



NAVIGATING BLACKNESS: A CRITICAL RACE ANALYSIS OF RACE, GENDER AND COLONIALISM IN AKERSTROM'S "IN EVERY MIRROR SHE'S BLACK"

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Abstract

The present research study critically explores how the themes of race, gender and colonial legacy intersect and interact to create the Black womanhood experience of living in a racially white and Western world. The study is theoretically informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), formulated by Richard Delgado and is thus a theoretically guided approach to the novel by the Akerstrom in the context of how systemic racism and intersectionality are performed diasporically across various contexts and normalized discourses. This follow through epicurean work promises to imbue a deeper understanding of the day-to-day experiences of three black women living in Sweden and the manner in which systemic racism and intersectionality is infused textually. The focus of the analysis serves to be the themes of racial identity, microaggressions, and interest convergence as it develops through the struggles of belonging, visibility, and resistance of the protagonists. The importance of intersectionality is also highlighted in the study as race, gender, class, immigration status interacts to generate different forms of marginalization and survivorship. By rigorously reading the text, the thesis reveals how colonial ideologies are continued to influence present-day attitudes toward blackness, how these ideologies have been subverted and appropriated by the characters. This study illuminates the experiences of Black women in Scandinavia that are far less well-known and demonstrates global implications of racial injustice by placing the novel into a wider socio-political and cultural context. This thesis is not only helpful in the academic discourse in the field of literature but also substantiates the position of CRT as a tool to explain realities of marginalized communities. The analysis firmly concludes that literature can shed light on systems of oppression and be critical of the same and celebrate the voices and identity of the people who live within it.

Key Words: Race, Gender, Colonialism, Identity, Intersectionality.

1. Introduction

Within the broader context of the changing world of global writing, the texts that place the focus on the experiences of Black women within white dominant cultures serve as the most valuable to comprehend the way in which the processes of formation of identity and social inclusion may be informed by the intersection of race, gender, and colonial histories. Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021) in which three Black women, having moved to Sweden, a nation that is not frequently discussed in connection with race and postcolonial relations, have to find their way through life. The novel sets focus on the negotiations of the complexities of racial identity within spaces that are structured and culturally defined by whiteness. In this research study, Critical Race Theory (CRT), formulated by Richard Delgado



among others was relied upon to examine the subtle aspects surrounding racism, sexism, as well as intersectionality in the novel.

1.1 Statement of the problem

This research study addresses the nuanced problems of race, identity, and belonging which is to be viewed as a manifestation of the lived experiences and tribulations of the people belonging to different cultural and social contexts. It attempts to investigate how narratives focusing on the topics of these problems belong to the larger discourse of social justice and emphasize the ubiquity of the problem of racism in its systemic form and the necessity to eradicate it and enhance the notion of understanding and equality in multicultural communities.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To explore how the novel portrays characters' experiences with racial identity.
2. To Identify and analyze race-related themes in the novel and their relevance to contemporary race issues.
3. To explore the impact of race and identity in society.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This critical race study is of great importance both to the world of literature and to the modern socio-cultural sphere of communication. The research is therefore relevant in providing input in existing theoretical discussion on the inclusion of systemic inequality and representation as it taps into themes of race, identity and belongingness. With the ongoing social changes in a progressively global community, there is always a greater need to have radical and systematic way of understanding social problems. It is to this need that this research spotlights by implementing Critical Race Theory (CRT) to investigate the construction and experience of race in literature. The study enhances the knowledge of CRT through exploring how racial identity, intersectionality and structural racism are expressed and criticized. This way, it is correlated with a wider academic trend which considers race as a societal construct and aims to deconstruct the power structures woven into interpersonal relations, institutions, and the cultural discourse. It also brings out the significance of the site of literature as a product of contesting and exploring the dominant ideologies especially ideologies centered on race and gender.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Richard Delgado's critical race theory (CRT) and the nuances of literary theory provide the framework to conduct this critical race analysis of Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021). Identity and race representations that take center stage in the book are comprehensively addressed through these two approaches. Select textual passages and excerpts revolve around Critical Race Theory by Richard Delgado, which relates to race and the construction of identities. This in turn enhances the transformation by ensuring that the specific polar studies affect the general inquiry design. Critical Race theory and the understanding of race as a social construct in the novel is further enhanced by these external references. This qualitative method enables better understanding of the novel regarding critical race theory. The present study adopts CRT within the confines of how the selected novel addresses race, racial identities, and structural racism. The interactions of race and gender issues in the novel, the discovery of racial elements and structural racism etc. are all discussed within the CRT paradigm. It also provides a basis for understanding the possible evolution of the novel's themes within the existing frameworks of contemporary debates concerning race and identity.

