

Racial Segregation in Debbie Tucker Green's "Random"

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Abstract

Racism in all forms remains a significant cause of humiliation, differentiation, and unfairness for millions of people around the globe. Debbie Tucker Green (1964) is a well-known black British playwright of the new millennium. She does not focus on the concept of race and its interpretations in her plays but on the challenges black individuals face in many countries such as the UK, Africa, and the Caribbean. The play *Random* (2008) presents a black adolescent assassinated in London; for the most part, the writer Tucker Green focuses on showing how the problem of indiscriminate killing of black people impacts each character's life. Instead of focusing on the causes of the problem, she focuses on the emotional consequences. The play also examines this topic by concentrating on the character's thoughts and inner voices. This paper analyses Green's play in two terms, content and style, to present Tucker Green's depiction of trauma, loss, and vehemence.

Keywords: Debbie Tucker Green, trauma, *Random*, vehemence, racism

1. Introduction

The essential goal of international human rights law is to eliminate racial discrimination worldwide through shifting norms and enforcing treaties. However, the law's impact on decreasing racism does not achieve its objectives. Although many official and unofficial organizations aim to protect human rights regardless of the individual's race, color, or political and religious affiliation, unfortunately, these organizations are not able to eliminate racism around the world. Many people still suffer from racism for different reasons that underestimate human beings and humanity.

Debbie Tucker Green is a contemporary black British writer renowned for her technical ingenuity and political activism. Her works are widely acknowledged in current black British theater discussions. Tucker Green's plays remind that racism and inequality are significant social and political challenges (Bağırlar, 2020). She is marked by heightened demotic poetry and rejection of social realism's assumptions. Her work has been determinedly woman-centred, controversial, radical, and indignant (Reid, 2018). She also looks at the role of women in the global and domestic suffocation of capitalism and violence (Osborne, 2011).

There is not much information about Tucker Green's life; it is only known about her life that she was born in (1964). The journalist Aleks Sierz reminds that when she met her, "Tucker Green is apprehensive about doing the interview; clichés in journalism irritate her." She said, "I have Jamaican blood, but I do not talk about my family. The work and only the work is what counts" (Aleks, 2003). That is why there is not much information about her family or personal life. Green has her style in presenting her ideas concerning the suffering of ethnic

people in Britain as stereotyped minorities. She, for instance, uses lowercase to write her name and purposely avoids capital letters because she believes that the text is more important than the author or title matters (Davis, 2012).

Her works lack an autobiographical element. She emphasises the importance of her plays over herself as a writer. She always lowercases her name and the titles of her plays in her writing, which is a clear indicator of her voice. As D. Keith Peacock, an author said, described Tucker Green:

"She refuses to speak of her ancestry, although her family appears to have come from Jamaica, and [she] is unwilling to reveal her date and place of birth, considering that her origins are irrelevant to an understanding of her work" (Peacock, 2008, pp. 59-60).

Her career began in a fruitful decade for black British theatre; she appeared for the first time in 2003 with "dirty butterfly" (Soho Theatre) and the second play "Born Bad" (Hampstead Theatre). Then, with "Stoning Mary" (2005) and "Random" (2008), for the first time, Tucker Green as a black female dramatist, had two performances at the Royal Court Downstairs. In 2004, she received the Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomers (Fragkou, 2012). Green as a black female dramatist had two performances at the Royal Court Downstairs. In 2004, she received the Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomers (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020).

Tucker Green sparked the interest of current British theatre scholars and critics, gaining great critical interest from scholars who are not often concerned with Black British production. Most of these critics had framed their examinations of Tucker Green's plays primarily in terms of modern British theater scholarship's hot topics such as crisis, ethics, human rights, precarity, a discussion of politics, and how language and writing are aesthetically pleasing (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020). For example, Marissia Fragkou and Lynette Goddard, in their article 'Staging Human Rights in Debbie tucker green's Royal Court Plays,' write in 2013:

"Tucker Green's plays carefully position audiences as witnesses to the emotional impact of violent atrocities on her characters, which makes a statement about how inaction towards global crises amounts to complicity in human rights abuse" (Fragkou & Goddard, 2013, p. 146).

