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Subject

**Existentialism and identity in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964)
and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969)**

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Dedications

To:

The memory of my mother Fatma,

My father Mohamed,

My sisters: Djamila, Fatiha and Nacera,

My brothers: Sofiane, Yacine, Amer, Hakim and Samir,

My lovely nephews and nieces: Amine, Mimi, Melissa, Thafath, Massil and Adam,

My friends Dihia and Kamelia,

All those who were here for me,

You reader.

Thanina FENTAZI

To:

My grandmother Fadhma for whom I wish a long life,

My dear father Boussad and my lovely mother Fazia,

My sisters: Farida, Thiziri, Kenza, Liza and my unique brother Ramedane,

My niece Nelia,

All my family members,

All my best friends,

You reader.

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with existentialism and identity in two literary works of the 1960s: Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969). We have attempted to demonstrate the possibility of analyzing these two works together from the perspective of Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of Existentialism developed in his book: *Being and Nothingness* (1943). To begin with, we have seen how the mood and the main events of the sixties influenced and inspired the works of these two playwrights. We have also highlighted the impact of the socio-economic situation of that time on the Blacks i.e. the incidence of the inflation and consumerism combined with the feeling of racism and xenophobia of the whites toward the colored people. Moreover, we have endeavoured to define the way the 1960s were at the origin of existentialist problems and identity disturbances among the black community which underwent the prejudices of racism and segregation. These prejudices are clearly seen in the Blacks' rejection of their identity as Afro-Americans and adoption of the whites' ideals in an attempt to be integrated in the society as full citizens.

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I. Introduction

The main issue of our study titled: Existentialism and Identity in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* can be studied within the category of research known as literary studies. It is centered on post-modern American drama, since both plays were written during the 1960s, a period that led to such movements as the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Arts Movement, and influenced the majority of African American writers like: Amiri Baraka and Adrienne Kennedy. These two figures of the sixties marked the literature of that time since they were influenced by the main economic and social events that occurred in the United States during the sixties.

After the Second World War and more precisely in the late 1940s, the USA knew an economic boom, the life conditions of American Whites became better while the situation of the Blacks remained unchanged; the changes occurred only to the wealthy class. The case of the Blacks became a desperate one, especially after the assassination of the US president John F. Kennedy, who was ready to change the American Constitution to impose equality between the Blacks and the Whites. This atmosphere of racism and segregation inspired the Black community for the creation of what is known as the Black Arts Movement. The later was meant to show the Blacks' talent and to spread their nationalistic ideas through their artistic works. It was in this context that the two playwrights' under study have emerged. Our focus in this dissertation will therefore be put on their plays, *Dutchman* (1964) by Amiri Baraka and *Funnyhouse of a Negro*

conventional theatre and got rid of received ideas to question the human life and the absurdity of existence² through Sisyphus.

Amiri Baraka (also named LeRoi Jones) and Adrienne Kennedy wrote these two plays: *Dutchman* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro* to explore the issue of racial identity and the theme of existentialism.

1. Review of the Literature:

Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's the *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969) have been the center of interest for many critics. In his article: *The Dilemma of the Black Man in LeRoi Jones's Play Dutchman*, Sabah Atallah focuses on the problem of identity of the Blacks in the American society. He argues that Clay is not living as he wants in America. He states: "He surrenders his black identity. He adopts the dress, speech and manners of the white bourgeois society. His aspirations enslave him."³ This implies that Clay is living according to the white culture, so he is afraid to face his identity. Atallah affirms that the main character of the play rejects his racial individuality by adopting another personality.

In another article entitled: "*This is a Theatre of Assault*": *Amiri Baraka's Dutchman and a Civil Rights Othello*, Jason M. Demeter emphasizes his study on the racial side of the main character who is Clay. He argues: "Thus Lula, like Iago, acts as the catalyst for violence and, in doing so, becomes the embodiment of her society's anxieties and hostilities regarding the racial other"⁴. This is to show that the Black man is victimized in America and that Lula portrays the

After its publication in 1962, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* by Adrienne Kennedy received a large amount of interest too. In her essay: “*Reversing Blackface Minstrelsy, Improvising Racial Identity: Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro*” (1997) Deborah Thompson defines the play as a “different kind of textual criticism that will inevitably evoke white-guilt among white viewers and readers”⁶. She also considers that the play asks crucial questions about what a race is and how the distinction between “black” and “white” came to exist and was given a great importance among human beings. According to Thompson, Sarah, the main character of the play, suffers from an identity crisis that makes her reject her “blackness”. Hence, as a clear manifestation of this rejection, Sarah completely refuses to admit her Black father in her life; she summarizes the union of her parents as a “rape” of a “light woman”⁷ by a “dark man”⁸. As Deborah Thompson says in a piece of criticism: “In *Funnyhouse*, the narrative of the black father raping the light mother is a dream, residing in the deepest chambers of Sarah’s psyche”⁹. Sarah denies the truth.

Moreover in his article about Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro* entitled “the Nightmare Within: Battling the Internalized color Line” Neil Genzlinger highlights Sarah's identity disturbance that is clearly shown in her rejection of Blackness and obsession of Whiteness “Sarah, a light-skinned woman obsessed with whiteness”¹⁰. He focuses on the issue of identity and the search for belonging.

Although the above critics have dealt with the identity problems of the Blacks, their

2. Issue and Working Hypotheses

A large number of books and articles have explored the two plays of Baraka and Kennedy in terms of race. One might also say that black disturbance in both plays has been largely emphasized. However, one of our assumptions is to address Baraka's and Kennedy's search for identity in the light of existentialist perspectives. Hence, this analysis endeavors to focus on Afro-American literature by studying, as our title suggests, the way both Baraka's and Kennedy's literary works portray the identity disturbances within the Blacks' existence. It will, therefore be our concern to read the two works in terms of black identity and their existence to demonstrate the way the two Black playwrights express their rejection of racism by defending the Black identity. Both attempt to analyze the Black male and female in America through the main characters of the plays: Clay in *Dutchman* and Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*; they also aim to show their disagreement and denunciation of Blacks' sufferings. Thus, Baraka's and Kennedy's stance is for Blacks' liberation. As African American playwrights, they are aware of the Black man's situation in the American society.

. Methodological outline:

The theme of our study will be explored through three chapters. The first section provides a socio-historical background of both Baraka and Kennedy's plays during the 1960s in America to show to what extent the two playwrights have been influenced by the main events of that period. The second chapter deals with the three aspects of existentialism and their presence

The purpose of our work is to deal with existentialism and identity as viewed by Amiri Baraka and Adrienne Kennedy. To deal with this issue, we have borrowed Jean Paul Sartre's existentialist theory developed in his *Being and Nothingness: a Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (1943). According to professor Spade Fall: "Basically, *Being and Nothingness* is an ontological analysis of human existence".¹¹ The main idea of the book is to study the consciousness of a human being by referring to three aspects namely the "Being-for-itself", the "Being-in-itself" and the "Being for-others": "While discussing the important features of man's being, Sartre identifies three constituents of being; being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others."¹²

We have borrowed this theory because it underlines the main aspects that describe the human being's actions towards himself and the world in which he lives. The theory informs that everyone has the responsibility to choose his own nature and value, each one has the absolute freedom to create his personality because before any aspect that defines the nature of the world and the nature of humanity, we exist as human beings. Thus Sartre is well known for his slogan "Existence precedes essence"¹³. This can be seen mainly through the characters of both plays: Clay and Sarah. Hence, their identity can be understood by referring to Jean Paul Sartre's theory "Being and nothingness" (1943).

