

Tribhuvan University

Change and Continuity of Black Aesthetics in debbie tucker green's *random*

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled "Change and Continuity of Black Aesthetic in debbie tucker green's *random*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Shanti Bhatta been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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### **Abstract**

This research work aims to trace the change and continuity in Black theatrical aesthetics in deddie tucker green play *random*. It tries to explore the Black aesthetic or mode of writing as the obvious feature of debbie tucker green's play *random* due to her feature of writing including her selection of subject matter, writing style as well as her position as the Black British woman playwright. debbie tucker not only presents the thematic issues of black but also chooses the writing style like avoiding capital letters and including the vernacular speech in literature which were features of Black writings throughout the history of Black literature. Similarly, there is the changed setting, expression style as well as modern England's events and incidents which are far different than the past Black writings in America but tucker green even in the changed setting, modified theatrical style like experimentation performance of solo character for various roles does not go beyond her tradition of Black writing in term of the subject of struggle for survive for the Blacks in contemporary British society. Even the innocent Blacks are compelled to live the life of criminal in the eyes of authority due to the prevalence of race which is presented through the murder of a Black youth and the consequences brought by the incident in his family.

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## I. Introducing Black British Theatre and debbie tucker green

This research aims to trace the Black Aesthetics in debbie tucker green's play focusing on the back racial identity and characteristics in the theatre. For this purpose, this research aims to include her play *random*. As the contemporary theatrical author, Green deals with the contemporary of social and cultural values inherent in the European world specifically within the scenario of England where the migrated Africans have their own experience of struggle to adjust in the white world. Even there are the racial riots and violence which marks the clear demarcation between Whites and Blacks has dealt with Black British Theatre.

The play *random* brings the Black people as the central characters who have been living in London with struggles for survival and face the racial conflict in London. *random* is a story about a family's worst nightmare; a racially motivated random act of violence in which their son is an innocent victim. Television and film are inundated with crime stories, following the detectives that solve the murder cases. But little is heard about the families of the victims. debbie tucker green empowers the victims of this story by giving them a voice as the voice of innocent blacks.

British playwright debbie tucker green doesn't hold with capital letters, always writing her name and play titles in lower case. The research brings the text *random* into the dimension of its study to deal with the contemporary Black English writings in theatre with its focus on the representation of Black identity, culture and aesthetic in theatre. This research aims to observe the Black mood of writing and aesthetic in modern English theatre through the analysis of green's play deals with the changes that take places during the period of globalization in the black writings. As a theoretical modality, at first this work of dissertation analyses the British Theatre and the space of Black Women theatre

artists and their issue represented on the Black writings in theatre with its focus on how the issues of Blacks are represented in the plays written by Black author in Europe with its focus on *Random*.

debbie tucker green is a contemporary Black British dramatist. So it is relevant to deal with the Black's space in British theatre. Black British dramatists have been marked, for many decades, by invisibility, difference and otherness. Until the 1990s, Black playwrights had dealt with issues such as “origin, migration, displacement, diaspora, arrival and otherness” (48) as Peacock writes, in their plays. However, second-generation black dramatists not only interrogated concepts such as ‘assimilation’ or ‘otherness’ but they also used theatre to express their frustrations about being born and brought up, but not accepted in Britain. Now, the Black theatre has become the medium to express their experience of frustrations of being born and brought in England.

Kritzer remarks that initially, contemporary black British dramatists had focused mainly on “the change of identity from one generation to the next in families who have immigrated to Britain” (80) and the experience of the following generations of black British who, far from succeeding in the process of assimilation of mainstream British culture, felt the need to rediscover themselves through their in-between and often unstable position within contemporary Britain. About the feature of contemporary Black theatre in Britain, Peacock writes:

At the turn of the century, a new wave of young black writers emerged, though, and this time they presented a new drama which would give black writers access to the white-dominated means of representation to offer a presence and a voice for those who, because of their race, ethnic origin

and history, have been considered by the white majority and, indeed, often by themselves, to be outside mainstream culture. (48)

Those young black British dramatists, who as Osborne writes, “in all spheres of expertise [...] encountered roadblocks on their routes to development and practice” (223), had to struggle not to go unnoticed within mainstream culture and to find a unique style of writing which wouldn’t be marginalised as ‘Black’, ‘Commonwealth’ or any other kind of literature that put it at the edges.

Black British theatre would be a fully fledged member of the broad range of British writing. These young Black writers were critical insiders not outsiders, and had moved from postcolonialism to multicultural Britain. As a result, contemporary black British dramatists chose to define their identity as the result of a process of hybridization and focused their attention on “third-generation teenagers and their place within a hybrid urban culture” (53) as Peacock mentions.

From the urban lifestyle, rap music and gang culture, potent subcultures emerged and were considered “a way of continuing an open sense of black collectivity in the shifting, changing beat of the present” (qtd. in Peacock: 49). However, this also led to a “nihilistic black-British subculture of violence [...] and gun crime” (53-54) as Peacock mentions. The Black British writing represents a major problem within multicultural Britain. Despite the difficulties in making their voice heard, contemporary Black British playwrights have increasingly overcome silence and have been able to place audiences face-to-face with the most uncomfortable side of racism in Britain.

While silence and lack of visibility have been huge obstacles in the development of Black British theatre, representationalism – the expectation that ethnic minority writers



have to represent one sole black identity with which all black people would feel identified – has also been a source of conflict for ethnic minority dramatists as Osborne writes, "[D]ramatists seeking to have their work produced at the end of the twentieth century face the familiar conundrum of representationalism vs. artistic individualism – a constraint that their white counterparts simply do not have to face" (224).

Black theatre has often been expected to be 'black' and 'urban'. As Lola Young claims, "there is the complicity on the part of black people too, who view anything that isn't 'street' to be 'inauthentic' and not 'really black'" (qtd. in Osborne 224). As a result, Black playwrights have faced the need to find a unique aesthetics and form, which, by being different from 'white theatre', "will have the power and influence to move forward" (225) as mentioned by Peacock. About the contemporary Black Play writers Kritzer writes:

Contemporary playwrights who belong to minority ethnic groups are trying to redefine their national identity as much as they articulate issues of individual identity [and] make visible what has occurred but has not been fully recognized: the development of a heterogeneous cultural landscape in which there are various patterns of connection and separation. (95)

At the same time, and "in contrast to [...] the first in-her-face playwrights", on temporary black British playwrights seek to "communicate an interest in the future and a sense that they stand at the beginning of a history yet to be written rather than at the end of one that has been discredited" (96) as mentioned by Kritzer.

Black theatre artists see in theatre an active way of problematising the violence and multicultural tensions that have been taking place in Britain in the last decades. In 1998, Richard Norton Taylor and the Tricycle Theatre presented one of the most challenging tribunal plays on racial issues that had been performed so far. *The Colour of Justice*, a play which focused on the murder and the subsequent trial of Stephen Lawrence, “made a major public impact [and] it [still] stands out as one of the most successful attempts to use theatre to make an issue visible” (156) as mentioned by Kritzer.

*The Colour of Justice* dealt with issues such as loss and, despair, and strongly suggested that the police force sometimes act according to a racially motivated unfairness. The staging of the trial in the form of a ‘tribunal play’ managed to get the audience involved and invited them to become critical about the case. The success of this and other tribunal theatre lies in the opportunity it gives the audience to consider individual actions, see and hear those individuals defend their actions, and participate in judgment. This means of presenting issues thus functions in a unique way to involve audience members. The evidence may be vivid and even dramatic, but the memorable experience consists in drawing one’s own conclusions on the basis of hearing and considering the evidence.

