

**An Intersectional Reading of
Women of Color's Multiple Identities and Differences
In the Poetry of Audre Lorde^(*)**

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Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of the intersectional feminist reading of the African-Caribbean American poet Audre Lorde in analyzing the different experiences of black women in the U.S.A. as multiple marginalized subjects. Towards this end, this paper utilizes some main tenets of the intersectional feminism such as women of color's intra group differences, the complexity of identity, identities as coalitions and the interlocking system of oppressions. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's essay, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (1994) demonstrates these tenets elaborated on by Anna Carastathis' "Identity Categories as Potential Coalitions" (2013) and "Identity as Coalitions" (2016). The poems in the study are "Power" and "Litany for Survival". Reading these tenets of the concept of intersectionality in Lorde's selected poems affirms and highlights the particular experiences of women of color and their differences along with those of men of color. It also finds expression in decreasing the tension among them.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Audre Lorde, intragroup differences, coalition politics, identity Politics

(*) An Intersectional Reading of Women of Color's Multiple Identities and Differences In the Poetry of Audre Lorde, Vol.11, Issue No.3, July 2022, pp.101-125.

الملخص :

ستكشف هذه الورقة البحثية مدى فعالية القراءة النسوية التقاطعية على الشاعرة الأمريكية الكاريبية الأفريقية أودري لورد وذلك في تحليل التجارب المختلفة للنساء السود في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كأفراد مهمشة متعددة الهويات. و لتحقيق هذه الغاية ، تستخدم هذه الورقة بعض المبادئ الرئيسية للنسوية التقاطعية مثل الاختلافات داخل المجموعة، وتعقيدات الهوية ، والهويات كائتلافات والنظام المتشابك المتداخل للظلم. القصائد المختارة للدراسة هي "القوة" و "الصلاة من أجل البقاء". يوضح مقال كيمبرلي ويليامز كرينشو، "رسم خرائط التهميش: التقاطعية وسياسات الهوية والعنف ضد النساء الملونات" تلك المبادئ وقد تم لقاء الضوء عليها من خلال "فئات الهوية كتحالقات محتملة" و "الهوية كتحالقات" للكاتبة آلا كاراستائيس. وقد توصلت القراءة التقاطعية في قصائد لورد المختارة إلى أربع نتائج: (١) دحض بعض الادعاءات بأن التصنيفات الأساسية القائمة على الهويات مثل العرق أو الجنس أو الطبقة تحول دون اظهار الهويات والاختلافات المتعددة للنساء السود و هويتهم المعقدة. (٢) في شعر لورد الاختلاف له دور إبداعي وإجتماعي وسياسي وله دور في تشكيل تحالف بين النساء ذوات البشرة السوداء و بين هويتهم الفردية المتعددة. (٣) إن القراءة التقاطعية المتزامنة للعرق والطبقة والجنس في شعر لورد يفيد في الكشف عن المشاكل الاجتماعية والإبداعية والسياسية المتداخلة. من الأمثلة على هذه المشاكل العنف العنصري، موت الذات للشاعر لصالح العرض الموضوعي، وتبني نهج أحادي المحور مثل النظرية النسوية كنظرية قائمة على النوع أو نظرية تركز على العرق ، مثل مناهضة العنصرية. (٤) إن تأكيد وإبراز التجارب الخاصة للنساء ذوات البشرة الملونة واختلافاتهن إلى جانب تجارب الرجال الملونين يساعد في تقليل التوتر بينهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقاطعية، أودري لورد، الاختلافات داخل المجموعة، سياسات

التحالقات، سياسات الهوية

Despite Clenora Hudson-Weems' criticism of black feminists for naming themselves feminists, they have contributed to the clarification of women's overlapping and interlocking systems of oppression and identity by coining the term 'intersectionality' (Clenora Hudson-Weems Portrait of an African Woman n.pag). In 1989, Intersectionality or intersectional feminism as a method of approach was first coined by the black feminist

legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, underscoring the 'multidimensionality' of the lived experiences of marginalized subjects ("Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", p. 6). In a recent forum at the Columbia Law School, Crenshaw defines the concept of intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." (Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later 1). Such a definition explains that the task of the intersectional scholars is to highlight the relational aspect of social categorizations (Davis, 1981; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1981; Mc Call, 2005; Meekosha, 2006). In addition, this definition highlights the main question. What about the differences within groups or "intragroup differences" taking black women as an example? (Crenshaw, 1994). Adding to this, Crenshaw explains that feminism based on a white racial context is not adequate to express the overlapping forms of oppression resulting from women of color's various identity categories. For example, race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation and nationality can simultaneously oppress women of color.

