Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

LOSS, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA IN DEBBIE TUCKER GREEN'S *STONING MARY* AND *RANDOM*

Seray BİLGİN

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Bilgin, Seray. Loss, Violence, and Trauma in Debbie Tucker Green's *Stoning Mary* and *Random*, Master's Thesis, 2020, Ankara.

Debbie Tucker Green (date of birth unknown-) is a prolific black British playwright of the twenty-first century. In her plays, she explores the local and global problems of black people living in Britain, Africa, and the Caribbean without underlining racial identity. Her play *Stoning Mary* (2005) presents the issues of AIDS, child soldiering, and stoning punishment that primarily African people encounter; *Random* (2008) depicts the murder of a black teenage boy in London. Tucker Green mostly presents the effects of violence, trauma, and loss, which the above issues cause, on the characters' lives. Rather than discussing the reasons for these issues, she portrays their emotional aftermath. In addition, Tucker Green explores these issues by focusing on uncaring characters and their failure of communication in *Stoning Mary*, and the characters' inner voices and thoughts in *Random*. Therefore, this thesis analyses *Stoning Mary* and *Random*, in terms of both content and style, to examine Tucker Green's representation of loss, violence, and trauma, and discusses that these issues are given in a cause and effect relationship in the plays. The introduction of this study provides the historical background of black British drama in order to reflect Tucker Green's contribution to it better. The first chapter analyses the relationship between loss, violence, and trauma in *Stoning Mary*. In this play, the characters experience a traumatic loss because of violence, and this situation also leads to violence. In the second main chapter, the same relationship between traumatic loss and violence is examined in *Random*, in which traumatic loss results from violence, but it causes different responses of grief other than violence. Consequently, in the conclusion part, it is highlighted that the losses that the characters experience in both plays are quite traumatic because of their violent and unexpected nature, and they lead to various responses of grief. While loss caused by violence also leads to violence in *Stoning Mary*, traumatic loss resulting from violence produces other reactions such as numbness, anger, and avoidance in *Random*.

Key Words: Debbie Tucker Green, *Stoning Mary*, *Random*, loss, violence, trauma

ÖZET

Bilgin, Seray. Debbie Tucker Green'in *Stoning Mary* ve *Random* Adlı Oyunlarında Kayıplar, Şiddet, ve Travma, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2020, Ankara.

Debbie Tucker Green (doğum tarihi bilinmiyor-) yirmi birinci yüzyılın önde gelen siyahi Britanyalı oyun yazarlarından biridir. Oyunlarında genellikle, ırksal kimlik kavramını vurgulamadan, Afrika, Britanya ve Karayipler'de yaşayan siyahi insanların ulusal ve uluslararası sorunlarına değinir. Yazar, *Stoning Mary* (2005) adlı oyununda, genellikle Afrikalıların yaşadığı AIDS problemini, çocukların askerleştirilmesini ve bir ceza türü olan taşlayarak öldürmeyi konu alır. *Random* (2008) adlı oyununda ise Londra'da yaşayan siyahi bir gencin bıçaklanarak öldürülmesine değinir. Söz konusu eserlerde, değinilen problemlerden çok, bu problemlerin karakterler ve hayatları üzerindeki etkileri ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bu iki oyundaki karakterler bir aile üyesini kaybetme, şiddet ve travma unsurlarıyla mücadele ederler. Ayrıca Tucker Green bahsedilen unsurları, *Stoning Mary* adlı oyunda birbirine ilgisiz karakterler ve bu karakterlerin iletişim sorunu aracılığıyla, *Random* isimli oyunda ise karakterlerin daha çok iç seslerine ve düşüncelerine vurgu yaparak sunar. Dolayısıyla, bu tez *Stoning Mary* ve *Random* adlı oyunlarda yaşanılan kayıpları, şiddeti ve travmayı yazarın stilini de göz önünde bulundurarak bir sebep-sonuç ilişkisi içerisinde incelemektedir. Tezin giriş bölümünde Debbie Tucker Green'in katkısını daha iyi yansıtmak amacıyla Britanyalı siyahi yazarların ürettiği tiyatronun tarihsel gelişimine bakılmaktadır. Birinci ana bölümde kayıp, şiddet ve travma unsurlarının *Stoning Mary*'de nasıl işlendiği incelenmekte ve şiddetin sebep olduğu bir travmatik kayıp yaşayan karakterlerin, bu kayıpla başa çıkmak için şiddete yöneldikleri belirtilmektedir. İkinci ana bölümde, bu üç unsur arasındaki ilişki *Random*'da incelenmeye devam edilmekte ve şiddet sebebiyle travmatik bir kayıp yaşayan oyun karakterlerinin şiddetten farklı tepkiler verdiklerinin altı çizilmektedir. Son olarak, tezin sonuç bölümünde, bu iki oyunda yaşanan kayıpların ağır travma yaratan kayıplar olduğu ifade edilmekte ve *Stoning Mary*'de travmatik kaybın sonucu şiddetken, *Random*'da karakterlerin kızgınlık ve sersemlik hissedip, etrafındaki insanlardan kaçındıklarının altı çizilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Debbie Tucker Green, *Stoning Mary, Random*, kayıplar, şiddet, travma

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INTRODUCTION

Debbie Tucker Green (Date of birth unknown-) is a prominent black British woman dramatist of the twenty-first century. Her playwriting is unique within the black British theatrical context in the sense that her scope of interest is not limited to identity politics or immigration experienced by black people who migrated to Britain from British colonies, a theme common to the works of several black British playwrights like Mustapha Matura (1939-), and Winsome Pinnock (1961-). Moreover, whereas her contemporary black British playwrights, such as Roy Williams (1968-) and Kwame Kwei-Armah (1967-), also represent the social identity of black British characters, gang culture and black masculinity in their plays, Tucker Green focuses on a wider range of global and local issues, namely AIDS, domestic and urban violence, black teenage murder, female sex tourism and genocide, concerning black people living not only in Britain but also in Africa and the Caribbean, without foregrounding racial identity. In her plays, Tucker Green concentrates on the aftermath of traumatic experiences like violence and abuse that the characters face and their responses to these through several devices such as strategic casting and fragmented, ungrammatical language in order to reflect the emotional effects of these problematic subjects. In *Stoning Mary* (2005) and *Random* (2008), which will be examined in this thesis, the playwright represents several issues that black people experience on a wide scale, including AIDS, public stoning and child soldiers which are mostly associated with Africa; and teenage knife crime in the years 2007 and 2008, which predominantly affected black teenagers in London. Furthermore, she portrays the issues of loss, violence and trauma interdependently or in a cause and effect relationship in these plays. The characters either become violent after experiencing a loss or lose a family member due to a violent event, both of which lead to trauma. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine Debbie Tucker Green's *Stoning Mary* and *Random* in terms of the relationship between violence, loss and trauma focusing on the social and aesthetic aspects of these works in order to underline the emotional impact of the mentioned social issues that the characters encounter.

For a better understanding of Tucker Green's place in and her contribution to black British theatre, it seems essential to survey the works by black British dramatists. Black theatre in Britain is relatively recent since it started to be properly archived towards the end of the twentieth century. The records of black plays are kept in different places such as the Theatre Collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the London Metropolitan Archives, Middlesex University's Future Histories Collection and the George Padmore Institute (Croft et al. 6). Susan Croft et al.'s theatre collection of black and Asian productions in Britain demonstrates that there was little evidence of the presence of plays produced by black writers before the second half of the twentieth century (15). Formerly, black people in Britain were mostly performers in various genres and venues. Since the thirteenth century, there were several black entertainers and musicians who performed at courts. For example, Henry VII and Henry VIII had a black trumpeter in their courts; James IV hired Africans as drummers and choreographers; and Elizabeth I had African entertainers and an African page in her court (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 11). In Victorian society, too, although black people were then mostly performers, to wit singers and musicians, there were also a number of black actors, among whom the most prominent was Ira Aldridge (1807-1867) (Lindfors 7). He was an African American actor who came to Britain in 1824 and later acquired British citizenship, and he performed white and black roles in classical plays, including those of Shakespeare. Besides, he used to tour to different cities in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland such as Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Manchester, and Liverpool, alongside European cities such as Warsaw, Berlin, Stockholm, and Moscow where he received critical attention and gained a reputation with his roles, including Othello, Macbeth, and Shylock, although some critics made racist comments about his performance (Lindfors 73-4). Thus, archives of black theatre, though they are inadequate, show that until the twentieth century, in the theatre world, black people in Britain were mostly performers, rather than writers, acting in different venues.

On the other hand, although black people in Britain did not contribute to drama as writers until the twentieth century, they have long been represented in British drama mainly as characters. However, their representations were mostly negative because of

the connotations of the colour black and later its racist implications. According to Peter Fryer, throughout history, connotations of the colour black have always been unfavourable. In different cultures, including European cultures, blackness signified grief and sorrow, in addition to being usually associated with sin and evil. Racialised discourses in the representation of black people in British plays date back to the sixteenth century when the English got into contact with the indigenous people of Africa through exploration, colonisation and trade (Fryer 135- 37).

Throughout the sixteenth century, black people were represented by white courtiers in the masques of the English and Scottish courts, and maskers usually presented them by wearing black masks, gloves and black stockings (Barthelemy 19-20). During this period, a black Moor stereotype was created on the English stage; this stereotypical character would continue to exist in the next century as well. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy states that the term "Moor" then referred to "Asians, Native Americans, Africans, Arabs and all Muslims regardless of ethnicity" (x), and "the majority of black Moors who appeared on the popular English stage between 1589 and 1695 […] were evil" (72). One of the earliest representations of a villainous black moor was Muly Mahamet in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588) by George Peele (1556-1596). This character in Peele's play, which relates the battle between Morocco and Portugal, was followed by other evil black moors, such as Aaron the Moor in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1589-92), Mulymumen in William Rowley's (1585-1626) *All's Lost by Lust* (1633) and Eleazar in *Lust's Dominion* (writer unknown) (1657) (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 14). Thus, it seems possible to argue that racist discourses, which started with colonisation and later continued with the transportation of black people from African and Caribbean colonies to Britain for economic purposes, placed them into the category of villains in British drama and theatre.

In the seventeenth century, there was a large black population in England, and, alongside that of the supposedly villainous black moor, another depiction of black people emerged. During this period, although English people continued to present

blacks as inferior in drama, the concept of the "noble savage" was also introduced with Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (1695), derived from Aphra Behn's 1688 novella by the same name. Southerne's play offers a depiction of an African prince who is enslaved and killed in the end since he rebels to free his lover from slavery. After *Oroonoko*, noble savage characters continued to be seen in many plays, for instance, as Ulamor in John Dennis' *Liberty Asserted* (1704), Juba in Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713) and Cawvawkee in John Gay's *Polly* (1729). These plays were mostly moral, rather than political, and they showed that as a result of their colonialist feelings of superiority, English people could not accept the black unless they were of noble birth (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 25).

This understanding of white supremacy continued in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which can be observed in the depiction of black people as servants in the plays dating from this period. This presentation resulted from the growing black population in Britain as the owners of plantations returned to Britain from the colonies bringing their servants with them. In the Victorian period, black people in Britain were still kept separate from the white British in cultural life, held to be uncivilised and subservient, which affected their representation in drama. Black characters in the plays of the time were given submissive roles, as illustrated by Sally Slack, a "pauper negress," in Gilbert Abbott à Beckett's *The Revolt of the Workhouse* (1834) and "hindoo servant" in Joseph Derrick's *Twins* (1884) (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 53).

In addition, a significant mode of performance in the 18th and 19th centuries was minstrelsy. Similar to the plays mentioned above, the black characters in minstrel shows, too, were delineated as inferior. Minstrel shows at that time were marked by the representations of black people. In these shows, which were called blackface minstrelsy, performers impersonated blacks by mimicking their actions and speech mockingly, at the same time creating racial stereotypes. Charles Mathews (1776-1835), who was among the leading performers of blackface minstrelsy, also impersonated and parodied black characters in his satires. In his dramatic show *A Trip to America* (1824), which he

created after his visit to America in 1822-23, he played several racialised representations of black people such as Agamemnon, a fat, clumsy slave, in his skit *All Well at Natchitoches*. In addition to this, in his 1833 show, *Othello, the Moor of Fleet Street*, Mathews depicted Othello as a violent husband who sweeps streets (Pickering 7-9). So, the representation of black people in this period still remained biased and derogatory.

In regard to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it would not be wrong to state that black drama was mainly produced by African American theatre in Britain until the late 1940s, with the productions by American Negro Theatre. Philip Yourdan's (1914-2003) *Anna Lucasta* (1947) tells the story of a black prostitute who tries to gain her family's respect and forgiveness. Arnaud d'Ussea (1916-1990) and James Gow's (1854-1923) *Deep Are the Roots* (1947) is about a black officer who is treated unjustly even after returning from his service in World War II (Thomas 18-19). Moreover, Brian Russell Robert asserts that African American Henry Francis Downing (1851-1928) was probably the first black playwright who wrote and published his plays in Britain. He was born in New York in 1851; later on, he came to London in 1895 and lived there until 1917. He produced several plays such as *Placing Paul's Play* (1913) and *A New Coon in Town: A Farcical Comedy Made in England* (1914), where he represented racism and the colonisers' attitudes, deconstructing the issue of class, as well as national and gender stereotypes (270-71). These examples point to the fact that black writers whose plays were produced on the British stage were mostly African American in this period.

On the other hand, although the focus was more upon the experience of black American people in the above-mentioned plays, the Unity Theatre in London programmed post-war plays, which staged issues concerning racism. Some white writers' plays that explored black issues were performed in the Unity Theatre. To name a few of these plays, there was Ben Bengal's (1907- 1993) *Plant in the Sun* (1939), which presents the black characters' strike because one of them is fired for suggesting to establish a union.

In the performance of the play, the black actor Paul Robeson played the part of a "white" character. Furthermore, the Unity Repertory Company's 1946 re-performance of Geoffrey Trease's (1909- 1998) *Colony* (1939) focused on the strike of Caribbean sugar workers who were played by black actors. Similarly, Herb Tank's (1922-1982) *Longitude 49* (1950) featured black workers on a tanker, played by Robert Adams, Frank Singuineau, and Errol Hill (Chambers, "History" 49). Thus, the theatre encouraged black actors – such as Paul Robeson (1898-1976), Robert Adams (1906-1965), Frank Singuineau (1913-1992) and Errol Hill (1921-2003) – to perform black roles, as well as intentionally including black actors in the performance of plays that did not actually have parts for blacks (Osborne, "Writing Black Back" 21). New actors like Carmen Munroe (1932-), Rudolph Walker (1939-), Mark Heath (1940-) and Anton Phillips (1943-), who would be influential in the development of black British theatre later, also played in the Unity Theatre (Osborne, "Writing Black Back" 22).

Due to several factors, black British theatre attained more autonomy in the second half of the twentieth century. In order to understand this transformation that black British theatre underwent, a significant moment in the twentieth-century British history should be taken into consideration. On 22 June 1948, the ship *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks, Essex, bringing 492 emigrants from Jamaica, which "signalled the beginning of one of the most important phases of black immigration into Britain since the eighteenth century" (Thomas 17). The arrival of the *Empire Windrush* can be regarded as the starting point of British society's transformation into a multicultural community. The reason for this massive immigration was Britain's need for workforce in order to help the country recover after World War II. Britain aimed to recruit labourers from colonies for the rearrangement of welfare systems and reconstruction in the country. After coming to Britain, these immigrants were employed as farmers, foundry and railway workers, and electricians, providing labour supply. At the same time they sought better occupations and education alternatives in Britain. Thus, their immigration created a common "supply and demand dynamic" between Britain and colonised subjects (Fryer 378).

Fryer reports that within ten years of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, the West Indian population in Britain rose to 125,000. Additionally, besides the West Indian, there were 55.000 Indian and Pakistani people by the end of 1958, and around 135.000 by 1990 (378). This large black community was highly noticeable in British society. Many of these people received education in their countries of origin, which were under British rule. Thus, they could have their creative influence on British culture, as can be seen "in artistic responses to racism in the development of black British drama and theatre" (Thomas 17). The artistic contribution of black immigrant playwrights to British culture can be analysed in three periods, which were roughly divided by Deirdre Osborne, as "the migratory" or "arriviste" (late 1940s-1960s), "the settler" (1970s-1980s), and "the indigene" period (1990s-2000s) (*The Cambridge Companion* 3) as the themes they explored in their works changed in time depending on their experiences in Britain.

In the development of black theatre in the 1950s, the significance of 1948, as a turning point in British cultural history, can be understood more clearly in relation to the political events and changing attitudes towards immigration and race in Britain, which paved the way for the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in Tilbury. India gained independence from the British Empire in 1947, which was a crucial step in the dissolving process of the colonies. Moreover, in December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was declared at the General Assembly of the United Nations, pronouncing that "the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" were "the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (Thomas 18). As a result of these political developments, Parliament enacted the British Nationality Act of 1948, which offered UK citizenship to black people from the previous British colonies and legalised migration into Britain. However, this act was significantly revised as the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962 so as to strategically control the entrance of Commonwealth citizens into Britain. The Act differentiated skilful workers from the unskilful ones. It also distinguished people who had British passports and were born in the UK from those born in the colonies. For instance, it limited the coming of Kenyan Africans who had British passports to Britain, while permitting the entry of

white people from the ex-colonies (Fryer 390). Hence, the Commonwealth Immigration Act was the first governmental step taken to racially restrict immigration into Britain.

The political and practical formation of black theatre in Britain was profoundly affected by these controversial and conflicting regulations, as well as by the changing attitudes of British society towards black people. It can be argued that this ambivalent atmosphere left a mark on the themes and issues that black playwrights explored in their plays. First of all, the twin themes of exile and immigration of the Windrush Generation, the first generation of immigrants brought to Britain from Jamaica in 1948, were significant issues that dramatists explored. For example, the Trinidadian black writer Errol John's (1924-1988) *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* (1956), which is the first play written by a black British writer (Croft et al. 17) depicts a group of working-class Trinidadian people and their dreams of moving to Britain for better living conditions. Set in Trinidad, the characters live in a small yard, and the play's central character Ephraim tries to convince his partner to migrate to Britain for job opportunities (Elam 176).

In addition to this, since mainstream British society marginalised black people, both openly and covertly, black dramatists mostly discussed white British people's racist attitudes, diaspora, and their own place in British society as immigrants. The majority of the plays they produced during the 1950s-80s indicated and dealt with black people's disappointment at the circumstances in the UK, together with the discourse of race relations and changing opinions about assimilation, British identity and black individuality, and intermarriage of different races (Maynard 55), as exemplified in the plays of the playwrights below.

Some of the important black playwrights of the period were Jamaican-born Barry Reckord (1926-2011) who came to Britain, with a scholarship to study English at Cambridge University, in 1950; Trinidadian-born Mustapha Matura (1939- 2019) who

migrated to Britain in 1961; and the Nigerian Nobel-winning writer Wole Soyinka (1934-) who started to study English at the University of Leeds in 1954 (Thomas 21). In his plays, Reckord explored class and black people's ambitions, as well as the relationship between people from different races. His *Flesh to a Tiger* (1958) shows a woman's struggle for survival in a colonialist environment, and *You in Your Small Corner* (1960), another play of his, portrays the concern of a black mother whose son falls in love with their white neighbour (Bidnall 205). As regards Matura, he examined the experiences of immigrants in Britain and the effects of these experiences on their identity. Even though he concentrated on his country of origin, Trinidad, Matura's plays are unique in the sense that they introduced Caribbean Creole and made a connection between the middle-class worlds of the black and white characters (Peacock, "Stages" 113). To illustrate, in his first full-length play, *As Time Goes By* (1972), Matura focuses on the story of a Trinidadian immigrant, Ram, who refuses to integrate into British society and maintains his racial identity by using his culture's spiritualism. As a spiritual guru, Ram gives advice to different black immigrant characters who are disappointed by British society as representatives of the Windrush Generation (Peacock, "Stages" 113). Differently from Matura and Reckord, Wole Soyinka uses myth and history to address racism, and his main concern is problems related to *apartheid* in South Africa. As a case in point, in *The Invention* (1954), he explores a nuclear explosion which eradicates the racial diversity and leads a group of scientists to try to bring racism back by inventing a device (Attwell 32). Therefore, in their plays, these writers suggest that discrimination, unemployment and bias – provoked by harsh racial boundaries and fears of contact with other cultures – make the integration of black communities into British society especially difficult. Due to their shared colonial origin and racial segregation in British culture, these playwrights represented the inevitable political, economic, and social outcomes of racial identification and concerns about blacks' ambiguous and marginalised position in post-war Britain, as well as their experiences as optimistic immigrants in Britain (Thomas 21). Thus, during the 1950s-80s, those plays produced by black dramatists portrayed the disappointments and frustrations of black people in post-war British society, as well as different ways to survive and resist the British hegemony culturally and politically. In the 1960s and early 70s, black theatrical productions struggled to oppose and confront, and if possible

change, the prejudiced, racist representation of black citizens, besides aiming to lessen their "second class citizenship" in society (Jones 68).

The above mentioned playwrights explored these issues mostly in a realistic manner. Caribbean and African arts are, in general, based on poetry, dance, story-telling, and music; therefore, it was possible to integrate these types of art into the dramatic forms that black British playwrights used (Peacock, "Stages" 112). However, since such a fusion would not adequately reflect the lives of immigrant people in Britain, black dramatists tended to employ a realistic approach when examining the issues of culture, race, class, identity, and the experiences of immigrants in British society. David Lane claims that "they were demanding attention by speaking the recognisable language of the British theatre" (120) so that their experiences and difficulties could be understood by the British audience.

