Carina Bartleet

Sarah Daniels: Feminist Enque(e)ry within the Mainstream

Sarah Daniels is a playwright who has been closely identified with feminist theatre throughout her career. In this article, Carina Bartleet examines Daniels's plays from the early work of the 1980s through to her more recent output by exploring lesbian representation. Emphasis is placed on lesbian/queer representations through renegotiation with feminist theatre and gendered spectatorship. The work argues that Daniels's oft-criticized reluctance to stage lesbian desire can be viewed as a continuation of her feminist intervention into the gendered construction of the gaze in mainstream theatre. Carina Bartleet is a Lecturer in Drama at Oxford Brookes University. She read Biological Sciences at Oxford University, taking her PhD in Drama at Exeter on the intertextual dimension of the plays of Sarah Daniels. Her interests are science, gender, and performance in contemporary theatre. She is currently working on a book on theatre and science, and has published articles in *Modern Drama* and *Studies in Theatre and Performance*.

THE BRITISH PLAYWRIGHT Sarah Daniels (born in 1956) is frequently portrayed as one of the 'canonical' women playwrights of the contemporary British theatre scene. Described by the editors of *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* as 'arguably the most controversial and the most successful representative of a younger generation of women playwrights to emerge in the 1980s', Daniels has produced work that has been staged at the Royal National Theatre, and the Royal Court, as well as regional and 'fringe' venues and internationally.[1] She has also written widely for radio and television, notably for the BBC, for programmes as diverse as *EastEnders* and *Grange Hill*.

Principally positioned critically as one of the foremost feminist theatre writers currently writing in the UK, Daniels has written plays throughout her career that are notable nonetheless for the manner in which many of them engage with representations of lesbians onstage. This is evident from her first play to receive a professional production, *Ripen Our Darkness* in 1981, right up to her most recent, *Flying Under Bridges* from 2005.

Daniels herself helps foster the positioning of her work as feminist. In her opening to the Preface to the first volume of her collected plays, she observes that 'I didn't set out to be a "Feminist Playwright". I didn't set out to be a playwright at all' (Daniels, 1991, p. ix). At the end of the same Preface she concludes, 'I didn't set out to further the cause of Feminism. However, I am proud if some of my plays have added to its influence' (Daniels, 1991, p. xii). She thus allows her preface to frame her work through its negotiation of feminism.

This positioning of her work as something that is contained by or overlaps with feminist discourses is also reflected in much, though not all, critical discussion of her *œuvre*. The identification of Daniels as a contemporary, 'canonical' feminist theatre maker, however, should not and has not prevented discussion of her work from the perspective of queer theory, as exemplified by Alan Sinfield in his survey of the field, *Out On Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. Nor has it prevented others interrogating Daniels's work for its representation of lesbian characters or the overlap between feminism and critiques of homophobia, as the work of Christine Dymkowski, Margarete Rubik, Mary F. Brewer, Sandra Freeman and, most recently, Dimple Godiwala, illustrate.[2]

Daniels's plays from the 1980s present largely contemporary portraits of life in Britain from a feminist perspective. *Ripen*

 © CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS doi:10.1017/S0266464X1000028X
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Our Darkness, premiered at the Royal Court in September 1981, focuses on the life of Mary, a housewife and mother in the early 1980s. While Mary is the play's protagonist, and it is her struggles to exist beyond the twin roles of wife and mother to her husband and male children that is the focus of the action, her household is contrasted with two others: that of her daughter Anna and partner Julie, and Julie's stepmother and sister, Rene and Susan. In so doing, *Ripen Our Darkness* invites a comparison between the heterosexual and lesbian households as well as a cross-generational exploration of three interconnecting families.

Coming Out at the Royal Court

The differences between the three households are discernible even in Daniels's stage directions. Their settings are consistent with Daniels's predominantly realist dramaturgy, much of the play's action taking place in the three kitchens.[3] Linked to this and detectable within the phrasing of the stage directions is a gendered interrogation of domestic space. Scene One, for example, places the action in 'Mary's kitchen, Sunday morning. She has just made tea,' while Scene Two occurs in 'Rene's kitchen. Alf is drunk. Susan sits silently at the table. Rene buzzes around frantically, dusting and polishing the tatty furniture' (Daniels, 1991, p. 3, 12).

In contrast, Scene Three takes place in 'Anna and Julie's kitchen. Anna is knitting. Julie is watching television' (Daniels, 1991, p. 17). The kitchens are associated with the senior female character of the family, with the exception of Anna and Julie's kitchen which belongs to both women jointly. Furthermore, whereas Mary and Rene have or are completing domestic tasks, Anna and Julie are depicted engaging in activities usually associated with relaxation and leisure, such as watching television and knitting. This is reflected in the level of agency each of these four characters has within the play more widely. The lesbian couple, Anna and Julie, have identities outside the home either as a teacher, in the case of Anna, or as a student of the Open University. In this way, Daniels sets up a contrast between the agency and equality of her lesbian characters in contrast to their heterosexual elders and the more conventional families.

Daniels creates a similar contrast between heterosexual and lesbian households in *The Devil's Gateway* (1983). There are also striking similarities between the predicaments of the protagonist here and in *Ripen Our Darkness* in their domestic entrapment (Boireau, 1999, p. 226). In this play, which has been read as a reworking of the conventions of situation comedy, the central character, Betty, and her family are contrasted with the partnership between Fiona the social worker and Linda.[4] Links are forged between the characters via Linda, who is the daughter of Betty's friend and neighbour, Enid, and Fiona's role as social worker to Betty's family.

One of the most famous images of post-Second World War British theatre, which is reproduced in many books about drama of the time, is from the first production of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger* (1956).[5] In it, one character, Alison, stands to one side, an ironing board in front of her. To the centre of the picture, seated, is Cliff and to the left, standing, is the protagonist, Jimmy Porter. So iconic is the image that any representation of ironing in post-1956 British theatre may be read as referring to it. *The Devil's Gateway* remakes this image in a manner that functions to illustrate two paradigms of domesticity.

The first of these, which occurs in Scene Two, shows Fiona ironing as Linda enters. Fiona is ironing a dress because her job as a social worker requires her to make a court appearance, and for this she must be smartly dressed. The scene itself shows the two women discussing their jobs – that is, their roles outside the home. The second is established by the use of mirroring or reflection of the action in Scene Three. Here the focus is on the play's central character, Betty, and in it she is ironing. Betty, like Fiona in the previous scene, is not on her own: her friend and neighbour Enid is present.

