

SPEAKING IN OUR OWN TONGUES:
LANGUAGE AND CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN AFRICAN BASED CREATIVE
THEORY AND WESTERN BASED TRADITIONAL THEORY TOWARDS A
THEORY OF WOMANIST DRAMATIC DISCOURSE

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2003

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by

Monica T. White

This document is dedicated to Ella Mae Patterson, Esther Robinson and Joshua Robinson,
my lifeline. To everyone in my cypher who has contributed to the making of me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to be a part of the Source of all life and to be free to travel my path. . .

I thank the Creator for All things.

I thank Esther Robinson and Joshua Robinson for their ever-present love and support during every project I have had an opportunity to participate.

I appreciate all of my family's love and support.

I thank my mentors. I thank Debra Walker King for recognizing and nurturing my scholar potential and providing my Womanist foundation, which has been instrumental in the development of this work. I thank Leah Rosenberg for always making herself available and asking pertinent questions that assisted me in taking the next step as well as inspiring me to further my knowledge in Caribbean literature, politics and performance. I thank Mikell Pinkney for mentoring me in directing, performing and scholarship in African theatre. He has also inspired within me the pursuit of understanding and articulating spirituality in performance, which is a major aspect of this work. I thank Ntozake Shange for showing me the power of a creative theorists and the accessibility of forms of speech. She has led me closer to myself and an aspect of my work that I was not aware existed. Adrienne Kennedy was kind and patient in her willingness to share her personal experiences as they relate to the production of her work. Her candid and sincere spirit is a true testament to the beauty of an artist. Yanci Bukovec has shown me how to use my voice and my body to convey theoretical meaning. He has taught me the power of language in performance. Diane Harvey who has inspired me to use movement

as theory and to study dance in terms of movement and theory. James Smethurst was one of the first professors to see my scholarly potential in undergraduate courses. I appreciate his sincere approach to studying and teaching African American studies. I thank Samuel Kimball for being one of the first to introduce the possibility of me pursuing higher degrees in scholarship. Pam Monteleone first introduced me to August Wilson and a Shakespeare that was insightful and not intimidating. She awakened within me the power of performing and directing and presented many opportunities for me to learn more about myself. Judy Gebre-Hiwet may never know just how much she influenced me by simply telling me to ask questions. Specificity is clarity and clarity is what I am seeking in my scholarship. Each of my mentors has led me one step closer and for this I am very appreciative.

I thank my colleagues in English, theatre and film.

I appreciate the faculty and staff of University of Florida's English Department.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

SPEAKING IN OUR OWN TONGUES:
LANGUAGE AND CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN AFRICAN BASED CREATIVE
THEORY AND WESTERN BASED TRADITIONAL THEORY IN WOMANIST
DRAMATIC THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

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August 2003

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Major Department: English Department

This analysis offers Womanist Dramatic Discourse as a theoretical framework for interpreting and discussing academic and creative writing specifically within the development of African American theater. It is broken into four major parts: Womanist/Womanism, Womanist Drama, Dramatic Theory, and Discourse to offer a tool for analysis and interpretation. It also proposes further research in each of these areas within African American theater development and other areas of African American culture as well as cultures of people of color around the world.

The analysis begins by offering an interpretation of Womanism and developing criteria for identifying Womanist texts based on the definition. It addresses the spiritual components of Womanism, which broadens its scope for empowerment.

The analysis then focuses upon Wole Soyinka's terminology of interior language, metalanguage and spoken language to explain the origin and usage of creative and

academic texts in African American theater. It identifies Womanist Dramatic Discourse as an interior language within African American culture. Within this interior language there is Western thought exemplified in White American culture and African thought exemplified in Bantu philosophy, which act as metalanguages that inspire speech and speech patterns. Creative theory (plays, poetry, art forms) and traditional theory (essays, speeches, academic writing) are the spoken languages or inspired speech. This analysis engages the differences between creative and traditional theories and proposes an analysis of the call and response that takes place between the two within African American theater development.

