pp. 5-16.
- Naples, N. 1992. 'Activist mothering: cross-generational continuity in the community work of women from low-income urban neighborhoods.' *Gender & Society* 6(3): pp. 441-63.
- Neal, M. A. 2013. *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities*. New York: NYU Press.
- Neal, M.A. 2015. *New Black Man*. New York: Routledge.
- Nightingale, B. 2008. Random (Review). *The Times* 13th March.
- Ochieng, B. M. N. & Hylton, C. 2010. *Black Families in Britain as the Site of Struggle*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Onions, C. T. (ed.) 1966. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Osborne, D. 2020. "'Hearing Voices" and Performing the Mind in Debbie tucker green's Dramatic-Poetics'. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 233-55.

- Palfrey, J. G., & Ibarguen, A. 2017. *Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces: Diversity and Free Expression in Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Parmar, A. 2017. 'Intersectionality, British criminology and race: Are we there yet?' *Theoretical Criminology* 21(1): Pp. 35-45.
- Patterson, O. 1998. *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*. Washington, DC: Civitas.
- Pavis, P. 2008. *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Pearce, M. 2017. *Black British Drama: A Transnational Story*. London: Routledge.
- Philips, C. M. 2005. 'Sisterly bonds: African American sororities rising to overcome obstacles'. *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision*. Brown, T. L., Parks, G. S. and Philips, C. M. (eds.). Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Ponnuswami, M. 2000. 'Small island people: Black British women playwrights.' *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*. Elaine Aston, E. and Reinelt, J. G. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 217-34.
- Pouissant, A. F., and Alexander, A. 2000. *Lay My Burdens Down*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press
- Preiss, R. (2013) 'Interiority'. *Early Modern Theatricality*. Turner, H. S. (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 47-70.
- Procter, J. 2006. 'The postcolonial everyday'. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 56: pp. 62-80.
- Randall, D. 1968. *Cities Burning*. Detroit: Broadside Press.

- Rehm, R. 2003. *Greek Tragic Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Reid, T. 2020. “‘What About the Burn Their Bra Bitches?’: Debbie tucker green as the Willfully Emotional Subject’. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 45-66.
- Reynolds, T. 2005. *Caribbean mothers: identity and experience in the UK*. London: Tufnell Press.
- Rhodes, J. 2005. *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modem*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Rich, A. 1986. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. 2nd edn. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Roberts, D.E. 1993. ‘Racism and patriarchy in the meaning of motherhood’. *Journal of Gender and the Law* 1(1): pp. 1-38.
- Robinson, J. 1996. *The Power of Apartheid: State, Power, and Space in South African Cities*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Robinson, J. 2019. ‘Caribbean English’. British Library, n.d. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.bl.uk/british-accent-and-dialects/articles/caribbean-english> [3 December 2021].
- Rodosthenous, G. 2015. *Theatre as Voyeurism: The Pleasures of Watching*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roediger, D. R. 2017. *Class, Race and Marxism*. London: Verso.
- Romano, R. C. 2006. ‘Narratives of Redemption: The Birmingham Church Bombing Trials and the Construction of Civil Rights Memory’. *The Civil Rights Movement*

- in American Memory*. Romano, R. C. and Raiford, L. (eds.). Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, pp. 96-134.
- Rojek, C. 2003. *Stuart Hall*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Ross, F.C. 2003a. *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*. London: Pluto Press.
- Ross, F.C. 2003b. 'On having voice and being heard: some after-effects of testifying before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.' *Anthropological Theory* 3: 325–341.
- Ross, K., & Derman, D. 2003. *Mapping the Margins: Identity Politics and the Media*. Cresskill, N.J: Hampton.
- Said, E.W. 1983. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard University Press.
- Sanyal, M. M. 2019. *Rape: From Lucretia to #MeToo*. London: Verso.
- Sawyers, L. 2018. 'Traum-a-rhythmia on debbie tucker green's in-yer-ear stage'. *Sillages critiques* 25: pp. 1-10.
- Scheub, H. 2012. *Trickster and Hero: Two Characters in the Oral and Written Traditions of the World*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Seventh-day Adventist, The. 1985. *Hymnal*. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Pub. Association.
- Shands, K. W. 1999. *Embracing Space: Spatial Metaphors in Feminist Discourse*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.
- Shakespeare, W. 2007. *The Narrative and Other Poems*. Duncan-Jones, K. and Woudhuysen, H. R. (eds.). London: Arden Shakespeare.

Sierz, A. 2001. *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*. London: Faber & Faber.

Sierz, A. 2003. 'debbie tucker green: "If you hate the show, at least you have passion": Review of born bad'. *The Independent*, n.d., [Online]. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/debbie-tucker-green-if-you-hate-the-show-at-least-you-have-passion-117081.html> [Accessed 1 February 2020].

