Intersectional Edges in Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*

Adrienne Kennedy'nin *Funnyhouse of a Negro* ve *The Owl Answers* Adlı Oyunlarında Kesişen Sınırlar

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Abstract
This article aims to explore intersectional boundaries in the construction of formations through the analysis of Adrienne Kennedy's plays, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) and *The Owl Answers* (1965) Intersectionality challenges the axes of power by interrogating the experiences of the marginal voices who are exposed to simultaneous and interactive oppression. Positions of the disadvantaged identities predetermined through cultural construction in these plays reveal the discrimination debates at a junction where identity crisis points out what it means to be both black and woman, and the denial of intersections to keep the differences alive. The juxtaposition of intersectional voices against privileged ones provides a lens through which one can understand the systematic nature of oppression and inequality. One's being aware of her/his own position means realizing how confronted identities are constructed and positioned. Thus, trying to struggle against domination and invisibility in such a construct draws a road map of a journey to self-definition and required consciousness to resist. Within the framework of intersectionality, the present study offers a focus on black females' experience and social and political consequences of a culturally adapted construction through race, gender, sex, and class.
Keywords: Intersectionality, Black, Women, Performativity, African American

Öz
Bu makale, Adrienne Kennedy'nin *Funnyhouse of a Negro* ve *The Owl Answers* adlı oyunlarının incelenmesiyle, toplumsal oluşumların inşa edilişindeki kesişimsel sınırları keşfetmeyi amaçlar. Kesişimsellik, eşzamanlı ve etkileşimli baskıya maruz kalan sıra dışı seslerin deneyimlerini sorgulayarak iktidar eksenlerine meydan okur. Bu oyunlarda dezavantajlı kimliklerin kültürel bir inşa yoluyla önceden belirlenmiş konumları, kimlik krizinin hem siyah hem de kadın olmanın ne anlama geldiğine işaret ettiği bir kavşakta ayrımcılık tartışmalarını ve farklılıkları canlı tutan kesişimlerin inkâr edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıcalıklı seslere karşı kesişen sesler, kişinin baskı ve eşitsizliğin sistematik doğasını anlayabileceği bir mercek sağlar. Kişinin kendi konumunun farkında olması, karşı karşıya olduğu kimliklerin nasıl inşa edildiğini ve konumlandığını/konumlandırıldığını fark etmesi anlamına gelir. Dolayısıyla, tahakküme ve görünmezliğe karşı mücadele etmeye çalışmak, kendini tanıma, tanımlama ve direnme için gerekli olan bilinçlenmeye doğru ilerleyen bir yolculuğun

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yol haritasını çizer. Bu çalışma, oyunların kesişimsellik çerçevesinde incelenmesiyle, siyah kadınların deneyimlerine ve ırk, cinsiyet, toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf üzerinden kültürel olarak inşa edilmiş bir yapının toplumsal ve politik sonuçlarına odaklanır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Kesişimsellik, Siyahi, Kadın, Edimsellik, Afrikalı-Amerikalı

The struggles of activist movements in the United States, especially feminist and anti-racist efforts of those who have been fighting to be the voice of the voiceless, have focused on achieving inclusive political rights and improving the living conditions of people in society. Broadly, feminist movements were underestimated because only white middle-class women struggled to get their problems resolved while anti-racist struggles were criticized for raising the problems of black men only. This paradoxical situation seems to have been resolved with the increasing usage of the term intersectionality. Kathy Davis (2008, 68), an academician known for her contributions in the field of gender studies, briefly summarizes the role of the term that "intersectionality was intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of color fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse". Intersectionality has started to be widely known and frequently discussed within the third wave of feminism and the emergence of intersectionality has begun to be perceived as a field of discussion to indicate the same problems from different perspectives.