Overall, this analysis offers Womanist Dramatic Discourse as a theoretical framework for analyzing and interpreting Womanism within the context of African American theatre. This work constructs this framework and deconstructs its components to offer a tool for analyzing and interpreting academic and creative writing as they interact to enhance old forms and develop new forms of communication that inspire artistic, political, spiritual and social development and reform.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

There is an exchange that takes place between scholars and artists throughout African American Theatre history. This exchange has been instrumental in developing new forms and periods of theatrical development. Scholarly and artistic works are analyzed, in terms of development utilizing different critical terms with scholarly work considered as a form of high theory and the artistic works may be considered as low theory if acknowledged as theory at all. Due to the unequal conditions upon which they are judged, the theory in art is often overlooked or discounted in African American Theatre analysis. This is problematic because African Americans are a gestalt people whose interpretation and communication of theory varies in form. Therefore many theoretical approaches to African American theatre and history have not yet been identified or analyzed which has led to a gap in chronicling African American Theatre development.

There needs to be an analysis of this exchange between *scholarly work* and *artistic work*. The exchange consists of languages used to communicate ideas and analyze concepts. Such languages inspire conversations. Conversation is the movement of language. It is the exchange of an idea from a speaker to a listener. During this exchange the idea is altered by interpretation. Such an exchange validates language for the speaker and the listener because it is acknowledged and allowed to exist within its own space. It is therefore important to become familiar with language in any study. When one is unfamiliar with the language one is incapable of participating in the conversation.

Therefore, language and conversation are mutually important. These conversations are literal and figurative occurring in various forms. For example, conversation in terms of this work refers to an exchange of language whether it is verbal, written, performed, heard, interpreted, etc. It is the movement of an idea from source to source and the way that idea is complicated in its movement that requires analysis. As the idea is exchanged it continues to develop from its original form into an altered form. This study recognizes the need for analyzing the site where these conversations take place in the form of call and response between scholars/traditional theorists and playwrights/creative theorists in African American Theatre development.

African American Theatre as a discipline is a relatively new field within the Academy that is establishing its history, chronicling development and attempting to develop tools for academic and artistic progress. It is also important to note that African American Theatre developed out of a necessity for entertainment as well as political empowerment. Therefore, the introduction of tools to enhance the awareness of historical development of African American theatre cannot be effectively analyzed without also understanding the theoretical development. Likewise, the theoretical development cannot be complete without identifying, acknowledging and interpreting the various forms of theory that appear in African American Theatre.

This analysis offers a interpretive framework that complicates the concept of high theory by introducing the possibility that black female writers have been writing theory in prose in response to black male scholars who make claims concerning the use of art as propaganda, as a weapon against oppression. The framework provides language and an

opportunity to inspire conversations about the exchange and how it has impacted the development of African American Theatre history and theory.

It is important to identify the possibility of art as theory in terms of African American theatre because art has been one of the many languages used to articulate the African American experience nationally and globally. According to Wole Soyinka,

when you go into any culture, I don't care what the culture is, you have to go with some humility. You have to understand the language, and by that I do not mean what we speak, you've got to understand the *language*, the interior language of the people. You've got to be able to enter their philosophy, their world view. You've got to speak both the spoken language and the metalanguage of the people. (qtd. in Harrison xi)

Language is how ideas are communicated and in order to make a sincere attempt to understand the historical or theoretical development of a people it is necessary to respect their language.

To aid in making this possible I am aiming towards a theory of *Womanist Dramatic Discourse* and identifying it as an *interior language* used in the discussion of African American artistic, political, economic and social development in America. Womanism is an important aspect of this interpretive tool because it creates a space where spirituality and personal perspectives can be addressed on individual and collective terms. Within this interior language there are *metalinguages* of *African Philosophy* exemplified in *Bantu Philosophy* and *Western Thought* exemplified in Euro Philosophical Traditions which inspires *spoken languages*¹ of *creative theory* and *traditional theory*.² Spoken languages are in fact languages that articulate multiple individual and collective

¹ This is my interpretation of Wole Soyinka's terms introduced in the opening quote of this analysis. I will continue to interchange these terms accordingly.

