

Giving Ear to Death-Worlds: Necropolitical Dramaturgy, Racialised Vulnerability, and the Legal Counter-Archive in Debbie Tucker Green's *Ear for Eye*

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Abstract

This study analyses Debbie Tucker Green's *ear for eye* (2018) through Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, responding to comparatively limited critical attention to the dramatic forms through which the play renders racialised vulnerability perceptible. It argues that the title's symbolic meaning, fragmented dialogue, relational naming, mirrored UK/US scenes, familial instruction, slave-code recitations, and an unresolved ending collectively establish the play as a necropolitical dramaturgy. Following a qualitative, theory-based close reading, this study traces the recurring interplay among visual capture, auditory testimony, bodily gesture, interruption, and legal language. The analysis shows that the "eye" suggests surveillance, spectacle, evidentiary demand, and retaliatory justice, while the "ear" reorients theatrical reception towards the difficult ethical work of listening to interrupted Black testimony. Within the family scenes, the play reflects parental care as an anxious pedagogy for the youth generation's survival, through the older generation's attempts to render racialised misrecognition into bodily instruction. Across the play's UK and US settings, this intergenerational pedagogy stages how everyday gestures can be interpreted as possible threats within distinct yet connected histories of anti-Black regulation. The slave-code sequence, meanwhile, transforms the stage into an audible counter-archive, exposing how legally authorised disposability persists over time and takes new forms in the present. The article contributes to existing scholarship by showing that the play's continuing urgency lies not simply in what it represents but in how sound, visibility, gesture, law, and unresolved speech make exposure before death theatrically apprehensible.

Keywords: Debbie Tucker Green, *ear for eye*, necropolitical dramaturgy, Black British theatre, legal counter-archive, ethics of listening

1. Introduction

What happens to political speech when speaking, remaining silent, moving, or standing still can all be interpreted as signs of danger or threat? This question merely provides the starting point for Debbie Tucker Green's *ear for eye* (2018) to address the fragmented dramaturgy that turns ordinary conversations into struggles for those who can speak, whose words are heard, and whose claims are acknowledged. By rejecting linear exposition, fixed meaning, and seamless, reciprocal dialogue forms, the play incisively dramatises forms of racialised vulnerability in contemporary Britain and the United States through postmodern traits, shocking its contemporary audience and reader with the unequal distribution of speech and recognition. This is especially achieved through repetitions that create rhythm, pauses that convey unspoken anxiety, and interruptions that help the playwright reveal uneven power dynamics in the speech of Black characters the moment they seek to clarify themselves. Through these formal strategies, the play depicts how its Black characters are situated within racialised death-worlds marked by social erasure and physical violence. This insight underpins a necropolitical reading of *ear for eye* as a drama in which power operates partly through the regulation of speech and reception, influencing what can be articulated, recognised, and understood within structurally unequal social relations.

Necropolitics, one of the primary concepts in Achille Mbembe's analysis of modern sovereignty, sheds light on the unequal distribution of exposure to violence, injury, abandonment, and death within societies. Developing his arguments through a close dialogue with Foucauldian biopolitics, Mbembe identifies the power to determine "who may live and who must die" as a key expression of sovereignty (2003, p. 11). Beyond physical death, Mbembe broadens out the logic of necropolitics by encompassing the political, legal, and social conditions that differentially expose particular populations to violence, abandonment, and premature death, foregrounding the extent to which an authority can exercise "control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power" (2003, p. 12). Thus, the main focus of this critical approach does not simply hint at a physical death, but also highlights the political, legal, and social factors that make certain populations more susceptible to surveillance, punishment, dispossession, and premature death within the necropolitical authority (Axster et al., 2021, p. 415). This can also be explained by what Gilmore states: "Racism is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet's sovereign political territories" (2002, p. 16). Mbembe's critical lens provides a useful framework for exploring how the play represents racialised Black individuals as members of a minority group who are compelled to live with the persistent expectation of danger arising from suspicion, racialised misrecognition, surveillance and the

pre-emptive criminalisation of their speech, gestures, and movements.

Premiered at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs on 25 October 2018, tucker green's *ear for eye* portrays interconnected scenes of racialised vulnerability in Black British and African American contexts through fragmented dialogue, relational character designations, intergenerational conflict, and the recitation of slaveholding laws (tucker green, 2018, pp. 2–3). Read through a necropolitical lens, the play suggests that racialised forms of power function beyond acts of physical violence as they also shape bodily conduct, speech, parental care, public visibility, and legal memory. This approach also clarifies why the characters in this society are drawn by Tucker Green's use of relational labels such as Son, Mum, Dad, Mom, Young Adult, Woman, and Man. Rather than defining each character with a specific name and psychology, they are woven as dramatic figures situated within broader familial, generational, and geopolitical contexts of racial exposure. In doing so, the playwright invites the reader/audience to associate personal experiences with the institutional and historical production of racialised vulnerability.

One crucial point in the play is hidden in its symbolic title, which plays a significant role in the dramatic logic the play reveals. This symbolic relevance enables one to reinterpret the retributive formula “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” in a different but equally shocking way, shifting the focus from visibility, retaliation, and visible injury to themes of listening, testimony, warning, and reception. By contrasting the ‘eye’ with the ‘ear’, the play establishes a tension between visual scrutiny and ethical listening. Put differently, the ‘eye’ evokes surveillance, bodily capture, evidentiary demand, and a racial order in which Black suffering must first be made visible before it is acknowledged, whereas the ‘ear’ emphasises the ethical necessity of listening to Black voices that are repeatedly interrupted, misunderstood, dismissed, or rendered inaudible.

To explore these concerns beyond Mbembe's necropolitics, this study examines the play's necropolitical discourse through the arguments of other key theorists, who provide essential theoretical background. In this regard, Fanon's account of Black subject as “overdetermined from without” (1986, p. 116) has been referred to highlight how Black bodies and their gestures are often interpreted through racialised assumptions before they are allowed to clarify themselves. Saidiya Hartman's discussion of spectacle, witnessing, and the enduring legacy of slavery has been considered within the theoretical scope of this paper to clarify how the play depicts Black suffering regarding the continuing effects of racial violence (2007, p. 129). In addition, this study draws on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's account of racism, which she defines as the production and exploitation of group-based vulnerability to premature death, to complement the theoretical framework (2007, p. 28). These approaches collectively illustrate how *ear for eye* links modern suspicion directed at Black bodies and the racialised encounters with police to historical legal systems that regulated Black mobility, punishment, and survival, thereby illustrating the play's necropolitical discourse.

