Clare Finburgh Delijani, Goldsmiths, University of London

"Nobody's ever held the door open and invited women, Black people or disabled people in": Confronting Discrimination in Marie NDiaye's Theatre[1]

> In *Peau noire masques blancs* (1952) anticolonial author Frantz Fanon writes:
> C'est mon professeur de philosophie, d'origine antillaise, qui me le rappelait un jour : "Quand vous entendez dire du mal des Juifs, dressez l'oreille, on parle de vous." Et je pensais qu'il avait raison universellement […]. Depuis lors, j'ai compris qu'il voulait tout simplement dire : un antisémite est forcément négrophobe. (98)

In this article I ask how the French author Marie NDiaye's theatre shines a spotlight not on the identity politics of people marginalized owing to class, gender, sexuality, racialization or religion, but on the structures that marginalize them. With particular focus on the two plays which, to date, bookend her theatrical career – *Hilda* (1999) and *Royan* (2020) – I examine how she excavates the power dynamics, or what Simi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Leslie McCall, co-editors of a special issue on intersectionality, term the "multi-layered and routinized forms of domination" and "overlapping structures of subordination" (797), that discriminate against minoritized individuals and groups.

When interviewed, NDiaye says of her theatre, "Je tâche de faire en sorte que le dialogue, le style d'écriture et le langage que je place dans la bouche de mes personnages ne puissent absolument pas nous renseigner sur le personnage, ni sur son âge, ni sur son milieu social, ni sur son sexe" (2021 11). Given that, unlike her novels, often described in terms of a kind of "magic realism" (Roussos), NDiaye's plays float free from obvious historical, geographical or social contexts, it might be tempting to compare them to the works of symbolist, expressionist or surrealist playwrights – Paul Claudel, Arthur Adamov or Eugène Ionesco[2] – which seek to become supposed "myths", applicable "universally" to any society or situation. However, unlike these twentieth-century authors, from which NDiaye clearly inherits, her theatre complements abstracted strangeness with direct social and political critique.[3] She explains: "Avec mes pièces, j'essaie d'entrelacer la présence du contemporain et les problèmes sociaux aigus avec une esthétique que j'ai toujours connue en tant que lectrice, c'est-à-dire une langue non pas réaliste mais très écrite, et des images qui peuvent parfois provenir d'un autre lieu." (10). NDiaye employs literary writerliness and poetic symbolism to launch a mordant attack on "le contemporain. […] à l'époque actuelle" (10).

Ionesco proposes that his character Bérenger, recurring in *Tueur sans gages* (1958), *Rhinocéros* (1959), *Le Roi se meurt* (1962) and *Le Piéton de l'air* (1963), is a generic anti-hero, who represents all humanity or, in Ionesco's words, "la conscience universelle" (285). NDiaye herself states, "Je ne me vois ni comme une femme qui écrit, ni comme une femme noire qui écrit." (2009 199) But NDiaye, unlike Ionesco, does not attempt to create universalist characters.[4] As feminist, queer, postcolonial and other critiques of the European Enlightenment demonstrate, historically, "universalism" often denotes a dominant class of white, straight European men, and excluded women, people who do not conform to heteronormativity, racialized people, disabled people, and other ostracized or relegated categories. The concept of intersectionality provides a useful means for apprehending how NDiaye exposes the discriminatory structures that minoritize, racialize and marginalize these individuals and groups.

The theory and methodology of intersectionality originated in the late 1980s when US law academic and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw remarked that, setting aside the European Enlightenment's championing of white male superiority, *white* women are often perceived in universalizing terms to represent women; and Black *men* are seen in universalizing terms to represent Black people.[5] The categories of white woman and Black man are thus commonly received as neutral or invisible, whereas Black female narratives are held to be partial,