Segregation as a term points out many different social constructions. This means both individual and social awareness are required about the possibility that the potential discriminations that the individual may be exposed to may be based on religious, class, ethnic or racial grounds at one time. Within this context, intersectionality can be explained in the most general sense as "the state of being linked through various common qualities."[1] In social studies, intersectionality is considered as an analytical framework used to understand and explain how an individual's social and political identities come together to create different situations of discrimination and privilege. It is of great importance in terms of establishing many examination and solution systems, including determining the position of the individual in the social structure correctly and solving problems such as inequality. Widely adopted by academics, women's rights policy advocates, practitioners, and activists in the early twenty-first century, the term intersectionality is most broadly defined as "a way of understanding and analyzing complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, 15). The concept of intersectionality, which was known as an analytical tool at the time it emerged, has gained a theoretical structure by being widely discussed in the studies by the African American civil rights advocate, lawyer, and academic Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Crenshaw examines intersectionality in three main categories; structural, political, and representational. In terms of structural intersectionality, Crenshaw explains

[1] As of March 19, 2022, Collins Dictionary listed at www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/intersectionality

that black women's experiences of domestic violence and rape are qualitatively different from those of white women. While representative intersectionality describes the cultural construction of women of color, political intersectionality points out that both feminist and anti-racist policies paradoxically marginalize the issues of violence and oppression against women of color. In this context, political intersectionality is agenda-setting in terms of practices related to the defense of civil rights.[2]

While some feminist theorists, such as Crenshaw, focused specifically on the social situation of women of color, critics such as Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis have framed their discourse in a more general context, encompassing not only lower-class black women but any group of people who are subject to intersectional discrimination. In their co-authored article titled "Contextualizing Feminism: Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions", Anthias and Yuval Davis asserted their belief that there is no single truth in all circumstances and stated that "[t]he focus or project of each struggle ought to decide which of the divisions we prioritize and the extent to which separate, as opposed to unified, struggle is necessary" (1983, 73). Thus, the first use of the term "intersectionality," while emphasizing the intersection of gender and race in the process of development, associates gender with several different axes, especially class, nationality, sexual orientation, and age.

Gender, racial classifications, and ethnicity are intertwined social constructs. The concepts introduced and appeared within these constructions, knowledge and experiences about women generate the basic building blocks for intersectionality. They are shaped by many axes that are indivisible and affect each other and have influences on individuals from different sides. In this case, Collins suggests using intersectional analysis. In their book *Intersectionality*, academics Bilge and Collins state that "[i]ntersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves" (2016, 15). Events and conditions in social and political life are not shaped by only one factor; rather, they are often formed by profound and equally impressive factors, meaning that it is possible for an individual to be subjected to gender discrimination while being subjected to class or racial discrimination at the same time. The intersectionality theory, which examines this disadvantaged position and is referred to as "… the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall, 2005, 1771), explains and emphasizes the combination of potential overlapping discriminations. Intersectionality theorists predict that all discriminations should be examined together, and in addition to being an academic field of study in feminist criticism seeking to scrutinize the oppression of women, the intersectionality theory also finds a place in international human rights discourses. As Nira Yuval-Davis stated in her article titled "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", the United Nations Human Rights

[2] For detailed information, Crenshaw, K. W. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review 43(6)*, pp. 1241-99.

Commission "recognized the importance of examining the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination, including their root causes from a gender perspective" (2006, 194) in its resolution on women's human rights in 2002.

Intersectionality can also be used for the analysis of power relations in the context of discrimination. While political actions reflect the intersectional perspective, intersectionality can also be considered a tool for struggling to understand, make sense of and transform modern power in all its complexity. For example, through political intersectionality, Crenshaw analyses "how both feminist and antiracist have, paradoxically, often helped to marginalize the issue of violence women of color" (1991, 1245). Crenshaw used this expression, which she brought up in her legal studies, to explain that the field of experience of black women does not appear both in the feminist struggle and in the anti-racist discourse and struggle. The conflict stems from the people's assumption that Black women's claims of exclusion must be unilateral, whereas Black women can experience discrimination in a variety of ways. Crenshaw wants to make the reader think of an intersection with four directions of moving traffic as a metaphor. Discrimination can move in one direction or another, just like how traffic does at an intersection. Cars moving in a variety of directions, and occasionally in all of them, might cause an accident if it occurs in an intersection. In Crenshaw's own words, "Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination" (1989, 149).