Tucker Green explores black people's local and global challenges in the United Kingdom, Africa, and the Caribbean without highlighting racial identity. For example, in the play "Random", she portrays the killing of a black adolescent in London. Green focuses on the consequences of vehemence, trauma, and bereavement in the characters' lives. Traumatic loss is caused by violence (Bilgin, 2020). The play Random tells the story of a West Indian family living in London. It is based on a realistic event to which the writer herself was a witness. The play was directed and premiered in March 2008 Downstairs at the Royal Court Theatre in London. It was performed by one black actress on a bare stage (Abram, 2014).

Her depiction of critical issues facing Black people locally and globally is well-known. In her plays, the protagonists are frequently confronted with horrific events that have devastating effects on their lives. Moreover, characters who are through horrific events turn against or distance themselves from one another; for instance, in random when Brother's life is cut short by the horrific murder which traumatizes his family, each family member deals with the situation differently (Bilgin, 2020).

A spike in the number of youngsters tragically stabbed in London in 2007 and 2008 prompted *Random* to be written, with approximately three-quarters of those killed being young Black males. In the final days of his premiership, Tony Blair pressed black society to take action against an increase in violent young fatalities and said:

"The series of knife and gun killings in London was produced not by poverty but by a special black culture [...] the current violence should not be considered as a part of the generic crime wave but as specific to black youth" (Wintour & Dodd, 2007).

There were allegations in the spring of 2008 in the newspapers of the top police officers declaring "the significant surge in the number of youths slain on the streets of London is the biggest threat confronting the capital after terrorism" (Fresco, 2008). London Mayor Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Gordon Brown raised the issue of adolescent knives on the DirectGov website. The government has begun public awareness campaigns about the dangers of carrying a knife and has tried to address the situation, including the ability to search effectively and harsher sentences for those caught with weapons (Goddard, 2009). Langston Hughes wrote the following poem "Weary Blues," which is an emotional response to racism and slavery:

"Ain't got nobody in all this world,

Ain't got nobody but ma self.

I's gwine to quit ma frownin'

And put ma troubles on the shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor. He played a few chords then he sang some more— "I got the Weary Blues

And I can't be satisfied.

Got the Weary Blues

And can't be satisfied—

I ain't happy no mo'

And I wish that I had died." (Hamad & Alzubaidi, 2020, p.4).

In the play *Random*, on stage, a single Black woman performs the play and depicts an ordinary day in the life of a Black family. The story begins with the bird's morning singing and the dog barking outside the house; at the end of the day, the policemen arrive to tell the parents and Sister (the same single black woman who plays all of these roles) of the deadly stabbing of Brother at the school (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020). The drama was later broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on March 13, 2010. Debbie Tucker Green won BAFTA (British Academy Film and Television Award) for Best Single Drama in 2011 after it was adapted for television and broadcast on Channel 4 (Aston, 2014).

2. Analysis and Discussion

The British Crime Survey (BCS) indicated that "between 2000-2001, 53,090 racist accidents were registered in England and Wales". In addition, the "Institute of Race Relations (IRR) registered 124 cases of murder with racist motives in Scotland, England, and Wales in the period 1970-2003 (Cottle, 2004). Furthermore, in 2003, "there were 31 youths under the age of 20 accused of a weapon-related offence in London" (Shukor, 2007). As Ravinder Barn clarifies in her work (*Black Youth on the Margins: A Research Review*) when it comes to street crime, ethnic minorities who "worry about racial harassment" have had to use a variety of strategies to keep themselves and their families safe, including not going out after dark, making their homes more secure, visiting stores only at specific times, preventing children from playing outside their houses, and avoiding places where the majority of the population is white (Barn, 2001).

All these events are discussed in Debbie Tucker Green's play *Random* including the racism of the police and the media; on the other hand, her primary concern is focusing on people who are losing their loved ones who are brutally murdered for racist reasons. Tucker Green stays away from the stereotypical urban council estate setting, but she also resists stereotypes in different ways, like refusing to give any explanation as to why the stabbing occurred, such as whether the so-called "Black on Black violence" may have a factor in the incident or it was motivated by race. In addition, she depicts the family's sad reactions immediately after the murder instead of showing the struggles that lead to the decisive act. Finally, rather than depicting the hardships that led to the act of violence, Tucker Green concentrate on the black female protagonist (Sister) instead of the teenager (Brother) (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020).