Norton Taylor argued that theatre is “‘a medium complementary to newspapers’ that ‘can lead to a greater understanding of how we are governed and what is being said and done on our behalf’” (qtd. in Kritzer 159). According to Taylor the value of the play lies in the directness of using only words spoken in the proceedings, rather than second-hand descriptions, and the completeness of a finished story, as opposed to the day-to-day

reporting of pieces of the story. Thus, Norton Taylor chose theatre as a way of eliciting a critical response to the Stephen Lawrence case and to racial harassment at large. As Michael Billington points out, the play “really showed the potential of verbatim theatre: that it could operate simultaneously as source of information, work of art and instrument of social change” (385).

Similarly, David Hare's concept about the Black British theatre and racism in Britain is mentioned by Billington as:

[Norton Taylor] laid before a live audience all the subtleties and intricacies of British racism, all its forms and gradations, with a clarity which I had never seen emulated by television, documentary or newspaper. The play seemed not just a rebuke to the British theatre for its drift towards less and less important subject matter: it also seemed to expose other forms by the sheer seriousness and intensity with which it was able to bring the theatre's special scrutiny to bear. (qtd. in Billington 386)

There is the distinct history and identity of Black theatre in Britain. In 1999, black playwright Roy Williams's *Lift Off* examined “race relations through the lives of urban youths who not only accept black culture, but also admire and emulate a particular black stereotype” (83) as Kritzer writes and believe that they must endure pain to become part of a gang. Keeping the change and continuity of Black theatre Kritzer writes, "At the turn of the century, Williams shift[ed] his focus from issues of identity within the Afro-Caribbean community to exclusion of Afro-Caribbeans from the concept of British identity” (158) and presented *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (2002), a play which

“highlights the illusionary aspect of national unity” (158) but also the constant racial tensions which problematise any sense of British ‘togetherness’. One year later, Williams’s *Fallout* (2003) premiered at the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs; the play which, distantly echoed the Stephen Lawrence case, addresses the story of a black-to-black unprovoked murder and the dubious attitude of the police to make its viewers consider aspects of 21st century British society and its black teen sub-culture in a fresh light.

Like Williams’s plays, Kwane Kwei-Amah’s *Elmina’s Kitchen* (2003) and *Fix-Up* (2004), both premiered at the National Theatre, are also “written in realistic style and take a complex view of individuals involved with the ongoing creation of Afro-Caribbean culture in Britain” (92) as Kritzer writes. Most recently, *Look to the Sky* (2011) written by Courttia Newland is a vivid, fresh, urban play which “deals with issues of knife crime, drugs, family and friendship” (92) as experienced by contemporary British youths through a highly poetic, urban language.

Such plays exemplify the efforts of black British playwrights to gain visibility and to be included as part of the wider notion of British culture by putting at the forefront issues such as multiculturalism, belonging and exclusion, racial tensions and violence. About the Black British Playwrights Osborne writes:

Nevertheless, despite black British playwrights’ demand for attention and their evident will to take part in the reshaping of post-Thatcher political theatre, [i]n the first decade of the new millennium, white men continue to maintain hegemonic sovereignty in the realm of theatre despite recent

governmental arts policies [and] contemporary media coverage  
 highlighting the need for greater diversity. (224)

Black British theatre is gradually moving from the margins to the centre of British culture. Keeping this issue into consideration Sierz writes, “in terms of the British stage there is a black in the Union Jack” (187). Many Black playwrights have noted that increased visibility might be one thing, but it does not equate to any real increase in institutional power – black artists are still utterly dependent on white-run institutions. The debate of Black British theatre is an ongoing so it should be addressed with the blackness reflected in Black British dramatists which this research tries to deal.

The issue of Black represented in the texts has been analyzed properly. Then the research work aims to trace the contemporary representations of racial tension and Black's struggle of survive in the European world. If contemporary Black British dramatists have generally found it difficult to gain a place in the British theatrical arena, Black women dramatists are still one of the most invisible minority groups within British theatre. And yet, Black women playwrights, who have been struggling for decades to erase the indelible mark of being sexually and racially discriminated on, articulate a potential counter-discourse by “deconstruct[ing] significations of authority and power exercised in the canonical text” (226) as mentioned by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins while recreating a multiplicity of identities stemming from the black experience.

Even today, as Deirdre Osborne states, “the staging of Black British women’s drama, in particular, still remains, at best rare [and] sex, gender and race disadvantages appear to fuse more acutely in this context than in other arts disciplines” (226). Black

British women playwrights continue to fight for and to try to preserve the (still lesser) recognition they have etched. The Black feminist movement that emerged in the United States in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement (1955–1968) and led many Black feminists to ‘grab the microphone’ to “free all women: women of colour, working class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women – as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women” (49) as mentioned by Smith. There is a huge step towards the eradication of sexism and racism and the recognition of the Black experience.

Most Black feminists supported the idea of establishing a common collective identity and defending it in front of the white supremacist ideology while, at the same time, acknowledging the diverse identities which make up the ‘black experience’. Many Black feminists articulated discourses on the importance of experience as hooks writes:

This was the case of bell hooks [sic], an iconic black feminist, who argued that “there is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black ‘essence’ and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle. (93)

Likewise, numerous Black American playwrights aimed at proving the validity of their writing and developing a new aesthetics. The play of Black British Women playwrights explores womanhood, blackness and plurality, as well as experiences of discrimination, violence and abuse, and it intertwines music, poetry, dancing, thus creating a unique piece which became widely recognized as a masterpiece.

Following this line, the first Black women’s theatre company in Britain, Theatre Black Women, was created in 1982 by Bernardine Evaristo, Patricia St. Hilaire and

Paulette Randall. Later on, in 1985, Talawa Theatre Company – one of the most salient black theatre companies in Britain – was founded by four black women in London as a reaction to the lack of creative opportunities for actors from minority ethnic backgrounds and the general marginalization of black peoples from cultural processes that was prevalent at the time of the Company's inception.

During the 1980s, black British women dramatists, who acknowledged the problems of labelling their theatre as feminist or non-feminist and preferred being described as writing from "women's perspective" (132) as Goodman writes as Joseph says, "had the opportunity of transforming the gendered rhetoric of belonging in new ways" (111). Before this period, "the discourses of identity and belonging in black British cultural production were predominantly male narratives foregrounding male subjectivity" (111) as Josep writes.

With the new millennium, a second wave of Black women dramatists has emerged who celebrate their in-between position in relation to the mainstream culture, while they explore new sensibilities not only linguistically but also aesthetically. This new group of Black women playwrights focuses on the exploration of the politics of identity in the here and now, whose starting point is not the West Indies, but London, and sometimes encompasses white characters. It is recognition, as Hall suggests and Peacock writes, "Cultural identities are hybrid and 'undergo constant transformation' [...] At the beginning of the new millennium, [...] there is also a hybrid approach that does not privilege racial difference but explores, from a black woman's perspective, gender, social and domestic relationships" (63).

