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The Mobility of Suffering: Cosmopolitan Ethics in debbie tucker green's Plays

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Abstract: debbie tucker green's theatre can be seen as a reaction to the state of heightened mobility in a globalised world in which social problems can no longer be contained locally but inevitably register globally and vice versa. Her plays that move remote suffering to the centre of attention qualify as cosmopolitan for two reasons: Not only do they address such suffering by making use of globally diverse settings, but they also express cosmopolitanism's belief in an undeniable responsibility for the other that connects all humankind. The plays make a cosmopolitan ethical appeal by facilitating an immediate affective accessibility of faraway suffering with an aesthetic strategy that can be described as 'universalisation through familiarisation': Devices such as cross-racial casting or the use of universally familiar constellations like the family are used to lend mobility to the abstract hardships of remote others, allowing them to intrude into the familiar world of the audience's concrete experience. Implicitly, this entails the demand to accept responsibility for and, eventually, take action against global suffering, which is the core of any cosmopolitan ethics.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, globalisation, ethics, precarity, debbie tucker green, *dirty butterfly*, *generations*, *stoning mary*, *trade*, *truth and reconciliation*

Our globalised world is characterised by an unprecedented rate of mobility – primarily of people, goods, and information. Media coverage from every corner of the globe means that we are familiar with other cultures and with global politics, but also that we are exposed to images of war and suffering in remote places. And yet, the mobility of such images only rarely has the effect of bringing the plights of victims of distant suffering really closer to those who are watching them, however emotionally disturbing the images may be. It is this problematic that debbie tucker green addresses with many of her plays, trying to carve out the

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framework of an ethical position that lives up to the challenges of globalisation and the extended reach of information. *generations*, *truth and reconciliation*, *dirty butterfly*, *stoning mary*, and *trade* all deal with the issue of human suffering and the question of what reaction such suffering should elicit in a globalised world.¹ By moving the seemingly remote suffering of others from the periphery to the center of attention and by making it, in the process, immediately accessible on an emotional basis, these plays develop a distinctive ethical appeal that may justifiably be called cosmopolitan. In this article, we want to trace the characteristically cosmopolitan command to acknowledge the mutual responsibility of all humans in a world that is moving closer together, which we think can be discerned at the heart of tucker green's plays.

Globalisation means an increase in worldwide interconnectedness. It is defined by political scientists David Held and Anthony McGrew as the “growing *extensity*, *intensity* and *velocity* of global interactions [that] is associated with a *deepening* enmeshment of the local and global in so far as local events may come to have profound global consequences and global events can have serious local consequences” (*Globalization/Anti-Globalization* 3). The “shrinking world” (3) of globalisation is further characterised by heightened mobility in the exchange of goods and capital, information and ideas, and human travel, resulting in “a growing collective awareness or consciousness of the world as a shared social space” (3). This awareness is, first and foremost, brought about by the ubiquity of media coverage and the availability of information about any part of the world. As early as 1964, Marshall McLuhan ascribed to modern media technologies the function of connecting the world in a way that makes it impossible “to adopt the aloof and dissociated role of the literate Westerner” (*Understanding Media* 4) – a situation tremendously intensified with the rise of the internet. For McLuhan, the possibility – theoretically, at least – of knowing and affecting every other person on the planet has famously turned the world into a “global village”. This necessitates profound changes in the conception of ethics and responsibility (see 5). Communitarian notions of ethical obligations limited to members of a shared community lose their force and legitimacy when the awareness of the world as shared social space is taken seriously. Therefore, the challenge of globalisation is also a challenge to redefine ethical behaviour and the limits of responsibility.

¹ With the exception of *dirty butterfly*, Lynette Goddard discusses these plays as “global plays, which move beyond the boundaries of the UK to foreground the international human rights concerns of black people” (*Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 121). In our analysis we have added *dirty butterfly* to this group of plays, since on a symbolic level it negotiates these very same issues.

