

**Colorism and the Madhouse
of Racism in Adrienne Kennedy's
Funnyhouse of a Negro.**

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Abstract:

In general, the physical characteristics of a human being, such as skin color, play an important role in determining a person's identity and social status. Afro-American inferiority is a manifestation of what is known as the inferiority theory, which suggests that they are inferior because of their color or race. Epidermalization theory emerges as a paramount idea in African American society, in which the measures of blackness and whiteness are used as a criterion for granting or declining advantages, a hierarchical scheme known as colorism. *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) is a play by Adrienne Kennedy that focuses on the negative effects of inferiority and intraracial feelings of color-based inferiority among black people. It confirms that obsession with skin color is not conducive to one's welfare. Instead, it contributes to self-marginalization, fear, and lifelong anxiety. The aim of this study is to delve into the dilemma of colorism and inferiority as well as the consequences for Sarah, who is racially and socially damaged. Her obsession with color causes her self-hatred, eventually leading to suicide. Kennedy hopes to stimulate a sense of metamorphosis among black women toward supremacy.

Keywords: Colorism, Epidermalization theory, inferiority theory, intraracial feelings, psychological disturbance, and self-marginalization.

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التمييز العنصري وجنون العنصرية بين أبناء العرق الواحد في مسرحية اديان كيندي بيت الزنجية المضحك.

الملخص:

بشكل عام، تلعب الخصائص الجسدية للإنسان، مثل لون البشرة، دوراً مهماً في تحديد هوية الشخص وحالته الاجتماعية. الدونية الأفرو-أمريكية هي مظهر من مظاهر ما يُعرف بـ "نظرية الدونية"، والتي تشير إلى أنهم أناس أقل شأنًا بسبب لونهم أو عرقهم. تظهر نظرية البشرة كفكرة أساسية في المجتمع الأمريكي الأفريقي، حيث يتم استخدام مقاييس لون البشرة كالسود والبياض كمعيار لمنح المزايا أو رفضها، وهو مخطط هرمي يُعرف باسم "التلوين". بيت الزنجية المضحك (1964) هي مسرحية من تأليف الكاتبة الأمريكية اديان كيندي حيث تركز على الآثار السلبية لنظرية الدونية والمشاعر الداخلية للدونية القائمة على اللون بين السود أنفسهم. إنها تؤكد أن الهوس بلون الجلد لا يفضي إلى رفاهية المرء. بدلاً من ذلك، فإنه يؤدي في تهميش الذات والخوف والقلق مدى الحياة. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو الخوض في معضلة التلوين والدونية وكذلك العواقب المترتبة على بطللة المسرحية سارة المتضررة عرقياً واجتماعياً. حيث يتسبب هوسها بالألوان في كراهيتها لذاتها، مما يؤدي في النهاية إلى انتحارها. حيث تأمل كيندي في تحفيز الإحساس بالتحول بين النساء السوداوات نحو السيادة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الألوان، نظرية تجريد البشرة، نظرية الدونية، المشاعر الداخلية، الاضطرابات النفسية، تهميش الذات.

1- INTRODUCTION:

Colorism or racial discrimination, is one of the critical problems that has afflicted Afro-Americans. The fragile situation of marginalized people in a community that is predominantly

ruled by discriminating class, ethnicity, or gender statutes have always been an issue of interest for researchers from various fields. Racial discrimination has developed due to the development of the ideology of white supremacy. Colorism is considered the main cause of black inferiority and white supremacy. Colorism is a widespread phenomenon that has received considerable attention in African American literature due to its significant importance and broad impact on psychological health. It causes what is known as the inferiority complex. Judging black people on the basis of their own skin color enforces the inferiority complex among them and encourages the white dominant to systematically subordinate the values and perspectives of blacks.

Thus, the idea of superiority was established due to the inborn qualities that justified the inequalities between the races and allowed one to rule over the other. According to Vaughan (1989) white people assumed that Africans were the inferior race of humanity who, were qualified by their features and conditions, to be eternal slaves. The defendant of colorism claims that the Negroes are innately inferior, their low status is the result of divine ordination that requires them to remain in servitude state. Thus, dark skin usually affects every phase of human life, including self-knowledge, identity, relations, and social status.

The study involves analyzing Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* which tackles colorism and the daily difficulties associated with lighter and darker skin. By depicting her female characters as racially and socially damaged, Kennedy hopes to instill a sense of transformation among black women toward supremacy.

Research Objectives:

- To comprehend how Afro-Americans are obsessed with colorism
- To discuss the ever-growing problem of racial and social marginalization and negligence against blacks.
- To determine whether the black woman can live and incorporate herself into her reality as a black woman or resist it, dealing with the stereotypes that come along with darker skin within the scope of inferiority theory.
- To reveal how Sarah's obsession with white criteria influences her self-esteem in the play.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts colorism and epidermalization of inferiority in order to illustrate the major character's inferiority. The study will demonstrate how colorism's destruction is profoundly rooted in the black community. Colorism causes destruction in black society by generating dread, social disorder, discomfort, and social separation. The impact of colorism on social relations inside the African American community led to its fracturing rather than its unification. The common concept is that a dark-skinned black individual may choose to adopt a white person in order to receive the advantages of having lighter skin. Thus, the framework concentrates on how black groups are being hated and mistreated in Kennedy's play. The research deals with *Funnyhouse of a Negro* as a play that confronts colorism and the everyday conflicts dealing with the stereotypes that come along with having darker skin.