particular and different (Crenshaw 1989). Originating in the need to demarginalize Black women, the theory and praxis of intersectionality have since become an analytical and activist means to investigate and challenge the vexed dynamics of difference and discrimination more broadly (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall 787). Intersectionality today seeks to understand "compound discrimination" (Crenshaw 1991) – overlapping categories not only of "race" and gender, but also of class, age, sexuality, disability, body type and other categorizations that conspire to inflict inequality and injustice, including those to which the non-human world is subjected. The theory and praxis of intersectionality do not concern the identity politics or subjectivity of individuals or groups; nor do they rate or order the oppression of one group ahead of others, mainly because these categories are "always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created" (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall 795). Intersectionality focuses not on discriminated subjects, but on discriminatory practices (785, 788). In other words, intersectionality "concerns the way things work rather than who people are." (Jihye Chun, Lipsitz & Shin 923) Returning to Fanon, his philosophy teacher "avait raison universellement" because the barriers preventing one group from accessing rights, eventually obstruct others. NDiaye's theatre shifts emphasis from discriminated groups, to discriminatory structures.

***Hilda* (1999)**

NDiaye's first play is the disquieting, warped tale of a domestic cleaner, Hilda.[6] NDiaye makes the dramatic choice never to feature her on stage: she is not played by an actor, nor is she heard; she is only narrated by Mme Lemarchand, her employer, who negotiates her contract with Franck, her husband. Hilda's physical absence serves to objectify her, rendering her a passive party, this effacement shifting emphasis from her identity, to the capitalist, patriarchal and possibly anti-Jewish power dynamics that discriminate against her class, gender and ethnicity/religion.

Mme Lemarchand is quick to declare her leftist credentials, vaunting that she is "une ancienne révolutionnaire" (20). Unlike the ladies who read centre-right newspaper *Le Figaro*, she is a social liberal: "Hilda aura la chance de servir chez des gens de gauche." (16) In their intersectional approach to advocating for migrant female workers, Jennifer Jihye Chun, George Lipsitz and Young Shin highlight the association between low language proficiency and workplace harassment (923). Mme Lemarchand explains that she could have employed an illegal migrant like Brigitte, who previously worked with them but who was deported to Mali. Immigrant women, she goes on, are prepared to work "comme des juments", they are self-effacing, grateful for pitiful pay, and even concede to having sex with their employers' husbands, who are partial to "une toute jeune étrangère à la peau sombre et au français incertain." (37) Mme Lemarchand ostentatiously congratulates herself for renouncing the exploitation of these dispossessed migrants, in which she herself previously engaged.

NDiaye does not waste time criticizing right-wingers for their racism, xenophobia or misogyny. Rather than shooting fish in a barrel, she targets defenders, like Mme Lemarchand, of the "revolution", and the liberal republic to which it gave rise. Intersectionality rejects the perception that liberal antidiscrimination laws are universal. Crenshaw, Cho and McCall, write, "as any interrogation of the nearly universal embrace of equal rights discourse in the mid-twentieth century reveals, institutionalized equality practices are at considerable odds with the contextualized understandings of power that gave rise to the demands in the first place." (806) Further back than the mid-twentieth century, the French Revolution's *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* accorded "universal" "equal rights", declaring, "Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits." However, this "institutionalized equality practice" was "at considerable odds" with the reality of women and colonized people, deprived of *liberté, égalité et fraternité*. Former civil servant from the

French Ministry of Culture and Communication, Reine Prat, explains how “l’égalité parfaite” is impossible (23): in order for select parties to guarantee their privilege they invent differences between themselves and those who resemble them, maintaining a monopoly over that privilege. From these hierarchies emerge sexes, races, classes and other categories, she explains (23, 87): “La différence implique automatiquement un système hiérarchique, producteur de violences autant que produit par la violence.” (23) She references philosopher and political scientist Elsa Dorlin, whose *Matrice de la race* describes how the same discourses that in the Middle Ages deemed women to be of weak and sickly temperament, were co-opted by the first naturalists arriving in the Americas and Africa to classify those who were captured, enslaved and colonized, as inferior and undeserving of rights (193-275). Universal equality is an abstract and disingenuous ideology constructed from the perspective of the privileged; and the structures imposed to safeguard that privilege exclude an intersectional spectrum of groups and individuals.