This very insight that with a “shrinking world” comes a new kind of responsibility has led to the emergence of globalist or cosmopolitan ethics. While cosmopolitanism is a contested and multi-faceted term, our focus here is on Kwame Anthony Appiah’s notion of the concept as formulated in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). When McLuhan calls the world a global village, Appiah calls humanity a “global tribe” (xiii), shifting the focus distinctly on the relationship between human beings in a globalised world. For Appiah, “[e]ach person you know about and can affect is someone to whom you have responsibilities” (xiii) and this idea of an obligation to others regardless of spatial and cultural distance is key to his cosmopolitanism (see xv).

A claim such as this finds support from a strand of ethical philosophy that derives the moral obligation towards others not only from the fact of cohabitation but additionally, and importantly, from the recognition of human vulnerability and precarity. In her essay “Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation,” Judith Butler draws on Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt in answering the question why we might – and should – feel ethical obligations when confronted with media images of distant suffering for which we are, at least directly, not responsible (see 135). Such obligations, she argues, “do not require our consent, and neither are they the result of contracts or agreements into which any of us have deliberately entered” (135). Rather, they result from our ineluctable condition as both social and precarious beings – inevitably sharing the world with and being dependent on and exposed to others from the moment of our birth (see 141). Our situation is one in which “unwilled proximity and unchosen cohabitation” (145) combine with the fact “that everyone is precarious, [which] follows from our social existence as bodily beings who depend upon one another for shelter and sustenance and who, therefore, are at risk of statelessness, homelessness, and destitution under unjust and unequal political conditions” (148). Precarity, it is important to note, is hence not only an existential condition of human beings but also dependent on the concrete social, political, and natural circumstances to which individuals are exposed and it is this potentially alterable precarity which must be challenged by those who feel solicited by images of distant suffering (see 148). The awareness of the shared or “generalized” existential precarity of all human beings, this universal ground of human sameness, is thus what makes it an obligation to tackle precarity resulting from alterable circumstances. This, then, forms the basis of her

conception of ethical obligation that is grounded in precarity. No one escapes the precarious dimension of social life – it is, we might say, the joint of our nonfoundation. And we cannot understand cohabitation without understanding that a generalized precarity obligates us to oppose genocide and to sustain life on egalitarian terms. (148)

Such an insight into the universal conditions of human life and its implication of a fundamental human sameness is central to cosmopolitanism. It should be stressed, however, that this doesn't mean that particular or group interests that are threatened – such as those of minority or disempowered groups subject to othering and discrimination – do not deserve particular protection that might seem at odds with the principle of human sameness and the demand for equal treatment for everyone that follows from it. On this point we concur with Steven C. Rockefeller that

[o]ur universal identity as human beings is our primary identity and is more fundamental than any particular identity, whether it be a matter of citizenship, gender, race, or ethnic origin. It may be that in some situations the rights of individuals can best be defended by addressing the rights of an entire group defined, for example, by gender or race, but this does not alter the situation regarding a person's primary identity. (*Multiculturalism* 88)

This is in full agreement with Appiah, who claims that the otherness of others is too often overemphasised in contemporary human rights discourse. The fact, he argues, that there are undoubtedly important valuable cultural differences and local values should not obscure the even more important fact “that there are some values that are, and should be, universal” (xxi). Appiah thus clearly speaks out against any kind of moral and ethical relativism according to which all values are always necessarily subjective and contingent on a specific time and place (see 17). Against such relativism, he posits cosmopolitanism's conviction that it is (or should be) a universally acknowledged principle that every human being has basic needs such as health, food, shelter, and the protection from certain harms and that these needs ought to be met (see 163). Although Appiah remains rather vague about concrete actions cosmopolitanism asks from its adherents and although he admits that, while believing in the truth of universal ethics, he is unable to formulate this truth in more specific terms, the baseline of cosmopolitanism is clear and non-negotiable: “One truth we hold to, however, is that every human being has obligations to every other. Everybody matters: that is our central idea” (144) and “if there are people without their basic entitlements – and there are billions of them – we know that, collectively, we are not meeting our obligations” (173).