Recent Black female dramatists do not seek to defend the early feminism that helped women gain visibility and which was, most of the times, a central issue in the first wave of Black women's theatre. Rather, they examine individual lives and address all types of audiences, regardless of their race or gender, while they seek to resituate Black women's theatre from the margins to the centre of British culture in order to both challenge the idea that black female playwriting was not worth listening to in the context of a "white-led cultural production in Britain", and to include ethnic minority "audience members in traditionally 'all-white on the night' mainstream arenas of performance" (Osborne 26). Moreover, they affect substantial forays into dismantling the identity-politics or issues-based contingencies in which Black drama in Britain traditionally has been housed – to the point of claustrophobia. Additionally, their *dramatis personae* challenge assumptions, expectations and stereotyping regarding age and race in relation to casting. In contrasting ways, they produce sustained experimentation with form, style and subject matter to assert Black experience as more universal than marginal.

Indeed, her voice comes from her experience as a black British woman who has been in contact with the urban speech style that characterises black people – mainly of Caribbean descent. As she herself has pointed out, the language of her plays reflects the way as Sierz writes, "“people speak. [...] Listen to a group of kids: just repeat and repeat and repeat [...] ‘It’s hot outside; it’s really hot, innit? I bet it’s really hot.’ So ‘suddenly you’ve got half a page of dialogue’” (10).

Their linguistic remorselessness and rawness are simultaneously alienating and compelling. She resists the imposition of Standard English, a fact that led one white male critic to mimic and deride it in his review of *Random* as Osborne writes:



‘Ali G-style patois [...] not so much ethereal as absurd. A no-go zone innit’, thus ignoring the emotional throb that this pared down language pounds out in delivery. Whilst acknowledging her radical voice and style [...] tucker green revives and revitalises the techniques of her woman dramatist forebears. Their innovations are embedded in her texts and, yet, taken in new directions. (231)

Moreover, her style signifies of her commitment to giving a voice to marginalized groups and including them as part of the picture of British society and culture as Peacock writes:

tucker green’s plays tend to be delivered via internal monologues or dialogues that uncompromisingly jar (both in content and rhythm) against the familiarity of social realism. Her plays actively talk about ethnic minority groups who experience violence on a daily basis and whose tragedies go unnoticed by the media or mainstream society: Obviously I’m a black woman, so I know the conversations I’ve had with my friends. With Zimbabwe, we were like ‘You know what, if it was them, they’d makes sure it was on the news, they would sure [sic] it was flagged up 24/7 if it was white people’. So that’s from my standpoint, but obviously my standpoint is different to somebody else’s standpoint, maybe a white person’s standpoint. (60)

In terms of the content, she chooses very traumatic, unpleasant, extremely controversial topics for her plays, such as domestic violence and voyeurism (*dirty butterfly*, 2003), incest (*born bad*, 2003), sexual tourism (*trade*, 2005), rape, child soldiers, AIDS and lapidation (*stoning mary*, 2005), racial prejudice and street crime (*random*, 2008) and

international conflicts (*truth and reconciliation*, 2011). Unsurprisingly, she admits that she feels attracted to violence or, as she states, stories which are quite mundane as the mode of Black British women playwright.

Despite the disturbing nature of the topics she deals with, tucker green refrains from using sordid or unpleasant images. Instead, she foregrounds language and the power of the imagination, which can make the audience feel even more uncomfortable than explicit violence. tucker green's theatre is also strongly influenced by Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. Brecht stated that in epic theatre as Benjamin writes:

. . . no appeal is made to the spectator's capacity for empathy. The art of 'epic theatre consists in arousing astonishment rather than empathy.'

Brecht's 'V effect' of 'Verfremdungseffekt' – also known as the alienation or distancing effect – consisted in a series of devices, such as having the actors remain detached from the characters' emotions, inviting the audience to critically examine the characters' actions, or using interruptive sounds or lights, which aimed at preventing the audience from falling into the process of emotional identification with the story. (qtd. in Benjamin 18)

Like Brecht, debbie tucker green attempts to break across the fourth wall and uses language and props to alienate the audience from the characters so that they can respond critically to the stories she presents. At the same time, she manages to enhance the complicity between the actors and the audience, whose expectant eye is empowered to construct a personal opinion.

Reinent writes, "Echoing Brecht's 'Lehrstücken' or 'learning plays', tucker green's plays [re]present the current society and the social conditions of [violence] in order that we may involve ourselves in the process of theatre-as-learning" (53). For Brecht, distancing becomes necessary to all understanding as he writes:

When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up [...] The epic theatre's spectator says: I'd never have thought it – That's not the way – That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary. That's great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh.

(217)

tucker green is compared with Brecht with regard to her epic style and the use of imagery. Furthermore, tucker green is part of a new and very contemporary group of playwrights who as told by Goddard, "tend to focus more on the interpersonal relationships between characters in urban multifarious (multicultural, multiracial, multifaith) communities to ask complex questions about the world we live in now" (96) instead of talking about the experience of emigration or exile, as previous Black playwrights had been doing.

Her plays according to Osborne are, "incorporate the linguistic innovations and the thematic complexities that texture contemporary Black British women's drama to charge British theatre with an extraordinary challenging aesthetics" (239). Moreover, her theatre has contributed to black British women playwrights' growing visibility within the context of contemporary British theatre, although they still run the risk of going

unnoticed. Her political views move far away from both the mainstream concept of British identity and from racial essentialisms as Peacock writes:

[tucker green] refuses to speak of her own ancestry, although her family appear to have come from Jamaica, and is unwilling to reveal her date and place of birth, considering that her origins are irrelevant to an

understanding of her work. Nevertheless, tucker green [...] recognizes that her desire and ability to offer a different perspective are consequent on her ethnic origin and cultural location. (59-60)

She combines Black and White actors and actresses and explores different settings, so as to prove that her theatre addresses not only Black audiences, but human beings at large, because her stories deal with marginalisation and discrimination as much as with insolidarity, prejudices, sorrow and violence, which affect “London today irrespective of race” (Goddard 308).

This research argues that tucker green’s plays have both the shift and continuity on Black aesthetic. The horrors which are the subject matter of tucker green’s plays – knife crime, domestic violence, racism as well as the domestic violence and street crime respectively, two central sources of conflict in contemporary Britain, and interrogate the reaction of British society and the media to such events, which take place almost on a daily basis are some of the feature of her plays.

The history of Black aesthetics was rooted while Afro-Americans tried their best to preserve and prosper their distinctive and unique culture through writings and Jazz music. Their target on the great values of art would certainly help the black writers to throw off the chains of discrimination which were put on them by the so-called superior

white racism and to establish their own principle and analysis of their art which explicitly shows their life style. They have carried out their virtue of finding beauty in them and they have offered liberty prosperity and progress in every sphere of the Afro- American people. They have struggled and tried their best for the establishment of African or Black aesthetics in the form of art and literature.

In the history of America a kind of new movement emerged entitled New Negro Movement. This movement was named after Alain Locke's "The New Negro" which proved to be an important document of the Harlem Renaissance. This movement was the modern art movement of the Afro-American history. Alain Locke wanted to give term to this movement as a 'spiritual emancipation.' He further commented that the Negro has "American ideas should therefore strive for recognition of those (517).

Later, the "The New Negro" Proved to be one of the milestones to the black writers, artists, musicians, actors, intellectuals and others during that period. The cultural expression of "The New Negro" became widespread in America. After that many artists including Langston Hughes were inspired to expose the life style and culture of black people in such a way that had not been done before. As a result the Afro-American artists raised their voice for equality and recognition of the artistic values in the community of white Americans. This artistic movement made their literature protest writing. After this the Afro-Americans constantly raised their voice against the white supremacy for equality and liberty as well as their Afro-American cultural value.