Literature Review

There are many related studies that tackle the issue of colorism and black inferiority in black women. Enes Eren's study (2020) was conducted under the title "Fragmented Racial Identity in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*". The purpose of this essay is to illustrate the psychological repercussions of history and culture on the structure of African female identity by situating racial identity in a cultural context.

Another study was presented by Sabah Atallah & Hasan Mohammed (2014), entitled "I try to create a space for myself: The Quest for Identity in Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*". This aims to demonstrate how Adrienne Kennedy handles the struggle for identity in her play. The theme reflects this identity conflict, as the protagonist is clearly obsessed with finding a place for her contradicting personalities. In this play, Kennedy tackles the issue of identity through family relations and individual problems.

Emilio Ramón's (2011) "*Funnyhouse of a Negro*: Projection of Womanhood and Blackness as a Melancholic Cry for True Diversity in American Society" is another study. It emphasizes Sarah's struggle with her dark complexion, which causes her a loss of identity in the dominant white culture.

The Concept of Colorism: An overview

Throughout their history in this country, Afro-Americans have been classified as inferior by the dominant white culture because they are either savages or lack morality. Colorism, or prejudice based on ethnic background, was coined by Alice Walker in 1982. It is defined as a kind of oppression shown in the discriminatory practices of both individuals and groups depending on skin tone. Favoritism is typically exhibited toward those with lighter skin tones, whereas those with darker complexions face rejection and abuse. The color line is the main crisis facing Afro-Americans, according to James Baldwin, who claims that the core of Afro-American racism is intimately associated with skin color.

Colorism is also described as the tendency to identify or interact with people in a racial group based on the lightness or darkness of their skin color. Colorism's devastation is firmly rooted in the black community which is widely acknowledged to exist in both intraracial and interracial racism. This is a framework that promotes white-skinned individuals above black-skinned people of color in fields such as marriage, income, and education. It is generally recognized to exist both intraracially and interracially. Intra-racial discrimination is defined as "discrimination from within a particular racial or cultural group against those of the same group." It arises when people of the same ethnic background create distinctions between individuals of their own ethnicity based on skin color. It has been noted that The majority of blacks are discriminating against darker-skinned individuals of their own ethnicity.

Colorism is a critical issue; it is a form of racism that dates back to the time of slavery. Color prejudice is still widespread and viewed as "the last taboo". It is associated with self-esteem; it can affect how one sees, treats, and feels about himself or herself since the picture of human identity mirrors selfhood. Therefore, color as a symbol of power is determined by levels of achieved success, status, and distinction. Cokley (2002) states that internalized racialization is

not simply black self-hatred; it the internalization of harmful stereotypes about other's racial group. Thus, in order to transcend internalized racism, one has to initiate the procedure of racial identity developing. (p.55)

Writing is a therapeutic technique for Kennedy, enabling her to reveal ethnic problems. She was bound to nurture the stream of ethnic consciousness among black people. Color and gender are often bonded together in the fabric of black culture as a source of misogyny and pain. It finds its way into the social structure as a whole, and for women, it often marks the degree of their femininity. Norton comments, "I sit here to tell you that I am black. That people who are my color in this country will always be treated as Black.... We who are black have got to say... Look, we are people of color, and we are readily identified. Any discrimination against one of us is discrimination against another". (Monroe, 2012, p.107).

Commonly, the prevailing concept is that a light-skinned black person wishes to be white in order to take advantage of the advantages of a light-skinned person. These advantages include being acceptable in white society, gaining prominence in the black community, and being considered more beautiful. Black women were naturally influenced by these perceptions, assuming those lighter-skinned women had significant advantages and prestige. As Davis (1946) points out, "What is really crucial behind the color point is class; the implication that light color goes with higher status and the Negroid appearance with lower status, is what makes these characteristics so important". (P.26)

Afro-Americans were negatively judged on their physical features as well as the fact that they had less control over their life choices. Therefore, skin color as well as other physical characteristics pose an obstacle to the members of a less valued class since they are obvious and constant elements that can act as immediate indications to activate or fuel cognitive stereotypes, emotional reactions, related beliefs, and behaviors against them. Skin color as well as other physical characteristics pose an obstacle to the members of a less valued class since they are obvious and constant elements that can act as immediate indications to activate or fuel cognitive stereotypes, emotional reactions, related beliefs, and behaviors against them. Thus, lighter skin usually denotes beauty and promotes one's social standing. Whereas darker color stands for ugliness and is consistently associated with an inferior social position, therefore those who has white skin (mulattoes) are viewed to be biologically, culturally, and socially superior. Thus, black women are psychologically disassociated due to racial and social negligence and marginalization.