It is the concern with precisely this belief that in an age of globalised interconnection and information the individual's responsibility for distant suffering has grown that renders cosmopolitanism a central topic in Debbie Tucker Green's dramatic work. In fact, the plays analysed here do exactly what Daniel and Elizabeth Lee describe in *Human Rights and the Ethics of Globalization* as the prerequisite of any attempt at an ethics of universal human rights: they raise awareness of the fact that our “distant neighbors” are the same human beings we

are, sharing the same basic needs, desires, hopes and fears (see 43). The most serious impediment to an acknowledgment of responsibility for distant suffering, according to the Lees, is the “pronounced tendency to ignore the humanity of our distant neighbors, most of whom we never see” (42). It is this tendency Elaine Aston addresses when she speaks of “contemporary island mentalities” that tucker green seeks to delegitimise by putting on stage the “dehumanizing effects of an inability to care for ‘others’, locally and globally” (“debbie tucker green” 183, 184). In much the same vein, Lynette Goddard emphasises the recognition of shared humanity as one crucial objective of tucker green’s “global plays” (121). According to Goddard, tucker green “stages black experience as ‘universal’, and in the process foregrounds ‘black rights’ as ‘human rights’” (17) – a process that makes precisely the point that cultural and ethnical otherness must not obliterate the view of human sameness.

The method tucker green uses to simultaneously demonstrate both the full humanity of the other and the undeniable responsibility of human beings for one another is to provide an affective accessibility of suffering and injustice. Her plays spotlight the suffering of distant neighbours as the suffering of concrete fellow human beings, asking the audience to accept responsibility in the face of the fundamental sameness of humanity that is epitomised by the essential vulnerability shared by all human beings. They not only transport distant suffering to the British or European stage but use an aesthetics of simultaneity of specificity and generalisability that makes for a powerful ethical appeal. For instance, tucker green’s plays repeatedly make use of the universally recognisable institution of the family as the framework in which distant suffering is allowed to take concrete shape (see Abram, “Staging the unsayable” 117). In the context of the family, the victims of suffering assume the roundness of characters who have specific, individual background stories and are part of family relations. At the same time, the frame of the family, despite all cultural differences, is recognisable worldwide and fosters an audience’s ability to ‘familiarise’ with the depicted situation, facilitating the transport of faraway suffering into the spectators’ comfort zone – an effect that is supported by the use of functional labels such as Mum, Dad, Older Sister, Younger Sister etc. instead of names. Following Goddard, we think that this aesthetic device “underlines a ‘universalising’ characteristic that implicates us all” (125). What tucker green thus achieves is to lend mobility to distant suffering and to depict it as both concrete and universal, affecting the lives of individuals as much as the whole of humanity. It is through this ‘universalisation through familiarisation’ that the travelling images of suffering acquire the force of the ethical appeal that underlies cosmopolitanism.

Two of her plays in which the family provides the background for the depiction of suffering are *generations* (2005) and *truth and reconciliation* (2011). *genera-*

tions is a dramatisation – in fact, a dramatic acceleration – of the dying of the younger generations of a South African family from some unspecified disease, which is commonly interpreted to be HIV/AIDS. The play shows a family meal from which the younger members one by one disappear until only Grandma and Grandad are left, while an onstage choir is lamenting their deaths and the deaths of so many other victims of the disease. In the 2007 Young Vic production, as Goddard describes, the stage was covered in red earth, the audience were sat on colourful plastic boxes and a South African choir sang the accompanying dirge live, while real food was being cooked on stage – an “all-senses” experience that “transported audiences from London to South Africa” (Goddard 122; see also 133). Or, conversely, it transported South Africa onto the British stage – the effect is the same: the prevailing sense of loss becomes palpable for an audience that, by and large, is not usually affected by this kind of suffering. Through the use of the cultural invariant of the family as the frame for the subsequent disappearance of the younger generations, and hence symbolically of the future, the abstract and remote problem of the AIDS pandemic is given a familiar and thus emotionally accessible context.