Taken together, these readings establish how *ear for eye* serves as a necropolitical dramaturgy through which racialised vulnerability and exposure to social or physical death become theatrically perceptible by shifting attention from visual evidence to auditory testimony, presenting the family as a site for the intergenerational transmission of survival knowledge, and rendering the recitation of slaveholding laws into an audible theatrical counter-archive.

1.1 Research Questions

This study focuses on three interrelated research questions. How does the title's shift from “eye” to “ear” reshape the audience's reception of the play? In what ways do the family scenes and the mirrored UK and US settings establish how survival knowledge, influenced by racialised vulnerability, is passed down through generations and across the Atlantic in this society under such a necropolitical authority? How does the final legal-archival sequence conclude or deliberately leave the play's necropolitical argument unresolved?

1.2 Literature Review

While scholarship on tucker green has grown significantly, there has been relatively limited engagement with her play *ear for eye*. Foundational analysis of tucker green's theatre especially draws attention to her innovative use of language, silence, and theatrical form as tools for political criticism. Abram (2014, pp. 113–130) emphasises her experimental approach to dramaturgy while Adiseshiah and Bolton's edited collection, *debbie tucker green: Critical Perspectives* (2020, pp. 1–19), situates tucker green's work within the debates on Black British identity, precarity, ethical spectatorship, and linguistic disruption. These studies demonstrate that tucker green's formal experimentation is closely linked to racial injustice and resistance but do not analyse them through necropolitical lens.

The existing scholarship mainly approaches *ear for eye* as a critical exploration of modern racial politics, exploring how it depicts persistent racism in Black British and African American settings, questions different notions of national identity, and portrays racial violence, protests, and deferred pursuit of justice in the lives of Black people. Bağlılar (2020, pp. 1, 3–10) analyses *ear for eye* within the framework of race and racism, highlighting its depiction of Black British and African American experiences and its connection to legal and linguistic histories of racism, but does not explore these aspects through the lens of necropolitics. Holdsworth (2020, pp. 163–204) situates the play within the enduring debates about race, nation, and belonging, illustrating how Black citizens are still perceived as socially threatening in post-imperial Britain. However, this reading does not explicitly conceptualise racialised threat perception within the play as a necropolitical mechanism that makes Black life vulnerable to surveillance, punishment, disposability, and premature death. Goddard (2021, pp. 79–87) interprets the play focusing on protest and the deferred promise of racial advancement, intergenerational tension, and political fatigue. This analysis leaves the role of necropolitical order in shaping these tensions underexplored, particularly how it transforms parental care into a survival strategy and forces younger Black individuals to negotiate between inherited caution and the wish for a life free from constant fear and self-control.

A further strand of scholarship extends the critical discussion of *ear for eye* beyond current racial politics by examining how the play uses historical memory, silence, interrupted speech, and racialised embodiment to highlight the ongoing impacts of enslavement, exclusion, and disciplinary power. In this context, Finburgh Delijani (2022, pp. 471–498) relates the play to the enduring effects of slavery and emphasises that its focus on historical injustice highlights how racial violence persists restlessly today. However, this study does not focus on the play’s insight into the legal archive as a necropolitical counter-archive through which colonial regulation, punishment, and authorised death become audible within the play’s representation of contemporary Black vulnerability. In a related but distinct vein, Mullen explores the politics of silence across theatrical and cinematic adaptations of *ear for eye*, showing how verbal interruptions and refusals serve as politically charged tactics (2024, pp. 753–769). Çakırtaş, meanwhile, expands the discussion by discussing how race and disability intersect, underlining the pathologisation and regulation of Black bodies (2025, pp. 239–256). Taken together, these studies go beyond thematic accounts of racism by focusing on the play’s historical, sensory, and embodied aspects. They, nevertheless, leave room for an analysis of how interrupted speech and controlled bodily presence together serve as signs of an expected vulnerability to injury and death. Drawing on this key opening, this article suggests that tucker green transforms silence, broken speech, and bodily misrecognition into formal representations of necropolitical exposure, dramatising how Black characters are forced to regulate their speech and conduct before they are exposed to violence.

Among these studies, Adiseshiah’s (2025, pp. 119–137) analysis of *ear for eye* appears the most relevant to the present study as it explicitly situates the play within the necropolitics of racial capitalism in Britain and the United States. As she suggests that tucker green’s depiction of racialised vulnerability can also be interpreted in close connection with transatlantic power structures through the close relationship between necropolitics and racial capitalism, her interpretation holds a significant place. Existing scholarship has therefore approached *ear for eye* as both a critique of racism and a form of political protest, while also examining how its formal strategies engage with silence, disability, historical injustice, and Black experiences across Britain and the United States. Viewed collectively, this scholarship suggests that *ear for eye* has been analysed as a critique of racism and political protest, and as a play that innovatively uses a specific form to explore silence, disability, historical injustice, and shared Black experiences in Britain and the United States. This article, however, shifts the focus from the thematic use of necropolitics to the theatrical methods that reveal the core of racialised vulnerability. It argues that the play’s political force arises from the active interaction among auditory testimony, visual representation, family survival pedagogy, transatlantic repetition, legal recitation, and its unresolved conclusion. In this analysis, necropolitics serves not merely as a descriptive term but as a framework that both challenges and clarifies vulnerability, resistance, Black agency, and ambiguity.

2. Method

2.1 Rationale for Text Selection

Since tucker green’s *ear for eye* offers a highly productive basis for applying Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics to clarify its involvement with those who are exposed to either social or physical death through its fragmented dialogue, intergenerational exchanges, transatlantic structure, bodily instructions, and recitation of slaveholding laws, this study focuses on tucker green’s *ear for eye*.

2.2 Application of Theoretical Framework

The study primarily uses Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics as its primary theoretical framework. This framework is further enriched by Fanon’s concept of racialised embodiment and visual capture, Hartman’s discussion of spectacle and the afterlife of slavery, and Gilmore’s formulation of the unequal exposure of racialised groups to premature death.

2.3 Quotation Selection Criteria

For this study, each quotation has been selected for its relevance to racialised vulnerability, fragmented speech, intergenerational survival knowledge, transatlantic parallels, legal violence, and the unresolved ambiguity in the play’s final moments.

2.4 Limitations

This study is limited to the 2018 print edition of the play rather than to a specific stage production or the 2021 screen adaptations. It does not make empirical claims about audience reception, provide a comprehensive production history of the play or the complete legal history of the slave codes mentioned in the play. It focuses on close textual and dramaturgical analysis of the play. The legal archive is treated in terms of its dramaturgical function, focusing on how the playwright selects and organises the laws within the play. All these parameters define the scope of the necropolitical close reading throughout the analysis.