While declaring herself a staunch republican, Mme Lemarchand seizes every opportunity to demarcate her superiority. Cho, Crenshaw and McCall open their definition of intersectionality by stating that it seeks to interrogate “regulatory regimes of identity, reproduction, and family formation” (785). Mme Lemarchand internalizes patriarchal norms by exercising control over Hilda’s body and reproductivity, demanding reassurance from Frank that Hilda, who has two small children, will not get pregnant again, in order for her to look after the Lemarchands’ three children. Hilda is oppressed both because of her gender, and class. Mme Lemarchand’s house, like Madame’s in Jean Genet’s *Les Bonnes* (1947), a clear inspiration for NDiaye, becomes a metaphor for the manner in which oppressed, objectified and subjugated people are treated with charity and pity at best, hostility and violence at worst; never with respect and dignity. Indeed, some of Mme Lemarchand’s words are resonant of Madame’s, who considers that handing her cast-off gowns down to her maids is an act of magnanimity. Mme Lemarchand also describes Hilda like a twirling clockwork figurine, reminiscent of the Black servants bowing to their white mistress and rotating on the music box which provided inspiration for Genet’s play *Les Nègres* (1958). However, unlike the music box, dating from the days of the French Empire, and *Les Bonnes*, first staged in 1947, *Hilda* was written, and is presumably set, during a time when domestic service is largely replaced in Europe by modern electro-domestic conveniences. Nonetheless, Mme Lemarchand refers to Hilda as her “femme de servitude” (11), “femme de peine […] assujettie” (16), "femme à tout faire” (31), “bonne” (32), and “domestique” (33). Hilda is stripped of economic and social agency to the point where Franck says, "Passez-moi Hilda”, to which Mme Lemarchand responds, “Hilda restera en ma possession” (59), agreeing finally to loan her back temporarily (61). Like the theatre of Bernard-Marie Koltès, also an influence on NDiaye, families become what NDiayian critic Abdoulaye Sylla calls, “une bourse des valeurs” (201). Hilda is reduced to a commodity in the neoliberal exchange economy, Mme Lemarchand’s and Frank’s names underscoring this Marxist critique:[7] Mme Lemarchand literally “marchande”, or barters to reduce Hilda’s salary with Frank, a homophone of France’s former currency.

While Mme Lemarchand has established that Hilda, unlike Brigitte, “à la peau sombre et au français incertain”, is French and not an immigrant, NDiaye’s play seems to imply that she does not quite adhere to the norms of “Frenchness”, to which she must assimilate. The revolutionary First Republic (1792) announced that France was “une et indivisible”, the notion of indivisibility enduring across successive constitutions until the present Fifth Republic which states, “La souveraineté nationale appartient au people qui l’exerce par ses représentants […] aucune section du peuple, ni aucun individu ne peut s’en attribuer l’exercice”. Any belonging to ethnic or religious communities must be secondary to each citizen’s loyalty to the nation, France rejecting the Anglo-American model of

multiculturalism, and deeming what they call "communitarisme" to be an essentializing threat to republican cohesion and an encouragement of dangerously segregated ghettos. In return, the nation promises equal rights to each citizen. Presidents Sarkozy in 2009 and Macron in 2019 launched the "Grand débat" on French identity, asking how the nation can speak "together" with one voice, and illustrating how national indivisibility is still a dominant French ideology.

Mme Lemarchand explains that as soon as Hilda enters her house, she will cut her hair because it will be "plus hygiénique" (39); she will strip her, shower her (54), and get her own clothes altered for her to wear (42). Mme Lemarchand dresses Hilda in a pleated skirt and little cardigan, or in a summer frock described as "bleu vichy" (57). It is surely no coincidence that this fabric contains the name of the Nazi-backed authoritarian, racist Vichy regime. It is also no doubt intentional that Hilda and Frank, and their surname Meyer, are Germanic, with potentially Jewish connotations. The way Hilda is sanitized and stripped is evocative of the Nazi persecution of Jews, and of the ways in which Jewish and colonized people in the past, and migrants and postmigrants today, are judged as "uncivilized" or "unclean", and in need of "civilizing". The French *mission civilisatrice*, at its height between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, sought to consolidate and integrate the colonies by assimilating the *indigènes* into "civilized" republican values (Burrows). For the postcolonialist David Murphy, the colonial frontier today is represented by the *banlieue*, inhabited by migrants and their descendants who are faced with the conquest of a dominating and "civilizing" France (77). Hilda is French, but Mme Lemarchand displays the same cultural superiority that justified the civilizing mission, since Hilda must renounce all cultural specificity and sense of self as soon as she enters the house, conforming to a monocultural definition of Frenchness. In revealing ways, Mme Lemarchand says about dressing Hilda, "N'est-ce pas là une forme accomplie de démocratie ?" (54) For her, there appears to be no contradiction between oppressing Hilda, and these grandiose claims to democracy. Mme Lemarchand's house becomes a microcosm of a nation that excludes those who are considered to be "other": women, the working classes, and racialized people, for whom rights are certainly not "equal".[8]