In contrast to the previous scene in which Fiona and Linda discuss their jobs, the topic of Betty and Enid's conversation is doing the laundry. Stage directions that indicate that

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

domestic chores are to be carried out are reinforced by dialogue which acknowledges both the mundane routine of these jobs and the divergent meanings that they can take on in the lives of the housewife, for whom such quotidian tasks become an end in themselves, and to the working woman for whom such chores allow her to fulfil her professional role.

In performance, such contrasts also operate to create a sense of distance between the heterosexual (and older) characters and Fiona and Linda, for whom such tasks are not gendered or symbolic of their limitation to the domestic space, but are indicative of their lives outside the home. It is a strategy that, in its juxtaposition of portraits of nuclear or extended – and heterosexual – families with that of lesbian households reinforces the positing in *Ripen Our Darkness* of lesbian relationships as a real, and even superior, alternative to marriage. In this respect, Daniels's play looks back at *Anger* through a drama that re-presents the 'kitchen sink realism' of 1950s New Wave theatre through the perspectives of gender and sexuality.

Appropriately for a professional theatrical debut, *Ripen Our Darkness* theatricalizes Anna's 'coming out', but does so in a manner that resists staging it as an instance of intergenerational conflict between her and Mary. Instead, the play approaches it through Mary's growing discontent and subordination to home and family. In Scene Four, which takes place in Mary's kitchen, she and her churchwarden husband, David, are entertaining Roger the vicar and his wife, Daphne. It is Sunday and all four characters are playing Monopoly.

Characteristically, Mary tries to combine the playing of the game with clearing and washing away the lunch dishes and preparing the tea. After the exit of David and Roger, carrying cups of tea, Daphne is left alone with Mary in an attempt to persuade her to go on a Christian retreat while ostensibly helping her with the washing up. What ensues is a conversation that reveals the extent of the isolation to which both Mary and Daphne are subjected. It is also an opportunity for Mary to discuss Anna's attempt to broach the subject of her sexuality with her family, which has left her mother puzzled:

DAPHNE: What did Anna say [to her brother]?
MARY: Something about, 'It's been a long time since a little Dutch boy stuck his finger in me.'
DAPHNE: I see.
MARY: What?
DAPHNE: I think she meant that she prefers women's company in bed as well as out.
MARY: Oh. (*Then a long pause as she tries to digest this.*) Do you mean . . . I mean . . . Do they kiss?
DAPHNE: I should suppose so.
MARY: And touch each other?
DAPHNE: I would have thought so.
MARY: What on earth for?
DAPHNE: I don't know. (*She shrugs.*) Love?
MARY: No, she did say something, now I remember, about a political decision.

(Daniels, 1991, p. 32–3)

Attitudes to Lesbian Relationships

Mary's initial reaction to the meaning behind her daughter's revelation allows Daniels to present a range of stereotypical responses through the character that start with initial disbelief and puzzlement about what lesbians do in bed, to her secondary reaction 'I always said that antenatal care left a lot to be desired. . . . (*Pause.*) What a dreadful thing' (Daniels 1991, p. 33). Mary's second response contains echoes of arguments that identify faulty parenting as somehow the 'cause' of the child's sexuality.

By Scene Seven, however, Mary's attitude towards her daughter's relationship seems to have evolved again, this time into something approaching acceptance, when she remarks that, 'To tell you the truth, in many ways it comes as a big relief. . . . From the day you were born I've dreaded the speech your father would make at your wedding' (Daniels, 1991, p. 44).

The sub-plot concerning Anna and Julie's household is also an elaboration on this theme which works in tandem with the main plot and functions to undermine the authority of psychiatric discourse to comment on homosexuality. Marshall, the psychiatrist, makes a home visit to the Johnsons to assess Mary's state of mind. During his consultation with Mary, he discusses Anna. His

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

speeches, as Sandra Freeman has observed, present 'the most prejudiced view of lesbianism, straight from Havelock Ellis' (1997, p. 156). Thus, according to Marshall:

> True happiness depends on a lasting relationship, an option usually denied to homosexuals. Relationships between women do tend to last longer than they do for men – possibly this stems from the male's obsession with anal activities – but they are still full of unhappiness. But male or female, their eventual problem is common to both sexes. They are all looking for satisfaction where there can be no lasting satisfaction. They are all looking for love in a world where there can be no love.
>
> (Daniels, 1991, p. 59)

Marshall's assertion is just that: it is a generalization for which he offers Mary no statistical data or scientific evidence. Freeman's assessment that Mary rejects Marshall's perspective on homosexuality 'as total nonsense' is a fair observation, but it is one that can be developed further if it is considered within the context of the play overall and its comparison of three households. Daniels's depiction of two fractured families, from David's inability to see that, without his help, Mary's work within the house is constant, to Rene's fraught relations with her drunken husband Alf, offers an alternative perspective to that of Marshall.

Through this, *Ripen Our Darkness* suggests that heterosexual marriage is not necessarily a recipe for happiness. In contrast to the institution of marriage, which, in this play, breaks down with the sudden and suspicious death of Alf (who has choked to death on a scone) and Mary's suicide, the partnership of Anna and Julie is strong enough to withstand their arguments.[6] So Marshall's assertion that homosexual relationships are not enduring is undermined by the play's action overall.

Into the Mainstream

The work with the strongest claim to be a lesbian play within Daniels's entire *œuvre* is *Neaptide*. This play, which won the George Devine award for 1982 and was premiered at the Royal National Theatre in London in 1986, is a re-visioning in Adrienne Rich's sense of the term, of the classical Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone in which, thematically, lesbianism has a central place.[7] In *Neaptide*, the myth is transposed to modern-day London where the abduction of Persephone becomes a custody battle between a lesbian mother, Claire, and her erstwhile husband, Lawrence, over Poppy, their seven-year-old daughter.

But this is not the extent of the play's plot, for many of the scenes are devoted to depicting Claire's life beyond her family and, especially, the conflict between her sexuality and professional roles in her work as a teacher at a secondary school for girls. This allows Daniels to create contrasts and parallels between Claire's role as a teacher and in her personal relationships, which are brought to the fore when two members of her A-level year group, Diane and Terri, decide to be open about their relationship. The two girls resist the school's attempts to silence them on the grounds that, in the words of the school's Headteacher as she warns one of the pupils, 'once a name is put on it [lesbianism] publicly, it will involve condemnation from staff, parents and pupils alike' (Daniels, 1991, p. 269).