Fanon's Epidermalization of Inferiority:

Frantz Fanon is a French theorist who used psychoanalytic discourse to examine the hierarchical binarism of oppressor and oppressed and its negative impacts on the integrity and completeness of the colonizer's psychology. He asserts that racism will eventually result in a sense of inferiority among people of color (blacks) who are unable to overcome their discriminatory state; therefore, a white oppressor will progressively force Negroes to integrate harmful perceptions of their ethnic heritage that portray blackness as a symbol of deficiency and immorality. Thus, it ultimately results in blacks' self-hatred and desires leading them to behave

as dominant whites, a phenomenon that is called the epidermalization of inferiority, according to Fanon.

The book "Black Skin, White Masks" by Frantz Fanon (2008) analyzes the psychology of colonialism. It discusses the causes that discreetly and slowly create an inferiority complex on the part of colonized people, as well as the serious repercussions this might have on their perception not just of the colonizer but also of themselves. The black males were trapped in a chain of symbols that continuously portrayed them as lascivious and chaotic and degraded their ancestry as inferior. They are doomed to be perished by the so-called superior white culture. This inferiorization process has resulted in a subaltern figure battered down by the unbearable weight of the demeaning negative stereotypes about the "tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships". (Fanon, p.84)

People's cultural identities are determined by the color of their skin. In this regard, this powerful assertion highlights the basic essence of Fanon's conception, "Black Skin, White Masks." It discusses how non-white humans are appraised and culturally categorized exclusively on the basis of their skin color. Therefore, due to segregation, slavery, and class distinction, the blacks were subjected to distressing and different kinds of exploitation and the deliberate destruction of human dignity. Being black means that the person is subhuman, hideous, and of inferior status to the white person, who is respected, beautiful, and better than the black one. Christopher Meinert adopted this view and classified humanity into two distinctive races, which he termed the beautiful white and hideous black races. He considered just the white race to be beautiful and all other ethnicities to be inferior, evil, and animal-like.

The concept of colorism is also inextricably linked to the inferiority complex. Historically, the white's look regards the black subject as an inferior, which, in turn, prevents the black race from perceiving himself without internalization of the white's gaze. Fanon views humans as social creatures. An individual's behavior as a social being is significantly affected by his interactions with others. As a result, he believes that an individual's personality is formed as a consequence of his actions. As a result, inferiority feelings have been theoretically linked to Adler's inferiority theory (an inferiority complex), which stated that everyone has an inferiority complex. Humans strive for superiority from childhood to overcome their inferiority. According to Adler (1956), this impulse is the motivating factor underlying human behaviors, feelings, and ideas. This belief is accepted not only by whites, but also by the elite blacks. It is an unconscious exaggeration of emotions of inferiority expressed through complicated behaviors such as aggression.

Inferior emotions, according to Adler, are determining psychological evaluations because infants are born into an adult world, they are perceived as smaller and weaker, creating a universal sense of inferiority among all people that is based on perception rather than truth. These emotions can encourage individuals to persevere toward more elevated positions, power, and superiority. Therefore, those black people begin to interface with their social circumstances and accept their ethnic identity among other races. Thus, inferiority feelings can prove positive as individuals use them as a motivating factor toward reaching their goals.

Fanon's idea of inferiority feelings is negatively related to depression, shame, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Inferiority feelings can embody abnormal behavior when people do not use

them as motivation to achieve success. Individuals who see their inferiority in the context of others are motivated by fear of failure and frequently suffer from a lack of social interest inferiority. "Over the years, feelings of inferiority have been defined by a number of separate but related constructs, such as failure, worthlessness, a low sense of belonging, questioning of competence, low self-esteem, envy, depressive symptoms, self-doubt, and feelings of not being accepted by society" (Dreikurs, 1990. p. 221). As a result, people with inferiority complexes will seek out negative behaviors.

The phenomenon of epidermalization is prevalent in African American culture, in which measurements of whiteness and blackness have been the criteria for granting or refusing privileges, a hierarchical structure known as colorism. This research analyzes Kennedy's play, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* as a study case to highlight the entrenched existence of the epidermalization of inferiority and colorism in African American society. These factors point to white superiority, which forces blacks to internalize stereotypes as a survival necessity since these disrespect, mocking, and systematic humiliation developed an all-pervading drive to impose contempt for anything black. That is to say the pressure of racial stereotypes had become so oppressive that it led directly to a malignant tendency of obsessive self-surveillance and conscience inside the African American ego.

While the concept of inferiority complex is often used to define people with a sense of inferiority, when an individual feels inferior and believes that other people are better than him, he develops an inferiority complex. Frustration can be one of the negative consequences of the inferiority complex, and it can frequently cause destructive behaviors such as isolation, lack of interest in one's surroundings, and suicide. As a result, people who are really frustrated attempt to commit suicide in order to escape negative sensations. Thus the phrase inferiority complex is a key element of *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, where Sarah experiences social stress due to her color.