Further Alain Locke comments in "Negro Youth Speaks" that ". . . with arresting visions and vibrant prophecies, forecasting in the mirror of art what we must see and recognize in the streets of reality tomorrow, foretelling in new notes and accents the

maturing speech of full racial utterance”( 17). Most of the Afro-American artists and intellectuals shared their experience with this new and unique experience. As a result a number of black artists and writers followed his idea as the Black aesthetics.

The Civil Rights Movement had been the hope of a large number of aspirations to middle-class people but ultimately it failed to do so. When it failed many of middle-class Afro-American youths formed the social base for a new nationalist movement against America. This movement became a relying slogan for the new born nationalist who began to defect from the Civil Rights Movement, particularly after the death of the great intellectuals Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. As a result this movement gave birth to new movement termed as Black Arts Movement. This movement had fought for full integration into the supremacy of white mainstream. The Black Arts Movement defined the problems of black people that proposed the solution of their problem which was radically reformist as Larry Neal mentions, “A cultural revolution in Arts and ideas” (26). Furthermore, Black aesthetics for Neal is the Cultural Revolution as he writes:

The motive behind the black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas and white ways of looking at the world. The new aesthetic is mostly predicted on ethnics who ask the question. Whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or of the oppressors? (27)

Black writers no more, pleaded for their equal status in white, dominated literary mainstream after the rise of the black aesthetic. Their works have become racially

expressive, rather than racially rhetorical and they liked to speak as Negroes. So, they desired blackness everywhere in America.

During the depression era in America Be Bop arrived on the stage which was the key concept of the Be Bop experience as it was a cultural revolt against the white culture. Later the hippie society was developed as revolt against the white culture. The hipsters were in revolt with long beard, dark glasses even at night beret and a militant political attitude. These hipsters were black people who had been ignored in the south and who were bitter about being kept from realizing their full humanity. Later this revolt represented a new cultural fuel. As a result the African Americans were more inspired to revolt against the supremacy of the white culture A B Spellman puts his opinion forward in this way:

The Be Bop revolution saw the Jazz musician adopting an entirely different social posture [...]. Here, for the first time, a black artistic Vanguard assumed whole studies of compartment attire, and speech which were calculated to be the indica of a group which felt that its own values were more sophisticated than, if not superiority the mores of the American society at large. The music and he manner developed concomitantly, which indicates that the musicians were aware that each musical innovation was a new way of commenting on the world, around them. (36)

There emerged different types of powerful external forces to the Negro Community that had a tremendous effect on the development of the arts and cultural movement during different era in the American history. Black people were constantly radical on every matter. Black, people and their intellectual artists began to understand that racial

discrimination was just the product of capitalism. Thus, all of the Negro community began to be active as leaders and participants in campaigns for radical and revolutionary changes. Hence, this theme of revolution could be observed in the works of many Afro-American artists. Here, Richard Wright puts his view forward:

It means that a Negro writer must learn to view the life of a Negro living in New York's Harlem or Chicago's south side with the consciousness that one-sixth of the earth surface belongs to the working class. It means that a Negro woman having cotton in the south and the whole in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil. (56)

There were a number of Afro-American intellectuals, leaders and artists who continued their revolt against the so-called superior white culture. A number of revolutionary works were appeared in the Afro-American literary and cultural movement. One of the revolution heroes or artists who brought the revolutionary task at the climax was Langston Hughes.

Langston Hughes dramatically carried out the nature of the revolutionary task of the black writers in his work entitled *Good Morning Revolutionary* at the first American writers Congress in 1935 which is as follows. He writes, "Negro writers can seek to . . . sand of religious brotherhood, but on the solid ground of the daily working class struggle to wipe out, now and forever all the old inequalities of the past" (9).

In this way the Afro Americans tried their best to preserve and prosper their distinctive and unique culture. They left no stone unturned for the conservation and prosperity of their culture. Hence their target on the great values of art would certainly help the black writers to throw off the chains of discrimination which were put on them



by the so-called superior white racism and to establish their own principle and analysis of their art which explicitly shows their life style. They have carried out their virtue of finding beauty in them and they have offered liberty prosperity and progress in every sphere of the Afro- American people: Hence, they have struggled and tried their best for the establishment of Afro – American cultural identity through the issues of Blacks in their as the mode of Black aesthetics.

*random* articulates a critical view on prejudices and violence, from a neo-millennial Black British woman’s perspective that steers clear of avoiding essentialist attitudes. Many critics have linked debbie tucker green with the in-yer-face theatre and, more concretely, with Sarah Kane. Nevertheless, although “her poetic depictions of uncomfortable emotions are similar to the visceral and experiential [in-yer-face] trends”, her theatre “departs from such in-yer-face theatre conventions” (306) as Goddard writes and it is more connected to the new wave of “young playwrights whose political commitments arise from their experiences as member of a minority race or culture [and who] have placed issues of race, ethnicity and class at the centre” (78) as Kritzer writes, which, as has been previously mentioned, are some of the prominent features of contemporary Black British women playwrights which itself bears the changed context of Black writing within the same historical frame of Black writing.

In fact, tucker green admits to have been much more influenced by black writers such as ntozake shange and Louise Bennet, and musicians like Lauryn Hill, Bob Marley or Beverly Knight. With all of them, she shares a local colour in their plays, and intertwines politics with lyrical realism and musicality. tucker green presents the characters from Black community with their family relationship, social and cultural status

from the England. All of the characters are interrelated with each other in this sense they are Blacks and share the similar experience of racial tensions. On the other hand she captures how a fault of a person of the community hampers the lives of the entire Black community because the news of the mass media circulates in fast unlike in the past generations.

debbie tucker green presents the thematic issues of Black as well as chooses the writing style like avoiding capital letters and including the vernacular speech in literature which were obvious features of Black writings throughout the history Black literature. Unlike in the past her characters are connected with the global issues because the racial tensions of the entire world affects the lives of the Blacks living in England. Similarly, the misrepresentation of the Black characters in the mass media, telefilms and films too leading the lives of the English Blacks to the obstacles to adjust into the white world. Is there not changed feature of Black aesthetic in Green plays? What might be the specific feature of contemporary black mode of writings and theatrical performance?

debbie tucker green one hand presents the Black characters living in London with their access to the modern world, technologies and individual freedom. On the other hand, she interconnects the black characters due to the racial tensions between blacks and non-blacks raising contemporary Black in vernacular language as the mode of new modern Black aesthetic in her plays *random* which deal with Black people's experiences in London as the medium of Black aesthetics.

## II. Change and Continuity of Black Aesthetics in tucker green's Plays

As the focus of this work of research work is to trace the back racial identity and characteristics in the theatre being centered with debbie tucker green's play, it in this chapter deals with the textual interpretation of the play *random*. tucker green deals with the contemporary of social and cultural values inherent in the European world specifically within the scenario of England where the migrated Africans have their own experience and struggle to adjust. Though there are the racial riots and violence even excited in the modern world the blacks minorities have even the modernity and freedom. Though the Blacks have modern world of freedom, equality as well as human rights there pain and suffering of existence has not end yet which tucker green presents in the form of plays as if she is presenting the change and continuity of Black theatre in term of life experience, suffering and struggle of survival for Blacks in the modern world.