Multiple positions that form power relations in ordinary life are tried to be made visible. An individual's experiences are not only gender-stigmatized but also racialized, classified, and associated with other kinds of hierarchies. Intersectionality also comes to the fore in the field of knowledge production. While producing knowledge on gender and gender inequalities, a gender approach that relates to different axes is brought to the agenda in order to analyze power relations. Originally a lawyer, Crenshaw studied the cases of violence and rape against women and concluded that by the late 1980s these incidents of black women had been rendered invisible within both the feminist movement and the anti-racist movement. Because black women are marginalized in anti-racist movements in terms of their gender identities, this double subordination and ignoring cause violence against black women to become invisible. "[T]he boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women's and Black men's experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989, 143). Within the anti-racist struggles, there is a fight against stereotyping Black men. In order not to spread this stereotype, violence and rape incidents by Black men against Black women are not brought up much. Crenshaw's analysis of three discrimination lawsuits filed by black female plaintiffs against corporate employers shows that "Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups [Black men or White women]" (1989, 143). Therefore, it is seen that anti-racist policies too fail to protect the rights of Black women completely.

Considering intersectionality as a keyword to understand the formation of an individual's identity – social or political – it is asserted that identity indicators – such as race, and gender – define each other and indicate how they are interwoven. According to cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall, "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (1996, 4). Claiming that identities are subject to constant change and transformation, Hall states that questions about what one can be and how to represent - rather than who one is and where one comes from - constitute the real agenda of identity. Emphasizing that identities are constructed within discourse, Hall argues that "we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (1996, 4). He mentions that identities, which become evident by highlighting differences and stigmas rather than similarities, are products of certain types of power. Political theorist Ernesto Laclau, in his book *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, includes the thoughts of the literary critic Jacques Derrida, who is known as the founder of deconstruction theory. The development of an identity, whether it is form/matter, essence/accident, black/white, man/woman, etc., is always built on excluding something and creating a violent hierarchy between the two poles that result. There is a difference between "marked" and "unmarked" terms in linguistics. The former transmits a term's primary meaning, whereas marked terms complement or add a mark to it. The term "man" distinguishes the latter from "woman," but it also refers to "human being," the category in which both men and women fall. Thus, in contrast to the essentiality of the first word, what is particular to the second term is reduced to the function of an accident. It is the same with the black-white relationship, in which "white," of course, is equivalent to "human being." "'Woman' and 'black' are thus 'marks', in contrast to the unmarked terms of 'man' and 'white'" (Laclau, 1990, 33).

Therefore, the unity that identities indicate while emerging within the structure organized by the power, is not natural or holistic but is subject to formation processes that gain meaning through those that are controlled and excluded on the basis of differences. Psychoanalyst and social scientist Frantz Fanon is known for the notion that some neuroses are socially produced. He emphasizes the subjection and objectification of the individual's identity to performative processes by saying, "I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects" (2008, 82). According to Fanon, while colonial institutions had an impact on identity consciousness in the colonial period, the dependency and inadequacy of the newly established governments in the post-colonial period negatively affected the development of this consciousness. Therefore, at the point of finding the true meaning of identity, there occur actual processes that are shaped by the positive or negative effects of the powers and proceed under their control. In contemporary studies, "performativity points to a variety of topics, among them

the construction of social reality including gender and race" (Schechner, 2006, 123). Academic Judith Butler, a poststructuralist and feminist theorist, questions the traditional perception of sexual identity by expressing the concept of performativity as a form of action and evaluating it in a cultural context. By asking various questions about the concept of gender, Butler opens the traditional and accepted meanings of the concept to the discussion, examines the traditional approach, and deconstructs the feminist views that come up to Butler. Butler argues that "woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end" (1999, 43). The feminist subject is discursively constructed by the very political system that is thought to facilitate its liberation. She states that the adoption of this discursive structuring in feminist thought, that is, a presupposition, will hinder the feminist struggle. She wants it to be realized that the questioning of women's representation will not be enough, and how it is subjected to artificial classification and restriction actions. As a result of the criticisms Butler encourages, it is concluded that the distinction between sex and gender was originally made to oppose the understanding of "biology is destiny" (Butler, 1999, 9) and that gender is both a cultural construct and does not have to be a fixed concept as much as sex.[3] Therefore, there is no reason to consider the individual in a single way, and all kinds of sexual identity classifications have been opened for discussion.