² The diagram in Appendix A offers a visual aid in the construction of Womanist Dramatic Discourse as an interpretive tool.

experiences to the larger world through creative and traditional mediums for the purpose of survival, development and progress. In its consistent appearance and evolution a theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse has become a tradition³beginning from the first period of African American Theatre to present.

There are seven documented historical and theoretical eras/periods of African American theatrical development, according to Dr. Mikell Pinkney. These eras include: 1) plantation/slave period, 2) Minstrel Era (1840's to 1890's) 3) Harlem Renaissance (~1917 – late 1920's), 4) The Assimilationist period (mid 1930's – late 1950's) 5) The Black Power/Black Arts/ Black Revolutionary Theater (early 1960's – mid 1970's) 6) The Revolutionary-Afrocentric era (mid 1970's – late 1980's), and 7) The New-Age Post- Revolutionary Era (late 1980's to present) (Pinkney 3-5). Each of these eras has been documented theoretically in relation to historical occurrences, theoretical analysis and development of works. The development of each era evolves out of discourse between scholars and artists aiming to use art as propaganda.

A theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse offers an opportunity to explore these eras. It is a mutually inclusive interior language that acknowledges the importance of spoken language and metalanguage for people of color. This is one of the first steps in equalizing academic and artistic work in terms of theory.

The need for such equalizing develops out of the racial history in America. Scholars like W.E.B. DuBois and Amiri Baraka developed scholarly works in response to

³ Tradition of Womanist Dramatic theory evolves out of the idea of a consistent evolving artistic theoretical form meeting similar criteria over a period of time. Examples of the tradition include Marita Bonner's The Purple Flower (1928), Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro (1962) and Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls... (1975). All or which contain similar criteria utilize similar techniques to discuss similar issues over a period of time.

circumstances created by the fact “Black people in the U.S.A. suffer from a dual oppression then, not only as part of a multinational working class exploited by capitalism (the private ownership of the means of production, but also as an oppressed Afro-American nation, struggling against imperialism for liberation and self-determination” especially in terms of language and speech (Baraka, “Not Just Survival” 31). When looking at the site of exchange it becomes clear that historically black male scholars utilize traditional forms to conceptualize.

Black female playwrights have historically conceptualized in the form of prose. In analyzing the site of call and response it becomes apparent that artists like Marita Bonner, Adrienne Kennedy and Ntozake Shange offer works that explain “for black women, and women of other oppressed nationalities in the United States, there is finally a triple oppression, not only class and national oppression, but also oppression because of their” gender not to mention sexuality and/or religious and spiritual practices (Baraka, “Not Just Survival” 31). These black female creative writers complicate the issues addressed in traditional theory by using a creative form and altering the original idea based on their perceptions resulting from multiple oppression.

A theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse therefore provides languages to discuss oppression and empowerment through creative theory and traditional theory provides an opportunity for analyzing the exchange and alteration of ideas as they are communicated back and forth using different forms.

This analysis deconstructs Womanist Dramatic Discourse into four major parts Womanist/Womanism, Womanist Drama, Dramatic Theory and Discourse in order to better understand the necessity of an analysis of the site of exchange between traditional

and creative theorists. A brief analysis of such exchanges occurs in some sections yet the primary purpose of this study is to develop a framework so that such analyses can occur more frequently and in greater detail.

In summary, this analysis encourages the understanding of African American theatre in theory and practice as language. It is applicable to people of color in all parts of the world who utilize varying means of expression to resist oppression but I am focusing specifically upon the African American experience at this time. It is a critical site of analysis of the exchange between *African American theatre theorists* and *playwrights* as a tradition and a discourse for the empowerment of oppressed people as individuals and a collective group. Simply stated, art can again be used more effectively as propaganda if we utilize the discourse between two theoretical forms.

CHAPTER 2

WOMANISM/WOMANIST

Womanist 1. From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “you acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered good for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grownup. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious.

Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter, and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white beige and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.

Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.¹

A tradition of womanist dramatic development can be observed beginning with Alice Walker’s introduction of the term Womanism/Womanist². It is important to note

¹ Definition of a “Womanist” from In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose, ©1983 by Alice Walker, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company in Katie’s Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community by Katie Cannon.

