

T.C.
DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI PROGRAMI
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

**IN SEARCH OF A BLACK FEMALE LEGACY:
ARTISTIC CREATIVITY AS AN AGENT OF
TRANSFORMATION IN ADRIENNE KENNEDY'S
PLAYS**

Pınar ŞAHİNOĞLU

Danışman
Yrd. Doç. Dr. Esra ÇOKER KÖRPEZ

2010

Yemin Metni

Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak sunduđum “In Search of a Black Female Legacy: Artistic Creativity as an Agent of Transformation in Adrienne Kennedy’s Plays” adlı çalışmanın, tarafımdan, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuđunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve bunu onurumla doğrularım.

Tarih

04/01/2010

Pınar ŞAHİNOĐLU

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ SINAV TUTANAĞI

Öğrencinin

Adı ve Soyadı

:Pınar ŞAHİNOĞLU

Anabilim Dalı

:Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları

Programı

:Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı

Tez Konusu

:In Search of a Black Female Legacy: Artistic

Creativity as an Agent of Transformation in Adrienne Kennedy's Plays

Sınav Tarihi ve Saati:

Yukarıda kimlik bilgileri belirtilen öğrenci Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü'nün tarih ve sayılı toplantısında oluşturulan jürimiz tarafından Lisansüstü Yönetmeliği'nin 18. maddesi gereğince yüksek lisans tez sınavına alınmıştır.

Adayın kişisel çalışmaya dayanan tezini dakikalık süre içinde savunmasından sonra jüri üyelerince gerek tez konusu gerekse tezin dayanağı olan Anabilim dallarından sorulan sorulara verdiği cevaplar değerlendirilerek tezin,

BAŞARILI OLDUĞUNA

OY BİRLİĞİ

DÜZELTİLMESİNE

OY ÇOKLUĞU

REDDİNE

ile karar verilmiştir.

Jüri teşkil edilmediği için sınav yapılamamıştır.

Öğrenci sınava gelmemiştir.

* Bu halde adaya 3 ay süre verilir.

** Bu halde adayın kaydı silinir.

*** Bu halde sınav için yeni bir tarih belirlenir.

Evet

Tez burs, ödül veya teşvik programlarına (Tüba, Fulbright vb.) aday olabilir.

Tez mevcut hali ile basılabilir.

Tez gözden geçirildikten sonra basılabilir.

Tezin basımı gerekliliği yoktur.

JÜRİ ÜYELERİ

İMZA

..... Başarılı Düzeltme Red

..... Başarılı Düzeltme Red

..... Başarılı Düzeltme Red

ÖZET
Tezli Yüksek Lisans
Siyahi Kadının Mirasını Arayışı: Adrienne Kennedy'nin Oyunlarında Bir
Değişim Aracı Olarak Sanatsal Yaratıcılık
Pınar ŞAHİNOĞLU

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Anabilim Dalı
Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Programı

Yaşam, bağımsızlık ve mutluluk arayışı gibi temel prensipler üzerine kurulmuş olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, özgürlük kavramının bütün vatandaşları için vazgeçilmez haklardan biri olduğunu savunur. Özgürlük vaadi, Birleşik Devletleri'ni dünya üzerinde birçok göçmenin ilgi odağı olan bir ülke haline getirmiştir. Fakat iradeleri dışında getirilen köleler için Birleşik Devletler her zaman paradoksların ülkesi olmuştur. Afrikalı insanlar, ana vatanlarından kaçırılarak, kölelik süresince ve sonrasında tarifi zor acılar çekmişlerdir.

Birleşik Devletler'deki sosyal hayat, beyaz ataerkil kanunlar tarafından düzenlenmiştir. Siyahi insanların beyaz ataerkil toplumda yaşadıkları zulüm onları psikolojik, ruhi, fiziksel ve ekonomik yönlerden etkilemiştir. Fakat süregelen ataerkil hakimiyet yüzünden Birleşik Devletler'deki siyahi kadın, siyahi erkeğe kıyasla daha ağır bir yükün altındadır. Irkı ve cinsiyeti yüzünden beyaz toplum tarafından daha fazla baskı gören siyahi kadın, siyahi kökleriyle ve kadınsal mirasıyla bağı koparmazken kendisinin, beyaz erkek toplumuyla baş etmesini sağlayan yaratıcılığına sığınır.

Adrienne Kennedy, Birleşik Devletler'in en üretken oyun yazarlarından birisidir. Oyunları beyaz ataerkil hakimiyeti yüzünden acı çeken kadınlarla ilgilidir. Buna rağmen Kennedy'nin ana kadın karakterleri yazma eylemiyle ayakta durabilip varlıklarını sürdürmüşlerdir. Bu karakterler yazarak teselli bulmuşlar ve dile getiremediklerini kağıda dökerek annelerinin ve büyük annelerinin mirasına tekrar kavuşmaya çalışmışlardır. Bu çalışma, Adrienne Kennedy'nin üç oyununu, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964), *The Owl Answers* (1965), *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976), analiz ederek beyaz ataerkil hakimiyetin siyah kadın birey üzerindeki boğucu etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlar. Böylece, "yaratıcı hayal gücü"nü Afro-Amerikalı oyun yazarı tarafından bir tedavi, öz keşif ve kadını özgürleştirme yolu olarak kullanıldığını gösterecektir.

Key Words: 1)feminizm 2) siyah feminizm 3) Adrienne Kennedy
4) *Funnyhouse of a Negro* 5) *The Owl Answers* 6) *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*.

ABSTRACT

Masters of Art Degree
In Search of a Black Female Legacy: Artistic Creativity as an Agent of
Transformation in Adrienne Kennedy's Plays
Pınar ŞAHİNOĞLU

Dokuz Eylül University
Institute of Social Sciences
Department of Western Languages and Literatures
American Culture and Literature Department

The United States of America, which is founded on the principles of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, advocates the concept of freedom as one of the inalienable rights for all its citizens. The promise of freedom has made the United States a country of attraction for many immigrants around the world. However, for the slaves who were brought beyond their control, the United States has always been a country of paradoxes. Being abducted from their mother countries, African people have suffered ineffable pains during and after slavery.

The social life of the United States is regulated by white patriarchal codes. The oppression black people have experienced in the white patriarchal world affected them mentally, spiritually, physically, and economically. Because of the prevailing patriarchal dominance, however, the black female in the United States has been under a heavier burden when compared to the black male. Oppressed more by the white male world because of her race and sex, the black female takes shelter in her creativity which enables her to cope with white male society while not losing in touch with her black roots and female heritage.

Adrienne Kennedy is one of the most prolific playwrights of the United States. Her plays deal with black female characters suffering from white patriarchal oppression. Nevertheless, whatever the situation, Kennedy's female protagonists are able to endure and survive through the "act of writing." They find solace in writing and by pouring out on the papers what they cannot say, they try to reconnect with their mothers' and grandmothers' legacy. This study by analyzing Adrienne Kennedy's three plays *A Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964), *The Owl Answers* (1965), and *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976), aims to interrogate the stifling impacts of white patriarchal oppression on the black female subject. By doing so, it will also illustrate how the "creative imagination" is used by the Afro-American playwright as a channel of healing, self-discovery and female liberation.

Key Words: 1) feminism 2) black feminism 3) Adrienne Kennedy
4) *Funnyhouse of a Negro* 5) *The Owl Answers*, 6) *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*.

CONTENTS

IN SEARCH OF A BLACK FEMALE LEGACY: ARTISTIC CREATIVITY AS AN AGENT OF TRANSFORMATION IN ADRIENNE KENNEDY'S PLAYS

YEMİN METNİ	i
TUTANAK	ii
ÖZET	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CONTENTS	v-vi
INTRODUCTION	1-3

PART ONE

THE IMPACT OF WHITE OPPRESSION

1.1. The Mental Impact of Oppression	4
1.2. The Spiritual Impact of Oppression	13
1.3. The Physical Impact of Oppression	21
1.4. The Economic Impact of Oppression	26

PART TWO

BLACK FEMINISM

2.1. What is feminism?	29
2.2. The Origin of the Movement	31
2.3. Black Feminism	32
2.4. Anna Julia Cooper, Alice Walker, and bell hooks: Three Voices from the Black World	36

PART THREE
ADRIENNE KENNEDY AND DRAMA AS A WAY TO SURVIVE IN
WHITE MALE WORLD

3.1.	Adrienne Kennedy: A Playwright of Selves	49
3.2.	A General Evaluation of <i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i> , <i>The Owl Answers</i> and <i>A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White</i>	52
3.3	Interrelated Nature of Oppressions in <i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i> , <i>The Owl</i> <i>Answers</i> , and <i>A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White</i> and its Reflections on the Female Character	56
3.4	Impact of White Oppression on Black Female in <i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i> , <i>The Owl Answers</i> , and <i>A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White</i>	61
	CONCLUSION	76
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	80

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the impact of white oppression on the black female subject and the coping strategies that the black female uses in order to survive in white male world. In this context, Adrienne Kennedy's three plays *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *The Owl Answers* and *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* will be analyzed. Made up of three parts, this study aims to show how the creative imagination can play a pivotal role in black women's struggle for liberation and self-understanding.

America is a country of many people with different backgrounds. Immigrants from various parts of the world have come to the United States willingly in hope for molding a better future for themselves. The U.S., which has always stood for freedom, liberty and pursuit of happiness, has not provided its black citizens with these rights. Black people, who have been abducted from their native lands, have found themselves in a new country with a distinct set of values. In order to survive they had to adapt to this new life; a life which forced them into servitude, humiliation and debasement. Slavery - a shame of the United States - was abolished in 1865. After the Emancipation, black people have struggled more than before to be able to live in the United States proudly.

The negative impacts of white oppression can be seen on the black identity. Having been born and brought up in the United States, absorbing white values but being incessantly excluded from the white world on account of their color, black people have continuously questioned their place in American society. The paradox between black and white world affects them both mentally and spiritually, and, creates a self-division which is named by W.E.B. Du Bois as "double-consciousness."

Since slavery had been an important aspect of American economy, for many years, white Americans supported slavery by claiming it was for the good of the society and also for the good of the black people. Interpreting Christianity from a

white point of view, the Bible has been used as a proof to support the different thesis about black people's inferior status in terms of race, intellect, and moral. Creating stereotypical black images, white male society confines black people to certain standards which causes economic inferiority of black people. First part of this thesis investigates mental, spiritual, physical and economical results of white oppression on black people.

During the revolutionary periods like the Independence War, French Revolution, Civil Rights era, ideas of liberty affect females, too. Women's movements, starting at the end of the 18th century, have attempted to draw attention to inequalities between the sexes and the inaccurate image of women in the male mind. While white women are talking about sexist discrimination, black women experience two different sides of oppression - racism and sexism. From the 18th century onwards, black feminism has become a way for black females to seek their place in white society.

In the light of the works of three black feminist writers, Anna Julia Cooper, Alice Walker, bell hooks, the second part of this dissertation examines the intersection between gender and race. It will foreground the influential role black feminist thought has played in black women's journey to selfhood and empowerment. Anna Julia Cooper is one of the earliest feminists from the 19th century. She presents the inequality between the races and sexes. Alice Walker, who has coined the term "womanism," is a distinguished writer from the 20th century. She believes that the creative spirit of black women has given black women the power to cope with the interrelated oppressions. She strengthens her theories by providing readers with real life incidents from Afro-American women's lives as well as her own personal life. Bell hooks, who is a faithful supporter of Walker's ideas, takes a more materialistic stance to the oppression and gives importance to the physical and economic solidarity of Afro-American women.

Adrienne Kennedy has given a new life to American drama with her dream-like settings and fragmented characters. Unlike her contemporary black playwrights,

she has not disdained from drawing the portraits of black male and female characters who experience the negative effects of white oppression in a ponderous way. Her earlier female characters, neither fitting in the black world nor white world, generally commit suicide, and, they are portrayed as characters obsessed with whiteness. However, in her later plays, the audience is presented with stronger characters. The later female characters are aware of the black legacy and they promise hope for a healthier black female subject.

In part three, two female characters from Adrienne Kennedy's earlier plays - *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* - are examined. The female characters Sarah and "She," respectively, reflect the negative impacts of white male oppression in their split and fragmented selves. In Kennedy's later plays, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* the protagonist Clara, is presented as a character more aware of her heritage and, thus, is a stronger female figure. What all three characters have in common confirms Alice Walker's thesis about the creative spirit of black female. All three women are involved in reading and writing as a way to cope with the white world that stands indifferent to their existence.

PART ONE

THE IMPACT OF WHITE OPPRESSION

Slavery as an institution and practice has left traumatic effects on the Afro-American experience, especially, in the socialization process of the Afro-American. In order to cope with oppression, black people have tried to balance themselves mentally and spiritually revising white cultural values with a touch of African culture or tried to find a solace by embracing white cultural values wholeheartedly. Whatever the choice, they have lived in the margins of society, mostly, in poor ghettos and slums. Both black men and women have suffered to different extents white oppression. As a common ground, they have experienced the negative impact of white oppression. The first part of this thesis aims to present the ways white culture has affected black people and the measurements that have been taken by blacks to hold on to life in the United States.

1.1. The Mental Impact of Slavery

Identity, as Sandra Carlton Alexander defines it, is “the search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities.”¹ The utmost difference between social context and realities is that while the former constitutes elements which people can control to a certain extent such as the cultural structure of a society, the latter is made up of elements which are beyond people’s control like biology (race). Since social context and realities are important in forming identities, it can be deduced that each different geography re-defines and re-constitutes identities.² Returning to the subject of African American’s unwilling diaspora, their identities suffered not only because of their coerced uprooting but also because of their physical reality which was their different colored complexion, shortly their race. Diaspora, race and identity have always been in a “contradictory interplay” and this complicated the African

¹ Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 379

² Davies, Carole Boyce. (1994). *Black Women, Writing and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 2.

Americans' effort to reach a self-awareness and a self-definition.³ Double consciousness is a term coined by W.E.B. Du Bois that explains this complicated feeling about trying to form an identity for one's self under oppression.

Du Bois' renown masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) which presents very realistically the Black Folk's situation in white society has shaken American society, and, in Rampersad's words has become "a sort of Bible" for black Americans.⁴ Du Bois, in 1897, used the term "double consciousness" for the first time in his essay "The Strivings of the Negro People" which was later republished in his well known book *The Souls of Black Folk*:

After the Egyptian and Indian, The Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. ... He simply wishes to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.⁵

This double consciousness provided him with both "a region of a blue sky" and "great wandering shadows".⁶ In other words, he wished to be like the white people, as an American - the way a human should live. However, the reality of his darker skin made him invisible in the shadows. Du Bois wanted Afro-Americans to be visible under the blue sky of America.⁷

³ Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 379.

⁴ Ibid, p. 238.

⁵ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 364-365.

⁶ Ibid, p.364.

⁷ Ibid, p. 628.

“How does it feel to be a problem?” asks Du Bois in the first paragraph of his essay “Of Our Spiritual Strivings.”⁸ Du Bois himself knew very well what it meant to be a “problem.” He was only a child when he began to interrogate his identity and his negative perception of his appearance in terms of skin color. At school, he and his friends had been exchanging visiting cards until one day a girl, a newcomer refused exchanging her cards with him. At that moment, it dawned on him that he was different from the others.⁹ Even though he was advantageous as a boy in patriarchal society, his skin color imprisoned him to the concept of the “other.” Starting from childhood, similar to many black folks, he also developed a “confused” identity. Because of his race, there was always a strife between the values he had been taught and the treatment he faced. To cite Du Bois:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world.¹⁰

What imprisons black folks in “otherness” is the prejudice which dates back to slavery. Du Bois renders that black folk hoped that emancipation would erase the prejudice of white people, however, emancipation “broadened and intensified the difficulties;” the ballot gave what black folk wanted but did not eradicate the prejudices.¹¹ Only the effort of black men to educate himself may warrant them a journey at whose end black folk can reach “self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect.”¹²

Du Bois furthered his theory of “double-consciousness” in his later autobiographic book *Dusk of Dawn* (1940). One of the chapters of this book titled

⁸ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 363.

⁹ Ibid, p. 364.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 365.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 372.

¹² Ibid, p. 368.

“The White World” scrutinizes what it means to live in a white world from a black male’s eyes:

I lived in an environment which I came to call the white world. I was not an American; I was not a man; I was by long education and continual compulsion and daily reminder, a colored man in a white world; and that white world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds. All this made me limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream. I could not stir, I could not act, I could not live, without taking into careful daily account the reaction of my white environing world. How I travelled and where, what work I did, what income I received, where I ate, where I slept, with whom I talked, where I sought recreation, where I studied, what I wrote and what I could get published - all this depended and depended primarily upon an overwhelming mass of my fellow citizens in the United States, from whose society I was largely excluded.¹³

This definition, surely, reflects the situation of all black folks. The most important thing in this excerpt is how Du Bois defines the surrounding world as a “white world” from what all non-whites are excluded. Afro-Americans live on the same land, however, they lack the same privileges of those belonging to the “overwhelming mass” of citizens. They are always reminded that they are colored men and women in a black world within a white world, whose movement space is determined by strict lines. Within these borders colored folks are expected to have certain life styles which are absolutely different from those of whites’. Living on the same land with limited opportunities and underprivileged status has created mental confusion and imbalance for most Afro-Americans. As Du Bois asserts, “The fact of a white world which is today dominating human culture and working for the continued subordination of the colored races”¹⁴ has become impossible for Afro-Americans to avoid.