The intersectional perspective, which holds that African American women's experiences of gender and racial subordination and alienation in the United States diverge from the experiences of white women and black men, ensures that democratic societies embrace the ideal of better political rights for all. When the historical process of theatre is analyzed from a feminist perspective, it is seen that women are either ignored or created by men. For example, the presence of women in classical periods (if a presence can be mentioned), "became possible by studying the image of women within plays written by men" (Case, 1988, 5). Feminist historians working on the position of women in the classical theatre tradition, after examining classical works since the early 1970s, encounter two basic images; "positive roles, which depict women as independent, intelligent and even heroic; and a surplus of misogynistic roles commonly identified as the Bitch, the Witch, the Vamp and the Virgin/Goddess" (Case, 1988, 6). Although feminist historians have examined such images in order to obtain findings of the daily lives of women in the times in which they lived, the images in question mostly provide information about how women were 'created' by male playwrights. Due to the fact that individuals who are exposed to social and cultural construction processes do not belong to any social class, are positioned at the intersection, and are often marginalized, it is difficult to recognize the individuals in question. At this point, the fact that African American female playwrights discuss the concept of identity shaped by factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and culture increases the importance of

[3] For detailed information, Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge. pp. 9-11.

intersectional studies. With her characters, Adrienne Kennedy ensures that individuals who are not able to fully belong to any group, but who position themselves or are positioned at the intersection of many groups, can be noticed.

Kennedy's main characters are staged as disembodied and fragmented beings, unable to fully embrace either white supremacy or black pride, and unable to feel fully belonging to either of the two opposing factions between which they oscillate. For this reason, Kennedy includes a structure in her plays that softens and changes the distinctions between memory, history, time, and space. Such a structure is necessary for a kind of deconstruction and a critique of racial identification and assimilation. In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Sarah is the child of a black father and a white mother. Each of Sarah's selves—the Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria, and Patrice Lumumba—represents a different aspect of her soul. Sarah is embarrassed about her black background, and occasionally she encounters her father's ghost. Her inner desire to be white could explain why she took an English class at university, had a white boyfriend, and worshiped the Queen Victoria statue. Sarah's discomfort with her ancestors turns into serious psychological pressure and causes her to take her own life. Similarly, in *The Owl Answers*, Clara is the child of a prosperous white man and his black slave. Clara is confined in a place that is synchronically the subway, the Tower of London, a Harlem hotel, and St. Peter's Basilica. The characters go back and forth, dressing in and out of one another, just like how the scene transforms. Clara's captors are Shakespeare, Anne Boleyn, William the Conqueror, and Chaucer, who did not accept her whiteness and did not allow her to attend her father's funeral. As with Sarah, Clara is haunted by her father's body, iconic Britishness, biblical figures, and white and black origins. While she gloomily wishes to die as a white, she eventually turns into an owl. In both plays Kennedy offers "powerful metaphors for the social (de)construction of racial and ethnic identities" (Brown, 2001, 292) that reflect current debates about identity politics. Both plays reflect the complex emotions caused by the characters' hybridity through the pain experienced by Sarah and Clara. Intersectional axes have a great share in their lives, which has been shaped by the pressure created by these feelings. While factors such as the transformation of the space and the use of interchangeable masked characters make the plays surreal, the character of Clara and Sarah represent the alienation experienced by African American women, caused by trauma and intersecting and overlapping pressures on identity.

The issue of oppression in *The Owl Answers* is told through intertwined, intersectional classifications such as race, gender, class, and hybridity. Clara, an African American woman who works as a teacher in Savannah and attends Teachers College during the summer, experiences a traumatic event. Due to her race and social status, Clara, who travels to England to attend her father's funeral, is not permitted entry into the church. Throughout her life, Clara has been excluded by both her father and her black adoptive family. Clara is completely estranged from herself and her family. Kolin notes that "[r]ejection by the outside white world coalesces with the abjection she suffers inside" (Kolin, 2005, 54). As a mulatto woman, Clara is subjected to the experience of

double subordination by the ideology of patriarchy and white supremacy. When she goes to England, her sense of loss increases because she is completely alienated by herself in a place that completely rejects her. She loses her sense of self and begins to experience existential conflicts that can have harmful consequences. Kennedy strengthens the formal structure by establishing imaginary dialogues with her psychic characters to reveal the extraordinary controversy between Eurocentric and Afrocentric rhetoric and mythologies. All these dialogues expand philosophical discussions of the aftermath of slavery:

> 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 Palace, we had our morning tea at Lyons then came out to the Tower. We were wandering about the gardens, my father leaning on my arm, speaking of you, William the Conqueror. My father loved you, William …
>
> THEY. (Interrupting.) If you are his ancestor why are you a Negro? Yes, why is it you are a Negro if you are his ancestor? Keep her locked there. (Kennedy, 2001b, 30)

Clara cannot have a positive image of herself without the support of her father's community, but there is no room for a black woman in that society. All attempts by Clara's father to associate with representatives of the white patriarchy fail. These representational characters are the means by which the intersectionality pressure problem arises. Clara reflects on her African American past, confused by three distinct characters wearing white masks. When characters remove their masks, their underlying dark skin is revealed. These masks are understood to be metaphors for Clara's conflicting feelings about her hybridity and confusion that can lead to her own sense of alienation.

The prejudice against hybridization, which has existed since the era of black slavery, continued in the nineteenth century as a threat to the concept of white supremacy in dominant societies. Because of this, mulattos have been subjected to widespread humiliation and abuse. In literary works, the tragic mulatto has become a stereotype for the white reader/audience. As Sollors puts it, "mixed blood characters, merely because they were nearer white, were […] more tragic in their enslavement than their 'pure' black counterparts" (1997, 224) and being a mulatto has been considered as a kind of damnation. The reason why Kennedy includes mulattos – Sarah and Clara – in her plays is to reveal the wild side of the concept of racism. For example, Sarah does not have any place to feel like she belongs. While homes or cities are not places for her to consider home, it is her room, reminiscent of prison or asylum, where she lives and finally ends. The inability to feel belonging to any place in question is related to the inability to feel belonging to any racial identity due to being bi-racial. In the play, black and white colors are often used, emphasizing the dilemma and sense of belongingness of the character. The color white, which generally evokes positive meanings such as goodness, purity, and innocence, is used on satin curtains reminiscent of death and shroud, and the meanings associated with the color are diversified. She is haunted by the characters who are somehow connected to her,

such as her father, whom she describes as a black animal, her mentally ill white mother, African nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba, and Queen Victoria. Surrounded by these seemingly contradictory characters and symbols, Sarah has come to want to become a stereotype rather than resist it:

> As for myself 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. I want to possess no moral value, particularly value as to my being. I want not to be. I ask nothing except anonymity. (Kennedy, 2001a, 14)

Sarah's statement "I want not to be" (Kennedy, 2001a, 14) is associated with her refusal to classify, name, and explain herself. Because society's predetermined, rigid, limited, and often uniform definitions of her identity are somehow incomplete or faulty, it has become more desirable for her not to want to exist than to exist in the way others want her to. In fact, mulattos do not exist on a single, stable ground, which culturally allows them to move across seemingly fixed racial boundaries that reinforce racial hierarchies. Cultural ambiguity was seen as a threat to both black nationalism and the idea of white supremacy in western societies, given the political atmosphere of the 1960s. Kennedy's characters struggle against Black Power supporters'[3] notion that white culture should be removed from black life. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Sarah's views in *Funnyhouse* are in opposition to those of Black Power supporters:

> My friends will be white. I need them as an embankment to keep me from reflecting too much upon the fact that I am a Negro. For, like all educated Negroes—out of life and death essential—I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself. (Kennedy, 2001a, 14)

Wide acceptance of Kennedy's plays became possible not in the 1960s, but over the following three decades. In order for the plays in question to be understood as if they are dealing with the present day, the political resistance in the field of theatre must be perceived as it is today. For example, transgressive mulatto, instead of the tragic mulatto stereotype, is necessary to explain the permeability of racial boundaries. Kennedy's mulattos are in the position of the subject of intersection, a position that refers to identity, "the sum of the parts of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)" (1994, 2) as in Homi Bhabha's work *The Location of Culture*. While the subject of the dominant culture is in a structure with opposites and boundaries such as black and white, masculine and feminine, the intersectional subject determines its own boundaries within the overlapping boundaries of the opposite groups, thanks to its cross-border nature. Deconstructing sharply bounded binary oppositions means breaking down the hierarchical order in which either side is superior or inferior. Kennedy's use of the word Negro for black or mulatto characters in the dialogues in both *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Owl Answers*, while emphasizing the

[3] For detailed information, Smethurst, James Edward. 2005. *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*. London: University of North Carolina Press. pp. 114 -32.

internalization of the discourse, indicates that their social positions are also internalized.