In terms of the theatrical developments, there were significant contributions to the improvement of black drama since the 1940s. Between 1943 and 1958, the BBC broadcasted radio programmes such as *Caribbean Carnival*, *African Theatre*, *Caribbean Voices*, and *Caribbean Theatre*; these were influential in the development of black British theatre since they provided a platform to broadcast black playwrights' work, in addition to adapting novels to radio programmes (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 112). To be more specific, feminist writer Una Marson (1905-1965), who has Jamaican origins, founded the Kingston Dramatic Club in 1937; and she was hired by the BBC London in 1941 and turned the programme *Caribbean Voices* into a place for Caribbean people's interviews and literary work, which made her an effective figure on West Indian migrant culture (King 71). Similarly, Jamaican actress Pauline Henriques (1914-1998) established Negro Theatre Company, London, in 1947, which Henriques herself; Trinidadian actor and playwright Errol John (1924-1988), and Bermudan actor Earl Cameron (1917-) thought to be the "nucleus" of the Black British Theatre Movement (Cochrane 143).

In the period between the 1950s and the 1980s, a phase important for black theatre, in terms of its physical development, infrastructure and visibility, was initiated in Britain (Thomas 23). In 1970, Guyanese architect Oscar Abrams established the Keskidee Centre in Islington, London. For people of African and Caribbean cultures, this was a significant platform and a social centre that involved various activities. The centre provided accommodation and legal advice, different classes such as pottery and yoga, and also theatre workshops where black writers could present their plays (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 146). *Sighs of a Slave Dream* (1972) by Jamaican Lindsay Barrett (1941-) was the first production of the Keskidee Theatre Workshop, which opened in 1971. Moreover, Helen Thomas claims that three crucial contributions were made to the development of black British theatre in this period (23). Firstly, in 1970, African playwright and actor Alton Kumalo (1939-2013) founded Carib and Temba Theatre Companies, which would concentrate on new black writing from South Africa and the UK. Another important step was the Black Theatre Cooperative, which Mustapha Matura founded together with Charlie Hanson in 1978, with the aim of highlighting the fact that African, Caribbean, and Asian playwrights' works had been pushed to the margins of British theatre (Ekumah-Asamoah 65). Moreover, journalist Naseem Khan published a report, *The Art Britain Ignores: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (1976), which emphasised the contributions that Britain's ethnic communities made to British culture and art through their artistic work, even though they were subjected to marginalisation. The document was commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Community Race Relations Commission and the Arts Council; the report raised issues about providing money for the theatrical groups and suggested that ethnic communities' arts should be supported by supplying buildings and advisory service (Khan, "The Arts of Ethnic Minorities" 681-82).

From the 1950s through the 80s, the term "black" acquired growing cultural and political dynamism, since it signified the shared experience of discrimination and racism in Britain, although the "diasporic communities," heretofore mentioned, were distinguished from one another in terms of their various backgrounds, languages, and cultures (Griffin 4). As a response to black people's position as "others" in white British

society, Reckord, Matura, and Soyinka's plays attempted to present, in their artistic productions, the emergence of a socio-political understanding within the post-war context, decolonisation, and postcolonial consciousness, and their depictions of black experiences in Britain coincided with the experiences of other subordinated groups in the rest of the world (Thomas 26). By representing the connection between struggles for survival in their new environment and international struggles for independence, these dramatists explored the practical and ideological values and problems of full integration into British society alongside segregation based on racial and cultural identities. Black identity in this period was usually regarded as a "migrant" or "marginal" identity, and people who arrived in Britain realised that immigration was a "one-way trip," that there was not any real "home to [which they could] go back" and that the colonised people were always "somewhere else," always "doubly marginalised or displaced" (Hall, "Minimal Selves" 115).

During the 1970s-80s, black dramatists used the language in their plays as a medium to resist their othered position in society and reflect their opposing stance. They used "black" vernacular and style within the black British culture of the time so as to achieve an identification of a new aesthetics, which combines the music and language of the Caribbean and Africa (Thomas 25). In other words, black writers in Britain endeavoured to alter and free themselves from a language that had historically defined their inequality. The appearance of Black British English on the stage indicated not only a struggle "for freedom from European hegemony" but also "cultural self-consciousness," alongside an endeavour to achieve postcolonial cultural "validation and authentication" (Elam 184).

Black people's struggle for cultural recognition continued in the 1980s, although more than forty per cent of all black people in Britain had been born there until the mid-1970s. These second-generation black British people were more familiar with the traits of British culture than their parents were, since they were raised and educated in Britain, and most of them never visited their country of origin; however, the majority of British

people still considered these people "immigrants," and/or "coloureds," positioning them on the margins of society, rather than seeing them as British citizens who have equal rights (Thomas 26). The Race Relations Act of 1976 declared discrimination unlawful in certain areas such as employment, education, and accommodation, and founded the Commission for Racial Equality in order to ensure that the Act functioned properly (Ponnuswami 80). Nevertheless, racism was still alive and destructive, as a consequence of which it was difficult for black people in Britain to find jobs, besides their limited housing opportunities. In addition to the conflicts between the black and white communities, in the late 1970s, the relationship between the police and black British people deteriorated due to the increasingly harsh policing strategies that targeted specific areas where mostly black people lived (Fryer 398). "SUS" (Stop and Search) laws of the period allowed the police to search anybody that they suspected in the streets (McMillan, "Ter Speak" 283). Before the Brixton riots of 1981, the police started "Swamp 81" operation (Gilroy 104). In this operation, ten groups of police officers stopped and searched 943 black people in four days, and seventy-five of these people were charged (Gilroy 104). Kenan Malik describes that "no fewer than thirty-seven Blacks and Asians were killed in police custody" between 1969 and 1989, "almost one every six months" (41). Consequently, discrimination, unemployment, and police harassment led to riots and protests in different cities of Britain. Some of the best known of these riots that occurred between black people and police officers are the Bonfire Night riots in Leeds in 1973, 1974, and 1975, the Notting Hill riot in 1976, and the Brixton riots in 1981 (Fryer 400).

Nevertheless, these riots directly and dramatically influenced the development of black British arts and culture. After the Brixton riots, the Thatcher government commissioned the judge Lord Leslie Scarman to investigate the reasons for these riots. The inquiry indicated that reasons were the "endemic, ineradicable disease" of "racial disadvantage" and "racial discrimination," and the report offered solutions to recover this situation and encourage black citizens to fully participate in British life (Owusu 459-60). As a result of the Scarman report, new funding was formed, and it provided significant opportunities for a variety of black and Asian artists. Alda Terracciano states that in

1983, Black Theatre Season was initiated by the Ethnic Arts sub-committee of the Greater London Council, and during its six seasons, writers of African or Asian origin gained opportunities to demonstrate their talents and performed plays that they wrote, interpreted, and directed. Moreover, besides the appearance of various theatre companies which were managed by black people such as Talawa Theatre in London (1985), together with the black British writer SuAndi (1951-) as its director, the Black Arts Alliance was formed, in 1985, to serve as a cultural platform for black artists (23).

Additionally, this period was significant because black women playwrights such as Trish Cooke (1962-), Maria Oshodi (1964-), Jaqueline Rudet (1962-), Jackie Kay (1961-), and Winsome Pinnock (1961-) emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. These writers had their plays performed at important venues such as the Royal Court, the Royal National Theatre, and the Liverpool Playhouse, besides small theatres (Peacock, "Stages" 115). Black women playwrights not only produced plays but they also took part in the process of establishing new theatres. Paulette Randall (1961-), Bernadine Evaristo (1959-), and Patricia St Hilaire (Date of birth unknown-) founded Theatre of Black Women in 1982, and the same year, writer Yvonne Brewster (1938-) became the first black British woman theatre officer at the Arts Council. Furthermore, in 1984-85, the Black Arts Alliance united with another organisation, the Black Theatre Forum, which used to organise training and workshops in theatre (Ekumah-Asamoah 63). Hence, a significant number of theatre companies and organisations were established in this period; also, a number of theatre companies – such as the English Stage Company at Royal Court, Foco Novo, Tricycle Theatre, and Oval House – managed by white artists started to be interested in black dramatists such as Mustapha Matura, Alfred Fagon (1937-1986), Winsome Pinnock (1961-), and Tunde Ikoli (1955-) (Ekumah-Asamoah 68).

Besides these developments in black British drama, the concept of "black" and the understanding of identity politics, which defined black British drama in the 1980s and

1990s, changed during this period. So far, concepts such as immigration, diaspora, dislocation, and marginalisation were mainly taken into consideration while discussing the issues of individual and cultural identity in black British drama. However, in this period, Stuart Hall describes the notion of "cultural hybridity," which highlights culture more than race in the examination of the diasporic experience and identity politics. In his essay entitled "New Ethnicities" (1988), he explains the newly emerging cultural formations in the late 1980s. He argues that during the 1970s and the early and mid-1980s, the term "black" signified the immigrant people's shared experience of discrimination and racism (Hall, "New Ethnicities" 163). This umbrella term referred to the immigrants who came from Africa, the West Indies, and Asia regardless of their race (Bourne 3). The term or concept helped immigrants form an identity in a culture where they were marginalised, and it was used to produce discourses that resisted and challenged the hegemony of white British people's representation of black subjects. However, from the late 1980s, there was a change in these discursive practises. Although not completely replacing the previous forms of representation, these discursive practices recognised the fragmentation within the unifying term "black," which Hall believes is a constructed concept ("New Ethnicities" 163). Hall says:

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences, and cultural identities which compose the category "black"; that is, the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects. ("New Ethnicities" 166)

Accordingly, towards the end of the 1980s, with the emerging significance of difference, the diversity within blackness was highlighted. It was acknowledged that the communities that constituted the category of black actually had distinct backgrounds, histories, and cultures (Malik 94). Thus, new cultural politics emphasising diversity led ethnic communities to embrace their individual identity, apart from the unifying black experience within multicultural British society.

In line with the focus on cultural difference, the second generation born in Britain began to construct their own identity as black British people "not as rejected outsiders, but as critical insiders" (qtd. in Arana 236). Although discrimination continued, black British people tried to be part of the culture of the country which they saw as home. In 1998, Hall claimed that

> [b]lack British culture today is confident beyond its own measure in its own identity; secure in a difference which it does not expect, or want to go away, still rigorously and frequently excluded by the host society, but nevertheless not excluding itself in its own mind. Blackness in this context may be a site of positive affirmation but is not necessarily any longer a counter identity, a source of resistance. ("Frontlines" 135)

Therefore, black people in Britain formed their identity by embracing their differences and tried to gain a place for themselves in British society.

The effects of changing attitudes towards blackness can be observed in the dramatic works of the 1980s, and since then, as R. Victoria Arana suggests, most of the plays questioned the concept of blackness by focusing on the variety within the black (232). Many playwrights explored the complicated interaction of cultural identities not only between whites and blacks but also among diverse groups of blacks: the relationship between the West Indian and African; immigrants and British-born middle and working classes. For example, in his play *Scrape Off the Black* (1981), Tunde Ikoli explores the class and race dynamics of mixed-race families by presenting a family where the character Trevor organises a party for his brother, with his indifferent white mother and uncaring African father, because his brother is released from prison (Terraciano 29). Additionally, since these diverse groups of blacks within British society were trying to embrace their discrepancies besides their British identity, authenticity was a key concern in the drama of the period, which was evident in the writers' search for languages and rhythms suitable to ethnicity, class, and generation. This concern for authenticity becomes clear through the recurrent themes of loyalty and "selling out" (Ponnuswami 83) as can be observed in Alfred Fagon's *Lonely Cowboy* (1987). In the play, members of a community accuse their friend Jack of having sold his "birth-right to the Englishman" (Brewster 43) because he joins the police force which they all hate.

Yet Jack confirms that he is an "Englishman" (Brewster 43). This confirmation signals a distinctive "multicultural" voice, which shows that second-generation black people in Britain were more confident about their British identity. However, it is difficult to rigidly differentiate the post-colonial from the multicultural, since, as Ponnuswami claims, playwrights of the 1980s-90s "depict vastly polymorphous black Britain in which both migrant and British-born characters can be variously "'assimilationist' or not; nostalgic or contemptuous of the past; politicised and agitational or unwilling to rock the boat" (83).

Therefore, although it is difficult to generalise such diverse materials, some key trends and concerns in the playwriting of the 1980s can still be identified. Black drama then tried to explore the experiences of black communities for black audiences, as well as aiming to familiarise British society with the lives of people of African, Caribbean, and Asian descent. Thus, most of the plays by black British playwrights reflect not only the conflicts between different racial groups but also the relations within families in consideration of diasporic experiences and second-generation people, trying to identify their distinctive lives and experiences in this multicultural society (Peacock, "Stages" 111). Hence, in the early 1980s, besides matters related to racism, immigration, and belonging, playwrights also examined the tense relations between second-generation black people who were born in the UK and their first-generation African Caribbean parents (Thomas 28). As Gabriel Griffin asserts, during the 1980s, plays predominately reflected generational conflicts expressive of the difference between the adult person who immigrated and the child who was born into British culture, and their different responses to that situation (25). Conflicts between the first and second generations are examined, for instance, in Winsome Pinnock's (1961-) *Leave Taking* (1987). The play portrays a first-generation Jamaican immigrant mother, Enid, and her struggle to raise her two daughters. The incompatibility between the characters becomes apparent as Enid is hopeful for their lives in Britain while her daughter Del experiences and criticises the harsh realities of Thatcher's Britain into which she was born (Griffin 37).

In addition to writing about the conflicts between first and second generations of black people, playwrights also intended to explore immigrants and their British-born children's search for their roots in their countries of origin. Caryl Phillips's (1958-) *Where There is Darkness* (1982), for instance, examines the situation when the protagonist Albert returns to the Caribbean after living in Britain for twenty-five years (Ward 80). Likewise, in *The Nine Night* (1983) by Edgar Nkosi White (1947-), father Hamon Williams thinks that if he and his family travel back to Jamaica after twenty-five years in Britain, they can reunite with their ancestors. He tries to unite his family with the help of a spiritual journey to Jamaica by performing a ritual, which is used to help tormented souls go to heaven (Pearce, *Black British Drama* 39).

Another prevailing theme in the plays of the 1980s was the social turmoil in British society during Thatcher's administration. Michael McMillan's (1962-) *Day of Action* (1981) and Edgar Nkosi White's *Man and Soul* (1981), as a case in point, discussed the riots that broke out in those years and their consequences. While McMillan's *Day of Action* tells the story of the New Cross Fire (1981) during which thirteen young black people died historically, White's *Man and Soul* which takes place in a detention centre in London reflects the aftermath of Notting Hill Riot where white British people attacked the houses of the West Indians in Nottingham (Ponnuswami 84). Additionally, a number of plays examine the harsh economic conditions that black British people faced in Britain under Thatcher's rule. These include Amani Naphtali's (Date of birth unknown-) *Ragamuffin* (1989), and Jacqueline Rudet's (1962-) *Money to Live* (1983). *Ragamuffin* reflects the difficult conditions of life in contemporary Britain for black youth. In *Money to Live*, to illustrate, a young black woman accepts to become a stripper in order to earn money and be independent (Starck 240). The plays written during this period also frequently portray a general disappointment and discomfort resulting from the first generation's incomplete hopes and aspirations. As an example, Nigel Moffatt's (1954-) *Mama Decemba* (1985) deals with a first-generation immigrant woman who could not still find a job in Britain and does not have any friends after having lived for years in Britain (Ponnuswami 84). Therefore, it would not be

wrong to state that class, race, and diaspora were the three concepts which formed and characterised the content of post-war black British drama during the 1980s.

By the late 1990s, in spite of some setbacks, black British drama continued to develop. Due to the reduction of financial supply, among approximately twenty black theatre companies, many of them, such as Black Mime and Carib Theatre, were closed; only few of them, such as the Talawa Theatre, managed to continue their work (Osborne "Writing Black Back" 26). However, the 1990s also prompted an optimistic feeling about black British arts towards the millennium. In this period, black theatre in Britain burgeoned despite the shortage of money, and it significantly contributed to the variegation of theatre in this period. As Goddard puts it, although many black theatre companies were closed because of funding cuts, the Arts Council of England attempted to develop cultural diversity and tried to encourage black dramatists to integrate into mainstream theatre platforms. By revising their policies about ethnic diversity, the Arts Council acknowledged the necessity of financial support for black theatre in order to promote and help it reach a wider audience. Hence, the council provided funds for theatres to include plays by black dramatists in their programmes (*Staging Black Feminisms* 31). Moreover, the Arts Council also developed the Cultural Diversity Action Plan in 1998, aiming to mitigate the funding cuts. The major motivation for this plan was to recognise the fact that the British nation now consisted of various races and cultures; thus, the Arts Council intended to struggle with the cultural discrimination which was observed by non-white playwrights and practitioners. The purpose of the Action Plan was not to finance individual writers; it aimed to form bureaucratic organisations which would foster theatres, by means of financial support, and to include black and Asian plays in their programmes, thereby familiarising the British audience with their work and transferring black and Asian drama from the fringe to the centre of British theatre (Peacock, "The Social and Political Context" 150). The Arts Council's Action Plan was evaluated several times, and these surveys resulted in critical reports and the arrangement of funding practice and purposes. Journalist Naseem Khan's *Towards a Greater Diversity: Results and Legacy of the Arts Council of England's Cultural Diversity Action Plan* (2002) was the first critical review of the Action Plan. In

her critique, Khan investigated the impact of the cultural diversity plan and claimed that although the plan made a remarkable improvement, in the long run; the concept of "cultural diversity" should become unnecessary because the term mainly refers to Black and Asian ethnic communities. Nevertheless, she argued that in order to be able to remove the concept, some key terms such as "inclusivity, cohesion and respect" should be adopted (*Towards a Greater Diversity* 13). Considering this opinion, the Arts Council decided to eliminate the phrase "cultural diversity" from its terminology and expand its work to involve the concepts of "age, class, gender, sexuality and faith" (Arts Council, *Navigating Difference* 209).

In a similar vein, after the redundancy of the term "cultural diversity" was discussed, there was also a debate about the un/necessity of the concept "black theatre." Richard Appignanesi discussed, in *Beyond Cultural Diversity: The Case for Creativity* (2010), that works of art should not be classified in terms of ethnic origin, though racial minorities should still be regarded as an important component of a "United" Kingdom. In line with the assertion that "cultural diversity" did not reflect a "United" Kingdom, Peacock argues that the term "black theatre" may not also seem relevant because making their plays relatable only to black people, the term can be a thematic constraint for writers ("The Social and Political Context" 153). However, black playwright Roy Williams (1968-) thinks that it is not the right time to abandon the description because it is significant to make their voice heard. He says: "Personally, I love the phrase 'black theatre,' and I think we need it to ensure we are heard. 'Theatre' sounds po-faced and white; 'black theatre' sounds intriguing, daring" ("Black Theatre's Big Breakout"). As for Winsome Pinnock, the writer admits her disapproval of the term, but at the same time she acknowledges that it still "articulates the reality of a division" in British drama (qtd. in Lane 112).

However, among these discussions, black drama gained critical attention and recognition with the greater inclusion of black playwrights in the mainstream towards the new millennium. Elizabeth Barry and William Boles claim that "the first decade of

the twenty-first century may soon become recognised as the period when black drama in Britain emerged as a dominant mainstream force" (312). There was an increasing publication of black plays by several publishers such as Oberon Books, Nick Hern Books, and Methuen Drama. Although plays by black dramatists were initially published in collections in the 1980s and 1990s, like *Black Plays: One* (1987) edited by Yvonne Brewster, these publishers started to publish black playwrights' work as individual editions (Peacock, "The Social and Political Context" 150), which shows that black writers were now acknowledged as individual writers, rather than being only recognised as "black."

Additionally, in the 2000s, although most of the plays were performed in several metropolitan theatres and often in studios at first – such as *Truth and Reconciliation* (2011) by Debbie Tucker Green and *The Westbridge* (2011) by Rachel De-lahay (1984-) staged in an old cricket bat factory – plays by black playwrights started to appear in significant theatre venues, as mentioned above. Kwame Kwei-Armah's (1967-) *Elmina's Kitchen* (2003) was staged at the Royal National Theatre; Roy Williams's (1968-) *Fallout* (2003) was produced at the Royal Court; and Debbie Tucker Green's debut play *Dirty Butterfly* (2003) opened at the Soho Theatre (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 4). Moreover, the Royal Court always promotes young and new writers, and they include young black writers in their different writer groups and programmes. To be specific, Rachel De-lahay was included in Unheard Voices Group; Bola Agbaje (1981-) and Levi David Addai (1983-) were part of the Critical Mass Initiative, which was formed to encourage young black writers within the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writers Programme (Peacock, "The Social and Political Context" 148). Hence, Kwei-Armah interprets this prominence of plays produced by black British writers in the first decade of the twenty-first century as a "cultural renaissance," although Steven Luckie (Date of birth unknown-) claims that it is a "shift" rather than a renaissance (qtd. in Cavendish).