A similar method is employed in *truth and reconciliation*, which stages the ubiquity of suffering caused by violence, genocide and (civil) war in the present and recent past. The play brings together five different storylines from South Africa, Bosnia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland, which are connected to each other only through the similarity of their plots. As the alternating episodes of the five stories gradually uncover, the dramatic situation each time consists in the confrontation between perpetrators of violence and their victims, or their victims’ close relatives, in scenarios reminiscent of the eponymous South African Truth and Reconciliation Committees. The episodic structure of the play makes use of a pronounced mobility of time and space: the play jumps between the different settings and covers a period of time from 1976 to 2007. This emphasises one central theme of the play – the universality of the consequences of war and violence. Each episode presents the audience with the suffering of the victim’s family, reminding us that victims of violence are concrete individuals, with their own stories and families lamenting the loss of a beloved person. Again, suffering at the fringes of popular awareness is given centre stage, framed in a family context: the family serves as a device that familiarises and simultaneously universalises the experience of suffering in remote wars and thus makes it immediately accessible to audiences. Both *truth and reconciliation* and *generations* make use of the image of the family to facilitate audience identification with remote problems and to underline their universal nature. In this sense, both plays follow a cosmopolitan agenda in pointing out that the faraway violation of human rights is in fact a global problem that concerns everyone, not least the spectators in the theatre.

tucker green's 2003 play *dirty butterfly* differs from these two plays in that it neither presents suffering in distant places nor uses the image of the family as universally recognisable feature. Instead, the play shows the urban couple Jason and Amelia and their attempts to cope with their situation as witnesses to the daily routine of violence and sexual abuse taking place in the flat of their next-door neighbours Jo and her husband. However, this play, too, ties in with tucker green's practice of familiarising and concretising abstract and global problems. While the play is often understood as criticising the lack of solidarity and community ethics in a highly individualised, fragmented, anonymous urban culture (see Goddard 74), the dramatic situation can also be understood as symbolic of a lack of human solidarity in general. After all, in a globalised world in which, in many respects, "distant neighbors become near neighbors" (Lee and Lee 53), the two couples are not only direct neighbours but they also represent cohabitants of a "global village" who are capable of both learning about and affecting each other's lives. However, Jason and Amelia refuse to accept any (cosmopolitan) responsibility for the suffering of their neighbours. Instead of taking action, they complain about how witnessing the violence next door is disturbing their own privacy. Arguing about the right way of reacting to the evidence of abuse that can be heard through the thin walls of the adjacent bedrooms, Jason accuses Amelia of "cheating" (11) because she spends days and nights downstairs in order to escape the noise, while he remains in their upstairs bedroom. For a while, Jason's active listening, which keeps him awake night after night, seems morally superior to Amelia's attempts at closing her ears to Jo's suffering by sleeping downstairs, turning up the radio, or leaving the house early. Upset about Jo's suffering "infringin on" (4) her own domestic life, she even repeatedly resorts to victim blaming, eventually telling Jo that her mere presence justifies the violence she has to endure (see 25). As it turns out, however, Jason's reaction to the abuse is even more problematic. Not only does he not intervene, remaining, as Jo mockingly puts it, her "next door knight that never moves a muscle that loves listenin in and whispers words a comfort that get lost passing through" (32). He even tacitly consents to and secretly enjoys Jo's suffering, getting aroused by the sexual violence and masturbating while listening to it (see 33). On an abstract level, Amelia's behaviour of trying to ignore what is going on next door, blaming the victim and resenting the disturbance of her privacy is tantamount to the very "island mentality" tucker green frequently attacks in other plays with more global settings. Jason's role, on this level, is that of the silent profiteer, who is not directly involved in processes of abuse or exploitation but who is well aware of the fact that the source of his pleasure is a state of injustice and unequal power relations.