How will the black race be saved from this subordinated position? To save black folks from their subordinated positions, “exceptional men” of black race are

¹³ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 653.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 655.

called on duty by Du Bois.¹⁵ “Talented Ten” of every race is responsible for the uplift of her/his race. If the educated and intellectual minority do not work for her/his race, the majority will pull the whole race down. Working is not sufficient without intellectual guides. However, in respect to the issue of black leadership, another important question comes to the fore and that is “How will black folk be educated? Will they be educated according to American or African values?” Du Bois’ answer is:

No Negro who has given earnest thought to the situation of his people in America has failed, at some time in life, to find himself at these cross-roads; has failed to ask himself at some time: What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? ... It is such incessant self-questioning and the hesitation that arises from it, that is making the present period a time of vacillation and contradiction for the American Negro...¹⁶

Then what is the limit? Can black folks really be both African and American at the same time? All of the questions asked here arise because of double consciousness of black folk, the double environment and the double culture in the American world. Du Bois concludes:

We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race ... [I]t is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development.¹⁷

In his essay “Conversation of Races,” Du Bois takes race as a product of a common language, history, traditions, and impulses and not as a product of biological differences. People belonging to different races, naturally, show peculiar physical characteristics but that does not mean some races are better than the others or that

¹⁵ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 842.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 821.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 822.

some people should be the “other” since s/he belongs to another race. “The foundations of race are socioeconomic and ideological.”¹⁸ In this context, black people in the United States speak the same language, believe in the same God, support the same political ideas. These qualities are enough for a group of society to feel the spirit of togetherness as a nation. However, there is also a spiritual side to these facts. People’s mental healthiness is closely associated with the preservation of their spiritual and intellectual values. It is these values that bind a people together and make life enriching.

Apart from the race issue, black women’s situation should also be considered. Since the “white world” of black folks is a patriarchal, racist society, the reality of black woman’s situation is more difficult than of her male counterpart. When “woman and color combine in one, the combination has deep meaning.”¹⁹ Understandably, double consciousness idea was at the heart of Du Bois’ political thoughts, including all black folks regardless of sex. To eradicate this double consciousness, the individual soul must be freed.²⁰

In fact, Du Bois is not the only one who has written about the mental conflict that stems from dual identity. Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) expresses his opinion about the same conflict. Born and brought up in Martinique, his service in the French army made him realize the true face of racism. Although not an American black, Fanon suffered in the hands of French racism. As Du Bois, he firmly believes “culture” to be the shaping force in people’s lives. In regards to European culture, all non-Europeans including the blacks have been molded by “white civilization” and therefore, the soul of black folk is a “white man’s artifact.”²¹ In his book, Fanon also gives place to the traumatic effects of double consciousness: “The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another

¹⁸ Reed Jr., Adolph L. (1997). *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 124.

¹⁹ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 965.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 1130.

²¹ Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press., p. 14.

Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question.”²² Fanon’s idea about a “self-division” between his own self image and the image of the Negro in the white world shows the way how a black is affected mentally. Speaking for colonized subjects, Fanon claims that the more you adapt to mainstream culture, the more you become “closer to being a real human being,” that is, “whiter.”²³

Fanon indicates that his real aim is not to prove the black is equal to white but both white and black are enslaved by their ideas. “The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority” and “in the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence.”²⁴ Thus according to Du Bois, black folk can free her/himself from the bondage of self-hatred only by learning to love her/his blackness and value her/himself.

Giving himself as an example of a black man of the Antilles, who was educated in France, Fanon states that he has absorbed European education, ideas, and culture so he is a European but his skin is black. This is the conflict for an educated middle class Negro for “he does not understand his own race, and the whites do not understand him.”²⁵ Coming in terms with his own situation, he says: “I analyzed my heredity. I made a complete audit of my ailment. I wanted to be typically Negro - it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white - that was a joke.”²⁶ It is hard to detach one’s self from this double dilemma, especially, for the Negro who has little or no education. In his writings, Du Bois calls for an education which will not alienate black folk from her/his people, and, centers on the importance of holding on to Afro-American values. Unfortunately, education which is in the hands of white people has made black people more miserable, alienating them both from their own culture and,

²² Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press., p. 17.

²³ Ibid, p. 18.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 60.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 64.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 132.

the white world, imprisoning them in a limbo, between heaven and hell; in a grey world neither black nor white.

Family is the smallest unit of a society while at the same time it is a “miniature of the nation.”²⁷ Since society is made up of families, being brought up in a family, a child is affected tremendously from his parental upbringing. And later when he starts in life, s/he finds out that the laws, rules, values in the society are similar with the ones in her/his family. To put it succinctly and generally, the initial family values that dominate one’s childhood is replaced by societal values during his adulthood. However, this situation is different for the black child. Speaking about black people who spend their early lives among black people, Fanon writes that “A (psychologically) normal Negro child, having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world.”²⁸ Therefore, double consciousness goes back to childhood when the identity of a person is shaped. Colonized children are exposed to lots of assimilative events starting from primary education. Therefore, every kind of mental illness is actually a result of her/his cultural upbringing and not a result of her/his biology. As Moore indicates “Most African Americans feel it is safe to say we are all Americans until they experience a rude encounter with racism” and this happens at an age much earlier than Du Bois has experienced (at the age of ten.)²⁹

Double consciousness is the dual identity of a black folk who has absorbed the culture of the white world which he has been exposed to and which has continuously excluded him. Therefore, he realizes his difference not only in terms of her/his skin color but also in her/his cultural bearing. Under white gaze her/his skin color imprisons her/him to a black sphere whereas s/he wants to belong to the white sphere; as a result, s/he does not belong to neither and begins to live in a grey world. Du Bois defined this situation in sociological terms and Fanon in psychological terms. They both wrote about dilemma of seeing one’s own self from the other

²⁷ Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, p. 142.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 143.

²⁹ Moore, T. Owens. “A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness.” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 752.

people's point of views and therefore, not being able to develop a positive sense of identity as a reality of a racist society. It can be concluded as Moore says "It is not psychologically healthy to measure your worth through the eyes of others. Moreover, it is not psychologically healthy to be denied full expression of your Blackness or manhood in a White-dominated society."³⁰

Gomez's argument brings a different perspective to the issue of double consciousness. He takes the African diaspora as the core of double consciousness dilemma which leaves African folk with a country "once lost" and America is a country "yet to become home." Then the subjects are unable to achieve a wholeness of spirit and vision and they set sail to a psychic exile.³¹ Between 1500 and 1865, millions of slaves came to America³² and this radical break from the homes and families is the reason of the "fractured self" says Gomez.³³

What Du Bois and Fanon wanted is a universality in human souls. Fanon brings out, "The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness."³⁴ If this is a cultural programming, then according to both Du Bois and Fanon, what is to be done is to free oneself from this problem of double consciousness by not being black nor white but by being a human being, "who reaches out for the universal."³⁵ By gaining self conscious as a human being, the body becomes an "object of consciousness."³⁶ The theory of double-consciousness holds a mirror to the reader by reflecting the mental conflicts of black folk; as a child they may be protected from the effects of racism but once they enter the white world, deep scars will be ingrained in their personality and well-being.

³⁰ Moore, T. Owens. "A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 753.

³¹ Gomez, Michael A. (2004). "Of Du Bois and Diaspora: The Challenge of African American Studies." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Special Issue: Back to the Future of Civilization: Celebrating 30 Years of African American Studies, p. 177.

³² Davis, David Brion. (1988). *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 9.

³³ Gomez, Michael A. (2004). "Of Du Bois and Diaspora: The Challenge of African American Studies." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Special Issue: Back to the Future of Civilization: Celebrating 30 Years of African American Studies, p. 179.

³⁴ Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, p. 9.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 197.

³⁶ Merleau-Ponty qtd in Fanon. (1967). p. 225

Education and learning about the past were very important for both thinkers since "...[T]he lives and personal histories of these individuals were used to demonstrate how reading about the past can provide direction for the future."³⁷ Refraining from telling the history of slavery or at least the history of their own families not to remind their children of the horrible racist acts that their ancestors had to endure, black parents most of the time refrained from telling the history of slavery or at least the history of their own families. This caused the new and future generations to become a stranger to their roots and more open the effects of double-consciousness. In this way, the African child felt detached from her/his heritage and found her/himself easily alienated in the mainstream culture. As long as black children carry the color of their skin as a curse while feeling white then they become invisible. According to Du Bois, superiority will be provided with the rise of black intellectualism bringing enrichment to the mainstream society which they are also citizens of.

1.2. The Spiritual Impact of Oppression

Effects of European culture are not limited to only psychological and sociological facts. From the time the first slaves have come to the shores of the New World, religion is used as one of the justifications of black folks' low-class transition from slavery to today's underclass. White society has molded Christianity into a religion whose holy book is used as the major evidence for the enslavement of blacks. Therefore, under "white Christianity," blacks had been wounded spiritually, too.

Blacks were outside the Christian tradition until the middle of the 18th century. Later when they were converted into Christianity, black preachers such as Jupiter Hammon took the "Anglican theology with pronounced Calvinist

³⁷ Moore, T. Owens. "A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 759.

overtones.”³⁸ Since black writers and orators lacked of formal theological training, preachers like Hammon adopted the same ideas that were given to them by white masters; although they knew how to read and write, they did not question the impositions of white religion about slavery so they became also the defenders of the white people’s views. However, that did not mean the slavery issue was not dealt in a different way from the whites. Lectures and addresses on slavery played an important role in black religion as Holifield indicates and one of the earliest Methodist attack on slavery was Daniel Coker’s *Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister* in 1810.³⁹ Blacks took and studied the Bible, “especially Paul’s assurance that God made all nations of ‘one blood’ (Acts 17:26),”⁴⁰ and associated this view with the Declaration of Independence natural rights of men. They also tried to show the paradox of slavery by stating that their enslaved situation hindered them from fulfilling the divine commandments. The struggle with slavery on intellectual level can be said to pave the way to the later Black nationalist movements.

Bible, which is at the core of the lives of all American Christians, is used to posit reasons for slavery. Slavery was defended or opposed both by whites and blacks according to the Bible. The ones who claimed slavery was a rule from God, not sanctioned by Him, gave examples from the Old Testament in which it is written that Abraham had slaves, too and heathen men could be subjugated by Christians. The New Testament also says that Paul urged that slaves should remain in their positions.

However the most famous myth which was used as a proof for enslavement of black people is the “myth of Ham.” It is written in Bible;

¹⁸Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. ²⁰Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the

³⁸ Holifield, E. Brooks. (2005). *Theology in America : Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*. New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, p. 308.

³⁹ Ibid, p.313.

⁴⁰ Bible qtd in Holifield. (2005). P. 314.

nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." ²⁶He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷"May God enlarge Japheth And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant." (Genesis 25) ⁴¹

According to these passages, after the flood there were three sons of Noah left to procreate on the earth. Theophus H. Smith states, "The re-peopling of the earth by Noah's sons and their descendants - the sons Shem, Japheth, and Ham - figuratively accounts for the differing ethnic divisions (respectively) of Semites or Semitic peoples; Japhetic, or Caucasian peoples; and Hamitic, or black peoples" and Smith makes it clear that by grouping people under three races, Asiatic, Oceanic and aboriginal people were dismissed. ⁴² Thus, the white people's interpretations of Bible grouped people into three races leaving out the other races. If this view is taken into account, then Adam's fall caused all people to be sinners, and accordingly the curse on Canaan, who represented the black race, became a curse on all African people. This view was so popular and intense that even people opposing slavery found themselves trying to prove that the curse of Ham was said to be on Canaan and not Ham and that the offsprings of Canaan were Canaanites, and not African Americans who "suffered the consequences of curse when they lost their land to the armies of Joshua. Proslavery writers pointed out that old Testament narratives showing that Abraham – a 'Friend of God' – and the other patriarchs of Israel owned slaves (Gen. 12:5, 17:13)." ⁴³

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Bible is used as a divine manifestation to either prove or refute claims about slavery. Such disputes and clashes caused Black folk to develop a unique vision of Christianity from the 18th century to 1960s called as "Black Theology."

⁴¹ "Genesis." *New American Standard Bible*.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%209&version=NASB>. (August, 01, 2009).

⁴² Smith, Theophus H. (1995). *Conjuring Culture : Biblical Formations of BlackAmerica*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, p. 226.

⁴³ Bible qtd in Holifield. (2005). P. 496.

Arvarh E. Strickland and Robert E. Wees, Jr. define black religious thought as “not simply white religion in blackface; neither is black religion a formal denomination with a structured doctrine.”⁴⁴ A. Roger Williams defines it as “a theology that emancipates, that breaks shackles, that lets the oppressed go free. If it is less, it cannot be Christian.”⁴⁵ According to Williams, Black Theology is the only expression of Christian theology in America since it arises from the oppressed community and centers on Jesus Christ.⁴⁶

Talking about how God is conceived by Black Theology, Williams explains, “Because of what ‘Christians’ have done in the name of God, the name of God loses meaning for some of the poor and oppressed. While using the name God, the image of Black Theology’s God is ‘The one who is participating in the liberation of the oppressed of the land.’”⁴⁷ Referring to Cone, the father of Black Theology, he adds “Cone, sharply distinguishes this God from the God ‘worshipped in white churches whose primary purpose is to sanctify the racism of whites and to daub the wounds of blacks.’”⁴⁸

In religious belief of the first coloniers, the concept of God was “grounded in the theological tradition stemming from the Protestant reformer John Calvin.”⁴⁹ Believing in the sovereignty of God, people are “His lowly creation.”⁵⁰ According to this belief, people are unable to understand the true nature of God. They can comprehend His wills through Bible and so Bible is at the center of the white religion.⁵¹ As a second tenet, people are innately sinful, they are hopeless before God. In Calvinist belief, it can be said there is an omnipotent and wrathful God.

⁴⁴ Strickland, Arvarh E. and Robert E. Weems, Jr. (2000). *African American Experience: An Historiographical & Bibliographical Guide*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, p. 370.

⁴⁵ Williams, A. Roger. (1971). “A Black Pastor Looks at Black Theology.” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Theology and the Black Consciousness, p. 561.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 561.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 562.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 562.

⁴⁹ Fuller, Robert C. (2004). *Religious Revolutionaries : The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 6

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 6

With the preindustrial capitalism which pulled people towards an ethic of personal freedom and self-determination, strictness of Calvinism gradually abandoned American Protestantism; however, these beliefs about God and Bible did not change.⁵² Then it can be concluded that according to whites' beliefs, God is the only willful and other human beings are weak under His power. That is the main reason why during and after the slavery period, white people used the Bible as a proof to exploit slaves. Christianity is seen as a superior religion belonging to whites. With white and blue eyed Jesus images, white folks made Christianity a sound proof of their superiority leaving blacks forever unfit to Christianity. Nevertheless, later seeing from "the exalted teaching of the prophets that God cares for all the peoples of the earth," they saw the paradoxes of Christianity.⁵³

James H. Cone takes the "two warring ideals" of Du Bois as the center of black religion.⁵⁴ With a religious vision, Cone names "two warring ideals" as African and Christian.⁵⁵ To overcome this double-consciousness spiritually, blacks formed their religious thought which is neither African nor white. In Cone's words, "It is both - but reinterpreted for and adapted to the life - situation of black people's struggle for justice in a nation whose social, political, and economic structure are dominated by a white racist ideology."⁵⁶ African side of religion helped blacks to see "beyond the white distortions of the gospel and to discover its true meaning as God's liberation of the oppressed from bondage" and the Christian side "helped African-Americans to reorient their African past so that it would become useful in the struggle to survive with dignity in a society that they did not make."⁵⁷ Cone points out that combination of two cultures may create a harmonious thought. However, he gives more importance to the African side since he believes that it prevents black

⁵² Fuller, Robert C. (2004). *Religious Revolutionaries : The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.

⁵³ Williams, A. Roger. (1971). "A Black Pastor Looks at Black Theology." *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Theology and the Black Consciousness, p. 566.

⁵⁴ Cone, James H. (1985). "Black Theology in American Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 75th Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, p. 775.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 775.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 775.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 755-756.

religion from becoming merely an imitation of white Christianity.⁵⁸ For Cone, dissimilarities of black religious thought are more important than the similarities because whites used their religion to dominate others whereas black used theirs as an affirmation of their dignity and empowerment, it gave them the strength and courage to struggle for justice.⁵⁹

Roots of black religion can be found in the era of slavery which is the beginning of the black history in the New World. According to Cone, five themes shaped black religious thought during slavery and later helped the Black Theology to develop: “justice, liberation, hope, love, and suffering.”⁶⁰

Cone writes that in black religion Justice meant the punishment of oppressors and therefore brought liberation to the oppressed people. Consequently, these two concepts are closely related to the idea of hope - for God’s protection for the poor, and the needy: One must trust in God’s love and God’s justice, for eventually in the end God will punish the oppressors and will hold them accountable for all the crimes they have done:⁶¹

God's creation of all persons in the divine image bestows sacredness upon human beings and thus makes them the children of God. To violate any person's dignity is to transgress “God's great law of love.” We must love the neighbor because God has first loved us. And because slavery and racism are blatant denials of the dignity of the human person, God's justice means that “He will call the oppressors to account.”⁶²

If God is God of the oppressed ones, then Jesus is the Oppressed One, too and the gospel story of his life, death, and resurrection served as a foundation for blacks to struggle for liberation and justice.⁶³

⁵⁸ Cone, James H. (1985). “Black Theology in American Religion.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 75th Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, p. 756.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 756.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 756.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.758.

⁶² Ibid p. 758.

⁶³ Williams, A. Roger. (1971). “A Black Pastor Looks at Black Theology.” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Theology and the Black Consciousness, p. 769.