In doing so there are some sorts of the characteristics of Black writing tradition adopted in the former Black writing movement like Harlan in green's writing. Similarly, there are her own distinct experience of modern European society which in the form of setting of the plays is reflected. That is why tucker green writing bears the change and continuity of Black theatre, Black way of writing as well as racial identity.

The clear demarcation between whites and blacks and the issue has been raised by the Black British Theatre. tucker green being one of the prominent Black British playwrights have constructed her plays within the boundary or the demarcation lines between blacks and whites. The play *random* bring the black people as the central characters who have been living in London with their own struggle of survival and their face with the racial conflict in London. Similarly, the reflection of aggression, violence

and the agony due to the struggling life of the blacks are photographically represented in her plays which makes her a pure Black British playwright.

*random* as a story about a family's worst nightmare with a racially motivated random act of violence clearly presents the blackness in its feature. As in most of the Black's writing it evokes the story of a Black family whose son is an innocent victim. The story follows the detectives which solves the murder cases. Little is heard about the families of the victims, but the impact of family members after the incident is presented as the theatrical performances. While doing so debbie tucker green empowers the victims of this story by giving them a voice as the voice of innocent blacks as if she is speaking the voice of Blacks victim in contemporary English society. The subject matter depicts that even in the phase of globalization and modern world with the justice, human rights and equality the plight of black's suffering is still though the form and contend is changed.

debbie tucker green's *random* not captures the random violence occurred in London due to the racial chaos but also depicts how randomly the blacks are surviving due to the racial discrimination. Obviously, the joblessness, poverty and racial privilege are some of the traditional obstacles faced by the blacks in white dominated society throughout the history from America to Europe. In modern world and in London the fate of the Black is same as they are obliged to live the life with poverty, joblessness as well as social adjustment problem due to the racial privilege. Even the innocent Blacks are obliged to be victimized due to the racial tensions which are some of the randomness of modern world and Black people living in London.

*random* was first staged in 2008 at the Royal Court Theatre, one of the most emblematic non-commercial theatres in London, considered to be a hotbed of new dramatists. Only one actress, Nadine Marshall, directed by Sacha Wares, played all the main characters, generically named as Sister, Brother, Mum, Dad, and Teacher on an almost bare stage lit simply with a harsh white spotlight. Each character is identified by discrete accents and by slight movements in her body stance as the playwright mentions. The stage directions at the beginning of the play specify that the actress who performs all the characters must be a Black woman, which emphasizes the fact that street crime is much more common among Black people as one of the prominent aspects of the play being a black mode of writing.

The play is divided into two parts and the structure and texture of the dialogues recall poetry or song lyrics rather than a theatrical piece. At the beginning of the published text, tucker green specifies that:

Dialogue in ( ) is to be spoken.

Dialogue in [ ] is intention, not to be spoken.

Italicised sentences in ( ) are stage directions.

Part Two is listed in the text; however, the play is to be performed straight through without any break.

This text went to press before the end of rehearsals and so may differ slightly from the play as performed. (2)

This anticipates that form, including silence and style is as crucial as the content, for every comma, hyphen, semi-colon, full stop, and even spaces between lines carry meaningful intentions. Furthermore, unlike in her other plays, here the unnamed

characters suggest that identity is not portrayed as cultural, with its potential for change, but generic, which enhances the perception that the play's story, although intimate and personal, is nowadays happening to many Black people, and it could really happen to anyone.

Thus, as the symbol of the universal problem of random violence, Tucker Green does not provide a particular name for the character rather simply mentions as mother, father, sister as if she is presenting the issues of all similar blacks. The play is constructed around alienating effects whose aim is to expose the race motivated atrocities that take place recurrently in the streets of Britain, to create situations that unsettle the spectator, and to play with audience expectations in order to show reality from as Peacock mentions, "a viewpoint other than that prescribed by the British media" (60).

The play is aesthetically disturbing, for it consists of a series of effects – the bare stage, the single actress playing all the characters, the urban patois language varying from character to character, the poetic structure, the rhythmic speech, the hasty repetitions or the playing with ungrammatical sentences, often interrupted by unspoken intentions – which prevent the audience from getting emotionally involved in this highly absorbing story. About one actress's performance for all character, Kelleher mentions:

[h]aving one actress play all characters through the unadorned staging and the everyday clothes and vernacular speech and movements of this actress . . . sets the conditions for how the show communicates with its audience. These conditions include an exposure of the theatre itself: the bare boards of the stage, the back wall, the spectators at their ease in the un-darkened auditorium, at least at the start of the play. (20-21)

It is precisely through the distance that is created that the audience may be able to notice the play's ethico-political impact. *random* invites the audience to conceive the actress as a worker committed to testifying for those who cannot. By 'becoming' many people herself, she opens up a space between her and the audience, a space which may incorporate the spectators' 'response-ably' critical gaze.

Furthermore, the 'un-darkened auditorium' engages the spectator even more in the process of witnessing, for he or she becomes aware of his or her situation as a member of an audience who, at the same time, is being watched 'here and now' by the actress on stage. The view of actors as workers is a characteristic of postdramatic theatre, as conceptualized by Hans-Thies Lehmann in 2006. In postdramatic plays, Lehmann claims, the actors follow Brechtian conventions, "they become workers, rather than artists, who narrate stories with a didactic purpose" (138). The notions like the single character's performance as well as the features of postdramatic plays with regard to it 'un-darkened auditorium' gives the play a postmodern feature. Tucker Green in such experimentation, depicts herself as the playwright of contemporary scenario which is vast different than the performance of theatrical history in term of the theatrical art.

Though in term of experiment the play stands in the contemporary scenario, it is bounded within the similar black writing tradition with regard to its language, subject matter as well as the issue of murder of black and forthcoming consequences of the murder to the member of family. Furthermore, the unconventional or the vernacular speech and language represents the typical black speech throughout the text as the prominent black writing. The play opens up with Sister, who describes the beginning of

what, apparently, is one more routine day for her and her family. Sister bickers with Brother on ordinary teenage sibling conflicts:

SISTER ‘...You awake?’

BROTHER this one can’t be inna my dream.

SISTER ‘You awake –’

BROTHER nightmare.

(BROTHER *kisses his teeth.*)

SISTER ‘I can borrow y’phone?’

BROTHER ‘I’m sleepin.’

SISTER ‘This room stinks –’

BROTHER ‘come outta it then –’

SISTER ‘so I can borrow y’phone – an’ you ent sleepin – you sleepin?’

– how come yu sleepin all now? – mek mi borroe your phone –’

BROTHER ‘you credit-less – your problem.’

SISTER ‘Wanna use your sim in it – ennit –’

BROTHER ‘find a next phone – or a next man yeh?’

(*Beat*)

SISTER ‘I’ma ’llow that. Yeh?’

(BROTHER *kisses his teeth.*)

‘Thass an answer? Thass your answer?’ (5- 6)

Throughout the first pages, the dialogues are informal, lively and humorous. Elements such as the alarm clock which rings insistently. Brother was taking five extra minutes in bed, and cheekily explaining to his Teacher why he is twenty minutes late for school and



Mum's concern that neither of her children have eaten enough or dressed adequately.

The reference provides that the Black mode of theatrical writing the distinct feature with their vernacular language which is differ than Standard English.