The specific aspects of the theory are the "being-in-itself" (unconscious being) and the "being-for-itself" (conscious being). The first one is real, lacks the ability to change and is

creates himself by performing and acting in the world. These two key concepts that define Sartre's vision of the world, are related to each other. "Being-in-itself" is a word that is related to object "it is defined by its physical characteristics" but "being-for-itself" is another word for subject "it is defined by consciousness and non physical attributes". The third aspect that is founded in the two plays is the "being-for-others". It is about the conscious man who defines himself according to the other's gaze and look.

2. Materials

The two plays deal with the theme of our dissertation. Since they were written in the sixties, the characters can be analyzed in terms of their identity. Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* published in 1964 and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* published in 1962 are two plays in which Jean Paul Sartre's theory *Being and Nothingness* could be applied. We notice that all the characters have an existentialist problem due to their identity.

- **A presentation of the play *Dutchman* (1969)**

Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) is a one act play. It narrates the dramatic story of Black man, Clay, and White woman, Lula; two different personalities that constitute the American society. The play is based on the 1960's ideologies that concern the Blacks' movements in America and describes the discussion between the two protagonists as symbolic because of the stereotypes. Being different in colour from Clay, Lula as a White woman displays the idea of

- **A presentation of the play *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969)**

Adrienne Kennedy's *Funny house of a Negro* (1962) is a one-act play. The play was written within the Black Arts Movement and is set inside the mind of the central character, Sarah. This young Black student, who presents signs of schizophrenia due to her double identities, adores her White mother and hates her Black father. The play focuses on Sarah's internal struggle with her racial identity. She spends a great deal of time fighting her feelings about her mixed origins. She views her Afro-American part as an obstacle that must be removed; through her identities Sarah is struggling with her whole existence.

End Notes:

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III. Results and Discussion:

This dissertation is about the Blacks' identity problems in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1962). Both address the founding hypothesis of how the Black culture had been influenced by the American White society during the turbulent sixties, through which the frustration of the poor and that of the African Americans was reinforced by segregation. The economic boom of the sixties which is followed by the higher prices in America, caused the asking of the Blacks for emancipation as citizens in America. The main reason of their protest is to end the conflicts between the Whites and the Blacks by renewing a friendly relationship among them to create the reconciliation of the human races in America. Therefore, both Baraka and Kennedy wrote their plays in an absurd way to show the characters' problems with their existence because of their identity. The following study focuses on the identity problems of Baraka's and Kennedy's characters to show their rank as Blacks and Whites in a capitalist society. It is important to point out that Sartre's concepts are related to the historical background of the sixties in the Blacks life and their existence. So both *Dutchman* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro* portray the meaninglessness world that a black man is facing in his daily life.

This analysis will therefore be articulated around three elements: the socio-historical background of the sixties in America, because Amiri Baraka and Adrienne Kennedy are two African American playwrights, thus their works concern the main events that occurred in

Chapter I: The Socio-Economic Context of the 1960s and its Influence on Baraka's and Kennedy's Writings:

The study of the socio-historical context of the two plays, i.e. the 1960s in America, will help us understand the context and the influence of that period on the two literary works. We will see how Amiri Baraka's and Adrienne Kennedy's works were inspired by a set of events and a particular atmosphere that characterized the 1960s.

The sixties represent a very important period in the history of the United States of America since it can be considered as a decisive turning-point in the emancipation of the Black community. It was marked by several turbulences both at the economic and at the social levels and witnessed many changes. The most important events consisting of the election of John F. Kennedy as a president of the United States and his murder, the beginning of the Cold war, the Vietnam War, the Red Scare, the economic boom, the inflation and consumerism all contributed to the creation of class distinction in the American society. It is important to mention that these three last aspects are interrelated: consumerism was a major cause of the inflation, and the inflation played a decisive role in the creation and reinforcement of the class distinction. Before tackling the issue of class distinction, a brief overview of the economic situation of that time must be given. After the Second World War, America knew an economic boom characterized by a high production, important incomes and rising percentage of employment. But this improvement was closely followed by an important inflation which can be defined as "a sustained increase in

capitalistic society, the “haves” end up exploiting the “have-nots” for their hard work.

Therefore, exploitation creates a system that perpetuates class differences, keeping the rich richer and the poor poorer.²

The first class includes White Americans with a relatively comfortable life enjoying well remunerated jobs, education, security, houses, cars, television...etc; while the second class is made up essentially of Black people living a poor and a hard life (hard jobs with low wages, low level of education, precarious houses...). Blacks and Whites were even separated in public areas; this is what is called the Jim Crow Laws, it is a set of laws that divided many public places into Whites and Blacks areas:

With the Supreme Court now reinforcing the South’s segregation practices, the environment of white racism gave birth to Jim Crow—southern customs and laws that kept parks, drinking fountains, streetcars, restaurants, theaters, and other public places rigidly segregated.³

The Blacks were deprived of their vital rights as citizens: the right to vote, the right for education and the right to have access to public places like restaurants, stadiums or even theatres and cinemas.

This distinction between the Blacks and the Whites reinforced the already existing feeling of racism and xenophobia towards the Blacks and contributed in making their situation worse and harder. They were really victimized, despised and down-trodden by the category of the Haves.

The division of the American society into the Haves and the Have-nots had many negative impacts. Ethics and morality were no longer respected, appearances were given more importance,

success, and hopes of a better life”⁵ but this notion changed and was bent to comply with the materialistic side since “The dream had come to equal material success”⁶

American consumerism increased in a constant way, people bought no longer what they need but rather what can make them seem rich, popular and fashioned. This shift in the way of thinking was initially reflected in the field of architecture. American houses became modern rather than comfortable or adapted to the climate of the country. Since people’s interest was mainly on the shape, different forms of decoration emerged and more space was required for buildings because huge houses were a sign of wealth.