The narrative stands out as a uniquely Black response; as the West Indian family wakes up and goes about their usual routines of breakfast, school, work, and daytime television, an air of unease hang over them. However, the appearance of the cops heralds the play's major shift in tone. Suspicions of Mum, Dad, and Sister toward the policemen who bring bad news to the family when viewed in the light of the ongoing tensions between the police officers and the Black societies (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020).

“Sister: Seein -

not a one but a two piece a Police cars

outside our yard.

For all to see.

Obvious.

for all to know.

Shame.

Mom gonna be cuss.

Dad gonna be pissed” (tucker green, 2008, p. 46).

The members of the family's apprehension stem from a history of confrontations and riots, the unfair application of laws to Black males, and the use of excessive force by police to execute warrants in the houses of Black individuals. Aragay and Monforte write, "viewers are urged to participate emotionally and creatively in ways that go far beyond color, class, age and other categories for the sake of understanding the human ordinariness of others' lives" (Aragay & Monforte, 2013). Like many of Green's previous works, she had called for accepting Black experiences as "human experiences" without denying their racial distinctiveness (Adiseshiah & Bolton, 2020).

According to Marissia Fragkou, "to argue that the play is important primarily for a certain audience would invalidate its broader political significance that extends beyond the black community" (Fragkou, 2010, p. 80). Wherefore, Tucker Green challenges theater norms by avoiding presenting actual acts of violence; instead, she focuses on the consequences of trauma and misery. For instance, the homicide is not shown in the play or the race of the guy who killed Brother, whether he was white or not, but by Sister's narrative of her Brother's viciously facial wounds, lost eye, and a fatal knife wound depicts the horror of the crime.

“SISTER: But his been cut thru

With a chunk of him gone now.

He had an eye two.

Now he got juss one.

They try to pretty it up

mek it look like he winkin... [...]

His mout‘look like a clown now

Wider than it should be [...]

look like he a self-harmer

but proof he fought back” (tucker green, 2008, p. 53).

As a result, the audience can understand that the killing was for racist reasons. In addition, green concentrates on the feeling of melancholy that is rarely depicted in media images of families. Mum will not talk to the "the blue-eyed reports" because she does not want to be seen as the "dignified, strong, or forgiving one" (tucker green, 2008, pp. 41-42).

The plot of *Random* brings to mind the attitude of a Black mother's reaction to her son's unexpected and random murder, as well as a family who is uncomfortable in the presence of the police officers. Dad's quiet nature is "the sort dad who... do not say much unless he has to" (tucker green, 2008, p. 18). Mum drops on the couch perplexed and begin questioning the cops; she inquires carefully if they are confident that the youngster who is murdered is her son or not. Mum stops listening when the officers describe the boy and discuss the circumstances of the accident (Bilgin, 2020).

“How yu know iss him- how yu know he

Was there- how yu know iss not some- body who favour?

How y’know he ent juss late? How y’know he ent with he’s spars....

Not ‘gang’. why you here?” (Tucker green, 2008, p. 48).

After that, Mum is so shocked that she cannot speak for fear of exploding in rage. As a result, Sister's voice takes center stage as the spokesman for relaying information to the public. The use of one actress emphasizes the individualization of their grieving experiences, implying that Sister's sentiments of loneliness amplify the impact of Brother's death on the rest of the family during this dreadful period (Goddard, 2009).

Because there is no rational explanation for Brother's death, Sister finds it particularly difficult to make sense of the circumstance, which she expresses as fury. However, she is not angry with the murderer since she does not know who killed her Brother; she is furious at the officers who inform her that her Brother has died for a reason she does not entirely comprehend. As a result, the police present the family with a bag containing Brother's stuff. Dad stares at the officers while Mum avoids glancing at the bag (Bilgin, 2020).

“Sister: So it looks like a phone - what.

My number last dail on it - so?

So it look like he’s phone – yeh- that is

My number- yeh- that is his phone then.

So? And? What?’