The lowly birth of Jesus, his singular purpose to be with, struggle with, and set free the oppressed; his constant harassment by the official authorities who questioned his claims to usher in a new society for the least in his day; his eventual death sanctioned by government officials and the police; and his final triumph of resurrection all bring hope, a sense of possibilities, and power for the poor.⁶⁴

Blacks suffered much throughout American history, hoping that God's love, his justice would soon make itself visible and would liberate them. According to Cone this suffering was the greatest challenge for blacks to abandon their faiths, yet they still tried to hold on to their faith:

In their attempt to resolve the theological dilemma that slavery and racism created, African-Americans turned to two texts - the Exodus and Psalms 68:31.7. They derived from the Exodus text the belief that God is the liberator of the oppressed. They interpreted Psalms 68:31 as an obscure reference to God's promise to redeem Africa: "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God." Despite African-Americans reflections on these texts, the contradictions remained between oppression and their faith.⁶⁵

Developing black religious thought from their oppressed situation in the white society, blacks' religious thought about women is different from "white patriarchal Christianity." Passages from Bible such as: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate,"⁶⁶ and "[I]t was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression"⁶⁷ tell that the Fall of Adam and Eve has been used as an evidence for women's weak nature by white patriarchy. However, since black theology is the religion of the oppressed its vision about the women is also different from the white vision of women. Black women and men

⁶⁴ Hopkins, Dwight N. (2002). *Heart and Head : Black Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 34.

⁶⁵ Cone, James H. (1985). "Black Theology in American Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 75th Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, p. 759.

⁶⁶ The Lockman Foundation. (1995). *New American Standard Bible*. "Genesis 3:6". <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%203:6&version=NASB> (August, 01, 2009).

⁶⁷ The Lockman Foundation. (1995). *New American Standard Bible*. "Genesis 3:6". <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy+2&version=NASB> (August, 01, 2009).

suffer in the same society because of the same reasons. They are “co-sufferer” of Jesus.⁶⁸

Since the time of slavery, defenders of black religious thought discussed whether blacks should integrate into American society (these defenders emphasized the American side of double consciousness) or whether blacks should separate and embrace their African heritage and experience⁶⁹ but the general idea in black religion can be noted in Hopkins’s words: “[B]ased on their memory of West African ways of being equal creatures before their High God, Africans and African Americans reinterpreted Christianity as the champion of the oppressed sectors of society.”⁷⁰ The essence of Christianity is as in black religion the deliverance and freedom of the oppressed, including, all races, sexes, and classes. The poor and oppressed of black Americans read the Bible not as a proof to their bad situations but as a source for hope which guarantees their deliverance with the justice of God. However, it must also be made clear that being poor or oppressed does not make black folk sacred. They believe God is with the oppressed because “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”⁷¹ Therefore, everyone should be free from oppressing powers whether they are human or economics or a cultural system. Black theology also believes that Jesus is not the man with blonde hair and blue eyes, since God created African physical qualities together with white physical characteristics. Everyone should love her/himself for self-love is a reflection of the love of God.⁷²

⁶⁸ Wiggins, Daphne C. (2004). *Righteous Content : Black Women Speak of Church and Faith*. New York, NY, USA: New York University Press, p. 176.

⁶⁹ Williams, A. Roger. (1971). “A Black Pastor Looks at Black Theology.” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Theology and the Black Consciousness, p. 766.

⁷⁰ Hopkins, Dwight N. (2002). *Heart and Head : Black Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.

⁷¹ The Lockman Foundation. (1995). *New American Standard Bible*. “Genesis 1:27”. <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis%201:27&version=NIV> (August, 01, 2009).

⁷² Hopkins, Dwight N. (2002). *Heart and Head : Black Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 31.

1.3. The Physical Impact of Oppression

It can be seen clearly that double-consciousness is at the core of African American experience. Not to be permitted to acknowledge one's own heritage, values and tradition, and to always be understood from someone else's eyes was said to injure blacks mentally. Who is this "other" folk, then? How is s/he conceived by the white eyes?

America's foundation was established upon human dignity, individual and equal rights, in other words, equal opportunities for every American citizen. As a country known where the concept of freedom is given much importance, America could not endow equal opportunities to all of its people because of its racist segregation that began with the Native Americans and later continued with blacks and other minority groups. All the values whites brought with them to the New World to create "a city upon a hill" which would be an example to other countries of the world were later used to oppress blacks, Indians, and all the "others." The values, American ideals, equality, individual rights, Christianity were the rights of WASP men. Whites "bent, twisted, and perverted American ideals, American universal freedom, and America in relation to Blacks. This perversion induced and encouraged their psychological and social assault against Black people."⁷³ W. D. Wright writes more about racism of whites in *Racism Matters*. Referring to racist whites, he says that they did not want America, Americans, American society, culture or American civilization. Motivated by their racism, white supremacy, race prejudice, or color caste, "they converted Black people, in their minds, into nonhumans, subhumans, animals, or creatures."⁷⁴ Whites' suspicion, and skepticism towards blacks made blacks alienated not only culturally but also religiously and economically.⁷⁵ According to Wright, blacks had no problem with black/dark color. They had a problem with the way how black and blackness was interpreted and projected by

⁷³ Wright, W. D. (1998). *Racism Matters*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, p. 44.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 44.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 45.

white people.⁷⁶ Dark skin determines somebody's class, education and self-perception.

Comparing black men and women, Brown sees black men as more advantageous than black women in a patriarchal society where black men can counteract discrimination by the help of his talents, intelligence or education whereas black women never having the ideal of white beauty with her dark skin and negroid qualities are vulnerable to color prejudice.⁷⁷ As to be accepted by the white patriarchal society, the black women use cosmetics and other tricks to make them look whiter. Nevertheless, even though they try to reach the white beauty ideal they have been taught via media, movies, folk stories and fairy tails and other cultural tools, they cannot achieve being an ideal woman. Maxine Leeds Craig confirms that, "White women were objectified in these venues; black women were either excluded from them or included in images that reinforced Eurocentric beauty ideals ... Images of attractive women available through the media reinforced the message that beauty was found in light skin, straight long hair, thin lips, and a narrow nose."⁷⁸ Black women could just come half of the way towards the white beauty standard. Their quest for attaining the ideal is doomed to failure. The conflict of having an appearance which will never be appreciated becomes more intense for middle class black women "who pushed themselves in terms of accomplishments and thus are closer to reaching the white ideal."⁷⁹

Both male and female black images projected by the cultural products of white society have been very racist for they have reproduced disempowering images for blacks. This intentional shaping of black stereotypes affects the perception of the whites "in an effort to delimit the boundaries of African American capabilities in the collective public 'white mind' to forestall Black claims to social and political

⁷⁶ Wright, W. D. (1998). *Racism Matters*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, p. 49.

⁷⁷ Brown, Ursula M. (2000). *Interracial Experience : Growing up Black/White RaciallyMixed in the United States*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Craig, Maxine Leeds. (2002). *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, p. 30.

⁷⁹ Brown, Ursula M. (2000). *Interracial Experience : Growing up Black/White RaciallyMixed in the United States*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.

equality”⁸⁰ Since my discussion point is black women’s experience in a white society, the common black woman stereotypes, Mammy, Aunt Jemima, Tragic Mulatto, and Black Matriarch, given by the white media, cinema, culture and industry will be analyzed in this part.

The popularity of Mammy image in the United States was at its peak from slavery to Jim Crow era. It “served the economic, political, and social interests of White ideology and history in the United States.”⁸¹ Generally speaking, the Mammy image eased white society’s conscience that black women (and by extension children and men) were happy with their enslavement.⁸² Physically Mammy is a fat, ugly and desexed woman but she is loyal and harmless. She loves her masters and her masters’ children above her family. She is also skillful at doing every kind of house chores. According to Emilie M. Townes, the Mammy figure is constructed to provide “safety for an idealized patriarchal white family structure” which lets white man to cover the realities of sexually exploited female slaves.⁸³ By presenting an ugly black woman, the choice of a white man will absolutely be a white woman. Townes claims that in reality such Mammy figures were hard to find. Giving examples from Catherine Clinton’s and Herbert Gutman’s researches, she underlines the fact that the Mammy images were hard to find for in white households there were young and single girls working generally at that time and besides, slave women could not live to see their 40th birthday.⁸⁴ Then this image clearly did not stem from history but from the fantasies of white minds. Apart from justifying slavery, this myth is also a proof that black woman is doomed to domestic work, physical deterioration and loyalty.⁸⁵

Following Mammy, Aunt Jemima becomes another black woman image at the end of 19th century. Used for an advertisement of a pancake mix for the first time, she took place on every kind of kitchen and food related product. Although not having slaves to serve them at homes anymore, white women could cook delicious

⁸⁰ Stewart, J. (2005). *Migrating to the Movies*. Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, p. 32.

⁸¹ Townes, Emilie M. (2006). *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 31.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 32.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 35.

pancakes by the help of Aunt Jemima pancake mix (since they will only add some water in the mixture). With Aunt Jemima products, black labor again took its place in the service of white women and men. Townes writes; “Aunt Jemima, just like Mammy before her, truly becomes an invention of the white imagination. Like chattel slavery, property and commodity are combined. This time, however, identity was added.”⁸⁶ By the image of Aunt Jemima black identity has been made a property and “property means things owned, possession.”⁸⁷

If black women’s situation is difficult then mulattos’ must be harder for they are not culturally but also physically mixed and regarding “one drop of black blood” rule they have no hope for belonging to neither race. “These characters invite empathy because they are so much like whites and so little like blacks; the internal conflict they experience is explainable as a result of racial forces; therefore, no wonder white writers were far more eager to develop them.”⁸⁸ Tragic mulattos were used in literature many times by both black and white writers. They are “unabashed creation of the White imagination” to cite Townes.⁸⁹ Townes describes the Tragic Mulatto image:

The Tragic Mulatta appears as the heroine in many abolitionist tracts as the light-skinned woman of mixed race. She is beautiful, virtuous, and possesses all the graces of White middle-class true womanhood. Ignorant of her mother’s race and status, she is usually the daughter of an enslaved mother and slave-owning father. She believes she is White and free until her father’s death reveals her real status and race. She is formally enslaved and then deserted by her lover who is usually a White man and then dies, tragically, a victim of the racial and sexual dynamics of the peculiar institution. As exotic other, the Mulatta underscores the conflation of color and gender in a socioeconomic system designed to produce a cheap labor pool. . . . The nearly white skin of the Mulatta is the image of the systemic racial and sexual violence. However, an interesting divergence occurs between White abolitionist novelists and Black novelists in how they understand and bring the Mulatta to life. The Mulatta portrayed by White writers is usually a barrel

⁸⁶ Townes, Emilie M. (2006). *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 40.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 43.

⁸⁸ Sollors, Werner. (1997). *Neither Black nor White yet Both : Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, p. 225.

⁸⁹ Townes, Emilie M. (2006). *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 85.

drum of pathologies: self-hatred, depression, alcoholism, sexual perversion, and suicidal.”⁹⁰

On the other hand, as Townes also indicates, mulatto characters were portrayed as social activists or rebellious characters by black writers.⁹¹

It can be said that the Tragic Mulatto stereotype was a product of white imagination which underlined the racist white thinking about racial interrelations. According to whites, racial interrelations did not produce healthy humans, and that it was the best for somebody to live within her/his racial boundaries. And transgressing these boundaries would produce “mules” not humans.

Black matriarch is “the mammy gone bad.”⁹² She is indeed the woman of the 20th century. She is the single woman or the single mother or the supporter of her home with her income. In every situation since she is black, having children and working or single, she is the main reason for the bad situation of blacks. Trying to find a victim for the situation of the blacks, with this image white society charges black women with moral failure of black children and men.⁹³ This image is also some kind of a warning for other women of color not to oppose the values of white patriarchal family system.⁹⁴

To put it succinctly, white culture tried to keep the balance of the society by pushing blacks to lower segments by attributing them friendly qualities as long as they stay in their reserved places. Later images of tragic mulattos and black matriarchs, on the other hand, are at the bottom of the society again, suffering because of their demands of freedom and desires to be like white folks.

⁹⁰ Townes, Emilie M. (2006). *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 86.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 87.

⁹² Ibid, p. 115.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 115.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 117.

1.4. The Economic Impact of Oppression

In every experience of blacks, the traces of slavery and diaspora cannot be disregarded. In the United States minority groups, which are formed by immigrants, have faced many harsh situations since they are the “others.” They have come to America with an expectance to fulfill their dreams.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the coming of blacks to the new world was not something they consented to and their “sudden separation ... from their collective network exposed blacks to a form of raw economic exploitation in the American context not comparable to that experienced by other exploited immigrant groups.”⁹⁶ After this unwilling diaspora to the New World, the era of slavery began for them.

Starting in the 17th century, slavery lasted for many years and, the system had some effective qualities. As seen in the stereotyping of blacks, supporters of slavery claimed that the system was not bad for black mammies and Aunt Jemimas since these people were friendly but simple minded so they were taken care by the system.

Today blacks occupy the lower steps of the economic ladder. However, their poverty should not be blamed on the slavery system because, according to the whites, slavery system was a shelter for them.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, as it is seen in previous examples, racism has become a dominating factor of black oppression. Slavery has been seen as a natural outcome since for the whites, “blacks must be reflecting their biologically or socially inherited destinies.”⁹⁸ When inquired about the reasons of black poverty today, whites answered that as every immigrant group had experienced the difficulties of a free enterprise system, they will experience the same things; their situation is not related to race.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Franklin, Raymond S. (1991). *Shadows of Race and Class*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 25.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

In the Jacksonian era, with Jackson's emphasis on "laissez faire," white people got anxious that job positions would be open to everyone, no matter what their race were. That would mean less chance for whites. Therefore, they had to prove the white race's superiority. Biology became an "invariant rock upon in this era which to justify the social and economic subordination of the black population."¹⁰⁰ Darwinism is applied to the American landscape. Since blacks were inferior biologically they would become unfit to survive in the jungle of American economics and their innate bad qualities such as criminal behavior, degeneracy, immorality could not be rectified through religion, education, and philanthropy.¹⁰¹

During and after the World War II people's approach to biological racism changed because of racist theories of fascism. Scientific environmentalism would give way to new thoughts. Scientific environmentalism and biological racism have been two movements for imposing blacks' inferior status in white world. White society has applied to different means such as IQ tests in 1960s which showed blacks were unfit to higher education due to their low test results.¹⁰² Following that, there have always been barriers in front of blacks to get a higher position in occupational ladder. Franklin gives examples from postindustrial society. One of the examples is consumer and employer discrimination which are two factors that restrain blacks to their low income jobs. Since "businesspersons 'adapt' to the political and social structures that shape the moral and value-laden perceptions of others," they had to abide with the mainstream thought about "profit."¹⁰³ That resulted in blacks' employment for the unskilled labor jobs that were not in too much demand by the whites. Another reason for blacks' inferiority in terms of job status is the idea which has advocated blacks as biologically inferior. Franklin indicates that many employees see blacks fit for physically pressing jobs because they can exploit them easily since they have carnal qualities rather than humans'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Franklin, Raymond S. (1991). *Shadows of Race and Class*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 45-46.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 49.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 80.

As a conclusion, in economic life dominant-subordinate duality continued to exist as an unchangeable part of black life. This duality has been maintained with biological and environmental racism. Blacks' low incomes and temporary positions in business world have resulted in their choice of neighborhood and a disorderly family life. Even though the employer is not in favor of discrimination, s/he has to conform to mainstream society for her/his business interests. Discrimination in the work place may be stemming from various reasons such as consumer, employee and employer discrimination. Black underclass has become another way of depiction of black stereotypes by white people. With feminization of poverty, welfare mothers or welfare queens, and criminal and irresponsible fathers have taken place. These stereotypes are constantly nourished by the media.¹⁰⁵ From slavery to urban ghettos, nothing has changed much in blacks' life.

PART TWO

BLACK FEMINISM

Black feminism has its roots in the 18th century's the "Women's Liberation" movement which was started by women who defended woman's right to vote. The term "feminism" was used during the 1910s and its appearance in popular culture through media and literature signaled a new wave of ideas about women's situation in the male world. Not so much popular in the 1910s, feminism attracted attention of people and media in the late sixties and seventies with the conspicuous activities, protests, academic and literary works, conscious raising groups and in many possibilities where women could find a chance to voice out their discontent about their "other" place in the male world. Getting different names and evolving throughout the history and having lots of factions under its main title, what does word feminism mean? Or to ask it in another way, what meanings have been attributed to the term "feminism"?

¹⁰⁵ Franklin, Raymond S. (1991). *Shadows of Race and Class*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 101.

2.1. What is feminism?

The origin of the word comes from the French “feminisme,” used in 1880s in France by Hubertine Auclert, a determined advocate of political rights for women.¹⁰⁶ However, the meaning of the word has been hard to define for many thinkers. “The feminist vocabulary was never standardized in this country,” writes O’Neill before explaining the different terms used for women’s movement throughout the history.¹⁰⁷ He adds that “feminism” has always been used to describe the women’s rights movement and the terms such as the “Suffrage movement,” “the woman’s movement,” “woman’s liberation” have been used interchangeably which connote either women’s rights or the entire complex of feminine activities.¹⁰⁸ However, Nancy F. Cott points out that the indicated terms above have narrower meanings. She writes:

The shift in vocabulary has not been noticed by recent historians, who, like most users of the English language, readily adopted the neologism *feminism* and applied it retrospectively and generally to claims for women’s rights. ... Understandable though it is, historians’ tendency to lump together the woman movement, the chronology of the suffrage movement, and the vocabulary of feminism has been misleading for our comprehension of the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁹

To cite Cott, she claims that the terms, which have been related to feminism so far, indicate different sides of the movement of women. They are not enough to define “feminism” generally. Nevertheless, she also accepts that feminism is a hard term to define.¹¹⁰ To define the word she refers to *Oxford English Dictionary* edited in 1933. Before giving an explanation of the term it must be made clear that until that year, the word feminism did not appear in *Oxford English Dictionary*, except as an equivalent to womanism.¹¹¹ The 1933 edition defines feminism as; “the opinions and

¹⁰⁶ Cott, Nancy F. (1987). *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ O’Neill, William L. (1988). *Feminism in America: A History*. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Publishers, p. xxiii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. xxiv.