The cosmopolitan demand for the recognition of the full humanity of the other which the play entails becomes particularly evident in the concluding scene

when Jo, bleeding from between her legs, is seeking shelter at the city café where Amelia works as a cleaner. Now that she is immediately confronted with Jo's suffering and urgent need for help, Amelia's reluctance to care for her really assumes a "dehumanizing" quality (Aston, "debbie tucker green" 184). Instead of taking care of the abused and severely injured woman, Amelia above all worries that the floor of the "*extremely shiny, clinically clean*" (38) café, which she has just finished polishing, is now sprinkled with Jo's blood. But the play also makes unmistakably clear that Amelia's prolonged effort to ignore Jo is not only ethically wrong but also futile. Her position – "I don't wanna see. I don't need to see. I don't have to see – you" (41) – is countered by Jo's simple but powerful "But I am here" (41), which refers not only to her presence in the café but is also a reminder of their ontological status as fellow human beings cohabitating a shared world. And Amelia's attempt to protect her floor from Jo's blood with paper towels so as to ignore, if not Jo, then at least the traces of her suffering, proves ineffective, as the stage directions explain: "*She doesn't notice that she has JO's blood on her own feet so every step makes a bloody footprint. She becomes part of her own problem*" (48). Ultimately, then, this reading of *dirty butterfly* suggests that the suffering of neighbours can perhaps be ignored to some extent, and solidarity withheld, but this looking the other way must leave behind bloody footprints.

Lack of solidarity is also the central theme in *stoning mary* (2005), which uncompromisingly denounces indifference to remote suffering and in particular to the suffering of others who are not in a position of social or economic privilege. In an unspecified yet recognisably African country (see Fragkou and Goddard, "Acting In/Action" 149) wrecked by AIDS and wars, the young woman Mary is awaiting her execution by stoning. As the play gradually reveals, her crime was the killing of a child soldier who, in turn, had killed her parents. Sitting in her prison cell, Mary is informed by her older sister that public support for her cause, such as a petition and a protest march, has attracted hardly any following and she realises that her hopes of a stay of execution were in vain. Above all, she is disappointed in the lack of solidarity by other women, which she criticises in a long and angry monologue. In her rant she laments the indifference to her fate shown by women of all races ("[t]he black bitches," "the white the brown bitches"), social classes ("underclass" or "overclass bitches"), political attitudes ("mainstream," "rebel" or "underground bitches") or educational backgrounds and by women subscribing to various forms of feminist thought ("womanist bitches," "feminist bitches" or even "burn their bra bitches"), concluding that "the bitches that'll support a bitch" are in fact very selective in giving their support only to women who are literate or "[p]retty bitches" (61–63). Mary thus decries a form of female solidarity that only applies to others who are in similarly privileged positions as the proponents of solidarity themselves.

While the focus on a black feminist perspective, critical of a white feminist tradition, is clear here (see Fragkou and Goddard 152–53; Aston, “Loss of Feminism” 589–90), from a cosmopolitan standpoint, Mary’s rant takes on a wider meaning in that it does not exclusively constitute a critique of female or feminist solidarity (or the lack thereof), but more generally a critique of the lack of solidarity among all human beings in a globalised world. What underlies Mary’s monologue, then, is the cosmopolitan principle that “everybody matters” (Appiah 144), which is contrasted against her frustration about the apparent fact that she, indeed, *does not matter* to people who reserve their support for those who are like them. As tucker green herself has pointed out in an interview, *stoning mary* wants to give a stage to the concerns of “people who would be in the headlines every day if what was happening to them was happening to white people” (Gardner, “I was messing about”).

This cosmopolitan perspective is supported by the casting practice in *stoning mary*. According to initial stage directions, the play is to be “*set in the country it is performed in*” and should feature a cast in which “[a]ll characters are white” (2). This creates an incongruity with what may be assumed as typical audience expectations, as the topics of the play – AIDS, child soldiers and, to a lesser extent, stoning as a method of punishment – are stereotypically African (see Goddard 126–27). By embedding these ‘alien’, far-away problems in a local context, they are moved closer to the audience’s reality, i.e. they are familiarised (see Fragkou and Goddard 153). The white cast underlines that those are *not* merely ‘black’ problems that are of no relevance or consequence to “predominantly white middle-class audiences” (Goddard 153) in British theatres. As Aston points out, the question that is implicitly asked is “‘what if’ the atrocities, hardships, and injustices happening in parts of Africa were happening here” (“Loss of Feminism” 588). This highlights what she describes as “our Western inability to imagine what [the struggle for survival] is like for people on another continent” (“debbie tucker green” 190). Ultimately, through the casting practice the vulnerability of the theatregoers themselves, their communities and the society they live in, and hence the universal precarity of life, is thematised. It underscores that complexion or geography are not relevant to suffering and should not be relevant to our response to the precarity of others. In *stoning mary*, suffering that is usually associated with the African continent – and therefore appears to be at a ‘safe’ distance – is brought right into the comfort zone of a European audience and it is precisely by means of this theatrical mobility of suffering that the play calls for a wider, global, or cosmopolitan solidarity.

