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Dramatising Anti-Racism in Branden Jacob-Jenkin's An Octoroon

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Abstract

This paper is based on social and literary critique. Literature reflects human existence through expressing a vast spectrum of human emotions, feelings, and behaviours. People can transcend human creativity into something larger than life and beyond their imagination through literary art. Numerous references, scientific investigations, and literary works have been written about Racism. *An octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is one of the literary works that analyse such phenomena. The researchers are called literary critics since she evaluates and analyse the selected literary work to achieve the study's objectives. The researchers look at this literary endeavour from two angles: intrinsic and extrinsic and then apply the genetic structuralism theory. This paper tries to answer questions such as "Do Blacks in America confront a variety of forms of white racism?" and " What are the important things for Blacks to continue their struggle against racism and win equity?"

Keywords: literary Criticism, Racism, Asian People, An Octoroon, Structuralism.

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التمثيل الدرامي لمناهضة العنصرية في مسرحية اوكتورون للكاتب الامريكي براندن جاكوب
جينكينز

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جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

الملخص : يعتمد هذا البحث على النقد الأدبي الاجتماعي. يعكس الأدب الوجود البشري من خلال التعبير عن طيف واسع من المشاعر والسلوكيات البشرية. يمكن للناس تجاوز الإبداع البشري إلى شيء أكبر من الحياة ويتجاوز خيالهم من خلال الفن الأدبي. تمت كتابة العديد من المراجع والتحقيقات العلمية والأعمال الأدبية حول العنصرية. يعد فيلم "Anctoroon" للمخرج براند جاكوب جنكينز "Branden Jacobs-Jenkins" أحد الأعمال الأدبية التي تحلل مثل هذه الظواهر. وتصنف الباحثة على أنها ناقد أدبي حيث تقوم بتقييم وتحليل العمل الأدبي المختار لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة. ينظر الباحث إلى هذا المسعى الأدبي من زاويتين: جوهرية وخارجية ثم يطبق نظرية البنيوية الجينية. تحاول هذه الورقة الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة مثل "هل يواجه السود في أمريكا مجموعة متنوعة من أشكال العنصرية البيضاء؟" و "ما هي الأشياء المهمة بالنسبة السود لمواصلة نضالهم ضد العنصرية والفوز بالعدالة؟"
الكلمات الدالة: النقد الأدبي ، العنصرية ، الأسيويون ، الابيض الهجيني ، البنيوية.

Introduction

The race is labelled as folks from several parts of the world, which vary in definite inborn qualities such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, stature, and head shape (Hornby 956). According to Horton (60), This term describes a population or groups of people distinguished by different characteristics and beliefs about common ancestry. The most widely used human racial categories are based on visible traits (especially skin colour, hair texture, and facial features) and self-identification. Then the conception of race, as well as specific ways of grouping race, varies by culture and over time and is often controversial for scientific as well as social and political reasons. Many scientists contend that while the features on which racial categorisations are made may be based on genetic factors, the idea of race and the actual division of people into groups based on selected hereditary features are social constructs.

The race is a group of people that are different from other groups. Another side also pointed to the meaning that social used. Then, social differentiation according to race is because of the different physical or social. Scientific anthropology said that it is generally different according to geography and physics. For example, it is the colour of eyes, the colour of skin, the colour of hair, from of the head – and the evolution of racial principles (Narwoko and Suyanto 176). Literary work is a representation of real life based on sociological factors. A literary work is a historical witness that, at the time it was written, can tell readers about the social condition. Due to the social circumstances that have arisen in a society, literary work can be done. (Endraswara 77). Many literary works published by Blacks and white Americans and the exception of Racism, were written by Blacks from 1700sup to this period. Most works contribute significantly to the Black American struggle to establish a new future free from injustice, enslavement, oppression, discrimination, inequality, and exploitation (Karenga 416). This phenomenon shows that literary works can mirror social life. The critical idea in sociological- literature is the concept of mirrors. It implies that sociological- literature considers the literary work as a representation of the literary work of real social life as an expression of personal life that cannot be isolated from real society. The work of literature represents the social culture that forms a deflection between the writer and the social condition. The dialectical history formed in literary works can also be clarified (Endraswara 79).

The most evident and prevalent form of racial discrimination is against black whites. Scientists were curious to find some reason for black people's perceived inferiority. The question is whether the actual discrepancies between the races are physically based on blood, skin colour, or cranial measurements. (Jordan 33-50) They also did not find proof in the blood of the whites to show their superiority; thus, the early principles used to clarify the inferiority of the blacks and to justify the poor treatment they underwent at the hand of the whites were natural and physical distinctions. There is "no presumption then that race discrimination is a white race's biological heritage" (Cox 74).

Every author, through his text, has purposes for writing:

- He gives entertainment. He wants to please his readers through the medium of language.
- He portrays the problems of life, i. e. either his\ her complications in life or the difficulties that occurred in society.

Society, in this regard, means a group consisting of numerous people's deeds, welfares, and relatives. The author describes it in the works of literature. In literary texts, humans are designated as characters and a group of humans who cannot separate from life's difficulties. They encounter the massive problem of right and duty and the difficulty in their communal and emotional worries that can be advanced in literature (Wellek and Warren 95).