The situation reaches a climax when, faced with the expulsion of the two lesbian students, Claire is forced to choose between remaining silent about her own sexuality and a public declaration of it in support of the girls, even though the consequence may be the loss of her daughter's custody. This aspect of the play has a largely happy resolution, however, when it is discovered that the Headteacher is herself in a lesbian relationship. As Christine Dymkowski, who contrasts this play with Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, observes:

> Crucially, Claire is not alone in her difficulties, as *Neaptide*'s dramatis personæ . . . boasts many other lesbians: the headteacher, . . . the physical education teacher Linda Fellowes, students Diane and Terri, and other unseen schoolgirls who take part in an offstage meeting. Daniels's refusal to represent lesbianism in its usual theatrical guise as an isolated and individual problem challenges the audience to accept it as the part of everyday life it so manifestly is for a significant proportion of the population. (Dymkowski, 1996, p. 69)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press



Jessica Turner as Claire, the lesbian mother fighting for custody, in the production of *Neaptide* at the Cottesloe, 1986. Photo: Ivan Kyncl.

Daniels's statistically unlikely solution to Claire's professional dilemma is a humorous reversal of the norm. The threat to Diane and Terri's A-level studies is averted because they gain knowledge that they are not isolated in terms of their sexuality.

Overlapping Discourses

Despite the play's panoply of lesbian characters, *Neaptide* has been criticized for its reticence in staging lesbian relationships. As one critic observed, noting the play's mainstream positioning, 'No lesbian relationship is, in fact, depicted. . . . Claire is living without a lover at present, the headmistress's companion only shouts a few words from offstage, and the worst we hear about the two defiant lesbian pupils is a report that they were seen kissing' (Rubik, 1996, p. 17–18).

The same arguments are linked much more explicitly by Alan Sinfield, in whose opinion:

> there is a cost, in the representation of lesbian lives, for getting all that onto a National Theatre stage: Claire has no love scenes, no women partners, no evident attraction to other women. . . . Further, these emphases cut the play off from themes that might engage a lesbian audience, such as how your partner and child get along together. (Sinfield, 1999, p. 345)

In contrast to Sinfield, Mary F. Brewer positions *Neaptide* as belonging 'to the developing pattern within radical feminism of gynocentric writing' (Brewer, 1999, p. 20). Leaving aside Sinfield's somewhat biologically reductive assumption that lesbian women will find themes of mothering and personal relationships necessarily of interest, the criticisms voiced by him and Rubik have some foundation both in *Neaptide* and in Daniels's *œuvre* more widely, with the exception of *Byrthrite* (1986) and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994). Brewer's discussion of Daniels's play asserts that: *'Neaptide* should not be read as the story of a woman or a mother separated from her daughter, but as the story of a *lesbian mother-woman bringing up her daughter alone* in a heteropatriarchal culture that denigrates all women, where lesbianism is feared and despised, and in the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

midst of a *backlash against single mothers*' (Brewer, 1999, p. 20; emphasis added).

This analysis represents a significant development in the critical debate concerning *Neaptide*. Through it, feminism and lesbianism are linked. Parallels are drawn between the fear of lesbianism and a culture that is more widely misogynist. Furthermore, Brewer's analysis links Claire's single status with a 'backlash against single mothers'. The strength of this approach is that it is open to Daniels's dramaturgy, not as a discrete example either of feminist or queer theatre, but to the interaction and overlap between the two political discourses that are detectable within it.

In creating a character who is without a partner, Daniels's dramaturgy exposes discrimination against lesbians as a mixture of homophobia and misogyny. While Sinfield is undoubtedly correct when he asserts that 'mainstream address is bound to have thematic consequences', both he and Rubik, in focusing on lesbian representation with respect to Daniels's work, fail to consider it within the context of her entire corpus and wider engagement with feminist discourse (Sinfield, 1999, p. 344).

Perspectives on *Masterpieces*

Feminist critical perspectives on Daniels's early work from the 1980s indirectly open up the possibility for a markedly divergent reading of lesbian representation. Elaine Aston's exploration of Daniels's best known play and something of a *succès de scandale*, *Masterpieces* (1983), sees the play through its form, and especially the manner in which it resists constructing women as objects in a voyeuristic spectacle. Thus, according to Aston, 'the central narrative of *Masterpieces* is the narrative of "looking-at-being-looked-at-ness". The play is not a "soft-edged" critique of the gaze, but an intervention in its production' (Aston, 1995, p. 129).

Masterpieces is a play that explores the construction of 'woman' as a spectacle for construction within patriarchy and, although it is the sole play of Daniels's to make pornography its focus, Aston's reading of it has relevance to a discussion of Daniels's work more widely. Reading the absence of demonstrative lesbian desire onstage in Daniels's plays through Aston's theorization of resistance to the male gaze, it becomes apparent that what, initially, has been seen as a less than radical representation of lesbianism within the mainstream can, in contradistinction, be read as a sophisticated and nuanced renegotiation of representational processes in mainstream theatre.

Daniels's writing creates a theatrical space for lesbian experiences without subordinating them to heterosexual voyeurism. Crucially, Daniels's dramaturgy is a feminist negotiation of lesbian desire in its resistance to the possible readings of lesbianism as voyeuristic spectacle within mainstream theatrical structures. Similarly, Daniels's heterosexual women characters are constructed in a manner that is resistant to the possibility of becoming the object of voyeuristic desire.

Like *Neaptide*, *Byrthrite* (1986) has been claimed as one of Daniels's lesbian plays (Freeman, 1997, p. 158). Set in seventeenth-century England, the play concerns the lives of a group of women in Essex during the Civil War and intersperses these with songs which make parallels between the action and late twentieth-century reproductive technology. Organized on a *mise-en-abyme* structure, one of the characters, Rose, it transpires is writing a very similar if not the same play (Daniels, 1991, p. 410–12).[8]

Given the play's focus on the female characters and their relationships with each other as well as attempts to avoid persecution as witches, it is unsurprising that this play has been read alongside *Neaptide* as one of Daniels's explorations of lesbian existence. Freeman, for example, identifies the play as an example of epic theatre, observing that 'The lesbian line is . . . very strong: all the women are bonded in a sisterhood of esoteric knowledge which leads to particular emotional involvement and in some cases falling in love' (Freeman, 1997, p. 161).

Although *Byrthrite* does indeed boast a number of lesbian characters, it also lays claim to be an interrogation of the male usurpation and intervention into human

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

reproduction through technology and the increasing medicalization of the female body. The play's title, *Byrthrite*, is an allusion to the biblical story, in Genesis 25, of Esau selling his birthright to his brother, Jacob. The reference to this story suggests that, like Esau, the women in the play will be supplanted by their own kin. The allusion invites parallels with, and provides the link for, two of the play's central themes, the persecution of women as witches and late-twentieth-century reproductive technology. Allusively, both can be read as a selling of women's birthright.