Sierz, A. 2013. 'Nut review at The Shed National Theatre London'. *The Stage*, n. d. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2013/nut-review-at-the-shed-national-theatre-london/> [Accessed 13 December 2018].

Sivanandan, A. 1978. *Race, Class and the State: The Black Experience in Britain*. London: Institute of Race Relations.

Sluzki, C.E. 1990. 'Disappeared: semantic and somatic effects of political repression in a family seeking therapy'. *Family Process* 29: 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1990.00131.x>

Smith, A. 2015. 'Studio Firsts with Talawa Theatre Company (for Black theatremakers)'. *London Playwrights' Blog*, n. d. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.londonplaywrightsblog.com/?p=4150> [Accessed 11 December 2018].

Smith, B. 1978. 'Toward a Black feminist criticism'. *The Radical Teacher*, 7: pp. 20-27.

Spector, L. 2013. 'Breaking it down: an exploration of the musical fela! in relationship to Greek tragedy and Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian duality'. *Studies in Musical Theatre* 7(3): pp. 369-374

- Starck, K. 2006. “‘Black and Female is some of Who I Am and I Want to Explore It’:
Black women’s plays of the 1980s and 1990s’. *Alternatives Within the Mainstream:
British Black and Asian Theatres*. Godiwala, D. (ed.). Newcastle upon Tyne:
Cambridge Scholars Press, pp. 229-48.
- Stovall, H. A., Baker-Sperry, L., & Dallinger, J. M. 2015. ‘A new discourse on the
kitchen: feminism and environmental education’. *Australian Journal of
Environmental Education* 31(1): pp. 110-131.
- Strathern, M., Franklin, S., & Butler, J. 2016. *Before and after Gender: Sexual
Mythologies of Everyday Life*. Chicago: HAU Books.
- Supski, S. 2007. *It Was another Skin: The Kitchen in 1950s Western Australia*. New York:
Peter Lang Publishing.
- Talawa Art 2018. ‘Talawa Art: FAQs’. *Talawa*, n. d. [Online]. Available from:
<http://www.talawa.com/contact/faqs/> [Accessed 11 December 2018].
- Taylor, P. 2008. ‘Random, Royal Court, London’. *The Independent*, 12 March, [Online].
Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/random-royal-court-london-794378.html>.
- Torres, M. G. 2016. *Marital Rape: Consent, Marriage, and Social Change in Global
Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Townsend, M. 2020. ‘Revealed: surge in domestic violence during Covid-19 crisis’. *The
Observer*, 12 April, [Online]. Available from:
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/12/domestic-violence-surges-seven-hundred-per-cent-uk-coronavirus> [Accessed 1 February 2020].

- Tyler, L. 2020. “‘Almost, but Not Quite’: Reading debbie tucker green’s Dramaturgy inside British Playwriting Studies’. *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives*. Adiseshiah, S. and Bolton, J. (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 129-51.
- UNICEF. n.d. ‘HIV and AIDS – Overview’. *Eastern and Southern Africa*, n.d. [Online]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/esaro/5482_HIV_AIDS.html [accessed 31 October 2017].
- Walker, C. 1995. ‘Conceptualising motherhood in twentieth century South Africa’. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21: pp. 417–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079508708455>
- Wallace, J. 2011. *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace-Sanders, K. 2009. *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Weekes, D. 2003. ‘Keeping it in the community: creating safe spaces for black girlhood’. *Community, Work & Family* 6(1): pp. 47-61.
- Werbner R. (ed.) 1999. *Memory and the Post Colony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*. London: Zed Books.
- Williams, R. 2010. *Sucker Punch*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Williams, R. K. 2016. ‘Toward a Theorization of Black Maternal Grief as Analytic’. *Transforming Anthropology* 24(1): pp. 17-30.
- Willie, C. V., & Reddick, R. 2010. *A New Look at Black Families*. Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield.

- Wilson, E., & Goldfarb, A. 1983. *Living Theater: An Introduction to Theater History*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wintour, P, & Dodd, V. 2007. 'Blair blames spate of murders on black culture'. *The Guardian*, 12th April [Online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/apr/12/ukcrime.race> [2 December 2020].
- Wolf, M. 2013. 'Onstage, depression with a capital D.': Performance review. *International New York Times*. 14th Nov.
- Woolf, V. 2014. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Spark publishing.
- Young, A. 2012. *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Young, N. 2010. *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Young, S. 2004. 'Narrative and healing in the hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. *Biography* 27: 145–162.
- Zima, P. 1999. *The Philosophy of Modern Literary Theory*. London, Athlone Press.
- Zink, S. 2018. *Virginia Woolf's Rooms and the Spaces of Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.