In "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color", Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has several features that reflect her emphasis on the black female identity as a person and as a group. In this way, she criticizes the identity politics because they exclusively focus on black women as a homogeneous group. One feature of this is the intragroup differences. Such a feature refutes some of the claims, such as Lisa Downing's "The Body Politic: Gender, the Right Wing and Identity Category Violations" (2018). She argues that Crenshaw's intersectionality focuses more on group-based identities than on individual ones (367-377). According to Crenshaw, intragroup differences mean what is inside the black women's group. Therefore, it eases the tension among men and women groups who can create appropriate political alliances instead of what exists as political intersectionality in which white women and black

men are representatives of gender and antiracism discourses respectively. Adding to this, emphasizing color differences women as subjects contributes to addressing the marginalization and invisibility problem.. Also, being aware of the necessity of the political power, Crenshaw quests for shedding light on these differences as a way of integrating women of color into such a power. Therefore, Crenshaw affirms that politicizing violence against women of color is a way of the inclusion of women of color's particular experiences among the other experiences of women. In this way, Crenshaw's idea of intragroup differences as a feature of intersectionality contrasts with the concept of difference as separate homogeneous categories of existing identity politics. The main scope of these essentialist identity policies is to divide people into separate categories of race, gender, class and other identities. Such a division or categorization is always practicing the oppressive powers of domination and marginalization on the basis that the dominant group's social power works for marginalizing those who are different in terms of power and privilege hierarchies. Mary O'Brian draws attention to such dangers of commatization, the use of commas ("The commatisation of Women: Patriarachel Fetishism in the Sociology of Education"). In other words, such lists of identities, separated by commas, lead to marginalizing groups such as black women.

Another feature of Crenshaw's intersectionality is its positive outlook on collective identities as coalitions. This feature seems to be contradictory to the previous one. However, Crenshaw explains that the essential identities such as race enhance the possibility of solidarity among black men and women or among black women across differences. As for Crenshaw's idea of coalitions, she explains that the existing identity-based groups are "in fact coalitions" or "at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed" ("Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color", 1994, pp. 93,97,113). In "Identity as Coalitions" (2016), Carastathis contrasts identity politics and coalition ones. She differentiates between them in terms of difference. The former stands for difference as homogeneous identities while the latter focuses on difference as heterogeneous ones (163). This contrast confirms Crenshaw's desire to change the methodology of the essentialist group-

based identity. She considers every essentialist identity such as race a coalition in which black women, for example, express the multiplicity of social injustice. In this way, coalition politics becomes an alternative reading of the essentialist identities of black women. In this regard, these two intersectional features highlight the positive outlook for difference (Crenshaw, 1989; and Lorde, 1984). Crenshaw sees this as a tool of political empowerment and resistance. In favor of this positive concept of difference, both Crenshaw and Lorde support the constructive rather than the essentialist approach of difference. In other words, they both deal with difference as a process and as a relationship where women's social positions and identities are overlapping, complex, changeable and multiple.

In this way, intragroup differences and coalitions can be the lens exploring Lorde's redefining the concept of difference, celebrating women of color's multiple selves and establishing a sense of unity, diversity and creativity across their differences in favor of change and political empowerment. Achieving these goals requires two points: first, a standpoint theory that focuses on learning from the perspective and experience of black women (Borland, 2017). In this way, a black woman, despite being a "provisional" subject or having a particular experience, creates an identity that is large enough to contain multiple self (Rudnitsky, "Power" and "Sequelae" of Audre Lord's *Syntax Strategies* 476). Second, the position of a sister outsider is theorizing the complexity of the identity and difference of black women. Lorde defines herself as a "sister outsider" to affirm her membership and coalition with diverse communities, sometimes of mutual interest, but often conflicting with each other. In an interview with Charles H. Rowell, Lorde cites her membership of the U.S. Colonial Community, the International Color People's Community and the Black Women's Community ("Above the Wind: An Interview with Audre Lorde" 86). Such definition and membership of diverse communities affirm both her view of difference as diversity and unity and her rejection of reducing herself to one or another of "the many different ingredients of my identity" ("Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" 120). Moreover, her cruel reply to one of her critics is a manifestation of such adherence to her multiple subjectivities. He comments on the open articulation of her

sexual orientation as a lesbian. In this respect, Lorde explains, "My sexuality is part and parcel of who I am, and my poetry comes from the intersection of me and my worlds. . . . Jesse Helms's objection to my work is not about obscenity or even about sex. It is about revolution and change. . . . Helms knows that my writing is aimed at his destruction, and the destruction of every single thing he stands for." ("Above the Wind: An Interview with Audre Lorde" 93). In this way, intersection reading affirms Lorde's positive concept of difference as a way of unity and not as a way of separation and as a reaction against identity politics, which oversimplifies women's experiences and identities by rejecting the Western European system of human differences.

