

debbie tucker green. Critical Perspectives, Siân Adiseshiah and Jacqueline Bolton (eds.), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 354 pp. ISBN: 978-3-030-34580-8
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debbie tucker green. Critical perspectives, edited by Siân Adiseshiah and Jacqueline Bolton, is the first volume devoted entirely to the work of playwright debbie tucker green and offers a highly valuable contribution to the field of Black British theatre. This ambitious collection aims at providing a multiplicity of frameworks from which to examine debbie tucker green's production, reflecting a diverse range of theories, from affect theory to ethical philosophy, Black feminism, postcolonialism or musicology, among others. debbie tucker green's plays have received increasing attention in academia and the press alike in the last few years. Her unique style, defined by the editors of the volume as a "potent fusion of experimental aesthetics, piercing politics, and an affective economy of cruelty" (3) has left few indifferent and has significantly changed the British theatrical scene. In spite of her visibility, with the exception of a number of individual articles and book chapters, no single volume had been devoted to her work. This is, without doubt, one of the strengths of this volume, which covers her plays between 2000 and 2017 and, hence, offers a full and detailed picture of her career as a playwright.

Following an introduction and preview of the structure in which the editors situate debbie tucker green's work, the book is divided into two parts: "Dramaturgies of Resistance" and "Affective Encounters". In the first chapter of the first section, "Black Rage: Diasporic Empathy and Ritual in debbie tucker green's *hang*", Michael Pearce focuses his analysis of *hang* on Black rage in close relation to race. According to Pearce, the fact that most reviewers overlooked race as a central theme in the play echoes the invisibility of institutional racism in Britain, which was called to our attention through the Macpherson report, released after the murder of Stephen Lawrence. By focusing on the Black aesthetics of the play, expressed in the tropes of rage and ritual, Pearce seeks to establish a connection regarding the topic of racism between both shores of the Atlantic. Pearce further places tucker green within the tradition of the Black Arts movement, highlighting the social function of rage as a form of activism to interrogate the racism of the criminal justice system. Pearce's chapter is followed by Trish Reid's "What about the Burn Their Bra Bitches?": debbie tucker green as the Willfully Emotional Subject", in which she draws on Sara Ahmed's theory of willfulness and

emotion to explore tucker green's practices of resistance both on and off the stage. Along the lines of Michael Pearce's chapter, Reid similarly identifies anger, and adds other emotions such as pain, present in her female characters, to advance her argument about the ethico-political possibilities of tucker green's work. Interestingly, willfulness, Reis contends, is not only present at the character level in her plays or aesthetically through her rejection of realism or the use of a "heightened demonic speech" which "inevitably brings white middle-class audience members into an encounter with failure" (59); Reis also explains how debbie tucker green herself embodies this willfulness at the personal level. Her refusal to discuss her work or even the choice of spelling her name with lower case letters, a strategy that Deirdre Osborne elsewhere in this volume refers to as the "right to opacity", following Édouard Glissant's coinage of the term, similarly draws attention to tucker green as a willful playwright. Siân Adiseshiah and Jacqueline Bolton's "debbie tucker green and (the Dialectics of) Dispossession: Reframing the Ethical Encounter" takes a different approach to the recurrent tendency of reading tucker green's work as eliciting empathy between audience members and characters to offer a reading of *dirty butterfly* and *hang* through the framework of dispossession, as theorised by Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou. Dispossession, they contend, works at two levels: the dispossession of the characters in terms of the marginal position they occupy as victims of violence and dispossession understood as the loss of traditional conceptions of subjectivity which, taken together, according to the authors, result "in a demand for a different form of relationality" (86). Harry Derbyshire and Loveday Hodson follow with chapter four in which they examine *hang* and *truth and reconciliation* from a human rights perspective. Although tucker green's plays have previously been approached from this framework, Derbyshire and Hodson's study is innovative in its focus on the playwright's portrayal of the agency of the victims and the humanisation of their perpetrators, something which results in higher levels of self-awareness and reflection in the audience. Along the lines of Pearce's analysis in chapter one, Lynette Goddard's chapter, "'I'm a Black Woman. I Write Black Characters': Black Mothers, the Police, and Social Justice in *random* and *hang*", similarly centers on race by offering an analysis of Black mothers through the lens of Black feminism and drawing connections with the Stephen Lawrence case and, specifically with Doreen Lawrence, Stephen Lawrence's mother. Contrary to many academic publications and reviews of tucker green's plays which place her along the mainstream tradition of contemporary playwrights such as Sara Kane or Harold Pinter, Goddard further problematises the tendency of evaluating Black

British plays against a white canon. Following Goddard's argument, Lucy Tyler's "‘Almost, but Not Quite’: Reading debbie tucker green's Dramaturgy inside British Playwriting Studies" reads tucker green's work, using a postcolonial critical lens, as a counter-discourse to what she refers to as the hegemonic British playwriting guides. As such, Tyler contends debbie tucker green's plays can be more appropriately examined using Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, as they blend elements from the classical tradition with Black transatlantic influences, thus creating, in Bhabha's terms, a third space which, according to Tyler, underscores "the politics of race" (146). Part one closes with "Yarns and Yearnings: Story-Layering, Signifyin', and debbie tucker green's Black-Feminist Anger" by Elaine Aston. Along with Michael Pearce and Lynette Goddard, Aston similarly reads tucker green's work from the perspective of Black culture. To this aim, she focuses on form, language and Black feminist commitment through Tricia Rose's study of rap, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s ideas about the difference between signifying and signification, and María Lugones's reflections on Black anger, respectively.