Nevertheless, although black playwrights started to have their plays performed at mainstream theatres in London in the millennium, they were still inaccessible to the audience outside London. Several steps were therefore taken to overcome this problem, too. In addition to the difficulty in reaching audiences in other cities, black playwrights were still subject to institutional racism in theatres, and these two issues were discussed in the Eclipse Conference which was held in 2001 by the Theatre Management Association, Nottingham Playhouse, and the Arts Council at the Nottingham Playhouse (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 9). At this conference, new policies were developed to fight institutional discrimination in theatre, and it was recommended that Credibility Limited Company and Theatrical Management Association would establish regional training programmes in order to encourage senior management of theatre companies to create their own action plans and revise their strategies of equal opportunities for different writers (Khan, "Towards a Greater Diversity" 7). The report suggested that the Arts Council of England would provide funding to the Black Regional Initiative from 2002 and concentrate on forming a network of theatres in different regions, aiming to help black dramatists access prevailing theatres, as well as to expand their audience and work. Various theatres in different cities such as The Green Room in Manchester, The Nottingham Playhouse, and the Leicester Haymarket benefited from the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre (BRIT) funding (Arts Council, *Eclipse Report* 21-22). Furthermore, as a result of this conference, the Eclipse Theatre Company was established by the Arts Council, and it was responsible for improving the profile of plays by black writers. The Eclipse Theatre intended to commission and tour "quality work" and to develop black drama in terms of new writing, training, and marketing (Peacock, "The Social and Political Context" 152). Consequently, it can be stated that Eclipse Theatre increased the connection of black drama with the audience in different cities as a company run by black people and touring regional theatres beyond the metropolitan area.

Besides expanding the areas that it can reach, black theatre has also extended the scope of issues with which it deals. In the post-millennial period, the focus of black drama is no longer the problems of immigrant people – namely race, diaspora, and identity in a

foreign society – but the exploration of social and individual concerns in contemporary multicultural Britain. Instead of concentrating on the issues of immigration and displacement, the plays written in recent years deal more with the life of a generation born and raised in Britain (Griffin 25). After the mid-1990s, there was a "transition from Old World- (Caribbean diaspora-) inflected subject matter" to "New World, home-grown experiences" of black British people (Peacock, "Stages" 115). Lane notes that contemporary black dramatists explore the experiences of the third generation- instead of the relationships between British society and immigrant black people, or the second-generation and their immigrant parents who struggle to maintain their culture in their new environment. In most of the plays, there are characters that have second-generation parents, and the plays attempt to reflect multicultural Britain with its negative and positive aspects. Put differently, contemporary black playwrights demonstrate "what it means to be a black Briton as opposed to what it means to be an immigrant" (Lane 114). Hence, owing to its broadened cultural perspective, black drama cannot merely be related to black racial issues. Now, black British drama began to tackle issues of young people who try to form their identities as individuals despite social stereotyping and peer pressure. From the late twentieth century onwards, white British people have portrayed black culture in the press within the confines of high unemployment, the potential for crime and violence, low rates of education and poor housing (Peacock, "Black British" 54). Thus, the themes of contemporary black drama are affected by white British people's perception of black people and their culture, and subject matters like welfare problems and youth culture are presented in the plays. Playwrights mostly explore the problems of different communities who are discriminated against because of their race, class, and financial situations. Most of the plays by black playwrights now display issues of black masculinity, black teenagers' experience of urban crime, violence, and gang warfare in modern Britain (Osborne, "The State" 138).

The prominent writers of the contemporary period of 2000s are Kwame Kwei-Armah, Roy Williams, Debbie Tucker Green, and Bola Agbaje. Each of these playwrights treat the theme of trauma in their own way. Agbaje explores the experiences of third-generation youth in Britain and the problems of asylum seekers and immigrants who

come to the country illegally. In *Detaining Justice* (2009), Agbaje analyses Britain's immigration system by portraying the experiences of a Zimbabwean sister and brother, Grace and Justice, who want to take refuge in Britain. Although Grace's application is approved, her brother is rejected and stays in a detention centre. A black British lawyer, Mr Cole, tries to help him, but the immigration system is a very complex one (Pearce, *Black British Drama* 142). The experiences of third-generation black British people are also explored in Williams and Kwei-Armah's plays. Kwei-Armah concentrates on the effects of slavery on the lives of black people and how these racial politics of the past can provide an insight into the contemporary race relations in *Fix Up* (2004), while Williams foregrounds cultural identity, racism, and race in multicultural Britain in *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (2002). Both Kwei-Armah and Williams examine identity politics and individuals trying to achieve a social identity through their relation to a group which offers attachment to the social world. The playwrights depict the characters in connection to a cultural and racial group, such as gangs, and reflect the characters' problems within the context of their relation to these gangs or social groups. Roy Williams's *Fallout* (2003) revolves around police scrutiny of the murder of a black teenage boy, Kwame, who is killed by his friends from a gang. The gang murder of a black teenager is similarly seen in Kwei-Armah's *Elmina's Kitchen* (2003). In the play, a West Indian character, Deli, owns a restaurant named Elmina's Kitchen. He tries to protect his 19-year-old son Ashley from getting involved in gangs and crime. However, he cannot prevent Ashley from involving in a gang and being killed by his friends in the end (Kritzer 90).

In terms of form, although millennial black British playwrights focus mainly on content more than form, the prevalent dramatic tradition which they use is realism. Other forms and practices experimented with during this period are revues, musicals, and performance poetry, represented by the works of SuAndi and Michael McMillan; however, naturalist and realist plays are in the foreground (Chambers, *Black and Asian* 194). Peacock argues that the use of realism may only result in unchanging characterisation and setting, which leads to cultural clichés that do not display the evolution of different cultures; however, social realism is at the same time a helpful

form of expression to portray the experiences of blacks and their exploration of culture, race, and identity in a familiar context for the audience ("Stages" 112). Therefore, as the black dramatists did in the previous decades, black British playwrights of this period also used realism to make the issues that black and Asian communities encounter recognised by the predominantly white audience.

Debbie Tucker Green is different in this context. Instead of black youth violence and criminality, gang culture, and dramatic social realism, she analyses the issues of violence and trauma through her characters' domestic and universal problems and the effects of these problems on their psychology.

Tucker Green is one of the most original and outstanding black British playwrights in contemporary Britain. She is, according to Deirdre Osborne, "the most stylistically innovative and uncompromisingly poetic dramatist in contemporary British theatre" ("Resisting" 163). Tucker Green's date and place of birth are, as noted earlier on, unknown since she is very private about her personal life and background. Although acknowledging that she has Jamaican roots, the writer prefers to foreground her work rather than her private life (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 184). In addition, she prefers to write her name and the titles of her plays in lower case letters. She has not publicly stated her reasons, but Goddard asserts that Tucker Green does so to oppose the superiority of the English language (*Modern British Playwriting* 193). Recerca, on the other hand, claims that she uses lower case in order to foreground her work, rather than herself as a writer (45).

Before becoming a playwright, for ten years, Tucker Green had worked as a stage manager. Her writing career began with her unpublished play *She Three* (1999), which was listed for the Alfred Fagon Award, an award for playwrights of Caribbean origin writing in English, but she could not win. She made her debut with *Dirty Butterfly* (2003), first performed at the Soho Theatre in London, and later in the same year, she

produced *Born Bad* (2003), performed in the Hampstead Theatre in London, which brought her the Laurence Olivier Award for Most Promising Newcomer in 2004. For *Born Bad*'s 2011 American premiere in New York, Tucker Green also obtained an OBIE Special Citation (Off-Broadway Theatre Awards). Her plays were performed at prominent venues. *Trade* (2004) was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and first staged at the Swan in Stratford-upon-Avon; *Generations* (2005) was performed at the National Theatre; and *Random* (2008) and *Truth and Reconciliation* (2011) were performed at the Royal Court Theatre. As a result, Tucker Green attained critical attention and international recognition in a short time. Her most performed play, *Stoning Mary* (2005), staged across Europe, the USA, and Australia, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs and made her the first black British woman playwright to premiere a play at the Royal Court Theatre's main stage (Goddard, *Staging Black Feminisms* 182).

Besides writing plays, Tucker Green also produced plays – like *Freefall* (2002), *To Swallow* (2003), *Handprint* (2006), and *Truth* (2009) – for the BBC radio. Additionally, she adapted her play *Random* to television (Channel 4) in 2011, for which she won a British Academy Film and Television Award (BAFTA) for Best Single Drama. She also wrote and directed the film *Second Coming* in 2014 (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 184).

According to the artistic director of the Hampstead Theatre Jenny Topper, Tucker Green "has the three essential elements of a new voice: she is concerned with ideas, she is concerned with form, and she has the courage to stay true to her intuition and let her own linguistic invention come through" (qtd. in Sierz). American playwright Ken Urban compared her work to several British playwrights such as Sarah Kane, Caryl Churchill, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter due to her depiction of disturbing matters, namely domestic violence, death by stoning, knife crime, the impact of trauma, and alienation, as well as her concentration on form and language ("Cruel Britannia" 52). Thus, her work is generally associated with in-yer-face theatre. Nevertheless, despite her portrayal

of unpleasant subjects, her work is different from in-yer-face theatre because she does not show violence on stage. In a rare interview, Tucker Green herself rejects the connection of her work to in-yer-face plays, saying: "I just don't see it. I think it says more about critics' reference points than my work" (qtd. in Sierz). Although accepting the influence of Caryl Churchill and her overlapping dialogue technique on her work, she claims that her main influences come from black performance, music, and poetry such as African American "urban music of singers" Lauryn Hill and Jill Scott, the Jamaican poet Louise Bennett, and the African American playwright and poet Ntozake Shange (Goddard, *Fifty Modern and Contemporary Dramatists* 221). Tucker Green explains that her plays start with "a voice in her head that won't go away, and grow into scraps of writing that she then fits together" (Gardner). She also tells journalist and theatre critic Lyn Gardner that "I never set out to write plays […]. I was just messing about writing stuff down […]. I didn't know it was a poem, the lyrics to a song or a play. It is all much of a muchness to me. It's all words, ain't it?" ("I was messing"). Thus, as she is inspired by different genres, her playwriting can be regarded as a style of writing that eliminates the borders between theatre, music, and poetry (Goddard, *Modern British Playwriting* 191).

Tucker Green's writing is characterised by repetitions, silences, overlapping dialogues, and unfinished, fragmented sentences. She uses full stops, hyphens, and italics to point out the overlaps and interruptions in the dialogues. Moreover, the characters' untold intentions and sentences are given in brackets. Along with her purposeful use of punctuation, Tucker Green also uses patois in her plays. The language she uses is not Standard English and it is ungrammatical. Osborne claims that Tucker Green's language "attack[s] and counter-attack[s] the bounds of syntax" ("Resisting" 161). Moreover, in her plays, the characters' names are sometimes written without dialogue, which she calls "active silences" that capture the tension between the characters. Her use of non-grammatical language, repetition, silences, and rhyme, together with her focus on punctuation, make her language poetic and rhythmical. Therefore, Osborne refers to her work as "dramatic-poetics" ("Resisting" 161), and Elaine Aston suggests that Tucker Green's plays are a "metissage" of poetry and theatre ("Debbie Tucker Green" 183). In

addition to making her language lyrical, Tucker Green's distinctive style of rhythmical, repetitious, and sparse dialogue captures the rhythm of real speech (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 196). Tucker Green also states that her language is similar to "how people speak. Listen to a group of kids – just repeat and repeat and repeat [and] you've got half a page of dialogue" (qtd. in Sierz). In a similar vein, the plot structure of her plays is generally fragmented. Her plays mostly comprise discontinuous scenes that join together in the end. In these fragmented scenes, there are certain moments which give a clue about the story without explaining it fully, and these moments reveal the main concerns of the play (Pearce, *Black British Theatre* 287). Additionally, the characters in most of her plays do not have proper names; they are instead identified by their roles in the family such as "Mum" or "Wife." Their biographical background is also missing. The characters are described by their relationships, in place of being recognised as autonomous individuals (Abram 117). The issues that are explored in these plays are presented through conflicting familial relationships between the characters.

In her plays, Tucker Green does not highlight identity politics, diaspora, dislocation or emigration, as the first-generation black playwrights such as Mustapha Matura did. Nor does she examine the relationship between the first and second generation, like Winsome Pinnock did. She is also different from her contemporaries, like Kwame Kwei-Armah and Roy Williams, in the sense that she is not concerned with black masculinity or gang warfare. Debbie Tucker Green, too, deals with violence, alongside trauma, in her plays; however, the type of violence that she tackles is different from the types of violence that Kwei-Armah and Williams explore in their dramatic works. Joseph de Rivera divides violence into four categories: personal violence including family violence, rape, and bullying stemming from personal conflicts; community violence that consists of riots and gang warfare; societal violence which includes media violence, civil war, and ethnic violence; and lastly, structural violence, which is an indirect form of violence resulting from the social and economic inequalities in society (574). Hence, while Kwei-Armah and Williams are, for instance, concerned with community violence, Tucker Green foregrounds personal violence and explores difficult

situations, local and global horrors that black people experience not only in the UK but also in Africa and the Caribbean.

Her debut play, *Dirty Butterfly* (2003), depicts the character Jo who is exposed to domestic abuse by her cruel husband on a nightly basis. Even though her black neighbours Amelia and Jason overhear what Jo undergoes next door, they do not intervene or help Jo out of this situation. On the contrary, while Amelia refuses to help and is bothered by the sounds of violence coming from Jo's bedroom, Jason is intrigued and addicted to listening to the domestic abuse of his neighbour.

In her next play, *Born Bad* (2003), this time Tucker Green examines a woman's traumatic experience of incest. The play tells the story of a "blood-related black family" (*Born Bad* 2) – a Dad, a Mum, their daughter Dawta, Brother and Sister 1 and Sister 2. Dawta confronts her family about her being sexually abused by her father, and she learns that her mother made a choice and chose her to be the object of the father's sexual abuse because she was "born bad." It is also revealed later that the Brother is also abused by the father, and when he tells this to his Mum, she "cries oddly, silently" (*Born Bad* 49). In both of these plays, the writer draws attention to the fact that these traumatic situations can continue if the witnesses refuse to intervene.

As regards *Trade* (2004), her next play, this presents a multi-layered exploration of the issue of female sex tourism in the Caribbean. It addresses the dynamics between three women – Local, Regular, and Novice – in terms of the human rights of local people who live in the Caribbean holiday destinations and the sexual rights of Western people who go to these places on holiday. Local is a black woman who lives in an unspecified Caribbean holiday destination and who earns money by braiding the hair of Western women who are there for a holiday. Regular is a Western white woman who regularly comes to the island as a sex tourist, and Novice is another free-spirited female white sex tourist coming to the island for the first time. It is then revealed that Regular and Novice

have a sexual relationship with Local's husband who is involved in this situation for economic reasons. Although the play includes other characters such as hotel dwellers, Local's husband, and an American tourist, the story unfolds through the perspectives of the three women characters and shows their constant rivalry, at the same time raising questions about "(s)exploitation" (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 188).

In *Stoning Mary* (2005), Tucker Green focuses on global issues, analysing important topical issues such as child soldiers, AIDS, and death by stoning, which are mostly associated with sub-Saharan Africa. Even though these issues concern Africa, the writer remarks, at the beginning of the play, that "all the characters are white [and] [t]he play is set in the country it is performed in" (Tucker Green, *Stoning Mary* 2), which implies that she aims to make her audience/reader question what they would do if the same problems were happening in their own country. The play contains three ostensibly disconnected storylines that come together in the very end. The first storyline depicts a couple with AIDS, Husband and Wife, discussing who will take the only drug that they can afford to treat their illness. These two characters' inner thoughts and feelings are also verbalised by two Ego characters. The second story relates the argument between Mum and Dad whose son is taken as a child soldier. Lastly, the third storyline focuses on Mary who is sentenced to death by stoning because of a murder she committed. The connection between the three storylines is revealed at the close of the play: Mary is sentenced to death as she killed the child solider who is Mum and Dad's son, and she killed him because he had murdered her parents, Husband and Wife.

Tucker Green continues to examine the AIDS crisis in Africa in *Generations* (2005), which was produced in the same year as *Stoning Mary*. The play portrays three generations of a South African family that is children, parents and grandparents, who discuss who can cook the best. This family scene is repeated five times, but at the end of each scene, a family member, starting with the young ones, dies of poverty or AIDS, their cause of death not being explicitly mentioned. At the end of the play, only Grandad and Grandma remain and lament over the family members that they lost.

Apart from concentrating on the global problems that black people, in Africa and the Caribbean, experience, Tucker Green also problematises teenage knife crime in London, which is a social issue. Her play *Random* (2008) can be deemed a reference to the considerable increase in the number of black teenagers who were killed by stabbing in London in 2007 and 2008, turning into a national concern at the time (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 71). The story expresses the grief of a family – Mum, Dad, Brother, and Sister – upon learning that their son is randomly killed as a result of an argument that broke out during his lunch break at school. Although the murder scene is not depicted on stage, nor is the reason of the murder explained, Sister's detailed description of the body in a morgue can create an emotional effect and reflect the devastation of the family in the play, which seems to be the main concern of the dramatist.

Tucker Green once again examines global problems in her 2011 play, *Truth and Reconciliation*. The subject matter and the title of this work refer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was founded in 1995 in South Africa, aiming to restore justice after the period of racial segregation in Colonial Africa (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 144). The play connects different locations and times – South Africa 1998, Rwanda 2005, Bosnia 1996, Zimbabwe 2007, and Northern Ireland 1999 – and stories of people who are affected by violence. The story that takes place in South Africa is about a young girl murdered in 1976 and the truth and reconciliation meeting held for the perpetrator and the girl's family in 1998. In Rwanda, a woman encounters the man who murdered her husband, and in Bosnia, a pregnant woman challenges two Serbian soldiers about confronting the man who raped her. The Zimbabwe story includes a man who argues with a woman whom he blames for his wife's death. Lastly, the Northern Ireland story presents a woman who confronts a woman and two men about the actions of her dead son (Angelaki 199-200).

Debbie Tucker Green's next play, *Nut* (2013), is about a young black woman, Elayne, who suffers from mental health issues. The play comprises three acts. In the first act,

Elayne discusses funeral eulogies with her friends, Aimee and Devon; they each state that their funeral will be more elegant. The second act presents a conflict between a divorced couple, Elayne's sister and Tyrone, who argue about Tyrone's right to see their daughter Maya once a week. In the last act, Elayne and her sister discuss Elayne's mental state, which also reveals the relations between the previous acts, and it is understood that the play, in fact, reflects Elayne's inner conflict and the characters are the creation of her imagination (Harpin 127).

Tucker Green's 2015 play, *Hang*, similar to her earlier plays, represents the aftermath of a painful event that is experienced by a black woman. It deals with the ethics of justice system. The play contains three characters, namely One, Two, and Three. Three, a black woman, is invited to a government building to determine the punishment of a person who committed an unidentified crime, traumatising Three and her family. The officials One and Two try to help Three decide how the man will be executed. At the end of the play, the officials give her a letter which is written by the perpetrator. Three sees his photo in the envelope and confronts him. Finally, the play ends when she decides that the perpetrator should be hanged (Reid 390).

In *A Profoundly Affectionate, Passionate Devotion to Someone (-Noun)* (2017), Tucker Green explores the conflicts in the characters' personal relationships. The play presents three couples in three parts and their efforts to communicate. In the first part, a black woman (A) and a man (B) bicker over their marriage life. Part Two depicts the disagreement between an Asian woman and her black boyfriend; Part Three shows the same black man from the second part after several years, but he is now in love with another woman, that is the daughter of the couple in the first part (Rabey 207).

Debbie Tucker Green's most recent play, *Ear for Eye* (2018), also represents three seemingly separate storylines that examine the issues of oppression, racial discrimination, and protesting. The first storyline depicts the confrontation between

black British people and African American people, exploring different reactions to suppression. The second part presents the discussion between a Caucasian professor and an African American student on the motives of mass killing. The last part is about the discrimination laws of the USA and Britain's regulations for Jamaican slaves. The play ends with some of the characters' provocation to protest (Adiseshiah and Bolton 17).

To recap briefly, in her plays, Tucker Green presents controversial issues and global and local human rights problems such as domestic violence, incest, poverty, AIDS, child soldiers, death by stoning, female sex tourism, teenage murder, and sexual and physical abuse concerning black people living in the UK, Africa, and the Caribbean. In an interview, the playwright asserts that she is "interested in normal situations that become dark. [She] find[s] it intriguing; it's all out there. Somebody who beats on his wife might be the nicest workmate you can have" (qtd. in Sierz). Accordingly, Tucker Green focuses mostly on disturbing and traumatic matters about black people. For the writer, people are individually and collectively responsible for the global horrors that black people experience. In her plays, she concentrates on the aftermath of the issues she portrays and her characters' responses to traumatic experiences of violence and abuse, perhaps as an attempt to heighten the Western, or at least British, audiences' awareness of the world events concerning black people. The writer explores dark issues by portraying selfish, individualistic characters that are mostly in conflict. The characters' interpersonal relationships are on the foreground, but the dynamics of their relationship is marked by anger and dispute. The characters are evidently unable to empathise with the pain and grief from which the others suffer. Husbands and wives are always in conflict; women do not support each other; and unfriendly, merciless neighbours refuse to help others who are in difficult situations (Goddard, *Staging Black Feminisms* 187). Therefore, focusing on the characters' psychology and emotional lives, Tucker Green emphasises how selfishness, inaction, and apathy lead to complicity (Goddard, *Fifty Modern and Contemporary Dramatists* 221). To depict the harsh consequences of this complicity, she dramatises the emotional effects of violent and unpleasant events, raising questions about political and personal human rights abuses, instead of analysing the reasons of these problems. Therefore, the reasons and causes of the problems she

examines in her plays remain ambiguous, which is also reflected in the fact that most of her characters do not have specific names. Thus, Tucker Green underlines their responses to the traumatic incidents rather than making a connection between their background and their reactions.