A third feature of Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality is rejecting the single-axis of analysis-of either race or gender-that ignores and conflates black women's interlocking systems of oppression and problems. In this respect, before coining the term intersectionality, in the mid-1970s, Audre Lorde joined others of black feminists, including Alice Walker. She formed a political organization called the Combahee River Collective. The purpose of such a political organization is to celebrate their distinction and to reflect the embedded structures of oppression to which women of color are subjected, affirming that movements such as feminism, and black power and black civil rights movements do not articulate the specific concerns and experiences of women of color. Besides her role as an activist, Lorde writes poetry to be a tool for her theory of difference and the exploration of the black female identity as a person and as a group. Her class difference as a poor working class colored woman leads her to write poetry more than prose because the former is "the most economical". At the same time, redefining and examining such a difference, Lorde considers poetry "the most secret, used as a way of creativity and change and not a less "serious" art subject ("Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" 116). Lorde thus seeks the unity of expression and practice as a poet and activist. She tries poetry as a way to inspire and thrive politically. Thus, by celebrating the warrior poet spirit, she transforms silence into language and action in a poem urging all Black women with their diversities to share such survival experience. Silence and uncertainty, however, are the biggest obstacles to such a dynamic transition ("The Transformation of Silence

into Language and Action").

However, critics pay little attention to Lorde's poetry in general and to her poems "Power" and "Litany for Survival" in particular. (Dilworth; Rudnitsky). Recent articles are more concerned with analyzing her essays, speeches and letters collected in her famous book, *Sister Outside: Essays and Speeches*. As for Lorde's poetry, one recent article is "Identity Politics Revisited: On Audre Lorde, Intersectionality, and Mobilizing writing Styles"(2017). It covers the role of Lorde's radical poetical writings for intersectionality, taking "Recreation" and "Between Ourselves" as examples. Focusing on poetry, this paper reads two of her major poems, "Power" and "Litany for Survival" (Lorde, *The Black Unicorn*, 1978). "Power" is a celebration of Lorde's individual identities as both a mother and a poet. Although she is a black lesbian woman, she allies herself with a black heterosexual woman's sadness and anger because of the murder of her ten-year old boy and the white police officer's acquittal. "Litany for Survival" affirms both her individual identity and the potential collations of women of color. Lorde celebrates one part of her multi-layered self as a warrior. Like a warrior, she is no longer afraid of violence or death. Therefore, she expresses her anger and her feelings of interlocking oppressions and discrimination and writes poetry as a way of change.

Having regard to Crenshaw's definition, the features of the intersectionality concept and Lorde's "Power" and "Litany for Survival", this paper explores their importance in reading the Western practices of distorting and misnamed differences as well as in Lorde's redefinition of difference as a way of finding solutions to such distortion. In so doing, this paper reads and analyzes three dimensions of black women's multiple identities, race, gender and class in Lorde's "Power" and "Litany for Survival" to uncover the overlapping forms of oppression resulting from distorting women of color's collective as well as individual identities. With respect to finding solutions to such distortion of differences, the paper celebrates the artistic, social and political functions that the individual as well as the collective identities and differences of black women highlight. Therefore, the paper focuses on the black woman's positions as a sister outsider, a poet, a survivor, a warrior and a

mother. Towards this end, the present paper seeks to answer the following overarching question: How effective is the lens of intragroup differences, coalition politics and the interlocking systems of oppression in reading the Western practices of distorting and misnamed differences and in finding solutions to them in Lorde's selected poems?

Lorde's "Power"

Lorde (1934-1992) is an African-American poet. Both her activism and her poetry enhance the importance of fighting for the liberation of oppressed peoples and organizing in coalitions across differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age and ability. "Power" is about a ten-year-old African American boy named Clifford Glover. In 1973, a white police officer, Thomas Shea took a shot at and killed this boy. After the act of murder, riots and protests spread through the surrounding area of Queens. Then, a year later, Shea became the first city police officer to stand trial for a murder committed on duty, but the jury acquitted him on 12 June 1974.

As for Lorde's poetic style, it seems fragmented and indicative of a lack of interest in adherence to standardized poetry constructions. Lexi Rudnitsky explains that Lorde does not use the conventional syntax because, as she reveals, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" 112). In this way, Lorde's poetry does not follow the traditional conventions of syntax and creates new syntactical ones. In addition, it is useful to affirm the multiple positions of black women and Lorde's insistence on celebrating difference as change and creativity. To her, Poetry should have "insight" along with "imagination". It is not just a "sterile word play" ("Poetry is not a Luxury" 37). Features of this style are syntactic ambiguity and the use of fractured and syntax run (Leonard 760). Commenting on Lorde's writing style, Keith D. Leonard's essay "'Which Me Will Survive: Rethinking Identity, Reclaiming Audre Lorde'", uses the term "language poetics" to describe the manipulation of words. This manipulation generates multiple meanings, which challenge readers to examine themselves based on their interpretation. However, this term does not clarify Lorde's deeper desire to deconstruct a flawed system of social action, replacing it with a sense of identity for all

people; however, in a technical sense, “language poetics” more accurately describes Lorde’s way of deconstructing sentences with line breaks, as in the first stanza of “Power.” More importantly, however, Leonard suggests that critics who do not appreciate the shifts in poetic language have marginalized African American innovation in poetry, especially in Lorde’s case. As a result, Leonard believes that Lorde’s changes are more indicative of a cultural and social movement than of actual innovation. However, from the point of view of intersection reading, this syntactic ambiguity confirms the complexity of the position of the subject, undermines the unitary subject and demonstrates the difference as a source of creativity and diversity.