***Royan* (2020)**

In *Royan*, performed (in an unremarkable production) at the Festival d'Avignon in 2021 before transferring to Paris's Théatre de la Ville in 2022, Gabrielle, a teacher, is visited by the parents of one of her pupils, Daniella, who killed herself by jumping out of a third-floor window at school. With this play NDiaye adds sexuality to the "compound discrimination" I have already discussed. Typical of NDiaye's theatre, *Royan*'s realism is askew: when Gabrielle first returns home in this one-person play, she notices that Daniella's parents are on the landing outside her apartment because, almost supernaturally, she smells them (15). The barely punctuated language contains NDiaye's characteristic linguistic recurrences and assonances (examples of which I provide presently), transforming the monologue into a cadenced – if contemptuous – elegy to the teenager.

Gabrielle never explicitly labels Daniella's sexuality, but the implied homophobia, transphobia and body-shaming of her tirade, while lyrically stylized, are offensive in the extreme.[9] There is an insinuation that Daniella was in love with Gabrielle, to whom she addressed many messages which Gabrielle claims never to have read, telling her parents she "avai[t] honte pour elle qui me livrait une intimité si malheureuse" (54). Gabrielle upholds strict heteronormativity, to which she expected Daniella, and other pupils to conform. She describes, with NDiaye's trademark venomous wit, that she would never be seen dead taking the bins out, or even jumping out of a third-floor window, without putting on her make-up (65). Her narrow definition of female identity is manifestly shared by the pupils, who

mercilessly bullied Daniella (62). Like Mme Lemarchand, Gabrielle internalizes patriarchal and heteronormative structures, perpetrating the discrimination to which she herself has no doubt been victim, in a spiral of intolerant cruelty.

Daniella was discriminated against because of her sexuality, and ethnicity. 150 years after the French Revolution which claimed to bring universal equality, women had only just won suffrage, and the Fourth Republic of 1946 differentiated between citizenship enjoyed in metropolitan France, and *citoyenneté coloniale*, a category with distinctly diminished rights (Bancel, Blanchard and Vergès 123). In the 1950s Fanon wrote, "Qu'est-ce que cette histoire de peuple noir, de nationalité nègre ? Je suis Français. Je suis intéressé à la culture française, à la civilisation française, au peuple français. Nous refusons de nous considérer comme 'à-côté', nous sommes en plein dans le drame français." (164) Asserting one's cultural specificity, and French citizenship, appear to be mutually exclusive; the rights of *l'homme* – the gendering of this term, as well as of *fraternité*, are notable for their exclusion of "non-frères" (Prat 84) – and of the *citoyen*, seem incompatible. The most notable example today of the narrow notion of equality in "cet universalisme 'à la française'" (Prat 44) is that while certain citizens originating from France's former colonies in Africa, the Antilles or East Asia are born in France, they are still pejoratively called *immigrés*, and victim to the same racist discrimination and social inequality endured by their parents and grandparents. Moreover, while state secularism, also introduced by the French Revolution, supposedly guarantees equality between people of all faiths, postcolonial literary specialist Farid Laroussi highlights the associations between the *immigré* today, the *indigène* of the colonial era, and the *infidel* of the Crusades, all considered outsiders (13). The hypocrisy of the Republic's claims to universal egalitarianism was highlighted in a 2005 manifesto:

> La République de l'Égalite est un mythe. L'État et la société doivent opérer un retour critique radical sur leur passé-présent colonial. Il est temps que la France interroge ses Lumières, que l'universalisme égalitaire, affirmé pendant la Révolution Française refoule ce nationalisme arc-bouté au chauvinisme de "l'universel", censé "civiliser" sauvagers et sauvageons (Bouteldja and Khiari 21).[10]

Claims to "universal" equality flatten power relationships and erase discrimination, in the name of supposed neutrality (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall 791).