2. Literature Review

African American fiction is a general term that encompasses fiction in which African Americans are the focus in terms of the narratives, cultures, or histories. Such themes like



national identity, social oppression, justice, and liberation sometimes individual or collective are very common in this type of writing. It is an effective way of expressing complex feelings of the African Americans and shining the light on the struggles and triumphs of people and the community as well. African American literature, in addition to being entertaining and engaging, also helps audiences comprehend some of the political and socio-cultural landscapes, which have been pivotal in the lives of African Americans. This genre encompasses the spirit of persistence, creativity and the undying desire for justice and recognition in a multicultural society with its elaborate plots, interesting characters and heartwarming stories. Critical Race Theory (CRT) got its origin in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s when people felt that traditional civil rights methods were not providing racial justice. Since then it has become an essential model to interrogate the structural and institutional aspects of racism, as well as a model moving out of legal studies into education, literature, sociology, and cultural studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Derrick Bell (1992) highlighted the staunch existence of racism in American society since legal reforms are presented by white elites, referred to as interest convergence. This concept has proved pivotal in the later studies examining the reason why systemic racism still exists despite legal and social gains. The work of Kimberl Crenshaw (1989, 1991) extended CRT to include the notion of intersectionality, that is, she combined the aspects of intersecting social identities, like race, gender, and class, which exacerbate marginalization effects. The given research by Crenshaw has been especially salient in the context of feminism and jurisprudence because it served to present how Black women experience unique types of discriminations that cannot be encoded using a one-dimensional analysis. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) contributed to the application of CRT within the field of education as a way to criticize racial inequality in education. Her publications revealed the ways in which hegemonic beliefs involving meritocracy and colorblind unemployment mask the racial imperials of students of color. In a similar fashion, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) put forth the concept of counter-storytelling as a force of challenging the narratives of dominant voices and being more aware of the voices of the marginalized, which shows how experiential knowledge is important to comprehending the systemic oppressions. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) introduced the idea of the CRT into the circuit of Black feminist thinking through her theorization of the matrix of domination as the intertwining networks of oppression to which Black women give rise. Lived experience, or ways of knowing, were underlined in her work as part of emphases on the importance of epistemology that is originated within the experiences of marginalized groups. Within literature and cultural studies, CRT has been deployed to question race in cultural representations and whiteness within canonical and other contemporary texts. In her study, Harper (2021) examines Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Beloved* (1987), in a light of CRT, justifying that Morrison breaks the illusion of neutrality of whiteness and reveals its contribution to maintaining racial hierarchies. In the same spirit hooks (1992) explored popular culture and media as a way of revealing how the Black bodies are objectified and stereotyped and on the political meaning of representing a culture.

2.1 Research Gap

The present research study has induced the interest of interpretation with regard to its representation of the Black female identity in a European setting, the literature has glaring gaps that lack scholarly research based on the critical engagement with the novel using the twin conceptual framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The very majority of the existing literature on the theme of race and identity in literature are inclined to concentrate on African American or Caribbean discourse on the field of the U.S./U.K. origin, and mostly ignore the



Afro-diasporic experience in other countries, such as Sweden. This research fills these gaps by conducting a complex, inter-set reading of the novel as well as framing it in a wider global literary discourse of race and identity.