B. Jacob –Jenkins is an American playwright whose most crucial play is *An Octoroon*. *An Octoroon* portrays life in the American South. His work *Octoroon* was being called this century's most eloquent race drama. Nevertheless, the playwright says his work is about the human condition (Grimsted 33). The evil of black people's violence is reflected in the word 'Negro,' from which the term is derived. The Latin 'Niger' and the Spanish 'Negro' are both black. The Spanish and Portuguese first used the word around 1441, connecting colour to race and blackness to slavery and degradation (Arther 260).

The word Negro is described as a person (esp. male) belonging to the African race of humankind in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles,

characterised by black skin, black woolly hair, flat nose, and thick protruding lips (Onion 1). The word Negro has now been limited to black people of African origin, i.e. African Negroes; it excludes Australia's "black people," South India or Fiji's dark-skinned people, and some of the darkest-skinned American Indians as well (The Encyclopedia Britannica 12). The word 'Negro' is historically used to refer to some countries' physical appearance, primarily skin colour. This word, one can understand, is only used to humiliate black people.

Another term widely used to identify people who do not have white skin or Caucasian appearance is "skinned" or "person of colour". It typically means black African-Americans, but the words may also be extended to members of other races. The word race is used to identify people of different colours derived from the Latin "ratio". Its modern sense is "one of the major divisions of mankind" (Henry 3)

Jess Stein and Laurence Urdang describe "Race" as "a group of people associated with common descent, blood, or inheritance". According to them, "race" is a group of tribes or individuals forming a racial stock (Stein and Urdang 15). Racism is "a belief that human races have distinctive characteristics that influence their respective cultures, usually including the idea that one's race is superior and has the right to rule others" (Ibid. 17).

In addition, in classification (taxonomy), the word "race" has biological meaning. In particular, race names, which are coined to justify distributions of grossly observable physical features of human populations that are not biologically significant, are often too narrowly applied to the entire species of man. Thus, the early definition of the black race used to describe all people with dark skin has been discarded their origin.

"Racism" is also described by The New Webster's English Language Dictionary as the belief that each human race is characterised by distinctive characteristics that determine behaviours and capacities and that a specific race is inherently superior. Therefore, racial discrimination can be seen as "stemming from racial difference" (Finnegan and Thomas 35). In Webster's New World Compact School and Office Dictionary, David B. Guralink defines "race" as "any of the various types of humanity, primarily the Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid groups", so "racism" is the practice of racial discrimination or segregation (Smith 45). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary also identifies Prejudice as the assumption that some races of men are superior to others by birth and nature and discriminate against members of one or more of the other races (A Merriam – Webster 2).

The definition of race in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary is "the division of mankind possessing traits transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterise it as a distinct human type." Racism is thus a conviction that race is the primary determinant of human characteristics and abilities and that ethnic distinctions create an intrinsic dominance of a particular race. The methodological choices in researching white Racism have been aimed at theorising and describing "the racist event" in its many dimensions (Gove 4). Thomas F. Gossett notes that the race concept:

It is also believed that any dispute in history that cannot be quickly clarified in any other way must have been due to race antagonism in the world. On the other hand, physical differences between people were so rarely referred to as a matter of great significance before the eighteenth century that something of a case can

be made for the proposition that race-consciousness is primarily a new phenomenon. (Gossett 3).

However, Racism is described in the Encyclopedia Britannica as:

A causal correlation between inherited physical characteristics and some personality, intelligence, or cultural characteristics is coupled with the idea that certain races are inherently superior to others. Racial concepts are also generalised indiscriminately to be applied to non-biological and non-racial groups such as religious groups, countries, language groups, and ethnic or cultural groups. (The Encyclopedia Britannica 5)

The Rev. S. L. Fulwood Jr., who died at age 83 in 2007, also believed that in the United States, being black and poor were synonymous. To imagine anything otherwise was impossible for him, despite evidence to the contrary. The race was a fixed concept, as far as he was concerned, a cross for black Americans to bear from here to eternity (Fulwood 3).

Historically, Racism has had one of two associated definitions, according to Horton:

- confidence in inborn race differences that explain behaviour differences racially and
- challenging biases and intense hostilities often follow the development of exclusion, Racism, or imbalanced action of races.

Both definitions suggest that there is at least a mainstream group and another marginal group in a racist society on one ideal condition. Compared to the dominant ones or majorities, minority groups or simply minorities are described in a heterogeneous society. The use of the word is unfortunate because it has numerical connotations. Minorities and majorities are not statistical groups, but they are social class, despite their literal meaning (Horton 303).

Ethnic discrimination and bigotry are inextricably linked; the psychological and social aspects of Racism need to be distinguished. Prejudice does not evolve against a group of people in individuals' minds until their society already defines groups and discriminates against some of them. Prejudice is a rationalisation of discrimination, and discrimination also induces behavioural patterns in the victims that seem to justify the Prejudice. Racism is not a new concept, but it did not arise as a widely accepted scientific theory of behaviour until the nineteenth century, which was the age of Racism. Many Western scientists acknowledged Prejudice as a reality in the second half of the nineteenth century. Diverse types originated from the writing of Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, Houston Stuart Chamberlain, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Rodenberry, and Adolph Hitler (The free Encyclopedia 8).