Colorism as either a Choice or a Destiny:

Funnyhouse of a Negro (1964) is largely viewed as one of the most controversial Harlem Renaissance plays, tackling the issue of internalized racism and discrimination within the black community. It is a one-act play; it is about madness blended with race, which is the predominant factor that determines the fate of the main character. The term *Funnyhouse* expresses the insane shelter to clarify the mentally damaged state of a negro. It symbolizes society's humiliating vision of black women's issues by associating their experience with insanity. Thus, Sarah is seen as a pathological issue that needs to be examined in a mental asylum. Kennedy's plays were often autobiographical in nature, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* highlights the final moments of the protagonist's life (Sarah) just before her suicide. It focuses on the intraracial perspective of colorism, specifically within black people.

The play takes the form of an annotated bibliography about colorism and/or racism. It is a recounting of Sarah's story from her ego's perspective. It reveals the dilemma of Sarah's belief that her darker skin disqualifies her, causing her a deficiency of social placement and identity in her society. This problem becomes more serious in her life because beauty characteristics such as lighter skin enable her to gain more privileges in terms of partner selection, family ties, and income. Sarah is the epitome of marginality, and she cannot believe that anyone

could love her because of her dark skin. Even she and her mother are ashamed of it as Alexis De-Veaux states, "quiet as it's kept [...] color is still a critical issue among our people. We still discriminate against our own. the darker ones against the lighter ones. The light ones against the dark". (Wibke, 2008.p.13)

Sarah is a black university student studying English. She genuinely desires to be white, while she designs a life that mirrors what she perceives to be a white, educated society. Since studying English, she has realized that education is the ultimate good. She is ashamed of her blackness, has adopted all white traditions, and despises her black roots; she says, "I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself". (p. 9).

In Sarah's perspective, white society's standards are good, and black society's ethics are evil therefore, she views herself irreparably tainted with her black skin. She has a strong desire to construct good relationships with her white friends. She uses them as a barrier to prevent her from living on the fact that she is a Negro. It can be remarked that all identities need one another through the association with whom the self-identity is realized. The other's behavior or traits may impose an undesirable identity on the self. Thus, she only has two white friends, Raymond and Mrs. Conrad. These two characters are the only real ones who are not Sarah's mental illusions. They are positioned in the play as powerful witnesses, who are capable of eradicating Sarah's falsehoods through their honored revealing of events for those spectators who have missed something. When Mrs. Conrad heard the blabbing of Sarah in her room, she found entertainment in passing on Sarah's tale from the perspective of gossip.

Raymond is a white Jewish poet who wishes to have a black girlfriend but is not interested in Sarah's well-being. When Raymond interacts with Sarah, he is depicted as a cruel and uncompassionate lover. In fact, Sarah attempts to find protection and safety in her relations with others, especially white people, but as she highlights, "I try to give myself a logical relationship but that too is a lie. For relationships was one of my last religions. I clung loyally to the lie of relationships, again and again seeking to establish a connection between my characters". (p. 563). A short scene with Raymond exemplifies Sarah's reliance on Raymond as her white protector, even as she strives to show herself as a victim. When she realizes her father is approaching, she shouts, "hide me, while clinging to his knees". (p. 564)

Sarah has an external conflict with her white lover Raymond, in addition to internal conflicts with her blackness. On the other hand, he does not want to be her protector, he scolds her and accuses her of being cruel to her father. Raymond's behavior in this scene is described as sadistic because he tortures Sarah with his cold emotions. He simply watches her suffering and never appreciate her feelings. Raymond continues to observe Sarah from a distance because he believes she is an odd creature. But Raymond's coldness and distance caused a severe psychological conflict with Sarah, who eventually leading her to kill herself in her room.

Shinn (1990) asserts that while some writers exposed the psychic truth of their setting, Kennedy inverted the process by concretizing their characters' psyches (p. 156). *Funnyhouse of a Negro* focuses on the negative consequences of color that create feelings of inferiority among black people. The play raises the idea of the dark-skinned woman's mental and

spiritual despair as she searches for a sense of identity. This identity can potentially be an asset that a human has or fears he has lost and continues to pursue.

The play is set in her flat; her room serves as a metaphor for the intricacies of her mind. Sarah's room stands as a metaphor for the intricacies of her psyche in the play. It sets in her flat, and Sarah's room symbolizes her subconscious. It is an indication of her racial identity crisis and the contrast between her physical body and herself. This lifeless room seems to be the only shelter from the outside world, which she believes to be full of deception and violence. Sarah's inferiority issue has left her emotionally and spiritually traumatized, and she is unable to face reality. She lacks self-confidence and faith in herself, prompting her to construct an illusion realm to overcome her sense of inferiority that contradicts her reality.