3. Research Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research methodology grounded in narrative analysis to examine the representation of race, identity, and belonging in Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021). As a qualitative research, it navigates cultural, racial, and national boundaries, the novel offers rich textual ground for critical exploration through interpretive methods. Using a narrative analysis of the selected text, it is possible to read this work closely in the construction of character, thematic organization, and narrative voice in order to reveal how identity is developed and challenged within the text. The methodology is transformative in nature, seeking not only to analyze the text but also to challenge dominant socio-cultural narratives by centering marginalized voices. This approach is particularly suited for studies grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Postcolonial Theory, as it emphasizes power dynamics, historical context, and the lived experiences of racialized subjects.

4.1 Textual Analysis

The concept of racial identity is a central theme that is revisited and dealt with as one explores the three female characters, Kemi, Brittany-Rae and Muna, in 'Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She Is Black*' (2021). Kemi's story exemplifies the complexity that racial identity is, how the badges of ethnicity that are supposed to evoke pride may also be the ones that are used in the pursuit of belonging and respect. As she dated the rich Swedish man who is a Caucasian, the Afro American woman supports a different perspective of race which she herself is confused about. The struggle of Brittany-Rae is also about how gender, class, and race are defined in her life, and therefore, makes apparent the haziness of the discrimination and exoticism relegated to black women. Her struggles speak of the social danger where she finds herself trapped in a 'material' way by society which tries so hard to define her on racist terms. Muna, ethnic Somali must face the hardest core of 'the racial and ethnic experience' in Muna's new host society. Despite prejudice and parochialism, her story is one of endurance and courage.

“Relegated to picking up questionable prospects, Kemi was tired of wearing her invisible armor.” (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 11).

Kemi's fatigue is apparent in this phrase, 'From being consigned to the task of scouting for rather dubious candidates. Here the author's emotional status has been described in both emotional and professional senses as she is rather displeased. The use of 'relegated' purportedly harbors some "hot terrain" in her achievements, "relegated" put forward positions or opportunities that are lower than desired contrary to her qualifications plus aspiration. Most of these are due to her circumstance and not choices she made, more so because of institutional bias and complications of her gender and race. The phrase 'questionable prospects' also indicates that these are opportunities which do not fulfil or evoke any positive image of self. Delgado's CRT places stresses on the concept of intersectionality as a central idea in CRT as postulated by its main proponent, Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality is the study of the interrelation of various forms of discrimination It overlays stigma from a variety of forms.

In Kemi's case, her gender and color both play a role. In her work environment there is one apparent problem – she is 'relegated to picking up dubious prospects.' She is forced into roles that are below her skills and that are also off target from her qualifications due to institutional biases. One cannot understand the impact racism has had on the lives of the people without these narratives; some narratives have its place to racial dynamics and allege that



Kemi's case is neither of such dimensions nor of such dimension. Delgado has talked about the theory of structural determinism i.e. racial inequality is inevitable in a social system and it is a social/order problem, which admits that there is economic inequality. It is possible to interpret Kemi's lowering to lower career prospects in this manner.

Another CRT scholar, Derrick Bell, affirmed the Delgado model and proposed the Interest convergence principle which claims that not much progress can be achieved around racial justice until it ceases to be an equity issue. This proposition could also be evidenced in Kemi's case. Even if they are 'questionable prospects' perhaps the prospects someone is offered with a view to making her work is more for the benefit of the 'dominant group' rather than herself. Her career progress freezes unless it does not further the interests of the powerful people, thus showing an institutional barrier to real equality.

"Deepak intermittently punctuated his monologues with his love for "Black Booty."
(Akerstrom, 2021, p. 11).

As seen in the examination of CRT, the term racial identity covers a wide range of constructs which not only includes how an individual sees himself but how his racial identity is shaped by, and shapes, the social order and social relations. Deepak's love for "Black Booty" illustrates how Kemi is viewed through the racialized gaze, and possibly the same applies to other sister feminists in relation to Deepak's consciousness. Rather than appreciating Kemi as a unique individual with different personality traits and life experiences, she is objectified based on her race, where emphasis is placed on race-associated physical features.