The structure of the poem itself reflects the concept of difference as diversity and change. The entire poem consists of five stanzas. Each stanza has a different number of lines. The first line consists of five lines; the second line consists of twenty lines; the third line consists of eight lines; the fourth line consists of fourteen lines and the last line consists of thirteen lines.

In 'Power,' we can use the lens of intra-group differences, coalition politics, and interlocking systems of oppression to explore the traumatic impact of distorting, misusing, misnamed, and racial differences on black women's behavior and human thinking on the one hand. On the other hand, she uncovers three different selves of a black woman, a poet, a mother, and a warrior. Besides, it clarifies how the oppressive powers of classicism and racism in favor of domination and marginalization deconstruct Lorde's redefinition of difference as a source of creativity and diversity. In addition, it explores the speaker's identification as a sister outsider. Such a position enables her to be located inside and outside the black community. In this way, based on her racial identity, the speaker affirmed her membership and coalition with the black women's community, sometimes of mutual interests but often conflicting with each other.

The opening stanza has different functions in "Power". It is a way to brainstorm as many ideas as possible. At first, the reader believes that the speaker gives a lecture on the difference between poetry and prose. Later, however, we discover that it is a preparation for the traumatic

event of killing a ten-year- old black boy by the white police officer. It is also an affirmation of the concept of difference as creativity and diversity. Lorde's use of enjambment highlights the speaker's identity as a poet. Lorde uses an enjambment device defined as a sense or a thought in a line of poetry with which the line break does not interrupt, but moves over to the next line. In this regard, Lorde's use of such a technique as a deviation from the rules of traditional syntax is a revelation of her theory of difference and of the specific artistic self of the black woman:

The difference between poetry and rhetoric
is being
ready to kill
yourself
instead of your children.

With respect to Lorde's artistic self, she was in her car when she heard the news of the murder of the black boy. Possessed by anger and grief, she stopped the car and reached her journal to release the anger she felt on the page. In an interview with poet Adrienne Rich, Lorde explains that "Power" had been born out of pure emotion rather than any kind of focus on the "craft" (107). In this way, Lorde's view of writing poetry is in contrast with Shelley's idea that poets must abandon their individual identities in favor of their subject matter (*A Defence of Poetry*). Such an idea may be analogue to "being/ready to kill/yourself"(Lines 2, 3, 4). In this respect, in his article "Lorde's Power", Thomas Dilworth affirms the necessity of the death of the poet's ego in his/her writing poetry. He also affirms that such "self-murder" is a main difference between poetry and prose:

[S]elf-murder seems preferable because it is merely a metaphor for "killing" passionate egoism. Such self-killing resembles poetry, which involves objectivity and the death of the ego. [. . .] Poetry is not merely self-expression; it exists for its own sake as an object of beauty by virtue of aesthetically significant interrelationships. Antithetical to poetry is rhetoric, which is utilitarian language that does not exist gratuitously for its beauty but chiefly as expression for a speaker or to affect a listener. (54)

As the quotation reflects, Dilworth immediately takes an artistic focus as he states that Lorde refers to the craft of poetry writing, and that the opening stanza refers to the death of an artist's ego before he can objectively create his poetry. Dilworth advocates the idea that a poet must be "dead to self" as they work to create something of passive beauty. He writes, "Either you make poetry, which entails self-abnegation, or you make rhetoric" (Dilworth 54). Because of the framework in which Dilworth presents his comparisons between poetry and rhetoric, he implies that poetry and rhetoric do not truly coexist. It seems that Lorde's illustration of "the difference between poetry and rhetoric" is a dividing wall, excluding one approach from the other. Dilworth's interpretation is strongly in conflict with the context and implicit messages that Lorde expresses in "Power." At its root, "Power" is a reactionary statement against the consequences of an oppressive social structure that allowed Officer Shea to escape legal retribution for the murder of a ten-year-old boy. At its root, "Power" is a reactionary statement against the consequences of an oppressive social structure that allowed Officer Shea to escape legal retribution for the murder of a ten-year-old boy. In addition, the assumption that the poem is about the status of an artist's psyche is an interpretation far from the power and purpose of Lorde's work. According to her, Art has a function and "[a]rt for art's sake doesn't really exist for me...what was beautiful had to serve the purpose of changing my life" (Lorde, "Above the Wind: An Interview with Audre Lorde" 108).