3. Necropolitics and Racial Violence

Derived from Foucauldian biopolitics to address sovereign power’s “right to make live and to let die” (Foucault, 2003, p. 241), necropolitics offers an essential framework for analysing how modern power distributes vulnerability, exposure and death to those “illegitimate” subjects to both analyse and illustrate “deliberate exposure of specific groups of people to a permanent “state of injury” (Mbembe, 2003, pp. 11–12; Paul & Masood, 2024, p. 498). Reconsidered through this critical approach, necropolitical sovereignty turns out to be a dominating authority that extends beyond law enforcement and governance, becoming an administrative force that exposes certain populations to exclusion, deprivation, abandonment, disposability, gradual harm and eventually death (Paul & Masood, 2024, p. 516; Varman & Srinivas, 2023, p. 31).

In his later studies, Mbembe further develops his earlier arguments about necropolitics into a broader scope, including a sharp critique of

liberal democracy. Within his argument, Mbembe introduces a new term, “nocturnal body of democracy” or “the plantation and the penal colony”, where “sentences of exclusion are served”, through which he analyses how producing enemies, enforcing divisions, and normalising military security within a society serve as components of a larger necropolitical system rooted in “colonial empire and pro-slavery-states” under the guise of democracy, which is reflected in public as ideal (2019, pp. 22).

Viewing these critical evaluations, it becomes evident that Mbembe advances Foucault’s account of biopolitics as “the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life” by bringing fresh insight to his account of necropolitics, stressing that “the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death” (Foucault, 1978, p. 140; Mbembe, 2003, pp. 39–40). In this way, while Foucault emphasises regulatory control over populations as “a bio-politics of the population” (1978, p. 139), Mbembe draws particular attention to “death-worlds” where sovereign power controls populations through unequal exposure to injury, abandonment and death (Mbembe, 2003, pp. 39–40). In post-Foucauldian discussions, this conceptual shift is often regarded as “more useful than biopolitics” for analysing how necropolitical subjects are exposed to and ruled by power (Rouse, 2021, p. 364).

Within the necropolitical context, racial violence holds a unique significance as it may take the form of physical harm, aggression, or intimidation directed at individuals or groups on the basis of race, colour, or ethnicity. While it is revealed through hate crimes and verbal harassment, this influence is exercised through broader structural systems that cause harm, fear, abandonment and suffering to those specific vulnerable or weak groups of the population that are suppressed for the safety of the other dominant groups within a society. This interpretation brings necropolitics and racial violence into a close relationship when the protection of one population often relies on exposing racialised others to harm, neglect, and death. In other words, racial violence serves as an apparatus for gaining more power and maintaining it for the safety of the dominant privileged group. This is the point where this close relationship lies, resulting in unequal protection within a society that determines who must be protected and who must be discarded, similar to what was witnessed during Nazi Germany. Building on Foucault, Mbembe suggests that such a necropolitical regime is a clear example of what is addressed today as “the racist state, the murderous state, and the suicidal state” (2019, p. 71). Meanwhile, in the same context, Bauman’s discussion of the Final Solution as “an outcome of the bureaucratic culture” lays bare how racialised violence was institutionalised as administrative order over time (1989, p. 15). However, Nazism should not be regarded as the principal model for necropolitical violence simply because its logic can emerge and permeate in any other possible forms. This can be traced back to the plantation slavery period within the history of anti-Black vulnerability, in which enslaved people were kept alive only for their labour while they were equally exposed to harsh violence and death. Thus, protecting their lives and the threat they were exposed to serve not merely as a contradictory practice of the authority but as interdependent mechanisms that the authority keeps plantation slavery under complete control, as Patterson puts it as “conditional commutation” that gradually rendered slaves “a social nonperson” (1982, p.5).

As history shows, physical survival cannot be considered apart from the realm of death to which the weak are exposed. For Mbembe, this is where the necropolitical strategy emerges, as he clarifies that plantation power kept enslaved individuals economically valuable while stripping them of bodily autonomy and political rights (2019, pp. 75–76). Although formal abolition interrupted this necropolitical system to some extent, its logic persisted in both social and institutional practices, keeping racialised populations confined and controlled through different forms and discourses of power. Wacquant traces this evolution through Jim Crow segregation, the urban ghetto, and mass incarceration, considering all as historically distinct institutions of racial containment rather than identical repetitions of slavery (2002, pp. 41–60). Similarly, Browne further emphasises this evolution by focusing on the lantern laws that turned Black illumination into “a means of regulating mobility” and framed unsupervised Black presence as a perceived security threat that should be tackled (2015, p. 76). All these significantly show how racial power repeatedly adapts its legal, spatial, and administrative forms while preserving unequal access to movement, security, and protection. This understanding underscores the discourse of necropolitics by depicting how it becomes a central source of authority for regulating Black life, even before any physical harm occurs, in whatever form the authority devises.

Conceptualised as a “semiotic, literary, theoretical-technological invention” beyond its sociological discourse, necropolitics reconsiders biopolitical thought through the horizon of death in the world of fiction, enabling one to focus on a literary text as a site of social, historical, and political reflection on a specific society (Gržinić, 2021, p. 222). Thus, this approach establishes a strong bond between *ear for eye* and Mbembe’s arguments on necropolitics. Put another way, *ear for eye* does not directly present death as a final act throughout the play but depicts how Black subjects are deliberately exposed to suspicion, punishment, and premature death through infiltrated language, parental warnings, bodily instructions, intergenerational disagreements, the pressure placed on Black movement, and the continuity between slave codes and contemporary racial governance. Through this dramatic form, tucker green clarifies that racialised violence goes beyond weapons, policing, law, or state authority and involves a set of discursive systems that determine which bodies are considered dangerous, which deaths are normalised, which lives are worth mourning, and which testimonies are dismissed.