¹⁰⁹ Cott, Nancy F. (1987). *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 3-4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 288.

principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women advocacy of women's rights."¹¹² In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's words feminism is "the social awakening of the women of all the world."¹¹³ Coming to today's editions, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 2003 edition defines feminism is "the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men."¹¹⁴ Regarded to women's efforts to change their social status, feminist theory is best described by Bryson as a contribution "to the understanding of women's situation in order that this can be challenged and changed."¹¹⁵

It can be concluded that the broader meanings, which are attributed to feminism, have not changed much from the time when feminism was a brand new word to today. These definitions seem as if they take all women as one group whose demands are the same, having no difference, trying to be equals with men. This is a problem for women too - to find an adequate definition of feminism that can unify them all. Bell hooks takes this problem of definition as a central problem to the movement. "Most people in the United States think of feminism or the more commonly used term 'women's lib' as a movement that aims to make women the social equals of men. This broad definition, popularized by the media and mainstream segments of the movement raises problematic questions."¹¹⁶

To sum up, feminism is a term whose definitions may be problematic as hooks indicates but agreeing upon a definition is as much important as the origins of this movement. Knowing how feminism originates may help readers understand the meanings involved in this complex powerful word.

¹¹² *Oxford English Dictionary* qtd in Cott. (1987). p. 4.

¹¹³ Gilman qtd in Cott. (1987). p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Gadsby, Adam, ed. (2003). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Essex: Longman Dictionaries, p. 583.

¹¹⁵ Bryson, Valerie. (2003). *Feminist Political Theory : An Introduction*. Gordonsville, VA, USA:

Palgrave Macmillan, p. 226

¹¹⁶ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 17-18.

2.2. The Origin of the Movement

The origins of the modern feminist movement can be found in two reasons; the first is ideological-based, triggered by the French Revolution which had a deep impact in the Western world and the other is economic based, initiated by the industrial revolution. Before these, there were women who had written about the inequalities between the sexes and who rejected women's inherently weak nature proposed by men. Christine de Pizan, Mary Astell and Aphra Behn were some names given by Susan Osborne as early examples of women who wrote about these matters.¹¹⁷ These voices started to increase at the end of the 18th century with the French women who asked for their rights to vote. Olympe de Gouges was one of these women who issued a pamphlet titled *Les Droits de la Femme* (The Rights of Woman) (1791) in which she uttered her frustration about the neglect of women rights by revolutionarists.¹¹⁸ The revolutionary spirit affected Mary Wollstonecraft, too - a British woman whose work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is seen as a groundbreaking work and "the first major work of feminist theory in history."¹¹⁹

In addition to French Revolution, American War of Independence was also a time when ideas of liberty were at peak, and, therefore, people, who felt the need to write about women's position as the "other" in American society, did not hesitate to state their thoughts. Donovan notes that Abigail Adams suggested to her husband that women should have representation in the new nation, and, in 1790 Judith Sargent Murray published her essay *On the Equality of the Sexes*.¹²⁰

On economic level, industrial revolution is the main factor which has changed the society. O'Neill states that, "The industrial revolution forced women to alter their styles of life and inevitably brought them into conflict with customs and

¹¹⁷ Osborne, Susan. (2001). *Feminism*. Harpenden, , GBR: Pocket Essentials, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Donovan, Josephine. (2000). *Feminist Theory : The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*. London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing, p. 17.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 17.

institutions based on obsolete economic factors.”¹²¹ With the industrial revolution, the gap between the poor and the rich started to increase and the change in the status of woman in society began to take a new turn. Middle class woman was confined to her home despite her economic well-being. On the other hand, lower class woman, with the spread of mills and factories, found herself in the labor force, earning low income and having a low status comparing with men. Victorian concept of woman, which illustrates woman as a delicate and spiritualized being, does not fit in the life of a lower class woman. Because of hard work and difficult circumstances of working life, lower class woman was not as lucky as the middle-class woman in terms of education. Although education was not common in middle-class woman’s life, too, middle-class woman had the chance to put forth her opinions easier than her lower class non-white counterpart.

In the light of abolitionist cause, during the 19th century, white women drew an analogy between slaves and white women to draw attention to white women’s position as a domestic slave. Especially, the 1830s and 1840s witnessed the interaction of female abolitionists with the supporters of the women’s movement. Women required for suffrage and equal education to free themselves from their slavish status. In the future years, these efforts would result positively.

2.3. Black Feminism

Since the 18th century, in addition to the whites, great contributions of black feminists to feminist thought cannot be overlooked although for many years their voices and ideas have been kept under shackle or they have been suppressed. Writers such as, Anna Julia Cooper, Alice Walker, bell hooks, have presented different faces of the American dream. They have put forth the black women’s experiences and their ideas. Thinkers like these women have contributed to feminist movement with their

¹²¹ O’Neill, William L. (1988). *Feminism in America: A History*. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Publishers, p. 4.

theories. They claim that white women's elitist attitude in feminist movement, indeed, "contributes to their own (*white women's*) oppression."¹²² [Italics are mine.]

During the early feminist movement in the 19th century, majority of white women compared the situation of white women as domestic slaves to the black slaves and they pointed out the similarities. This approach of white women restrained the black women from joining feminist movement. Black feminist thought about the interconnected nature of oppression is disregarded by white feminists. White feminists dissent from the idea that oppressions such as, sexism and racism, are interconnected. All oppressions are different "bad acts" of society.¹²³ Having been brought up absorbing white patriarchal elitist ideas and having lived as a member of the mainstream group, the white feminists are not able to see that racism has traumatic effects on black people. White women believe that they are at the center of the feminist movement, and, they represent all the women. Non-white women are marginalized, therefore, they are alone in their struggles. The theoretical resistance of slave women against the oppression of the whites, which dates back to the era of slavery, is later named by the 20th century scholars as black feminism.¹²⁴ During the abolitionist era, black feminists like Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman encouraged other black women not to keep their thoughts to themselves. Although they would not call themselves "black feminists" at this time, they shared their opinions on racism, sexism and poverty. They believed that all these oppressions were integrated, and this idea is one of the main tenets of black feminism.

The Seneca Falls convention, which is organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, is a historic act for the women in the United States. Mott and Stanton are also renowned abolitionists. Uniting feminism and abolitionism, white feminists have hoped to reach to a wider public. Before the Civil War, anticipating the future, Sojourner Truth says, "There is a great stir about colored men getting their

¹²² Bryson, Valerie. (2003). *Feminist Political Theory : An Introduction*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 228. italics are mine.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 227.

¹²⁴ Davidson, Cathy N. eds. et al. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 123.

rights, but not a word about colored women.”¹²⁵ Abolitionist efforts proved useful in the end, and, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment were put into effect. However, these amendments limited suffrage to only African American men. This approach of government offended women’s rights advocates. After this disappointment, black women like Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Frances E.W. Harper realized that awareness-raising campaigns were necessary for the black women. They stated that ballots of black men would not be enough to uplift Afro-Americans. Clubs such as 1896 National Association of Colored Women (NACW) united great numbers of black women under their roofs to eradicate negative black woman stereotypes which were created by the white patriarchy, and, they encouraged women to have positive self-perceptions. Black women were also supporters of the other black groups like National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.¹²⁶

The situation of black folk has not changed after the abolishment of slavery, too. Now free from the chains of slavery with the right to vote, black folk is under an unbearable burden of her/his history. Most black women and men are deprived of education because they are not deemed worthy of a proper education (according to the whites, black people are the children of slaves who have been white people’s properties once). Wherever black folk goes, s/he is forced to have unskilled jobs with low incomes, and, therefore, her/his condition cannot be discerned from her/his condition during the era of slavery. White factory owner has superseded white land owner.

During the First World War, lots of positions were open because of the lack of “man” power. These open positions were occupied by women and, by this way, they had the chance to go out of home. However, this was a temporary situation, and, women were not paid as much as men. After the war, women returned to their homes with more ambitious hearts to gain suffrage. However, they had to wait for the Nineteenth Amendment until 1920. Twenty years following 1920 did not become the

¹²⁵ Truth qtd in Donovan. (2000). p. 37.

¹²⁶ Davidson, Cathy N. eds. et al. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to Women’s Writing in the United States*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 124.

years of death silence for the feminist movement. During these years, black feminists continued their struggles against racism, segregation, mob violence, poverty and sexism.¹²⁷

After the Second World War, popular culture and media put a heavy emphasis on the charms of family, motherhood and the concept of home. The concept of nuclear family hindered women to question their places until the end of 1960s. Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s, which is known as the Second Wave Feminism today, is the rebirth of feminism. Civil Rights era witnessed new developments for women and different feminism(s) emerged such as Black Women's Liberation, Radical feminism, Marxist and Liberal feminism, Lesbian feminism. During these years, Black feminists uttered their disappointment with the approach of white women in the feminist movement. Black women claimed that white women had been trying to control the movement. Therefore, as Bryson indicates in her book, black women have taken different attitudes. Firstly, a group of black women thinks that black women should be at the center of the movement, since they are at the bottom of the social pyramid, and, development of this segment will bring inevitable change in the whole structure of the society. Secondly, another group defends the idea that the experience of any group should not be at the center because every woman's experience is unique, therefore, a sisterhood or a solidarity should be achieved to struggle against all kinds of oppressions which lead the black women to the margins of the society.¹²⁸

To put it succinctly, it can be concluded that Black feminists think in two ways. One is that the feminist movement belongs only to "black people." Patricia Hill Collins defines black feminism as it is "in tune with an Afrocentric way of understanding" leaving other women outside the movement. The other is that, as Hooks insists, all women and men should join the movement against the oppression.¹²⁹ During the 1980s and 1990s, some of the black feminists have insisted

¹²⁷ Code, Lorraine, ed. (2000). *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. London, GBR: Routledge, p. 55.

¹²⁸ Bryson, Valerie. (2003). *Feminist Political Theory : An Introduction*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan., p. 228-230.

¹²⁹ Donovan, Josephine. (2000). *Feminist Theory : The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*. London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing, p. 232.

on the importance of black roots, whereas, some of them have considered a solidarity of men and women who are against the oppression. After 1980s, a conservative trend has taken over America, and, in the early 1990s women as Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe, and Susan Faludi have initiated Third Wave feminism (Post-Feminism).

In conclusion, women have begun expressing their sentiments about their inferior status in the United States during the revolutionary times. First of all, during the abolitionist era, at the center of the feminist agenda is woman's unequal status with men in the law. White feminists are the leaders of the women's movement during this time. In addition to white women, black women have also shared their ideas, unfortunately, their ideas are not welcomed by the white society since they do not belong to the mainstream. Experiences and ideas of black women are not valuable in the world of white women. What makes the situation of Black feminists different from their white counterparts is that they have been hand in hand with the black males in their struggles against the inequalities of the white world - first the abolishment of slavery, then the suffrage movement and later suffrage movement for women and civil rights. Therefore, it can be implied that Black feminism "is rooted in traditions of intellectual, social and political activism."¹³⁰ It seems that as long as inequalities persist, black women are in every aspect of the struggle.

2.3. Anna Julia Cooper, Alice Walker, and bell hooks: Three Voices from the Black World

Although black feminists are suppressed by Anglo-Saxon people and African men, they have presented a number of important works to American history before and after the Emancipation. Phillis Wheatley is an example of the everlasting voice of the black feminism as the first black woman and the second woman in the United States to get her work published at the end of the 18th century when there is no chance of formal education for blacks. Footsteps of Wheatley are followed by next generations of black women.

¹³⁰ Code, Lorraine, ed. (2000). *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. London, GBR: Routledge, p. 54.

By 1892, important higher education schools for blacks - Howard, Tuskegee, Hampton, Fisk, and others - had already been founded. The reforms, which were carried out after the Civil War, were seemingly advantageous for the Afro-American people, however, they were in favor of only black men. Therefore, generally black men constituted major black schools. The black women's areas of study were limited. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper, who was born in 1858, published her essays in a book, *A Voice from the South*, which reminds that black women are important to uplift the Afro-American people. To achieve this, equal education must be guaranteed to women. Cooper is accepted as one of the earliest black feminists by scholars today. Her book deals with the historic facts concerning race and gender problems in the United States.

The general idea Cooper presents in her book is that the progress of black woman will result in the progress of Afro-American race. Woman's progress can be achieved by black woman, again, because neither the black man nor white people "be wholly expected fully and adequately to reproduce the exact Voice of the Black Woman."¹³¹ Cooper points out that "the thinker and the doer" in the American society is "too often left to die in obscurity and neglect."¹³² Therefore, Anna Julia Cooper warns black women that they should not give up the fight against the inequalities and they should not be afraid of sharing their ideas.

Cooper criticizes the elitist approach of white women in feminist movement, however, she also emphasizes that she believes the women's movement will be successful. She states that black woman is ready to embrace this movement by saying: "[T]he movement making for Woman's full, free, and complete emancipation, has, after much courting, obtained the gracious smile of the Southern woman."¹³³ Cooper believes that the women's movement should be for the weak people. The cause of freedom should not be limited to a particular sex, race, class, party or a sect, freedom is the right of everyone.¹³⁴ Cooper expresses her uneasiness

¹³¹ Cooper, Anna Julia. (1990). *A Voice From the South*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. iii.

¹³² Ibid, p. 136.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 108.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 120-121.

about some of the white defenders of women rights. She states that she cannot understand why white woman has always considered herself standing against some groups of people such as blacks or Native Americans. White woman is also under the “iron heel of Anglo-Saxon power” like the ones she comes up against. Blacks, Native Americans and white women are all oppressed.¹³⁵ The reason for this attitude of white woman may be that a “highly cultivated selfishness” has taken over American politics.¹³⁶ As long as “the self-congratulation of ‘dominant’ races, as if ‘dominant’ meant ‘righteous’” continues and white people carry “the title to inherit the world,” there will always be weak and wronged people.¹³⁷ When the women’s movement confirms that the race and woman problem cannot be separated, it will have been successful.

According to Cooper, the family is a part of the society. Society is a whole and; “As the whole is sum of all its parts, so the character of the parts will determine the characteristics of the whole.”¹³⁸ Cooper denotes that if the home life is the core of the society, unfortunately, society has a worm at the core with women imprisoned in wrong ideals of womanhood.¹³⁹ Taking into consideration that every adult has been once a child, training of children is very important for a healthy society. If men insist that the motherhood is the major role of a woman, then it should be kept in mind that who shapes an individual is a woman, and therefore, she also shapes the society. To cite Cooper, “[T]he intelligent wife, the Christian mother, the earnest, virtuous, helpful woman” is the potential force for uplifting the race.¹⁴⁰ Education will make better wives, mothers and therefore, there will be a healthy family and society. Education will raise the standards of women and for educated women, it will be a common everyday affair:

[T]o reason and think and express their thought, the training and stimulus which enable and encourage women to administer to the world the bread it

¹³⁵ Cooper, Anna Julia. (1990). *A Voice From the South*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.123.

¹³⁶ Ibid , p. 137.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 51.

¹³⁸ Ibid , p. 29.

¹³⁹ Ibid , p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid , p. 45.

needs as well as the sugar it cries for; in short it is the transmitting the potential forces of her soul into dynamic factors that has given symmetry and completeness to the world's agencies.¹⁴¹

America may not promise black women the rights it has ensured white men but Cooper is hopeful because of the “possibilities and promise that are inherent in the system, though as yet, perhaps, far in the future.”¹⁴² Cooper indicates that they are “inheritor of a manhood and womanhood impoverished and debased by two centuries and more of compression and degradation,” and she urges that, “Now the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration, the re-training of the race, as well as the ground work and starting point of its progress upward, must be the *black woman*.”¹⁴³

Unfortunately, “American Negro” has not been able to determine her/his own destiny. They are the heirs of a past which they have not chosen.¹⁴⁴ However, Cooper thinks this is an advantage for black folks because this past unites them. To empower black women in their struggles against white society, Cooper urges Church sisterhoods, schools and other black organizations to take action. Cooper advocates that black women are “a potent force in the betterment of the world.”¹⁴⁵ Ideas of black woman will enrich the society.

Women like Wheatley and Cooper have paved the way for the black women in the 20th century. By appraising the legacy of their female ancestors, the 20th century black women continued to contribute in the feminism with new theories. Alice Walker's “womanism” is one the most important theories of this century, presenting new ideas to black woman from religious, social, and economic perspectives. Walker, inheriting the legacy of her ancestors, has showed her “concern for spiritual wholeness and cultural connectedness.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Cooper, Anna Julia. (1990). *A Voice From the South*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 57.

¹⁴² Ibid , p. 12.

¹⁴³ Ibid , p. 29.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁴⁶ Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 750.