She hopes to reside in a room "with European antiques and my Queen Victoria [statue], photographs of Roman ruins, walls of books, a piano, oriental carpets, and to eat my meals on a white glass table." (p. 563). It mirrors the fantastical world in which she lives, which consists of walls and rows of mirrors that deform the pictures they reflect. They are making some figures bigger while shrinking others, particularly heads. Sometimes these mirrors make some parts completely vanish. Kolin (2005) presents a fascinating interpretation of the setting's symbolic meaning as:

"In such a setting, the self is virtually torn apart, parceled into fragments. In a funny house, one's identity and self-image are never stable, reliable, truthful, or comforting. Representation in Kennedy's funnyhouse leads to self-repression and revulsion. Tormented by racist views of herself, Sarah cannot avoid the delusions of her funnyhouse breakdown when she looks at herself or at others. In this funnyhouse of her mind, Sarah's fear and guilt become magnified, distorted, dismembered. She has no perspective. Time, place, and hope dissolve. The shocking world of the funnyhouse also symbolizes her mad fantasies and the impossibility of escape". (p.36)

Many of Kennedy's plays concern themselves with issues of self-knowledge, identity, and the status of black women in society. Most of her characters, therefore, portray African Americans' struggle against race and oppression. Therefore, Sarah's complex personality is influenced by her inferior feelings created by her dark skin color. She matured into a very obscure and oversensitive young lady. Like her mother before her, Sarah is insane, and her character has fragmented into different personas in her mind. Therefore, depression, hopelessness, and the consequent frustration continue to hunt her. As a result of her inner racial conflict, she psychologically divided herself into four different selves in order to deal with her own self-hatred as a black woman. They instruct her to reject her blackness and femininity. Sarah is embodied by all four of these characters. Her main characters are not submitted as unified or complete but as a group of contradictory and multifaceted figures.

In her works, she appears to be attracted by European culture, which furnishes her with a variety of inspirations and metaphors. Regardless of her connection to this culture, she never concealed her disdain for white marginalization and exploitation of blacks. Sarah is represented as a psychologically fragile and sensitive black woman. With the help of these metaphors, Sarah tries to make sense of her life and comprehend the insanity she perceives

all around her. These metaphors are Queen Victoria, Regina, the Duchess of Hapsburg, Patrice Lumumba, and Jesus, who is described as a dwarf with yellow skin. Here Jesus is shown as an oppressed slave instead of a holy figure to highlight Sarah's absurdity in her vision of whiteness. So, her inferiority complex prevents her from forming genuine relationships with real people.

The play analyzes the conditions of a traumatic identity crisis in which Sarah's inferiority is caused by her ethnicity, social status, psychological disturbance, and family framework. The protagonist is clearly obsessed by the desire to create space for her contradicting selves. Nobody spoke to her. Her room contains a huge statue of Queen Victoria; with whom she spends most of her time conversing. In her choice of self-personalities, Sarah chooses Queen Victoria, a significant portrait of white authority in England. The Queen's statue symbolizes not just whiteness but also the authority of feminine power. As Sarah explains, "Victoria always wants to tell me of her whiteness. She wants to tell me of a royal world where everything and everyone is white and there are no unfortunate black ones". (p. 563).

Kennedy (2001) reveals that "In my play I would soon have the heroine, Sarah, talk to a replica of this statue. Finally, the dialogue with a statute /the statue would inform my character of her inner thoughts. The statue would reveal my character's secrets to herself". (p.118). Therefore, Sarah's connection with Queen Victoria is characterized as dualistic, Sarah simply used to communicate with Queen Victoria, whereas at other times Sarah had become the Queen herself. As Sarah states, "Victoria always wants me to tell her of whiteness...of a royal world where everything and everyone is white". (p. 563).

Ruby Cohn (1979) writes "Notably, Kennedy plays with lighting and subverts white images not to disdain whiteness, but to show the absurdity of superiority of any race as she situates blackness vis-à-vis whiteness to stress the same thing with black race, so she presents historical white figures that represents Sarah's inner fragmentation in a distorted way since both Duchess and Queen's wear white masks to suggest their unreal whiteness". He also notes that Kennedy's play is both expressionist and surrealist, which assists in comprehending why and how her female protagonists' psychological degradation occurs. Such psychological turmoil is well conveyed through the thoughts and imagery of her characters, as he mentioned: Kennedy's drama is expressionist in essence with its internal tensions externalized as varied characters. It is also surrealist in their tight reliance on dreams and strong visual pictures. therefore, they are unique in their symbolism and suitable touch that expand into fantastic world.

Kennedy (1997) reflects tensions between whiteness and blackness from the beginning. The play seems to have "a dreamlike atmosphere as A WOMAN dressed in a white nightgown walks across the Stage carrying before her a bald head. She gives the effect of one in a dream' that Sarah is positioned in the center to indicate that it is Sarah's dream, rather a nightmare in which her inner suffering and obsession with whiteness are reflected". (p.5). Sarah was born to a light-skinned woman and a dark-skinned African-American man. Within this chaos, the images of Sarah's mother and father appeared as a terrifying introspection of race and identity, which will undoubtedly captivate and haunt her throughout the play.