4. The Body before It Speaks: Visual Capture, Testimony, and Embodied Suspicion

The title *ear for eye* plays a crucial role in setting the scene by challenging whether theatre can represent racial violence without reproducing the visual logic that demands Black suffering as evidence. For the play’s overall meaning, this sensory shift is central to the reception of tucker green’s play, directing attention to how racialised vulnerability is heard, perceived, or denied on stage rather than adding thematic value. The playwright tends to use “ear” to mean an alternative way of reception rather than to imply a guarantee of understanding. In other words, listening throughout the play is reflected as difficult, interrupted, and ethically demanding. This becomes clear in almost every confrontation between the Black and the White, where their utterances are received as signs of hostility, while the audience/reader must attend to pauses, corrections, repetitions, and unfinished speeches. On the other hand, the symbolic meaning of the “eye” in the title

strengthens the meaning further by hinting at multilayered meanings centred around the visual sight, such as surveillance that totally predisposes the Black body to suspicion; a requirement for injury to be visible before testimony is accepted; a spectacle that renders suffering into widely consumed public imagery; and the concept of retaliatory justice embodied in the phrase ‘an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth’. More broadly, she tends to explain how power structures shape visual perception by determining who is observed, who controls the framing, whose images are accepted as evidence, and whose testimony is denied within a necropolitical authority. When the play is reconsidered in these terms, the revelation of necropolitical discourse becomes crystal clear, as this shift underscores the play’s concern with the necropolitical conditions that expose Black life to suspicion, harm, and premature mourning. The shift from visual to auditory focus challenges visual capture while exploring whether theatrical listening can accept testimony without transforming it into another spectacle. Technically, this theatrical strategy confirms why Abram labels tucker green as “one of the most stylistically innovative and politically engaged playwrights at work in Britain today” (2014, p. 113). In the racialised world of *ear for eye*, the Black individual, who is rendered a voiceless subject, becomes nothing other than a threat, aligning well with Fanon’s account of how a Black individual is racially addressed: “Look, a Negro!” (1986, p. 109). As is evident, tucker green stages a necropolitical logic by showing how Black bodies are fixed by a gaze that precedes speech and reduces their presence to a simple fear. Her urgent, interrupted dialogue further reinforces this logic, rendering it a theatrical logic in which listening becomes necessary for apprehending vulnerability before death, echoing a shift from visual dominance to “a mobile and exposed politics of listening” (Chambers, 1996, pp. 50–51).

Interestingly, tucker green presents her characters as Son, Dad, Mum, Mom, Young Adult, Adult, Woman and Man as citizens in both the US and the UK for a specific purpose (tucker green, 2018, pp. 2–3). By naming them through relational and generational categories rather than proper names, she prevents the audience from reducing the drama to private misfortune and foregrounds racialised vulnerability as a structural condition produced through legal memory, social suspicion and the necropolitical management of Black life. In other words, she successfully conveys the message that racialised vulnerability is not unique to either the US or UK Black citizens. Hall’s claim that cultural identities are “not an essence but a positioning” helps clarify this strategy, since tucker green’s characters are situated within historically produced racial formations rather than being presented as fully individuated private selves as subjects of necropolitical White authority (1990, p. 226). The UK/US settings in the play also place the play in what Brah calls “diaspora space”, where “boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested” (1996, p. 209). This understanding clarifies how Black people have gone through a sociohistorical process through which their racial identities have been “created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 109). In *ear for eye*, the relational names for the Black characters serve as dramatic signs of racial violence that they are always exposed to. Throughout the play, the White authority regards Black presence simply as a source of either threat or danger in a dehumanising manner rather than recognising them as individuals entitled to the same rights, opportunities, and equal conditions of life. This pattern strikingly supports Butler’s claim that “specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living” (2009, p. 1). Drawing such a pattern, tucker green suggests not only how the Black characters are rendered necropolitical subjects but also how they are exposed to be in the grips of White necropolitical order, where Black life is considered inherently threatening and offered no recognition.

5. The Necropolitics of Everyday Survival

In *ear for eye*, the tension between seeing and listening extends into daily life for Black characters, whose ordinary speech and even their gestures intended to show compliance can be evaluated by the White as signs of threat. Critically reconsidered, this very possibility of being misjudged by the White authority manifests itself as another dimension of the violence, inevitably forcing Black individuals to be alert to the various forms of violence to which they may be exposed.

Throughout the play, the Black body is exposed to surveillance, misrecognition, punishment and premature death in several ways mediated through speech, naming and the audience/reader’s obligation to listen in a symbolic way. This symbolic discourse highlights the play’s core argument that racialised fear emerges due to persistent necropolitical authority. However, this fear in the play is revealed through brief, tense, and fragmented dialogue structures between characters rather than through a complete account of an event in detailed, realist scenes. This becomes clear in the police-confrontation scene, where asking is labelled “provocative”, and the speech is disciplined through the warning that “your mouth will get you into / trouble,” racial misrecognition is condensed in “fits the description of”, bodily gesture is recategorised as “gesturing aggressively”, and witnessing itself becomes precarious when onlookers film with “phones out like a hi-tech self-defence” before being threatened to stop (tucker green, 2018, p. 17). This scene in the play functions as an exemplary case that clarifies what Mbembe means by “nocturnal body of democracy” in his discussion of necropolitics by drawing attention to these Black individuals who are excluded from society through coercive violence embedded within democratic institutions that must, in fact, publicly claim to uphold equality, rights, and accountability for each citizen (2019, pp. 15–17).

Yet, here, law enforcement protects the democratic order primarily for White citizens while it is instrumentalised to both criminalise Black speech and movement and to suppress the recordings for fear that they may serve as evidence of police violence, thus excluding Black people by refusing to protect them as well. As the play reveals, Black suffering is not presented to the public openly and in full account but drawn into a necropolitical discourse in which vulnerability is rendered into spectacle, discipline, moral instruction and a demand for evidence, as Hartman (1997) argues:

[T]he spectacular nature of black suffering and, conversely, the dissimulation of suffering through spectacle. In one respect, the combination of imagined scenes of cruelty with those culled from unquestionable authority evidence the crisis of witnessing that results from the legal subjection of slaves. At the same time, the spectacular dimensions of slavery engender this crisis of

witnessing as much as the repression of black testimony since to the degree that the body speaks it is made to speak the master's truth and augments his power through the imposition and intensification of pain. (p. 22)

Beyond dramatising racialised fear, this scene also underscores the play's contemporary political relevance by taking attention to the bodily compliance demanded by racial profiling and other racialised policing practices at the time of its 2018 premiere. They both function alongside the fragile safeguard of mobile-phone witnessing in public spaces to suggest that even ordinary Black movement may be considered mere aggression to be prevented. In doing so, tucker green effectively frames racial fear as a constant pattern of suspicion, in which Black presence is judged even before any possible speech is heard, rather than directly associating this event with a specific news event recorded in official history.