Kennedy describes the psychological division of the subject as formed by multiple social and historical powers. While it mainly deals with the disparate identities represented by the divided selves, it is understood that it powerfully brings to the stage the well-known experience of the African American subject. Another of Kennedy's political stances is that she includes the division of consciousness between the secondary skin color and the self-identity experience at the individual level, which is built by the racist discourse and brought to the fore by an external imposition. For example, in both plays, some of the selves of the protagonists are seen as historical symbols of white, such as Queen Victoria in *Funnyhouse of Negro* or William the Conquerer in *The Owl Answers*, while others, like a black father or a black mother, find themselves as representatives of the black past that mulattos in question want to get rid of.

Although Kennedy's divided characters are cut out of their historical context, the alienation that each of them experiences in real life coincides with the alienation of Sarah in the play. In *Funnyhouse*, Queen Victoria, having nine children, has lived away from society for about two years, experiencing anxiety after the death of her husband Albert; the Duchess of Hapsburg loses her sanity after her husband was deceived by Napoleon into believing that the Mexicans needed an emperor; the prophet Jesus is betrayed by his supporters and left to his fate; and Congo prime minister Patrice Lumumba has been alienated by the United States president after three months in office and later has been killed for his political beliefs. Although each of them has different reasons, alienation emerges as the common experience of all these characters. Sarah's motive has to do with the thought of rejecting her racial identity. In this sense, at the beginning of the play, Queen Victoria's door knocking, which indicates the arrival of Sarah's father, appears in Sarah's mind like an incessant knock on the door, which is the rejection of her racial identity. At that moment the Duchess' words can be explained by this relation:

> How dare he enter the castle, he who is the darkest of them all, the darkest one? 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. I hoped he was dead. (Kennedy, 2001a, 12)

Here, the expression of "[y]et he still comes through the jungle to find me" (Kennedy, 2001a, 12), referring to Sarah's father, actually represents her search for identity, the crisis, and the trauma she experienced. His father's finding her is actually related to the end she has known is approaching. Sarah's story is told through herself and other historical and religious characters: The Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria Regina, Jesus, and Patrice Lumumba. It is clear that Sarah exists at the intersection of these characters that can be considered representative of imperialism and nationalism. It is the historical and political realities of the colonial conflict that cause their internal conflicts. While European antiques, books, oriental rugs, and photographs of Roman ruins draw attention as symbols of being Eurocentric, details such as skull, African

American hair, forest, and Patrice Lumumba character stand out as symbols specific to African culture. The mention of Patrice Lumumba, who became the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1960, is a remarkable detail, given Lumumba's views advocating the adoption of African values and the rejection of foreign ideologies of imperialism. On the other hand, Lumumba's ideas against racist oppression and his desire for "the new spirit of radical decolonization" (Smethurst, 2005, 124), which inspired the Black Power movement, became the symbol of nationalist resistance against racism.

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Sarah expresses her black-related point of view by using the phrase "wild kinky hair" (Kennedy, 2001a, 14) to talk about the curly and fluffy hair associated with African Americans. The fact that Sarah, who expresses her thoughts against blackness with the phrase "black is evil" (2001a, 14), presents one of her selves as Lumumba, the leader of an overseas African country, during her identity crisis means that black resistance has a place in her subconscious. Although she knows that her father committed suicide, she constantly states that she killed him. By referring to her father's ghost, she mentions that she will "bludgeon him with an ebony head" (2001a, 25) when she meets him for the last time, which makes it clear that she actually wanted to kill herself with the desire to destroy her black past. Kennedy tells through her characters that Sarah internalizes the colonial discourse that causes the exploited to see herself as racially inferior, and therefore desires to go out of her own body. For Sarah, both a mulatto and female character, no ideological thought or political movement other than the intersectional point of view is sufficient to fully understand her situation, defend her rights or meet her expectations.