The play is a propaganda play that addresses gender, colorism, and/or racism. Sarah is invisible in a white and masculine environment since she is both black and female. The play's atmosphere is heavily affected by Sarah's confused identity and racial consciousness. Social conditions and ethnic backgrounds are considered an essential aspect when analyzing the feelings of inferiority of any character, since these feelings might emerge from harmful societal comparisons. Kennedy's characters are de-essentialized, fragmented creatures who fail to exemplify either White domination or the Black ethnic satisfaction and feeling of proud since she swings between two contrasted polarities. Sarah lives in a problematic and nervous state called in-betweenness because she fluctuates between two poles: her blackness and her whiteness. Sarah believes that it is essential to understand her past in order to comprehend her current identity, which is deeply based on her family's history. Her parents got married in New York, things were fine till they moved to Africa, according to Patrice Lumumba's story. My mother tells me that 'she spent her days combing her hair. She would not let him touch her in their wedding bed and called him b Black man, black man, my mother says, I never should have let a black man put his hands on me". (p. 564)

Her inferiority complex has kept her from venturing out and becoming involved in her community. The play's central question is whether the black lady can integrate or resist her bitter reality. The fundamental issue that this female character constantly confronts is what is outlined as double consciousness, which stresses the recognition of the existence of two identities, black and white. Sarah is a mulatto of mixed race who occupies a liminal space between blackness and whiteness. The fact that she was born of a white mother and a black father (a hybrid marriage) weighs heavily on her mind, driving her into inner fragmentation. In other words, "Sarah suffers an ontological crisis due to her race, and she is haunted by her black father's figure throughout the play as if his blackness is a threat to her existence, and she sees her father as the darkest one who allegedly raped her mother while her mother is the lightest one" (p. 7). Unfortunately, her mother goes insane and ends up in a mental institution. Men are the oppressors and should be feared throughout the play. Sarah and her mother both suffered greatly as a result of their marital relationship, and both women died as a result.

Sarah looks to be suffering from an excruciating sense of crisis and self-fragmentation. Throughout the play, there is a recurring message stating that there is authority in being white and no strength in being black. Thus, such racial categories are associated with stereotypes and preconceptions that have social repercussions, like white people having better intelligence, ethics, and social worth compared to black people. This inferiority complex makes her avoid socializing in her environment. Sarah's behavior seems to be extremely convenient, yet it is a destructive lifestyle for her. As a result of her mother's brutal persecution, Sarah has traumatic emotions toward her father. Sarah hates him because she believes that he raped her mother.

As a result of this compulsion relationship, Sarah exists. Sarah's father is associated with a traumatic memory; he conveys a soul-wrenching past that she does not want to remember as a result of his brutal oppression of her mother, which caused her eventual death. According to the Duchess of Hapsburg, "He stalked my conception. He was a ferocious black beast who had raped my mother" (p. 564). She asserts that her father, "the blackest one of them all,"

raped her mother, who "looked like a white woman," turning her father's blackness into a curse. (p. 562). This quotation illustrates the racial tensions in Sarah's psyche. It reveals more details about her father's past "**Duchess**. He is a black Negro. **Victoria**. [...] before I was born he haunted my conception, diseased my birth. **Duchess**. Killed my mother. [...] We are tied to him unless, of course, he should die. **Victoria**. But he is dead. **Duchess**. And he keeps returning". (p. 7)

So the Duchess of Hapsburg expresses her point of view to Raymond: "Yes, yes, the man's dark, very dark-skinned. He is the darkest, my mother is the lightest. I am in between. But my father is the darkest. My father is a nigger who drives me to misery. Any time spent with him evolves itself into suffering. He is a black man in the wilderness" (p. 564) Sarah blames her father for her mother's psychiatric condition, which eventually leads to her mother's institutionalization. Such a speech emphasizes Sarah's cultural and personal exile, which brings her terrible, unspeakable bitterness and disintegration. Sarah's personal identity issue, according to Wilkerson (1992), is "at once a crisis with political and social resonance—a legacy of the historical confrontation between white Europeans and black Africans." (p.73)

The historic fact of white slave owners sexually abusing black slaves has been obliterated and has not resurfaced. It is obviously the case that Sarah internalizes whites' perception of the stereotypical image of black men as rapists. So rape is repeated throughout the play as a danger for Sarah and her white egos. Thus, the rugged black beast who violated Sarah's mother is a recall of the white culture's stereotyped portrait of black males as rapists.

Eventually, Sarah's father leads her into sanity, just like he did with her mother before. Sarah perceives her father as domineering and hostile, and she suspects him of stalking her. Throughout the play, loud knocking can be heard to indicate this hostility, as Queen Victoria exclaims at the start of the play, "It's my father calling. He's returning for the night. He makes his way through the jungle to find me. He never grows tired of his journey". (p.62). Sarah's speech clearly shows her psychological deterioration. When knocking is heard, Sarah perceives that her father is coming to attack her, despite the fact that her dad is assumed to be dead.