Intragroup differences highlights the importance of poetry to black women's self-expression. The speaker may be Lorde herself or any other black woman poet that makes a comparison between poetry and prose in favor of the former. At the same time, this comparison alludes to the passive connotations of class difference between prose and poetry. Here, the speaker rejects such a trial of distorting the class difference through presenting a difficult choice between killing the self and killing children. Besides, Lorde challenges such a distortion through using the functions of the two types of language in her poem. She expresses her view of the intertwining purposes of rhetoric and poetry when she affirms the social and political function of her poetry. At the same time, such a mixed use is as a way of redefining the class difference as a way of creativity,

diversity and change. In an interview with Tate, Lorde explains that Art has to have a social function. Besides, Lorde affirms the fact that she cannot isolate herself from the issues of her black community. To her, Poetry is a way of change: "[T]he question of social protest and art is inseparable to me. I can't say it is an either-or proposition. Art for art's sake doesn't really exist for me. [...] I loved poetry, and I loved words. But what was beautiful had to serve the purpose of changing my life. [...] That's the beginning of social protest" (108). In this way, this stanza is both a critique of the European concept of poetry as a type of self-killing in favor of objective presentation and as just an art for art's sake.

Another outcome of the intersectional reading is in accordance with Crenshaw's idea of the falsity of reading the black woman's life from a single-axis approach. The first stanza is in accordance with such idea. It reveals that the problem of the black woman poet becomes clear when the two dimensions of class and race intersect with each other viewing as factors exploited to challenge creativity and change. Rudnitsky's reading of the first stanza in "The "Power" and "Sequelae" of Audre Lorde's Syntactical Strategies" asserts that Lorde promotes a kind of self-martyrdom for the cause of social revolution. This means that self-killing is possible in case of deconstructing the harmful social categorizations of her community. In this way, the speaker's revelation of "the difference between poetry and rhetoric" is a political action against the distorting concept of class difference. Her insistence on such a change is manifest in repeating "the difference between poetry and rhetoric" in the opening as well as in the concluding stanzas. In the opening stanza, the speaker as a poet reflects her awareness, refusal and challenge of the distortions of class difference made by white feminist institutions. Based on a personal experience, in "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference", Lorde explains that in a women's magazine, they decide for one issue not to print poetry because they claim that it is a less "serious form" of art. Nevertheless, this is not true. Because of economic purposes, poor black women write poetry more than prose. Lorde explains that poetry has been the voice of "the poor, working class, and colored women" (116). Then in the last stanza, the repeated line comes to affirm the traumatic impact of such a passive connotation of difference through focusing on the outcomes of the speaker's inability to learn how

to write prose on the basis that it is a white favorite literary expression. Here the speaker feels her powerlessness because she is more skillful in writing poetry than prose. Her inability to reflect her sadness and anger through poetry deconstructs the idea that class can intersect with race as a way of creativity and change. As a result, "I have not been able to touch the destruction/ within me." (Stanza 5). Then the speaker reveals to the white institutions the outcomes of such a distortion. Here, the speaker decides to transform her suppressed poetical language into a violent action. This action out of her sense of anger as a poet and as a spiritual mother creates a new position as well as a new power as a counteroffensive. The speaker reflects a third self of her multi-layered selves appropriate to her mood. She becomes a black female warrior and the weapon used is that of racial hatred. This new power of racial hatred and violence lie in taking revenge on the mother of the white police officer affirming how the speaker's sorrow can turn into an unhealthy despair or a destructive vengeance.

But unless I learn to use
the difference between poetry and rhetoric
my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold
or lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire
and one day I will take my teenaged plug
and connect it to the nearest socket
raping an 85 year old white woman
who is somebody's mother
and as I beat her senseless and set a torch to her bed

Here the speaker's self as a poet is in conflict with another part of herself as a mother and a warrior. Her sense of hatred and anger is widespread to include her "teenaged" son. She is waiting for her son to grow up and become a teenager. He will rape and batter the mother of the white police officer. Lorde's visual imagery is so brutal and violent. She compares the teenaged black son to plug and "and connect it to the nearest socket/ raping an 85 year old white woman" (Line 6-7, Stanza5). Here Lorde's use of this metaphoric sense sheds light on the impact of the black woman's traumatic thought and behavior on the community as a whole. It is also a critique of the second wave feminism's slogan of

global sisterhood. Although both of them are women, the intersectional oppressive powers of racism and sexism lead the black woman to think of rape as a tool of vengeance. The speaker's alternative to these practices of oppression and discrimination conveys Lorde's message that lack of recognition and the continual distorting and misnamed differences as racism and classicism lead to such an act of violence that a group of women refuse.