Within the necropolitical discourse, this everlasting recurring framework of suspicion is reshaped through the blend of silence, bodily scrutiny, and institutional power into a single racialised perceptual space in which, as Mullen (2024) observes, white supremacy renders "both speech and silences, gestures and stillness, equally suspicious", implicitly posing a threat against the Black bodies in the play (p. 764). The pauses, interruptions, and unfinished utterances in the dialogue do not simply signal a lack of meaning; instead, they reveal the persistent struggle over whether Black speech will be acknowledged. At the same time, the persistent reinterpretation of everyday gestures as signs of aggressive behaviour reflects the Black body as inherently abnormal and threatening to White authority. This is diagnosed by Çakırtaş (2025) as the pathologisation of Black embodiment that she delineates as "the symbolically depicted disability within the context of social normalcy and abnormality" to highlight the border of racial order in which the White is valued as able while the Black is regarded as unable and worthy of being neglected, who can eventually be discarded (p. 239). As the play unfolds, it is difficult to consider this pattern an isolated expression of prejudice rather than a systemic condition operating across its British and American contexts imposed by the White, serving merely to shape both familial relations and encounters with the police and the legal system. These observations clearly show that the play retains its urgency beyond 2018 by revealing the perceptual and institutional practices that determine which gestures are seen as threatening, whose testimony is valued, and which images are accepted as evidence, all of which, in one way or another, determine whose life can be protected and whose should be denied.

The effects of necropolitical sovereignty in the *ear for eye* are not limited to implicit ways of state violence, policing, or law. It is further reinforced in domestic spaces, where parental care serves as a language of warning, bodily discipline, and pre-emptive self-regulation as a means of escaping from the necropolitical anxiety and threat. By rendering the dangers of racialised surveillance, whether witnessed or anticipated, into a set of instructions, the parents teach their children the mode of conduct concerning how they should move and speak in public simply to protect their children from falling prey to the grips of necropolitics. In doing so, they hope these instructions will help them cope with this necropolitical order and that any exposure that renders them socially dead will be solved to the core. This is drawn in the play through familial exchanges that reflect how necropolitical pressure grows, enters the domestic sphere, and reshapes the language of care, as is evidenced in the UK family scene, in which Mum and Dad teach their son how to act in public space under the risk of racialised misrecognition. When the SON asks, "If I put my hands up —", Mum suddenly interrupts him by calling the gesture "a threat, threatening"; when he asks whether doing it "slowly" might change its meaning, she answers that it is "Provocative"; and when he asks about showing his palms, she replies that it is "Inflammatory" (tucker green, 2018, p. 52). This pattern continues with keeping hands down that is perceived as "Belligerent", keeping hands by his side that suggests "Attitude," and with the hands in pockets that is inevitably interpreted as "Concealing," "Obscuring," or "Cocky" (p. 53). As this scene hints at, Mum and Dad's instructions do not aim to discipline their son into social conformity but into the regime of obedience the necropolitical authority demands. What they anxiously want to achieve is to convey the necessary knowledge to their children for survival through experiences that they gained through their frequent encounters with the White. By drawing such a scene, tucker green effectively shows how bodily gestures are viewed as necropolitical signs that offer nothing but anxiety, fear and threat in the eyes of the Black, as is clearly highlighted in the boy's hand-rising scene, which recalls Fanon's (1986) argument that the Black subject is "overdetermined from without" (p. 116). This clearly explains how Black bodies and their gestures are exposed to be reinterpreted through pre-existing racial assumptions before real individual intentions can be articulated or recognised. The play also foregrounds how such a basic act can be perceived as unsettling and threatening to the point that it may be misinterpreted by the police as proof of aggression, which can eventually result in a serious problem and provide the police with a pretext to use force. At this juncture, what makes the scene especially unsettling, then, is not simply the hostile interpretation of each gesture, but the unchanging fact that the SON's body has already been deemed dangerous even before he moves at all. This scene is quite parallel to Wynter's analysis about the contemporary North American racialisation where the dominant ideology considers the young Black males outside the boundaries of recognised norms of humanity and legitimises their unequal and biased treatment by police and judicial institutions (1994, p. 43). By giving dramatic form to necropolitical insight, tucker green's British family scene suggests how Black people are liable to be conceived as those whose lives mean nothing to White authority even today. As has been discussed, in the necropolitical world of *ear for eye*, the playwright often underlines the fear of suspicion that follows action and a need for self-protection, which is later revealed as a mere danger in the anxious lives of Black people. This scene can also be aligned with Gilmore's account of racism that she defines as the "state-sanctioned or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (2007, p. 28). Based on Gilmore's argument, tucker green clearly illustrates how Black 'group-differentiated' individuals are exposed to racial vulnerability by any possible means within the borders of White-dominated societies to the extent that may render them representatives of 'premature death'.

Beyond this, the play also sheds light on the younger generation's resistance to inherited survival knowledge, contrary to their parents' expectations. In this way, tucker green voices a strong protest against the necropolitical order through suppression, gaze, and suspicion

imposed on Black society by White authority. Although the younger generation is well aware of the reality of racial violence and the danger it poses when they do not yield to it, they refuse to internalise the feeling that they should be governed by constant self-regulation and pre-emptive fear. This desire compels them to seek ways to resist and eliminate the necropolitical order that produces these conditions. Blended with full anxiety, this desire of the young generation also tends to serve as an analytical insight which tucker green offers as a glimpse of hope and a response for the future Black generation concerning Quashie's warning that reading Black culture only through resistance "keeps us from being able to see/notice black humanity", as if Black existence "only conjures up a social narrative of racism and the resistance of racism, violence and the triumph over violence" (2012, p. 5). While Quashie's claim offers hope, the SON's sequence of interrupted questioning in full perplexity: "Then what do I...? What do I even —?" breaks this glimpse of hope (tucker green, 2018, p. 58). This captures the contradiction the younger generation falls into, as is evidenced by the interrupted questions that mark the anxiety the SON represents, even when he seeks a way to get rid of this order. Here, the political strategy of necropolitics offers no hope for the generations in that it appears not only as exposure to death but as a social condition in which Black life is sustained through anxiety and maintained through suspicion, restriction, vigilance and self-surveillance. From another aspect, tucker green's tactic of interrupted speech functions as a linguistic sign of a world in which almost any response can be evaluated as criminal and any means of escape from this order may result in nothing but vicious-circle-like attempts in vain. All in all, this interpretation reveals that necropolitical power functions as much by limiting everyday Black conduct as by threatening physical death. Evidently, the SON's questioning renders him neither a passive victim defined by racial violence nor a heroic figure capable of overcoming it, but a mere subject who is gripped by this necropolitical order they are plunged into.