² Womanism accounts for the spiritual side of African Americans, which is often ignored or discounted when using Western forms of knowledge. Use of Bantu terms provides an alternative, which accounts for that spiritual awareness. Use of Bantu with Western concepts is also important for African Americans because the reality is that we are no longer living in pre-colonial Africa yet we must not deny our roots or our present condition. Such a concept is achieved in Womanism, which marries the two traditionally oppositional modes of discourse.

here that Womanist Dramatic Discourse is not simply a regurgitation of Womanism, it is an expansion of the concept into a theoretical framework for African American theatre interpretation.

The structure and content of the definition are pertinent in understanding the significance of Womanist Dramatic Discourse. The likelihood of acceptance of a theoretical concept is often based on its structure and content. For example, if a theoretical concept does not follow Western structure and is not comprised of content that is clearly relevant to Western ideas, it becomes invalid. In resistance to such a fate, Walker constructs the concept of Womanism using a typically Western definition structure, which names the term and numbers its meanings. Yet she uses prose in the content of the definition to account for elements that do not rely on a Western perspective but instead incorporates non-Western ideals such as spirituality. She is therefore able to construct a definition that merges two traditionally opposing discourses. Likewise, Womanist Dramatic Discourse explains how this is possible.

Womanist Dramatic Discourse creates a space where interaction between opposing discourses can be examined. For example, by using the foundation of Womanism, a discourse between an African philosophical tradition represented by Bantu and a Western philosophical tradition represented by Feminism. Within womanism there is an exchange between these two traditions that aid in assisting African Americans in articulating experiences. Such discourse is an example of a method that allows African Americans to express ourselves without denying any part of ourselves. To explore this concept further, let us look more closely at Bantu as a philosophy and its relationship with Feminism within Womanism.

Womanism As a Discourse Between African Philosophy and Western Thought

The Bantu of Ruanda speak the language Kinyuruanda which is a language of classification where “the substantives are not divided into grammatical genders but are grouped into kinds or categories” (Jahn 99). “In simplified form the four basic concepts” applicable to this analysis include:

Muntu = human being (plural: Bantu);

Kintu = thing (plural: Bintu);

Hantu = place and time;

Kuntu = modality. (Jahn 100).³

According to these categories “all being in all essence, in whatever form it is conceived can be subsumed under one of these categories. Nothing can be conceived outside them” this approach is all-inclusive and prevents any element of society from being excluded (Jahn 100).

These four categories work within Womanism to explain the spiritual elements of the interior languages within African American culture, which are not as easily explained in Western terms. By understanding the categories and their meaning and identifying them within the definition we find more expansive ways of communicating a vision of

³ These terms provide an understanding of the way Africans, the Bantu specifically, viewed the world prior to colonial intervention. This is important because as African Americans we have been forced and coerced into articulating our experiences based on colonial intervention and its results. By incorporating Bantu philosophy as an alternative to our forced Westernization we are freeing ourselves from “the master’s language” (however briefly) and speaking a language we choose for ourselves. In essence, this leads to us speaking in our own tongues.

When I use the terms they are not simply used as a matter of exchanging a Bantu term for an english word. It is an act of resistance and empowerment that gives me an additional choice of how to use the languages applicable to my state of being. I find these words validate the spiritual essence of my interpretation more clearly than simply using English or Western concepts and terms.

the world and our position in it that does not rely solely on the tools provided by those who enslaved us.

Womanism, by combining Feminism and Bantu, places woman at the center by explaining her categorical repositioning in terms of empowerment and oppression. For example, Womanism and Feminism agree that women have been objectified, placed in the Kintu category. Through Feminist and Womanist discourse we attempt to reposition ourselves in the category Muntu as a human being, having the right and responsibility of self-definition and self-determination. The definition of Womanism addresses this using identifiable Bantu characteristics⁴. In the definition of womanism woman is named as Muntu, “a force endowed with intelligence, or better: Muntu is an entity, which is a force which has control over Nommo” the spoken word and the power by which one influences all of the other categories (Jahn 99-100). African Americans can use tools of empowerment from African and Western backgrounds by utilizing spoken languages and metalanguages as speech power/language. For example, the term Womanism is *Nommo* in its self-defining and self-realizing approach. By taking the initiative to develop a name that does not rely on Feminism for its meaning, Womanism creates its own independent space that acknowledges kinship to Feminism but does not rely on it for its meaning, such is the power of utilizing Bantu as an additional form of speech.