The speaker adds that these brutal acts will never stop by Lorde's allusion of chorus as an element of Greek tragedy based on curses and vengeance. Moreover, Lorde's writing of "greek" with a small letter indicates the change of the speaker's tone from anger and grief to sarcasm. Finding the solution of retribution eases the speaker's tension and leads to self-preservation and survival. At the same time, the multiple identities of the speaker as a black poet warrior woman resist the master's tool of subordination. Therefore, she decides to choose the poetic language as a medium of expression in the last stanza. Evidence of this is Lorde's choice of Greek tragedy based on poetic diction. Moreover, using the small letter to mock the chorus's song after the rape of the old white woman, "a greek chorus will be singing in 3/4 time/ "Poor thing. She never hurt a soul. What beasts they are,"" reflects the speaker's indifference to the inferior position as beasts and her full awareness of the continual distortion of her race and class in favor of the powers of domination and subordination marginalized subjects (Stanza 5).

With respect to the lens of the coalition politics, Lorde's central use of Apo Koinou device resonates Crenshaw's idea of race category as a coalition. Apo Koinou is a type of enjambment defined as a technique in which two independent syntactic units share a single word or a phrase. Rudnitsky explains that Apo Koinou allows "syntactic units to share a bond"; however, it simultaneously allows each unit to keep its individual meaning (475). Therefore, in the first stanza when Lorde writes, "The difference between poetry and rhetoric is being," the reader assumes that the difference between poetry and prose is an existential one. Nevertheless, the next lines of the first stanza transforms an affirmation of existence (being) into a denial of existence (killing yourself). However, from an intersectional reading of this poem, borne out by

Lorde's notion of difference, existence is along with nonexistence. Rather, the distinct meanings coexist in a productive tension, which serves to spark rather than limit meaning. This means that there is a difference between prose and poetry; however, they can co-exist. Likewise, Crenshaw's idea of race identity as a coalition means a coalition of black women and men in spite of their intragroup differences.

However, another interpretation of the first stanza is possible. The first choice is possible when parents by nature choose to kill themselves rather than their children. This last interpretation of such a traumatic comparison prepares the reader to the murder of the ten-year black boy in the second stanza. The second stanza presents a horrible imagery of the murder of the black boy. Here the black boy's ghost haunts the speaker while she is a sleeper. She dreams of his bloody face in a white desert. The desert is a symbol of the New York streets where she lost. She imagines that she is in this desert and she is hungry and thirsty. So out of her suffering, "without loyalty or reason", she thinks of drinking his blood and "my stomach churns at the imagined taste". Here the speaker's thought is similar to that of a monster or a vampire who longs for blood. Such a transformation is an outcome of the intersectional injustices of racism and patriarchy. In this way, Lorde tries to let the reader forsake the logic when reading the poem as a reflection of the absence of justice and logic in reality.

In stanza three, the speaker tells the reader the reasons for such a transformation. She makes it clear that the act of murder was on purpose. It is also out of the intersectionality of racism and patriarchy when a disembodied voice says in a recorded tape "Die you little motherfucker" (Line 2, Stanza 3). In addition, the white police officer continues to reflect blackness as a main racial difference when the white police officer says, "I didn't notice the size nor nothing else/ only the color" (Line 2, Stanza 3). In line 2, Lorde does not identify the subject. It is evidence of the extension of hatred beyond the white police officer to include a more systematic hatred of blackness. The speaker's anger and sadness reaches the climax when she hears the police's officer acquittal. The previous and next stanzas express the position of the speaker as a sister outsider. She is

simultaneously part and out of the black community. As a part of the community, in the previous stanza, she reflects, as a sister, the impact of murder on her psyche and life. Therefore, a nightmare haunts her. In the next stanza, the jurymen and the black jurywoman decide to reveal that the white police officer is innocent although the tapes indicate for his intended act of murder. This jury consists of eleven white jurymen and just one black jurywoman. Here, the speaker is speaking as an outsider. She starts to be in conflict with this black woman because of her situation. As the speaker clarifies, this woman accepts the intersectional oppressive powers of patriarchy and racism as tools of domination and marginalization through saying "They convinced me". Therefore, the speaker blames her for getting away the opportunity to have a voice and not to be marginalized. The speaker's attack becomes crueler when she describes the black woman's womb as a grave to black children. Here Lorde's metaphoric image of the womb and her choice of words, such as cement indicate the black jurywoman's taking part in such a traumatic event and social injustice.

Today that 37 year old white man
with 13 years of police forcing
was set free
by eleven white men who said they were satisfied
justice had been done
and one Black Woman who said
"They convinced me" meaning
they had dragged her 4'10" black Woman's frame
over the hot coals
of four centuries of white male approval
until she let go
the first real power she ever had
and lined her own womb with cement
to make a graveyard for our children.