Walker has coined the term “womanist” in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*. She defines womanist as a black feminist or as a feminist of color. Deriving the word from “womanish” whose meaning is acting as a grown up, she defines womanist as a responsible person, in charge and serious. A womanist loves women and “sometimes” men; a womanist is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people. A womanist loves music, dance, the moon, the Spirit, love, food, roundness, struggle, folk, herself regardless. A “womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.”¹⁴⁷

According to Walker, heritage is very important for Afro-American women. Their matrilineal heritage is the main source of the creativity and power in “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens.” She states that: “Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and respect for strength - in search of my mother's garden, I found my own.”¹⁴⁸ For Walker, the main inspiration is her mother’s thoughts, stories, dreams and her garden. A black woman’s creativity may sometimes be seen in a garden, or on a quilt. Educated or not, black woman’s creativity has always been a way to empower her, a way to cope with hardships of life. Virginia Woolf claims that to write fiction, woman needs money of her own and a room with a lock and key. However, Walker believes that this is valid for only white women because black women have been in bondage of slavery. Presenting Phillis Wheatley as an example who is a slave having no place and time to write something, she has written poems. Walker states that: “To be an artist and black woman, even today, lowers our status in many respects, rather than raises it: and yet, artists we will be.”¹⁴⁹ She mentions about the pressure on the creative minds of black women in the past and today, and she adds, it will probably go on in future, too.

Walker writes a stanza of Wheatley in which she defines the beauty of her white master. After this stanza, Walker states:

¹⁴⁷ Walker, Alice. (2005). *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*. London: Phoenix, p. xi-xii.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 243.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 237.

But at last, Phillis, we understand. No more snickering when your stiff, struggling, ambivalent lines are forced on us. We know now that you were not an idiot or a traitor; only a sickly little black girl, snatched from your home and country and made a slave; a woman who still struggled to sing the song that was your gift, although in a land of barbarians who praised you for your bewildered tongue. It is not so much what you sang, as that you kept alive, in so many of our ancestors, the notion of song.¹⁵⁰

Contexts of Phillis Wheatley's poems which champion the white life is not the thing to be discussed because having been abducted from her land, having been made a slave, Wheatley had to "sing" what she had learned among "barbarians." However, the important thing for a black woman is the "notion of the song" and her ability to sing it, not its context. What is important is keeping her creative soul alive through long years whatever situation they are in.

Black mothers by growing gardens, making quilts, telling stories are living examples of creative black woman, and they do this "Even without 'knowing' it, the reality of their spirituality, ... [A]nd they never had any intention of giving it up."¹⁵¹ They hand down this creativity to their daughters and what Walker tries to do is to make women be aware of this "spark" as a heritage of their mothers. Alice Walker encourages black women to see themselves powerful due to richness of their past.

"Womanism" has affected the ideas of other black feminists. Bell hooks is one of these prominent and prolific Afro-American theorists and intellectuals whose theories are based upon Alice Walker's womanism. She "rejects the belief that Walker coined the term to undercut feminist thought, because for hooks, womanism lacks 'a tradition of radical political commitment to struggle and change.'"¹⁵² She calls for a solidarity of women and men to achieve "radical political commitment" that is necessary. She summarizes her ideas with a sentence in "A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multi-Cultural Change:" "As I grew up politically, I placed alongside the struggle to end racism a commitment to ending sexism and sexism

¹⁵⁰ Walker, Alice. (2005). *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. London: Phoenix, p. 237.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 237-238.

¹⁵² Davidson, Cathy N. eds. et al. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 929.

oppression, to eradicating systems of class exploitation.”¹⁵³ She renders that feminist movement has not been a movement for all women, and since the beginning, spokespeople for the movement indicate that in which direction the course of the movement will lead.

Hooks opposes exclusionary nature of white feminist movement feverishly. Feminist movement has been a separatist movement. Although the movement criticizes sexist segregation, white women also segregate black women because of their colors. Not only in terms of race, but also in class, there has been a great separatism. This great separation has made the movement weak and it has prevented the movement from attaining its objectives.

Like Cooper, she believes that the interrelated structure of oppressions is an American reality. She explains: “Yet class structure in American society has been shaped by the racial politic of white supremacy; it is only by analyzing racism and its function in capitalist society that a thorough understanding of class relationships can emerge. Class struggle is extricably bound to the struggle to end racism.”¹⁵⁴ It is this lack of awareness that makes the movement accumulated in only white middle-class, college-educated women’s hands. They do not understand how black people are affected within a racist, sexist, capitalist state.

In feminist movement the vision of sisterhood, bonding of women, is based on the idea of common oppression.¹⁵⁵ According to white feminist vision of sisterhood, women are the victims in the patriarchal society and this concept of shared victimization is the basis for bonding. Hooks opposes the idea of “shared victimization” since “this meant that women had to conceive of themselves as ‘victims’ in order to feel that feminist movement was relevant to their lives.”¹⁵⁶ Women are not victims. If they think they are, they mean to accept the male supremacist ideology which dictates that being female means to be weak, powerless,

¹⁵³ Hooks, Bell. (1993). “A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multi-Cultural Change.” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Cultural Diversity, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 3

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 43.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

passive. According to Hooks, forming a sisterhood based upon an idea of victimization conflicts with itself. The main idea to form a political solidarity should be based upon “shared strengths and resources” and this can be achieved by helping women to unlearn sexism.¹⁵⁷

To form a solidarity, whose essence is not shared weakness but shared strengths and resources, there is another barrier bethinks hooks, and, this is racism.¹⁵⁸ White sisterhood does not give black and white women a chance to get together. Women from different cultural backgrounds mean different ideas and experiences. However, white women escape from differences. In this context, black women do not want to join a movement where they will be patronized or overlooked as in their actual lives. As a result, white sisterhood is like a field where the same crops are grown and whose soil is getting poorer. Women who share the same opinions do not enrich the movement but they block its development. Hooks states that white women should accept the fact that racism still exists. However, acknowledgment of racism will not be enough because;

White women are not the only group who must confront racism if sisterhood is to emerge. Women of color must confront our absorption of white supremacist beliefs, “internalized racism” which may lead us to feel self-hate, to vent anger and rage at injustice at one another rather than at oppressive forces, to hurt and abuse one another or to lead one ethnic group to make no effort to communicate with another.¹⁵⁹

Hooks believes that interracial relationships are very important. Women from different backgrounds will bring diversity and enrich the sisterhood. Instead of being powerful on the basis of the similarity, women should be powerful due to diversity and their respect to this diversity.

Hooks thinks there is a third barrier to form a political solidarity which is class. A few women who are at the top of the income ladder should not be presented as a victory of feminism. This kind of exaggerations of the public about feminist

¹⁵⁷ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 45-49.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 49.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 55.

victories will make feminism deteriorate “when individual concerns and priorities are the only reason for participation.”¹⁶⁰ Most women’s difficult situation at work and school must also be taken into consideration. Capitalism operates in a disguised way that it leaves white feminists under a spell which makes impossible to see the truths behind the events. Hooks informs the readers in “A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multi-Cultural Change:”

It takes the form of mass media creating the myth that the feminist movement has completely transformed society, so much so that the politics of patriarchal power have been inverted and that men, particularly white men, like emasculated black men, have become the victims of dominating women, so that all men, white and black in particular, must pull together (e.g., the Clarence Thomas hearings) to support and reaffirm patriarchal domination. Add to this the widely held assumption on the part of many people that blacks, other minorities, and white women are taking jobs from white men, that people are poor and unemployed because they want to be, and it becomes most evident that part of our contemporary crisis is created by a lack of meaningful access to truth. When this collective cultural consumption of and attachment to misinformation is coupled with the layers of lying individuals do in their personal lives, our capacity to face reality is severely diminished as is our will to intervene and change unjust circumstances.¹⁶¹

Solution for this, according to hooks, are again in the very hands of women. If “women accept the need for retribution of wealth and resources in the United States and work towards the achievement of that end,” there will be a bonding between women that transcends class.¹⁶² To be able to gather up around diversity, strengths and an understanding of race and class, women can experience a “positive growth” and a “revolutionary change.”¹⁶³ Solidarity on the basis of political struggle is another element which will empower black women in white patriarchal society. Reminding that black men also suffer sexism, Hooks indicates:

... [T]he poor or working class man who has been socialized via sexist ideology to believe that there are privileges and powers he should possess solely because he is male often finds that few if any of these benefits are automatically bestowed him in life. More than any

¹⁶⁰ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 62.

¹⁶¹ Hooks, Bell. (1993). “A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multi-Cultural Change.” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Cultural Diversity, p. 8.

¹⁶² Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 58.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 64.

other male group in the United States, he is constantly concerned about the contradiction between the notion of masculinity he was taught and his inability to live up to that notion. He is usually “hurt,” emotionally scarred because he does not have the privilege or power society has taught him “real men” should possess. Alienated, frustrated, pissed off, he may attack, abuse, and oppress an individual woman or women, but he is not reaping positive benefits from his support and perpetuation of sexist ideology.¹⁶⁴

Hooks gives black men and women’s collaboration throughout the history as an example by stating that “there is a special tie binding people together who struggle collectively for liberation. Black women and men have been united by such ties. They have known the experience of political solidarity.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, making feminist movement as only “women’s” liberation movement will not make the movement a visionary one. Movement should not see the individual gains as a priority but it should unify all people against oppression on the basis of their power. A movement going in the opposite way is “simply inverting the dominant ideology of the culture,” they are not attacking it in hooks’ statement.¹⁶⁶

Power, in Western society and many other parts of the world, usually means the domination of the weaker one. Radical feminists’ first attempt to challenge this notion, unfortunately, has resulted fruitless because instead of fighting against this notion of power, their attempts have transformed into an “overcoming their fear of power.” This means that they can have the same power with men.¹⁶⁷ Women, indeed, do not conceptualize power differently although they do not exert the same amount of power with men.¹⁶⁸ The key idea here is everybody is the product of her/his culture. White women are brought up in the same system, too. For them too, being powerful is equal to how much you control the others. Power may sometimes mean knowledge, sometimes money but it always leads to a way to dominate. Unless someone is a product of a different value system, it is impossible for her/him to leave some ideas. Therefore, for white feminists, as the white men, the important thing becomes the ability to control the others.

¹⁶⁴ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 69.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 76.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 85.

One other error feminists make is their unification around “victimization.” This is a confirmation of their empowered situation. If they are powerless, they will not overcome sexist oppression. Hooks opposes this feverishly stating, “Women, even the most oppressed among us, do exercise some power. These powers can be used to advance feminist struggle.”¹⁶⁹ Hooks describes the way to use this power as rejecting the men’s definition of the weaker ones. She exemplifies this idea; “Many poor and exploited women, ... would have been unable to develop positive self-concepts if they had not exercised their power to reject the powerful’s definition of their reality.”¹⁷⁰ Sexism has not made women powerless, it has taught them to “feel” as if they are powerless. Therefore, feminism should indicate that women have power to fight all kinds of oppression.

Hooks’ another idea she claims to empower black women is the value of their work. Hooks points out that a woman should not judge her works in terms of exchange value. Woman should learn to value work disregarding men’s approval. If woman sees the work as a thing to exert power to control others or a platform to jump higher for better personal material opportunities, she will merely be supporting and strengthening sexist ideology which she should have been fighting against.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the nature of work should be rethought and it should be known that work may be a sphere of developing identities and self-concepts of women.¹⁷²

Lastly, to empower black women education is indispensable. Hooks complains about the reality that feminism has been “a movement depending on the written word.”¹⁷³ Considering illiteracy of women who are generally lower class women and women of color, they can not join the movement by studying the books. Feminism should spread its agenda through not only high brow literature or academic writings but also through word of mouth.¹⁷⁴ Door-to-door contact,

¹⁶⁹ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 90.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 91.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 109.

translating ideas and theories to an audience that varies in age, sex, ethnicity, degree of literacy, and to provide the women who are deprived of modes of thought that promote the kind of critical and analytical understanding with access are important steps in educating women.¹⁷⁵

Cooper, Walker and hooks considered black women's place in parts of the black and white life such as family, marriage, religion, and in economic life. They are called by many scholars as pioneers of their eras. Therefore, if their works are studied, place of black women in American society and which ideas have kept them alive to survive in white male society can be observed in the first hand experience.

PART THREE

ADRIENNE KENNEDY AND DRAMA AS A WAY TO SURVIVE IN WHITE MALE WORLD

The "creative spirit" of black folk despite all suppressions has found a chance to emerge and spread throughout American literature. Black art has always been an outlet for black soul which suffers in a white world. Especially black theatre has played an important role in the spreading of black ideals, culture and awareness. From the first known play of blacks in 1858, theater stage has had a crucial role in black folk's life.

Until the middle of the 20th century, American stage witnessed the incessant suppression of black female voice. However, between 1910 and 1940, plays written by black women dealt with serious social agendas that supplied "a unique view of the black experience."¹⁷⁶ These woman playwrights dealt mostly with racial and social protests.¹⁷⁷ According to Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, early black women playwrights wrote about four inconsistencies in American society. The first one was paradoxes of white Christianity, the second was the black soldiers who fought abroad for the

¹⁷⁵ Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, p. 109, 111, 113.

¹⁷⁶ Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. (1990). *Their Place on the Stage*. New York: Praeger, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

United States yet “their basic constitutional rights were deprived,” as citizens; the third was “the economic disparity between black and white” and the last was miscegenation.¹⁷⁸ In this context, protest and religious plays, historical and folk dramas were produced by Dunbar-Nelson, Burrill, Myrtle Smith Livingston, May Miller and many other black women.¹⁷⁹ According to Will Harris:

While dramatizing the plight of their race, as a means of both raising a black racial consciousness and appealing to a possible white audience, early black women playwrights also formulated dramatic strategies which enabled them to stage substantive, independent African American female presences, and thus propose their sexual equality.¹⁸⁰

Dealing with these topics and trying to make their voice heard by both black and white public, black women faced racism of white theater owners and sexism of black art society.

Coming to 1950s, themes of black women drama changed due to historic events of the day. During the 1960s and 1970s, protest was a major theme in American plays of African Americans. Although violence was dismissed as a solution, the plays hinted “violence may soon become the only possible course of action.”¹⁸¹ Characters in these plays are “assertive” and “strong-willed” and are different from the stereotypes that appeared in the minstrels of the early 19th century.¹⁸² Plays of Baraka, Baldwin, Hansberry, and Childress express anger and disappointment. Other plays appreciated blackness by defending that, “blacks disassociate themselves from the decadent white society and its values.”¹⁸³ Some playwrights considered “solidarity” of women as an important means of resisting oppression. It can be concluded that the plays of 1960s and 1970s generally celebrate blackness and black values with a demurral of white world and its imposition of

¹⁷⁸ Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. (1990). *Their Place on the Stage*. New York: Praeger, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 8, 9-10, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Harris, Will. (1994). “Early Black Women Playwrights and the Dual Liberation Motif.” *African American Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Black Women’s Culture Issue, p. 205.

¹⁸¹ Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. (1990). *Their Place on the Stage*. New York: Praeger, p. 26.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 27.

blackness as a negative aspect. By the help of drama, black playwrights have proven that they can make white world a better place.¹⁸⁴

Black women have chosen drama as a way to cope with distorted realities of whites about blackness. Indeed, they have been doing the thing which they have been taught by their great-grandmothers, grandmothers and mothers; they have been changing their worlds thanks to the legacy of creativity and struggle.

3.1. Adrienne Kennedy: A Playwright of Selves

Adrienne Kennedy was brought up in the South and the Midwest in an extended family, typical of African-American life. Both of Kennedy's parents were college educated and they worked for the uplift of Black people. Growing up in middle-class black family, and in a Cleveland neighborhood where there were Catholics, immigrants and other people of color, Kennedy did not experience racism and separatism until she attended college. During her college years in Ohio, whose college campus had very little population of black students, Kennedy faced the grim reality of racism. Alienated from the society, she found solace in reading the works of English literature, especially, the ones by Bronte. Having wanted to study literature at college, she became disappointed by the fact that as black students they were expected to study pedagogics. She "halfheartedly" studied in this department.¹⁸⁵ During the college years, she met her husband-to-be and after graduation, she moved to Denver to live with her husband. Soon after the marriage Kennedy became pregnant and since her husband was in Korea, she spent her pregnancy days with her family. During these days, Kennedy made up her mind that writing plays was something she could do because being a movie actress like Bette Davis or Ingrid Bergman was seemingly impossible for her.

¹⁸⁴ Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. (1990). *Their Place on the Stage*. New York: Praeger, p. 74.

¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, Adrienne. (1996). *People Who Led To My Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, p. 71.

Getting married and becoming a mother did not make Kennedy forget her childhood memories which left deep marks on her spirit and memories. She writes in her autobiography that she remembers her parents' hometown, their neighborhood, people her parents talked about, Beethoven, John Selby, Leonard Lyons, Napoleon, all the Elizabeths, and many other important cinema, literature, philosophical and art figures.¹⁸⁶ If somebody would like to watch or read a piece from Kennedy, s/he should either watch or read it twice. Once before reading her autobiography, and then, once after learning her life. Reading Kennedy's works is sharing and witnessing her experiences in a white supremacist sexist society.

Kennedy is such a talented writer that she melts the fiction and reality in the same pot with a perfect style and makes the reader want to reread her works in spite of the hard swallowed realities on the pages. In her book *People Who Led to my Plays* (1988), she describes her experiences as if she writes in a scrap book or in a diary so the reader feels the sincerity and s/he can understand what it means to stand in a black female's shoes, or, at least, s/he tries to understand her. Taking middle-class family problems and black female subject, thus, it can be said, Kennedy's plays have the reflections of her life "as a means of addressing larger social and political issues."¹⁸⁷ Hooks says:

If we think of the feminist movement as I defined it in *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center*, as a movement to resist sexism and sexist oppression, we could surely do a critical analysis of Kennedy's work that would show how her focus on the construction of "feminist" subverts traditional paradigms ... [T]here is an emergent perspective on woman's identity - on her quest to create literature in this work - that can be read as linked to a growing political concern in the fifties and sixties with female identity - with women's efforts to come to voice - to establish a writer's identity, and this concern is there in Kennedy's work.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Kennedy, Adrienne. (1996). *People Who Led To My Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, p. 85-87.