Moreover, the car industry also knew great changes. Different labels started to emerge and prosper. Jeep, Cadillac, Chevrolet and the legendary Ford Motor Company, that made cars affordable to middle class⁷, started to seduce people with new forms and new options; even the colors were taken into consideration. More than a means of transportation, cars were seen as a way for reaching the myth of the American Dream: “The idea of achieving the American Dream with the help of a car, and not just any car, is quite fascinating. The car has to be a large, American-made convertible that has a certain status: a Chevrolet or a Cadillac.”⁸ The mood of the 1960s was still influenced by the 1920s one; people buy just to show themselves off. Many people possessed more than one car just to seem wealthy to the others and attract their attention. This exaggerated importance that was given to the gaze of the others or what is called “being-for-others”⁹ by Jean-Paul Sartre in his theory of existentialism represents the importance of the gaze

Beside the car industry, the fashion industry also developed at that time after the Second World War. After years of privation people became attracted by new clothes, and such as in the case of the houses, comfort was not taken into consideration, only the shape and the materials used mattered, a lot of animals were killed to use their fur in quilting clothes for rich women. Being a “lady” was conditioned by many clothing codes including accessories, jewelers, make-up and hair style. Even men were affected by this new phenomenon, fashion was a way to affirm people’s identity and belonging; many clothing styles appeared to represent each section of the society. Thus, many Black people adopted whites’ clothing codes to have the feeling of being integrated into the society, an attempt which is personified in the character of Clay in Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman*: “He surrenders his black identity. He adopts the dress, speech and manners of the white bourgeois society.”¹⁰ In Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro* Sarah’s attempt to belong to the whites’ society is a little bit implicit since she is obsessed by all what is white and, instead of whites’ clothes she literally wants to be surrounded by white people: “my friends will be white”¹¹

In short, the American society became a consumerist one; spending money was more important than winning it; all the ways were good for this: good or bad, legal or illegal, all what mattered was money. The rate of violence and criminality increased to satisfy this greed of money and, once again, the black community was blamed for it and designed as the first responsible for the degradation in the sphere of security. The rate of racism increased with the

The Black community knew hard times in the “country of justice and human rights”, they were constantly looking for their real identity and the place where they belong; they were foreigners in a “melting-pot” state which was supposed to carry in it different races in a climate of harmony and tolerance. Regardless of the economic facts, Black people were seen as sub-citizens and experienced this feeling in their daily life. In the America of the 1960s, being Black was a crime.

As a reaction to the segregation they suffered from, colored people in America gave birth to what is known as the Civil Rights Movement. It is a cultural movement that started in the late of the 1950s in America because of the difference between the races in the American society. Its major aims were to call for racial equality between the blacks and the whites, to end all forms of racism by claiming the right to vote, equal employment, public agreements, and school integration and to give access to Blacks to the government so that they could participate and take part in the political life of the nation as full citizens.

During the 1960s, African Americans opted in their movement against racism for peaceful actions and this attracted people’s sympathy and legitimized their cause as it is stated: “African-American non-violent leaders led a successful public relations campaign that caused American public opinion to support civil rights gains for African Americans”¹². Their major aim was the creation of their campaign for African American rights to call for the freedom of the

was led by Martin Luther King in 1957 and it was mainly based on the religious weight; because its creator was a clergyman. The other one (SNCC) was a students' organization that attracted media attention thanks to their different sit-in campaigns and to their non-violent protests. This organization created a center of attention to the black youths and encouraged them to participate in the movement with a large membership. The third one (CORE) was created in 1961 to identify all types of discrimination for the aim of denouncing and ending them to establish a full democracy.

Another important event that happened during the sixties was the March on Washington, D.C (August 1963) where the most important and notorious Black leader Martin Luther King delivered his well known speech "I Have a Dream" from which the following passage was extracted:

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama . . . will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today."¹³

This speech is written in a simple language to illustrate the deepness and the absurdity of the sufferings of the Black community in America. Racism was so extended that even Black children were not allowed to play or join White ones. Racism crossed the world of adults and killed the innocence in the children's world. This march played an important role during the Civil Rights

rights as citizens because they were not granted in the United States constitution, thus they wanted to change the constitution so that it will fit the Blacks' request and natural rights. Another aim was the promotion of economic opportunities within the black community.¹⁴

From all these events an important number of thinkers, writers, philosophers, educators and musicians emerged for many reasons. The first one is that the blacks wanted to express their anger, their wishes, their reactions, their thoughts and specially their identities through writings and other works of art. The second reason is that they wanted to show their talents, their courage, their intelligence, their educational level and their own beliefs to affirm their existence within the American community and their identity as Black Americans. Thus all these progresses gave birth to another movement which was known as the Black Arts Movement.

The Black Arts Movement started in Harlem by the writer and activist Amiri Baraka. It is important to mention that the Blacks artistic actions were first known through the Harlem Renaissance before being embodied in the Blacks Arts Movement. The origins of the Harlem Renaissance go back to the 1920s when a certain W.E.B Du Bois called for “a renaissance of American Negro literature... (for) the strange, heart-rending race tangle is rich beyond dream and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart”¹⁵; i.e. the Black culture must be advocated and highlighted mainly through literature. Furthermore, the economic changes in the American society contributed in the creation of the Harlem Renaissance: “The Harlem Renaissance is also rooted in the disappointment that African Americans felt with the limited

The Black Art Movement aimed to advocate black culture and denounce the discrimination and violence that were practiced on the blacks by some native groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). It is important to mention that the Ku Klux Klan, which started during the twenties, attacked mainly black and white Republicans to retain the white authority:

“A number of racist groups, such as the vigilante Ku Klux Klan (KKK), used even more harrowing methods—lynching and other forms of violence, for example—to brutalize and terrify blacks seeking to exercise their rights or advance their standing”¹⁷

One of the most important leaders that reacted against the KKK is Malcolm X who conducted many actions to stop the problem of injustice in the United States of America until he was killed. The spread of violent native clans and the silence of the Whites that considered Blacks' suffering as a non-existing problem contributed in making the situation of the colored people harder.

The Black Art Movement was a kind of trigger on colored people in America, it encouraged many of them to get involved in artistic fields; poets, writers, musicians and theatre groups began to emerge, new names appeared and imposed themselves in public area. Black people, that were silenced or passive in the past, started to break up with their complexes and began to affirm their existence and identity as Black Americans.

The Black Art Movement gave them a feeling of security inside a united family and made

Morrison. Because much more so than, the Harlem Renaissance, in which Black artists were always on the leash of white patrons and publishing houses, the Black Arts movement did it for itself. What you had was Black people going out nationally, in mass, saying that we are an independent Black people and this is what we produce.¹⁸

Moreover, all these African American movements attracted journalists and media; some of them established even their own publishing houses, magazines, journals and arts' institutions. These efforts were rewarded by the recognition of many black Americans in the area of arts and literature. A discrete but promising recognition, black artists began to have confidence in themselves as their works cross the geographical boundaries to be known at the international level. Consequently, it is this climate of hope under pressure that inspired Amiri Baraka's and Adrienne Kennedy's two plays to denounce black suffering in a white dominant society. Therefore, the aim of the two playwrights is to prove Blacks' talent, a talent which is reflected in their own accomplishments as black artists.

To sum up, the sixties marked the history of the Blacks in America. The two main movements of that time are the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Art Movement, they gave another dimension to the life of the Blacks. They presented an opportunity for the Blacks to express themselves through different works of art. It is through these movements that Amiri Baraka and Adrienne Kennedy emerged. In their writings, they have explored the themes of racism, segregation, Black identity and the existentialist problems of the colored people because

of a Negro were meant to stand as substitutes for the whole black community to show that black people were double victimized since they suffered first from racism that infected their social life, then from the inflation that complicated their economic situation.