Racism got lots of its evident empirical respectability during the 1930s, and it almost turned to take a social sense. As a rule, in terms of a single causal factor, complicated social phenomena such as Racism cannot be explained. Numerous hypotheses have been advanced on the origins of Racism, some are true, and others are false. Many psychological theories relate this phenomenon to certain aspects of personality or certain social circumstances. Another theory is "Their Fault". This theory was introduced by the most influential groups of racial or ethnic societies. It was based on the argument that the marginalised group's characteristics and attitudes were the actual cause of Racism. The other hypothesis was the unviable theory of the

cause of Racism. According to this theory, there is an inherent or instinctive repulsion among groups of individuals who look different (Ibid 9).

Ethnic perceptions are not focused on the definition of faith. There is no positive indication in the Holy Bible that the ancient Semites were Racists. Racism in the Quran: In the name of Allah, "Oh, men Behold, We have created all out "of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted"(Quran 49:13). In Islam, there is no racism. The Prophet said, "O people, your Lord is one, and your father Adam is one. There is no favour of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness". (Musnad Ahmed 22978).

While it is true that "black Africa was the source of many of the slaves in Muslim countries, none of the Muslim countries ever developed a racial caste system: one-half of Africa's Muslims are black." In most cases, Prejudice is connected to illiterate minds. It is wild, uncivilised, and far from teaching theories and ideas.

In Germany, race research flourished early on in the 20th century. The policies of Hitler were affected by such work (Raj 4). In the 1930s, the term 'racism' was coined primarily in response to the Nazi plan to make Germany Judenrein or "clean of Jews". The Nazis rejected the idea that Jews were a distinct race and posed a threat to the Aryan race that was supposed to belong to genuine Germans (Rattansi 4). It can be argued, after all, that the Nazi project was only one step in the long history of anti-Semitism. Moreover, that anti-Semitism is, as it has been called, one of the oldest forms of Racism, perhaps the 'longest hate'(Ibid 5).

Methodology

Discriminating treatment of Blacks by other people is reflected in Branden Jacobs –Jenkins play, *An Octoroon*. It is the first concern of this research. The second concern is finding the answer to whether Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *An Octoroon* adequately reflects the reality of Racism towards Blacks in the United States. To deal with these concerns, the researcher follows the structural approach in analysing the selected play. This paper tries to answer some questions such as: do Blacks in America confront a variety of forms of white Racism? What are the essential things for Blacks to continue their struggle against Racism and win equity?

Discussion

An Octoroon, a play by American playwright Branden Jacob-Jenkins (BJJ), is an adaptation of Dion Boucicault's 1859 play *The Octoroon*. It is a play within a play about staging a play on the expectations of blackness and the black playwright in theatre(Marks).

The job was voted the second-greatest American play of the last 25 years in a poll conducted by critics for The New York Times in 2018 (The Great Work continues 1).

The play begins with a prologue, "The Art of Dramatic Composition" (inspired by a Boucicault essay), introducing the playwright's character, B. J. J. (Jacobs-Jenkins' initials). With a familiarity that initially encourages the audience's propensity to assume they are the play's dream audience, B. J. J describes his decision to mount an adaptation of *An Octoroon*, savvy theatregoers ready to theatrically tackle the big problems of American culture, even race. In Boston, B. J. J.(played by Brandon Green, an African American, as is the actual B. J. J.), took his seat as one of the last

audience members admitted—albeit in his underwear. He delivered his first line from his mid-row seat: "Hi, everyone. I am a black playwright" I have no idea what that means, but I would like to tell you a story..." (Jenkins 5). When B. J. J. rose from his seat, pushed across the row, came down the aisle, and arrived on stage in the full glory of his skivvies, the audience giggled, and there were even bigger guffaws. He spoke directly to the crowd, recounting how he decided to adapt Boucicault's melodrama. Following his consultations with a psychiatrist, *the Octoroon* appeared.

B. J. J.: But then all the white guys quit. And then I could not find any more white guys to play any of the white guy parts because they felt it was too "melodramatic." (Jenkins 6)

After all the "white guys" refused to play the "racist whose racism is not complicated by some monologue, B. J. J. decided to accept his therapist's idea that he plays the white role to learn Sympathy? Maybe you will... / learn to understand them?". In the film, he played the villain, M'Closky, and the hero, George. To prepare for those parts, he set up a vanity on-stage and "violently" applied whiteface as directed by the stage directions. With this anecdote, Jacobs-Jenkins entices his audience to believe B. J. J.'s version of the show's beginnings. After all, he gave the character his initials and described him as "a black playwright." B. J. J. then proclaimed his entire opening statement to be a lie, saying, "Just kidding. I do not have access to a psychiatrist and cannot afford one." The monologue concludes with an account of B. A (nonexistent?) therapist is interpreting J. J.'s hallucinations. B. J. J. (the character) shattered all expectations that the audience would learn the truth about the production's true motivation.

Another Playwright (played by Brooks Reeves, a white actor) entered, still in his underwear, through the auditorium. Following Boucicault's precedent for the premiere of *The Octoroon* at New York's Winter Garden Theatre in 1859, he introduced himself as Dion Boucicault (the Irish playwright of the original *The "Octoroon"*). He then donned redface to play Wahnotee, a Native American. According to Jacob-Jenkins' "Dramatis Personae," "Actor ethnicities are classified in order of choice," this playwright was assisted by his Assistant (Harsh Gagoomal). He should be "played by an Indigenous American actor/actress, a South Asian actor/actress, or one who can pass as Native American". The Assistant then blackened his face to play the old enslaved person Pete and the young slave boy Paul because, as the playwright explained, you can now use Negroes in your plays, but you have to pay them. Of course, there are still no Indian actors—"Hey, where have all the Indians gone?" Of course, the Assistant actor claimed to be of South Asian descent. His disgusted glare at his Playwright boss, who was already piqued by the use of the word "Indian" rather than "Native American", cracked up the crowd.