6. Transatlantic Representations of Death-Worlds: Misread Gestures and Interrupted Speech

By extending the play's setting beyond the UK to America, tucker green draws attention to the transatlantic representation of necropolitics on a wider scale. Examining the similar familial negation of racial violence as a necropolitical strategy of White authority in the UK scenes, tucker green suggests how necropolitics manifests itself in a very similar way in Britain through a feeling of suspicion imposed on the Black subjects, although they have different historical contexts, in line with what Grossberg's observes that "the new global economy of culture entails a deterritorialization of culture and its subsequent reterritorialization" (1998, p. 69). In the play, anti-Black suspicion is not limited to a single national setting but is produced and articulated in a similar form across distinct histories, institutions, and policing practices of Britain and the United States. Put differently, *ear for eye* implies that racialised state violence is literally a transnational structure that goes beyond any specific national contexts, Black communities or geographical locations. Through such a setting strategy, she vividly exhibits "different dilemmas, to which they provide radically different answers" while preserving the shared necropolitical fear that "Black people are perceived by white people as an enemy that must be destroyed" (Laforest, 1996, p. 116; Bağlılar, 2020, p. 4). This is best staged in the UK scene, in which the SON asks about his hand position, recalling the very similar scene in the US setting. Son wonders, "What if they were in pockets," and receives the answer from his Dad that it is "Concealing" for the White (tucker green, 2018, pp. 4, 53). As is clear, in both contexts, ordinary bodily gestures arouse suspicion under Western structures of racial power, and this understanding brings Black individuals closer to the necropolitical threshold of being conceived as socially dead.

Formally, the play makes this transnational condition audible by turning fragmentation into a full medium of exposure. This is provided once again through tucker green's dramatic writing style that is marked by rhythmic compression, interruption, repetition and a refusal of smooth exposition - a form in which "much remains unsaid", signalling the necropolitical atmosphere that the Black individuals are forced to adopt (Abram, 2014, p. 113). Through this approach, fragmentation serves as an apt form for lives shaped by interpretive pressure, where speech must first defend itself against misreading before it may become testimony. The dialogue does not proceed as a stable argument but through correction, insistence, refusal and partial disclosure, as is evident in the scene in which the SON asks: "if I question", the only answer uttered by his MUM is that it is "confrontational"; when he asks: "if I reason", it is again replied as "confrontational" (tucker green, 2018, p. 57). Here, even the right of a Black individual to reason is, in a way, forbidden as it may be received as a sign of suspicion in the world of such a necropolitical White authority when articulated by a racialised body. As one can state, in *ear for eye*, necropolitical power operates not only through physical exposure but also through discursive systems that can transform this exposure into social exposure, determining which speech may be regarded as rational, and which is pre-emptively heard as a threat. Even a Black individual's attempt to explain or defend themselves throughout the play can easily be grounds for suspicion from the outset.

Taken together, the play's necropolitical imagination begins with exposure before death. Black subjects inhabit a system of deadly interpretability in which ordinary bodily and verbal actions can be read as danger or threat. Their bodies are liable to be regarded as threatening before they act, their words dismissed before they are heard, and their grief demanded only after violence occurs. Through parental warnings, fragmented dialogue, unnamed characters and transatlantic repetition, tucker green shows that racialised death-worlds are produced not only by weapons, policing or law but by everyday language that attaches suspicion to Black life. In the play, this clarifies that necropolitics is also embedded in the play's syntax of speech and reception.

7. When Law Authorises Death: Slave Codes and the Governance of Black Life

The play's shift into the legal archive broadens the analysis from everyday misrecognition to the historical legitimization of racialised disposability. While the first dimension of *ear for eye* reveals contemporary suspicion, the second exposes the legal structures through which racialised vulnerability is produced, normalised and maintained. The law does not function as an external remedy for violence but as a mechanism that authorises, classifies and normalises it. In this sense, Black life has historically been rendered governable through frameworks that regulate movement, possession, punishment and death. Harris's claim that "[t]he law constructed 'whiteness' as an

objective fact, although in reality it is an ideological proposition imposed through subordination” (1993, p. 1730), clarifies this juridical logic. This shows that tucker green’s legal archive contextualises modern racial violence as apparatuses of necropolitical policies of which the roots can be traced to a broader legal history that determines whose lives could be acknowledged, regulated or ended, thereby producing “a continuum between being declared dead in law, being made a slave, and being judged a criminal” (Dayan, 2002, pp. 58–59).

From a necropolitical viewpoint, the title *ear for eye* also suggests that contemporary racial exposure is shaped by inherited legal forms that have long rendered Black subjects governable through punishment, dispossession and vulnerability to lethal violence. This continuity recalls Silverman’s reading of Fanon and his emphasis on the “inter-relatedness” of metropolitan centre and colonial periphery (2005, p. 7). tucker green places present-day Black vulnerability in Britain and the United States beside historical legal documents associated with enslavement and racial control, thus exposing the continuity between colonial governance and modern regimes of racial exposure. This is revealed when the play stages slave law that authorises hard labour, permanent confinement or death for an enslaved person accused of violence against a white individual:

WIFE (Thirties.): ‘If any Negro or slave whatsoever shall
offer any violence to any Christian by
striking or the like,
such Negro or slave shall
for his or her first offence
be severely whipped by the constable.
HUSBAND (Thirties.): For his second offence of that nature
he shall be severely whipped,
his nose slit,
and be burned in some part of his face with
a hot iron.’
CHILD (Nine.): ‘If any slave shall offer any violence
by striking or otherwise to any white
person,
such slave shall be confined to hard labour
for life,
or punished with death’. (tucker green, 2018, p. 133)

The play rejects the idea that racial violence is a failure of individual justice by suggesting the inherited legal systems as continuing forces that shape how Black lives are protected, controlled, punished, or rendered disposable. This continuity, represented by White authority in the play, can be read as a manifestation of necropolitical power, based on Mbembe’s account of modern sovereignty as “the generalised instrumentalisation of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations” (2003, p. 14). In *ear for eye*, the legal archive makes this process audible by showing how the regulation of Black life has historically depended on surveillance, dispossession, punishment and premature death. By linking colonial legal histories to present-day racial realities in her play, tucker green exposes the enduring mechanisms by which necropolitical power operates across time and space.