Through the vernacular language, the African based English authors express their own cultural identity of Blackness. The trend was rooted in the history of slavery. Smith and Holloway note that although the communicative practices of enslaved Africans did go through a hybridization process, nevertheless the foundation of the Niger-Congo African languages has been a dominant feature. Thus, the communicative practices of African Americans have a "base" derived from Niger-Congo African languages. For example, while dialect proponents argue that features such as the consonant cluster reduction proves the relation of the communicative practices of African Americans to other varieties of English and European languages, language proponents use the same feature as proof to verify the relation of African American Language to West African languages. Smith writes:

Scholars who view African American speech as a dialect of English describe the absent final consonant clusters as being "lost," "reduced," "weakened," "simplified," "deleted," or "omitted" consonant phoneme. But viewed as an African Language System that has adopted European words, African American speech is described by Africologists as having retained the canonical form, or shape, of the syllable structure of the Niger-Congo languages. Thus, in Ebonics homogenous consonant clusters tend not to occur. This is not because the final phoneme has been "lost," "reduced," "weakened," "simplified," "deleted," or "omitted," but because

they never existed in the first place. . . English words such as west, best, test, last, and fast become wes, bes, tes, las and fas; the words land, band, sand, and hand, become lan, ban, san and han; the words left, lift, drift and swift become lef, lif, drif and swif and so forth. (56)

The references deal with the history of Black vernacular throughout the American history of slavery. Even today in the black mode of writing they use the similar vernacular or colloquial language as the prominent feature of their writing. This vernacular is the typical speech of African American or the African who uses the English language which make them differ than other American and Europeans.

tucker green uses the similar Black language though she is English playwright not the American one because she is well aware about the writing of the Black tradition. Unless there is the use of own vernacular, the expression of reality is not possible. Since, tucker green deals with the problems and obstacles faced by contemporary Black people living in London, it is her obligation to expression in Black vernacular as well as to express her own cultural and racial identity. The use of African American Language in the *random* is the racial politics of tucker green not only the expression of social reality.

As the play develops, it follows with the black vernacular. Sister's complaints on her job, the annoying clients who "chat their shit" to her (15), or on the fact that her man has not called her build up the picture of an everyday familiar routine she uses the similar vernacular. The normality is disrupted when SISTER receives a message, "'Come home.' What I thought was from my man is from my mum. "'Come home.' / What I thought was from my man / is from my mum. / 'Come home. Now' / One message from her" (23). Throughout the play, the text's layout changes from verse-like to prose and vice versa.

The play between verse and prose too breaks the conventional manner of Standard English as the typical Black mode of writing.

Apart from the use of Black vernacular, the subject matter of the play bears the blackness in its quality. When the sister (sister means the sister of the murdered) gets home, the police are there and she learns that her brother has been killed in the street for unknown reasons. When the police officers arrive, Sister recalls her Mum saying that Dad makes the prejudiced assumption, often circulated by the media, that if the police is at a Black family house, it must be because somebody has got into trouble. tucker green presents the hints that something is happened while on the hearing that two police cars were parked outside the family home, it assumed that the brother had got into trouble. The immediate assumption is that the son has got into trouble. Trouble is another obvious feature of Black writing.

As the play developed, it is revealed that the brother is murdered. Death of the youth, violence and murder etc. are the common incidents of Black writing throughout the history of Black writing tradition. Most of dead are innocent who are victimized due to other people's crime in Black writing which is clearly raised in *random* too as tucker green writes, “[t]here is an underlying assumption that the white boys are innocents caught up in coincidental attacks, whereas insinuations of links to gang cultures and street assassinations are prevalent in reports of the murders of black boys” (305).

The play now captures the impact or response of the family members including sister, mother and father after the incidents. Sister, Mum and Dad feel threatened by the presence of the “Two a them Police cars / park outside / our yard” and hope that “[m]ay be this someone else’s trouble” (24-25). When the police officers enter the house, both

Mum and Dad become defensive, as they feel intimidated by the police's invasion of their private space:

MUM Dark boots and heavy shoes –  
 beatin down my  
 for best carpet  
 without a second thought...  
 from them.  
 Outside shoes ent worn in this house –  
 an'  
 'no I don't wan' no cup a tea.'  
 An'  
 ennit for me to offer? [...]

DAD an' no – mi nah want no cup a tea –  
 thass fe us to offer –  
 an' no  
 mi noh wan' fe sit. Neither.' (26-27)

tucker green captures the realistic express of the response of the incident of Black community while police entered into their house. Furthermore, the chaotic circumstance of racial violence makes the family member fearful while the policemen come. All the incidents are the realistic experience of the black community living in London. As the Black English playwright tucker green raises these issues in theatre.

Even though Mum, Dad and Sister are reluctant to believe what the police tell them – “How yu know iss him – how yu know he was there – how yu know iss not

somebody who favour?" (32) Their resistance is beaten by the fact that Brother has been unprovokedly stabbed to death in a random altercation in the street during his school lunch hour, marking the shift of tone as the play enters the less familiar terrain of the immediate routine of post-murder rituals.

In one hand, the Black family is going through the grief because of the murder of innocent. On the other hand, the authority expects that the murdered might be the part of the gang which adds more grief to the family. Even the authority or police officers seem biased towards the victim. The biased attitude of the police officers is revealed through Sister, for they hint that Brother might be part of a gang:

SISTER How y'know he ent juss late? How y'know ent with he's spars –

Spars?

Friends – man dem – mates – bredrins –

no...

not a 'gang'

Why you here?

Why you sittin here? (32)

The police officers' attitude with the family and vice versa reflects the often uncomfortable, distant, sometimes racially biased relationship between the families of the victims of random street murders and the police. Only being the member of the black community tucker green understands the depth of the incident of the innocent black victimhood in the racial tension in London.

Specifically, the play echoes the case of Stephen Lawrence, discussed in chapter 1 above, in which the family's growing distrust of the police investigations led them to

publicly denounce the police irregularities and to carry out their own private investigation. The following account of the growing breach between the Lawrence family and the police investigation is worth quoting at some length, for it throws light to the kind of situation which *random* alludes to:

On 23 April, Neville Lawrence made short statement at a press conference calling for witnesses to come forward . . . Following their son's murder, the Lawrences became increasingly concerned that the police were not pursuing his killers as determinedly as they should, and as time moved on they became angered by the treatment they received from the police. Only one of the two assigned police liaison officers had been trained in the sensitive task of how to treat families of murder victims, and it was apparent that the Lawrences were not being kept in the picture. Moreover, Doreen and Neville Lawrence had also heard from Stephen's friends that the police seemed intent on trying to establish that Stephen or Duwayne were in a gang, and therefore that the murder was gang-related. (12)

In its capture of the incident of murder and the result of the incident the play is divided into the two parts. The first section in Part Two of the play focuses on Sister's subjective descriptions of the events, following the news of the murder, including the process of identification of her brother's corpse and his horrific state. Even though the play does not stage any image of violence, the language is raw, highly descriptive and unpleasant – it stimulates the imagination in such way that it makes the witnessing experience much more sordid than any explicit image of violence:

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...  
But  
you can't pretty up whass horrific Y'not meant to.  
His mout'  
Look like a clown –  
Now  
Wider than it should be.  
It slashed so much on a one side  
from there  
to there.  
That juss he's face. (35)

Increasingly, the play becomes entirely female-led and, even though Mum's voice is occasionally present in Part Two, Sister becomes the main narrator of the day's events and the one who bears witness of the family's suffering and their grief. The play, then, speaks from the perspectives of the Black women family members.