Lorde's "Litany for Survival"

This poem consists of four stanzas. Like "Power", each stanza has different number of lines. The first stanza consists of fourteen lines; the second of ten lines; the third of seventeen lines and the last one of three

lines, reflecting the concept of difference as diversity and change. Moreover, "Litany for Survival" is an embodiment of the effectiveness of a statement Lorde's daughter utters when she urges her mother to tackle the idea of using the power of words and speech as a way of creating an internal balance between her multi-layered fragmented selves in front of the powers of racism and patriarchy: "Tell them how about how you're never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside." ("The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" 42). In this way, "Litany for Survival" is a poetical articulation of Lorde's speech "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action". She tries to use both her prose and poetry to redefine and affirm the social and political importance of celebrating the intersectionality of the class and race differences as a resource of change and coalitions. Therefore, the speaker tries to politicize black women's pains and sufferings through replacing black women's internal feelings of fear with speaking out. In doing this, Lorde tries to convey her tone of challenge, courage and rebellion. The speaker's tone of challenge and courage is manifest when she affirms the power of black women's speech and the master's desperate trial of silencing them. As the speaker says: "the heavy-footed hoped to silence us" (Second stanza, Line 7). Here, the heavy-footed may be the powers of patriarchy and racism that are of course seeking for subordinating women through such an imposed silence.

In the first stanza, the speaker reveals a particular experience of black women as marginalized subjects. They are also sister outsiders on the basis that they are members of the black community; however, they are different. Lorde indicates these sister outsiders when she starts the first two stanzas with "For those of us". Then the speaker starts explaining that those women share the position of marginalization and invisibility when she describes and defines them:

--- who live at the shoreline
standing upon the constant edges of decision

crucial and alone
for those of us who cannot indulge
the passing dreams of choice

The importance and necessity of Crenshaw's focus on intragroup differences resonates with the description of these women as marginalized and invisible through the use of words and phrases such as "at the shoreline," "constant edges of decision," "alone" and "passing dreams of choice" as a result of distorting and misnamed differences. Likewise, the tone of the speaker is of rebellion and resilience in the fight against marginalization.

Moreover, the title of the poem is itself an echo of both Crenshaw's ideas of coalition and their affirmation of its social and political function. "Litany" denotes a prayer to God used in church services. However, here instead of the priest is a black woman. This is significant because black feminist power becomes an alternative to patriarchal one. Moreover, the statements of the prayer is a manifesto-like that explains the speaker's tools and strategies of survival in the context of oppression, marginalization and discrimination. It is also an indication of a collective performance required as a way of survival. In stanza three, the speaker gives a detailed description of black women's different sides of suffering. These sides are concerned with black women's internal as well as outward lives. As the lines reveal, they name black women's aches, their hurts, the paradoxes of their living, and their sense of fear existed in all sides of their life. However, in this litany, they try to cleanse themselves of their various pains through getting rid of their sense of fear that is "like a faint line in the center of our foreheads/ learning to be afraid with our mother's milk" (second stanza, Lines 3-4). As for coalitions, Lorde unifies black women through the mutual use of the pronouns "we" and "us" through stanzas and through assigning the coalition to the race category. She addresses all black women regardless of their sexual orientation. Moreover, the repetition of "for those of us" in the first two stanzas reflect the problems of all multiply marginalized women who "live at the shoreline/standing upon the constant edges of decision/crucial and alone" (Stanza 1). The speaker considers these women warriors because they achieve the triumph of survival in the context of suffering,

sense of fear and pains they are subjected to: "this instant and this triumph/We were never meant to survive." (Stanza 2)

This race-centered category represents black women's different experiences; however, the speaker as a leader focuses on a shared experience that will be the starting point for political empowerment. In urging them to get rid of their sense of fear and to speak out, the speaker presents one part of herself as a survivor. The power of speech and speaking out are the used tools by such a survivor. These tools are manifest in the three lines of the last stanza:

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

In fact, reading "Litany for survival" from an intersectional perspective echoes Crenshaw's focus on intragroup differences and coalitions simultaneously. Focusing on what is inside these multiply marginalized groups such as black women eases the tension among black woman's multi-layered selves and the intersectional interrelated forms of oppressions. Besides, it gives a way of investigating their psychological problems such as sense of fear and finding a solution to them.

Finally, the paper highlights what intersectionality is not. It is not a list of social identities, such as race, gender, class, etc. It is not who people are. It is about how things work and how these collective and individual identities are intersected and mutually interconnected. In this way, the importance of this paper lies in revealing four main points: First, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality is an extension and a development of the earlier attempts of the Combahee River Collective towards theorizing a more complex way of reflecting women of color's differences and identities. Second, it is a critique of both feminist and antiracist discourses. They are main factors of subordinating women of color and precluding the development of a political discourse that empowers them, along with men of color and white women. As Crenshaw explains, the representative of the former discourse is of a particular gendered experience-man of color- determining the antiracist features and goals. As for the latter discourse, the representative is of a

particular race-white-questing for grounding the women's movement. Moreover, these two discourses quest for conflicting political agendas. Therefore, neither feminist discourse nor the antiracist one can be a representative of the particular experiences of women of color. In this way, the present political intersectionality cannot articulate the full dimensions of racism and sexism. Moreover, marginalizing women of color's experiences and problems is a destructive result of ignoring the necessity of the intersectionality of race and gender.