> Gabrielle tells Daniella's parents:
> je dois vous parler des cheveux de Daniella
> Ils vitupéraient ces cheveux dressés emmêles comme une armée de serpents enchaînés qui sifflaient durant mon cours
> […]
> elle a tâté la masse fuligineuse et bruissante *répugnante* de sa chevelure (38)
> […]
> Voilà que les serpents qui faisaient la matière même des cheveux de Daniella
> […]
> se cabraient sur son crâne et s'amusaient à me provoquer à narguer mes efforts il me semblait évident alors que ces reptiles agressifs n'étaient ni plus ni moins que l'émanation des pensées de Daniella à mon égard (40)

NDiaye combines the French "belletriste" tradition of literary, aestheticized, metrical writing ("dressés, "emmêles", "armée", "enchaînés" and "sifflaient" rhyme, for instance), which incorporates the classical myth of the Gorgon Medusa's hair of snakes – what she calls "images qui peuvent provenir d'un autre lieu" (2021 10) – with contemporary social commentary. Daniella's ethnicity is never specified. But the blatantly racist associations between colonized people and animality that Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* exposes, are flagrant in Gabrielle's outburst: Daniella is animalistic ("serpents", "reptiles agressifs"), shadowy ("fuligineuse"), threatening ("vitupéraient"; "armée de serpents"), unruly

("sifflaient", "bruissante"), unkempt (emmêlés") and insolent ("s'amusaient à me provoquer"), while somehow remaining servile ("enchaînés"). Witnesses interviewed in sociologist Juliette Sméralda's *Du cheveu défrisé au cheveu crépu* testify to the legacies of colonial racism dominating cultural standards of beauty, manifested in the fact that Black people must straighten their hair to appear presentable. Gabrielle indicates with hyperbolic spite the shame associated with African/North African physicality, describing Daniella's hair as "*répugnante*" (Ndiaye's italics). As Sylla states, NDiaye's works reveal "la nature foncièrement raciste" of French society (Sylla 201).

But as Fanon's teacher warned, barriers preventing one group from accessing rights, are themselves "universal", and inevitably block others. As a number of NDiaye's plays demonstrate, including *Rien d'humain*, oppressors are not immune to the structures of oppression they enforce. Gabrielle recounts that when she was seventeen, she immigrated from Oran in Algeria to Marseilles (30). The audience can infer that she is a *pied noir* – European settler raised in colonial Algeria. in *From Empire to Exile: History and Memory within the* pied-noir *and* harki *communities*, Claire Eldridge explains how France first colonized Algeria in 1830 and from 1848 the colony was legally incorporated into the French nation, Algiers, Oran and Constantine becoming France's southern-most *départements* (5). In the late nineteenth century European settlers were granted French citizenship, a national identity they fully 'embraced' (19). In Oran, Gabrielle had "un esprit immense et glorieux / qu['elle avait] été là-bas perpétuellement en incandescence." (*Royan* 43) Life was radiant with the bountiful and plentiful natural, mineral and human resources France reaped from its occupied Mediterranean territory; and the settlers enjoyed 'highly privileged lives' compared with the colonized Algerians (Eldridge 20).

By the start of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62), approximately ten per cent of Algeria's population was comprised of European settlers and when, in 1962, Algeria gained independence, an exodus of 90 per cent of this population – around one million – ensued (Eldridge 5, 19). Eldridge describes how the *pieds noirs* had already suffered from an 'inferiority complex' in relation to their 'motherland France (19). Now they were displaced to an alien land they had never previously lived in, and from which their ancestors often did not originate, thereby coming to be characterized by their 'deeply traumatic experience' of 'exile' (20). She alludes to the *pieds*-noirs' 'sentiment of victimhood' at being 'marginalised and mistreated victims of decolonisation' (30), and their simultaneous nostalgic idealization of Algeria (21), all of which are palpable in Gabrielle's description of life in Marseilles.