Not Just a Passing Phase: into the 1990s

Daniels's interest in the onstage representation of lesbian women has proved to be one of the constants of her dramaturgy. Many of the plays of the 1990s and beyond have also featured lesbian characters. *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992), a play written for Clean Break Theatre Company on the subject of women in 'special hospitals' – that is, institutions for women considered to be criminally violent and mentally ill – features a trio of women patients, one of whom, Dee, is a lesbian.

As I have detailed elsewhere, all three patients are maddened re-presentations of the Virgin Mary (Bartleet, 2003, p. 250–7); however, the character of Dee offers the most determined reworking. Dee is described as a 'smack-head' and a 'bar dyke', who has 'made a career out of punching policemen', by her guardian angel when she visits the character in seclusion (Daniels, 1994, p. 230). A monologue given to Dee at the beginning of Scene Twelve foregrounds the character's life through details that position her within a lesbian subculture:

> I often distract myself by imagining my life as a film. I can see a picture of myself on the poster, a sort of cross between Martina [Navratilova] and K. D. [Lang] only younger. With the caption underneath 'When the rescue services arrived, the nightmare began.' But I said I wanted help. I don't admit that to no one now. (Daniels 1994, p. 229)

Dee's speech at this point is a projection or fictionalization. In it, Dee dissociates herself from her surroundings and her placement within seclusion (and isolation as the only gay character in the play) in the Secure Unit to project herself into a film and its publicity. Significantly, when she does so, it is to identify herself with two successful women of the time, Martina Navratilova, one of the most successful female tennis players, and K. D. Lang, a singer, both of whom were widely known to be lesbians at the time of the play's performance.

Dee's identification contrasts with an earlier scene (Part One, Scene Eight) that depicts the three patients preparing for a Christmas party. In it, she is shown getting ready by putting on a dress which, Daniels's stage directions note, 'looks nice enough but Dee looks very odd in it' (Daniels, 1994, p. 220). The notion that Dee is unfamiliar with normal social and dress conventions for women is developed later on in the same scene when the other two patients, Claudia and Ruth, assist her while she attempts to learn to walk in high heels.

The alien nature of sanctioned, heteronormative social roles is a theme that runs throughout the play, each of the three women having transgressed these at some point. While this is developed to its fullest through Dee, both the heterosexual women patients, Claudia and Ruth, manifest unease/dis-ease in their deviance from accepted norms.[9] In a striking example, Daniels uses Dee's visitation from the Angel while she is in seclusion to create a parody of the events that lead up to the birth of Christ.

> ANGEL: I'm not going to go away until I've told you a story –
> DEE: You can stop right there. You're an angel. This is Christmas. Let me tell you straight off I'm not having a baby for no one.
> ANGEL: Listen, duck, Brown Owls have been struck dead for comparing themselves to the Virgin Mary never mind smack-head, bar dykes who've made a career out of punching policemen. (Daniels, 1994, p. 230)

Shaz in the Community

Daniels returns to some of these themes in *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994), which in many respects has a good claim to be her

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

most camp play to date. The play focuses on Esme, a retired civil servant, and her niece, Shaz. It is comic in tone and much of the comedy rests on the mismatch between Esme and Shaz as two contrasting types. Esme is elderly whilst Shaz is young; Esme is a God-fearing Christian with a tendency to look for guidance from God at every opportunity, while Shaz, in contrast, is unable to open her mouth without blaspheming.

The divergent natures of the two characters is at its clearest in their attitudes towards sexuality and especially through the play's staging of Shaz's lesbian identity. At the opening of the play, Shaz, like Dee in *Head-Rot Holiday*, is a patient/inmate in a special hospital after spending time in Broadmoor, the secure special hospital that houses those persons deemed to be dangerously violent and mentally ill. Unlike Dee, however, Shaz is on the verge of being released into the community under licence, and the first scene of the play depicts her Probation Officer paying a visit to Esme to see if she would be suitable and willing to take Shaz on her discharge.

On the way home from the hospital on the train, Shaz, whose sexuality has already been established in an earlier scene, meets Pat, a ticket inspector/PhD student. The encounter between them, which occurs after an altercation about a train fare, comes the nearest to a pick-up scene in Daniels's work:

PAT: I'm not really cut out for this job. I'm a bit short on social skills. Here. (*Offering Shaz her ticket*.) Here, you can have this.
SHAZ: Ta. Ta very much.
Silence.
PAT: You been a dyke long?
SHAZ: Pardon?
PAT: I said, have you got a bike at home?
SHAZ: Yes and no.
PAT: Sorry?
SHAZ: Did you? You just did ask me if? Didn't you? Yeah, I am and no I haven't – got a bike.
PAT: You got a girlfriend then?
SHAZ: No.
PAT: Oh. (Daniels, 1994, p. 285)

The dialogue between Shaz and Pat is a frank rather than explicit staging of lesbian desire. The culmination of the exchange between the two is the return of Shaz's ticket to her, but with Pat's telephone number on the back.

Kinds of Incarceration

Daniels's elaboration of this theme, which charts the relationship between Shaz and Pat and its eventual breakdown when Shaz reveals the nature of the crime that resulted in her incarceration, extends beyond the discursive to a more demonstrative staging of lesbian desire. In the following scene, Part One, Scene Five, the two characters meet again. This time, however, the scene takes place in a park with Shaz and Pat sitting 'on a grounded aeroplane' and the sound of children playing in the distance (Daniels, 1994, p. 286). The stage directions at the end of this scene strengthen the notion that this is a burgeoning love affair between the two women:

PAT: What I'd really like is a kiss.
SHAZ: Oh.
Shaz looks at her but feels too awkward to move towards her. Pat moves towards Shaz and kisses her on the mouth and then pulls away slightly. Shaz leans forward and kisses her back.
(Daniels, 1994, p. 287)

If *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* presents a much more unequivocal and demonstrative staging of lesbian desire than *Neaptide*, it is important to remember that it does so from a different context. First, *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* does not focus on lesbianism in a straightforward manner. Shaz's sexuality is never purely incidental, but the discrimination against and silencing of lesbians as issues or themes to be explored are not developed in this play in the same way as in *Neaptide*, for example. Shaz's relationship is nowhere near as central to the plot as Claire's sexuality is in *Neaptide*, while Daniels uses the relationship between Shaz and Pat to dramatize the extent to which Shaz is unable to transcend her past. Daniels never suggests that Shaz is a lesbian because of the abuse she has suffered, but she does show how the character's ability to express her sexuality is hindered as a consequence of her actions

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press



Tanya Ronder and Marlene Sidaway in *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, 1994. Photo: Dee Conway.

resulting from the mental anguish she has suffered.