Delgado's theory of interest convergence applies here as well. It means that racial advancement is only championed when it is to the advantage of the dominant race. Considering Deepak's remarks, one might ask, is his love for 'Black Booty' a true representation of Kemi or Mr. Kemi designed to relish his love for the black woman's body. This raises the question of the origin of his interest in Kemi, a Black lady.

Moreover, it is also worth noting that CRT seeks to deconstruct 'race' and the meaning of categorization. 'Black Booty' is self-evident in that race is turned into body and desire. It has influences from the perspective of colonialism and slavery as a background. For this approach supports the concept that ethnic identities are being socially constructed with the help of culture, articulation, and images in the media besides biological factors. Applying CRT to this comment serves our understanding of Deepak in a broader context where issues surrounding race are present including prejudicial treatment of peers based on racial stereotypes. This compels the audience to think about more deeply how ordinary comments can contribute to structural violence and harm the racial discourses. It is possible for us to try to abolish the racial hierarchy and be able to achieve real respect and equality among all people irrespective of their races by understanding and addressing these issues.
"She a Black African woman was the least desirable relationship prospect, alongside Asian men". (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 12).

It can be stated that a statement of Kemi being positioned as the least attractive partner option among Asian males in 'In Every Mirror She Is Black' can be better understood by utilizing Richard Delgado's Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT sociology approaches race as an ingrained lived privilege within structures of power and oppression such as institutions, laws, and cultural norms. In Kemi's case, the way she is rendered as being unwanted resonates with CRT in terms of its understanding of how the experience of marginalization and exclusion is constructed by the interplay of different kinds of identification, including race, gender, nationality among others.



The representation of Kemi as the least attractive candidate for romance among Asian males in the narrative explains how race and racism is an institutional practice and not merely a question of interpersonal relations. Kemi's account depicts the detrimental effects of racial stereotypes on Black African women and Asian men and how Kemi's body is rendered unattractive in the context of cultural stereotyping. Stereotyping, desirability politics due to historical hierarchies found in traditional culture, and how the media also helps in upholding these stereotypes are all evidence of this. In the same vein, CRT would condemn this image as an instance of suppression of non-white bodies in love and romance scenes and how features as beauty within races are portrayed.

In addition, CRT is now further understanding how oppression is also experiences that are not independently attached to a single factor of race but a combination of issues of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality etc. The perception of desirability of Kemi and her person as a black African woman cannot be divorced from each other to illustrate the extent to which multiple notions of identification impact on social class and the likelihood of entering intimate relationships. And Kemi's story is such that makes the reader see their prejudices about race and looks.

“He collects Black women like trophies. Did you know that? Huh. Brit?” (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 74).

Jamaal's usage of this remark may also be interpreted in a way that seeks to address other signs or de facto around Jonny's deeds that draw more towards the object rather than the person, especially the negative aspects towards Black women.

Racial progress happens when the desires of the racial minorities concur with those of the powerful. The phrase implies that perhaps Jonny von Lundin cannot just engage in these activities for the sake of interest or respect but more to enhance his rating in the society by taking in interaction with Black women. Such studies examine intersectionality which explores how various aspects of a person's identity race, gender, class and others come together to create specific forms of privilege and oppression. Color-blindness and equality are the dominant values of liberalism, CRT takes issue with the fact that this paradigm ignores the reality of systemic racism. It is not unusual for the expression to be seen as such that is critical of the superficial scope of acceptance or equity in a race without alterations to the hierarchy of the ideal society.

It explains the importance of giving due attention to the experiences and voices of non-white people to understand the intricacies of racism and other social systems. This remark can be examining in the context that whose and which perspectives are trying to be articulated as a point of conspicuous suppression or erasure and how Jonny's actions stereotype and sexualize Black women. These conversations, in all probability bring to focus the details of the phenomena of race and race relations. Jamal's assertion that he was not regarded as a “freak” may either be self-serving or more stereotypical of people of color. Tanesha's comforting of Brittany shows the concern for oneness as well as the unacceptable emotion which could have been brought about by racial issues or communications gone wrong.