Despite her racist allusions to Daniella's ethnicity, Gabrielle's own heritage becomes increasingly ambiguous. At the start of her monologue she describes her blond hair as the colour of the sun (14). In sharp contradistinction to Daniella's, it is straight and soft, caressing her "épaules avec la douceur" (17). She describes her mother as a "femme si pale si rousse si vulnérable", again contrasting with Daniella's supposed menace (33). We learn, though, that when Gabrielle arrived in France, she started "discrètement graduellement à teindre [ses] cheveux de ce blond ocré" (49). The reason for this Europeanizing cosmetic intervention was because, she discloses, "Les cheveux de celle que je ne suis plus étaient riches de nuances chromatiques que je trouvais inquiétantes" (49). In Marseilles Gabrielle was presumably marginalized both by the immigrant North-African population who resented her former colonial status; and the French, who doubted her European ethnicity. She presumably moved to Royan – a sort of anagram of Oran – to reinvent and conceal her ethnicity and refind the status she previously enjoyed in Algeria. "[T]olérance" (63) is not an option in NDiaye's theatre. The only alternative that victims of oppression have to death or suicide, is to become perpetrators of hatred and prejudice in knotted web of discrimination.

Not only Gabrielle's ethnicity, but her sexuality emerge as equivocal. She says, "Je serais devenue pareillement une Daniella sauvage et âpre et véhemente et finalement annihilée si j'avais pas eu autrefois l'idée salvatrice de me montrer tout autre" (63). She admits that Daniella had told her, "Vous vivez dans l'illusion car vous avez peur Madame de cette haine que vous suscitez du fait même qu'on devine cela en vous que vous vivez dans l'illusion" (68). Not only does Gabrielle conceal her non-European, non-white heritage but, living alone, she suppresses her sexuality. Aurally, Gabrielle's name can be both feminine and masculine. Moreover, it shares a syllable – "iell" – with Daniella's, highlighting the likenesses, rather than differences between them. Driving Daniella to suicide, Gabrielle seems to attempt to erase the parts of herself proscribed by dominant white heteronormative society. But repression does not result in total erasure: Daniella's parents, or at least their spectre in Gabrielle's conscience, rear up, demanding recognition, "queer(y)ing" straightness with strangeness (Galis, Wimbush & Tomlinson*).

Addressing the picket line during a strike at Goldsmiths University of London in 2018, the Black British journalist and academic Gary Younge said, "Nobody's ever held the door open and invited women, Black people or disabled people in. We've had to kick it down."[11] Prat writes in *Exploser le plafond*, the title of which indicates the same necessity for force:

> Les droits ne sont jamais octroyés, ils s'obtiennent, de haute lutte, parfois au péril de sa vie. Le pouvoir ne se lâche pas, il se transmet, du même au même. […] Il faut donc se défaire de l'idée qu'on peut laisser du temps au temps, que les changements viendront progressivement, que la société évolue, lentement mais sûrement… vers le mieux, forcément. Nous avons chaque jour, sur bien d'autres sujets, la preuve du contraire. (11)

Closed doors are a recurring motif across NDiaye's theatre.[12] Frank negotiates Hilda's salary while standing on Mme Lemarchand's doorstep, or at her garden gate. *Papa doit manger* begins as Papa speaks to his daughter through a crack between the door and frame, and ends as he pleads, standing in the doorway, old and destitute, for his ex-wife to take him in. In *Les Serpents* (2004) Mme Diss is shut outside her son's house, with his ex-wife. In *Les Grandes personnes* (2011) the schoolteacher who has abused an immigrant child asks his mother if he can speak to him through a closed door. In *Royan* Gabrielle waits at the bottom of the stairs, talking to Daniella's parents up the stairwell. Representing the power dynamics of access and exclusion imposed by categorizations of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion, doors pose barriers rather than providing access or opportunity.