End notes

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Chapter II: Existentialism in both Baraka's *Dutchman* and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*

Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969) are two plays that can be studied from the existentialist perspective. Both plays treat the existentialist problems of the characters due to the racial heritage they are suffering from. Thus in his existentialist theory entitled *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre highlights it by referring to three important concepts that define the human being.

According to Jean Paul Sartre a human being can be defined with three characteristics: "Sartre argues that, though the being-in-itself and being-for-itself mutually exclude, they are nevertheless combined in human being. Man is both being-in-itself and being-for-itself."¹ in addition to these two aspects "Sartre also describes a third structure of being, being-for-others, which is one's being as it exists in the consciousness of another."² Therefore, the two plays' characters can be analyzed in relation to the three concepts of Sartre's theory: Being-for-itself (conscious being) Being in-itself (unconscious being) and Being for others (the meeting of both the consciousness and the unconsciousness in one being).

1. The Characters' Unconsciousness in Both Baraka's *Dutchman* and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*:

The black characters of the two plays: *Dutchman* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro* can be analyzed as unconscious human beings. Clay and Sarah are two black African Americans who

Dutchman is a one act drama written by Imamu Amiri Baraka in 1964. It is based on two main characters. The two characters Clay and Lula start a conversation full of absurdity and meaninglessness, but it is full of significance. Clay as a black man suffers from his identity because of Lula's gaze. The "in-itself" is found in Clay, it refers to his race, his color as a black male. This explains Sartre's indication that the "being-in-itself" is created without consciousness, it cannot be changed. Thus even if Clay wants to change his color, he is condemned to accept his physical appearance. In order to avoid Lula's insults, the black character tries to escape from his identity by ignoring the "being-in-itself". Thus Sartre defines the being-in-itself as a violation of the "Principle of Sufficient Reason."⁵ The "Principle of Sufficient Reason" means that there is a sufficient reason or explanation for everything. It means that Clay is created as a black man for sufficient reasons. Sartre states sometimes that the existence of the "in-itself" is absurd, it can be without explanation.⁶ Lula as a white woman considers herself as a god. The existence of the in-itself in her being makes her react as a free being, as the best being and as the most important one. Sartre states that the being-it-itself accomplishes the idea that the person is as a god; it has the freedom to construct itself.

In Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969), Sarah the main character is, as Clay in *Dutchman*, the manifestation of the being-in-itself. Being in itself, as it is previously explained in this dissertation, refers to all what is fixed by the law of nature and cannot be changed such as gender and race. It also stands for all what exists for no definite reason. It is

wishes, future projects or dreams, this character is always in a kind of passive and virtual state; she seems to live out of the world, completely detached from the reality. The total absence of any goal to fulfill is uncommon regarding to Sarah's age and education. Any young girl in the prime of her life dreams of many things that are different from one person to another, except Sarah. This student spends her time passively lost among her multiple identities; the only projects she aims to realize consist of living somewhere where she would be only surrounded by white people: "My friends will be white."⁷ She explains this choice by her need to forget about her blackness by the illusion of being among the whites: "I need them as an embankment to keep me from reflecting too much upon the fact that that I am a Negro"⁸. Hence, she does not only dislike herself but also the whole black community which she considers as a persistent reminder of her origins. This shows how deep and real her existentialist problem is, since she literally wants to shift the black community away and replace it by a white one where she could forget her blackness and satisfy her obsession of whiteness. In other words, this existentialist problem imprisons Sarah in the being in itself and pushes her to surround herself by walls of loneliness and passivity that isolates her from the society.

Sarah denies her blackness and wants to get rid of her Afro-American part; but contrary to Clay who "rejects" his real identity by adopting whites' culture and manner, Sarah case is more complicated since she lives on a virtual world of imagination made of white influent characters. To put it simply, Sarah manifests some schizophrenia symptoms since she possess four different

2. The Characters as Conscious Beings in Both *Dutchman* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro*:

In *Dutchman* (1964) and *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969) the characters are real and not fictional; their consciousness makes them exist in this world. Sartre identifies human beings with consciousness. He adds that consciousness is not something human beings *have*; it is what they *are*.⁹ Sartre considers that man is both being-in-itself and being for-itself. These two aspects represent “Facticity”¹⁰ and “Transcendence respectively”¹¹ Contrary to his color (facticity), his mind can react, respond and transcend his nature as a black man and as a white woman. Clay and Sarah as blacks suffer from their identity; they are not ready to face the white community in which they live. As it is defined by Sartre, consciousness is a human being’s desires, wishes, fears, emotions, memories and hopes.⁸

In *Dutchman*, Lula’s desires are to control the black Clay’s emotions, Clay tries to escape from his memories about his origins:

CLAY My grandfather was a night watchman.

LULA And you went to a colored college where everybody thought they were Averell Harriman.

CLAY All except me.

LULA And who did you think you were? Who do you think you are now?

CLAY [*Laughs as if to make light of the whole trend of the conversation*] Well, in college I thought I was Baudelaire. But I've slowed down since.

LULA I bet you never once thought you were a black nigger. [*Mock serious, then she*

It shows the way that the “being-in-itself” and the “being-for-itself” are constructed in Clay’s consciousness. He does not respond to Lula’s insults, he takes no notice that his consciousness is free and that he has the freedom to construct himself, not according to others but according to himself. The conscious being “for-itself” is defined by Jean Paul Sartre as the human reactions towards the others’ gaze. And it is mainly free to react and to create or to construct his being as he wants thanks to its reasonable and intelligent mind. The “for-itself” is the most important part for Sartre because of its consciousness, he states that it depends on the “in-itself” for many reasons. The “being-for-itself” has the power to interpret the “being-in-itself”, in the case of Lula, she has the power to dominate Clay’s essence (Clay’s in-itself). Both Clay and Lula have failed to respond to Sartre’s theory of nothingness. They do not pay attention to the fact that a human being is condemned to be free and that he is the master of himself according to Sartre. Lula in one side considers herself as superior to Clay; she does everything to victimize him because he is a black man. She is limiting his freedom. In another side, Clay does nothing to stop her and to defend his nature as a black African American. At each time he ignores his own culture, though he knows that it is not his own culture, he prefers to mask his personality, his life and his culture to satisfy a white woman. This is what Sartre calls a bad faith, the fact of ignoring his statute as a human being¹⁰ because the in-itself dominates him.

“Being-for-itself” is also presented in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. As a reminder, “being-for-itself”, in contrast to the “being-in-itself”, stands for “subjects” and can be changed. Normally,

sufficient to cause a total upheaval to happen to the In-it-self. This upheaval is the world ...”¹¹ It means that for-itself has the ability to change things, to create one’s being. But this aspect, which is essential in the construction of one’s self, seems to be mis-represented in the central character of the play.