“Is it because he is white? So, he can protect you? Can he open doors I can't?” (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 105)

In this phrase, Brittany remembers Jamal's words from her experience with Johnny and this gives rise to crucial moment which seeks an introspection on privilege and racism. The structural privileges that Johnny as a white man in a society that allows racial discrimination entertains even more questions from Jamal. Dispossession by Delgado incorporates the notion of “whiteness as property” which in simpler terms means that whiteness comes with certain



over carried privileges like ownership rights as postulated by other CRT proponents such as Cheryl Harris. That question, 'Can he open doors I can't,' goes to the heart of the issue of white privilege, which is the power of white people to either literally or metaphorically open doors that are often denied to people of color. There is also a structural emphasis on male-centered protection that flows from patriarchal societies and is noted here. However, it becomes more complicated than that by bringing in racial dynamics in which white male protectorate is seen as more convincing and effective than that of black males and hence hitting two birds with one stone: misogyny and racism.

It is clear from Jamal's questions that there are certain races that face structural barriers that handicap social mobility. This is witnessed in present day issues such as the earnings created in the racial class-based groups with White people positively benefiting from opportunities and resources available for developing upward mobility.

In the last place, Jamal's questions to Brittany include several essential ideas of Critical Race Theory like intersectionality, white privilege and the barriers of equality. These concepts still help in questioning the structures that maintain racial discrimination in society and are highly relevant in contemporary discourse on race.

***"I want to help you, but this is an issue. The offices we clean are for rich businesspeople. You can't be roaming around in your jilbab during the day when they 'r having important meetings."* (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 123)**

Yagiz is looking at Muna, who he is concerned about as she is cleaning offices of rich men in a jilbab. He suggests that the dress code might be inappropriate or distracting, cutting across some of the major meetings to be held. We do office cleaning for big entrepreneurs. The third statement, 'You may not be walking around in your jilbab in the day when the other people are having important meetings', captures a small part of a bigger story in which systemic racism and cultural oppression has become very common in modern societies. The situation is also aided by Richard Delgado's Critical Race Theory (CRT) which explains the concept of racism as a structural issue within a society as well as its institutions. This view is in line with CRT's 'interest convergence' principle which proposes that progress towards racial justice is only accepted when there is something in it for the majority. Here the majority's interests are met on the insistence of following the Western ideologies of dressing in formal clothes in the workplaces for it upholds an image of uniformity and order while ostracizing the conspicuous others. Within this concept of intersectionality further, the complexity of the discrimination she faced such as class and religion are clearly demonstrated since it is only not about ethnicity that led most marginalization to Muna. Lastly, the quotations from the "In Every Mirror She Is Black" demonstrate chronic struggles with racism and cultural bias in the workplace, which have been constructed within Frameworks of society in wider scope bolstering Delgado's Critical Race Theory. Muna's experience emphasizes the overlapping nature of gender, race and religion, emphasizing the need for structural change within society if one wants to achieve true equity and inclusion in present times.

***"Was she supposed to feel like a fraud for preferring alternative rock? Being black apparently required liking specific music choices."* (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 128)**

Kemi is in a nightclub and is having a dilemma where she openly courts alternative rock music deviating from other genres Kemi finds herself unable to embrace as associated with Blackness. Such a polemic highlights the boundaries and demands imposed by culture on a particular racial identity. Understanding intersectionality in society means understanding that individuals have layers that are not limited to one, such as race, gender and social class. Kemi's choice of music, alternative rock fits within her black identity, thus creating a personal



dilemma. Delgado and other Critical Race Theory (CRT) writers argue that race is a socially constructed concept that reaches into every aspect of human activities and that the society allocates racial powers which have a bearing on the self, creating a dissonance and alienation when a person does not or cannot live up to them. Following the CRT perspectives on the issue of game betrayal, social dynamics, liberty, Kemi's fraudulent feelings in this particular scene are drawn out to the extent by which individuals lose their self in order to fit with the society and further contribute to stereotypes. These pressures exist within a broader matrix of racial subjugation that marginalizes all those who do not adhere to or uphold a specific set of cultural values while privileging some at the expense of others. Suitable to analysis, her inner struggle exemplifies the forces of racialization and calls for the importance of counter-storytelling. Exploring such themes helps in appreciating the intricacies of race and identity, how they operate at the individual level in society and why there is a need for an expansion on the concept of racial identity.