In contrast, Sarah's mother, according to the Duchess of Hapsburg, "looked like a white woman, hair as straight as any white woman's". (p. 562). Sarah's mother is introduced wearing a "white nightgown before a closed white satin curtain which is ghastly white like of a cheap casket and once the curtain is opened, a strong white LIGHT on a chamber that resembling an ebony tomb while the rest is in unnatural BLACKNESS, however, the strong white is unreal and ugly and black ravens are flying over". (p. 5). Throughout the play, hair acts as a metaphor. Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Hapsburg are both referred to as having "[heads] of frizzy hair". (p. 562)

Her mother became more and more reclusive, preferring to spend her evening hours outside among the night animals. She went insane after the rape, and she now lies in bed, strands of her own hair falling out, watching the strands fall from her scalp and covering the bedspread "She's suffering so till her hair has fallen out. But then she did always hide herself in that

room with the walls of books and her statute. I always did know she thought she was somebody else, a Queen or something, somebody else". (p. 16)

All of Sarah's selves, like Sarah's mother, are losing their hair, and the stage directions and dialogue explain that their hair falls out from the crown of the head first. Sarah's personalities indicate that their hair comes out first from the top of the head, like her mother's. Sarah and her selves are completely bald by the end of the play. She wishes to transcend her race by eliminating the one characteristic that she associates with being black (her hair). Sarah is hating her "Negro kinky hair" since it reminds her of blackness. Her behavior can be viewed as a betrayal of her own race. According to the Duchess of Hapsburg. It is obviously her position in the family that also contributes to her inferiority complex since she believes she is a burden to her family. Sarah avoided her father, but her mother also avoided her. Sarah's mother was unable to accept Sarah's birth and therefore refused to acknowledge Sarah. As a result, she was never loved or appreciated "she clung" to her mother despite her mother's lack of affection, and in a child's fantasy world, Sarah remembers wove long dreams of her beauty, her straight hair and fair skin and grey eyes, so identical to mine". (p. 565).

Kennedy's play explores how dissatisfaction with one's skin tone can develop into an inferiority complex that might ruin an individual's entire life. In fact, "the self is a core sense of who one is. That is, you are who you are; shifting is indicative of a problematic, deficient or disengaged identity". (Hecht and colleagues, 2003, p. 48) Thus, Sarah's powerlessness and black femininity led to her psychological disorientation. Her extreme reaction to her destructive psychological state leads to a state of intense pain, which in turn leads to instability and detachment from others. Psychiatrists William Grier and Price Cobbs argue in *Black Rage* that "femininity, as it is defined in the time of writing this play, is something she [the black woman] cannot achieve." (Crawford, 2008, p. 17). Perhaps it is one of the main reasons Sarah participates in what is known as anti-black racism against herself.

She suffers from the complications of cultural and social alienation. Some critics refer to this cultural dispersion as unhomedness. She continues by asserting that being unhomed is not synonymous with being homeless. "To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak" (Tyson. 2006. p.421). Black American playwrights endeavored to describe the oppressed condition of blacks and resist the ideals of whites in their works. Furthermore, the Duchess of Hapsburg epitomizes the royal authority of a white family; she was an unusual choice for a female icon of authority because, despite her beauty and power, she was depressed, childless, and ultimately insane. Sarah used to adopt this white individuality as an embankment to preserve her from thinking too much about the truth that she is a Negro and to indulge her passion for white customs and values.

Sarah strives to mask her dark skin in order to compensate for her sense of inadequacy. These fantasies, however, do not provide her with inner stability. Her depiction of Jesus indicates her futile effort to become white. Jesus, who means compassion and is the foremost figure in the Christian religion, is represented as a deformed figure who does not have the ability to

save people, as Sarah wishes he did. As Jesus proclaims, "Through my apocalypses and my raging sermons I have tried to escape him, through God Almighty I have tried to escape being black". (p. 566).

Sarah is manipulated by both black and white men's dominance. Sarah imagines her father as Patrice Lumumba, and through him, black males are depicted as vicious and brutal creatures who bring death and devastation to black women. Patrice Lumumba, from Sarah's viewpoint, becomes a ruinous project. In Lumumba's identity "Sarah [combined] her aggressions and her affections toward her father and toward her black ancestry, the African continent is the place where unfortunate black ones who seem to be animal-like are born into bestiality that she wants not to be in order not to be recognized with that shameful culture". (p. 8) White power is what Sarah aspires to have, her identification with Lumumba is illustrative of her attempt to have a protector and escape her powerlessness as a woman living in a man-ruled society. Patrice Lumumba, like her father, was unable to save Africa, and he is incapable of saving Sarah herself due to his incapacity to heal her agony. Kolin (2005) asserts that Lumumba "symbolizes her martyrdom, too, by white enemies, and thus prefigures her gruesome hanged death at the end of the story. His split head visually represents the psychic/racial strife that tears Sarah apart and shows that black women are not the only victims of violence in Kennedy's canon". (p.44).