In the light of the above, this thesis examines the effects of the violent and traumatic events that the characters experience in *Stoning Mary* and *Random*, taking into account the concepts of violence, trauma, and loss in a cause and effect relationship. The study underlines that in both plays, the characters experience traumatic loss, which results in different grief reactions. While in *Stoning Mary* traumatic loss leads to physical and verbal violence, in *Random* physical violence causes traumatic loss producing emotional responses like avoidance, anger, and numbness. The relationship between the concepts within the context of this study will be examined with reference to the studies of several psychologists and critics. First of all, people's attachment to one another and the effect of losing an attached figure on their lives will be explored through John Bowlby's Attachment Theory. Margaret Stroebe et al. and Bonnie Green's studies will be helpful in explaining how a loss can be traumatic for those experiencing it by focusing on the nature of the relationship with the lost person, as well as the nature of the death. They argue that loss becomes traumatic if it is unexpected and violent, which can be exemplified in the plays analysed. This thesis also suggests that traumatic loss leads to different grief responses such as anger, numbing, violence, and denial. These various responses are underlined in the analysis of the plays. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler's *On Grief and Grieving*, the studies of Holly G. Prigerson et al., and Bowlby's theory are used in the analysis of in *Stoning Mary*; Gordon Riches and Pam Dawson, Ann Wolbert Burgess, Amick- McMullan, and Colin Murray Parkes are additionally referred to in the examination of *Random*. In addition, Professor Cathy Caruth is referred to while exploring the issue of trauma. Caruth concentrates on traumatic memory, the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and the role witnessing in the process of healing from trauma. Yet this thesis only refers to her statements about how a traumatic event cannot be grasped when the event is happening and cannot be narrated because of its overwhelming nature. The connection between

violence and traumatic loss is also discussed in this study. In *Stoning Mary*, physical violence in the name of revenge is associated with traumatic loss in the light of Felicity de Zulueta and Celia Harding's ideas, while verbal violence is examined through Nirit Karni-Vizer and Ofra Walter's views, together with those of Patricia Evans. Furthermore, in *Random*, the symbolic meaning of physical violence that cause the family's bereavement in the play is explored in the light of James Gilligan and Jack Katz's arguments.

CHAPTER I

VIOLENCE AS A REACTION TO TRAUMATIC LOSS IN *STONING MARY*

Stoning Mary was first performed on 1 April 2005 in Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs in London. Directed by British director Marianne Elliot, the play made Debbie Tucker Green the first female black British writer to have a play premiered in the Royal Court Theatre's main stage (Pearce, *Black British Drama* 192). Since its opening, the production has also been performed in several other countries such as Australia, Spain, Canada, and Germany, and it became Tucker Green's most performed play (Fragkou and Goddard 149).

The play comprises sixteen scenes and presents three seemingly unrelated stories about significant issues such as AIDS, execution by stoning, and child soldiers which are indicated in the title of each storyline: "The AIDS Genocide. The Prescription," "The Child Soldier," and "Stoning Mary." The first story portrays Husband and Wife who constantly argue over an AIDS prescription because they can afford only one prescription. It is not mentioned in the dialogues that the couple has AIDS; however, the title points out that they are discussing their treatment of AIDS. Both of the characters, whose inner thoughts and feelings are verbalised by their Ego characters in the play, try to convince each other that they need the medication more. Similarly, Older Sister and her boyfriend also argue over an AIDS medication towards the end of the play, showing that the problem of AIDS will continue to affect people's health, as well as pointing to the cyclical nature of the plot. In the second story, Dad and Mum recall the memories of their son who is abducted to be trained as a child soldier, and they quarrel about whom their son loved more and who should be blamed for his being kidnapped. Lastly, in the third storyline, Older Sister visits her younger sister, Mary – the eponymous character of the play – in prison, as she is sentenced to death because of a murder she committed. The connection between the three narratives is revealed as the play progresses. Towards the end of the play, it is understood that Mary is going to be stoned since she killed the Child Soldier, who is Mum and Dad's son, for murdering her parents, Husband and

Wife. The play ends when the Child Soldier's Mum takes the first stone in order to throw it at Mary.

Critics such as Lynette Goddard and Deirdre Osborne associate the above issues tackled in the play with African countries. Although there are no cultural indicators specific to African cultures in the play, it can be stated that these issues are primarily observed in Africa. In his 2000 London Commonwealth Lecture, Kofi Annan claims that AIDS caused a significant number of deaths in sub-Saharan Africa, saying, "AIDS killed far more people than all the region's conflicts combined" (Annan, "Africa: Maintaining the Momentum"). He furthermore underlines that 36 million people are suffering from HIV in the world, and 23 million of these are in sub-Saharan Africa (Annan, "Africa: Maintaining the Momentum"). This number increased to 25.7 million according to the World Health Organization's statistics in 2019. It is suggested in their report that sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the country most affected by the disease (*World Health Statistics 2019* 24). Of the 25.7 million people with HIV, 20.3 million are in Eastern and Southern Africa, while the remaining 5.4 million are in West and Central Africa. Additionally, about 81% of these people are aware that they are contracted with the disease, which is important in seeking and having access to the treatment of HIV. However, not every person in Africa has access to treatment services. Only 64% of Africans with HIV have the opportunity to benefit from antiretroviral therapy, and this situation caused 470.000 African people's death in 2018 ("HIV/AIDS").

Another problem that Africa faces is children who are employed in militia. UNICEF defines these child soldiers as follows:

> Any person under eighteen years of age who is part of any kind of armed force in any capacity, including cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups. Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriages are included in this definition. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms. (qtd. in Zisler 254)

Most of the children who live in countries where children are employed as soldiers are kidnapped and forced to serve in armed forces without their parents' permission or knowledge. After they are taken, these child soldiers are trained brutally and mostly asked to kill a member of their community or family in order to desensitise them to violence and change their understanding of morality so that they can commit violent crimes without hesitation (Zisler 254-55). Moreover, depending on their gender and age, child soldiers are given different tasks as guards, spies, sex slaves, porters, and fighters. Michael G. Wessells explains that children who work as combatants fight in the front line in battle while children who are used as spies collect information. In addition, they are sometimes involved in kidnapping and guarding captives. They are also used for other risky jobs such as setting traps and mines as well as clearing minefields. Girls are often raped and used as sex slaves besides cooking meals and carrying supplies (6). Children who are employed in armed groups can be found in many countries such as the United States, China, Afghanistan, South Korea, Mexico, and Iraq; however, child soldiers are most extensively used in wars and struggles in African countries. Most of African countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Liberia, Sudan, and Mozambique involve a significant number of child soldiers in their armies (Zisler 254). For example, in one of Africa's most pressing conflicts, which occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the army recruited approximately 10.000 children, under the age of 16, mostly as combatants in the war that started in 1996. About 40 per cent of these children were girls, and they were considered to be the fighters' property. In 2007, the national army of the country still included girls who were exploited by the members of the army (Hartjen and Priyadarsini 105).

There are significant international and national agreements, protocols, and treaties that aim to prevent and prohibit employing children in armed services. Some of these international agreements are the Geneva Convention (1949) and its Protocol II (1977), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), the International Labour Organization Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182 (1999), and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on

the Rights of the Child (UN 2002) (Hartjen and Priyadarsini 99). In addition, Africa also has regional agreements to ban the employment of children as soldiers. These include the Organization of African Union Resolution on the Plight of African Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (1996), the Cape-town Principles (1997), Montevideo (Uruguay) Declaration on the Use of Child Soldiers (1999), and Maputo (Mozambique) Declaration on the Use of Child Soldiers (1999) (Hartjen and Priyadarsini 101). Furthermore, recognising 18 as the standard age, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Organization of African Unity (1999) requires the necessary steps be taken to ensure that children do not participate in armed forces (Hartjen and Priyadarsini 102). Yet, although the purpose of these agreements is to criminalise the use of child soldiers, government armies, paramilitaries, and other rebel groups continue to recruit children since, as Wessells argues, using them as soldiers is cheap and advantageous. To be more specific, children are always abundant in number, and those who exploit children often succeed in concealing their actions from the attention of international organisations that regard employing child soldiers as a crime (2). Thus, these laws do not deter countries from using children in armed services.

The title of the third storyline of the play indicates that Mary will be executed by stoning because of murdering a child soldier. This stoning practice is, in fact, one of the punishment types of Sharia laws of the Muslim religion. Sharia laws are based on the religious doctrines of Islam, and they encourage people to live their lives in accordance with these precepts and God's will (Anyanwu 316). If people do not follow these doctrines, they secure the justice by applying strict corporal punishments such as amputation, canning, lashing, and death by stoning for different crimes, like stealing, adultery, and homicide (Ogbu 179). Sharia laws are implemented by some African countries, too. As a case in point, almost half of the population in Nigeria is Muslim, and starting with the Zamfara state in 1999, the twelve northern states of Nigeria introduced Islamic criminal laws to regulate their justice system (Weimann 246). Therefore, among other punishments, executing criminals by stoning can be observed in Nigeria, too. People are generally sentenced to death by stoning if they commit homicide or adultery; however, it can be asserted that it is more often used for married

women who commit adultery. This degrading punishment is performed by constantly throwing stones at the person until he/she dies (Ogbu 180). In the play, although the character does not have a relationship outside marriage, she is sentenced to death by stoning because of homicide.

The issues that are dealt with in the play are crucial problems that African people experience. However, while these issues can be related to Africa, Debbie Tucker Green mentions at the beginning of the play that "the play is set in the country it is performed in," and "all characters are white" (2). Therefore, the writer apparently aims to create empathy by bringing African concerns to the countries where the play is performed and telling her story with white characters. In an interview with the former artistic associate of the Royal Court Theatre Emily McLaughlin, Tucker Green states that

> [t]he play isn't a documentary about Africa. There are certain things that are happening in the world and I'm intrigued by what isn't being talked about, what falls out of the news, what isn't in the news. […] It seems a bit blatant to me that some things are off the radar, there's an invisible news agenda. […] I'm not going to dictate what the audience should think, but the play is flipped for a reason, the people are white for a reason, it is set over here for a reason. I'm just asking 'what if'? (qtd. in Goddard, *Modern British Playwriting* 201)

Hence, in *Stoning Mary*, Tucker Green does not aim to lecture the audience/reader about the problems that black people experience in African countries. Instead, by employing white characters, she tries to draw attention to these problems and make their unheard stories heard because she thinks that these issues are not discussed sufficiently in the media. As McLaughlin puts it, *Stoning Mary* "encourages us to explore what our feelings and reactions would be if white people were dying of AIDS in the same numbers as black Africans" (qtd. in Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 127). In a similar vein, Marianne Elliott, the director of the play, identifies *Stoning Mary* as a "state-of-the-nation" play since it concerns "selfishness and inability to touch each other" (qtd. in Fragkou and Goddard 150). Elliott also interprets people's lack of empathy towards the problems that black people experience in other countries as follows: "[w]hen things happen in a different continent like Africa, we're not

particularly bothered about [them] because we find it very difficult to imagine what their world is, it feels so far away from us that a lot of the time we're not very active in helping" (qtd. in Fragkou and Goddard 150).

For Tucker Green, the inability to respond to the issues that happen in Africa results from the media's prioritisation of particular matters while silencing others that do not concern the West. Tucker Green questions this lack of care and response towards black people's conflicts as she articulates in her interview with Lyn Gardner:

> I'm a black woman […] I write black characters. That is part of my landscape. But with *Stoning Mary*, I was interested in questioning what we don't see and hear. The stories of people who would be in the headlines every day if what was happening to them was happening to white people. It happens all the time. Look at Rwanda. It just fell out of the news. Or Zimbabwe. We're always hearing what is happening to the white farmers, but what about the black political activists who are also being killed? Where are the news stories about them? ("I was messing")

Similar to the playwright's opinions, in his London Commonwealth lecture, Kofi Annan, too, asserts that "[s]ome of these conflicts [in Africa] have completely vanished from the headlines and news bulletins in more fortunate parts of the world" (Annan, "Africa: Maintaining the Momentum"). He emphasises that all necessary measures should be taken to help African people overcome their ongoing problems (Annan, "Africa: Maintaining the Momentum"). Likewise, in his speech in January 2005 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Tony Blair argues that "if what was happening in Africa today was happening in any other part of the world, there would be such a scandal and clamour that governments would be falling over themselves to act in response" (qtd. in Goddard, *Modern British Playwriting* 201). On the other hand, referring to developed countries, Judith Butler claims that lives of certain people are more precious, and their claims are thus sufficient even to start wars, while other people, mostly in developing countries, are not supported the same, and their lives are not even considered worth to grieve (*Precarious Life: The Powers* 32). Consequently, for Butler, it is not surprising that although few people's deaths from AIDS are grieved

publicly, the great majority of losses because of AIDS in Africa are not generally mentioned in the media showing that their lives are unremarkable and "ungrievable" (*Precarious Life: The Powers* 35). Thus, biased news stories and media coverage show that although it is actually known that people living in Africa experience difficulties, it becomes easy to ignore or desensitise to their problems since they are unlikely to happen in the West. Goddard argues that Tucker Green's play emphasises the fact that it is essential to realise these issues since the media depicts these problems as remote concerns that occur "over there," which causes Western people to become indifferent. Hence, *Stoning Mary* not only encourages the Western audience/reader to consider how they would feel if they experienced the same problems in their own country, but it also underlines that people are unable to react to crises which do not bother themselves (*Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 127).

Explaining why people should feel responsible for others' suffering in other countries, Butler argues, in her article "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," that people feel responsible for distant problems when these problems are presented by the media because people are social beings who depend on each other and share the world. The reason for this situation is our "unwilled proximity and unchosen cohabitation" (145) resulting "from our social existence as bodily beings who depend upon one another for shelter and sustenance and who, therefore, are at risk of statelessness, homelessness, and destitution under unjust and unequal political conditions" (148). Martin Riedelsheimer and Korbinian Stöckl also claim that human beings are dependent on and exposed to certain social, natural, and political circumstances; thus, their vulnerability to these alterable conditions compel them to help other people with whom they inhabit the earth. For all that every culture has its own values; there are some basic requirements such as health, food, shelter, and protection from injury, which every human need. Accordingly, in *Stoning Mary*, in which Tucker Green treats global issues, her main aim is to underline the idea of a shared world and common humanity. In the play, she depicts black people's problems as universal issues and identifies blacks' rights as human rights, which shows that cultural differences should not eliminate universal rights that people have in common as

humans (Riedelsheimer and Stöckl 115-16). By moving these distant concerns to a more local context, *Stoning Mary* encourages the British, European, audience/reader to become more familiarised with Africans' suffering and think or act in response because of our interdependence. It also highlights the fact that skin colour and geography should not affect how people respond to the suffering of others. Therefore, by bringing these problems into the comfort zone of westerners, *Stoning Mary* invites global solidarity (Riedelsheimer and Stöckl 120).

Tucker Green portrays atrocities by focusing on human beings' interdependence and responsibility for one another through her unique aesthetic style. Firstly, she transposes the sufferings in remote Africa to the countries where the play is performed. Ken Urban therefore states that the play forms a "third space that is neither locations and yet both" (*Cruel Britannia* 207). The play does not take place in Africa, but it does not take place in any other specific country, either. Since the setting is not definite, it can make these issues more familiar and relatable for its supposedly white audience and readers who cannot attribute these issues to a precise location.

Also, to remedy people's lack of empathy for the problems of others who live in distant countries, Tucker Green uses white characters in the play. D. Keith Peacock argues that employing white characters produces a Brechtian alienation effect since it enables the audience/reader to interpret the issues and the characters from a perspective which is not prescribed to them. Yet, Peacock also claims that the playwright's purpose of using white characters is not to alienate the audience/reader but to lead them to perceive the problems in their own environment by changing their viewpoint "to generate empathy" (*A Concise Companion* 60). In other words, the white characters' being kidnapped to become child soldiers or being sentenced to death by stoning aims to draw attention to the need for an empathic response. Michael Christopher Pearce asserts that the play raises this question: "how does your relationship to these atrocities change when the victims are white and English?" (*Black British Drama* 194) Hence, representing white people as the victims of atrocities which are mostly associated with African countries

intended to shock and provoke people to react. According to Aleks Sierz, this kind of representation challenges the idea that marginalised people are mostly considered to be black people in Britain, at the same time opposing the belief that Britain is a "safe haven" where such problems do not exist (*Rewriting* 230).

Additionally, the characters in the play do not have proper names. They are named after their roles such as Mum, Dad, Older Sister, and the Child Soldier. Only Mary is an exception. In the play script, her name is given as Younger Sister; however, the Correction Officer addresses her as Mary, like her mother who also refers to her as Mary. Despite the fact that Mary is considered a Western Christian name, it is used in Eastern cultures, too. Different forms of the name exist in different cultures such as "Maria" in Greek and "Maryam" in Aramaic (Murdock 135). Mary is thought to originate from Hebrew "Miriam," which is also the name of Moses's sister in Egyptian culture (Murdock 135). Therefore, one may assert that the only proper name used in the play is also a common name, versions of which can be found in both Western and Eastern cultures. Giving the characters common names, and a name like Mary difficult to associate with a single culture, contributes to the idea that these problems can be experienced by anyone living anywhere (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 127). Instead of using names that indicate a specific culture, the writer chooses names, be they common or proper, which can make it easier for the audience/reader to identify with the issues presented in the play. Thus, the focus is not on the characters' culture but on their dialogues and rather universal problems.

Furthermore, according to Osborne, the titles of the scenes projected onto the stage during the production of the play create a distancing effect ("debbie tucker green and Dona Daley" 43). Victoria Segal explains the impact of the projected titles as "immediate and intimate, a headline you cannot look away from, human emotion spilling out from behind the flat, stark words" ("stoning mary review"). The titles reveal the characters' problems which are not explicitly mentioned or explained in the dialogues. Therefore, Nicola Abram states that the titles are "provocative juxtaposition

of words" benefiting from "what remains unsaid" (119). Abram also asserts that the titles prevent the audience from identifying with the characters emotionally, thereby calling for an intellectual rather than an emotional response (119). By specifying the issues in each scene with the titles, which would otherwise remain unexplained, Tucker Green directly indicates the central concern in each scene and its effects on the characters and induces thought.

Besides these devices, human beings' lack of empathy with the problems of those who live in other, less privileged countries is best demonstrated through the relationship between characters. With *Stoning Mary*, Tucker Green underlines the consequences of turning a blind eye to crucial global issues through family dynamics and difficult domestic relations. The characters in each storyline refrain from helping one another, and their reactions to important problems are mostly uncaring and insensitive. Their interactions can be interpreted as a metaphor for how indifference contributes to the continuation of global atrocities (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 129). In the first storyline, Husband and Wife are locked in a desperate fight for the only prescription that they can afford for treatment. Although it is unclear how they first got infected with AIDS, it is evident that both of them need the medication. Since the prescription can save only one of them, they become "the enemy of the other" and try to convince each other that their own life and survival is more important and urgent (Aston, "Feeling the Loss" 589), as seen in the dialogue below:

> HUSBAND: 'But I am fitter'
>
> […]
>
> WIFE: 'I'm younger.'
>
> HUSBAND: 'But I'm stronger.'
>
> […]
>
> WIFE: 'but I'm smarter. I'm smarter. I am.'
>
> […]
>
> HUSBAND: 'I earn more.'
>
> WIFE: 'not enough to cover two.' (27)

Their refusal to give the prescription to each other, by trying to undermine each other, is not a kind of behaviour that is expected from a caring couple. However, it is clear that each character is terrified of the idea that the other one will be the one to survive. Instead of trying to find a solution for both of them, Wife repeatedly states that she is able to look after her husband and their daughters better and thus insists that she has a greater need for the medication. Likewise, Husband claims that his wife looks well and healthy, even though he does not actually believe this.

While they try to persuade each other about the prescription, their real feelings and inner thoughts are revealed by their ego characters, viz. Husband Ego and Wife Ego. They are not willing to explicitly disclose their real feelings to each other; nonetheless, the ego characters verbalise what they really think and feel. Although their inner thoughts indicate that they believe the other one is sick, they try not to show this explicitly in order to have the prescription. The relevant dialogue reads as follows:

> HUSBAND: 'And y' look fine'
>
> HUSBAND EGO: Liar
>
> WIFE EGO: he says.
>
> HUSBAND: 'Y' look well.'
>
> HUSBAND EGO: 'Liar.' (27)

Like their ego characters that externalise their hidden thoughts and feelings, the characters' body language, too, is highly expressive. It reveals the dynamics of their relationship. The ego characters interpret the characters' body language and behaviours, which show that they try to avoid acknowledging each other's problems and to maintain power over another (Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 129), an example of which is as below:

> HUSBAND EGO: She eyes to the skies it – focus on the floors it.
>
> […] Hands in pocket.