NDiaye's characters do not "kick doors down"; they do not claim rights "de haute lutte". Indeed, both Hilda and Daniella are physically absent from the stage, further emphasizing the stripping of their personhood and selfhood by intersectional structures of discrimination. But her plays provides literacy, a means for recognizing domination, discrimination and marginalization, as the intersectional prisms through which I view her theatre expose. She challenges the Enlightenment underpinnings of the French republic and other liberal equality and universal rights discourses, exposing the barriers that prevent women, LGBTQIA+ people, people from the working classes, postcolonial subjects – and the combinations and implications of overlapping intersections between these categories – from enjoying the claimed benefits of citizenship.

Works Cited

Asibong, Andrew and Shirley Jordan, editors. *Marie NDiaye : l'Étrangeté à l'œuvre*. PU du Septentrion, 2009.

Marie Ndiaye: Blankness and Recognition. Liverpool UP, 2013.

Béhar, Clarisse. “Écrire en pays à majorité blanche: *En famille* de Marie NDiaye”. Bengsch and Ruhe, 2013, pp. 125-40.
Bengsch, Daniel and Cornelia Ruhe, editors. *Une Femme Puissante : L'oeuvre de Marie NDiaye*. Rodopi, 2013.
Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Verges. *La République coloniale : Essai sur une utopie*. Albin Michel, 2003.
Bouteldja, Houria and Sadri Khiari. *Nous sommes les Indigènes de la République*. Éditions Amsterdam, 2012.
Burnautzki, Sarah. “L’Équivocité de la visibilité de Marie NDiaye.” *Les Frontières racialisées de la littérature française : Contrôle au faciès et stratégies de passage*. Honoré Champion, 2017.
Burrows, Mathew. “‘Mission Civilisatrice’: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1986.
Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine.” *Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, pp. 139–67.
“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43 no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241-99.
Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Leslie McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2013, pp. 785-810.
Dorlin, Elsa. *La Matrice de la race : Généalogie sexuelle et coloniale de la nation française*. La Découuverte, 2006.
Eldridge, Claire. *From Empire to Exile: History and Memory within the* pied-noir *and* harki *communities, 1962-2012*. Manchester UP, 2016.
Fanon, Frantz. *Peau noire masques blancs*. Seuil, 1952.
Finburgh Delijani, Clare. “Marie NDiaye.” Dramatikkens hus, Oslo, 2021, https://vimeo.com/598889349
“Portes fermées, possibilités ouvertes.” *Parages*, edited by Nathalie Trotta and Frédéric Vossier, vol. 11, February 2022, pp. 106-117.
Galis, Polly, Antonia Wimbush and Maria Tomlinson, editors. *Queer(y)ing Bodily Norms in Francophone Culture*. Peter Lang, 2021.
Geiger, Marion. “Parole et pouvoir : la part totalitaire dans *Hilda* de Marie NDiaye.” *The French Review*, vol. 84, no.1, 2010, pp. 114-26.
Grewal, Kiran. “‘Va t’faire intégrer !’”: The Appel des féministes indigènes and the Challenge to ‘Republican values’ in Postcolonial France.” *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2010, pp. 105-33.
Hargreaves, Alec, Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, editors. *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*. Liverpool UP, 2017.
Henningfeld, Ursula. “Humain, trop humain, rien d’humain : Le Théâtre de Marie NDiaye”. Bengsch & Ruhe. 2013, pp. 177-200.
Ionesco, Eugène. *Notes et contre-notes*. Gallimard, 1966.
Jihye Chun, Jennifer, George Lipsitz & Young Shin, “Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates: Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory.” Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, pp. 917-940.
Kaprièlian, Nelly. “Marie Ndiaye : Aux prises avec le monde.” *Les Inrockuptibles*, vol. 716, 18-24 August, pp. 28-33.
Laroussi, Farid. *Postcolonial Counterpoint: Orientalism, France, and the Maghreb*. University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Maïsetti, Arnaud. “Marie NDiaye, politiques du cauchemar.” *Parages*, edited by Nathalie Trotta and Frédéric Vossier, vol. 11, February 2022, pp. 82-91.
Moudileno, Lydie. “Marie NDiaye : Entre visibilité et réserve.” Bengsch and Ruhe, 2013, pp. 159-76.
Murphy, David. “The Postcolonial Manifesto: Partisanship, Criticism and the Performance of Change”. Hargreaves, Forsdick and Murphy, pp. 159-76.
NDiaye, Marie. *Hilda*. Minuit, 1999.
“Rencontre avec Marie NDiaye.” *Marie NDiaye : L’Étrangeté à l’œuvre*, edited by Andrew Asibong and Shirley Jordan. Septentrion, 2009, pp. 186-99.
Royan. Gallimard, 2020.
“‘Lectrice plutôt que spectatrice’, entretien réalisé par Clare Finburgh Delijani.” *Théâtre/Public*, vol. 239, 2021, pp. 4-18.
Prat, Reine. *Exploser le plafond*. Rue de l’échiquier, 2021.
Rabaté, Dominique. *Marie NDiaye*. Textuel, 2008.
Roussos, Katherine. *Décoloniser l'imaginaire : Du réalisme magique chez Maryse Condé, Sylvie Germain et Marie Ndiaye*. L’Harmattan, 2007.
Sylla, Abdoulaye. "Le Négoce de la distance : Rhétorique des rapports humains dans le théâtre de Marie NDiaye.” Bengsch and Ruhe, 2013, pp. 201-16.
Sheringham, Michael. “The Law of Sacrifice: Race and the Family in Marie Ndiaye’s *En famille* and *Papa doit manger*.” *Affaires de Famille: The Family in Contemporary French Culture and Theory*, edited by Marie-Claire Barnet & Edward Welch. Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 23-38.
Sméralda, Juliette. *Du cheveu défrisé au cheveu crépu*. Publibook, 2012.
Thomas, Dominic. “The Marie NDiaye Affair, or, the Coming of a Postcolonial Évoluée.” Hargreaves, Forsdick and Murphy
Younge, Gary. “Teach-Out”. Goldsmiths, University of London, February 2018.