***“We need more brown and black faces. Regardless of their qualifications?”
(Akerstrom, 2021, p. 141)***

The quote “We need more brown and black faces. Whatever their qualification?” from the book *In Every Mirror She Is Black* brings out the fact that the efforts of embracing diversity are more of a pretense. While wearing a scarf as part of her cultural identity, Muna intuitively feels racial tension, where she overhears Swedish women arguing about how relevant it is to have a Black person on their team at work. But genuine inclusion is marred by tokenism, that is the inclusion of people of color not for their disparate capabilities but just to meet the diversity threshold. Richard Delgado's Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a robust lens within which race as an issue can be dealt with in this aspect, as it understands racism to be structural and entrenched in American (thus Western) society and not just an event. Considering that racism is structural, then even the good intentioned activities and initiatives that are supposed to promote diversity may end up safeguarding the status quo rather than reversing or improving it. The way Swedish women converse concerning this issue brings up the idea that adding “Black faces” can thus be seen as a quick fix, which in turn indicates that these people have little competence and thus create structural limitations to true participation.

Muna's experience in Sweden is a classic example of intersectionality, so it has to do with both her race and gender for her to be able to elicit a particular form of oppression. The way the woman on the other end of Greg's phone ignores assistance-non silence, since assistance will be given regardless of their qualifications is an ironic statement, it stresses the intersection of race and gender when it comes to the discrimination of black women, and more importantly the embedded expectation of stupidity that black women, and potentially other women folk, must exist in. Delgado's attention is turned to microaggressions: such subtle verbal, nonverbal or environmental disrespect may be unintentional, but still intimate hostile feelings toward a certain race. The conversation Muna undertakes is a typical demonstration of micro-aggression since it implicitly attacks the self-efficacy of black people which fosters an ambience of exclusion and marginalization. In this regard, applying Delgado's Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the quote leads to what a lay person refers to as unnecessary problems of intersectionality, structural racism, institutional racism, and microaggressions that still exist in the society today. These experiences are so well addressed in the novel, *In Every Mirror She Is Black*, that her readers are motivated to look for images of racial identity and the ongoing struggle for real inclusion and equity.

The novel depicts with great accuracy the effects of social opinion rather on race than directly on individual persons on their private affairs and self-esteem. Former flight attendant



Brittany is in a complicated relationship with a panoramic view luxury hotel owner who sexualizes her ethnic appearance. Recently, her racial identity took the front stage while her personality takes the back seat. This showcases the hypertextualization of black women as well as their objectification. The women through their accounts also reflect the issues of discrimination within the structures of the society and racism as a general problem, but also the astonishing strength as well as diversity of Black woman. In *Every Mirror She is Black* is an engaging account of race as both a personal and social experience, delving into the politics of racial contestations, attempts at ‘belonging’, and self-perception in a world marked by powerful racial boundaries. Åkerström's prose portrays race as intertwined and presents three different women who experience different but related forms of racism from different angles.