Undoubtedly, Sarah suffers from the difficulties of cultural and social displacement. Sarah's inferiority was caused by her ethnic minority. Sarah's existence in a dangerous domain of un-belonging creates a sense of instability. Her feeling of having no powerful connections to herself or others emphasizes the idea that she is set between two contradictory cultures, a position that contributes to her emotional imbalance and fragmentation. In analyzing the appearance of the characters in the play, it is implied that to be white is to be beautiful and to be black is to be hideous. Sarah defines her appearance in the following form: "In appearance 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 head of frizzy hair, unmistakably Negro kinky hair". (p. 563). Sarah wishes to "become a more pallid Negro" like those she sees "on the covers of an American Negro magazine." (p. 563).

Overall, the play confirms white ideology that shapes African American women's internalization of racial hatred toward their own race. It illustrates how Kennedy deconstructs institutionalized racism by employing historic white figures to subvert the stage's depiction of African American women and highlights the historical hardship imposed on them by this white ideology. Whereas Sarah's mother is mentioned as passive and incapable of emotional support. The character's race is associated with her gender, and being black is linked with being inferior to humans and socially unacceptable. Therefore, the play reveals how gender and race issues affect her life and drive her insane. The play shows gender as a clashing and competing factor when analyzing gender patterns. The play promotes the concept that behavior associated with men should be feared and avoided by women. Overt male behavior takes away a woman's identity and sanity. Sarah is dependent and weak in her actions despite not having traditional gender roles such as wife or mother. Her father is characterized as a

failed breadwinner who is aggressive, her father "got mixed up in politics, was revealed, and is now devoting his foolish life to the erection of a Christian mission in the middle of the jungle in one of those newly freed countries". (p. 564).

In fact, Kennedy stands for Sarah herself, through this character Kennedy is expressing her own anxieties, rage, confusion, and fears. Definitively, Kennedy's personal work demonstrates that she suffered through a severe identity crisis as a black woman, which manifested itself in her works. The consequence of Sarah's inferiority complex is that she is morbidly obsessed with color. It is obviously that Sarah is an exemplary issue of the destructive repercussions of a Black obsession with complexions. Throughout the play, the consequences of being black involve growing aggression, schizophrenia, low self-esteem, and paranoia. Additionally, it is argued that Sarah is angered by the intra-racial hierarchy rather than the segregation and consequently is a miserable character because, because of her psychotic fascination with color, she is incapable of really being happy, marrying and loving, and overcoming oppression. Therefore, such obsession causes distorted vision, self-destructive, and holds the possibility of damaging options in her life.

Finally, Sarah's body is discovered swinging from a noose in her room by Raymond and the landlady. After Sarah's body is found, Mrs. Conrad and Raymond affirm that her father did not kill himself but instead lives in the city and seems to be married to a white lady. Furthermore, his final assessment of her was that she was "a funny little liar." (p.567) Because Sarah is dead and unable to advocate for herself at this point in the play, these two unempathetic characters have the final say; whether or not they convey the truth about Sarah or her past is irrelevant because they constitute the play's reality voices.

Sarah's tale is gloomy and painful because instead of empowering herself, her skin-color consciousness brings fear, anxiety, and depression. The choices she makes in her life become absolutely crucial because Sarah regards those tragedies as turning points that forever shaped her character and confirmed her fate. Therefore, Sarah kills herself as a way to free herself from the complications and hardships of life, thinking that she is unable to survive apart from white culture. Sarah exists in an intersectional area between whiteness and blackness. Consequently, she can get neither a place to belong in either ethnicity or a coherent sense of self. This quotation demonstrates a great deal about the influence of color in the construction of self-identity. Sarah's tormented life can only be resolved through death. Sarah's death in the finale scene reinforces the play's prevailing message that she is a victim of the colorism and social standards that she was raised with.

Conclusion:

Kennedy's work made a concerted effort to convey her own concerns about the fate of black people in general, and black women in particular. She concentrates on the liberation of black women even within the black nation. She also endeavors to increase national consciousness and encourage a feeling of belonging. This study analyzed the impact of inferiority feelings and the striving for white superiority. The play explores the devastating consequences of colorism, which instilled in black people feelings of inferiority. As a consequence of her racial struggle, Sarah's subconscious is fractured, and each part symbolizes the identity problem,

leading her psyche to self-destruction as she constructs an alternate dream-like dimension from which she cannot escape and ultimately commits suicide due to a racial identity crisis.

Funnyhouse of a Negro is a long journey of bitter loneliness; Sarah finds it comfortable to isolate herself in order to reclaim her lost identity. In her physical and psychological isolation, she seeks outlets for her existence as a result of her trauma and insanity in order to attain completeness and identity. The play depicts Sarah's internalization of racism and consequent self-hatred. Kennedy tries to grasp not only the physical loneliness that her heroines suffer from but also the inner loneliness that captures them through what they live within. Irrespective of social factors that do contribute to this state of mind, the paper explains how much concern there is that skin color rejection does not solve the problem of racial inheritance and may even make worse the problem of colorism inherent within the black population.

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