The actors put on the blackface, redface, and whiteface of melodrama in the Prologue. It is an irreverent riff on racialised performance traditions. The targeted performance traditions range from 19th-century minstrel shows to the classic made-for-TV movie about a "magical negro with PTSD". According to the script, "Trying to get out of a generic ghetto with his fat girlfriend, who is also pregnant and has AIDS from a history of sexual assault that some moron would characterise as indicative of the Black experience in America" (Jenkins 32).

The pleasures of feeling "sympathy" (the therapist's word) for stereotypical but improbable characters named as representations of "the Black experience" have been

a continuity of racialised success since the 19th century. For a 19th-century audience, the tragic plot of the "magical negro" and his girlfriend is familiar as the trope of the tragic selling of the lovely quadroon to a lecherous bidder.

As both the traditional melodramatic fainting heroine and the titular *Octoroon*, a word Boucicault may have coined to differentiate his play from the tragic quadroon story it invoked, Boucicault's Zoe is the primary magnet for audience sympathy in the original play. Judge Peyton's quadroon mistress, Zoe, is the daughter of the Terrebonne plantation's owner, Judge Peyton. Zoe is adored as the pinnacle of elegance and goodness by a group of male outsiders to elite plantation life. They are with a foreign heir, a Yankee, and an Irishman—despite being raised with as much luxury as was possible for an illegitimate mixed-race girl in Louisiana. Zoe can pass for white so convincingly that she wins the affections of George Peyton, heir to Terrebonne, who has arrived from Paris following the death of his uncle, Judge Peyton.

The villain, one of the outsiders who love Zoe, is Jacob M'Closky, the Yankee overseer who mismanaged the plantation. M'Closky's last name and the "julep" he drinks for breakfast identify him as an Irishman. The stereotypes portrayed on-stage by the 19th-century drunken Irishman might not be familiar to modern audiences. However, because of their racialisation, Irish immigrants could not join the Louisiana elite (A Biography 52-56) because they were not "white enough." "Curse these old families—a snooty bunch of dried-up aristocracy," M'Closky rails. I am not fit to sit down to the same meat with them because my grandfather was not some broken-down Virginia émigré or a stingy old Creole (Dion 62). With his criticism of class, Boucicault's M'Closky was already sympathetic, at least for a melodramatic villain. Jacobs-Jenkins complicates the role even further by casting the same black actor in both his role that of heroic George. Wahnotee, another outsider who adores Zoe, expands Boucicault's criticism and sympathy to include domestic colonisation, Native American genocide, and the dispute with Mexico over the southern border. Wahnotee "speaks a mash-up of Indian and Mexican", a veiled reference to the interconnected struggles of Native Americans and Mexicans for land rights in the American southwest during the period (Ibid. 143).

An Octoroon is an antebellum American drama about plantation life and miscegenation written by an Irishman who visited the South. As the first act begins, Terrebonne Plantation, the Peyton farm, is about to be sold. The property is subject to several liens, the most significant of which is owned by Jacob M'Closky, Terrebonne's former supervisor. He duped the late Judge Peyton into mortgaging to him one thousand acres of the plantation's wealthiest portion. Following M'Closky's death, Salem Scudder, who took over as overseer, dragged Terrebonne deeper into debt due to poor "inventions and improvements" on the property. The Judge died two years ago, and George Peyton, the Judge's nephew, and Terrebonne heir, has recently arrived from Paris. Despite Dora Sunnyside's feelings for George, he is smitten by Zoe, Judge Peyton's wonderful girl and one of his slaves. The Judge's wife adores Zoe as well; she regards her as if she were her daughter and is concerned about what would happen to Zoe after her death because she was not raised as an enslaved person. M'Closky wants to buy the plantation and marry Zoe. When he tells Zoe about his plans, she is furious. M'Closky prevents her from leaving before Scudder arrives. According to Cooper & Leong (133).

Furthermore, the race is classified as "the class to which others assign persons based on physical facial features colour or hair type, as well as the generalisations and

stereotypes that result". The plantation's owner, George Peyton, falls in love with Zoe, his uncle's daughter, whose mother is enslaved. Since Zoe is biracial, the title "The Octoroon" references her. Someone who is 1/8th black is known as *an Octoroon*.