The shock Sarah experienced was divided, like the selves she portrayed: experiences of the intersection of concussions, the collective shock of the African American, the enslaved black, and the exploited black at the same time. Throughout colonial history, the black body has always been presented as a brutalized, re-signified primitive African stereotype. Black feminist author and professor of women's studies, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, summarizes the postcolonial discourse on the black female body in her article "The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination": "There is nothing sacred in black female bodies, […] They are not off-limits, untouchable, or unseeable" (2002, 18). There are lines in *The Owl Answers* that the violation of the black female body is seen as legitimate, so to speak.

> NEGRO MAN. What is it? What is it? What is wrong? (He tries to undress her. Underneath her body is black. He throws off the crown she has placed on him. She is wildly trying to get away from him.) What is it? (Kennedy, 2001b, 40)

In *Funnyhouse*, the Duchess of Hapsburg's palace suddenly turns into Sarah's bedroom, while, in *The Owl Answers*, the Tower of London becomes both a prison and a subway. Temporal and spatial abrupt transitions provide mobility and fluidity to both the characters and the overall structure of the plays. This

situation offers the possibility of "self-in-process," which is a form of resistance against the colonial discourse. Both Bhabha and Fanon believe that self-construction is an absolute strategy for the colonized subject. Bhabha explains this thought as follows:

> [A] subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority […] [A]gency requires a grounding, but it does not require a totalization of those grounds; it requires movement and manoeuvre, but it does not require a temporality of continuity or accumulation. (1994, 185)

Therefore, it is quite consistent that the characters, who are in-between the dominated or dominant culture and their own culture and even express the shocks they have experienced due to this situation, both physically and psychologically, construct themselves in the process by determining their authority, rather than existing in a fixed and unchanging state. That is why Kennedy includes multiple phrases that describe each character in *The Owl Answers*.

> SHE who is CLARA PASSMORE who is the VIRGIN MARY who is the BASTARD who is the OWL. BASTARD'S 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 is REVEREND PASSMORE. THE WHITE BIRD who is REVEREND PASSMORE's CANARY who is GOD'S DOVE. THE NEGRO MAN. SHAKESPEARE, CHAUCER, WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR. (Kennedy, 2001b, 29)

The transition of characters from one racial identity to another, from one social class to another, and their transformation from specific individual identities into historical symbols obscure the boundaries of social class and identity. However, in such a case, it becomes possible to get away from unnecessary social rigidity, to see the invisible, and to obtain the rights of those who are ignored. Fanon explains the benefit of not being fixed and static by saying, "In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (2008, 179). In the plays, in which historical figures who are symbols of imperialism, literature, and belief are included, the main characters Sarah and Clara can be expected to be fully included in any class identity with the transitions in current and historical times, but this is not possible. Sarah prefers not to exist rather than exist in a shaped and limited way whereas the transformation of Clara into an owl, who desires to be a white woman, also can be described as a manifestation of the racist colonial discourse that causes the black woman to be identified with animals. As a result, the transition between time, space, and characters allows the boundaries between opposing and hierarchical identities to be destroyed, while the inability to remain constant in any character means that the demarcated, performative identity is not a safe and desirable shelter.

Critical studies of Kennedy's *The Owl Answers* with the surreal character have been limited to the framework of literary criticism, which places the main

character Clara in a psychological context. Likewise, many academic studies focus on the play as a portrayal of a black woman seeking her home and relationship in a world of discrimination and unfairness. Clara is presented as a mixed-race woman with a fragmented soul, confused about her identity. However, examining the character of Clara from an intersectional point of view appears to gain new dimensions, because there is an alienation of Clara's identity within three intersecting categories: race, gender, and hybridity. Clara makes every effort to embrace her father's white heritage, but her attempts are in vain. She is utterly frustrated when she has no hope of owning this legacy. The tragic ending of *The Owl Answers* is linked to the psychological trauma Clara has been through. The intersecting types of oppression Clara endures and these three interconnected categories combine to form her alienation to the point where she gives up her own life.