> WIFE EGO: hands in pockets doing defiant – doin defiant badly.
>
> […]
>
> WIFE EGO: Face off the floor- look him in the eye.
>
> HUSBAND EGO: Looks me in the eye now, now she thinks she got somethin to say. (4-5)

Husband and Wife are unable to look at each other, nor do they touch each other. They often avoid looking at each other's eyes and instead prefer to stare at the sky or the floor, which points to their refusal to give away their real thoughts. Additionally, as Emmanuel Levinas argues, looking at other people's eyes and faces means acknowledging their humanity; thus, when people refuse to look at one another's faces, they, in fact, refuse to recognise the comprehensibility of human life, and it becomes easy to ignore their problems (199). Moreover, when Husband asks his wife to "put [her] hands on" him (4) to show how scared and nervous he is, Wife refuses to do so. Similarly, Husband also puts his hands in his pocket to avoid touching his wife and feel how she feels. Their refusal to establish a friendly contact creates an emotional distance between the couple and makes it more difficult for them to understand each other's problems (Aston, "Feeling the Loss" 589). Their lack of affection and avoidance of understanding each other clearly demonstrate their fear of the disease and concerns about their own lives. They become selfish when their own lives are at risk because they know that no one, not even their spouses, will protect or take care of them when they are in need.

A similar fight for one life-saving prescription continues in the next generation. Husband and Wife's elder daughter, Older Sister, and her boyfriend experience the same conflict. It is again not clear how they caught the disease, but both of them fight for the prescription, although they claim that it is not a fight. They offer each other to take care of the other one if they receive the medication. In the end, Older Sister succeeds in convincing her boyfriend and takes the prescription. This cycle of arguing over one prescription suggests that the problem of AIDS continues to affect people's health negatively, and infected people who live in underprivileged countries, such as

those in Africa, continue to have difficulties in finding medication since not enough is being done to solve the problem.

The relationship between Mum and Dad in the second storyline is not affectionate, either. Mum and Dad, who lost their son to soldiering, continuously argue about which of them loves and cares about their son more, and if their son loves his mother or father more. They also remember him laughing and playing, and Mum wishes to kiss and hold her son. Here it is seen that their relationship and communication are negatively affected by the absence of their son. Dad persistently blames Mum for losing the child, although Mum clearly states that he is abducted to become a child soldier without their permitting and knowing. Instead of consoling each other in time of distress, they turn their sorrow into accusations.

Moreover, when their child comes back home, Mum describes the changes in her son's behaviour because of the military training he received. She states that her son now "barks his demands and shouts his curses" (51). This type of behaviour scares Mum, and she avoids her son's gaze. However, she does not refuse to look at her child to ignore his problems. She just cannot look at his eyes, being afraid of him. On the other hand, when Mum cannot talk to their child directly and asserts that she "cannot sleep with him in the house" (52) Dad becomes pleased by this situation.

> The Son sniffs.
>
> Dad smirks.
>
> The Son sniffs again.
>
> Son raises the game and sniffs more obviously.
>
> Mum shifts. Uncomfortable.
>
> Dad watches her, amused.
>
> DAD: You alright? … Love. (57)

The above scene shows that the son deliberately continues to sniff, which makes his mother uncomfortable. Seeing this, instead of helping his wife, Dad enjoys Mum's unease and inability to communicate with her son. Otherwise stated, even though their son returns home from soldiering, the conflicts in their relationship are not resolved.

Another striking example of lack of care and selfish attitude towards others is seen when Older Sister visits Mary in the Correction Office as she awaits her execution. Although she knows that Mary will soon be stoned or brutally killed, she scolds her sister by focusing on unimportant matters. She criticises Mary because she quit smoking and resents her for Mary's glasses, saying that she, too, needs glasses, but no one cares. Furthermore, she does not listen to her sister when she says that "they will shave [her] head" (60) for the execution, and instead continues to talk about her sister's glasses (60). She expresses that Mary receives more attention, even though she also has similar problems. In short, the nature of the sisters' interpersonal relationship is conveyed by Older Sister's concerns about insignificant issues that contrast with the seriousness of Mary's impending execution (Goddard, *Staging* 188).

Additionally, from the perspective of Mary, she cannot find the support that she expects from people other than her sister, either. Mary wants her sister's help to prepare a petition and ask any volunteers to sign it so that she can gain a reprieve from the execution or even be rescued. However, Older Sister brings the unpleasant news that only twelve people signed their petition, whereas they need 6000 signatures. When she learns that almost nobody is willing to help her escape the death penalty, she harshly criticises the women who fail to stand up for her:

> YOUNG SISTER: So what happened to the womanist bitches?
>
> […] the feminist bitches?
>
> […] the professional bitches.
>
> What happened to them?
>
> What about the burn their bra bitches?

> […] the black […] white [...] brown […] underclass […] overclass […] political […] bitches that love to march […] study […] debate […] curse […] educated […] bitches that can read […] count […] Pretty bitches.
>
> Not one of them would march for me? […]
>
> Not a one a them would sign for me? (61-63)

In her speech, Mary highlights the lack of solidarity and unity among women. She expected them to support her, but she got bitterly disappointed. Ken Urban interprets the repetitive use of the word "bitches" here as a reproof of those women who do not react to Mary's punishment (Urban, "Cruel Britannia" 53). Furthermore, Goddard considers Mary's speech as an example that Western people do not act in a responsible way when it comes to the predicaments of African people (*Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 131). However, the women's communities that Mary mentions in her speech are quite diverse, and she refers to women from different ethnic, social, racial, and economic backgrounds. The ethnicity of the twelve people who signed her petition is not clear, either. Therefore, it may be misleading to hold only Western people responsible for this lack of response. Instead of Western people's inability to react, this speech can thus be related to Butler's idea of people's interdependence under certain circumstances. Mary needed the help of the community on which she depended when her life was at risk, but she could not receive the support she looked for, which made her furious.

The characters' failure to care for each other is also portrayed through their failure to communicate verbally. Alexandra Coghlan describes the language that Tucker Green uses as "in its death-throes, contorting, writhing and twisting every which-way" in order not to constrain the meaning ("Review of *Stoning Mary*"). The characters' speech contains unfinished and fragmented sentences as well as repetitions. Furthermore, they often speak simultaneously and do not listen to one another properly. Thus, Tucker

Green's use of overlapping dialogue, which is indicated by a slash in the text, represents the characters' inability to listen to one another's problems.

Besides the characters' simultaneous speech, their communication is also interrupted by active silences between the characters, which is one of the prominent features of Tucker Green's plays. The characters' names followed by no dialogue show that they remain silent. Moreover, these silences are "active" or meaningful because they suggest opinions which are not shared, or they articulate a "manifestation of offence, a confession of powerlessness, or an act of capitulation" (Abram 121), as the "dialogue" below between Mum and Dad suggests.

> DAD: Run your hands over his number one now.
>
> MUM:
>
> DAD: Put your hands to his head now.
>
> MUM: (35)

Here, Dad tries to make Mum feel guilty about their son's being a soldier. As Mum remains silent in response, it looks justifiable to assert that Mum feels guilty, although she claims that they took the boy from her without her consent. Therefore, the characters' communication fails in two ways: they are unable not only to look at each other – as in the case of Husband, Wife, and Mum and her son – but also to speak to each other. They leave their real thoughts unsaid, and when they speak, they do not listen to each other.

By focusing on the characters' selfish behaviours and failure of communication, as Marissia Fragkou contends, Tucker Green's portrayal of a "moral wasteland," where the characters refrain from helping others or caring about them, serves to display the repercussions of the lack of care and effective response towards global issues happening especially in Africa ("Precarious Subjects" 25). The playwright draws the picture of a

world where people are cruel and attack each other in the times of disease, distress, and trauma. Trish Reid maintains that the lack of empathy between the characters results in cruelty and aggression (392). The characters in Tucker Green's plays are mostly angry people, especially angry women. In *Stoning Mary*, too, the characters' response to traumatic events is generally anger. Particularly, when they lose the attachment figures in their lives traumatically, their aggressive reaction is expressed in the form of verbal violence and homicide, as seen in the examples of Mum, Dad, and Mary.

Losing an attachment figure, a highly distressing experience, can cause trauma. In his Attachment Theory, English psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1907-1990) explains a person's attachment behaviour to another one as "any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual" (*Sadness* 39). In Bowlby's view, this attachment behaviour starts in childhood between parent and child, and it continues in adulthood as a relationship between adult and adult. The attachment behaviour and the bonds it forms continue throughout the person's life, and developing healthy attachments provides self-sufficiency, autonomy, and a sense of protection in later relationships (*Sadness* 39). Bowlby further argues that this type of behaviour is a typical feature of various species, including animals and human beings, and it prompts affectional relations and attachments between people. It provides individuals proximity with their attached figures or caregivers and thereby contributes to their survival because interacting with the attached person lowers the risk of being hurt. This caregiving resulting from the attachment behaviour is usually shown by parents towards their children as well as by an adult towards another adult in difficult times such as illness. Thus, human beings instinctively develop attachments to certain individuals in order to cope with the world better with the help of the attached figure's caregiving. The goal of this attachment behaviour is also to maintain the affectional bond and relationship. Hence, when this attachment is disrupted by separation with the attached or by death, people tend to struggle to restore the relationship. If there is a threat of loss, then they try to prevent it and preserve the relationship. However, when they experience an actual loss, the attachment behaviour remains, but having no chance to restore the bond leads to grief,

sorrow, and even trauma if the relationship is very significant in the life of the person who experiences the loss (*Sadness* 39-40).

The severity of the effect of a loss on an individual can change depending on the nature of the relationship between the bereaved person and the person who is lost. Neria and Litz argue that losing a family member, a child or a close friend may cause a more serious depression than the loss of an acquaintance. Put differently, the importance of the relationship that is lost to the bereaved person can intensify the depression and grief that they experience. Losing a loved one results in an unfulfilled sense of attachment. The loss of the object of the sense of attachment leads to grief and sorrow, and if the relationship is very significant for the bereaved, the grief can be much deeper (82).

In addition to the nature of the relationship between the person who is lost and the person who experiences the loss, the nature of the loss, too, is significant in the sense that it can make the situation more traumatic. As already pointed out, the attachment figure's death might be quite traumatic for the bereaved. Margaret Stroebe et al. define bereavement as a situation in which a person loses a significant attachment figure through that person's death (188). Bonnie Green explains that this situation can lead to trauma in people's lives. Although it might not be very traumatic for their loved ones if the death is somehow anticipated and expected, certain modes of death may bring about more painful results (8). Thus, the nature of death determines whether or not the bereavement will be traumatic. The term "traumatic bereavement" is used by Stroebe et al. to describe the loss of a person in violent, accidental, and sudden ways (188). Therefore, the death of an important attachment figure can be more traumatic if the death is sudden, unexpected, accidental or premature; if the death is violent and painful such as homicide or suicide; if numerous losses are experienced, or, if it involves the death of a child (Green 8).

Some of these traumatic modes of death can be observed in *Stoning Mary*. There are two types of loss in the play: first, parents lose their child, and second, two sisters lose their parents. Mum and Dad firstly lose their son to soldiering. He is abducted, although Dad insists that his wife has lost him. After their son's brief return to home, Mum and Dad lose their child once again since Mary kills him. On the other hand, Mary and Older Sister also experience a loss because of the Child Soldier. It is not clear why the Child Soldier murders Husband and Wife. Yet Husband's statement that the Child Soldier comes to kill them because it is about "us not being them. Cos we're not them" (40) suggests that the child does not intimidate them for the prescription. Husband's statements, in Maggie Inchley's view, imply a military conflict in the background which is not explained any further (175). Although the reason is ambiguous, the Child Soldier is apparently asked to kill them as a duty. These losses that the characters experience are traumatic losses. Mary and her sister are bereaved of their parents because of homicide. Even though their parents have AIDS, their death is still not anticipated since they do not die of the illness. Moreover, it can be asserted that they die in a violent way. Although it is not depicted how the Child Soldier kills Husband and Wife, it is clear that he immediately instils fear in them, and he is described as holding a machete. The couple offers everything they have to the Child Soldier such as money, food, and finally their prescription about which they non-stop argue. Yet they cannot escape death. Their death is not given or shown, but it is implied by the scene in which the Child Soldier destroys the prescription and tells them to "beg" (41). Additionally, Mum and Dad lose their child because of homicide, too. Besides his unexpected abduction, his death is very premature as he is only a child. Still more, although he takes part in a risky, life-threatening job, he is not killed in a fight or a battle. He becomes the victim of a murder because of Mary's revenge. Thus, the characters who suffer bereavement deal with the trauma of losing their loved ones suddenly and violently.

As mentioned above, traumatic bereavement causes grief because people cannot restore the lost relationship, and the lost person cannot return. Holly G. Prigerson et al. define traumatic grief as a psychological response to the traumatic loss of an important attachment figure (67). This suffering can be externalised in certain ways, although each

individual expresses his or her grief in a unique manner. Bowlby summarises the four phases of traumatic grief as numbing, yearning, disorganisation, and reorganisation (*Sadness* 85). Prigerson also explains the symptoms of grief due to traumatic bereavement as disbelief, avoidance, shock, numbness, anger, and a sense of futility about the future (67). Similarly, in *On Grief and Grieving*, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler identify five symptoms of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Even though the terms they use are different, these critics identify similar symptoms of grief due to traumatic bereavement.

To expand on these reactions, first of all, when people lose someone significant, they may not fully register that person's death and may be in denial. It can be difficult to accept the fact that the person will not return, and life will not be the same. This situation can lead to intense emotion expressed in various ways. One can feel shocked and stunned by the death, as well as angry. Bowlby argues that anger is not always necessarily reasonable. It is mostly aroused because people do not believe that the loss is permanent. Thus, they continue to behave as if there is still a possibility to recover the attachment; when they understand that this search for recovery is futile, they are likely to feel angry (*Separation* 247). Moreover, their anger can be directed towards different people because of different reasons. People may become angry with themselves because they could not prevent the death from happening; they can even be angry with the lost person for not taking care of himself/herself better. Their anger can be aimed at the perpetrator of the death, or anyone who has a part in causing the bereavement and obstructing the recovery of the attached relationship (Kübler-Ross and Kessler 33). Additionally, in Prigerson's mind, if the bereaved person can register the reality of the loss, he/she can, in the next stage, yearn for the lost person. The bereaved can be constantly preoccupied with the thoughts of the deceased person and go back to memories. Furthermore, when the object of the attachment is missing, the unfulfilled sense of attachment can also lead to a shattered sense of security and loneliness because the bereavement means losing someone who supports and protects the bereaved person (70). People may also feel depressed and frustrated since they need to adjust to their new lives without the attached person. They may feel empty about life and the future

and want to detach themselves from life. After feeling dazed about the death, or becoming angry; longing for the lost person, or feeling despair and meaninglessness, the bereaved ones come to a phase where they start realising that this is the new reality and finally accept it (Bowlby, *Sadness* 93). In this acceptance phase, they try to reshape their life and change their old way of living in order to adjust the new permanent reality. Kübler-Ross and Kessler claim that everyone may not undergo all of these stages, or each stage in this order, but that these are the most common expressions of grief due to the loss of an attachment figure (27).

Although not all of these traumatic grief symptoms can be observed in *Stoning Mary*, longing for the lost person and anger, which is manifested in the form of violence, can still be found in the play as two forms of expressions of grief. Psychotherapist Felicity de Zulueta defines violence in this context as "a manifestation of human rage due to a disrupted attachment system" (223). She argues that violence and traumatic grief are closely related, and individuals' tendency towards violence can result from the psychological trauma of loss that they experience (211). She claims that people may become violently angry as a result of a "man-made disaster" (206). Similar to Kübler-Ross, Zulueta, too, asserts that if they experience this traumatic event because of a person, they are likely to behave violently towards the person who caused their trauma or anybody who played a part because of negligence (206). In line with this, the response of the characters who experience a loss in *Stoning Mary* is usually physical or verbal violence towards the people who they think are responsible for the bereavement. Only Mum and Dad yearn for their child when they lose him to soldiering. However, they also react violently to the traumatic death of their son. Husband and Wife do not experience an actual loss. There is only a threat of losing their spouses, but they are killed together. Moreover, there is a threat of loss in Older Sister's life as well. Her younger sister Mary is depicted as awaiting her execution, but Older Sister is indifferent to her pending death. In addition, Older Sister also loses her parents; however, her instant reaction to the loss is not depicted. Unlike her sister, Mary's response to the loss of her parents is violence towards the Child Soldier who caused her bereavement.

Even though the characters' common response to loss is violence, *Stoning Mary* does not show the audience/reader physically violent actions. These can be anticipated through certain images. For example, Husband and Wife's death is implied by the Child Soldier's destroying of the prescription and saying, "beg" (41). The soldier first appears in scene five with Husband and Wife, holding a "bloodied machete" (30), which points to the probability that he killed another person before coming to the house of the couple who are about to be his next victims. Seeing him with his machete, Husband and Wife are shocked and scared. Together with the destruction of the prescription, these two scenes evoke the feeling that the Child Soldier is going to kill them, though the action of killing is not displayed. Mary's awaiting execution actually confirms that her parents are dead; it also reveals that the Child Soldier, too, is dead, as flatly expressed in a dialogue between the two sisters as well:

> OLDER SISTER: You killed a man who was a boy.
>
> YOUNGER SISTER: That *boy* was a soldier.
>
> OLDER SISTER: That soldier was a child –
>
> YOUNGER SISTER: That *child* killed my parents. *Our* parents. (63)

The dialogue also discloses that the Child Soldier's murderer is Mary, though there is no information about how she kills him. Likewise, Mary's death is only anticipated, not shown. She prepares the audience/reader for her execution with her description of the oncoming process:

> YOUNGER SISTER: they'll shave my head.
>
> […]
>
> then strip me down
>
> […]
>
> then lead me out. (60)

This description increases the tension as her tragic end approaches. Finally, in the last scene, Mary's hair is shaved by the Correction Officers, and the play ends with "Mum

pick[ing] up her first stone" (73), without showing the rest or the brutality of Mary's stoning. In short, physical violence is conveyed through dialogues, descriptions, and certain images, which is similar to the use of verbal violence in the play.

One of the characters who uses verbal violence is Older Sister. She first appears in the play, following her parents' death, when she visits her sister in prison. She is depicted as an aggressive woman. Though it is difficult to relate her aggressive behaviour directly to the tragic loss of her parents, it can be argued that she verbally abuses her sister Mary. As mentioned above, anger, which can be externalised in the form of violence, is a common response to the loss of a loved one, and people can direct their violent behaviour to various people such as the person who is responsible for the loss, the lost person or themselves for failing to protect the lost figure. Nevertheless, Older Sister targets her violent behaviour to her sister despite the fact that she will lose her, too. In this sense, she experiences a threat of loss, as her sister Mary will be stoned to death. However, she does not try to protect her sister or her attachment to Mary. For all that she helps Mary collect signatures to save her from stoning; Older Sister does not do anything else. She visits her in prison when the officers ask her to do so, without knowing that this is Mary's last wish before the execution.

> OLDER SISTER: Somethin fuckin fizzy to slowly fuck me up is what I'd ask for as my lass requess – thass my requess, would be my last request… if I was you.
>
> So what is it you said to them you want as yourn?
>
> YOUNGER SISTER: You. To come. (57)

Mary also asks her sister to come to the stoning; she wants her sister to be there with and for her. Yet, even if she promises to come, she does not do so. While perhaps she does not want to watch Mary being stoned, this looks like a weak possibility given the fact that she is, in general, indifferent to her sister as she waits for her death.

Besides her indifference, Older Sister's aggressive behaviour towards Mary can be regarded as verbal violence because she continually tries to hurt Mary psychologically. Nirit Karni-Vizer and Ofra Walter describe verbal violence as a type of violence that causes psychological and emotional harm to people through verbal attacks, the effects of which may be difficult to detect, for they do not leave any physical mark. Karni-Vizer and Walter claim that verbal violence can be inflicted through shouting, using pejorative language, mocking, swearing, insulting, blaming, threatening and criticising (315). Verbal violence can be targeted to a person in diverse areas and ways, which affect everyone differently. It can be directed to the person's physical appearance, a disability, sexual orientation or family background in order to generate negative feelings and attack their self-esteem (Karni-Vizer and Walter 316). In line with this, Older Sister targets her violence to Mary's physical appearance. When she visits Mary in prison, she ridicules her new glasses. Using derogative words, she intentionally tries to insult Mary and make her feel bad about how the glasses look on her:

> OLDER SISTER: […] they look fuckin horrible.
> Look like you got a problem-
> […] bit on the retardative […]. (45)

She states that Mary looks retarded when she wears her glasses. So, through the glasses that she denigrates, Older Sister also belittles Mary's intelligence (Kaya). Furthermore, she not only criticises Mary about her glasses but also taunts her saying that she herself needs glasses more because "[her eyes] could be worse – worse'n yourn – you lucky" (45). She becomes jealous and angry because Mary takes care of herself, while she, Older Sister, fights with AIDS. Older Sister also scolds Mary about quitting smoking, too. She claims that she started smoking because Mary encouraged her to do so; thus, she does not accept the fact that Mary quits smoking and berates her about it.

> OLDER SISTER: So you aint in no position to quit. You don't get the say so to say you've stopped. You don't got the right – you lost the right- you lost that right when you started me startin. (48)

Moreover, Mary wants to draw attention to the fact that they will shave her head and take her to the place where a crowd will watch her being stoned; nevertheless, Older Sister focuses on different, insignificant matters like Mary's hair and glasses. So, Older Sister worries about trivial and daily issues, rather than her sister's imminent supreme punishment. She, furthermore, blames Mary for the difficulties she is experiencing. It is not made explicit in the play why she undergoes difficulties and what kind of problems she has, except that she, too, has AIDS and needs a prescription. However, leaving the reason for the difficulties in her life unknown, she claims that Mary puts her in a difficult position. Even though Mary apologises, she does not accept it. Hence, in the case of Older Sister, it is not certain if her direct response to the loss of her parents is violence; however, when she comes to the stage first upon losing her mother and father, she behaves aggressively and violently towards her sister albeit her pending tragic death.