Even though Zoe is a free woman, interracial marriage was still frowned upon at the time, and she and George faced many challenges in their relationship. The historical relationship between Blacks and Whites may be essential in the low rates of Black-White intermarriage. Interactions between Blacks and Whites remain somewhat different from interactions between Whites and other minorities due to the protracted legal separation between the two races, which lasted well into the last century (Horton 45). Still, many Whites claim relationships with African-Americans are "less appropriate" than relationships with Latinos or Asians. Although slavery has been abolished for nearly 150 years, residual shame, anger, and racial animosity exacerbate the relationship between Blacks and Whites. Relationships between Blacks and Whites are also portrayed as "immoral," "vulgar," or "purely sexual," according to old myths. (Childs, 200) Another widely held stereotype of Whites and blacks is that Blacks marry Whites to achieve social status. (Foreman and Teresa 540-557). Interracial marriage has been gaining popularity since the 1970s, according to public opinion surveys. These increasingly positive attitudes can be seen in people of all races, ages, and genders. In 1968, only 17% of White Americans approved of interracial marriage; by 1997, 61% of White Americans approved. Interracial marriage was accepted by 48 per cent of African-Americans. In 1968, and by 1997, it had risen to 77 per cent. Higher levels of schooling, income and the fact that people are increasingly likely to live in large communities contribute to these growing approval rates (Root 89).

Most other characters in the play treat Zoe as though she is not human enough to warrant agency or uniqueness. Dora Sunnyside, George's scorned girlfriend, attempts to persuade Zoe to help her with George's prospects, ignoring the possibility that George may be interested in Zoe instead. The main antagonist, Jacob McClosky, lusts after Zoe and threatens to sell her as a physical item if she rejects his advances. He would then go out and buy her and make her his mistress. As a result, Zoe is treated as though she does not have a mind of her own and has no right to make her own choices.

Although she refuses her agency, Zoe possesses it intrinsically. Even though interracial marriage was illegal then, she initially rejects George's proposal. Although George proposes to marry her in a different country with different rules, she insists on remaining in Terrebonne to help in whatever way she can with the town's bleak future. After being viewed as a possession in the play, including being referred to as "The Octoroon" in the title as if her race defined her, Zoe's fate is eventually determined by the racial conditions of the location being performed.

The Octoroon is known as a slavery play, much like the numerous dramatic adaptations of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Boucicault's play is more unified and refined than its predecessors. Formerly enslaved people's autobiographies, such as those written by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Harriet Jacobs, were powerful instruments in the antislavery crusade during the nineteenth century. These stories made many people aware of the horrors of slavery. Similarly, *The Octoroon* was an effective weapon for abolitionists because of its ability to provoke numerous antislavery sentiments. *The Octoroon* remains a valuable resource more than a century later, revealing the wisdom and bravery of a nineteenth-century playwright who dared to put the inflammatory problem to the stage.

In a sort of Prologue, Jacobs-Jenkins reframes the play by writing a sort of Prologue in which Smith plays B. J. J., a black playwright, bemoans critics' proclivity to conclude that all of his plays—even the one about farm animals—attempt to deconstruct America's race crisis. Thigpen enters and observes B. J. J. for a few moments before introducing himself as Dion Boucicault and lamenting his obscurity as a dramatist today.

After Thigpen performs a stereotypical Native American dance to techno music under rave-like lighting, we enter Boucicault's world, where George; M'Closky; Pete; Paul; the white woman, Dora; and *the Octoroon*, Zoe, talk much of Boucicault's text with the same melodramatic flourish one might imagine actors in 1859 employing, we enter Boucicault's world. But without most of the spectacle. Set designer Mimi Lien beautifully evokes a plantation with nothing more than a white stage covered with cotton. The playwright characters of Smith and Thigpen narrate the explosion of the steamboat. Director Sarah Benson adds to this Brechtian style by ending several violent scenes with the actors helping one another off the ground and offstage as if to remind us that these people are not trying to hurt one another. as if to emphasise that these individuals are not attempting to harm one another.

Jacobs-Jenkins uses these instruments, as well as on-stage performances by cellist Lester St. Louis and the occasional appearance of a mystery man dressed as a rabbit, to remind his audience that race, and therefore "the race issue in America," is more than just a matter of DNA (as it is for the *Octoroon*), but also a matter of DNA and tradition, heritage, and success. The passage of time since 1859 has only added to the complexity of this combination. Today, according to Jacobs-Jenkins, the race is less about what we can see and more about how we ask to be seen (enotes.com).

Any discussion of the intersection of sex, gender, and race is conspicuously absent from the play. Although Jacobs-Jenkins maintains the original storyline, in which George falls in love with Zoe but cannot marry her due to her racial background, he is courted by Dora, a wealthy white woman desperate for a husband to spend her money on. There is no mention of these women's disenfranchisement in the narrative. Furthermore, although the three male actors portray characters of various races, the central character, Zoe, is portrayed by a light-skinned, bi-racial woman, a white woman played by the white woman, and the two enslaved women are played by black actors, implying that the same fluidity of gender embodied by the men does not extend to the women.

Furthermore, only the length of Dora's dress separates her from her historical status, and neither Zoe nor Dora are given any opportunities for direct address or contemporary conversation. So, unlike Boucicault's Zoe, who is given a chance to kill herself on stage after being sold to the villain M'Closky, making a powerful statement about her refusal to return to slavery, Jacobs-Jenkins' Zoe leaves the stage with her poison, never to be seen again. At last, the two enslaved women, Aharanwa and Armand, speak in a kind of urbanised reminiscent of Orange Is the New Black's Tastee and Poussey, not in the manner of the learned playwright characters nor the slave dialect of Boucicault's slaves. However, it is unclear if Jacobs-Jenkins plans to draw a direct line from slavery to modern urban culture since neither he nor the actors make any specific comments on the women's portrayals.