In fact, Sarah is always represented as an absent-minded person who sits passively with no move and no hope, during all the play she does not make any physical effort, her body is at the image of her mind: completely paralyzed. But, in spite of this inversion, some manifestations of the being for itself are present in Sarah’s existence. In fact, a soft desire for change is felt in the play, Sarah dreams of a better life, a life in which she could forget her heavy heritage and live as a “normal” person, she wants to get rid of her Afro-American part to be “free” and start a new life. In her perspective she cannot take a new departure with her actual color skin, she feels the need of changing her racial heritage to make progress in her life. Her multiple identities can be also interpreted as desperate attempts to find her own self, to build or rebuild her existence. In this context the Landlady, one of the few real characters of the play says:

“But then she did always hide herself in that room with the walls of books and her statue. I always did know she thought she was somebody else, a Queen or something, somebody else.”¹²

She dreams of being anyone else except her own self, she is in a stage where the notion of acceptance of herself does not exist anymore, she considers her racial appurtenance as a fatality

situation and considers herself as a desperate case; according to her there is no hope; her life is a loss. This suffering is symbolized by Sarah's loss of her hair throughout the play because of her incessant thinking: "She is suffering so till her hair has fallen out"¹³. In a word, even though man is both being-in-itself and being-for-itself, Sarah's existentialist trouble favored the superiority of the being-in- itself over the being-for-itself.

3. The Interaction of Both Consciousness and Unconsciousness in the Characters' Mind

The plays' aim is to show the black conditions of life within a capitalist society. Thus this aspect of the consciousness (being-for others) is the one which dominates the characters of the two plays. In his existentialist theory named *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre states that the being-for-others is about the human being mind which is defined according to other's gaze. It refers to the humans who live their life to satisfy others, not to be criticized and maltreated. It refers directly to the black Clay in *Dutchman* and to the black Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, because they are suffering from their blackness, the white America misjudges them. In his essay about the aspects of western philosophy, Dr Sreekumar Nellickappilly says:

Sartre further contends that our relations to other people are of the very essence of man. Unlike our encounter with objects, we here experience the other and encounter the subjectivity of the other. The realization that the other we encounter is a subject posits a potential threat to our own subjectivity, as it raises the possibility that we

another culture because of Lula's accusations. She puts on him the idea that he is a nigger, the one who can not react as he wants, and the one who cannot have a sexual relationship with a white woman like her because of his blackness. As a result, Clay tries to escape from his identity, from his nature and his individuality because he is afraid, he is terrified and troubled by his history. He does not accept the truth that even if he is created black, it does not prevent him to be free in his society. Another example given by Sartre, it is about a voyeur who peeps through a keyhole and suddenly realizes that another person is looking at him and judging him.¹⁵ the voyeur here understands directly the bias of the other. Consequently this reveals the main troubles and conflicts that face the human relationships, these "conflicts-ridden relationship"¹⁶ with others can be seen as a part in our existentialist conditions that we cannot defeat. The conversation between Lula and Clay reveals these conflicts, Clay's insecurities about his race, social status, and masculine ability points out that Clay respond to the third aspect of Sartre's concept: being-for-others:

CLAY My mother was a Republican.

LULA And your father voted for the man rather than the party.

CLAY Right!

LULA Yea for him. Yea, yea for him.

CLAY Yea!

LULA And yea for America where he is free to vote for the mediocrity of his choice!

Yea!

CLAY Yea!

by Lula's prejudices. So he does not believe in his own freedom, he is not aware that he has to live as he wants in America. But his troubles as a black male Pushed him to feel himself in an insecure world.

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, being-for-others can be considered as the principal preoccupation of Sarah. The gaze of the others may be a handicap in constructing one's being, sometimes the way people see us is given more importance than the way we see ourselves and this is what happened in the play. As Clay who is influenced by Lula's ideas, Sarah is deeply influenced by all what is European and white that she judges herself as being inferior and wishes to be someone else to please the others. The most astonishing fact about this influence is that being a black woman did not dispense Sarah from being racist. The received ideas about racism constitute on the fact that some Whites are racist toward the Blacks; one can be racist toward what he is not, but in this case it is the contrary: Sarah is racist toward her own self her own identity and existence. Her racist sub-conscious manifests itself many times all over the play, especially toward her father; she goes as far as to accuse him of "haunting" her conception as if he did not have the right to marry a white woman: "He haunted my very conception. He was a wild black beast who raped my mother"¹⁸ This accusation may also refer to "ghosts" since they are the ones who haunt someone or something; Sarah's disrespect for her father pushes her to see him as a ghost, for her it is impossible to give the statute of human being to her father, he could be anything but not a human being. This disrespect is rapidly replaced by pure hate; in the

dead. Yet he still comes through the jungle”²⁰ this association of her father with the jungle, her reference to him as a “wild beast” and her hope of his death show that Sarah viewed her father as an uncivilized creature, almost an inhuman one reduced to the statute of animal. She goes as far as to call her father a jungle: “Hide me here so the jungle will not find me. Hide me”²¹ and later on she said: “He is the wilderness”²² All this harshness toward her father comes from Sarah’s fear of the rejection of the society; she sees her situation from the angle that if her father was white, she would be also white and will not have to face the gaze of the others, thus her father is identified as the cause of her sufferings. All this factors combine to complicate Sarah’s existential problem since she is paralyzed by the gaze of the others and gives it a great importance.

To sum up, Clay and Sarah are from two different plays written by two different playwrights. But both symbolize the same culture, the same identity and both suffer from their existence within a white community. Thus the three concepts that Sartre has defined are combined in Clay’s and Sarah’s beings, this is to show that they are suffering from their existence as black human beings because of their identity disturbance.

End notes:

¹ Nellickappilly Sreekumar, *Jean Paul Sartre’s Concept of Human Existence*, Chapter 38, 2. Viewed 2 September 2015.

< <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109106051/Module%205/Chapter%2038.pdf>

² Devita F.P , Sartre on Being-For-Others, August 6, 2012. Viewed on September 5, 2015
<https://frankdevita.wordpress.com/2012/08/06/sartre-on-being-for-others/>

³ F. L. S. , *Existentialism and Sartre*, (1990), 82.

⁹ Baraka Amiri, *Dutchman*, (1964), 5

¹⁰ Nellickappilly Sreekumar, *Jean Paul Sartre's Concept of Human Existence*, Chapter 38, 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Baraka Amiri, *Dutchman*, (1964), 5.

¹⁴ Fall Spade, *Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, (1996), 133.

¹⁵ Sartre Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness*, Chapter 8, 637.

¹⁶ Kennedy Adrienne, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, (1969), 8.

¹⁷ Baraka Amiri, *Dutchman*, (1964), 6.

¹⁸ Nellickappilly Sreekumar, *Jean Paul Sartre's Concept of Human Existence*, Chapter 38, 6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kennedy Adrienne, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, (1969),

²² Ibid, 10.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, 8.

²⁵ Ibid, 10.

²⁶ Ibid.