On the other hand, Mary's direct reaction to the bereavement of her parents is violence, specifically, physical violence. Although her parents have a disease, they do not die of it; they are tragically and unexpectedly murdered. As a result of this, Mary expresses her grief in the form of violence. She first appears in the play, in prison, after her parents die. She is behind bars because she killed the Child Soldier who murdered her mother and father, which evidences that violence breeds violence in the play. Mary responds to the Child Soldier's violent behaviour that causes the bereavement of her parents with violence again. Furthermore, as previously stated, while Older Sister directs her violent behaviour to her sister, the target of Mary's violence is the person who is responsible for her grief and bereavement. Despite the fact that the soldier is a child, this does not hold Mary off from killing him. She murders the child in the name of revenge which Celia Harding defines as "the desire to inflict equivalent injury or damage in retaliation for wrongs or injury received" (133). Harding explains that victims of trauma seek revenge for the injuries that they experience because of the perpetrator. In order to handle their anger about the injuries suffered, trauma victims turn to retaliation when they think that they have been unfairly treated. The victims then become perpetrators so as to turn their passive and helpless situation into action as a

solution to their own trauma (134). In Mary's situation, she kills the child in order to take revenge for her parents' death. She considers that she has the right cause to kill the soldier. Marissia Fragkou and Lynette Goddard claim that Mary does not want to be the "vulnerable victim" of the Child Soldier's guilt (152). The character thinks that the necessary action should be taken to punish the perpetrator. Harding also claims that the victim of trauma believes that he/she is totally innocent and the person on whom the victim takes revenge is entirely culpable (134). In accordance with this, Mary asserts that "I done somethin. Least I done somethin – I did" (64). These words disclose Mary's belief that by killing the criminal, she brings justice herself without leaving it to the system of justice. Nevertheless, her act of retaliation is in conflict with her community's understanding of justice. Only twelve people sign the petition that can save Mary from prison and her final punishment. Although she thinks that she had a cause to commit the murder, neither her community that she blames nor her sister believes in her cause.

YOUNGER SISTER: but I'ma bitch in need

OLDER SISTER: butchu killed/ a-

YOUNGER SISTER: I got cause

OLDER SISTER: you killed a man. (63)

Older Sister negates her sister's reason to murder the child and believes that she is guilty. She also does not come to the stoning despite Mary's wish. After her visit to Mary, Older Sister gives her ticket to Correction Officer:

CORR. OFFICER: And you promised/ her.

OLDER SISTER: Have my ticket.

[…]

OLDER SISTER: Take my ticket… I- don't wannit. (73)

What is more, Mary's violent retribution is also punished with violence. It appears that she receives an extremely brutal and relentless punishment, by being sentenced to death

by stoning. So, Mary brings justice for the death of her parents with violence, and the system also brings justice for Mary's crime with violence.

Mum also becomes part of the violence of the system by participating in Mary's stoning. She is actually the one who becomes the victim of Mary's retribution. It is clear that the motives of Mary's revenge had devastating repercussions. According to Harding, revenge is prone to have a reverse effect. The characters in revenge scenarios become victims and culprits in turn since retribution is likely to produce a response from the victim, which increases the destruction (134). Therefore, Mum, who is the victim of Mary's revenge, also becomes the perpetrator as a solution for the pain of her loss. Mum also externalises her grief for the loss of her son in the form of physical violence. First of all, Mum and Dad grieve for their son since he is abducted to become a soldier. When Mum loses her son, she loses an attachment figure in her life. Thus, with the separation distress, she shows certain symptoms of traumatic grief. She yearns for her son and is preoccupied with him all the time. She tries to remember what he used to do, what he used to smell like, and his hair.

> MUM: […] To smell. Have his smell. […] The never-get-used-to-that, the never- get-enough-of-that- the after-bath-aroma, the first thing of a morning-the- just-come-in-from-out wanting more of that smell. […]
>
> Waiting for that. [...]
>
> Miss it. (19)

Turning back to memories, Mum realises how much she misses her son. Her longing for the boy can also be seen when she wears the clothes that remind her of him, claiming that he likes them.

> MUM: I wear it cos he bought it.
>
> DAD: He bought it for a joke.
>
> […]
>
> MUM: I wear it because he liked it.

DAD: He liked it for a joke.

MUM: … It reminds me of/ him.

DAD: You are a joke. (26)

Mum wants to be surrounded by her son's memories, but Dad does not allow her to be in such a state of mind. Mum and her husband always bicker about who loves their son more and wants to spend more time with him. They turn to the past to search some moments with him that can ease their pain and relieve their feelings of guilt (Haddow 283). However, when their son returns home briefly, his changed behaviours scare Mum. She cannot look directly at her son or talk to him after she sees that he is much tougher now. Yet his behaviour does not change Mum's attachment to her son. When she loses him permanently, her longing is turned into violence. Although her act of violence is not portrayed, it can be anticipated when she goes to Mary's stoning and takes the first stone to kill her. Mum has a motive similar to Mary's for her violent action. Mary becomes the target of Mum's violence because she is responsible for her grief. Likewise, Mum seeks revenge to ease her pain and engages in physical violence. She attends Mary's stoning and becomes a part of this the cruel punishment, which is treated as a show. Mum sees this as an opportunity to take her revenge for her son's immature death and becomes part of a group of people who pay for their tickets to punish Mary.

While Mum directs her violent behaviour to the person who kills her son, the target of Dad's violence is his wife. Similar to Older Sister, he inflicts verbal violence on Mum since he thinks that they lost their son because of her. Even though his wife tries to convince him that "they" took him, she fails to persuade her husband. It can be stated that their loss affects their relationship as husband and wife negatively. Traumatic and distressing events can have a disruptive effect on attachment relationships (Zulueta 193); accordingly, the relationship between the husband and wife is ruptured. While Mum tries to demonstrate that her attachment to her son is stronger than the attachment

between Dad and his son. Dad consistently blames his wife for the traumatic situation that they experience.

Dad's attachment to his son looks different from the relationship between Mum and the son. While Mum is comparatively loving and affectionate, Dad is rather firm. Mum claims that he does not spend as much time as Mum does with their son. She asserts that when she took care of the boy and cut his hair, Dad just watched them and became jealous.

> MUM: Yes you did – you'd watch him- you'd watch him – you watched you did. Watch his hair and wish it was you – watch me wash it and wish it was you. (34)

Moreover, she also states that their son used to hate it when his father kissed him. Thus, Mum implies that she had a closer relationship with their son, and her husband did not really look after him. However, although Dad does not seem to be very caring, he also displays traumatic grief symptoms. He longs for the times when he and his son used to play games, and he remembers watching him at home. Yet, when they try to remember how their son smelt, Mum states that her husband did not use to "get close enough" (23) to know his smell, and that their son did not allow his father to come close to him. As a response to that, Dad reacts to his wife's accusations by trying to harm her emotionally. Patricia Evans discusses that this form of violence is characterised by enmity and anger, and it aims to damage one's self-worth. This type of behaviour destroys the communication and is deliberately used to produce negative feelings (45). Dad contradicts his wife by stating that their son did not have a smell of his own because Mum's smothering affection covered his smell. He insults her about her perfume, comparing it to contamination, calling it "genetically modified contaminated fuck" (23). During this discussion about her perfume, he also walks up to Mum and scares her:

> MUM: Don't think so. Don't think so- and I don't wantchu near-
>
> DAD: catch the smell a the natural you, drop down dead a/ shock.
>
> MUM: Dontchu come near- dontchu come nearer- (23)

Here it is obvious that Mum feels nervous and threatened by her husband's actions. In addition to this, Dad refers to the times when he and their son used to mock Mum about her perfume and laugh at everything she did. He recounts those memories with pleasure and tries to prove that the relationship between Mum and their son was not actually as close as Mum thinks. Additionally, Evans argues that as well as being overt, or having outbursts of anger; verbal violence can also be inflicted by invalidating and negating the other person's feelings to make him/her feel unsupported and powerless (46). It can be stated that Dad, too, invalidates his wife's feelings and leaves her feeling helpless. When their child returns home, he also enjoys the fact that his wife cannot communicate with him. Dad knows that Mum is afraid of the boy because of his disturbing behaviours, and he enjoys watching his wife's discomfort. He states that he sleeps comfortably while Mum cannot sleep with their child at home. In other words, Dad not only mocks his wife and insults her, but he also threatens her and enjoys seeing her suffer, which may well hurt her psychologically. Besides, after they learn that their son is dead, Dad continues to blame his wife for his grief, though knowing that he is murdered by Mary. When he sees that Mum cries, he does not believe the sincerity of her tears. He thinks that his wife pretends to be sad although she does not feel sad in fact. Since she was scared of her son when he came back, Dad thinks that his wife is relieved to learn that he is dead.

DAD: She did you your fuckin favour…

> I know how dry your eyes were when he was with us – and I can see how dry your eyes are. Even now. (66)

Thus, one may state that even after their child dies, Dad takes his grief out on his wife in the form of verbal violence. Although he knows that it is Mary who killed their child, he continues to blame his wife because, from his perspective, she could not prevent the murder from happening due to her negligence and played a role in their son's becoming a child soldier in the first place, which indirectly led to his tragic end.

It can therefore be concluded that *Stoning Mary* portrays the effects of certain problems such as AIDS, child soldiering, and losing an attachment figure on the characters who fail to care about one another. The details about the issues presented in the play remain ambiguous; nonetheless, their effects on the characters and the responses that the characters give are clear and very much in the foreground. The characters in the play become hostile, selfish, and violent in the time of illness and trauma. When the disease threatens their lives, Husband and Wife compete with each other selfishly for a prescription, instead of trying to solve their problem together. Even the characters who experience actual loss, through separation and death, do not support or care about one another. Older Sister and Mary do not have a strong bond, and the loss of Mum and Dad's child leads to a tension in their marital relationship. The conflicts in the play are explored through disrupted family dynamics, which is reflected in the family members' failure of communication, too. When they speak, they interrupt one another's sentences. They are also unable to share their real feelings, which are expressed by means of the "active silences" in the play. So, their feelings and thoughts are either unsaid or unheard. Furthermore, the characters lose their attachment figures in sudden, violent, and traumatic ways, which leads to grief. Their traumatic grief is manifested in the form of homicide and verbal violence. The physically violent actions are not displayed because the play rather focuses on their consequence, which is also violence. The characters inflict their violent behaviour on those who they hold responsible for their bereavement. They either engage in physical violence so as to take revenge from the perpetrator of the murder causing their bereavement, or they verbally abuse their family member for failing to protect the attachment figure. Only Older Sister is an exception. She also acts violently towards Mary, yet, it is not clear if her violent behaviour is her response to the murder of her parents. Hence, it can be argued that although the acts of physical violence are not demonstrated, but implied, violence is the cause of loss, and also a reaction to the loss in the play.

CHAPTER II

TRAUMATIC GRIEF AS A REACTION TO VIOLENCE IN *RANDOM*

Debbie Tucker Green's *Random* is another important play in her career. The play was written two years after *Stoning Mary* in 2007 and premiered on 7 March 2008 in the Downstairs stage at the Royal Court Theatre in London. It was directed by Sacha Wares and performed by one black actress on a bare stage. Later the play was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 13 March 2010. It was also adapted to television in 2011 and broadcast on Channel 4, which brought Tucker Green a British Academy Film and Television Award (BAFTA) for Best Single Drama (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 193).

Random tells the story of a West Indian family living in London. Their lives change abruptly because of a traumatic loss that they experience. The play comprises two parts and depicts a regular day in the life of the family consisting of Mum, Dad, Sister, and Brother. Their typical day starts when Sister wakes up her brother to take his mobile phone because she expects a call from her boyfriend. Brother does not want to wake up and becomes late for the school. Mum burns the porridge that she cooks for her children, and she is worried about her children being cold because their clothes are not suitable for the weather. Sister does not want to go to work with her colleagues whom she dislikes. Dad stays at home because he is not on a "day shift." Towards the end of the first part, the ordinary day of the family is ruptured when police cars arrive at their door to give them the devastating news that the son of the family is stabbed and killed on the street during his lunch break in a random argument, as the title of the play suggests. The violent action of the murder is not shown in the play, but its cruelty is described by Sister when she, together with her father, goes to the morgue to identify Brother's body. On the way back home, they see that people build a shrine on the street where Brother is murdered. People and his friends there express their sorrow, while reporters recount the incident. At home, Sister's colleagues visit the family to express their condolences, while a Victim Support Officer tries to console Mum. In the second part of *Random*, which is mostly portrayed through Sister's perspective, the atmosphere

becomes more depressing. This part of the play focuses on the traumatic grief of the bereaved family and their responses to their shocking loss. The background details and the reason for the murder are not explained. Instead, Tucker Green concentrates on the aftermath of the traumatic event and its effects on the family members.

The playwright penned the play during a time when the knife crime was a growing concern, specifically in London. In 2007 and 2008, there was a significant increase in the number of young people, under the age of 18, carrying knives. Peter Squires explains that teenagers carried knives for several reasons, such as to gain the respect of their peers or to protect themselves from other young people who carried weapons. If they became involved in a gang or excluded from school, they also tended to carry weapons (11). This situation led to an increasing number of knife-related casualties and murders on the streets of London. The number of stabbing incidents of teenagers rose from 524 in 2003 to 931 in 2007 (Squires 15). In 2007, 18 teenage deaths of 27 were because of stabbing; in 2008, this number was 22 teenage deaths out of 28 in London (Squires 16). In 2008, as crime correspondent Adam Fresco mentions in *The Times*, police officers reported that "[t]he huge rise in the number of teenagers being killed on the streets of London [… was] the biggest threat facing the capital after terrorism" ("Teenage Knife Crime"). Lynette Goddard explains that although there were also white British people under the age of 18 who were the victims of knife crime, approximately 75 per cent of these deaths were black British boys. The British media gave more coverage to the deaths of white boys in the news than black teenagers who were murdered in similar ways. The news reports indicated that white young people became victims of random attacks, while it was generally implied that the deaths of black boys were mostly connected to gang cultures. Even if the teenagers who were killed were not gang members, the media often tended to emphasise that the teenagers were innocent boys caught in the crossfire of gang warfare, or relate them to activities associated with gangs (*Contemporary Black British Playwrights* 88). In line with this, in April 2007, the Prime Minister of the time, Tony Blair, gave a speech in Cardiff and touched upon the major concern about the growing number of teenagers who became the victims of knife crime. Even though it was a national concern at the time, Blair held black British young

people and gang culture responsible for the situation by stating that "the spate of knife and gun murders in London was not being caused by poverty, but a distinctive black culture […]. The recent violence should not be treated as part of a general crime wave, but as specific to black youth [since] particular youngsters are being brought up in a setting that has no rules, no discipline, no proper framework around them" (qtd. in Wintour and Dodd 2007). He also claimed that "[w]e won't stop this by pretending it isn't young black kids doing it" (qtd. in Walker 2007). Chris Eades et al. state that black communities mostly live in underprivileged areas where they are more likely to participate in crime as a response to difficult conditions, and black British teenagers, especially boys, become involved in a lifestyle that encourage them to use guns and knives. Moreover, the majority of the victims of knife crime was black British boys (24). However, as related by Eugene McLaughlin, Home Office Minister Patricia Scotland explained to Home Affairs Select Committee that there was not enough evidence that street knife crime was related only to the black youth, but Blair advised black communities to take action to prevent young people from being involved in this kind of violence. He also suggested that the police should focus on black Britons, and the laws related to this issue should be made stricter (100). Accordingly, the next Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the government initiated campaigns through social networking sites and websites, such as "It Doesn't Have to Happen," about the risks of carrying knives (Aston, "Debbie Tucker Green" 194). They also initiated measures to tackle the problem. They brought more severe punishments for those who carry weapons, and also the police increased their Stop and Search powers besides these raising awareness campaigns (Eades et.al. 7).

Although the years 2007 and 2008 were marked by teenage murders, actually this issue was not new. The death of an eighteen-year-old black teenager named Stephen Lawrence, who was killed on 22 April 1993, was a very significant incident that captured national attention. In 1999, the government requested an investigation of the murder, which would be led by former high court judge Sir William MacPherson. The judge investigated the murder and the prosecution process and prepared a report. In this report he explained that Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death by five white young

people in a racist attack while he was waiting for the bus in Eltham, South East London. After the police investigation, five prime suspects of the murder succeeded to avoid the prosecution. The first investigation failed to acknowledge that racism was the main reason for the murder. Therefore, Lawrence's parents initiated their own private prosecution by appointing their own lawyers. The teenager's mother Doreen Lawrence launched campaigns for "justice for Stephen," and she tried to point out the inequalities that they experienced during the prosecution. As a result of their efforts, nineteen years later, two of the five suspects of the murder were finally convicted of murder on 3 January 2012 (18-29). The case led to a lot of discussion about the attitude of the police towards the victims of race crimes. The institutional racism of the police force and whether the police paid the same amount of attention that they would have if white youths were the victims of the racist murders were argued about. MacPherson's report concluded that the inquiry of the murder was "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers" (MacPherson 365). In his report, he criticised the police for being institutionally racist and not doing enough to solve the case. He recommended measures to prevent institutional racism and to enhance ethnic minorities' confidence in the police. He suggested that police services should be inspected and necessary methods should be applied for the inquiry and prosecution of racist crimes (MacPherson 375). The Stephen Lawrence case and the following MacPherson's report were quite significant in terms of discrimination and racism, and they had an important impact on the discussions about race relations. The lawyer of the Lawrence family, Imran Khan, explains the importance of the Lawrence case for race relations in an interview: "What the Lawrence case did was it made race mainstream. It made it something people had to recognise, acknowledge and accept. Before that, it was something that the left and liberals talked about as a fringe issue. Now suburban England had to accept that race existed." (qtd. in Muir, "The Stephen Lawrence case")

The Stephen Lawrence case and the teenage murder also found their place in the plays of several black British playwrights such as *The Guardian*'s reporter Richard Norton-Taylor, Winsome Pinnock, Tanika Gupta, Kwame Kwei-Armah, and Roy Williams.

Norton-Taylor's play *The Colour of Justice* (1999) is based on the murder of Stephen Lawrence and its subsequent investigation. The play consists of extracts from MacPherson's report and aims to indicate the nature of the murder (Fragkou, *Ecologies* 65). Winsome Pinnock's *Can You Keep a Secret?* (1999) is also about the racist murder of a black boy, although it is not directly related to Stephen Lawrence case. It reflects the dilemma of the white murderer's girlfriend who witnesses the killing but is scared to report it to the police in order not to be rejected by her community, though she finally reports it (Sakellaridou, "Winsome Pinnock" 392). Tanika Gupta's *White Boy* (2007), too, is written in response to the teenage murders during that time. The play takes place in a schoolyard in London, and it portrays the death of Victor, a black teenage footballer, in a fight (Fragkou, *Ecologies* 67). Murder of black teenage boys, or characters, can also be found in Kwame Kwei-Armah's *Elmina's Kitchen* (2003) and Roy Williams's *Fallout* (2003) and *Little Sweet Thing* (2005). In *Elmina's Kitchen*, Kwei-Armah explores the threats of gang and drug culture to young black men. The main character Deli who owns a restaurant, Elmina's Kitchen, tries to protect his son from becoming involved in this culture. Yet he cannot prevent his involvement and loses him because he is killed by a member of his gang (Peacock, "Black British Drama" 54). Williams's *Fallout* portrays a young black boy's murder which is investigated by a black police officer. The play also examines the gang culture and the difficulties of attaining justice for a black teenager (Osborne, "The State of the Nation" 135). Finally, in his *Little Sweet Thing*, Williams delineates Kev, a former gang member who is recently released from prison. He attempts to stay away from his former gang and tries to live without becoming involved in crime, but he cannot do so since the other members of the gang kill his sister (Peacock, "Black British Drama" 57). So, in general terms, Kwei-Armah and Williams mostly explore the effects of gang culture on black teenagers' lives.

Tucker Green's *Random* also features a teenager who becomes a victim of knife crime. Goddard draws an analogy between the murder in the play and Stephen Lawrence's death in that the play portrays a family that prematurely loses their teenage son, because he is stabbed to death, and confronts the police, although the police investigation of the

murder is not displayed in a detailed way ("I am a Black Woman" 119). Additionally, several critics such as Charles Spencer and Christopher Hart relate *Random* to the "black on black violence" and gang culture in their review of the play as Brother is killed in an altercation (*Daily Telegraph, Sunday Times*).

Nevertheless, although the play carries the echoes of the teenage knife crime of the time, which Squires calls an "epidemic" (1), *Random* is different from the other plays dealing with the same issue since Tucker Green does not specify the reason for Brother's murder. The only information given about the murder is that he is killed during a fight in his lunch break at school. Moreover, the perpetrator of the murder is unknown; thus, it is not clear if it is a racially motivated murder. Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte argue that *Random* goes beyond the categories of race, class and gender, for it reflects "the human ordinariness of the lives of others" (111). Tucker Green identifies a black family's bereavement as a human experience, though not denying their racial background (Goddard, "Death" 308). She depicts the issues that teenagers experience and their effects on their families without highlighting race. Additionally, the common names of the family members in the play – Mum, Dad, Sister, and Brother – also suggest that this traumatic loss that the family encounters can be experienced by any family regardless of race (Goddard, *Modern British* 207). Furthermore, the presupposition that Brother had a connection to a gang is challenged in the play, as seen when Sister questions the police officers about where her brother might be because she does not believe that the boy who is stabbed is her brother.