The reason for Shaz's incarceration in Broadmoor is not revealed until Pat is told in Part One, Scene Seven. As one of the conditions of Shaz moving in to live with Pat she is required to supply her with the details of her offence. In a moving scene, which again takes place in the park with the grounded aeroplane, Shaz displays reluctance about sharing the details. Realizing that it is likely to be one of the conditions the probation service will set if she is to live with Pat, Shaz tells her lover about what happened after she became the subject of incestuous sexual abuse at the hands of her father and was taken into care:

SHAZ (*without emotion*): Three years after I was taken into care my mother died. I didn't feel anything. I thought, 'That's it then. My mother's dead.' She'd not visited me in three years. I was in care because she put him before me.

PAT: Women's conditioning is so strong.

SHAZ (*without looking at her*): You won't find any easy answers for this in the books you've read. . . . But when she died a feeling of hope went. Anyway, several years later my father married again. They had two children, a boy, and a baby girl. I left care when I sixteen. You had to. I got a job in an old people's home. I was – Oh, I don't know. My behaviour was rather strange. I used to cut myself. No one ever knew. They told me I was very good at my job. They had no idea. I was – it was like I was very cut off. I decided to look for and found my father. He was pleased enough to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

be reunited. I babysat for them. They gave me a key to the house. Sometimes when they were out I would let myself in and write stuff with her lipstick over the mirror. Tip her perfume over the bed. Smear body lotion into the carpet. One evening I was babysitting – (*She stops.*)

PAT: You, you killed the little boy?

SHAZ: No, I murdered the baby. Girl. I picked her up from her crib thing and held her. Squeezed her. Until she stopped breathing. When I knew she was dead, I sat down, turned the telly up and waited for them to come home.

PAT: Why? Why her? (*Silence. Pat makes a decision here not to see Shaz again.*) It's very easy though, I mean it must be, they're so fragile –

SHAZ: I meant to kill her. (Daniels, 1994, p. 297)

Significantly, both this scene and the earlier one in which Shaz and Pat first kiss, occur in a children's park with a grounded aeroplane. In many respects, one scene presents the mirror image of the other through the action: a joining and a parting of lovers. Symbolically, the aircraft can be said to parallel Shaz's relationship with Pat. What seems at first to be a viable relationship and, for Shaz, a far better alternative to life with her decidedly homophobic aunt, Esme, never takes off. Their relationship, like the aircraft itself, is grounded by the past. For Shaz, a future with Pat is impossible because she killed a female baby rather than her male abuser.

The exchange between Shaz and Pat is remarkable for the manner in which Shaz's life is resistant to Pat's feminist theorizing about it. Pat's assumption that Shaz's crime was the murder of her abuser is crushed by the facts and Shaz's warning that she 'won't find any easy answers for this in the books you've read' (Daniels, 1994, p. 297). The dialogue between the two characters in this scene dramatizes the tensions that arise between feminist theory, the exploration of lesbian desire, and the very material harm that can result from sexual abuse.

Daniels's reworking of these discourses to fit the play's comedic structure requires that these tensions be resolved. This is achieved through an ending that transcends rather than provides a solution to the tensions. If Shaz is denied a 'happy ever after' fairy tale ending with Pat, then she is also saved from ending her days as a patient hospitalized within the mental health system through the contrived, hilarious, and more than a little camp manner of her rescue by Esme. Shaz's liberation from the psychiatric system comes when Esme threatens both Shaz and her psychiatrist, Dr Morton, with a replica handgun.

Instead, of a romantic resolution to the comedy, Daniels opens up the possibility of a queer space for Shaz and, through *Neaptide*-like flight from the United Kingdom, another alternative to the heterosexual nuclear family. The play ends with Esme and Shaz on board a cruise liner – the homophonic wordplay between cruise as in a sexual pick-up and a pleasurable sea voyage having been established through Shaz's comment that 'despite its name a cruise is a very heterosexual experience' (1994, p. 336). Their destination, Limnos, would seem to undermine Shaz's assertion, however, as Esme informs her niece that Mitilini (also known as Lesbos), the home of the classical Greek poet Sappho, is 'just across the bay' (1994, p. 336). In this conclusion, the play does not deny Shaz's sexuality but defers it in order to show the limitations of a life in late-twentieth-century Britain. Crucially, the play's ending dramatizes a beginning. For Shaz, that beginning – and the play's ending – is open to queer possibilities.[10]

Ambiguities and Discursive Tensions

If Daniels is at her most daring in both the thematic and onstage representation of lesbian desire in *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*, her 1995 adaptation of the 1984 novel *Blow Your House Down* by the Booker prizewinning writer Pat Barker for Theatre Live, Newcastle, offers a very different perspective. Pat Barker's novel centres on the lives of working-class women in the north of England. Many of the women featured in the story are working as prostitutes, and the scenario has many resemblances to the real-life Yorkshire Ripper case.[11]

In its dramaturgy, this play, alongside *Masterpieces*, is one of Daniels's most formally innovative; it exploits the technique of non-linear plotting and integrates some of the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

conventions of theatrical Expressionism. One of the most significant changes that Daniels makes in her transposition of Barker's novelistic discourse into her dramatic one centres on two characters, Carol and Jean. Like many of the other female characters, they are depicted as prostitutes but are distinctive because they are revealed to be lovers. When Carol disappears and is found murdered – another victim of the serial killer – Jean, traumatized by the loss of her lover, goes out looking for the murderer, with the purpose of ending his life in revenge.

As I have detailed elsewhere, the relationship between Jean and Carol provides a major point of difference between Barker's novel and Daniels's adaptation (Bartleet, 2005). One of the most striking changes is the manner in which Daniels opts to treat the lesbian relationship between the two characters: thus, in 'the dramatic text Carol and Jean's lesbian relationship is never realized. Instead, Daniels depicts two close friends for whom a relationship remains in a forever-thwarted future' (Bartleet, 2005, p. 93).

Furthermore Daniels's subsequent rendering of Carol's attitude towards the possibilities of a lesbian relationship with her friend is decidedly equivocal in the play. In Scene Twelve, she is cross-examined by a policewoman when she tries to report Jean missing. Carol's response to the question of whether she and Jean were lovers is an emphatic rejection. Later, however, in Scene Fourteen, Carol, overcome with the grief and the shock of identifying the dead body of her friend, shows a more ambivalent attitude: 'I don't know why. I wanted – I wanted to kiss your face but don't worry, I never. I realized that I'd never so much as touched your face in real life' (Bartleet, 2005, p. 94).