‘...What’s with the brown on it?’ Oh. Blood.

... Since when does a mans bleed brown?

... When the blood is old and dry” (tucker green, 2008, p. 50).

People prefer to avoid stimuli that remind them of the traumatic incident after they had gone through it (Caruth, 1995). Mum and Dad try to avoid glancing at the bag that reminds them of their son's killing; Sister is the only one who can examine the bag's contents. Although she sees her brother's phone, she denies that her Brother is dead and refuses to understand what occurred (Bilgin, 2020).

Kübler-Ross and Kessler see that accepting all of the feelings involved with loss at once may be too much to handle and crushing for the psych's defense mechanism. As a result, the mind produces the sensation of disbelief to protect itself (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014). The characters' unique solitude contrasts with the absence of privacy surrounding grieving in such circumstances. Riches and Dawson write, "Criminal justice and media coverage may compound already complicated mourning processes when control over the child's death and previous existence is moved from the private to the public realm" (Riches & Dawson, 1998). To show how awful the crime was, the authorities accompany Sister and Dad to identify

Brother's body; she details the injuries on her brother's body and what the offender did to him (Bilgin, 2020).

“SISTER: They try to pretty it up mek it looks like he winkin... [...]

His mout' look like a clown now

Wider than it should be. It slashed so much on a one side from there to there” (tucker green, 2008, p. 35).

The words above suggest that the killer not only murdered Brother but also mutilated his body. The killer maimed him by slicing his mouth and injuring his eyes; other little bruises on her brother's body indicate that he attempted to fight back and protect himself (Bilgin, 2020).

According to psychiatrist James Gilligan, vehemence can be regarded as a "symbolic language" that reflects concepts that cannot be spoken. Therefore, one must first comprehend what violent acts and behaviors entail to comprehend violence. For example, Gilligan says that criminals deliberately mutilate the corpses of their victims for various reasons and meanings. Cutting someone's tongue, for example, may represent the attacker's desire to prohibit the victim from mocking or discussing the offender (Gilligan, 1997). Similarly, Jack Katz says that assailants who kick their victims' faces are metaphorically attempting to avoid their victim's distressing gaze. As a result, the perpetrator's cruel actions may convey their behavior (Katz, 1992).

“Whole heap a witness Polices say.

Whole heap a somebody on street.

Saw.

Whole heap a peeps

on road

was present.

But I lissen*

Hard*

an' still, I hear ...

(Silence.)

Silence shoutin the loudest. Cos it seems that

now no one wanna witness what happened

to my BrotherBrother” (tucker green, 2008, p. 45).

Sister's depiction of witnesses' hesitation to speak up implies an archetypal "wall of silence", which can stymie policemen's investigation because societies are either too scared or too loyal to disclose what they observe. This is a harmful quiet that might be interpreted in two ways. First, witnesses do not want to bear witness to Brother's murder, so they remain silent. Second, they are involved in perpetuating violence. Sister's speech also exemplifies Tucker Green's recent pattern of demonstrating that quiet equates to complicity in acts of vehemence, abuse, and homicide (Goddard, 2009).

3. Conclusion

People's instincts to fight and compete for dominance had led to thousands of horrific acts of violence, from worldwide conflicts and genocides to domestic abuse and racial profiling. Debbie Tucker Green's theater aims to give explicit imagery of violence. She hopes to arouse a supposed calm audience and transform them into objective observers.

Her success stems from her ability to portray the hushed and neglected groups effectively. In her play *Random*, Tucker Green evokes one of the most popular themes in the United Kingdom; street crime is considered one of the most difficult challenges the British government must address and work to reduce and eliminate. The characters' ability to tell the stories of their tragedies makes the audience participate in their stories and witness their misery and trauma. Mum, Dad, and Sister are shocked to learn of Brother's catastrophic killing; the police arrive at the family's house and deliver the news to the family. A disagreement at the end of a normal day leads to the stabbing death of Brother (the black guy) in the street outside the boy's school; this vehement killing ends a little boy's life and leaves his family in a state of shock and disbelief. It can conclude that Tucker Green demonstrates that everyone can feel trauma and vehemence; people's lives can be ruined by traumatic events like the death of a close individual.

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