Similar concerns also appear in *trade* (2004), which uses the topic of female sex tourism to address the challenges arising from heightened mobility and the persisting imbalances of power in a globalised world. Set in an unspecified beach

holiday destination for American and European tourists, the play focuses on a discussion between three women that are only identified by their generic labels as a 'local' and two white British tourists, a 'regular' and a 'novice' to the sex tourism trade. Their conversation soon revolves around the sexual services the latter two receive from a local man called Bumster, who is also in a relationship with the local woman. In an increasingly acerbic dialogue, the ambiguous effects of global capitalism on local communities and cultures are highlighted, while the entanglements of mutual dependence – both economic and emotional – that affect all characters come to light.

This mutual dependence becomes clearest in the sex trade at the centre of the play, where the human body and sexual encounters are reduced to commodities in a trade from which, ultimately, no one profits and Local suffers the most. The three women's attitudes revolve around questions Lucy McCombes asks in her sociological analysis of female sex tourism: "Is romance or love involved in these relationships? Who exploits who? What do these relationships mean to those involved?" ("Host-guest encounters" 294). Novice displays a brash hedonistic consumerism, feeling entitled to doing whatever she wants in her self-paid holiday and reasoning that this is part of the "equal rights" (27) she enjoys as a woman. This aligns her with those female sex tourists who "experiment with new gender roles and power" (McCombes 301, see also Pruitt and LaFont, "Romance Tourism" 318) they enjoy over their hosts due to their economic privilege. Regular, on the other hand, has a naïvely romantic understanding of her relationship with Bumster (see 29) and simply ignores the financial side to the relationship. Meanwhile Local immunises herself against the threat to her own "long-term" (55) relationship with Bumster by insisting repeatedly that the tourists' sexual relationship with Bumster is merely a "h'economic transaction" (12) and his flatteries and drinks offered no more than a "h'investment" (20) – terms that insinuate a business-like detachment from the traded service. In fact, Local mirrors Regular's naivety when she insists that only her own relationship with Bumster is genuine, as they have promised each other never to "bare-back" (56) outside their relationship: it emerges that despite the promise Bumster has indeed had unprotected sex with Regular, meaning that the protective layer around Local's emotions has burst. As Aston observes, it is in particular her who can be seen to be exploited (see "debbie tucker green" 188). In the end, it is money, or global socio-economic inequality and its facilitated exploitation in a globalised world, that become (dis-)empowering factors for the women in *trade*.

Hence, the focus of the play is on such mechanisms of exploitation and dependence that emerge as a direct consequence of the increase in mobility through globalisation. Worldwide tourism relies on the desirability of remote recreation spots but often turns a blind eye to the effects this has on local societies

and ecosystems. Expressed in the unstable deixis of tucker green's play, in which the three women, depending on their perspective as local or tourists, use 'here' and 'there' to refer to both the UK and to the holiday destination, the 'here' of remote neighbours is commodified to become the utopian exoticised paradise 'there', object of escapist desires of travellers from the Global North: Regular claims, "I go 'there' / on holiday 'there' / to get away" (9), which is mirrored in the local woman's view that the tourists are "tekkin a break from who you are 'there' by comin over to my 'here'" (31), and, absurdly, in Novice's assertion "I'm not 'here' / I'm 'there'. [...] Why would I – would I *not* do what I wouldn't do at home?" (9). This shifting of place deixis, which continues throughout the play, highlights the fact that in a globalised world physical distances have less impact than mental ones and that it is the latter that a cosmopolitan ethics needs to strive to overcome. As Butler observes,

We can be alive or dead to the sufferings of others – they can be dead or alive to us. But it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that "here" is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that let us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics. (150)

What *trade* does is to point towards the responsibility ensuing from global mobility by using the familiar topic of tourism – although fractured through the not quite so familiar perspectives of female sex travellers.