Daniels's reworking of Carol's dialogue, in particular, can be considered as a deferral of the lesbian relationship Barker depicts. Daniels's play is resistant – at least superficially – to the transposition of Jean and Carol's relationship to the stage. In many respects, the play opens itself out to criticisms, such as those levelled against *Neaptide* by Sinfield and Rubik, that its writer has sought wider audiences through adopting a mainstream dramaturgy that risks the danger of ignoring lesbian representation. On closer scrutiny – and again as in *Neaptide* – the play reveals discursive tensions that indicate a sensitivity towards and integration of feminist theory, notably in its treatment of violence against women.

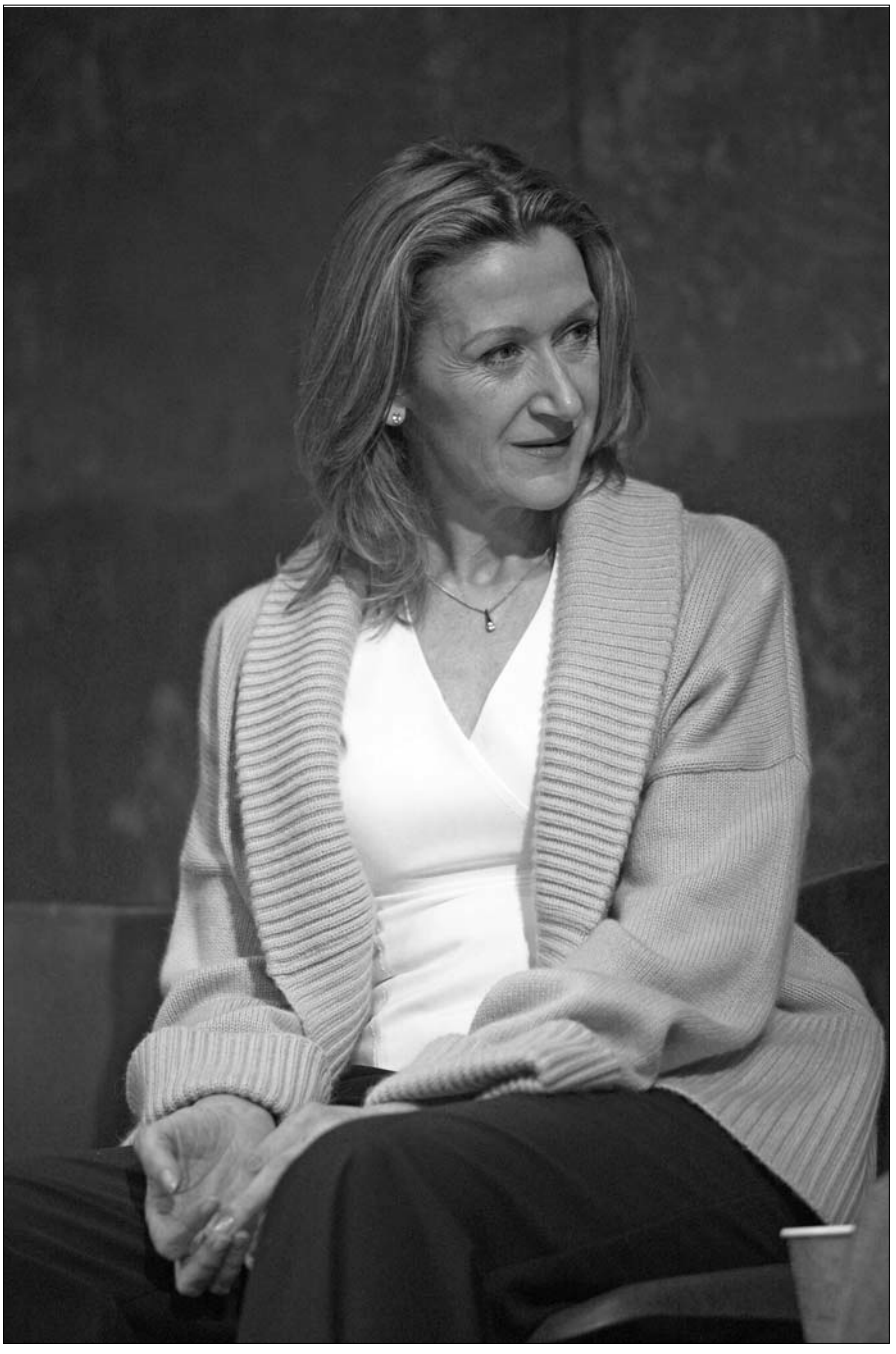
Decentring the 'Male Gaze'

Significantly, for a play that dramatizes a story in which women are subject to extreme violence at the hands of a male killer, the adaptation displays a clear engagement with feminist theorizing in a determined reworking of the more graphic aspects of Barker's text and the portrayal of murder in particular. Chapter Ten of Barker's novel, which details the horrific murder of Kath, one of the prostitutes, is presented from the perspective of the serial killer. Ann Ardis has noted that Barker's depiction of Kath's murder is 'pornographic, in the sense that Barker shows the murderer's association of sex and violence without reassuring us that we are being offered a critique of this behaviour' (Ardis, 1991, p. 51). Although Daniels retains the murder as part of the play's narrative, it is relegated to offstage and unrepresentable.

This strategy is consistent with Daniels's *œuvre* more widely with regard to violence. Not one of Daniels's plays for the theatre depicts an act of violence against a lone woman by a man, although some – and *Blow Your House Down* is included in this group – do show acts of extreme force inflicted on one human by another.[12] It is also in keeping with Daniels's depiction of lesbianism in this play. What, at first glance, can been seen as one of the costs of representing lesbianism in mainstream theatre can, I contend, be theorized as a successful negotiation of feminist discourse within a dominant dramatic form and theatrical convention.

Even more significant perhaps is the fact that Daniels's negotiation of feminism and dramatic form creates the opportunity for drama in which lesbians can be the focus of the action in mainstream theatres. In *Blow Your House Down*, the transposition of Carol and Jean's relationship to an imagined but

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press



Inge, in *Flying Under Bridges*, at the Watford Palace Theatre, 2005. Photo © Manuel Harlan, with kind permission from the photographer and Watford Palace Theatre.

thwarted future can be read alongside the relegation of Kath's murder offstage. When considered together and read like *Neaptide* in combination with Aston's theorizing on *Masterpieces*, it becomes apparent that both may be viewed as textual strategies which function as instances of resistance to voyeurism within the mainstream theatrical context. Both the violent murder of Kath (for which Barker invites readers to position themselves with the killer) and an explicit show of lesbian desire onstage possess the potential to be appropriated by the dominant subject position of mainstream representational processes – that is famously described by Laura Mulvey as the 'male gaze'.[13] Outside a few

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press



Family meal, in *Flying Under Bridges*, at the Watford Palace Theatre, 2005. Photo © Manuel Harlan, with kind permission from the photographer and Watford Palace Theatre.

fringe venues, such as London's Drill Hall and Oval House, both of which have at times been identified as producing niche lesbian theatre, such a strategy can be seen as a means by which the representation of lesbians on mainstream stages can avoid or at least decentre the male gaze as the privileged position of the spectacle.