The use of the dialect can be interpreted to mean that contemporary black women willingly perpetuate a slave mentality—without the deconstruction of sex and gender that can be done by cross-racial casting, cross-sex casting, or making certain actors speak for themselves directly to the audience, as the men do. However, we have come a long way. Suppose the playwright wants to demonstrate that ghettos have replaced

slavery as a way of oppressing African Americans or that black women have not earned as many rights as black men since slavery. In that case, criticism from the on-stage playwrights about the female characters may have helped illustrate that argument.

The play has two different endings, which is interesting. The lovers in the British version are allowed to be together and even marry. In the American version, however, Zoe kills herself by drinking poison and dies in George's arms after almost being sold into slavery. It avoided depicting an interracial marriage in American theatres (enotes.com). Branden Jacob- Jenkins depends on the American version at the end of the play, which is that in the American version. On the other hand, Zoe poisons herself and dies in George's arms after nearly being sold into slavery. It was accomplished to avoid presenting an interracial marriage in American theatres.

Prejudice is the first type of Racism that the researcher will examine. Prejudice is a negative attitude against a group of people who share a common attribute that not everyone has. Some attitudes, thoughts, feelings, or perceptions are prejudiced against African-Americans. The whites perceive a Negro as weird, an idiot, destructive, and filthy, and whites believe that Negroes cannot walk and work beside whites. As a result, they believe it is forbidden for whites to have close relationships with black people (Ghazi 55). The sight of George examining Zoe's physical characteristics for indications that the public cannot perceive is heartbreaking. Zoe exposes not only her disdain for herself (she refers to herself as "an awful thing") but also the level to which the chattel slavery system enslaves her. The following quotations prove all explanations above:

“ZOE: George, do you see that hand you hold? Look at these fingers; do you see the nails are of a bluish tinge?”

GEORGE: Yes, there is a faint blue mark near the quick.

ZOE: Look in my eyes; is it not the same colour as the white?”

GEORGE: It is their beauty.

ZOE: No! That is Cain's dark, fatal mark and curse. Of the blood that feeds my heart, one drop in eight is black—bright red as the rest may be, that one drop poisons all the rest.” (Jenkins 31)

The above quotation shows the Prejudice that always appears between the white and Black most of the time. Anyone that can read Zoe's body will be able to classify her, putting her life, as well as her education, upbringing, and social position, in jeopardy. According to Mineo (455). Americans tend to see Prejudice as a product of Southern slavery, which has several flaws. Slavery existed in the North and the South, and the people who shaped the notion of American identity were Northerners, not Southern enslavers. John H. Van Evrie, a Canadian who eventually settled in New York City, was the father of white supremacy, not a Southerner. Van Evrie said that if there had been no slaves, the European class system would have been transferred, preserved, and established in the American colonies with the arrival of Africans.

However, Van Evrie claims that white European descendants saw the distinctions between themselves and African Americans as negligible in comparison to what they saw as differences between themselves and African Americans. It allowed democracy to thrive and evolve, although it was a controversial concept in the 17th and 18th centuries. Zoe is enslaved by a disciplinary system that restricts her freedom and happiness while limiting her possibilities. While this moment is incredibly moving, there is a significant mismatch between what is written and what

is seen. Jacobs-Jenkins specifies that Zoe is played by *an Octoroon* actress, a white actress, a quadroon actress, a biracial actress, a multiracial actress, or an actress of colour who can pass as *An Octoroon*. As a result, Jacobs-Jenkins appears to undercut the scene's reveal: if the audience already recognises Zoe as mixed-race, there is no need for her to lie about it. Rather than revealing Zoe as an Octoroon, the researcher believes these casting parameters highlight the insidious nature of racialising attitudes, which attach negative traits to physical minutiae. Because Zoe's views on race and self-worth are based on melodrama, they starkly contrast the play's other race studies. The following quotation describes it:

George. Zoe, must we immolate our lives on their Prejudice?
Zoe. yes, for I would rather be Black than ungrateful!
(Beat)Ah, George, my race has at least one virtue – it Knows how to suffer....
George. Each word you utter makes my love sink Deeper into my heart.
Zoe. Moreover, I remained here to induce you to offer that Heart to Dora!
George. if you bid me do so, I will obey you-
Zoe. But no, no! if you cannot be mine – oh, let me Not blush when I think of you! (Exits, running). (Jenkins 31)

And

“GEORGE. Zoe, this knowledge brings no revolt to My heart. I love you nonetheless. We can leave This country, and go far away from where none can Know. !. (Jenkins 31)

The above quotations show that. The plantation's owner, George Peyton, falls in love with Zoe, his uncle's daughter, whose mother is enslaved. Because Zoe is multiracial, the title "*The Octoroon*" references her. Someone who is 1/8th black is known as an "*Octoroon*". Although Zoe is a free woman, interracial marriage was still frowned upon at the time, and she and George faced numerous challenges in their relationship. Although she is denied her agency, Zoe possesses it intrinsically. Even though interracial marriage was prohibited then, she initially rejects George's proposal. Even when George offers to marry her in a different nation with different laws, she refuses and insists on sticking in Terrebonne to help in any way she can with the region's bleak destiny. Because of the physical characteristics of black people, white people are constantly led to believe that they are a minority and weak. The white people are permitted to abuse them and tag them as senseless, impoverished, the lowest social group, and filthy. When issues need to be addressed, unfairness emerges, representing that there are governing and marginal groups. Furthermore, it causes Blacks to develop a psychological illness, which manifests itself when whites constantly refer to blacks in derogatory terms.