In this context, it is important to note that the setting of *trade* is *not* any specific region or country, which again highlights the universality of the concerns. It is true that most, if not all, critics so far have by default identified the setting of *trade* as 'Caribbean' (Abram 115; Aston, "A Fair Trade?" 185 and "debbie tucker green" 188; Goddard 137; Fragkou and Goddard 145; Klein, "Female Sex Tourism in the Caribbean"; none of whom provides any reason for this localisation), but in fact the location is not specified in any way in the playscript. If the use of expressions like 'canerows' rather than 'cornrows' points towards the Caribbean, the name Bumster is one that is specifically used as a generic term for black men who offer sexual services to female white tourists in The Gambia (see Nyanzi et al., "*Bumsters*, big black organs and old white gold"; McCombes 291–92) and would therefore suggest a West African setting, disseminating any presumable specificity of place. In fact, the play's holiday destination remains deliberately vague: it is a 'there' that can be rapidly transformed into a 'here' closer to the audience's reality. As sociological studies show, the problems associated with female sex tourism are strikingly similar wherever in the world it occurs, be it the Caribbean, Kenya, or the Gambia (see Pruitt and LaFont; Kibicho, "Sex Trade & Tourism in Kenya"; Nyanzi et al.; McCombes). In *trade*, these

problems emerge as the exploitation of the local at the hands of the tourists, who, empowered by globalisation, act without taking into account the detrimental consequences on those remote others that become their hosts for the duration of a holiday 'escape' that is temporary only for the tourists.

As it were, then, *trade* brings closer to home the problems that some attempts at holiday escapism may cause in the remote 'there' they seek out as a place onto which they project instant gratification without negative consequences. The casting practice of using, as stage directions demand, "*three black actresses*" (4) to play all the roles and switch between roles on stage adds to the change of perspectives on the tourism trade. As Goddard points out, this allows for the action to be seen through the eyes of the black women (see 137), that is, through the eyes of those remote others that are affected by the consequences of exploitative practices. Female sex tourism is thus used as a vehicle to stage the far-away problem of the exploitation of the so-called 'third world'. The vision of a get-away offered by a holiday in an exotic 'there', it becomes clear, cannot ignore that getting away from one 'here' means entering another 'here', the here of a neighbour, for whom we must accept responsibility.

The concern with the condition of remote suffering is then a recurring topic in debbie tucker green's plays. The suffering can either, as in *trade*, be directly caused by the behaviour of actors from the Global North who – wittingly or not – exploit global socio-economic imbalance, or, as in *stoning mary*, *generations* and *truth and reconciliation*, be the result of problems that need to be tackled on a global scale but are wilfully ignored by those privileged enough not to be directly affected by them, a behavioural pattern that also forms the basis for the dramatic action of *dirty butterfly*. In all cases, the realities of suffering are brought closer to Western audiences through the use of familiar settings, such as the family, relations with neighbours, a beach holiday, or simply by casting white actors to play roles that would stereotypically be associated with Africa. This familiarisation makes the particular problems of remote others more immediately affectively accessible and hence lends them greater urgency, implying their universality: The suffering on display is common to all humanity, and, following Appiah, everyone who is aware of such suffering holds responsibility for those affected by it. What thus connects all the plays discussed here is that they give a stage to injustice and suffering that is usually all too readily overlooked. tucker green's plays make (the pretense of) ignorance towards the suffering of others impossible and in this sense their function in the shrinking world of globalisation is to remind the audience of the cosmopolitan responsibilities they hold towards everyone, and in particular towards those faraway others who are in need.

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