¹⁸⁷ Williams, John. (1993). "Review: Intersecting Boundaries: The Surrealist Theatre of Poet/Playwright Adrienne Kennedy." *African American Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Women's Culture Issue, p. 496.

¹⁸⁸ Bryant-Jackson, Paul K. ed. *Intersecting Boundaries : The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 181-182.

Kennedy is successful in unifying non-fiction and fiction in a surrealist style.

Plot, event, and character in the traditional realistic sense are absent from her plays. A character may represent the several selves of the central figure or may be multiple, having several names to designate the various parts of his or her personality. Metaphor, image, and symbol are the major elements in her work.¹⁸⁹

Because of their fragmented structures, although at first sight, Kennedy's plays seem as if they lack plot, yet they do not. In all Kennedy's plays, there is one common image which makes the play coherent. For example, the "hair" in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, and the owl in *The Owl Answers*, and Hollywood stars in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*. It can be claimed that each play resonates another, sharing similarities in themes, structure or characters. Though the characters' names are sometimes different, they speak the same lines of a previous play or a play which is being written at that moment by Kennedy.

Most of Kennedy's characters want to live in a white world but because of the conflict they have about their split roots they cannot adapt to neither side, and they begin to search for different identities. Kennedy's three plays will be analyzed in two parts; in the first part, the interrelated oppressions of sexism and racism and their influence on the black female will be interrogated, and, in the second part, the impact of white values on black female identity will be revealed. Kennedy's early plays are different from the plays of her contemporaries which have strong-willed female characters. Her early characters are fragmented alienated souls trying to survive in a brutal white world and who eventually end up crushed and defeated at the end. The characters in Kennedy's later plays learn to cope with the negative effects of white culture by holding on to their black values.

¹⁸⁹ Bryant-Jackson, Paul K. ed. *Intersecting Boundaries : The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 70.

3.2. A General Evaluation of *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *The Owl Answers*, and *A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White*

Funnyhouse of a Negro was staged in 1963. Kolin summarizes the 1960s:

Kennedy's play grew out of the turbulent early 1960s with its bloodshed over civil rights, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, the Watts riots in Los Angeles in 1965, and the looming holocaust of the Vietnam War. ... *Funnyhouse of a Negro* explored incest, miscegenation, racial genocide, and female oppression years before they would be freely staged elsewhere.¹⁹⁰

The characters of the play are Negro - Sarah, a mulatto girl, looking like white people except her "wild kinky hair" giving her race away, Queen Victoria and Duchess of Hapsburg who have got partly bald heads, Patrice Lumumba, a hunched back Jesus, Sarah's Landlady, Raymond and the mother. Although there are eight characters, except Raymond and Sarah's Landlady, the others are Sarah's selves and they take place on the stage at the same time. Trying to live in the United States of 1960s, Sarah with her different selves represents different places and different time periods. Starting with earlier periods of Duchess of Hapsburg and Queen Victoria, she moves to the present-day; to 1961 when Patrice Lumumba, the prime minister of the Republic of Congo is assassinated.

The play mainly takes place in Sarah's room but there are also Queen's and Duchess' chambers on the stage. There is a bed, a writing table, a mirror, a statue of Queen Victoria, her photographs and her books. The statue of Queen Victoria is a gigantic plaster one. Sarah's photographs show the old ruins of Rome, and she has books of white history and literature. On the stage, there are two main colors which are black and white. The center of the stage is lighted with a strong white light leaving other parts of the stage unnaturally dark.

¹⁹⁰ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 26.

In the Queen's chamber, there is a bed resembling "an ebony tomb, a low, dark chandelier with candles, and wine-colored walls."¹⁹¹ Duchess's chamber is made up of "a black and white marble floor, a bench decorated with white flowers."¹⁹² All the decoration in the Duchess's room seems very artificial. The curtain, the clothes (nightgowns of Victoria, Duchess, and the mother) are made from a cheap white satin reminding the inferior of a casket. The curtain has also some holes as if it is gnawed by rats. The faces of Queen Victoria and Duchess of Hapsburg are depicted as deadly white, a color that gives them an expressionless quality or Kennedy indicates that the actresses must wear masks in order to portray these qualities. The father (Lumumba) does not have a name in the text. He is referred as "Man" and he is without a face carrying a mask in his hand.

Funnyhouse of a Negro presents the psychic confusion of a mulatto girl named Sarah. The play does not have a traditional chronologic order of events. It demonstrates different phases of the life of an educated mulatto girl whose father is a black and mother is a nearly white woman. Having been brought up in an American white world, Sarah has accepted the norms of this white world. She is in a constant war with her selves. Her confusion with her selves is of a great extent; she is on the edge of ending her life because she cannot cope with her selves. Throughout the play, Sarah talks with her selves and her last appearance, with a rope on her neck on the stage, hints her sudden death.

The Owl Answers was staged in 1965, two years after her first play. There are eight characters in this play, too. Unlike *The Funnyhouse*, this time every character is transformed into more than two characters throughout the play. They are "SHE who is CLARA PASSMORE who is the VIRGIN MARY who is the BASTARD who is the OWL, BASTARD' BLACK MOTHER who is the REVEREND'S WIFE who is ANNE BOLEYN, GODDAM FATHER who is the RICHEST WHITE MAN IN THE TOWN who is the DEAD WHITE FATHER who

¹⁹¹ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 12.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 21.

is the REVEREND PASSMORE, THE WHITE BIRD who is REVEREND PASSMORE'S CANARY who is GOD'S DOVE," and also the negro man, Shakespeare, Chaucer and William the conqueror.¹⁹³ As it can be seen clearly, there are identities within identities which make the play more complicated.

Stage is also made up of different places overlapping successively. There is a New York subway with its seats, "the gates, the High Altar, the ceiling and the Dome are like St. Peter's, the walls are like the Tower of London."¹⁹⁴ There is again a white light on the center of the stage, the outside of subway car is dark.

Both *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* have a dream-like quality with distracting voices - in *Funnyhouse Of a Negro* there is a constant laughter, door knocking and in *The Owl Answers* there are laughters, there are slamming of metro car gates, screeches, flap of wings, sudden flash of lights, voices of wheel on a rail. These voices distract the audience and seem to warn them as if they are witnessing something unreal like a nightmare or a dream. In *The Owl Answers* when the scene changes, the platform where the subway car is situated turns a full and a half circle. There is an incessant action on the stage. This turn of the platform keeps the audience seeing what is happening on the stage from every angle as if Kennedy implies to show the reality of blackness from every angle.

The Owl Answers is about Clara, a mulatto girl, whose mother is a black cook and whose father is a white rich man. The audience learns Clara's story from the dialogues between the characters. She lives with a black stepfather who is a Reverend. Except the mother and the stepfather, all of the characters are historical white characters who represent different parts of Clara's life. Shortly, her story is about a black girl who has a strong desire for being accepted by white people because of her white ancestral side. She rejects her mother's blackness and she turns into an owl at the end of the play.

¹⁹³ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 29.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White was staged in 1976 with characters who are not split. Changing her style in this play, Kennedy leaves the nightmarish atmosphere which is dominant in her earlier plays. The characters are Clara (a pale black girl), the mother, the father, the husband. These characters are presented to the audience as supporting actors and actresses, other characters whose roles are called as leading roles are Betty Davis, Paul Henreid, Jean Peters, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Shelley Winters. These characters have the same roles as they did in the movies *Now Voyager*, *Viva Zapata*, and *A Place in the Sun*. There are three curtains. In the first scene, there is a hospital lobby and there is also a scenery from *Now Voyager* in an appearance of a ship deck. In the second scene, there is Clara's brother's room and a scene from *Viva Zapata* with a wedding bed. In the third scene, there is Clara's old room and a scene from *A Place in the Sun* with a rowing boat. The stage is lighted in shadows of black and white.

By using flashbacks, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* tells the story of Clara and her family - a usual black family. Talking about the divorce of her parents and her own, her brother's car accident, her efforts to hold on to life, Clara displays a black family's life open-heartedly on the stage. The last scene ends with her brother's death in hospital.

By looking generally at the plays, it can be concluded that three plays, which are written in different years, have the same characteristics. Plots are without chronological order, the characters either split or transform into other selves, the stage lighting is in shades of black and white and the scenes where take place in different sections of the same stage. All of the plays are reflections of the memories of black women and how their lives are affected by white norms, values and perceptions.

3.3. Interrelated Nature of Oppressions in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *The Owl Answers*, and *A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White* and its Reflections on the Female Character

Racism has left deep scars on black identity. Even for black people, skin color is as important as it is for the white people. The blacker a person is, the more s/he is separated from society. Racist ideas about blacks' inferior status confine them to the margins of the society. Racism and classism have been interrelated since the era of slavery. Sexism as another oppression goes back very early in history. Their roots go far back in American history, and, unfortunately, they still exist in today's modern world. Underlying these oppressions is the relationship between the dominator and the dominated.

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Sarah is a mulatto girl living with her books and generally spending her time in her room. Sarah says: "Part of the time I live with Raymond, part of the time with God, Maxmillian and Albert Saxe Coburg. I live in my room. It is a small room." However, the room does not fill her with any sense of belonging since it is an empty signifier that cannot be associated with a "place." "I know no places," she says.¹⁹⁵ She lives with her selves in her room. Her not knowing any places designates the fact that she does not know where to belong. Because of her bad experiences from her childhood as a black female, it can be understood easily why she is imprisoned in her room. No matter how, she cannot reject the fact that she is a black girl however white she looks. She cannot belong to white world outside her room. However, she cannot also belong to a black world. She is different from many Afro-American people since she has graduated from a white college where she has fallen in love with English literature and white culture. Not every black woman finds a chance to graduate from a college as Sarah. Sarah has a light skin and she considers herself lucky to be born with a light skin but due to her kinky hair she has no chance to hide the black side of her heritage.

¹⁹⁵ Kennedy, Adrinne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 13, 15.

Sarah is a college educated black female but this does not empower Sarah. She spends her time reading volumes of English books and writing poems instead of working and trying to feed her family as many black females do. Although light colored blacks have a better chance to get higher education because of their skin color, this does not change the white perception of blackness. Sarah is a symbol of the other educated, middle-class light colored blacks. Sarah defines pallid negroes as “soulless, educated and irreligious” and, she adds, “... like all educated Negroes - out of life and death essential - I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself.”¹⁹⁶ Sarah is aware that an education in the white world creates soulless black people but she feels too miserable and powerless to change this reality. Educated blacks are confined to their circles, being excluded by the white society, they also reject their black roots like Sarah, and therefore, they are alienated. Trying to find a solace in reading and writing, she pours her opinions on “white page after white page” with her poems which are imitation of Edith Sitwell.¹⁹⁷ As a black woman belonging to nowhere she realizes that what she writes or thinks is not important for the white world she wants to belong to.

Queen Victoria and Duchess are two powerful woman figures. Although they are women, they are superior in status as members of royalty. For a black woman, being a Queen or a Duchess is impossible even in their dreams. Black woman is oppressed by white patriarchal racist society and by black men. Sarah is an example of an educated black woman who suffers from her blackness and femaleness at the same time. Being both black and female she is lonely and her thoughts are invisible.

In *The Owl Answers* all of the male characters are portrayed as symbols of power. “Goddam father” is the richest man in the town. His money is a way to empowerment, his color and sex gives him the right to rape a black woman. He casts away his illegitimate child without any remorse for having a bastard child is not a sin

¹⁹⁶ Kennedy, Adrinne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 14.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 19.

for a white man. “Goddam father” has the right to sexually abuse a black female cook because she is black, female and poor.

Though not powerful in terms of wealth and status like the white “Goddam father,” Shakespeare and Chaucer are the representators of white patriarchal intellectualism. They are significant names in classical literature. Their male gender identity and white color have made it easier for them to open the doors of the world of ideas, and have encouraged them to write and spread their works whereas the same doors have been strictly closed to women. Clara calls these writers as “dear,” showing her sympathy with her Goddam Father’s whiteness, and her claim on the white side of her ancestry. Goddam Father feels this desire of Clara and he says: “You are filled with dreams of my world. I sense it all.” Clara longs to be a part of white world.¹⁹⁸

William the Conqueror, another noteworthy name from English history, is the ultimate authority as the king of England. Kennedy may have deliberately chosen William the Conqueror as a character because he is known as “William the Bastard because of the illegitimacy of his birth.”¹⁹⁹ By bringing together two bastards, Kennedy illustrates how the lives of a bastard king and a bastard black girl can totally differ from each other. William’s color, sex and royal blood eliminate moral barriers, and ironically, he calls Clara as “Bastard” at the beginning of the play.²⁰⁰

Reverend Passmore is a black man. He has a holy mission; a mission which is destined to be suitable for a black man as long as he is in black church. His black color confines him within the church walls but his sex makes him the head of the family. He has the right to abuse his wife and her adopted child Clara. He is a symbol of patriarchy and a symbol of sexist authority in the family. Reverend Passmore reads a battered Bible. His battered Bible may represent the doctrines of Christianity

¹⁹⁸ Kennedy, Adrinne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 35.

¹⁹⁹ Wikipedia. (2009). “William I of England.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_the_Conqueror. (August 5, 2009).

²⁰⁰ Kennedy, Adrinne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 29.

which are stained by the whites. Without speaking a line in the play, it is understood that Reverend Passmore is more powerful than his wife and his adopted child.

Clara and her mother, on the other hand, suffer because of their sex and color. Clara's mother is "somebody that cooked for" Goddam Father.²⁰¹ As a black woman, her situation in the modern era is not much different from her grandmothers' situation in the era of slavery. After the era of slavery, black women have been confined to menial labor and housework while white women have been chasing after equal job opportunities. Being a lower class member, black women not only struggle to earn a living but also learn to cope with the mental and physical harassment of white men. Because of stereotypes such as Mammy, Aunt Jemima, and Jezebel, white perception of black woman is determined beforehand. Black men are rapists and black women are Mammies, Matriarchs or whores. Therefore, racism and sexism defines are in a close relationship with classism. In other words, these oppressions are interrelated in a black female's life.

Clara is not different from her mother. Being a child of miscegenation like her mother, she is called "Bastard." Having no guilt about the light color of her skin, she is the victim of white patriarchal society for which black women stand merely as "machines or as manikins." They have no individual identity.²⁰² "She" is a teacher who "carries notebooks that throughout the play like the handkerchiefs fall. She will pick them up, glance frenziedly at a page from a notebook, be distracted, place the notebooks in a disorderly pile, drop them again, etc."²⁰³ Tension in her actions show that her mental well-being is deteriorating, causing her to feel lost and disconnected. She acts aggressive. She is also a product of racist and sexist oppression. She works as a teacher, since for a black woman being a teacher is among the limited choices of jobs rather than menial jobs and housework. "She" is a whore in male perception because her search of love is mistaken by a black man in a subway car. By presenting

²⁰¹ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 32.

²⁰² Cooper, Anna Julia. (1990). *A Voice From the South*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 30.

²⁰³ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 37.

a rapist black male figure on the stage, Kennedy confirms to white perception of black stereotypes, and surprises her contemporaries.

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* a black family is on the stage at the same time with different Hollywood stars. While all black family members are talking on the stage, only white female movie stars talk. White male movie stars are mute during the play. Kennedy uses powerful white woman characters such as Queen Victoria and Duchess of Hapsburg in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* to show the fascination of a black girl to belong to white world whereas in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, white stars are not used to show the longings of a woman to belong to this glamorous world. Hollywood stars perform their roles by speaking lines of an ordinary black woman. This time Clara does not want to be a white woman. By making white female stars speak her own lines, Clara does not imagine living in a chamber. This time Clara brings white stars into her black world.

Although Clara is indicated by Kennedy as playing a small role in the play, the play is told from her perspective. Using the same name with the protagonist of *The Owl Answers*, Kennedy may be trying to create an alternative to miserable Clara of *The Owl Answers* with a more self-confident Clara in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*. Although both women feel the effects of sexism and racism on their lives, Clara of the latter play has been able to develop a positive self-perception. Clara is also a writer like Sarah and “She” in the other two plays and she knows racist and sexist attitude of white world. She says: “Everyone says it’s unrealistic for a Negro to want to write” but in this play, she does not give up struggling and by writing a play which is on black experience with a style of her own rather than imitating white styles, she finds a chance to get her play produced and she is even nominated for her play.²⁰⁴ Shortly, Clara’s sex and race do not become a hindrance for getting her play produced but it is, still, hard for a black woman to live in white society as a writer. After getting divorced from her husband Eddie, Clara thinks: “It bothers me that Eddie had to give money for the ticket to come home. I don’t have any money of my own: the option from my play is gone and I don’t know how I will

²⁰⁴ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 75

be able to work and take care of Eddie Jr. Maybe Eddie and I should go back together.”²⁰⁵ Being financially broke, Clara as a strong-willed black woman considers marriage with her ex-husband unwillingly. Clara’s situation is an example of how black women are forced to carry unhappy marriages because of their disadvantaged positions in the market economy.

To put it succinctly, in all of the plays, black women are affected by racist, sexist and classist oppressions. In the first two plays, Sarah and Clara, in spite of their education, feel disempowered in white society and accept the alienation. Sarah confines herself to her room while Clara becomes a yellow owl belonging to neither white nor black race. They are not aware of their potential power of creativity. Both Sarah and “She” are not afraid to imagine but they are afraid to question. However, in the last play, Clara is aware of her power. She suffers from the sexism and racism, too, but she is stronger than the other characters. Unlike Sarah and “She” Clara does not give up the fight at the end of the play. She becomes a symbol of hope for black women by standing with her mother holding each other at the end. Solidarity and the courage to think and create will empower them.