DIDO. Here it is, missey Zoe. Dere's a dish of Hoecakes –jess taste, Mas'r George – and here's Friend bananas; jess smell 'em (Jenkins 22)

And

PETE. It is this black trash, new Mas'r George; dey's Getting too numerous round and this property needs Clearing! when I get time, I'm going to have to kill some Of 'em fo' sure!. (Jenkins 22)

When Dido, Grace, and Minnie interact with the white characters, the significance and importance of Dido, Grace, and Minnie's modern language become apparent. Dido and Minnie use the same black-voice accent as Pete and Paul when they are back under the disciplinary glare of George and Dora, the daughter of the neighbouring plantation owner. When analysing Dido and Minnie's introduction, the artificiality of this loyal and obsequious slave is blatantly apparent. Minnie discusses with Dido their work at the start of the play while Dido grudgingly sweeps cotton around the stage. White people keep a safe distance from black people because they believe that white people hold the truth and black people do not, and this is because white people believe that black people are often ignorant, poor, and minority.

Segregation is the spatial and social division of the majority group from the minority group. At its most basic form, the minority group resides or uses services separately from the majority group. It implies that the marginal is considered substandard and that they should live apart. It is a reality that white people cannot sit side by side with black people (Ghozi 61). As a result, the whites distinguish themselves from the blacks, and it becomes the law that the blacks must sit in line with the black. Also, they were black. They suffer from bad treatment from white people and persecution, and rape. Many of the preceding explanations are supported by the following quote.

MINNIE: You ever had to fuck him?

DIDO: Who?

MINNIE: Mas'r/Peyton

DIDO: Oh, no! You?

*MINNIE: Naw, he only likes light-skinned girls. But Renee, you know,
who was fuckin' him all the time . . .*

MINNIE: Would you fuck him [George]?

DIDO: No, Minnie! Damn. Would you?

[Beat]

MINNIE: Maybe.

*DIDO: Yeah, well, I get the feeling you do not get a say in the matter. !
(Jenkins 81).*

This conversation contains a more subtle sense of humour than Dido and Minnie's other disclosures, such as their admission of forced illiteracy or their unwillingness to flee. This discussion, however, poses troubling concerns about the overt and constant presence of sexual harassment. It seems to give Minnie and Dido some agency, implying that they and Renee had a say about whether or not they slept with George. The ramifications of this debate rapidly spread outward, prompting the audience to wonder who Zoe's mother was. At the same time, the Peyton family treats Zoe well. She was most likely the victim of some kind of sexual assault. The punch line's awareness of unspoken sexual harassment is the play's closest approach to using the term "rape". The organisation that Minnie and Dido seem to have in modern dialect shows itself to be ephemeral, and it is clear that they live within a violent system. Though Jacobs-Jenkins acknowledges and reflects the system's brutality, Minnie and Dido's dialogue is at an impasse.

ZOE. Because it was the truth, and I had rather be a slave with a Free soul than remain free with a slavish, deceitful heart. !. (Jenkins 39)

The above quotation shows segregation in *an Octoroon*. It happens because the dominant group believes that they are inferior. Furthermore, as a result, Zoe says to George, "I had rather be a slave". It means that the minorities do not have the opportunity equality as whites. This fact is also described in the text below:

*PETE. Hold quiet. You trash o' niggers!
And this ain't alw listen – we taught dat niggers
would always
Belong to de ole missus, and if she lost
Terrebonne,
We must live dere and simply hire ourselves out
so
We could bring our wages to her-!. (Jenkins 37)*

The preceding remark also demonstrates that Prejudice is one of the most persistent reasons for segregation; it is a commonly held view that people of minority groups are intrinsically incapable of working and competing in our highly sophisticated and competitive society, with few exceptions. Many scientists also say that the reason Blacks score so poorly on IQ tests, as proven by whites' statements to Blacks that they are "an "Octoroon", " is the direct result of inferior "Black" genes. Some claim that the more white genes a Black person had, which could only be attained by hybridising with a white person, the greater the intelligence would be. Even though such researchers have been forcefully reprovved and their numerous technical flaws revealed in academic journals, the broad public is sometimes ignorant of such rejection. The conclusion of Blacks having a low IQ and whites having a high IQ is not always true; the statements and the results of the research are not always correct; they can be modified by tampering with the data (Ghozi 64). Discrimination, according to some, causes discrimination. We can deny it because, when race relations become a big topic and have negative consequences in our lives, many white people, as the dominant group, judge Black people as being different in every way. When white people believe that, they discriminate against Black people because they are of a different race. It happens when Slavery is defined by brutality towards black bodies, and the Peytons' inattention to the specifics of their slave lives is mirrored in the incidental manner in which Paul is murdered, which is described in the stage directions but not mentioned in the dialogue. The following quotation can support this information:

*To his horror, WAHNOTEET finds him dead,
expresses excellent grief, and raises his eyes.
They fall upon the camera. He rises with a
savage growl, seizes tomahawk and smashes the
camera to pieces, then goes to Paul and
expresses grief, sorrow, and fondness. Maybe he
starts to make a grave—sobbing and digging his
hands? I do not know. In any case, there is a
TABLEAU!. (Jenkins 33)*