“You are white. I am black. you are wealthy. I am not. You hold the keys to their kingdom. They think I’m here to steal it.” (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 171)

The line Kemi remarked to Jonny ‘You are white’ reveals the racialism as well as the social distance that pervades in society. I am American black. You are rich. I am not. You, however, have got the keys to their kingdom. This is historically and contemporarily stewed with racism so much so that Kemi's blackness is regarded threatening’’ to the white rich man's comfort zone. Kemi argues how class and race are made to fit social contexts and how they in turn dominate the way people and matters are understood in enduring ways. Delgado embodies the cumulus of CRT, in the scene where Brittany does meet the parents of Johnny, since CRT deals with the linking of race, class and other identities and how they affect a person’s situation. This approach is essential since socio-economic status is a determinant of Brittany’s encounter. Johnny’s parents make assumptions regarding her race and class hence fallacies regarding her motives and character. This is particularly significant as one of the prevailing societal issues is the constant blame and overarching suspicion faced by Black people in White dominant high-class spaces. This meeting has a lot in common with contemporary forms of institutional racism that many see today as black people's more scrutiny and higher suspicion in white dominated spaces.

Systemic racism can be present in the social relations of Brittany’s family with Johnny’s parents where racism can be affected by stereotypes and structural issues related to social interactions and social acceptance. Critical race theory (CRT) has been helpful in getting additional dimensions of the relationship between Brittany and the parents of Johnny by bringing in elements of ethnicity, class, power, and ethnicity which brings in bias. It uses also personal relations as a platform to show that the complexity of such structural inequities and caste practices and attitudes often helps define interaction on a mundane level. Such analysis not only focuses on the specific dynamics of the scene in question but also extends those dynamics to more concerning and timely issues of race and class disparities.

“Diversity and inclusion are also about breaking stereotypes. she (Kemi) said. Not only showing Black and brown faces in ads. Trust me.” (Akerstrom, 2021, p. 193)

As Kemi expresses herself in the above covered excerpts also mean destroying all stereotypes and not tying advertisements to black and brown faces. surely, encapsulates an extensive backlash variety of policies masquerading as inclusion. Analyzing this understanding through the lens of Richard Delgado’s Critical Race Theory (CRT), this form of critique seeks to unpack the issues of race and identity politics in the society where it insists on working inclusion, not faking it. Kemi helps identify a typical problem that affects a lot of diversity and inclusion efforts: targeting only one face of color. So, she says, diversity and inclusion are more than simply “putting black and brown faces in the advertising”, addressing the problem of tokenism, as in when some minority faces are used in the advertisements to give an illusion of



diversity without changing the prevailing status quo. CRT as defined by Delgado says that racism is systematic in society, it does not come in the form of a raised fist but is embedded in systems, bureaucracies, and everyday activities. Kemi's comments are in line with this perspective as they suggest that simply placing images of diversity in media will not help to dismantle or challenge these entrenched domination systems.

Turning to Kemi's call to 'break the stereotypes', this important issue carries the element of counter-storytelling conceptualized in CRT and magnifies the significance of minorities in the society's cultural framework. Media representation of Black and brown people is riddled with stereotypes and often serves to perpetuate those stereotypes. These stereotypes are largely a means of oppression that dehumanize people belonging to racial minorities groups, both understand and maintain the existing structure of racial domination. In advocating for the breaking of stereotypes, Kemi is calling for a much deeper change in the ways in which racial minority groups are seen and treated by society that goes beyond representation prejudice. It is inadmissible that Kemi addresses the audience with the statements of self-justification ('Trust Me'). She puts the race issues on the agenda with an emphasis on the fact that people whose views need to be heard are those who have been subjected to racism. The CRT strategy contends that there are people who experience racism, and it is their experience which is central in solving the problem. In her capacity as a Black woman, Kemi addresses issues from the reality, which gives weight to her criticism. It is crucial to note that her standpoint is not merely a personal viewpoint, but one that is indispensable in the debate concerning race and identity, since her position encompasses and challenges the arguments usually propounded by the dominant group.

All-in-all, through Critical Race Theory, Kemi's statement, *In Every Mirror She Is Black*, points out the contribution of race and identity in society as articulated in Delgado's narrative on social race and race relations and urges that mere tokenism is not enough and stereotypes should be destroyed and the persons racially oppressed should henceforth be the focusing points. And Kemi's has pointed out that, in her statement, there should be no more diversity on the surface; there should be diversity at the core once again.