Part two includes seven chapters which revolve around tucker green's aesthetics and language, especially in relation to rhythm, musicality or the use of silences. This section opens with Maggie Inchley's "sticking in the throat/keyword bitch: aesthetic discharge in debbie tucker green's *stoning mary* and *hang*" which follows the playwright's preference for using lowercase letters in the titles of her plays. In this chapter Inchley looks at the discomfort generated by debbie tucker green aesthetics, especially her distinct use of language through which she expresses gendered and racialised stories of pain and which she describes as a "sticking in the throat process" with transformative potential (172). On their part, chapters ten and eleven bring an innovative approach to a widely examined aspect of tucker green's work, which is that of rhythm, temporality and musicality. Although earlier studies of tucker green's work had started to pay attention to some of the formal characteristics shaping her work, such as the use of silences, these two chapters offer a more developed theoretical framework through which to examine her unique style. David Ian Rabey's chapter, "Jumping to (and Away from) Conclusions: Rhythm and Temporality in debbie tucker green's Drama" draws on Eilon Morris's study of rhythm in *Rhythm in Acting and Performance* (2017) to analyse the ways in which rhythm and temporality are deployed both formally and thematically by the characters in *hang*, *lament* and *a profoundly affectionate passionate devotion to someone (-noun)* through physical movement, the use of active silences or spoken words. Through these rhythmic strategies,

characters contest and “often depict an interrogation of, and challenge to, an externally applied pressure” (197) and, at the same time, prompt audience members to interrogate “the fictional dramatic events onstage and, potentially, of non-fictional social processes beyond the theatre” (196). Chapter eleven, titled “Trading Voice and Voicing Trades: Musicality in debbie tucker green’s *trade*” follows Rabey’s line of enquiry and places emphasis on the “vocal arrangements” of *trade* using musicality as a framework. In this chapter, Lea Sawyers understands musicality as three-fold in *trade*: musicality as voice physicality, musicality as word motifs and musicality as relational subjectivity, all of them contributing to a process of meaning-making in the play that expands beyond Western frameworks. In chapter twelve, “‘Hearing Voices’ and Performing the Mind in debbie tucker green’s Dramatic-Poetics”, Deirdre Osborne’s decolonising project draws attention to tucker green’s aesthetics by looking specifically at the ways language reflects the characters’ thoughts through a unique style, discernible both on the page and in live performance, which she refers to as “performing the mind” (234) and which, according to her, has crucial implications for it transcends the Cartesian body-mind binary. Chapter thirteen, entitled “Cartographies of Silence in debbie tucker green’s *truth and reconciliation*” and written by Elisabeth Massana takes inspiration from Adrienne Rich’s book of the same title and adds to a body of scholarship which has focused on the use of silences in debbie tucker green’s work. In this chapter, Massana examines the use of this technique from a feminist lens and explores it as a site of oppression but also as a resistance strategy. Silences, for Massana, become a space of in-betweenness in *truth and reconciliation*, holding the possibility of activating the spectator’s ethical response to the play. Interestingly, the author also coins a new type of silence present in tucker green’s plays in this chapter, referred to by the author as “(distr)active”. This type of silence appears whenever characters seem to be discussing what on the surface seems irrelevant for the argument of the play but which points to “the power structures and hierarchies that shape characters” (264). “debbie tucker green and the Work of Mourning” is Sam Haddow’s contribution to this collection. In this chapter, Haddow draws on Jacques Derrida’s work on mourning to unpack the ways in which the singularity of grief, expressed by tucker green’s characters in four of her plays, is transferred to the audience for them to interpret and, as a result, is turned into an act of mourning. Izzy Rabey’s “Reflections on *hang*: Izzy Rabey in Conversation with Siân Adiseshiah and Jacqueline Bolton” closes this brilliant volume. Here, Izzy Rabey, the director of tucker green’s premier of *hang* (2015) at The Other Room in Cardiff discusses the process of producing

this play in this specific location in relation to casting, the rehearsal process or the audience response.

One of the main accomplishments of *debbie tucker green. Critical Perspectives* is to bring together a multiplicity of approaches which fills in a methodological vacuum in contemporary scholarship focusing on Black playwrighting in Britain. All in all, this is a timely and relevant volume in the field of Black British theatre which provides a myriad of vantage points from which to look not only at tucker green's work, but also, I contend, more broadly, to account for the new directions in which Black British drama is moving and to pave the way for future research in the field.