Chapter III: The Notion of Identity Disturbance in the Central Characters in *Dutchman* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro*

Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* are two plays that expose the blacks' conditions and reactions toward racism during the 1960s in America. Ireen Trautmann says that: "the two plays describe the unambiguous reality of the situation of the American blacks in the 1960s and give an impression of the American history and politics of that time"¹. This suggests that the two playwrights were really influenced by the main events that emerged because of the spread of racism. This shows how the characters of the two plays suffer from their identity as black African Americans. According to Berkowitz: "Racism as the previous condition was a living death... so black people were faced with two alternatives, assimilation or revolt... They had to find new identities."²

1. Identity Disturbance in Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969)

Dutchman (1964) is a one act dramatic story that gained an Obie-Award the same year of its publication. It was written by the writer and activist Amiri Baraka in the sixties in America to show the power of the black theatre: "Black theatre must be a school for teaching high morality, for inspiring black people to move, for Self- Determination, Self-Respect and Self-Defense."³ Through using absurd characters in the play, Baraka wanted to portray the emotional history of a black African American man in the American community. So the play deals with the internal

Dutchman (1964) is about the two main characters Lula, a white American woman, and Clay, a black man sit on a sub way train in New York City. During their journey, they engaged a detailed conversation full of mutual criticism that indicates the playwright's position and idea about the American social life in the sixties. While the conversation becomes more and more personal, Lula tries to control everything by seducing Clay. She provokes and challenges Clay's middle-class self image. Thus, the play is about variety of the social issues in which he asks the general question of personal identity and the nature of the relationship between the self and society⁴.

Funnyhouse of a Negro, which is Adrienne Kennedy's most known work, shares some characteristics with *Dutchman* in the sense that his one-act play tackles the issue of identity disturbance inside the black American community in the 1960s. The play refers to the black inner struggle and imbalance regarding their situation in a society that rejected and marginalized them. The author aims to show that the effect of discrimination on blacks goes beyond the appearances and affects them in their own identity. It can be said that the play contains some autobiographical elements since Adrienne Kennedy, as being a black woman in America, uses her personal experience to describe and denounce colored people's sufferings in a white-dominant society.

The main character, Sarah, is a black student that passes through an identity crisis because of her mixed origins, she even presents signs of schizophrenia by having four different identities or what is called in the play "herselves". Being the fruit of the union of a white woman and a

2. Lula's Identity as a Dominator and Clay's Identity as a Dominated

In *Dutchman*, Lula, the second character of the play; is a beautiful white woman. She enters the train with an apple in her hands and when she offers it to Clay he accepted, biblically this is an allusion to the Adam and Eve Analogy: "it is she who offers Clay an apple that he accepts; critics have made much of the possible Adam and Eve analogy"⁵. In this case Lula as a white woman tries to have the naïve black Clay as her murder, her slave and to put him under her control. Hence when reading the play one can notice that the reason why Baraka uses Lula's attitudes towards Clay is to show how the capitalist society views the African American men.

Despite she reveals little personal information; Lula's understanding of stereotypes allows her to estimate a great many points about Clay in an exercise of her authority. The cruel nature of Lula is revealed when she mocks on Clay's clothing: "Boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by....What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and a stupid tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard"⁶. In this case, Lula symbolizes racism, since her grade as a white person gives her influence over Clay and makes her the sexual provoker: "Lula tries to seduce Clay. But He rejects her advances politely. She insults, embarrasses and humiliates him. She becomes aggressive towards Clay."⁷ she sees Clay as a sexual object, as a savage animal, the one who does not contain any culture or civilization. This refers to the statute of the black man and how it is viewed in America.

To put it simply, Lula belongs to the category of the Haves in America, so she is

is as if you make an object of yourself. He adds that every human being must respect the freedom of others and accept them in his world because no one can interfere in the others' life.

One of the main characters of the play is Clay, a well dressed, intellectual African American poet. While reading a magazine, he is interrupted by a beautiful white woman Lula. By using an apple as a symbol, the two main characters start a conversation which becomes later on more personal. It is through that conversation that the two characters' personality is revealed.

The main character of the play becomes lost when Lula tried to seduce him. Because of his fear to reveal his identity and culture as a black man, he prefers to hide himself behind the white culture: "He surrenders his black identity. He adopts the dress, speech and manners of the white bourgeois society. His aspirations enslave him."⁸ this implies that Clay is manipulated by the false consciousness that inhabits him, as if he doesn't want to accept his nature as a colored man. He is influenced by the higher classes' views about the blacks, because he sees in Lula the white bourgeois woman. Lula rapidly noticed Clay's adoption of another culture, Attalah noticed: "She says that he is merely a well-known type, the black man who repudiates his racial identity to adopt a white culture."⁹ This means that Clay is ashamed to affirm or to talk about his black race. According to M. Demeter the play serves as the classic Early Modern English portrayal of a black man's victimization at the hands of a white hegemony¹⁰ this shows that the black man is influenced by the white's superiority and ideology.

By analyzing Clay's thoughts about his race, one can deduce that he is dominated by the

3. Sarah's Identities:

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, and as an imminent sign of identity disturbance, four imaginary characters are used in the play as Sarah's schizophrenia manifestations of herself or what is called "herselves". The study and analysis of "herselves" that are all historical figures may allow us to better identify and understand the identity problems of the main character Sarah.

The author gave more information about Sarah's "selves" that her own personality, and this was done on the purpose to indicate that the existence of all these fragments of herself made her lose her own and real one. All we know about the main character is that she studies English at a city college in New-York and works in parallel as a librarian. As it is already said in this dissertation her father was black and her mother was white. The setting of the play is mainly on Sarah's room where she spends indefinite time lost with her multiple identities.

To begin with, among Sarah's selves we find the Duchess of Hapsburg. Through this character the author seems to refer to Sarah's racist subconscious because historical figure has the reputation of being an emblem of European colonialism. This may also refer to the fact that Sarah worships all what is in relation to whiteness and civilization. She literally considers blacks as uncivilized and savage. Historically, the Duchess of Habsburg suffered during her reign from schizophrenia and was banished for mental illness. A parallel can be made with Sarah's multiple identities.

mental can be linked to the stress that comes from occupying a high rank in hierarchy, it can also be understood as a satire on people from the upper classes that do not assume their position and end by falling apart. Queen Victoria Regina is Sarah's idol since the girl placed a very white statue of her in front the door of the room and declares about it: "Partly because it is consumed by a gigantic plaster statue of Queen Victoria who is my idol"¹¹. Sarah admires Queen Victoria not because of her accomplishments as a queen but rather due to her whiteness; it is in this sense that she added about her: "Victoria always wants me to tell her about whiteness. She wants me to tell her about a royal world where everything and everyone in white and there are no unfortunate black ones"¹². Herein, we can see Sarah's obsession of whiteness and refusal of blackness, she desperately dreams of a world where blacks do not exist at all; this will goes with her persistent efforts to kill her Afro-American part.

Moreover, a religious figure appears among Sarah's selves: Jesus. Jesus, as a prophet, is known for being a kind of "hero" that came to save humanity and restore peace on earth; his martyrdom death made of him a symbol of sacrifice and real faith. But, in the play, Jesus stands for something else; even the author's representation of him is uncommon. In fact, instead of being interpreted by a white and beautified actor, as he is always portrayed in movies and plays, Jesus role is performed by a black actor wearing a white mask.