3.4. Impact of White Oppression on Black Female in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *The Owl Answers*, and *A Movie Star Has To Star in Black and White*

Negro - Sarah is a mulatto who is brought up in the white culture, absorbing white cultural values and ideas. Her name, Sarah, is a white American name and her second name used by Kennedy is Negro. At the beginning of the play, the name of the character Sarah is written as “NEGRO,” and later in the play, it is written as “SARAH (NEGRO).”²⁰⁶ Throughout the play, the name of the character is written as either Negro or Sarah (Negro). This double naming looks like a deliberate choice of the writer. It shows that Sarah may seem like a white person except for her “wild, kinky hair,” but in white society, she cannot deny the fact that she is a Negro, not a person of white race because of the black drop in her blood. This double naming is

²⁰⁵ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 72.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 13, 15.

also a good symbol of Sarah's split personality between her American and African side. As Du Bois clarifies this in "double-consciousness" term, Sarah is the typical black female suffering from this double-consciousness, and her double naming validates her conflict.

Alexander describes identity as a "search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities."²⁰⁷ For Sarah, the larger social context is white society and the smaller is the black community. Choosing where to belong is her option. She does not want to belong to Afro-American society whose values she feels a stranger to but she wants to belong to the white world whose values, education and culture she has absorbed. The first clash starts here: Having the chance to choose but being disallowed to choose. White society excludes all the "others." Therefore, the social reality for Sarah is her race, her family which she cannot choose nor change. This means that the exclusion of a black child starts from her/his childhood and as Fanon states, a psychologically healthy child becomes abnormal in the slightest contact with racist mainstream society.²⁰⁸

"She" in *The Owl Answers* is in a search of her self. She wants to be with her Father who is the Richest White Man in the town, nevertheless, she has to live with a black stepfather and a black mother. Clara in *The Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* lives in a black world, too; or to put it more correctly, she lives in a town where:

... [T]he white people lived on one side. It had pavements on the street and sidewalks and mail was delivered. The Negroes lived on the other side and the roads were dirt and had no sidewalk and you had to go to the post office to pick up your mail. In the center of Main Street was a fountain and white people drank on one side and Negroes drank on the other. When Negro bought something in a store he couldn't try it on. A Negro couldn't sit down at the soda fountain in the drug store but had to take his drink out. In the movies ... you had to go ... and sit in the last four rows. When you arrived on the train from Cincinnati the first thing you saw was the WHITE and

²⁰⁷ Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 379

²⁰⁸ Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 143.

COLORED signs at the depot. ... We at in only two cars and white people had the rest of the train.²⁰⁹

This is the social context where “She” and Clara have to search for an identity. Sarah’s and She’s desire to take place in a white world does not seem absurd if this picture is imagined. It may be a low possibility for them to choose another life style in the mainstream society but, still, they have the chance to make a change in their lives. However, there is also a reality which they cannot determine as they would like - their skin color. Blackness is like a guardian which keeps them within their boundaries.

A difference between *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, *The Owl Answers* and *The Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* must be emphasized here. In the first two plays, Sarah and “She” do not talk about black people who are in the black side of the town. They are so obsessed with whiteness and white world that blackness is evil for them. According to these two characters, black people are confined to the black side of the town since they are rapists, beasts or Black Matriarchs. Believing in the white perception and being excluded from white society, Sarah and “She” live belonging to nowhere. They hope that one day they will have white friends and they will live among whites. Both female characters are educated mulatto woman who are “destroyed by family and by an Anglo-Saxon society whose approval they desperately seek but from whose bastions of power they are excluded.”²¹⁰ “She” feels prisoned in her pallid skin as Sarah, and in *The Owl Answers* as Clara’s surname “Passmore” indicates that both Sarah and Clara want to pass as white to be accepted by the society. Clara in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* has the ability to see the two sides of the coin. She can see how orderly white people’s lives are in a town. However, she also tries to understand why the black folk lives on the other side. Therefore, white Hollywood stars have a different significance for Clara. They are not selves who Clara longs to be. Kennedy uses the glamour of the stars to draw attention to the life of a usual black woman because Clara is not obsessed with being

²⁰⁹ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 63.

²¹⁰ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 50.

white as the other two characters of the former plays. Clara can see the black folk's place in the society. She is aware of the fact that blacks are not responsible alone for their inferior status in white world. Clara questions American society. She accepts the reality that she cannot determine her family or the skin color but she is aware that she cannot also determine easily how she will live. Decision about where and how she lives is not completely in her hands. It is in white male hands which delimit their right to choose freely in the society. This awareness makes Clara different from Sarah and "She."

While defining double-consciousness, Du Bois presents the conflict of black American whether s/he is an American citizen or not. He urges the readers to be aware of their both sides. He confirms that blacks are Americans in politics, religion, and language but they are Africans to preserve their physical powers, intellectual endowments and spiritual ideals because Du Bois knows that both cultures have different messages to give the society.²¹¹ However, Sarah and "She" want to bleach her Negro soul "in a flood of Americanism" for they do not believe Negro blood has a message for the world.²¹²

To be saved from the traumatizing effects of double-consciousness, Du Bois advised that black folks should be educated by black people in black institutions. That kind of education will award black soul with "self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect."²¹³ Sarah and "She" have studied white culture and history, they have learnt white Christianity and have tried to adapt to white beauty ideals. Education they have received in white society makes them whiter theoretically whereas it leaves them in a limbo between white and black in reality. Sarah is not aware of her African side except the physical signs. She does not respect her father's efforts as a social worker. In *The Owl Answers* "She" is also not happy with her black family, she talks about her white father and "lovely" England throughout the play.

²¹¹ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 365, 822.

²¹² Ibid, p. 365.

²¹³ Ibid, p. 368.

SHE: We came this morning. We were visiting the place of our ancestors, my father and I. We had a lovely morning, we rose in darkness, took a taxi past Hyde Park through the Marble Arch to Buckingham Place, we had our morning tea at Lyons then came out to the tower...²¹⁴

She claims that England is her country because her ancestors live there. Her approach to white culture is a noticeable indicator of how she is sympathizing with the culture of her father for whom “She” is a daughter of a cook, trying to forget her black roots. However white “She” thinks she is, she is not admitted to her white father’s funeral because of her skin color. She suffers from the same in-betweenness as with Sarah. This is the conflict in conscious of a black girl .

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* Clara, on the other hand, does not suffer from her blackness. She is a pallid black as the other two characters but this reality does not seem to make her imprisoned in the limbo where Sarah and “She” are confined. Clara’s father is a social worker and he is a self-educated man. His relationship with his race is in positive terms. His aim is helping to uplift black race. Having been brought up by black parents, Clara can be said to get more love from her family than Sarah and “She.” Clara is not a child of miscegenation but she is a child of a willing marriage. Although her parents are divorced, part of the causes of this divorce lie in the white politics as scrutinized in the theoretical part of this thesis. Being a child in a normal family, her contacts with the white world have not made her obsessed with white culture by exaggerating the importance of it but they have made her a questioning self, and thus, a more powerful female. She is aware of the fact that white world keeps her within limits in “physical movement and provincial in thought and dream.”²¹⁵ Everything she has a natural right to pursue - job, income, recreational activities, housing, social relationships, writing, publishing - is done according to white society’s impositions but this fact does not set her apart from her black side unlike Sarah and “She.”

²¹⁴ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 30.

²¹⁵ Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 653.

The conflict between blackness and whiteness is reflected with the stage props and lighting by Kennedy. The stage in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* is surrounded by “unnatural blackness” which gives a clue about the play that it will take place in either a black world or for a black person there is no world outside of her/his home but just darkness.²¹⁶ There is a great irony here. The black area of the stage is outside the flat of Sarah. In her room, she lives under a white light in a white world of her own, however, her color makes her invisible even under a strong light. On the stage, in the middle of the “unnatural blackness,” there is a world whose dominant color is white. Therefore, the viewers can see the opposition of the Sarah’s life on the stage, black versus white. However, Sarah’s love of white culture is not reflected in an idealized way by Kennedy. As Curb says: “... [W]hiteness is associated with death and decay as well as with a hollow, false aestheticism.”²¹⁷

In *The Owl Answers*, the stage is in darkness again. It takes place in a New York subway car which is surrounded by darkness. This time black people are under the ground since the world above belongs to white people. The walls of subway are the Tower of London and the dome is like St. Peter’s. The scene gives an impression of a prison with constantly slamming doors and with guards Shakespeare, Chaucer, William the Conqueror and Anne Boleyn. “She” as Sarah is imprisoned in the every day life of a black female. White world is related to death in this play. All of the white characters in the play are dead. White culture and history becomes the guards of the prison for a mulatto woman.

White color is related to death in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, too. The curtain which greets the audiences “is a white satin curtain of a cheap material and a ghastly white, a material that brings the mind to interior of a cheap casket.”²¹⁸ The Queen’s chamber is in the middle of the stage with an ebony bed reminding a casket and is under a “strong white light.” The Queen and the Duchess should have white masks

²¹⁶ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 12.

²¹⁷ Curb, Rosemary K. (1980). “Fragmented Selves in Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*.” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32, No.2, pp. 186.

²¹⁸ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 11-12.

on their face or their make-up must be in a yellowish white so that their faces shall seem expressionless like dead. Their nightgowns are made of the same white cheap satin of the curtain.²¹⁹ Entering from the black (dark) to her room under a strong white light, we can see Negro - Sarah has a noose around her neck. It is like a warning, which says all the blacks who dare to enter and take part in the white world, must be ready for consequences. She returns from the white world into her room with a noose around her neck, accepting that she is a loser from the beginning.

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, all the colors on the stage are shades of black and white. The stage has a calmer atmosphere with the romantic movie musics from 1940s and 1950s. On the contrary of the earlier plays' nightmarish and disturbing atmosphere, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* is likely to be presenting some sections from a black female's life. Clara is both African and American and this has not affected her mentality. Her positive mood is reflected with the soft tones of light and music.

In all of the plays there are more than one self of Sarah, "She" and Clara. Sarah's selves are black, white, yellow, dead, alive, male and female. They all represent some part of Sarah which she longs to be or she rejects. Her conflict between blackness and whiteness is reflected in her selves. Sarah asks: "[S]hall they be Black or White? Male or female? Intellectual or sensual? Alive or dead?"²²⁰ Sarah is used to seeing the world in dichotomies. If it is not her color, she is to be subjugated because of her sex. Brown says: "Miss Kennedy demonstrates that Sarah's struggle is the struggle of all women in a world which not only mocks and rejects blackness but femaleness as well."²²¹

²¹⁹ Kennedy, Adrinne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 12.

²²⁰ Curb, Rosemary K. (1980). "Fragmented Selves in Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*." *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32, No.2, pp. 186.

²²¹ Brown, A. Lorraine. (1975). "For the Characters are myself": Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of Negro*." *NegroAmerican Literature Forum*, Vol. 9, No. 3, p 86.

In this play in addition to blackness and femaleness, education is seen as a factor which excludes the black woman. As an educated woman, Sarah is different from her black fellow beings who have to live on low wages and welfares having no chances of a good education. Sarah is by herself in her room where there is only a bed, a mirror and a writing table. Most striking objects in her room are her books and photos and a statue of Queen Victoria. These objects are proofs showing that Sarah does nothing in her room but sleeping, reading and writing to soothe her loneliness.

In order to soothe her loneliness, she talks to her selves which are indeed her warring ideas and her conflicts about a black female's place in white society. Her body suffers from the reality of blackness and this is shown in her "father self" as an agony. Her father is a social major trying to uplift his race, and this aspect of the father makes him a symbol for Afro-Americans to find a proper place in American society. Another self, Lumumba, who is the assassinated Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, represents the necessity for African people to rise from colonialism. Sarah's father and Lumumba are both the racial pride and the agony of the black skin. Sarah looks at her father from the white world perspective and she sees her father as a typical stereotype - Black Man the Rapist and the Beast.

Queen Victoria and the Duchess are two female white characters, they are rulers and they have powerful images in mind of a black girl. They both represent power and also weakness ironically because they are women. They are chosen as an opposition to Lumumba and the Father. The father and Lumumba are very black and embodiment of racial pride and they are also representators of patriarchy. Sarah mentions her father as a rapist and a "beast." His sex guarantees him the right to rape his wife. Queen Victoria and the Duchess are females but belonging to royal family and nobility, they have the power to colonize Africa of Lumumba and they are mightier than the black father. Lumumba's split head in the play shows that he is a real African, a victim of white colonization. Indeed, black women and men have many common reasons to struggle together against the white world, nevertheless, Sarah cannot accept the solidarity of black people seeing her father as a jungle beast. According to Sarah, Africans are good when they are in Africa, they should not

Africanize white culture. Curb says: “Sarah’s parents present a balance of power in a sexist and racist society: Her mother’s White power balances her father’s male power, and both are likewise despised and oppressed.”²²² By making her selves white women and black men, Sarah shows the racism is underlying all of the oppressions, since, despite being female, Queen Victoria and the Duchess are powerful thanks to their color.

In *The Owl Answers* “Bastard’s Black Mother” was a cook of “The Goddam Father” previously. Mother of “She” unlike the mother of Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, who is a light colored mulatto, is doubly oppressed by She’s biological father because of her color and sex to cite Curb.²²³ Taking her job into consideration, too, as a lower class citizen she also suffers from classism. “Bastard’s Black Mother” is at the same time “The Reverend’s Wife” whose real name the audience never learns. This black mother character is named as “The Reverend’s Wife.” Black mother does not even have a name. “All three roles - Bastard’s Black Mother, Reverend’s Wife, and Anne Boleyn - portray women imprisoned by their female nature and subservient to men.”²²⁴ Reverend’s wife lives according to patriarchal standards which impose that the feminine must be virtuous by preserving her chastity. However, she is humiliated by her husband, the Reverend, because of the dishonorable contact with Goddam father (White man). Her husband “condemns female sexuality, branding it carnal, sinful.”²²⁵ Confusion of the Reverend’s Wife becomes concrete in her addresses to “She” sometimes as Mary, sometimes as the Bastard. “She” is innocent like Mary because the mother is raped by a white man due to her powerless position as a black lower class female. On the other hand, the black mother has absorbed the white patriarchal ideas to such an extent that she sees her daughter also as a sinner because of her color and sex. “She” is the daughter of a condemned relationship. Therefore, “She”’s place in such a racially polarized nation is uncertain, and this

²²² Curb, Rosemary K. (1980). “Fragmented Selves in Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*.” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32, No.2, p. 185.

²²³ Ibid, p. 185.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 187.

²²⁵ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 57.

uncertainty finds its way into her perception of herself, resulting in a divided consciousness.”²²⁶

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, Clara and her family are on the stage with some Hollywood stars who pretend to be the same with the actors and actresses in the movies *Viva Zapata*, *Now*, *Voyager* and *A Place in the Sun*. However, they are not performing the same roles as in the movies, they speak the lines of Clara. Presenting a seemingly ideal world which is based upon white male aesthetic, Hollywood movies of the day do not present real life characters. The women and men have to be the “most” - the most beautiful woman or the most handsome man. If they are bad, they are the worst, if they are kind-hearted, they are the best. Although famous actors and actresses play roles of implausible men and women, the stars like Peters, Davis and Winters live in an ideal world. By bringing these characters on the stage together with her family, Clara wants to experience what ideal means. Geis states that: “To inhibit the world cinematic representation is to seek the pleasure of ‘translating’ one’s experience into the experience of the idealized Subject.”²²⁷ However, this act of Clara does not mean that she rejects her blackness. On the contrary, “Now it is time for the white world to imitate a black one.”²²⁸

Clara juxtaposes two opposite worlds by bringing them together on the same stage. She is not afraid of bringing white and black world together. Considering the reality of the suppression of black women’s voice so far, Clara uses these stars just for an outlet of her thoughts and emotions. The things a black woman says can be dismissed but presenting a black woman’s life through the mainstream stars will draw attention to the feelings of a black female in a white world. By this way, “Clara is given a voice that potentially empowers her to star as a woman, a mother, a wife,

²²⁶ Brown, E. Barnsley. (2001). “Passed Over: The Tragic Mulatta and (Dis)Integration of Identity in Adrienne Kennedy’s Plays.” *African American Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 290.

²²⁷ Bryant-Jackson, Paul K. ed. *Intersecting Boundaries : The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 175.

²²⁸ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 105.

and eventually a writer.”²²⁹ Throughout the play, male Hollywood stars never talk as if Clara takes revenge from the white male world by muting the white male movie stars who have talked so much for many years, and she presents the white actresses a new life with her own black voice. Casting white stars is a way to draw attention to the hard facts of a black woman’s life. The name of the play, *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, is also significant since a movie star has to be both black and white presenting examples from both worlds. America is not populated by only white people.

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro* Sarah’s self, Jesus, displays another dimension of oppression in black female’s life. He is a reflection from the spiritual side of white oppression. Black religious thought, which has developed since the middle of the 18th century, makes Christianity as a religion of the oppressed. According to black religious thought, God helps to the liberation of the oppressed. Jesus is the oppressed one, too. Since God is on the side of the oppressed, Jesus with God becomes a source of hope for liberation. This concept of God is different from white Christianity’s omnipotent and wrathful God which has not changed since Calvinist doctrines. In white Christianity, every person is sinner because of the Fall but women and blacks are more inferior and nonhuman-like than the white men as it is based upon the Fall and the myth of Ham. Therefore, white people have used the religion as a way to control non-whites and women whereas blacks have seen religion as an empowerment tactic.

Sarah indicates that: “I long to become even a more pallid Negro than I am now; pallid like Negroes on the covers of American Negro magazines; soulless, educated and irreligious.”²³⁰ Pallid blacks have no souls because they cannot belong to white race culturally. They also have difficulty to adopt a religion which is full of images that impose white superiority and humiliate the blacks. Sarah, as other pallid blacks, does not seem to know black religious thought whose doctrines promise

²²⁹ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 103.