A Selective Adaptation

Daniels's own positioning as a feminist playwright who has been known for her consistently positive and sensitive portrayal of lesbian characters can be seen in one of her more recent works, a commission for the Watford Palace Theatre, premiered in March 2005. The play, *Flying Under Bridges*, was an adaptation for the stage of a novel of the same name by Sandi Toksvig, published in 2001. The novel centres on the life of a middle-aged woman, Eve Marshall, who lives and, indeed, has spent all her life in the Home Counties town of Edenford. Toksvig's comic novel details the events that ensue when Eve meets her former school friend, Inge Holbrook. Inge, a former Olympic athlete and famous television celebrity brings glamour – and her partner, Kate – into Edenford society. Eve herself brings infamy when she runs down and kills her daughter's fiancé on the day of her wedding.

Daniels's adaptation does much to retain the comic flavour of the novel and the main elements of the plot. Given the number of characters that Toksvig opts to depict in the novel, it is unsurprising that Daniels's adaptation reduces the number to twelve – with doubling, so that only six performers are required – and only the actress playing Eve does not double parts. Inge's lover, Kate, is referred to but never features in the action, Eve's sister is written out of the play altogether and the part of Inge is written to be doubled by the same performer as Eve's mother.

While Daniels simplifies much in order to focus on the main plot – that of the events and reasons which lead up to Eve's murderous act of running over her daughter's fiancé – it retains the significant sub-plot of Inge's return to Edenford. In relegating Kate to the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

offstage world, Daniels's *Flying Under Bridges* precludes the theatricalization of lesbian desire but, by retaining the Inge sub-plot, she opts to dramatize themes that are specific to lesbian/gay/queer existence. The first concerns the issue of prominent people who are 'outed' by journalists who deem that knowledge of their sexuality is in the public interest; and the second, the lack of rights granted to women and men in homosexual partnerships. When Inge's partner, Kate, dies of cancer, she is prevented from seeing her and arranging her funeral. In a speech addressed to the audience directly, Eve reports the extent of her friend's problem:

> I'd been home a week when Kate died. The next day Inge came to see me. She said that Kate's mother had taken charge of organizing the burial, had organized for Kate's body to be removed to a funeral parlour and refused to tell Inge where it was. Apparently as next of kin this was her legal right. She'd even employed the services of Hogget, Hooper and Hoddle to help her enforce it. Not that Inge had any legal rights anyway.
>
> (Daniels, 2005a, p. 87.)

Through her selective adaptation of Sandi Toksvig's novel, Daniels opts to explore the very real distress caused by the lack of legal rights accorded to lesbian and gay couples before the enactment of civil partnerships in 2004. Thus, despite Inge's longstanding relationship with her partner, Daniels shows how, legally, she is powerless to intervene when Kate's estranged (and homophobic) mother takes control of her daughter's estate and makes the funeral arrangements.

Furthermore, Daniels's adaptation retains another aspect of Toksvig's Inge plot: that of celebrity and compulsory heterosexuality. In Toksvig's novel, Inge is subjected to journalistic intrusion into her private life.

> Inge couldn't cope any more. Kate was dying and there was nothing she could do.
>
> A silver Volkswagen Golf was sitting outside the house when Inge got home. A tall, blond woman and a photographer got out. Before Inge was halfway out of her car the photographer was snapping at her. Her instinct was to hide but perhaps for once in her life she had had enough.
>
> (Toksvig, 2001, p. 254)

Toksvig uses comedy to make a point about journalistic intrusion into the private lives of celebrities. In Toksvig's novel, Inge comes out to the female journalist who is working on the possibility that Inge has secretly been in a relationship with a male footballer, when she holds up an article about her not being married. Daniels is more direct. Early on in the play, in Scene Four, she dramatizes the chance meeting between Eve and her former school friend Inge at the hospital:

> INGE: I feel as though I'm continually on the run.
> EVE: Who from?
> INGE: Everyone. Myself. I have to be nice to people when they come up to me in the street. I have to guard my privacy with my life and I can't even keep myself to myself here.
> EVE: I would have thought that was a small price to pay for fame and fortune?
>
> *Beat. Eve smiles, hoping she hasn't said something wrong.*
>
> INGE: It might be if I wasn't gay and my partner didn't have cancer.
>
> (Daniels, 2005a, p. 38–9)

Through Inge, Daniels's play suggests that with celebrity comes a reduction in privacy and that, for gay people, the policing of one's behaviour is greater and thus the 'cost' is higher. Whereas for Eve the dilemma of celebrity leading to a reduction in personal privacy is seen as a fair economic exchange, this passage suggests that, for Inge who has to 'guard' her 'privacy with' her 'life' it is an act of survival.

Re-visioning Realist Conventions

When considered together, Daniels's plays are significant examples of feminist theatre that present a sustained exploration of lesbian representation onstage. Through her predominantly realist dramaturgy, Daniels explores issues such as homophobia and the lack of rights accorded to lesbian and gay people in a multitude of settings, including the legal and mental health systems as well as the gendered dynamics and division of labour in families. The majority of Daniels's plays include lesbian characters and many explore issues or political debates specific to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

lesbian existence. Furthermore, Daniels's engagement with and commitment to dramatizing the lesbian subject spans her *œuvre* from her earliest plays to her most recent.

Many of Daniels's plays offer revisionary approaches to lesbianism within the context of mainstream theatre. Thus, for example, *Ripen Our Darkness* re-presents lesbianism not as pathology but as an alternative to the gendered inequalities of heterosexual marriage. *Neaptide* re-presents Greek myth in order to question the (in)justice of a judicial system that views lesbian mothers as unfit to be awarded custody of their children on the grounds of their sexuality.

Revisionary techniques in combination with the predominantly realist conventions of Daniels's dramaturgy intervene in the systems of representation and especially in the construction of subjectivity. Importantly, for a playwright whose work has been staged in mainstream theatres, Daniels employs dramaturgical strategies that place lesbian existence centre stage and yet frame this through techniques that intervene in the gendered construction of the gaze and, especially, the avoidance of voyeurism.