Within this legal-historical context, the play illustrates the slave-code sequence to show how law becomes a form of administrative language exercised by the necropolitical authority. Although these laws do not neutrally describe enslavement as it was, they serve as an apparatus of necropolitical power that enables authority to actively control mobility and possession, and finally to regulate punishment and the conditions under which Black people should be granted life or exposed to death through racial violence. This process is vividly depicted in the dialogue between SON and DAD, which links a form of racial misrecognition to the written form of legal procedures that codify the racial domination and render it legally reproducible, as it reads:

SON (Twelve.) ‘From the first day of March, no Negro or
other slave in this island shall purchase or
buy any horse, mare, mule, ass or gelding.’
DAD: ‘No Negro or other slave shall be allowed
to hunt any cattle, horses, mares, mules or
asses, in any part of this island with lances,
guns, cutlasses or other instruments of
death unless in the company of his master,

overseer or some other white person, or by
 permission in writing'. (tucker green, 2018, p. 129)

As is clearly depicted, the use of phrases such as “instruments of death” and “permission in writing” highlights the extent to which even the most basic acts of ownership and hunting are controlled and shaped by White legal authority in the play. For the enslaved subjects, such systematic and dehumanising codification not only limits them but also imposes a social order in which Black existence is subjected to strict forms of control that mercilessly expose them to punishment and render them socially disposable subjects whose lives may be disregarded. Even the act of “travelling from one place to another” without a “ticket” taken from “their master, owner, employer or overseer” is forbidden by White legal authority, and those who dare to move without permission are strictly “deemed a runaway” and “apprehended and committed to jail,” where they will eventually “be whipped” (tucker green, 2018, p. 130). In essence, these violent practices of White authority show the reader/audience how this authority disciplines Black society to maintain and strengthen its sovereignty by eliminating those who oppose its strict rules, in line with what Mbembe states in his account of necropolitics (2003, p. 11). Beyond individual restrictions, such endeavours of White authority are manifested more starkly through legal codes and juridical procedures, which provide them the necessary basis for bringing Black people closer to being considered disposable. In contrast to the analysis of necropolitical discourse the play reveals, the authority’s policy of physical death is noticed for the first time in the exchange between MALE TEENAGER and HIS MUM on stealing “any such horned cattle, sheep, goat, horse, mare, mule or ass —” to which her mother openly replies that “such Negro or slave shall on conviction thereof suffer death” (tucker green, 2018, p. 130). Another clear articulation of this physical death, exposed by this authority, is portrayed in the dialogue between GIRL CHILD and HER DAD:

GIRL CHILD (Ten.) ‘That in all cases where the punishment of death is inflicted, the
 execution shall be performed in a public part of the parish —’

HER DAD (Thirties.) ‘— care shall be taken by the jailer that the criminal is free from intoxication and the mode of such
 execution shall be hanging by the neck.’ (tucker green, 2018, p. 130).

Following these scenes, the repetition of phrases such as “punished with death” by SISTER 2 and later by CHILD (Nine.) when they commit “frequent violations” against White people adds much to the necropolitical logic (tucker green, 2018, p. 133). This is the crucial point in the play that illustrates how death is legitimised as a means of governance rather than considering it a failure of law and legal order. Formed through such necropolitical logic, this scene also highlights how almost every simple human behaviour, such as disobedience, movement, or unauthorised presence can be criminalised and later be punished unquestioningly with death. This understanding is what Mbembe clearly states in his argument of necropolitics as “death-worlds,” or “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead” (2003, p. 40). It is the ‘death-world’ concept in the play that threatens Black people, operating in three distinct ways to render Black people either socially dead or to consider them as opposing groups to be killed throughout the play: first, by arousing fear of death through limits on their daily lives; second, by disciplining them through biased legal laws; and eventually by exposing them directly to physical death. By staging legislative regulations on Black individuals, tucker green suggests that the legal systems formed against Black societies to control and govern them have not disappeared with abolition but remained operative in contemporary authorities to regulate Black mobility, personhood, and vulnerability, as she reflects in her play. Surprisingly, this is clear even among nations that claim to uphold modern liberal democracy, which Hartman marks as the “afterlife of slavery” to explain why slavery is still politically present, as she delineates further:

[I]t is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment. I, too, am the afterlife of slavery (Hartman, 2007, p. 6).

As Hartman discusses, tucker green’s legal archive portrays slavery as a persistent institutional and legal legacy and adds a specific emphasis that can be evaluated within necropolitical discourse. She does not tend to suggest that history repeats itself unchanged, but she focuses mainly on how earlier methods or strategies of racial control are reformulated as modern systems of punishment, complete surveillance and disposability imposed on Black societies.

In her play, tucker green also tends to redefine the audience’s role in the play by conditioning them to witness the contemporary version of racial violence through legal structures that authorise racial violence rather than sympathising with the suffering of Black people. This is, no doubt, achieved through her craft in directing the attention of the audience/reader to biased legal systems that both authorise the violence and systematise it by adding historical legal codes a voice, which recalls Sharpe’s (2016) claim that “the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present” (p. 9). In doing so, the play enables the audience/reader to notice how the history of slaveholding interrupts the present and forces them to feel its consequences to the core.

In conjunction with this, through the final moments of the play, the audience/reader becomes more aware of the present effects of necropolitical racial violence reinforced by the historically deep-rooted laws as evidence. The striking fact lying here is not the past roots of this racial violence, but the way it has evolved into its present form through laws that soften them through democratic means. Setting the scene to clarify the similarity between past and present reflections of violence, tucker green turns her audience/readers’ attention to the courage of young members of Black society to challenge this deadly order once again as representatives of both the US and UK Black

people, as is illustrated in a brief dialogue between the characters of all generations from both the US and the UK. Although the younger generation is still preoccupied with the persistent racial violence exercised by White domination on Black society through several tactics, they wish to find a way to overcome it in any possible way. However, the minute they utter “Give me one reason to not”; they receive an anxious reply from the older generation suggesting that they remain patient and restrained for fear of possible punishment or death that the White would impose, as is clearly articulated in a very short but all-inclusive response to both young characters: “Go on” (tucker green, 2018, p. 135). What strikes the reader/audience here is the ambiguity Tucker Green creates as a dramatic strategy to emphasise the unstable and vulnerable condition of Black bodies within this necropolitical authority. By not specifying what action the younger generation will take, or what they will continue to do, she creates an ambiguity that hovers between hope and hopelessness.

The play deliberately leaves this ambiguity unresolved even at the end, leaving the younger generation in a profound dilemma. On the one hand, they show enough courage to challenge the necropolitical order; on the other, they remain hindered by the older generation that teaches them not to protest but to adapt to that order for survival. In doing so, tucker green tends to ask her audience/reader to find a suitable answer for this ambiguity and the dilemma the younger generation falls into. In this way, it can evidently be stated that *ear for eye* utterly resists the reification of Black victimhood, although it does not depict this with concrete proof. tucker green portrays her young characters neither as passive victims who are defined by racial violence nor as victorious figures who can easily overcome it. This can also be clarified when Quashie’s claim that “one’s life is raucous and full of expression” and that Black life goes beyond “victimization by or triumph over racism” (2012, p. 8). Reconsidered this way, the play’s unresolved ambiguity portrays Black subjectivity as introspective and questioning rather than simply presenting it as passive victimhood or heroic resistance.