Third, Crenshaw's idea of essentialist identities as coalitions finds a way of reading black women as multiply different subjects, being an alternative to the present identity politics and redefining difference as unity and diversity. Moreover, the position of the speaker as a Sister Outsider clarifies the social, psychological and political importance of coalition politics. In "Power", the speaker as a spiritual sister, a mother and a poet affirms her alliance with the tragedy of killing a ten-year-old black boy as a member of the black community in general and a symbol of the men of color group in particular. At the same time, her position as an outsider paves the way for criticism with respect to the black woman jury's attitude. Moreover, celebration of the race category as an example of the coalitional model is itself a challenge against the passive connotations of blackness. Fourth, using the concept of intersectionality in analyzing the literary texts is itself counteroffensive against the second wave feminism's slogans of universalization and of global sisterhood on the basis that all women share the same experiences. Besides, Lorde's celebration of her individual subjective identities and her insistence on revealing all of them can be also a way of change and deconstructing the intersectional oppressive powers of patriarchy, racism and classicism as well as their intersectional goals of marginalization, invisibility and domination. In Lorde's "Power" and "Litany for Survival", her different subjective identities as a poet, a mother and a survivor intersect with each other to highlight black women's problems as a group, such as violence against them, their children and their sense of racial hatred, fear and imposed silence. In this way, the intersectional reading clarifies the multi-functional and significant coalitions of black women as individuals and groups in creating and forming political coalitions against intersectional oppressions and powers.

Adding to this, Lorde's concept of difference and multiple identities manifest in her critical essays and speeches as well as in her selected poems highlights the keyword that relates the Combahee River Collective's organization of the mid-1970s and their concept of women of color's identity politics to Crenshaw's focus on intra group differences and multiple identities. Lorde quests for modifying and changing the essentials of identity politics based on transcending differences into a more complex, constructive, multiple and diverse identity. She is against the Western European history of over-simplification and identification with human differences. It is a system based on differentiating in terms of binary opposites, female/male and inferior/superior or able/disabled. Lorde is concerned with differences among women of color as a group as well as individuals. Lorde herself, as an individual, has internal differences and multiple identities. She is the poet, the warrior, the lesbian, the mother and the survivor. In response to affirming the positive impacts as well as deconstructing the passive ones of difference, Lorde focuses on racial differences as well as class ones on the one hand. On the other hand, she affirms Crenshaw's intersectional approach of women of color's multiple identities through the focus on the coalitions formed by race category, as an example. In this respect, reading the race category in "Power" and "Litany for Survival" refutes some claims that the existing essentialist categories of identities undermine black women's multiple identities and differences as well as the construction of theorizing the complexity of their identity. In "Power", the speaker uncovers some parts of herself, such as the poet, the mother and the warrior. Also in "Litany for Survival", the speaker uncovers herself as a leader, warrior and survivor. These fragmented parts of the self, work separately; however, they unify in front of the outcomes of intersectional oppressive powers such as domination and marginalization. At the same time, these multiple subjective identities affirm the creative, social and political roles of the intersectionality of class, race and gender differences. As for the creative role of the class difference, it is manifest in the speaker's personality as a poet. In this way, class difference is a way of replacing the master's power as domination with that of words and speaking out. As for the social role of race and gender differences, it is manifest in the speaker's personality as a mother and survivor. The

political role of race and class differences, on the other hand, is manifest in the speaker's personality as a warrior.

With respect to intersectionality as a term, Lorde's view of the falsity of separating prose from poetry manifest in writing "power" and "Litany for Survival" resonates with the term, 'intersectionality'. These two poems are an outcome of her essay and speech, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" and "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" respectively. In this way, Crenshaw's focus on intragroup differences highlights Lorde's challenge against distorting the class differences and obstructing creativity and diversity. Besides, taking into consideration Lorde's rhetorical and poetic works, this paper reveals the importance of the co-existence of the two literary genres in applying the intersectional concept to all black women's lives.

Finally, the simultaneous intersectional reading of race, class and gender in Lorde's poetry uncovers women of color's intersectional social, creative and political problems, such as violence against their children, the death of the poet's artistic self in favor of an objective presentation and adopting single-axis approaches that ignore and marginalize black women. Consequently, adopting a standpoint theory highlights the particular experiences of women of color and their differences, along with those of men of color as well as finds expression in decreasing the tension among them.

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