In many of the plays discussed here, Daniels subordinates lesbian desire to a feminist intervention into the gaze through her dramaturgy. Thus, the tensions identified by Sinfield and Rubik relating to the absence of desire in Daniels's characterization of Claire in *Neaptide*, for example, can be read, via feminist theorizing on spectatorship, as an intervention in the gaze in mainstream theatre.

In re-presenting the category of lesbian as a valid subject position, Daniels's dramaturgy presents the potential for a theatre that denotes lesbian desire outside voyeuristic spectacle. In so doing, her writing creates both a voice and a space for lesbian experience and subjectivity within mainstream theatre.

References

Ann Ardis, 'Political Attentiveness vs. Political Correctness: Teaching Pat Barker's *Blow Your House Down*', *College Literature*, XVIII, No.3 (1991), p. 44–54.

Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt, ed., T*he Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Carina Bartleet, *Stages of Rewriting: Intertextuality and the Dramatic Texts of Sarah Daniels* (PhD Thesis, University of Exeter, 2001).

———, 'Sarah Daniels' Hysteria Plays: Re-presentations of Madness in *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Head-Rot Holiday*', *Modern Drama*, XLVI, No. 2 (2003), p. 241–60.

———, 'Bringing the House Down: Pat Barker, Sarah Daniels, and the Dramatic Dialogue', in Sharon Moneith, Margaretta Jolly, Nahem Yousaf, and Ronald Paul, ed., C*ritical Perspective on Pat Barker.*

Nicole Boireau, 'La Comédie selon Sarah Daniels ou l'éloge de la raison', *Etudes anglaises*, LII, No. 2 (1999), p. 225–36.

Mary F. Brewer, *Race, Sex, and Gender in Contemporary Women's Theatre: the Construction of 'Woman'* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).

Sarah Daniels, *Plays: One* (London: Methuen, 1991).

———, *Plays: Two* (London: Methuen, 1994).

———, *Flying Under Bridges*, rehearsal draft, (unpublished MS, 2005), courtesy of Sarah Daniels.

———, *Blow Your House Down*, in Sharon Moneith, Margaretta Jolly, Nahem Yousaf, and Ronald Paul, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Pat Barker* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005).

Christine Dymkowski, 'Breaking the Rules: the Plays of Sarah Daniels', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, V, No. 1 (1996) p. 63–75.

Sandra Freeman, *Putting Your Daughters on the Stage: Lesbian Theatre from the 1970s to the 1990s* (London: Cassell, 1997).

Dimple Godiwala, in Godiwala, ed., 'Through the Looking Glass with Sarah Daniels', *Alternatives in the Mainstream II: Queer Theatres in Post-war Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007).

Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, XVI, No. 3 (1975), p. 6–18.

Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken', in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966–1978* (London: Virago, 1980).

Margarete Rubik, 'Fringe or Mainstream? What is Marketable?', *Contemporary Drama in English*, IV (1996), p. 15–24.

Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century* (London; New Haven: Yale University Pres, 1999).

Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (rev. ed, London: Faber, 1993).

J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 1: Realism and Naturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Sandi Toksvig, *Flying Under Bridges* (London: Time Warner, 2001).

Notes

1. Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt (2000), 'The Question of the Canon', in Aston and Reinelt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*, p. 152.

2. Mary F. Brewer, Christine Dymkowski, Sandra Freeman, Dimple Godiwala, and Margarete Rubik, as individually cited above. All these works focus prim-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press

arily on representation of lesbian characters in Daniels's play. The most recent, Godiwala's, explores lesbian representation and poetics by reading Daniels's play through the prism of melodrama.

3. Only five of the fourteen scenes take place in other locations, and of these just two (Five and Twelve) stipulate no recognizable location in the stage directions. Both of these scenes present monologues, which suggests a mode of direct address to the audience in their performance.

4. See, for example, Carina Bartleet (2001), *Stages of Rewriting*. The source argues that the play can be read through notions of situation comedy because: 'Unlike the majority of Daniels's stage plays, the story progresses to a relatively happy resolution and . . . there are many twists and turns that are turned to comic advantage. The domestic setting of this play, combined with a recognizable cast of character "types" such as Enid, a modern-day Mrs Malaprop; the officially unemployed but working husband, Jim; the problem teenage son and the unhappily married daughter with middle-class pretensions, all contribute to make this one of the purely comic of Daniels's plays. Thus the play can be seen as both comic and situated within the domestic realm' (p. 113).

5. See, for example, J. L. Styan's *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, which starts with Zola and *Thérèse Raquin*, yet this photograph of the first production of *Look Back in Anger* has been selected for the cover of the volume in paperback.

6. See Christine Dymkowski (1996). In her article, Dymkowski notes that the structure of this play 'carefully lays the ground for . . . comparison' between heterosexual and lesbian characters and observes of the partnership between Anna and Julie that, 'unlike the heterosexual relationships in which the men dominate their wives, this one is balanced with neither woman consistently having the upper hand' (p. 66).

7. Adrienne Rich argues that 'Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, or entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival' (1980, p. 35).

8. Rose, the play's author, discusses her work with Grace, one of the other characters, in Part Two, Scene Eight. The events and characters appear to resemble those of *Byrthrite* itself.

9. See Carina Bartleet (2003), p. 251–3. The article argues that all three patients' stories can be read as rejections of the maternal paradigm of the Virgin Mary. Through it, Claudia's story of depression and inability to cope with her young family can be read as a near-reversal of the Nativity. Ruth's rejection of this maternal paradigm is manifest through the character's tendency to quote the song lyrics of Madonna. In her dialogue, the biblical 'my lady' becomes transformed through homophonic play into the 'mad lady' (Mad Donna).

10. For a reading of this play and its ending as metaphorical 'coming outs' see Dimple Godiwala, 'Through the Looking Glass with Sarah Daniels', p. 206–210.

11. The details of this notorious serial-killer case from the late 1970s and early 1980s is relayed in Joan Smith (1993), who notes, in particular, how the case made by the police was constructed around the erroneous notion that the killer targeted women because they were prostitutes.

12. Examples from Daniels's wider *œuvre* include Rowena's act of pushing a man she perceives to be a threat to her safety in *Masterpieces*, the murder of Greg, one of the prostitutes' clients, in *Blow Your House Down*, and the three young people who are held and subjected to torture by three old ladies in *Morning Glory* (2001).

13. See Laura Mulvey's discussion in 'Visual Pleasure' of the construction of the gaze through cinema, with special reference to Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*. Mulvey notes that, 'the determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure. . . . In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*' (p. 11).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X1000028X Published online by Cambridge University Press