> SISTER: how yu don't know that? How y'know he ent juss late? How y'know he ent with he's spars-
>
> Spars?
>
> Friends- man dem- mates- bredrins-
>
> No…
>
> Not a 'gang.' (32)

Although police officers imply that he might be associated with a gang, the possibility is immediately rejected by Sister. Concerning this, Paul Taylor also asserts that Tucker Green is "skilled at bringing you up against your prejudices. On hearing that two police cars were parked outside the family home, I automatically assumed that the brother had got into trouble" ("Random" *Independent*). Yet, although Brother becomes involved in a fight, it is a "random" murder, and he does not engage in criminal or gang-related activities. Therefore, what Tucker Green focuses on in the play is not the motive of the murder or the background of the incident, but the emotional grief responses of the family bereaved by the murder of their son. Neither the climactic action of violence nor the conflicts leading to the murder is depicted in the play. Even though Brother is the subject of the main incident, his relationship with the perpetrator of violence, or the fight he becomes involved, is not explained. Instead of exploring the social issues related to teenage knife crime in the play, Tucker Green portrays the immediate aftermath of the murder in order to demonstrate how such an unexpected and violent death affects the family members who are left behind. The ordinariness of the family's life is suddenly disrupted by the tragic news that the police officers bring, and from that point on, how the family confronts the reality of loss and their emotions and individual ways of coping with grief are foregrounded (Fragkou, "Intercultural" 79). In addition, Sam Haddow considers the play as

> a eulogy in which the death of Brother, whose anonymity performed the task of universalizing him whilst Sister's concrete recollections kept him absolutely singular, was offered to the audience as an event which they had to view through their own conceptions and comprehensions of grief. (288)

The family's grief stemming from their loss is quite traumatic in the sense that it is caused by a violent and sudden death. As it is discussed in the first chapter of this study, if an attachment figure is lost violently and unexpectedly, this situation may lead to traumatic grief. In *Random*, Brother becomes the victim of a brutal homicide. However, the play does not display any conflict related to Brother; thus, his death is unexpected. For all that there is an implication of "something in the air – in the room – in this day – mekin [Sister] shiver" (3-4), which foreshadows that they will experience a problem, it does not prepare the family for the traumatic event that they would encounter (Aston,

"Debbie Tucker Green" 194). Besides being unexpected, his murder is most cruel. Although the act of violence is not demonstrated, its brutality is conveyed by Sister. She describes her brother's body when the police officers take her and her father to identify Brother. She explains the cuts and wounds on his body and what the murderer did to Brother's body, which reflects how horrifying the murder was.

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.

It slashed so much on a one side from there to there. (35)

These words reveal that the murderer did not only kill Brother, but he/she also deformed his body. He/she mutilated him by damaging his eyes and slashing his mouth. Sister also describes other small bruises on her brother's body, which she thinks show that he tried to fight back and defend himself. Psychiatrist James Gilligan contends that violence can be interpreted as a "symbolic language" that expresses the thoughts that cannot be articulated. He claims that in order to understand violence, it is essential to understand what violent actions and behaviours represent. According to Gilligan, people may inflict violence on others for different reasons, among which the most common is to restore the wounded self-esteem. Especially, if a person feels ashamed of being weak, powerless, and impotent, he/she may try to eliminate this feeling of worthlessness by turning to violence when he/she thinks that there are not any nonviolent options. Also, it can be understandable for Gilligan to kill a person for different reasons; however, he questions why people brutally mutilate or deform their victims besides killing them. He suggests that violent acts can have symbolic meanings, or violent acts are physical symbols of an idea. Therefore, he argues that further mutilation carries symbolic

meanings. Gilligan notes that offenders can cut their victims' ears and/or tongues or injure their eyes, each of which represents a different motive and meaning (58-66). For example, cutting someone's tongue can symbolise the offender's wish to prevent the victim from mocking the offender or talking about him/her (Gilligan 83). Jack Katz, too, makes similar claims, arguing that assailants who kick their victims' faces or stomp on their faces or heads may symbolically aim to avoid their victim's disturbing gaze (33). Hence, the brutal actions of the perpetrator may give a message about their behaviours. This extreme form of violence can be interpreted as a means to assert potency, power, and esteem on the victim and to diminish the feeling of being weak.

In the play, although it is not known if the assailant feels ashamed of being weak or powerless, because the perpetrator is unknown, it can be stated that the murder of Brother carries symbolic meanings, as well. It is not clear whether or not Brother falls victim to racial violence, but the way he is murdered implies that the murderer tried to restore his/her sense of power by mutilating Brother. It is again not known if he/she disfigured his mouth and eye before or after killing him, but it is almost certain that he/she wanted to mock and humiliate Brother by making him look like a clown. Jack Katz argues that removing the eyes can be the murderer's way of avoiding the victim's gaze (33). In Brother's case, the perpetrator removed only one of his eyes and tried to cover his missing eye with his eyelid, which makes him look as if he is winking. By covering it, they possibly wanted to avoid the horrid image of his eye, at the same time giving Brother a more clown-like appearance. As to the cuts on the body, Sister states that these wounds on her brother's body are just "marks that he had to live with" (36). They did not kill him since the killer cut is on his back. Thus, they did not slash his mouth or harm his eye to kill him; they did so to ridicule and insult him. As a result, it can be stated that the death of Brother was not sufficient for the perpetrator. He/she tried to put him in a defenceless situation and disgrace him to prove that he/she was more potent and powerful. They gave him marks that remained on his body, which is more devastating and tragic for his family, adding insult to injury.

The untimely and violent death of their son traumatises the family because they lose an attachment figure through murder, which results in different grief responses. Bowlby argues that continuation of a bond to a person provides a sense of security. Individuals feel safe as long as their attachment figures remain accessible (*Sadness* 39). However, when the attachment relationship is disrupted, the sense of security can be shattered. Hence, losing a loved one leads to traumatic grief because of the unfulfilled sense of attachment, as mentioned in the previous chapter as well. This grief can be felt more severely when the attached figure that is lost has a crucial place in the bereaved person's life. For example, Neria and Litz claim that losing a child causes families to experience deeper grief (82). Eileen Ellen Rinear also argues that "the relationship that exists between parents and their children may be the most intense that life can generate" (32). Therefore, according to Rinear, when the child dies, the family may become more vulnerable since it is a threat to their function as parents. Not only their role as parent and caregiver is changed, but also their family unit is disrupted. The family in these circumstances may feel as if they lost a part of their selves and their hope for the future when they lose their child (33). Especially, the murder of the child can be more difficult to deal with than anticipated deaths because of its violent and sudden nature. Ann Wolbert Burgess alleges that the families of homicide victims react to the tragic event on two levels, which she terms "ego-oriented thoughts" and "victim-oriented thoughts" (392). Burgess holds that ego-oriented thoughts are associated with the apprehension of their personal bereavement, while victim-oriented thoughts are related to the family's concerns about the way the family member died and the brutality inflicted on him/her. The families are generally worried about the physical harm that the victim received and his/her possible suffering, besides coping with the fact that they lost a loved one (392).

Furthermore, in cases of homicide, legal and social procedures compound the families' grief reactions. Homicide incidents mostly receive media coverage, and also the police investigate the murder starting with interrogating the family members, which complicates the family's grieving process and makes it more difficult for the family to register the reality of the death since their life is now under scrutiny. This investigation process reduces the chances of making sense of the death, as well as being with the

deceased since the police may not allow the family to take the body (Parkes 50). In this complicated process, the immediate grief reactions of the families of homicide victims are mainly numbness, disbelief, inability to express emotions, and anger (Parkes 50).

These reactions can be observed in *Random* as well when the family loses Brother through homicide. Aleks Sierz thinks that "although the family is black, and the parents have been written as if they were migrants rather than British-born, it is interesting that their grieving is so typically English. Heads down, dumb with shock and despair, both Mum and Dad prefer silence […]" (*Rewriting* 154). Goddard explains Sierz's presumption about black British and white British people's way of expressing their grief and states that it is considered that black people express their grief more vocally and publicly ("I am a Black Woman" 118). Nevertheless, the play does not portray culturally specific grieving or mourning practices or rituals. It only focuses on each family member's immediate reaction to the death, not on their mourning in the long term. The family members express their sorrow in different ways. Yet, in general, their grief is externalised in the form of numbing, anger, disbelief, and avoidance.

The tragic event that causes the family's grief is signalled by the coming of the police who are unwelcome by the family. When the police officers come to the house, Mum hesitates to invite them in because her husband does not want any police officers in his house. She states that her husband's first rule in their house is that they, especially children, should not become involved in trouble, and even if they do, they should not bring the police to their house. Goddard interprets Dad's attitude to the police as a result of the conflicting relationship between black families in Britain and the police because of their racist practices in the past against black people such as Stop and Search laws ("I am a Black Woman" 115). Although the play does not display any problematic interaction between the police and black people, Dad's approach shows that he has prejudices against the police and that he does not want to experience anything that may involve the police. Therefore, when they see two police cars in front of their house, Mum and Dad feel anxious. Mum instantly starts questioning why and for whom the

police may be there, while Dad silently stares at them. When they finally invite them into their front room, Mum thinks that they come to their house and intrude into their lives with their "dark boots and heavy shoes" (26). The police's invasion of their lives is conveyed through Mum's feeling of uneasiness because they walk into their front room with their shoes on. Michael McMillan explains that the front room is very important in West Indian culture. It is a room including sitting and living rooms, and it is used as a public space in the house where people other than the family members have access to the family's private life. It is generally used for special gatherings when guests and visitors come together for different occasions. Hence, it is not for daily use (136).

> It was usually the one room in the home where you weren't permitted, unless it was a Sunday or a special occasion when guests visited. As an opulent shrine to kitsch furniture, consumer fetish, and home-made furnishings, it was a symbol of status and respectability, announcing that no matter how poor you were, if the Front Room looked good, then you were "decent" people. (McMillan 136)

Thus, front rooms are attentively and carefully managed, mostly by the women of the house, to show the guests that the family has a respectable and beautiful life. Therefore, when police officers wear their outside shoes inside, they invade the family's safe sanctuary that they try to keep clean.

MUM: Dark boots
an' heavy shoes
on my clean carpet
in my good room
in my front room
my visitor room
my room fe best
fe formal
not even fe family. (26)

The police officers also continue to disrupt the normality of their lives by reversing the guest/host roles (Osborne, "How Do We" 241). Before they tell the upsetting news, they offer a cup of tea to Mum and Dad (26), although Mum and Dad should be offering it as the hosts. The police place Mum and Dad in a position where they become guests in their own house. This attitude of the police makes Mum and Dad even more nervous and uncomfortable since it implies how serious the situation is.

Their uneasiness caused by the coming of the police to their house turns into shock and disbelief when they learn that their son is stabbed to death during his lunch break at school. Kübler-Ross and Kessler describe this denial stage as "being paralysed with shock or blanketed with numbness" (28). Cathy Caruth contends that a traumatic event cannot be fully comprehended at the moment of happening because of the sudden and overwhelming nature of the situation that is "outside the range of usual human experience" (3). Hence, Caruth argues that "in trauma, the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it" (6). Therefore, when the parents confront entirely unexpected and traumatic news, they become dazed. It is difficult for them to believe the news; when they think that their son is at school, they suddenly learn that he is killed. Mum drops on the couch in bewilderment and starts asking questions to the police officers. She suspiciously asks them whether they are sure that the boy that is killed is their son, and how they know it is him. When the officers describe their son, mention eyewitnesses, and talk about the details of the incident, Mum stops hearing what they say. She does not hear or listen to them being numbed by a shock. After that, she wants to call her daughter and inform her immediately. She wishes her daughter to be with them and seeks her emotional support in this traumatic situation. However, all she can do is to send her a message and tell her to "come home now" (29).

On the other hand, Dad remains more silent when he learns about his son's death. Throughout the play he is mostly silent. As his daughter describes him, he is "the kinda dad who…/don't say much./ Unless he have to" (18). He is at home when the police

arrive as he does not work on the day shift. Not wanting to see any police officers in his house, he becomes very uncomfortable and nervous to see their cars and stares at them suspiciously when they come in. His suspicion about the police prevents him from believing the officers when they inform him about the incident. He straightforwardly states that he does not believe them. He rejects when they offer him a cup of tea and suggest him to sit. Dad does not articulate his thoughts and feelings about Brother's death, but he shows his reaction with his behaviour. Although the police officers try to change the guest-host position in their household, Dad does not give up his position as the host and serves tea to the officers himself. His denial and rejection are conveyed through his serving of "too sweet tea" (30) to the officers. Mum explains that Dad makes tea too sweet for people whom he does not like. Similarly, when Sister comes home and catches the smell of the tea, she understands that there is a situation of which Dad does not approve. She knows that he shows his reaction by serving extremely sweet tea.

SISTER: Smell Dad's too-sweet tea a mile off
muss be poisonin them
with sugar. (31)

Sister thinks that her father intends to harm the officers' health, which means that the officers must have brought unpleasant news that Dad does not, or does not want to, believe. Thus, Dad's rather sweet tea can be considered his way of expressing his disbelief in the officers or his refusal to believe them.

Sister also finds it hard to believe the news about her brother's death. When she receives an urgent message from her mother that tells her to come home, she tells her co-workers that she is sick and leaves the work. She wonders if her mother or father is sick and calls her brother to learn if he knows what might have happened, but unable to reach her brother, she leaves him a message without knowing that he will never receive it. When she comes home, sees the police with their "outside shoes" (26) in their fine front room, and smells her father's too sweet tea, she understands that there is a

problem. Similar to her mother, as soon as she is informed about her brother, she starts asking questions to the police officers. She insistently asks them how they know her brother is not just late and spending time with his friends. When the officers sceptically imply Brother's relation to a gang, she angrily rejects them by asking, "why you here? Why you – why you here?" (32) One of the grief responses to a traumatic loss is, as already stated, anger, and Sister becomes angry with the police officers who bring the news that she does not want to believe. Gordon Riches and Pam Dawson assert that these types of loss generate anger because the cause of death is unreasonable (157). Since there is no sensible reason behind Brother's death, it is especially difficult for Sister to make sense of the situation, which is externalised in the form of anger. Thus, Sister's anger, which stems from the traumatic loss she experiences, is directed at the people who disrupt their lives and change it permanently with the devastating news they bring. She is not angry with the person who is responsible for the murder, because she does not know who killed her brother, but with the officers, the targets of her anger, who tell her that her brother is dead, the reason for which she cannot fully grasp. Consequently, the police officers show the family a bag which contains Brother's belongings. While Mum avoids looking at the bag and Dad continues to stare at the officers. After the traumatic experience, people tend to refrain from stimuli related to the traumatising event (Caruth 4). Thus, Mum and Dad avoid looking at the bag which recalls their son's murder. Sister is the only family member who is able to check what the bag contains. Yet, even though she sees her brother's phone, she still refuses to understand what happened since she does not want to believe that her brother is dead.

SISTER: So it look like he's phone- what.

[…]

So it look like he's phone – what?

My number last dial on it – so?

So it look like he's phone – yeh – that is my number – yeh – that is his phone then.

So? And? What?... (33)

Sister purposefully chooses to deny the reality of the situation though she sees her brother's phone and the blood on it. Finally, overall about how the family members first act upon receiving the news of death, Dad shows his reaction with his too sweet tea. Sister becomes angry with the officers because they bring the tragic news, while Mum is bewildered. However, although their initial reactions are expressed in different ways, the family, in common, rejects the fact that Brother is dead. Kübler-Ross and Kessler maintain that this situation is the result of the "psyche's protective mechanism" (31). Accepting all the emotions related to loss at once can be too much to handle and too overwhelming; therefore, the feeling of disbelief is produced by the mind to protect itself (Kübler-Ross and Kessler 31).

After the initial shock, legal procedures prevent the family from processing their son's death. Sister and Dad have to go to the mortuary to identify Brother's body. Burgess claims that identifying the body adds a psychological burden to the person who has to do this task (394). Accordingly, Sister and Dad's bewilderment grows when they see Brother's body since his body is cut, slashed, and mutilated. Although it is already traumatising that their son is murdered, disfiguration of his body makes his death more tragic for the family. When they identify Brother, Dad lapses into silence. His silence demonstrates that he is unable to express how deep his grief is (Abram 123). Caruth asserts that besides its incomprehensibility, a traumatic experience cannot be explained in a meaningful way. Because it is overwhelming and sudden, and also the person cannot make sense of the situation at the time of occurrence, the experience cannot be put into words (10). Thus, Dad cannot find the right words that can articulate how he feels as Sister states it best: "Dad's tryin to say something, but … nu'un won't come out" (37). Sister, who is worried about her father, observes him closely and understands that "[h]e is embarrassed" (37). She watches her father's embarrassment as the police officers take them back home. Riches and Dawson argue that "the nature of the death may produce a sense of stigma within bereaved parents' identities which causes them to avoid conversations. This stigma may also add to the difficulties of communication which most bereaved families experience" (144). Therefore, Dad's feeling of embarrassment may be attributed to the way his son is killed. Since the murderer aimed

to humiliate Brother by trying to make him look like a clown, Dad may also feel humiliated seeing his son in that situation, which is a complicated emotion that language may fail to express.

On their way back home, while Dad looks away in silence, Sister sees that people build a street shrine where Brother is murdered. She goes to the spot and sees that people lay flowers and notes to pay tribute. She describes their different responses to the crime scene. Brother's friends cry together for their friends, "witnessin somethin they shouldn't" (41); several people try to console Sister by saying, "… sorry sis. He was nice" (39), though Sister does not believe their sincerity. She adds that many people pass by the shrine of her brother and do not even notice it. Thus, she explains how some people choose to acknowledge the incident while some refuse to do so (Aragay and Monforte 113). She feels angry with a number of people who, the police claim, are witnesses but who remain silent. Although the police mention that there were many people who saw the murder, Sister says that "no one wanna witness what happened to [her] brother" (45). The witnesses who refuse to bear witness and report what they saw are complicit in violence because the reason for the murder and the perpetrator cannot be clarified if they remain silent (Recerca 68).

Moreover, news reporters also come to the place where Brother is murdered to report what happened. Sister blames them for searching for a sensational urban story to tell instead of caring about the family's loss. She claims that they are "shieldin their zeal for a good, urban story" (41). Riches and Dawson explain that in such a situation, the media's aim to report the incident may interfere with the family's privacy and grieving process. The media's intrusion with their questions and comments makes it difficult for the family to keep their lives private since their family life is being publicised through the news stories about their loss. Thus, the media's portrayal of the death may prevent the family from creating an affectionate memory of their child together because they, in a sense, lose control over their "story" that is broadcast (147). In line with this, Sister and Mum do not react to the presence of the media in a positive way. Sister mentions

that the reporters, who perhaps expect a gang story, attempt to interview Brother's "hard-lookin" (41) friend there at the shrine. Yet they cannot obtain any answers because his "eyes don't stop flowin" (41). The image of a friend who is upset because he lost his friend provides an alternative to the biased media representations that generally associate black youth with gang culture when they report the murders of black teenagers (Goddard and Fragkou 156). Instead of "black on black violence," the play displays "black on black love" (42), as Sister suggests. More interested in a scandalous story, the media do not show his friends crying. They only ask questions without considering the family's emotions and privacy. As a result, Mum does not want to get involved with the media. She is reluctant to have an interview with the news reporters, as evidenced when she says that she has "got nuthin nice to say. / Nu'un polite / nu'un broadcastable / nu'un righteous / nu'un forgivin" (42). Moreover, she does not want to seem "dignified" (42) or "strong" (42) in the news because she is not feeling that way. She does not take the role of a stoic, resilient mother that the media demand her to be (Osborne, "How Do We" 239). She tries to avoid people's reactions and questions. She does want people to see her crying and feel happy because it is not them who experienced this tragic event. In addition, she thinks if she appears in the news, people will ask "where the smoke was cos su'un muss force the fire" (42). Put differently, people will imply that Brother must have done something to increase the chances of being murdered. In cases of homicide, society tends to relate the cause of murder to the victim's behaviour in order to feel safe (Rinear 47). People may question the innocence of the murdered person so that they can assume they themselves will not go through such an event. This is another factor that makes the situation more difficult for the family of the victim, leaving them to deal with the community's reactions blaming the victim besides grieving for their loss. Especially, when the news stories associate the victim with kinds of behaviour that might play a part in the event, or provoke the attacker, it stigmatises the victim and his/her family. Therefore, it prevents the public from identifying with the victim's family members. Rather than identifying with the family, people tend to "distance themselves from self-destructive behaviour and from relatives who appeared to have condoned or failed to prevent it" (Riches and Dawson 145). Hence, Mum presumes that if the news stories cover their loss, the public will try

to relate his son with deviant behaviours and mistakenly see their experience as a cautionary tale for themselves from which they need to learn.

MUM: So they can look

[…]

and see me crying

Look

Glad it not them

[…]

I don't got nuthin nice to say.