As the Black British women playwright, Debbie Tucker Green gives the clear picture of suffering of mother and daughter. About Black British women playwrights Peacock writes, "Thus, black British women playwrights, especially from the 1990s on, created their own vanguard in relation to mainstream theatres" (226) and aimed at voicing their dissatisfaction with the fact that "the majority of images of black women represented on stage reiterate [stereotypical and] heterosexist ideas" (1) mentioned by Goddard. As Lynnette Goddard points out, following bell hook's ideas on the crucial role that the mass media play in shaping the representation of black female identities:

The key to changing views about black humanity therefore lies within the power afforded by the representation of ideas [which] have to first be presented in our imaginations before they can be present in our lives, which is particularly crucial for representations of the 'other' that need to work towards decolonising institutionalised ideas about race, gender and sexuality and imagine new ways of seeing. (5)

Consequently, Black woman's theatre made use of theatre's potential to explore "cultural identity, holding within it the possibility of recognising the ways that we think about each other" (1) as Goddard writes and, thus, of subverting stereotypical imaginaries on Black female figures.

It is a reminder, that although relatively few Black girls are losing their lives to street violence, it may be the women (like Sister and Mum) who are left to pick up the pieces. Such an impact on the grieving family is captured in Sister's poignant reflection of a life cut short, in her noticing how quiet the house has become and wondering why Brother will never come home again. As the African English women playwright, Tucker



green can feel the pain of a mother and sister who have lost their son and brother in racial tension of London.

The tone of the play saddens and gets more intimate, subjective and violent and the act of witnessing as the theme. The situation is described through Sister's witness. She describes the way the crime scene has become a "street shrine [...] flowers / candles / cards / T-shirts / tags / teddy bears / Coke an' crisp / the flag of our island / Garvey's colours of Africa – / a note from his form teacher / signed with a smile..." (40) and the way "Passerby passes by / don't look once" as well as "Baby women [...] ask braken as brazen baby women do / 'Is it true he was your brother?'" (39) or the schoolmates, who are "witness in something they shouldn't" (41). Also, she criticizes the absolute "silence shouting the loudest. / Cos it seems that / now no one wanna witness / when happened" (45). Likewise, Sister is highly critical of the attitude of the press, "pressin / the picturesque for a bite. / Their – blue-eyed reporters / shielding their zeal / for a – 'good', 'urban' story / stepping into there sides / askin foolish questions / soundbitin so-called 'solutions'" (41) and sensationalizing his brother's death.

Violence and the consequences brought by it towards the family members is one of the major concerns of the play which is well justified by tucker green. The pain and suffering due to the grief of the death of innocent son and the doubt of police officer as the victim might be involved in riot is the typical struggle of Black community in London. They should live life like criminal due to being black. The play is not a personal issue in this sense rather it is the communal voice of black community.

Blacks are always associated with violence through in the eyes of authority though the Black may be an innocent. Sister describes a "hard-lookin 'hoodie'" who

“under the cloak of Adidas / is a brotha / whose eyes don’t stop flowin. / Wet raw / with weepin. / But.../ [the press] don’t show that bit tho”, because it does not confirm to the stereotype of ‘black-to-black’ violence (28). Eventually, Sister comes to the painful conclusion that, after all, “[d]eath usedta be for the old” (42) or, at least, it “never used to be for the young” (42).

The new drama written by Black women addresses both the personal and the political and breaks away from “a status quo that privileges white males without indicating or interrogating key shifts in late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century British theatre” (204) as Osborne writes. Playwrights such as Dona Daley, Jackie Kay, Patience Agbabi or Winsome Pinnock as well as debbie tucker green provide compelling examples of the key ways in which contemporary women dramatists articulate sensibilities and perspectives – arising from their positions within culture and theatre – that are distinct from those of their male contemporaries. Their plays experimentally and linguistically take drama down new routes in the indigenous British theatre.

Among the many neo-millennial British women playwrights, debbie tucker green has been praised and acclaimed as representative of the new wave of black British playwriting that has recently emerged. Her unique and stylistically challenging voice is made evident in the use of the lower-case when she writes her own name or the title of her plays, which echoes US black writer ntozake shange, or the feminist bell hooks, both of them intentionally uncapitalised to highlight the primacy of their work over their own selves as writers.

The number of characters that appear in tucker green’s plays is small. The props are usually minimalistic and the duration of the plays is short. Her language is radical,

concise, highly poetic and musical. She intermingles frenzied repetitions with overlapping dialogues, challenges Standard English grammatical rules and gives great importance to punctuation marks and silences. Moreover, dialects and urban accents are very much present in her plays, for most of her characters are West Indian black British people. Although sometimes criticized, her linguistic style, which mixes “patois, choreo-poetical, and non-grammatical syntax [...], qualifies for Kristeva’s revolution in poetic language” (226) as Osborne writes.

The interplay of silence and voice plays a crucial role in *random*. First, Brother only through Sister’s impression of him of course, speaks at the beginning of the play – his voice is then violently silenced. Thus, most of Brother’s particularities are conveyed through the accounts provided by Mum’s and, especially, Sister’s voices. Likewise, Dad’s active presence fades away at the end of part one; for he remains in the background of the scene, unable to speak. He ‘speaks’ through his eyes, which his daughter gazes at and seems to be able to read:

SISTER Dad tryin to say something.

Dad’s tryin to say something

but

...nu’un won’t [come out]

I watch him.

Watch him.

...He’s embarrassed.

I watch his embarrassment.

I can’t look away. (37)

The mourning, the silence after violence, pain and suffering are some of the obvious characteristics of the play. All these elements are expressed through the experience of the black victim as if the play is expressing the pitiful London life of minority Blacks.

Keeping these factors into the consideration, it could be claimed that tucker green is one of the prominent Black playwright who though is experimental in term of expression gives pure Black theatre identity through her subject matter and selection of character.

The expression of the silence of the black victim is the expression of the pain and suffering of the blacks living in London in the *random*. Mum's anger at the press is expressed through silence because, as she claims, she "don't got nuthin nice to say. / Nu'un polite / nu'un / broadcastable / nu'un / righteous / nu'un forgivin" (42). Sister highlights the deep silence that surrounds them while they are in the police car, which is only interrupted by the police officers, who have "to ask directions / The only thing breakin the heavy silence" (38), and the silence of the "schoolpeeps" who "stand there. / Nuff. / In a heavy silence. / With their – / MP3 wires dangling / their / mobile phones / on silent" (40-41), in contrast with the sensationalistic press who, ignoring the family's grief, brazenly keep asking Sister questions.

tucker green gives the voice to the silence of the black community living in London through the theatrical performance. The most resounding silence is that of the witnesses of the murder, which hinders the police investigation of the case:

SISTER I lissen

and I hear...

(*Silence.*)

I hear – an juss get –

*(Silence.)* [...]

Whole heap a witness

Police say [...]

Whole heap a peeps

on road

was present.

But I lissen –

hard –

an' still I hear...