²³⁰ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 14.

justice, liberation, hope, and love. She is completely lost. All the things she receives from the white culture keep her in a prison of her pallid skin.

The miniature photographs and gilt-edged cards of Jesus that the church gave us in Sunday school hypnotized me. The colors, the crimsons, blues, golds ... [T]he black of Jesus' eyes. "Jesus loves you," Sunday school teachers repeated every Sunday, winter, spring and summer. "Jesus loves all the little boys and girls." I saved the pictures of this Jesus into whose feet they had driven nails but who arose. And who loved me.²³¹

In Sunday schools, it is taught that Jesus and His Father love everyone but finding herself unfit for heaven of whites, Sarah talks to a distorted Jesus. His hunched back and yellow color make him an object of pity rather than a symbol of power in Sarah's world. She considers that even Jesus may be impotent if he is yellow like a mulatto. Rejecting black religious thought, Sarah bethinks that mighty Jesus must be the one with blonde hair and blue eyes in a white skin. Sarah's Jesus in the play is distorted since he is yellow as Sarah. Sarah may consider that the hunched back yellow Jesus is for the "colored" people whereas the one with blonde hair is for the "whites only". As in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* in *The Owl Answers*, the confusion about the religion is clear with the image of "white battered Bible."²³² Bible is "white battered" - battered by the white people. It has been used to exclude "others" while guaranteeing white male the power to dispose of the fate of the weaker ones.

Main image of the play, owl, might have different meanings. Kolin defines meaning of owl according to classical mythology: "The owl is linked to Pallas Athena, the 'goddess of wisdom and the female domestic arts' and 'the owl symbolizes inside into self and household'."²³³ Kolin adds that memory is also an attribute associated to owls.²³⁴ Apart from the meanings Kolin presents for owl, it may represent a religious motif. "In the Middle Ages the little owl was used as a symbol of the 'darkness' before the coming of Christ; by further extension it was

²³¹ Kennedy, Adrienne. (1996). *People Who Led To My Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, p. 31.

²³² Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 31.

²³³ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 68.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 69.

used to symbolize a nonbeliever who dwells in this darkness.”²³⁵ In this play, owl is the bird of the night and darkness both literally and figuratively. “She - Clara” belongs to darkness that surrounds the subway car, though however much she wants to belong to white world, she is forced to go back to the darkness, to be an owl in the darkness.

Owl may also be an antithesis of God’s Dove in the play. God’s white dove is not the outcast bird of night, it is holy. If “She – Clara” leaves owldom, she will be rescued however, this is not in the hands of Clara. Her mother calls: “Mary, leave owldom - come into my kingdom.”²³⁶ She can’t come to a white God who has forgotten her and who does not answer her prayers. She wants to be a white dove but only bird she can become is an owl. Therefore, according to the Reverend’s “white battered Bible,” Christian God does not accept Clara because of her color. “She” is not permitted to her father’s funeral although universality of Christianity.²³⁷ She says: “I call God and the Owl answers.” God is whites’ God and not the blacks’ so an owl answers her. Looking for her “spiritual legacy,” she calls a Negro man in subway car “God” and this blasphemous call is a sign that “She” is out of God’s kingdom.²³⁸ There is only a way from owldom and that is shown by “She”s black mother, who also starts hooting towards the end of the play, by stabbing herself. “She” is not aware her power and so she prefers owldom forever. Since she cannot pass as white, she is passing to owldom.²³⁹ To sum up, “She” is forced to prefer owldom because of her race and because she is a “She.”

Accepting that racism underlies the other oppressions is a fact, color of skin and how a person looks physically become an outstanding factor for a black female to be accepted by white society. Adrienne Kennedy confirms that reality in her biography in *People Who Led To My Plays*. In many places, she writes about her

²³⁵ “owl.” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. (2009).

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/436310/owl>>. (03 Jan. 2009).

²³⁶ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 41.

²³⁷ Sollors, Werner. (1991). “Owls and Rats in the American Funnyhose.” *American Literature*, Vol. 63, No. 3, p. 520.

²³⁸ Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 70.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 72.

obsession with her hair. As a child and a teenage, she tried to comb her hair as one of the Hollywood stars in the movies. She states that in Ghana, she has given up straightening her hair or trying to change her hair according to white beauty ideals. Going to Africa helps her to embrace her roots. In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, there is a “hair” image which connects the women characters. Hair is important because it is the only thing which gives Sarah away as a “negro” and so it can be said that it is handed down by her African heritage. Loss of hair means that Sarah loses contact with her African roots by rejecting her blackness and trying to hold on to white beauty ideals.

Sarah describes her mother, herself and her father with these sentences: “My mother looked like a white woman, hair as straight as any white woman’s. And at least I am yellow, but he is black, the blackest one of them all.”²⁴⁰ Her depiction shows clearly that her beauty ideal has been shaped according to mainstream society. According to Sarah, a beautiful woman should have straight hair whereas anything related to black race is evil. Sarah’s yellow color is preferable compared to the blackest skin. It is understood that Sarah believes that her appearance is beautiful except her hair: “I am good-looking in a boring way; no glaring Negroid features, medium nose, medium mouth and pale yellow skin. My one defect is that I have a had of frizzy hair, unmistakably Negro kinky hair; and it is indistinguishable ...”²⁴¹ Having straight hair, thin lips and a small nose and having a pallid skin is the most important thing. “Victoria always wants me to tell her of whiteness. She wants me to tell her of a royal world where everything and everyone is white and there are no unfortunate black ones. ... [B]lack is evil and has been from the beginning. ... Black was evil.”²⁴² White is related to anything cultivated, beautiful or noble.

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, “... [T]he Hollywood films of the 1940s contain the promises of fulfillment and female power (As embodied in, for example, the persona of Bette Davis) that permit the potential dreamer/moviegoer

²⁴⁰ Kennedy, Adrienne. (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 12.

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 14-15.

²⁴² Ibid, p. 12.

to be a sort of visionary.”²⁴³ Hollywood is just one of the many mediums through which white patriarchy imposes the standards of beauty, glamour and success. Kennedy states that people in a cinema magazine called *Modern Screen* have magical lives and adds: “I yearned to be like that. And I went upstairs and comb my hair like Kathryn Grayson’s in a pompadour ...”²⁴⁴ Magazines build up on glamour of Hollywood films in which women are presented from a white male perspective as fragile, in beautiful dresses. These women deserve the love of men therefore, every woman wants to be like these movie stars. Clara also may dream to be one of these stars but this is an impossible dream with her color because black is ugly and it is not pure. Therefore, she may be a playwright to make these characters take role in her life. The perception of white beauty ideal demonstrates “the psychological and social self-destruction of a community trapped in W.E.B. Du Bois’ realm of double consciousness.”²⁴⁵ However, Clara is a powerful black woman who has saved herself from this “trap” by accepting both sides of her heritage with the help of her creativity. Clara reads some passages from her play and it is understood that her play is *The Owl Answers*. Clara tries to be saved from the negative effects of white patriarchy by writing her conflicts and paradoxes of white culture in a unique play of her own. With her creative soul, she eases the pressure of white patriarchy on her self and listening to her ancestors like Anna J. Cooper, Phillis Weathley, she stands upright with her mother – another black woman. This act is an indication of her belief in the power of solidarity.

²⁴³ Bryant-Jackson, Paul K. ed. *Intersecting Boundaries : The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, p. 172.

²⁴⁴ Kennedy, Adrienne. (1996). *People Who Led To My Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, p. 46.

²⁴⁵ Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 333.

CONCLUSION

In 1960s and 1970s, black plays generally celebrated blackness and black values. Black playwrights tried to demonstrate that black people have capabilities to make the white world a livable place. Black woman writers have chosen playwrighting as one way to cope with the realities distorted by whites. Reading Kennedy's works gives readers a chance to share and witness a black woman's experiences in a white supremacist sexist society. Kennedy's female characters want to be accepted as part of the white world. However, living in a world which rejects their subjectivity leads characters to question their black identity. In Kennedy's plays there are black female characters with split personalities. The characters in Kennedy's earlier plays are college educated black females whose economic statuses are also better than their male counterparts. As educated blacks, they are confined to the prison-like spaces of their houses. Sarah and Clara do not go out from their rooms, and are too afraid to enter the world outside. Being alienated by the white society, they reject their black roots and therefore, are isolated in their loneliness. Even among their own race, class difference has become a determinant factor in their lives.

In this thesis, Kennedy's plays are interrogated, firstly, to present the reader that sexist, racist and classist oppressions are interrelated and have traumatizing effects on the black female identity. Woman characters who are analyzed in this study are all educated mulatto women. Although the light color skin of these women has helped them receive higher education, their place in society is not different from the other uneducated black people. Sarah is a symbol of the educated, middle-class black American. She believes that education in the white world molds black people into soulless creatures. Pallid Negroes have no souls because they cannot belong to white race spiritually. However, she does not feel powerful enough to change this reality. As an educated black woman in a white world, she rejects her black roots. She is also alienated by the white world. As a black woman belonging to nowhere, she realizes that what she writes or thinks is not important for the white world she wants to belong. Therefore, she is all alone by herself in her room. Black woman is

also oppressed by black men. Sarah and “She” are an example of educated black woman who suffer from their blackness and femaleness at the same time.

Selves of the protagonists in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* are extensions of their inner conflicts. However, in Kennedy’s later play *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* the audience sees a powerful woman character who knows her place in white and black society, and, who is struggling to lead a life by the help of her creativity. She is interested in writing plays as Sarah and “She” writes poems or essays. For Sarah and “She,” getting their writings published is an impossible dream because they are black and female whereas Clara’s sex and race do not become a hindrance for getting her play produced. However, it is hard for a black woman to live in white society as a writer. In the first two plays, Sarah and “She,” in spite of their education, feel disempowered in white society and accept the alienation. Sarah confines herself to her room while Clara becomes a yellow owl belonging to neither white nor black race. They are not so powerful as Clara to fight for themselves. Clara is antithesis of Sarah and “She” showing that there is hope for eradicating the inner conflicts stemmed from double-consciousness with the belief of black woman in her power.

The aim of this study, secondly, to show that black woman, who is aware of her place in black and white society, is empowered. In Kennedy’s plays, her empowerment becomes true when she holds on her artistic creativity – writing – to overcome the negative effects of white patriarchy. For instance, Negro - Sarah is a mulatto brought up in the white culture. Even the names used by Kennedy are a deliberate choice to reflect double-conscious of an educated black woman. Sarah’s and She’s desire to take place in white world are their impossible dreams. Although they know that they are black and do not belong to white world, they never accept this fact by imagining they will have white friends one day or they will live like their “dear” white people. On the other hand, Clara is not obsessed with being white as the other two characters of the earlier plays. She uses the glamour of the stars to draw attention to the life of a usual black woman. Hollywood stars are not used in the same sense as the selves of Sarah and “She.” Clara is aware of the black folk’s place

in the society. She is aware of the fact that blacks are not responsible alone for their inferior status in the white world. She does not blame her black roots as Sarah and “She.” Clara does what the other two characters do not – she questions American society. This awareness distinguishes Clara from Sarah and “She.”

In order to make the audience realize what it means to live like a black woman in American society, Kennedy attributes a negative quality to white color on the stage. White is related to death in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* with make-up of characters, the facial masks of the characters, the stage props and the stage lighting. On the other hand, in *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, all the colors on the stage are shades of black and white, soft music makes the stage more peaceful as if it tries reflects the consciousness of the protagonist. However, in former plays there is an incessant action on the stage with voices, sudden flashes of light, slamming doors and turning platforms. These are the reflection of the war of two opposites – black and white - in the souls of the protagonists. The divided selves are the result of this war.

In *The Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers* the multiplicity of the selves represent the traumatic effects of sexist, racist and classist oppression. Sarah’s selves, the Queen and the Duchess, are two white women whose kinky hair falls. These selves of Sarah stem from her desire to be powerful as a white woman. She cannot imagine being in a powerful position since she is oppressed because of her race and sex. However, kinky hair represents her roots which she cannot escape from. Lumumba, and Sarah’s father are two black men who haunt her. Their presence is always felt. They keep knocking on the door reminding Sarah of her inescapable past. Like in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, in *The Owl Answers*, there is also a multiplicity of selves. However, these selves go through a process of a continuous change, in one identity transforming themselves either from black to white, or white to black. For example, the “male” self of She is first a black stepfather who later changes to a white one, and this transformation keeps going on until the end of the play. These changing figures represent patriarchal oppression. White father abuses a black cook and her black stepfather intimidates his family with his religious dogmas.

In *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*, Hollywood stars are not selves of Clara. They are characters from the movies that she has once idolized. Clara uses them to draw attention to her situation in the white world. She does not imitate them, on the contrary, white stars imitate a black woman's life. Even the name of the play, *A Movie Star has to Star in Black and White*, is a confirmation of Clara's belief that a movie star also has to be black to represent American society truly.

In conclusion, white oppression has been a great force which shapes black women's life. Especially, educated black women have felt the impact of sexist, racist and classist oppression in a negative way. Receiving education in a white world, black women have distanced themselves from their origins and black selves. Black woman's desire to posit herself in the white world has made her lonely and has forced her to question her identity. However, this self interrogation has ended unsuccessfully, generally with suicide. On the other hand, writing as an artistic creativity can become a powerful means to cope with loneliness. Kennedy with her plays, tries to illustrate how acts of "creativity" can become a way to self awareness. The earlier plays of Kennedy present black women who are not aware of their power, whereas, her later play presents "a black" who appreciates and reclaims her black history and identity through "act of writing." It is her artistic creativity that empowers her and prevents her from being engulfed by the dominant white culture. Clara by pouring into words her dilemmas, conflict and confusion is able to make peace with her black female body and appreciate who she is and what she stands for.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrews, William L; Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris, eds. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Ursula M. (2000). *Interracial Experience: Growing up Black/White Racially Mixed in the United States*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.
- Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. (1990). *Their Place on the Stage*. New York: Praeger.
- Bryant-Jackson, Paul K. ed. *Intersecting Boundaries : The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bryson, Valerie. (2003). *Feminist Political Theory : An Introduction*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Code, Lorraine, ed. (2000). *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. London, GBR: Routledge.
- Cone, James H. (1985). "Black Theology in American Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 75th Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, pp. 755-771.
- Cooper, Anna Julia. (1990). *A Voice From the South*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cott, Nancy F. (1987). *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Craig, Maxine Leeds. (2002). *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and*

the Politics. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated.

Davidson, Cathy N. eds. et al. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davies, Carole Boyce. (1994). *Black Women, Writing and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Davis, David Brion. (1988). *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Donovan, Josephine. (2000). *Feminist Theory : The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*. London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois : Writings : The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade / The Souls of Black Folk / Dusk of Dawn / Essays and Articles*. New York: Penguin Books.

Fanon, Frantz. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.

Franklin, Raymond S. (1991). *Shadows of Race and Class*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press.

Fuller, Robert C. (2004). *Religious Revolutionaries : The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gadsby, Adam, ed. (2003). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Essex: Longman Dictionaries.

Gomez, Michael A. (2004). "Of Du Bois and Diaspora: The Challenge of African American Studies." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Special Issue:

Back to the Future of Civilization: Celebrating 30 Years of African American Studies pp. 175-194.

Harris, Will. (1994). "Early Black Women Playwrights and the Dual Liberation Motif." *African American Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Black Women's Culture Issue, pp. 205-221.

Holifield, E. Brooks. (2005). *Theology in America : Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*. New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press.

Hooks, Bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press.

--- . (1993). "A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multi-Cultural Change." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Cultural Diversity, pp. 4-11.

Hopkins, Dwight N. (2002). *Heart and Head : Black Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kennedy, Adrienne. (1996). *People Who Led To My Plays*. New York: Theatre Communicaions Group.

--- . (2001). *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Kolin, Philip C. (2005). *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.

Moore, T. Owens. "A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness." *Journal of*

Black Studies, Vol. 35, No. 6, pp. 751-762.

O'Neill, William L. (1988). *Feminism in America: A History*. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Publishers.

Osborne, Susan. (2001). *Feminism*. Harpenden, , GBR: Pocket Essentials.

Reed Jr., Adolph L. (1997). *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Theophus H. (1995). *Conjuring Culture : Biblical Formations of Black America*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated.

Sollors, Werner. (1997). *Neither Black nor White yet Both : Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated.

Stewart, J. (2005). *Migrating to the Movies*. Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press.

Strickland, Arvarh E. and Robert E. Weems, Jr. (2000). *African American Experience: An Historiographical & Bibliographical Guide*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.

The Lockman Foundation. (1995). *New American Standard Bible*. "Genesis 3:6".
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%203:6&version=NASB> (August, 01, 2009).

The Lockman Foundation. (1995). *New American Standard Bible*. "Genesis 3:6".
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy+2&version=NASB> (August, 01, 2009).

- Townes, Emilie M. (2006). *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walker, Alice. (2005). *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. London: Phoenix.
- Wiggins, Daphne C. (2004). *Righteous Content : Black Women Speak of Church and Faith*. New York, NY, USA: New York University Press.
- Williams, A. Roger. (1971). "A Black Pastor Looks at Black Theology." *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Theology and the Black Consciousness, pp. 559-567.
- Williams, John. (1993). "Review: Intersecting Boundaries: The Surrealist Theatre of Poet/Playwright Adrienne Kennedy." *African American Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Women's Culture Issue, pp. 495-500.
- Wright, W. D. (1998). *Racism Matters*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated.
- "owl." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. (2009).
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/436310/owl>>. (03 Jan. 2009).