Viewed in this way, the legal-historical dimension of *ear for eye* expands its necropolitical vision by proving that death-worlds are formed not only by weapons, policing or visible violence but through laws, permissions, prohibitions and punishments. In this way, tucker green effectively turns theatre into a counter-archive in which legal language is no longer neutral but is heard as a form of historical violence. Within this counter-archival space, Black life is represented as nothing rather than a site of witness, resistance and exposure to violence within the context of necropolitics that still waits for an effective and successful solution.

In light of discussions so far, the symbolic meaning hidden in tucker green’s *ear for eye* becomes more apparent through the political and legal archive context it is structured on, referring both to its 2018 context and the aftermath with subsequent events in the future. The play not only reflects the past but also sheds light on the possible reflections of racial violence against Black individuals by making persistent racial exposure theatrically perceptible in the eyes of its audience/reader. This is especially woven through tucker green’s dramaturgical strategies in staging hand-position dialogues, fragmented questions, mobile-phone witnessing, parental warnings, and UK/US parallels, each of which serves as a theatrical sign used specifically to symbolise the modern racial exposure that may still be witnessed today, alongside the reality of necropolitical conditions the Black individuals are mercilessly plunged into. For Adiseshiah and Bolton (2020), this is exactly what tucker green’s play “dramatizes with shattering boldness the lack of progress made with respect to racial equality since the horrors of slavery and racial segregation in nineteenth – and twentieth-century southern United States” (p. 1–2). Indeed, the play’s validity is first approved by the date it was staged, coinciding with the day when the Home Office report stated that Black individuals in England and Wales were approximately nine and a half times more likely than White individuals to be stopped and searched (Home Office, 2018, p. 6). Resonating with the hand position scenes in the play, these were not exactly tucker green’s intention or her own experience, but rather a real-time event that illustrated the very social context in which Black individuals were exposed to racial violence at that time. Beyond that, it was only months earlier that the Windrush scandal revealed how the “hostile environment” policy could turn the legal status of long-term Commonwealth residents into a target of bureaucratic scrutiny, depriving some of jobs, housing, healthcare, pensions, and social security (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2018, p. 3). Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the play’s portrayal of hand-position exchanges, debates over protests, and the risks involved in filming police encounters evoke the political context shaped by the Black Lives Matter movement. Contemporary critics similarly identified these constant police encounters, alongside persistent police harassment in Britain, as the corresponding political context for the play’s British scenes (Lukowski, 2018; Sierz, 2018). In the same vein, the slave codes, such as the requirement for “permission in writing” (tucker green, 2018, p. 129), echo the Windrush scandal once again, referring to “suspicion and scepticism” that the legal residents are exposed to (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2018, p. 3). Alongside these, the symbolic relevance of the play referring to its aftermath is vividly represented by the depiction of witnesses holding “phones out like a hi-tech self-defence” (tucker green, 2018, p. 17), which took on new meaning after bystander videos became crucial in the prosecution of George Floyd’s murder. Within the play’s ongoing symbolic relevance, the 2020 strip-search of Child Q adds another dimension to how Black young people may be viewed as suspicious even without tangible evidence, reinforcing the play’s necropolitical discourse (U.S. Department of Justice, 2022; Gamble & McCallum, 2022, p. 33). While these recent events are not direct sources for the play, they function as contemporary parallels that underscore the play’s ongoing relevance, revealing the extent to which the racial assumptions tucker green explores remain active.

8. Conclusion

This article has examined tucker green’s *ear for eye* not merely as a theatrical representation of racial violence but as a critical intervention that renders racialised vulnerability perceptible, foregrounds the real experiences of Black individuals, and challenges the racialised structures through which necropolitical power administers Black life. Beyond illustrating anti-Black violence, the play exposes the perceptual, familial, and legal processes to depict how Black life may be rendered suspect within its necropolitical context. In this regard, the fragmented dialogues, embodied instructions in line with parental warnings, and the act of witnessing throughout the play reveal that

necropolitical power is not simply confined to physical death but to a systematic racial logic in which ordinary gestures, speech, and bodily movements of Black people are regarded as evidence of threat that should be overcome. In the play, parental care becomes a biased pedagogy of survival in which adults attempt to instruct younger characters just to ensure their safety; however, this contradictory guidance reveals that no bodily position or verbal response is sufficient to guarantee protection within this necropolitical world order. In doing so, Tucker Green suggests that vulnerability is produced through a racial order that governs how Black bodies are seen, heard, and adjudicated in the world of necropolitical authority.

Building on this, the play extends its argument on necropolitics across British and American contexts, treating each with its own unique histories. Through the juxtaposition of British and American scenes, Tucker Green depicts the very similar necropolitical logic in which ordinary Black conduct is consistently interpreted as evidence of guilt or danger, despite differences in the two countries' institutional histories and forms of violence. It is through this parallelism that Tucker Green clearly depicts how racial violence functions as a mechanism of necropolitical power across different contexts, in which Black bodies are perceived as threats, and consequently subjected to intensified surveillance, control, and exposure to harm.

The slave-law recitations the playwright chooses in her play give this necropolitical logic a deeper historical dimension by clarifying that the racial assumptions they codified over time continue to operate restlessly in different forms in the present, even though the laws belong to the past. By staging this legal language, Tucker Green successfully renders the historical archive audible as a counter-archive, thereby enabling the audience to witness how plantation logics of the past evolved into a new contemporary form that persists in contemporary policing, surveillance, and bureaucratic suspicion. However, this continuity does not render Black existence legible solely through injury. The interruptions, silences, generational dissonance, and unresolved final dialogue in the play preserve interiority and agency, holding non-violence, retaliation, exhaustion, and resistance in productive tension rather than reducing them to a single political resolution.

Taken together, these findings extend existing scholarship by illustrating that necropolitical power in the play functions through practices of seeing, speaking, hearing, and remembering, as well as through the threat of physical death. Therefore, necropolitics is used in this study as a critical framework for explaining how racialised exposure is produced rather than portraying a complete account of Black life. This limitation marks an important strategy in the study concerning the characters who are neither passive victims defined merely by violence nor simple figures who can show strict resistance or overcome the necropolitical authority. Their constant questioning preserves the play's ethical and political uncertainty, particularly when no response can guarantee safety or provide closure. Since this analysis has focused on the published text, future research might consider how stage productions and the 2021 screen adaptation change the relationship between visual surveillance and auditory testimony. Ultimately, the symbolic force of *ear for eye* lies in the contrast between these two modes of perception. More clearly, the 'eye' enables the audience/reader to notice surveillance, capture, evidentiary demands, and retaliation as illustrated in the play, whereas the 'ear' raises the question of whether Black testimony can be heard before violence makes Black vulnerability visible.

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Authors' contributions

Dr Kaya Özçelik is responsible for study design, data collection, drafting the manuscript and revising it.

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