Nu'un polite

Nu'un broadcastable. (42)

Besides avoiding the media, the family members also want to avoid the other characters around them, which is another grief response to bereavement. Although their privacy is interrupted by those in their house – the Victim Support Officer who sits with Mum, the police, and Sister's co-workers who come to their house when they heard the news – the family members prefer to isolate themselves from all these people. Sister does not really welcome her colleagues who are there to offer their condolences. Similarly, Mum does not want anyone to come to their house. Dad initially takes the phone calls because they need to inform their relatives. However, he cannot continue doing so and therefore takes the "phone off its hook" (46) since it is emotionally difficult for him to tell people over and over again that his son is killed. Dad also warns his daughter not to take calls or go near the phone, and he does not want to listen to what his daughter says. Generally, people who experience distressing situations seek support and help from their relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Sharing the emotions can produce a sense of security for individuals in the times of bereavement since people outside the family can provide help and affection. However, the bereaved may not always seek support or find the support that he/she need because his/her acquaintances may not meet his/her emotional needs (Zulueta 202). In a similar vein, Bowlby argues that losing an attachment figure is likely to lead to a search for help, which may also lead to a rejection of help from those who

respond (*Sadness* 31-33). During a time of bereavement, the survivors of the event may detach themselves from others who can actually help and support them. They may avoid professionals who may provide professional support, their friends, and even family members as these remind them of the homicide and the attachment figure that they lost (Amick-McMullan 26). Also, Amick-McMullan explains that "a sudden, traumatic loss is especially likely to shatter a survivor's assumptions of the world as an orderly, fair place. Particularly in the aftermath of the murder of a loved one, a survivor's world view, sense of security and trust in others are profoundly threatened" (26). Additionally, Zulueta claims that the numbing reaction, a grief response, "is a psychological state during which traumatised people complain of feeling detached, unable to feel close even to those they love" (194). Thus, in Zulueta's view, they can isolate themselves from their attachments in order to avoid the memories and the feeling of hopelessness that the tragic loss causes. This detachment may even lead to conflicts within the family, marital tension, and even divorce (194). In *Random*, their bereavement does not create marital problems between Mum and Dad, but it causes a conflict between them and Sister. They not only avoid the people around them, but they also have conflicts among themselves. The family members are separated from one another. Dad sits in the kitchen; Mum is in the front room with the Victim Support Officer; and Sister isolates herself in Brother's room. The familiar and ordinary life of the family is transformed into "numbed domestic isolation" in the end (Osborne, "How Do We" 238). Dad does not want to talk to his daughter, nor does he want her to answer the phone or go to the kitchen where they keep Brother's bag that the police brought, wishing to refrain from any reminder of the murder. Mum also looks at her daughter angrily although Sister does not understand the reason. Even though Mum wants to inform her daughter of the murder and be with her when she learns it, later on she seems to direct her frustration at her daughter. Mum vents her frustration on her daughter because Sister brings the news that the boy who is killed is definitely Brother, after she and Dad identify Brother's body in the mortuary. Despite Sister and Dad's identification of the body, Mum's denial continues. She asks to see her son's body, which Dad and Sister do not allow since it might be more traumatic for her to see Brother's deformed body. She thus goes on not believing what they say. She looks at them as if they were "the perpetrators" (45) and insistently questions if Dad and Sister are sure that the boy who is killed is their son.

MUM: You sure it was him?

SISTER: Yeh. It was.

MUM: How yu know?

SISTER: Dad says, “It was.”

MUM: Y’see his mark?

SISTER: I say… Yeh.

MUM: Yu see his mark?

SISTER: Dad says, “Yeh” too.

MUM: Y’sure it was him?

SISTER: Yeh. It was him, Mum.

[…]

MUM: Y’sure he was dead? (45-46)

Mum still hopes that that boy may not be her son, or at least even if it is him, he may not be dead. The Victim Support Officer who comes to help and support the bereaved family tries to calm Mum by talking to her. Mum only accepts the professional support of Victim Support Officer while she has conflicts with her family. Families may reject professional support, such as the support of Victim Support Officers, thinking that officers cannot understand what they go through (Riches and Dawson 156). However, Mum does not refuse the officer’s help and listens to his/her relieving statements. While the officer helps to calm her, she still looks at her daughter angrily. She shows her anger by “kiss[ing] her teeth at” her daughter (46). Kissing teeth is a Western Caribbean gesture which is made by making a sound with the teeth (Patrick and Figueroa 383). Although it may carry different meanings in various contexts, it usually indicates the person’s annoyance, disapproval, and anger (Patrick and Figueroa 386). Therefore, with her gesture, Mum discloses her displeasure and irritation with the situation. She vents her anger on her family because they did not give her the answers that she expected, and they did not let her see her son. They destroyed the faint hope that she had, and she had to face the painful reality because of them. Thus, it can be stated that the loss they experienced isolate the family members from one another during the process of

registering and accepting the reality since the family members cannot be supportive to one another while they need help themselves (Parkes 51).

Isolating herself from her family and the other people at home, Sister goes to her brother's room. She looks around and realises that everything is the same as he left in the morning. She checks his drawers, stating that he would be mad if he knew she is there. Then, she sits on the ground and stays there for a while to be alone with his memories. She also wants to keep her brother's smell in the room so that they can still have a part of him to remember Brother, although she was complaining about the stink in the room in the morning. It is evident that she is preoccupied with her Brother's memories and what is left behind him. She struggles to recollect scraps of Brother's memory. Her last memories of him are recorded in her mind, together with the daily routine of the family, with certain time checks in the first part of the play: "[i]ss cold. Truss mi. 8.32. […] None a that's keeping me here… 9.03" (8-10). However, the time is no longer mentioned in the second part after Brother dies. Sam Haddow interprets this as follows:

> Prior to Brother's death all memory is valuable and must be retained in order not to lose him to the irretrievable trace […]. After Brother dies, Sister's memory slips into freefall because the impetus driving it has dissolved. Rather than archiving the final moments of a relationship she is left adrift in the wreckage caused by its loss. (286-87)

While Mum is still struggling to accept that her son died, Sister seems to accept the reality. Yet she cannot make sense of the murder. Although it is a "random" murder that does not have any apparent reason, she asks, "[h]ow come 'random' haveta happen to him?" (49) Burgess refers to this kind of murders, when there is no prior conflict between the victim and the perpetrator, as "the blitz attack" (392). When one falls victim to a blitz attack, it is not easy for the family to resolve their grieving process since they cannot comprehend the reason for the attack (Burgess 392). Sister and her parents do not ask who killed Brother and why they had an argument; instead, they focus on the fact that he is dead. Only Sister, and nobody else, questions why they experienced this tragic loss. She cannot comprehend how their lives changed permanently in a single day. She describes how their house is unusually silent and how

the birds stop singing while they were twittering in the morning, also referring to the sun that stops shining that day.

SISTER: Birds is silent
grievin as well.
Neighbourhood Stafs still
barkin the shit outta the area –
an' the sun –
the sun decided it's done for the day –
and this room…
(inhales deeply). (50)

Her depression is conveyed through these descriptions of her surroundings. In short, not the event itself but how it affects the family members is foregrounded in the play.

As can be seen, *Random* highlights the emotions and reactions of each family member to the bereavement they experience. The style of the play also contributes to the aim of the play, which is to highlight the emotions and reactions of the bereaved family. *Random* does not contain many dialogues, nor does it comprise overlapping dialogues or active silences. It has unfinished sentences; however, these may be interpreted as the characters' inarticulacy in the face of death and bereavement. The communication between the characters is limited because it is mostly based on the characters' inner voices. The only character whose inner voice is not heard is Dad. Since he "doesn't say much," his feelings and reactions are described by Mum and Sister. Although Mum's voice is also heard, the events are predominantly described by Sister. Towards the end of the play, Dad disappears completely, and everything is explained from Sister's perspective. The effect of the murder is also expressed with the changing tone of the play. While the first part of the play, until the police arrive, portrays a family's mundane day, the second part has a more depressive tone. However, although the play has a lighter tone in the first part, the tension is created in this part by the exact clock time

that Brother and Sister mention. It is similar to recording what happens in their lives and actions. In addition, Osborne draws an analogy between these exact time checks in the play and the doctors' stating the time of a person's death ("Resisting" 175). The last clock time is given when the police cars first come to the family's house. After that point, the normal day of the family, which starts with their interaction, ends with "domestic separateness" (Osborne, "Resisting" 175). The play does not reach a solution; the perpetrator of the murder is not found since Tucker Green only depicts a family that is stricken by grief.

All in all, *Random* is the portrait of a family that is bereaved by the murder of their son. The death of Brother shatters the normality of their lives and traumatises the family since it is not anticipated and is quite violent. Thus, it can be stated that here, violence is the cause of the family's trauma. The violent murder is not displayed, nor is the reason for the murder revealed. Yet, the murderer's further mutilation of the body suggests his/her aim to humiliate the victim. Such a murder can lead the public to question whether the boy did something to provoke the murderer. It is also seen in the play that the media are more interested in the story behind the murder, perhaps expecting a gang story. Moreover, the police immediately question whether Brother is connected to a gang because he is black. In other words, the media, the police, and the people around the family approach the murder in a prejudiced way. They are rather concerned about the reason why the boy is killed brutally. However, the play shows that black teenagers can also be the victims of "random" attacks, which are not necessarily related to gang culture. On the other hand, these details are not important for the family; what matters for the family is that their son is dead. They do not question the reason for the murder or who attacked their son. They only focus on the fact that they lost an attachment figure in their lives. Therefore, the family members tend to avoid the people who are curious about the story behind the incident because their attitude makes the situation more tragic and complicated for the family. Finally, this complex process and the violent murder lead to different reactions in the family, which is foregrounded in the play more than the tragic event itself.

CONCLUSION

Debbie Tucker Green is known for her portrayal of disturbing matters concerning black people locally and globally. The characters in her plays usually encounter traumatic incidents that result in tragic consequences in their lives. Especially in *Stoning Mary* and *Random*, which this thesis analysed, the characters deal with illness, violence, and loss of their family members, which lead to traumatic effects. The characters who experience traumatic incidents turn against each other or isolate themselves from one another, instead of being helpful and supportive. The plays show that if people are in a difficult situation, they are more concerned about their own problems.

In *Stoning Mary,* Tucker Green presents characters who suffer from illness, violence, and trauma, as well as poverty. Husband and Wife struggle with AIDS and fight for one prescription because they cannot afford another one. However, their lives do not end because they cannot receive treatment for AIDS, but because Child Soldier kills them. This means that sickness and violence afflict them at the same time. Similarly, Husband and Wife's daughters try to overcome illness and violence. Towards the end of the play, it is revealed that Older Sister has AIDS, too. She also tries to take the medicine from her boyfriend, but unlike her parents, she succeeds in doing so. Thus, it can be stated that there is hope for Older Sister' life. Yet her younger sister Mary is not as lucky as Older Sister since she is imprisoned and later executed by stoning because of the murder she commits. Including Older Sister, no one is willing to help Mary; thus, she becomes the victim of the violent justice system. On the other hand, the parents of the Child Soldier that Mary kills become traumatised by the abduction of their son and his eventual death, although they do not deal with any illnesses. The trauma that they experience when they lose their child to soldiering and then to death causes familial conflicts between Mum and Dad, as well as other grief responses.

Likewise, in *Random*, though the family do not suffer from any illness, the characters' lives are disrupted and ruined by violence and loss as well. The family members – Mum, Dad, and Sister – are bereaved by the tragic murder of Brother, which is revealed

by the police who come to the house to inform the family. The family learn that their son is stabbed outside his school as a result of a quarrel at the end of an ordinary day. This violent homicide cuts Brother's life short and traumatises his family, and each family member copes with this violent incident differently.

Thus, this thesis has discussed that the issues of violence, loss, and trauma are interdependent in these two plays. Both plays present the loss of a family member, which is caused by physical violence, specifically homicide. There are two types of loss in the plays: loss of a son and loss of parents. These losses are quite traumatic in the sense that they are unexpected and violent. Moreover, losing someone with whom the bereaved had a close relationship, such as a family member, is likely to make the loss more traumatic. The effect of losing a significant person on the characters' lives is examined through Bowlby's Attachment Theory, and traumatic loss, through the studies of several psychoanalysts. *Stoning Mary* and *Random* underline the impact of these violent and traumatic losses on the family members who are left behind. Neither of the plays dwells on any cultural rituals related to mourning; they only show the characters' immediate grief responses to the loss of their family members. These grief responses caused by traumatic loss are illustrated in the plays in the light of different psychiatrists' remarks, including Elisabeth Kübler Ross and David Kessler. Moreover, the different motives of violence in *Stoning Mary* are explored through Felicity de Zulueta and Celia Harding's arguments, and in the analysis of *Random*, Nirit Karni Vizer, Ofra Walter, and Patricia Evans's views are employed. In *Stoning Mary*, the characters who experience the bereavement of their loved ones act in a violent way towards either the perpetrator of the murder or their family members. In this sense, violence is both the reason and consequence of their loss. On the other hand, in *Random*, violence is only the reason of the family's bereavement. The family lose an attachment figure because of homicide, and their emotional responses to that are manifested in the forms of avoidance of the people around them, including their family members, alongside anger, disbelief, and numbing.

In *Stoning Mary,* as has just been mentioned, violence is both the cause and the result of a loss. The characters lose their loved ones because of violence, and they manifest their grief in the forms of physical and verbal violence. It is also seen that they inflict violence on people who they think are responsible for their loss. There are two types of loss in the play: Older Sister and Mary lose their parents because the Child Soldier kills them, and Mum and Dad lose their son since Mary murders him. To state the same thing differently, the Child Soldier's violence causes Mary to lose her parents, which leads to further violence in the name of revenge. Mary considers her action right because she thinks that it is a response to her parents' death. However, her righteous action in her own way results in Mum and Dad's bereavement since they lose their son because of Mary. Although their targets are different, Mum and Dad also turn to violence to express their pain caused by the loss of their child. Mum engages in physical violence and participates in Mary's stoning. With the same motive as Mary, she initiates the stoning by throwing the first stone in order to soothe her own pain. While the target of Mum's violence is the person who kills her son, Dad inflicts his verbal violence on his wife instead of the perpetrator since he thinks that Mum is responsible for their child's becoming a soldier in the first place and therefore his eventual death. He constantly insults his wife, mocks her, and intimidates her. Their separation from their child, first temporarily and then permanently, creates conflicts between Mum and Dad. They bicker over the memories of their son, verbally hurting each other. Another character who engages in verbal violence is Older Sister. Even though her immediate reaction to the loss of her parents is unclear, she also resorts to verbal violence. However, instead of the murderer of her mother and father, she batters her sister Mary. When she visits Mary in prison, she taunts her about her appearance and intelligence, besides scolding her to hurt her emotionally. Thus, while Mum and Mary try to hurt the person who kills their loved ones, and Dad attacks his wife psychologically because he blames her for their loss, Older Sister chooses her sister as the target of her violent behaviour, although she is not the one who causes her bereavement.

In *Random*, the relationship between traumatic loss and violence works only in one direction, unlike *Stoning Mary*. There is only one type of loss: the family lose their son

because of homicide. Brother is stabbed by an unidentified person on the street. The family's loss is also very traumatic since they lose their young son prematurely and unexpectedly when they think he is at school. Additionally, the way he is killed makes their bereavement more painful. The perpetrator symbolically slashes Brother's mouth and scoops one of his eyes in order to insultingly make him look like a clown. These violent actions lead to an even deeper grief. Moreover, Brother's murder is investigated by the police and attracts the attention of the media, which expects a sensational gang story. This scrutiny prevents the family from grasping the shocking incident because there are legal and social procedures they have to deal with first. During this complicated and painful process, their first reaction to the police, when they inform the family about the murder, is disbelief. The family members appear to deny the fact that their son is dead. While Mum and Sister suspiciously ask questions to the police about the incident, Dad directly tells the officers that he does not believe them. He also shows his reaction by serving the police his too sweet tea, which he usually does to people he does not like. Even after the identification of Brother's body by Sister and Dad, Mum still continues not to believe her son's death, though her daughter and husband seem to accept the fact. Dad retreats into more silence and cannot articulate his grief after he sees his son's body; Sister becomes angry and vents her anger on the police and the witnesses who are unwilling to tell what they saw. Yet Sister's anger does not escalate into violence. Her anger is expressed only in the form of questioning, not in the form of violent behaviours. Avoidance is still another response that the family members give. Mum avoids the media's questions so that they cannot talk about her son in a judgemental way. Dad does not want to talk to anybody on the phone in order not to explain the details of the murder, and Sister isolates herself from her family in her brother's room to stay away from the people in their house and be with Brother's memories. So the family members experience their grief and deal with this tragic event in their individualistic ways.

In accordance with the content, Tucker Green's style in *Stoning Mary* and *Random* also contributes to the depiction of the impact of the issues traumatising the characters. First of all, ambiguity is one of the common stylistic features in the two plays analysed in

this thesis. Although the characters are portrayed as trying to cope with clear-cut problems such as AIDS, child soldiering, stoning punishment, in *Stoning Mary*, and murder, in *Random,* these plays are not issue-based. The playwright does not present the reasons for the problems she depicts or offer any solutions to these problems. Instead, she highlights the consequences of these problems more than their reasons. To illustrate, *Stoning Mary* does not explain how Mum and Dad's son becomes a soldier, why he kills specifically Husband and Wife, as well as how Husband, Wife, and Old Sister are infected with AIDS. How Mary learns which soldier kills her parents and how Mum learns it is Mary who kills her son are also left ambiguous. In addition, only the titles of each scene indicate the issues that are represented in the scenes; they are not mentioned or discussed by the characters. Similarly, in *Random,* Tucker Green does not clarify the background of the murder. It is uncertain why Brother and the perpetrator have a clash and who the perpetrator is because the play does not show if the police could solve the case. Thus, Tucker Green does not concentrate on teenage knife crime problem, which was common at the time when the play was produced, but the emotional effect of the stabbing on the family by leaving the background of the incident ambiguous.

Besides the background of the events, the actions of killing are not shown in the plays, either. In *Stoning Mary*, the Child Soldier's murder of Husband and Wife is only implied by the soldier's holding a machete and destroying the couple's prescription. In like manner, how Mary kills the Child Solider is neither shown nor insinuated. It is revealed from the dialogue between Older Sister and Mary when Mary appears in prison awaiting her execution. In addition, the act of stoning is not displayed but implied. The play ends when Mum takes a stone to throw at Mary. Moreover, in *Random,* too, the brutal murder of Brother happens offstage. The murder is disclosed through the characters' statements in the first part of the play. Mum and Sister's questions to the police reveal that there was an "altercation," an "attack" (28). Sister also mentions that there is a blood stain on Brother's phone that the police give the family. In other words, the information that Brother is dead is not openly stated but implied. Furthermore, the brutality of the murder is revealed by Sister when she describes the cuts and slashes on Brother's body. She interprets some of the cuts on the body as a sign of Brother's effort

to defend himself. It is also understood from Sister's description that the perpetrator disfigured Brother's body besides killing him, which may well carry symbolic meanings. So, the violent actions in the plays are either disclosed through implications or described by the family members.

Besides ambiguity, there are other stylistic features that enhance the impact of the issues presented. In *Stoning Mary*, it is observed that the characters encounter violence, loss, and illness; however, they do not support or help each other in the time of distress. The effects of violence are portrayed through violent or uncaring characters. Husband and Wife are in conflict about their treatment; Older Sister does not support her sister when she is in prison, and Mum and Dad turn against each other when they lose their son. Their lack of care and support is also conveyed through their ruptured communication. The characters fail to listen to each other when they "share" their feelings and thoughts. Their statements overlap and mostly remain unheard because they do not give attention to each other, or because they try to relate their real thoughts by remaining silent. On the other hand, *Random* does not include uncaring characters and their failure of communication, but it can be seen that the murder of Brother isolates the family members from one another. While the characters' real emotions remain unsaid in *Stoning Mary*, the family members' personal ways of dealing with pain is expressed through their inner voices in *Random*. The play contains very little dialogue because it is mostly based on characters' inner thoughts and feelings. However, the events are mostly narrated by Sister, especially in the second part of the play, though Mum and Dad's voices are also heard occasionally.

Another characteristic of these plays is that the characters are given common names, instead of proper names indicating any specific culture. They are named after their roles in the family with the exception of Mary, which is used in many different cultures and therefore a common proper name. Although Tucker Green writes about the problems of black people in *Stoning Mary* and *Random*, the use of family terms draws attention to the commonality, or universality, of these issues of violence, trauma, and loss. Thus, it

can be stated that race is not discussed in terms of racial discrimination or racial identity in these two plays. In *Stoning Mary*, the issues tackled are mostly seen in Africa, though there is no cultural indication or reference. Yet these problems that mostly African people experience are reflected as global human problems with which African people happen to deal. By employing white characters while exploring issues primarily related to Africa, Tucker Green draws attention to the fact that white people, too, can experience these problems. Likewise, *Random* does not underline race, either. Although the number of black British teenagers who became victims of knife crime epidemic of that time is more than their white peers, the writer only focuses on the impact of this situation on the family. She portrays a West Indian family, but she does not reflect this knife crime as a problem that only black people encounter.

Finally, in the light of all these, it can be concluded that Debbie Tucker Green shows in *Stoning Mary* and *Random* that illness, trauma, and violence can be experienced by everybody regardless of race. These distressing situations, such as the loss of a loved one, have destructive effects on people. These two plays underline that each character or person tries to ease his or her pain, resulting from the traumatising loss, in a different way. While some of them retreat into silence and grieve more privately, others express their sorrow in the form of violence.

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