---

[1] I extend my profound gratitude to Andrew Asibong for his attentive reading of a previous iteration of the ideas developed in this article.

[2] For an analysis of NDiaye’s theatre in relation to that of Ionesco and Jean Genet see Geiger.

[3] For an examination of strangeness in NDiaye’s works see Rabaté, and Asibong and Jordan.

[4] For discussions of NDiaye’s navigation of France’s “colourblind” nationhood see Asibong (2013 9), Béhar, Burnautzki (178-202); Moudileno, and Thomas.

[5] I capitalize Black to indicate that, far from being a marker of skin pigmentation, the term denotes a consciousness-raising movement that fights for rights and justice.

[6] According to Maïsetti, “le cauchemar paraît […] l’élément dans lequel évoluent les pièces, la condition même de ces œuvres […], sa loi.” (88).

[7] I thank Rania Broud for this observation. See Finburgh Delijani 2021.

[8] Michael Sheringham suggests that *Papa doit manger* constitutes both a family drama, and a social and political critique of the “effects of power, violence, domination, subservience, surrender, and mirroring.” (26).

[9] An example is provided by Gabrielle’s outburst:

> Ses gros sourcils d’homme si bruns et si larges que les paupières en sembleraient écrasées et craintives et je ne pouvais m’empêcher de penser que ses jambes étaient sans doute couvertes du même poil noir et fier et que Daniella un jour peut-être ferait son entrée dans la classe vêtue d’une jupe qui exhiberait ce crin monstrueusement viril et vous savez bien parents attentifs que Daniella ne faisait rien pour atténuer la pénombre bleutée entre son nez et sa lèvre supérieure qu’elle en était même sombrement aigrement satisfaite (36-7).

Later, Gabrielle describes Daniella as “hirsute et large” (44).

[10] This manifesto was published by the Parti des Indigènes de la République in 2005, at a time when their challenge to racism and other forms of discrimination in France gained considerable support among French intellectuals and activists. For a detailed discussion of their provocative stances and their intersectional approach to “race” and feminism see Grewal.

[11] The campaign at Goldsmiths against precarity and unendurable work conditions, which predominantly target those with protected characteristics, is ongoing.

[12] See Finburgh Delijani, and Hanningfield.