The above quotation shows that M'closky smacks Paul around the face. Paul passes on. During the next few moments, a massive pool of blood forms around Paul's body and M'closky's feet." This scene gives the viewer a rare opportunity to

experience unbridled pathos that is not masked by an attempt at humour. Even so, this moment profoundly humanises Wahnotee, who is otherwise a thinly drawn stereotype, addicted to rum, speaking a mishmash of different languages, and prone to aggression, even in Jacobs-Jenkins' edition. This scene also defies stereotypes of Native Americans that were common in early nineteenth-century "Indian plays", in which Native American characters were often cast as villains. Wahnotee, on the other hand, is allowed to be sad in this scene. Even though M'Closky may not notice Paul's death, Jacobs-Jenkins' reconstruction of Wahnotee's tableau forces the audience to acknowledge that these characters are not disposable. The above text narrates that the Blacks are poor and not strategically in Louisiana.

*M'CLOSKY. See here, you imp! If I catch you
and your Redskin poaching in my swamps
again, I'll cut me a Switch and cane the black
off you! !.(Jenkins23)*

This quotation illustrates that the white wants the black to stay away not nearby Louisiana and M'closky says to Zoe, "*If I catch you and your Redskin poaching in my swamps again*". The people also categorise the groups who can use the communal services and steadily discriminate against some groups. All the clarifications above prove that the white does much ethnic discernment against the Blacks. The text below also displays racial discernment.

*DORA. Geoge, I do not understand how you can
be Appreciating the folksy wisdom of the niggers
with Your dear aunt is in the condition she is in!
Why she's Nearly paralysed with grief. !. (Jenkins
20)*

All Whites should understand, based on the above texts, that there are many Blacks who necessitate perceiving information about the factual circumstances in Louisiana and other issues. It implies that Blacks, as human beings, are a part of people and should be treated with respect. Since this is a common occurrence in human social life, and no one is immune to it, let people use the usual definition, namely the sociological and the humanist concept that people should be honourable and respectful to one another beings.

There have been several instances where whites have killed black people because of their colour. As mentioned in the following quote,

*[M'CLOSKY re-enters, stalks over to DIDO]
DIDO: Hi, Mar M'Cl—
[M'CLOSKY strikes her violently]
MCCLOSKEY: Don't you ever fuckin' sneak up
on me like that again, you nigger!
[An actual TABLEAU. !. (Jenkins25)*

Since the audience can easily comprehend the power dynamics of a white-presenting man physically threatening a black woman, the tableau works: it allows the audience to read and appreciate an essential power dynamic of slavery without dwelling on Dido's pain. In *An Octoroon*, the director has many leeways, as seen in

this scene. Although the stage directions only mention a tableau, we see M'Closky strike Dido and then stand over her in the production. The re-creation of the tableau by Jacobs-Jenkins forces us to reconsider the genre's ability to elicit and control our emotions. The tableau only works if it is linked to genuine emotion rather than dramatic conventions. The restoration of the tableau by Jacobs-Jenkins allows the viewer to see the brutality of slavery in a different light. The tableau, like the sensation scene, demands the audience's full attention. There are also circumstances of killing when the Whites kill the Blacks because of their race. As it is designated in:

*M'CLOSKY, fine. I know then that the boy was
Killed with that tomahawk – the redskin owns it
- The signs of violence are all around the shed –
ain't It clear that in a drunken fit he slew the boy
And concealed the body yonder. !. (Jenkins 49)*

The play depicted Blacks as victims of white brutality, with many whites killing Blacks to demonstrate their dominance, and as a result, they are labelled as Niggers and racists. The above quote demonstrates that "Blacks are the victims of white crime". To solve the dilemma Blacks face, many whites murder blacks to demonstrate their dominance, greed, and chaos. There is no way to fix the issue by negotiation. As a result, many disputes result in the deaths of many Black people. In many cases, bestowing to the above quotation, the Whites murder the Blacks steadily to end their race.

Conclusion

According to the study, Prejudice, segregation, discrimination, expulsion, and annihilation are white Racism that Blacks in America face. Prejudice, segregation, discrimination, deportation, and annihilation are extreme views for Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, who strives tirelessly to achieve equality between whites and blacks in *An octoroon*. Blacks are subjected to racial discrimination.

Whites' willingness to accept and fund affirmative action, as well as Blacks' commitment to seize every chance, are two prerequisites for Blacks to continue their battle against Racism and attain equity. The future appears dismal without them. The majority group's willingness to let go of old racist ideas and the minorities' self-motivation to end the other group's blind control are essential.

The play's title alludes to a character named Zoe. She is the illegitimate daughter of a plantation owner named Mr Peyton and one of his slaves on the Terrebonne property. Her racial background is mixed, including one black great-grandparent. She is known as an "octoroon" for being one-eighth black.

Zoe looks to be struggling to grasp the initial suggestion. She shows the young lady as a figure of future whites who will be able to respect and collaborate with Blacks. Zoe also symbolises the future of Black people who are courageous enough to maintain their identity in the face of white power.

Despite the many challenges Black people face, the researcher discovers that everything in the world has its appropriate place, except for human rights. People who believe they are unique fail to comprehend that African-Americans are also human beings with a stronger desire for equality, strong in achieving equality in IQ quality. Yet, we overlook the Black people's goodwill.

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