*(Silence.)*

Silence shoutin the loudest

Cos it seem that

now no one wanna witness

what happened

To my Brother. (45)

This is a harmful silence which points in two directions. The witnesses do not want to bear witness to Brother's murder, thus complicitly perpetuating violence through their silence. At the same time, the silence also manifests Sister's own inarticulacy in the face of the anguish and grief brought about by the witnesses' silence for, without their testimony, the investigations cannot be carried out.

Sister bemoans the lack of people coming forwards to act as witness. Sister's description of the reluctance of witnesses suggests an archetypal 'wall of silence', which can hinder police investigations because communities are either too scared or caught up

in a false sense of loyalty to report what they see. Her speech also typifies tucker green's trend for showing that silence amounts to complicity in violence, abuse and murder.

Due to the absence of the witnesses' testimony, only Sister's voice acts as the testimony of who her brother was and how events unfold after the murder. Sister's voice becomes frenzied and the verse-like structure of the monologues somehow acts as the metronome of the play, marking the pace and the rhythm, sometimes rushed and sometimes slow. The ungrammatical phrases echo rap singers dub poetry and the Back chat of urban youths:

SISTER I'm told

not to touch it –

not to hook it back –

not to phone out –

not to answer it –

not to go near it –

Dad's had enough

'but –'

he don't wanna hear

'but –'

he don't wanna hear me

'but –'

don't wanna hear what I got to say (34, 47)

Throughout her testimony, spontaneous and subjective, Sister remains true to herself and skeptical of display of emotion. She forces the audiences to see the terrible cost of

random knife attacks without falling into sensationalist sentimentalism. Sister becomes, thus, a 'good witness' to the events of the day, as well as to her own experience of her love for her brother, her sorrow for the unprovoked murder, the helplessness and uncertainty of not knowing who killed her brother, and the unbearable feeling of accepting that Brother is not coming back:

Fuck this cycle of shit.

And his poster of Halle

hangs over his bed

both of us clockin

It's as empty as it will be

now.

So I take a deep –

*(inhales)*

and don't wanna lose strength

of his bedroom su'un.

Ever.

And the house is quiet...

Y'know?

The house that never was...

is well quiet.

[...] Random don't happen to everybody

So.

How come

'random' haveta happen to him? (49)

Sister's voice is indeed not only often ungrammatical, but also elliptical, so that within the gaps between what is being said and what remains just under the surface, the spectator is impelled to incorporate his or her responses to this unsettling story.

debbie tucker green's choice for small letter for her name 'dobee tucher green' as well as for her plays like *random*, *dirty butterfly* and *born bad* etc. too captures the way of black writing. Like e. e. cunnings she chooses too use the small letter as if she is writing with her own choice without following the conventional Standard English. It justifies her as the branch of Black writing history and tradition with their own aesthetic of writing.

Does not hold with capital letters is not a simply choice of an author rather a tradition of Black writer since they are guided to write their own style. Rather it bears the black's motto "I write what I want" as mentioned in the first General Students Council of SASO in July 1970 as Biko Steve writes in *I Write what I Want*:

Steve was succeeded as President by Barney Pityana. Steve was elected Chairman of SASO (black student organization) Publications. The following month the monthly SASO Newsletter began to appear carrying articles by him called "I write what I like" and signed Frank Talk. At the BPC/SASO Trial the Judge at one point interjected: "Isn't (accused) number 9 [Strini Moodley] Frank Talk?" to which Steve replied. (20)

Thus, the selection of small letter before her own name for dobee tucker green means the neglecting the Standard English and accepting the black way of writing. It also depicts



her as a author with Black aesthetic consciousness. *random* is the result of her similar consciousness of Blackness through various angles.

All in all, *random* interrogates the sometimes coldly amoral attitude of the media and the police, as well as prejudiced assumptions towards minority ethnic groups. It also requires the audience to rethink the violence that underlies a supposedly multicultural Britain, seeks to challenge a growing social insensitivity, and to awaken empathy towards the other. If so many teenagers are being killed in the streets and so many prejudices are hindering the eradication of street violence, *random* proves that there is something going on in the world that should not be happening. Through her very political work, enhanced by the distancing effects, tucker green puts at the forefront an uncomfortable piece of Britain's reality and invites the audience to interrogate society's general insensitivity towards the other.

The play introduces the audience into the most intimate reactions to street crime, while challenging preconceived ideas on black youths. The disappearance of any male voice as the play develops enables the predominance of a female perspective towards random street crimes. The play links the actor and the spectator in a long ethical and political connecting thread, for the spectator is there to witness the character's personal testimony of an occurrence, which, at the same time, has taken place in many Black families. The story alludes to the numerous random street murders that have taken place in Britain over the last few decades and condemns both existing prejudices on black youth murders, and the silence of those whose voices are needed to bear witness.

In short, as has been previously said, the play solicits the spectators' reciprocal gaze and demands a justice based on care for the other who suffers and whose voice is

barely allowed to be heard or simply suppressed. *random* asks for the activation of our 'response-ability' as spectators, our capacity to develop a critical response to knife crime and the way in which British society mostly ignores it, for street robberies and random assaults are now so common that people rarely bother reporting them to the police, and in recent years stabbings and shootings have become everyday occurrences. Through the perspective of the Black victim, tucker green the harsh situation of the innocent Blacks living in London.

### **III. Stage as the Platform of Identity Performance for Black**

This research has tried to explore the Black aesthetic or mode of writing as the obvious feature of debbie tucker green's play *random* as the stage for Black theatre artists and playwrights is the proper medium to express or perform their racial identity. For this purpose, this research has gone through her feature of writing including her selection of subject matter, writing style as well as her position as the Black British woman playwright throughout the play *random*. debbie tucker not only presents the thematic issues of black but also chooses the writing style like avoiding capital letters and including the vernacular speech in literature which were obvious features of Black writings throughout the history of Black literature which this research has well explained in former chapters.

Though there is the changed setting, expression style as well as modern England's events and incidents which are far different than the past Black writings in America but tucker green even in the changed setting, modified theatrical style like experimentation performance of solo character for various roles does not go beyond her tradition of Black writing. Rather for her the theatre is the proper place to perform the racial identity. As the Black writing tradition she reveals the story of struggle for survive for the Blacks in contemporary British society. The innocent Blacks should live the life of criminal through the eyes of authority due to the race prevalence from the perception of racial discrimination which is clearly presented through the murder of a Black youth and the consequences brought by the incident in his family in *Random* as if the author is performing the Black identity in contemporary British scenario.

Unlike in the past her Black characters are connected with the global issues even though the racial tensions of the entire world affects the lives of the Blacks living in England which is the major subject matter of the play *random*. Similarly, the misrepresentation of the Black characters in the mass media, telefilms and films too leading the lives of the English Blacks to the obstacles to adjust into the white world which creates images about the blacks that is why the murdered or the victim though being innocent is suspended by police officer as a criminal who might have involved in riots.

debbie tucker green taking such sentimental issue of Black family living in London after the son is murdered raises the humanitarian issue with regard to the Black community throughout the plays. As an experimenter theatre artist or playwright she experiments her plays with new mode of presentation as well as writing style but while in term of subject matter and characterization she evokes the issue of Blacks as the ultimate way of change and continuity in Black's aesthetic in theatre. The timeframe as well as the setting of the play is different than the Black's historical writing since tucker green sets her play in contemporary London. But tucker green as a Black playwright evokes the issues of Black subjects which ultimately presupposes that though there might be change in the form of Black play but the stage of the theatre even now is the proper platform to perform the Black aesthetic and identity.

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