As mentioned earlier, Kimberlé Crenshaw has stated that intersectionality can be defined as various hierarchies intertwined in the experiences of black women. As racial and gender social hierarchies position African American women at the bottom of the hierarchical structure, Sarah, the daughter of a black father and white mother, and Clara, the daughter of a white father and black mother, find themselves in a narrow space between black and white. In this regard, since the name Funnyhouse, used as a kind of pun, also refers to a room full of mirrors that cause people to see themselves in different ways in amusement parks, the room of the main character Sarah is described as the environment where she questions her own image, body, and identity.[4] The main reason for the identity and existential crises they have experienced is that they have not had the opportunity to express themselves as they wish with their free will and to exist as they wish. Rosemary Curb, a prominent academic in women's studies, explains very clearly what is meant to be told through Sarah's situation. The consciousness of Sarah is situated on three continents that are at war with one another. Sarah's body reenacts the rape of Africa by white Europeans as both rapist and victim. Sarah is both the betrayer and the betrayed in her relationship with her parents. Curb states that "Kennedy mocks the hypocrisy of her four historic selves in the penultimate jungle scene by having them appear with nimbuses as 'saviors' of Africa, still obsessively narrating the story of the father's rape of the mother" (1992, 151).

It is known that Crenshaw's thoughts on intersectionality are shaped by "focusing on two dimensions of male violence against women - battering and rape" (1991, 1243). In this sense, the theme of rape in *Funnyhouse* gains depth in different dimensions over and over again. The rape of Sarah's mother by her father caused her mental health to deteriorate and she was sent to a mental hospital. Her mother's condition turned into an obsession for Sarah, and she added the fear of sharing the same fate with her mother among the psychological

[4] For detailed information, see Deniz Aras' unpublished PhD Dissertation entitled "Anna Deavere Smith'in Solo Performanslarında Kimlik ve Direniş Performansı" (in Turkish) (Identity and Resistance Performance in Anna Deavere Smith's Solo-Performances), (2016), Graduate School of Social Sciences, Atatürk University, Erzurum, Turkey. p. 72.

pressures she was struggling with. When Sarah's mother appears in the play for the second time, she utters words that can be considered as an ironic reflection of racist rhetoric: "Black man, black man, I never should have let a black man put his hands on me. The wild black beast raped me and now my skull is shining" (Kennedy, 2001a, 13). While the theme of rape is important in terms of bringing up one of the main issues that led to the emergence of intersectionality, these words can be evaluated as critical expressions against the colonial ideology and the racial construction of stereotypes that associate blackness with savageness and brutality.

In her studies, Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd, who is known as a lawyer and political scientist, states that "scholars and activists from different parts of the globe are finding ways to utilize the unique insights supported by this approach" (2010, 814). Intersectional thinking not only helps individuals to perceive their own identities correctly but also provides the opportunity to understand and change the world they live in. It determines your choices and desires in life. This is related to the identity crisis that both Sarah and Clara are experiencing. According to intersectionality scholars such as Amber West, Kennedy is a social critic, because Kennedy reflects on the tragic states of her characters "in order to depict the complex and distinct manner in which black women experience intersecting forms of oppression" (2012, 140). The characters in question, West concludes, have experienced tremendous personal and political discrimination and are attempting to find a method to challenge racism. The contemporary black feminist movement sees innovative art as an effective space for black feminism, as well as a tool to resist cross-cutting forms of oppression. Innovative theatre, then, of which Kennedy is a representative, is a highly functional space "to construct and empower a political sensibility that opposes misogyny and racism simultaneously" (Crenshaw, 2018, 131). When evaluated in a broader framework, Angela Davis, as American human rights defender, stated, "art is a form of social consciousness - a special form of social consciousness that can potentially awaken an urge in those affected by it to creatively transform their oppressive environments" (1998, 236). As a sensitizer and catalyst, art can encourage participation in organized movements that aim to bring about radical social change.

It can be said that Kennedy nourished and contributed to this aspect of art. Kennedy specifically links racial issues related to blackness with gender issues in order to question the systemic oppression within American society. The characters, who experience intersectional pressure intensely enough to internalize it, are conveyed to the reader/audience with Kennedy's unusual style, enabling her to create sensitivity in society.

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