In the play, Jesus leads the other "selves" into the jungle to kill Patrice Lumumba: "I am going to Africa and kill this black man named Patrice Lumumba. Why? Because all my life I

Through this character, Adrienne Kennedy aims to demonstrate how Christianity, which stands for justice, liberation and tolerance, became a tool of oppression. The author seems to question this religion which is finally not complete and not always faithful to its principles. Through this religious disillusionment all Sarah's faith which falls apart vanishing an important part of her identity.

To end with, the last historical figure that stands for a part of Sarah's subconscious is Patrice Lumumba. As a reminder, Patrice Lumumba was elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo on June 1960. His career was shortened by his murder on December 1960. This tragical event gave birth to a great polemic; his reputation as an activist for independence came to support the theory of Great-Britain and United States conspiracy in his murder.

In the play, Patrice Lumumba stands both for anti-colonial vision and Sarah's father. This political leader claims independence, which is every man's right; as Sarah's father begs forgiveness from her even though he was not guilty of anything.

At the end of the play, Patrice Lumumba was killed by Jesus (religious oppression), Duchess of Hamburg and Queen Victoria Regina (imperialist notion) to show that Sarah ended by losing her own identity and was deeply influenced by other's thinking. This also represents Sarah's desire to kill and get rid of her African American part.

In short, from the four representations of Sarah's subconscious it can be noticed that

hand, there are Jesus and Patrice Lumumba that are black and male characters, both of them are martyrs and associated with misery; Sarah's masculine "selves" are linked to violence and martyr. The female fragments of Sarah's identity are linked to sensibility; the two ladies are victims of the high oppression of their social position until they became mentally insane as Sarah's mother is represented in the play as a dead-alive woman victim of, as Sarah thinks, the rape of a savage black: Sarah's father.

4. Clay and Lula's Interaction:

Clay and Lula's mockery represents the difficult nature of racial relations in the sixties in America. Both have a big problem with their existence; they cannot escape from one another because of their history. As it is shown in the first chapter, the black man was victimized and belittled by the whites' dominance. This shows how the American history is full of facts and events that marked the ideological conflicts between blacks and whites. In the play Clay represents the black troubles and Lula symbolizes the white culture in America.

In the scene one, Lula controls the conversation. When she enters the train, she set beside Clay and begun her mockery:

LULA: Weren't you staring at me through the window? At the last stop?

CLAY: Staring at you? What do you mean?

LULA: Don't you know what staring means?

CLAY: I saw you through the window ... if that's what it means. I don't know if I was staring. Seems to me you were staring through the window at me.¹⁴

the black Clay even if he was uncomfortable with her. Clay seems to be astonished when Lula looked as if she knows many things about his life. He says “Hey, you still haven’t told me how you know so much about me.”¹⁵ She answered “I told you I didn't know anything about you...you are a well-known type.”¹⁶ In this context she refers to the black male who rejects his own identity to adopt the white culture because he cannot assume his racial personality and his color. By using the word “well-known type”¹⁷ Lula means that the black men’s class belongs to the category of the Have-nots in America and that they are well-known for their savagery and ignorance. At each time, the female character tries to convince the black male that his identity is full of stereotypes, she says: “you are a murderer, Clay, and you know it.”¹⁸ This is to say that a black man is not welcomed in America because of the bad characteristics that the white resort to in many cases to define him. The fact that clay does not response to her insults, illustrates that he is suffering from his own identity in the society. He knows that he is not in security that is why he loses his own identity. Atallah states that Lula is cursed and condemned to a symbolic role as an executioner who has to chase her black victims and kill them successively.¹⁹ she uses her attractiveness and her beauty to seduce them in order to put them under her control. This refers to the white America, the state that condemned the blacks’ life and faith.

In the second scene, Lula tries to seduce and to attract Clay by describing her party plans by using seductive details. In their dialogue, Lula insults Clay by considering him as an “escaped nigger”²⁰ as an escaped slave. In this context, the word “nigger” refers to slavery which is the

were suffering from by living within the whites, this clarifies that the colored men's identity is full of troubles. Because of their existentialists' dilemma, the blacks prefer to break with their own nature to adopt another one which is not theirs. In the play Clay says to Lula: "If I am a middle-class fake white man...let me be. And let be in the way I want... Let me be who I fell like being."²³ This implies that Clay wants to escape from his identity. He becomes angry because he defeats himself by denying his African culture, this is what Sartre calls to escape from his own nature or essence. In his Book "Being and Nothingness" Sartre gives a great value to the term of identity, he explicitly describes the Law of identity as what he calls a "regional principle."²⁴ Sartre considers that consciousness is as a treasury element that can differentiate between the human beings in terms of ideology, education and personality. This is the case of Lula and Clay in the play: one considers himself as the dominator and the other sees himself as the dominated one. Baraka's aim is about how difficult it is to become a man in the United States.²⁵ This is to refer to the difficulties and to the disturbances that the colored people suffered from in America. Therefore Clay is hardly struggling with his faith in a capitalist society, he is aware that his brothers and sisters were subjected by racism and segregation:

This is an hour of crisis. It is a crisis of democracy. It is a crisis of minority groups. It is a crisis of Negro Americans. What is this crisis? To American Negroes, it is the denial of jobs in Government defense projects. It is racial discrimination in Government departments. It is widespread Jim-Crowism in the armed forces of the Nation.²⁷

This is to show how the blacks were harmed and maltreated by the whites' savagery and

are necessarily free, always, and it is impossible for a human to fail to be free.²⁸ It means that through freedom we control our aims and our way of living, it allows a human being to be conscious about his existence and to admire himself.

According to Jean Paul Sartre, the fact that we are created on the earth means that we exist as human beings, and the fact that we exist, we are free to construct our nature by our own choices. In the play, both Clay and Lula know that they exist as humans in a common world, but they ignore that each one has his own identity and that they are free of choosing their own nature, they are free to react as they wish. The negative judgments of the white woman make clay very angry because he was deceived by himself of being unvoiced towards Lula's claims and sarcastic questions.

5. Black and White Sarah's Identities Interaction

The classification of Sarah's identities into black male and white female ones symbolizes her excessive admiration for her white mother and her hate for her black father. This also stands for two manifestations of her racist subconscious: the obsession of whiteness and the rejection of blackness.