5.1 Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021) centers on the racial ambiguity of the three Black women Kemi, Brittany-Rae and Muna who are depicted to be living in Sweden and has a complex nature of interwoven lives. It is not only concerned with race but with related issues of gender, class, and migration in the novel to demonstrate the multidimensional nature of marginalization these women experience as they move through white dominated societal systems. Kemi is an American born marketing executive, who is highly qualified and she moves to Sweden with the aim of seeking after a career move. She also faces microaggressions, tokenism, and professional undermining regardless of her effectiveness, which denotes how hidden racism still prevails in company culture. Her work mates would mainly see her success as a result of diversity rules as opposed to merit, which goes to show how deep rooted this situation is amongst the black professionals. The experience described by Kemi is typical of how racism is ingrained in the cultures of so-called progressive societies that continue to hold ingrained prejudice against races around them even though they seem to be politically correct. Brittany-Rae is an American whose husband is a rich Swedish man trying to come to terms with her fetishization and objectification of her body. Although she seems to have achieved a satisfactory social status as a result of her marriage, she is not really at the right side of total



acceptability. She is pushed into a world where her identity is subjugated to her racial/physical qualities and as such, is more of an exhibition than a person.

The various perspectives used by Akerstrom enable her to look at the issues of race and identity through the prism of various social classes- professional, seducer and refugee. The novel is quite in line with the concepts of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and, especially, in its focus on counter-storytelling and intersectionality of race, gender, and class. It unveils the ways that structural racism takes place in the daily encounters and in the institutions dredging even more exclusions and marginalizations. All of these characters follow a certain path that reveals another part of this structural violence- whether it is through the workplace, love life, or the state.

Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021) links the lives of three Black women, Kemi, Brittany-Rae, and Muna, into one, addressing the issue of race, identity, belonging in Sweden. Over the lens of a Critical Race Theory (CRT), structural racism, microaggressions, and the intersections of race, gender, class, and nationality are discussed in the novel. The professional accomplishments of Kemi have been overshadowed by the racial bias; the racial fetishization and objectification of black women are illuminated in the story of Brittany-Rae; Muna as a refugee has been alienated on a structural level and traumatic experiences are inseparable in the story of Akerstrom. This novel is not only a commentary on the issue of racial inequality but also a plea to open our eyes to the bias present in society and address it. By prioritizing the voices of Black women, it reflects the principles of CRT and makes an important contribution to the material on intersectionality, migration, and the concept of Black womanhood in the literature of the current era.

Cultural dislocation and the identity that is of being lost to belong is also brought out in the novel. In this persistence of the Black woman as an outsider, whether through the struggle of Kemi to assert her professional identity, the alienation of Brittany-Rae despite social mobility, or the battle to gain even a little dignity by Muna, it is clear that Akerstrom is showing the reader how Black women are never allowed to be insiders. However, the resistances of the women, in the form of community, self-assertion, and survival, show how strong black womanhood has lived to be. After all, Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021) is a sophisticated analysis of race and identity within contemporary society. Addressing the lived experiences of Black women, The present research also gives a significant contribution to the literary discourse concerning intersectionality and social justice, and, therefore, the novel becomes an essential text in the current Afro-diasporic literature.

5. 2 Recommendation for Future Researchers

Future research may also address how race as well as gender and class intersect with each other in Akerstrom's *In Every Mirror She's Black* (2021), especially the way these identities have formed the experiences and problems of the characters. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one more critical approach that scholars may use to analyze how the process of language in the novel constitutes patterns of power relationships and promotes racial ideology. International research between cultural and geographic environments owing to the role that location plays to racial identity may provide some insight as to how setting can affect racial identity particularly in Sweden and the U.S. Psychological consequences of racism can also be examined by researchers with an insight into trauma, resilience, and mental health. Gendered racial experiences could be deepened with the engagement of feminist readings on empowering of Black women. Furthermore, the aspect of media representation and narrative form might help identify the mechanism through which Black identity was constructed in the novel. The present



research has an educational application in teaching and learning topics related to race, identity, and social justice, and it is worth discussing in the literary and the learning background.

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