Sarah's obsession of whiteness is mainly shown on her excessive admiration for her mother: "My mother was the light. She was the lightest one. She looked like a white woman."²⁹ This admiration combined to Sarah's influence by the whites' and especially the European racist

The royalty in *Funnyhouse* are dressed in royal gowns of white, a white similar to the white of the Curtain, the material cheap satin. Their headpieces are white and of a net that falls over their faces. From beneath both their headpieces springs a heedful of wild kinky hair... They look exactly alike and will wear masks or be made up to appear a whitish yellow... If the character do not wear a mask then the face must be highly powdered and possess a hard expressionless quality and a stillness as in the face of death.³⁰

This exaggeration on the whiteness of the royalty selves of the play accentuates the idea of obsession of whiteness noticeable from the very beginning of the play by the presence of a white statue of Queen Victoria Regina in Sarah's room. Sarah considers Queen Victoria as an idol with who she could share her obsession of whiteness:

Victoria always wants me to tell her of whiteness. She wants me to tell her of a royal world where everything and everyone is white and there are no unfortunate black ones. For as we of royal blood know, black is evil, and has been from the beginning.³¹

Sarah associates "whiteness" with richness through her white "selves" that are both wealthy and belong to the royal class. Through Sarah's desire of richness Adrienne Kennedy refers to the whole black community that desperately wishes to belong to the Haves; in other words, this aspect in Sarah's identity stands as one of the results of the division of the American society into the Haves and Have-nots and portrays the inner struggle of the Blacks in the 1960s.

Sarah's rejection of blackness is represented in her hate for her father to whom she refers

DUCHESS: “He haunted my very conception. He was a wild beast who raped my mother.

FUNNYMAN: he is a black Negro. (Laughing.)

DUCHESS: Ever since I can remember he’s been in a nigger pose of agony. He is the wilderness. He speaks niggerly groveling about wanting to touch me with his black hand.³⁵

Sarah resents her father for being black and identifies him as the principal source of her problems: “My father is a nigger who drives me to misery.”³⁶ She considers that if he was not black she would be a white student living a normal life among white people. An important detail about the play is that all the characters are represented by black actors wearing white masks; this can be viewed as a sign of refusal of one’s real identity. Black actors with white figures may stand for the Blacks rejection of their identity, tradition and culture; and adoption of the whites’ features and behaviors in order to be integrated to the American society of that time. It shows also the great influence of the whites on the very deep personality of the Blacks, as Deborah Thompson said: “The two white characters of the play, Raymond and the landlady, not only have the final words, but also function as the dispensers of truth. They (seem to) give the real story. It is they who control our interpretation”³⁷ this means that even in the play the blacks are dominated by the whites, as Clay in *Dutchman* is dominated by Lula who directs the conversation as she wants and pushes Clay to believe her and be influenced by her declarations, Sarah’s real story in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* is taught by white characters. This may refer to the whites’ stereotype view of blacks as not being worthy of confidence, that is why white characters intervene in the

was seen as a source of problems and thus rejected by the Whites and also by the Blacks themselves.

To conclude with, both of Clay and Sarah present signs of identity disturbance in their way of living. This shows how both of Baraka and Kennedy were influenced and inspired by their history as blacks, because they were victimized and treated as sub-citizens. They wanted also to illustrate the marginalization that was practiced on them by the Whites' system of the 1960s.

End notes

¹ Trautmann Ireen, *The Success of Amiri Baraka's Play Dutchman*, (2006), 3. Viewed 28 September 2015. <<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/73551/the-success-of-amiri-baraka-s-play-dutchman>>

² Berkowitz Gerald, *American Drama of the Twentieth Century*, (London: Longman, 1992), 146.

³ Ceynowa Andrzej, "The Dramatic Structure of *Dutchman*", (1983),15. Viewed 18 July 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2904162?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

⁴ Bigsby, C.W.E, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama. Volume Three Beyond Broadway*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 375.

⁵ Mills Kathleen, *Amiri Baraka and The Dutchman*, (2010), 2. Viewed 20 August 2015. <<http://homepages.uwp.edu/martinm0/FALL%202010/DRAMA/Notes%20on%20Amiri%20Baraka%20and%20The%20Dutchman.pdf>>

¹⁰ M. Demeter, “*This is a Theatre of Assault*”: Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman* and a Civil Rights *Othello*, 68.

¹¹ Kennedy Adrienne, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, (1969), 5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid 19.

¹⁴ Baraka Amiri, *Dutchman*, (1964), 2. Viewed 17 March 2015.
<<http://faculty.atu.edu/cbrucker/Engl2013/texts/Dutchman.pdf>>

¹⁵ Ibid. ,3

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. ,5

¹⁹ Attalah K.A., *The Dilemma of the Black Man in LeRoi Jones' Play Dutchman*, 17.

²⁰ Baraka Amiri, *Dutchman*, (1964), 8.

²¹ Ibid. ,9

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Fall Spade, *Jean Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness*, (1995), 86. Viewed 13 August 2015.

²⁶ Thomas Lorenzo, *Amiri Baraka and the Dutchman*, (2010), 2. Viewed 1 October 2015.
<<http://homepages.uwp.edu/martinm0/FALL%202010/DRAMA/Notes%20on%20Amiri%20Baraka%20and%20The%20Dutchman.pdf>>

²⁷ Randolph Philip, *Civil Rights Can Be Secured Through Mass Action*, (2005), 58.
<http://www.dikseo.teimes.gr/spoudastirio/ENOTES/T/The_Civil_Rights_Movement_Viewpoint_s.pdf randolph philip 47>

²⁸ Franchi Leo, *Sartre and freedom*, 1. Viewed 1 October 2015.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 19.

³⁴ Kennedy Adrienne, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, (1969),10.

³⁵ Ibid, 10.

³⁶ Ibid, 11.

³⁷ Thompson Deborah, *Reversing Blackface Minstrelsy, Improvising Racial Identity: Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro*.(1997), 14. Viewed on July, 6, 2015.

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IV. Conclusion

Throughout our modest work entitled *Existentialism and Identity in Amiri Baraka's Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969), we have tried to analyze the two plays from the perspective of Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of Existentialism developed in his book *Being and Nothingness* (1943). We have focused on two main concepts of the theory: Existentialism and Identity in the two plays by studying the characters situation and their existentialist problems due to the socio-economical context of the 1960s.

Our dissertation starts by a general introduction in which a review of the literature about the theme is provided. Then, we have introduced the borrowed theory of existentialism and justified its relevance to the chosen plays. The key concepts of our work consist on: existentialism, unconsciousness, consciousness, identity and freedom. Hence, we have tried to highlight the themes of existentialist problems and identity disturbance of the main characters of the two plays.

In the first chapter, we have demonstrated the importance and the influence of the sixties on the two literary works namely Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1969) . We have seen at which extent the socio-economic context of these works is important in understanding the main aims of their playwrights. We have also focused on the decisive impact of the 1960s on the situation of the black community of America.

In the second chapter, we have explored Baraka's and Kennedy's works from the

the life within a white dominant community was a source of existentialist problems for the Blacks.

In the last chapter, we analyzed the two plays from the aspect of identity disturbance. We have seen how both Clay in *Dutchman* and Sarah in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* tried to escape their identity as Blacks and tended to adopt the Whites' thinking and behaviors because they were influenced by the stereotypes on the colored people.

All in all, this dissertation tackled the issue of existentialism and identity in Baraka's *Dutchman* and Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, it affirmed the possibility of studying the two plays together from the perspective of Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of existentialism. Moreover, other themes that include the study of both plays can be proposed, such as the black masculinity and white femininity.

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