For the Bantu, speech is an action and actions are speech. Likewise, Womanism is a speech action that distinguishes difference in methods and approaches to empowerment

⁴ Such characteristics include terms consistent with the Four categories (Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu). Also refers to *NTU*, which is the universal power that contains the workings of all of the categories together and the concept of Nommo: word power. Refer to glossary for more detailed definitions of each.

yet embraces sameness in terms of the Feminist agenda. For instance, Womanist speech acts are carried out in the performative aspects of the definition: loves, appreciates and prefers. All are indicative of the power of Nommo (Jahn 124). Within Womanism, Bantu is also modified using Feminism. In Bantu “man has the power of the word” whereas in Womanism the Feminist ideology of placing woman at the center gives her the power over the word. This is one of many ways in which both philosophies influence the other within Womanism. The relevance of this influence lies in their recognition of an African sensibility and access to a language that can more clearly articulate those sensibilities in a way that does not rely on Western terminology or acceptance of the concept.

Other Bantu characteristics appearing in the Womanist definition include the concept of Kintu. By placing woman in a position of Muntu, the definition indirectly address the need to endow woman with Nommo, the ability to perform these speech acts instead of being acted upon. For example, a Womanist is a woman who loves other Muntu such as the Spirit, other women and individual men, and in doing so respects them as beings and not things. In other words, a womanist defines herself in her capacity to love rather than being defined by those who love her. Rather than positioning people as objects, womanism categorically positions inanimate objects in the category of Kintu where they belong such as the moon, food, roundness and struggle (Walker ix). Hantu, which refers to place and time, is indicated in the term: *Regardless*. This term defies the concept of time in its lack of specificity. She in turn has the power to influence her position with the power of her perception. If she loves herself in every situation this is the only thing that matters, place and time are suspended (Walker ix). Kuntu is

exemplified in women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength, such are modes of reality in which woman determines her positioning in her existence (Walker ix). In essence, Womanism positions woman in a role of agency capable of influencing other people, objects, place and time and altering reality, a position traditionally denied to women. As a gestalt people, African Americans must have access to multiple theoretical discourses for individual and collective consciousness development without having to rely upon purely Western concepts to articulate ideas that may stem from our African ancestry.

In order to clarify the necessity of African Americans having additional speech options, I would like to offer an interpretation of Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls . . . in order to exhibit the power of using Bantu as a metalanguage within the interior language of Womanist Dramatic Discourse.⁵ Using Bantu to interpret the play allows us an alternative speech that liberates us from having to rely on Western perceptions of the world in order to articulate our position within it. Bantu Philosophy within Womanism provides an opportunity to use art as propaganda.

For Colored Girls . . . is a collection of poems performed by seven women of color who articulate their individual and collective experience as Black women in America. Although the women move between varying emotional states they find solace in song and dance as they celebrate and grieve simultaneously. The play begins with distress as each woman silently freezes into a pose and it ends with victory as each woman chants and

⁵ Such an interpretation is also possible with Marita Bonner's The Purple Flower and with Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro but I do not have the time or space to adequately include an interpretation of each. I am certain, however, that the example provided will be sufficient in proving the point.

dances. It is a story about surviving, healing, connecting and empowering. It is not about bashing black men, it is simply about making emotional sense for black women who have been historically ignored in struggles against oppression. In the end it is the understanding of their relationship with god, each woman's self, and one another that gives them what they need.

Bantu Philosophy in For Colored Girls . . .

The elements of Bantu Philosophy exemplified in this text begin with the ladies recognition of society's attempt to categorize them as Kintu as they "have given their love unconditionally to men [and communities] who degrade and abuse them" (Hatch and Shine, Recent 363). As Kintu, these women are the property of the men who hurt them and the society in which they live. Each woman is Kintu in her individual bondage but collectively they are Bintu (plural form of Kintu). This reveals the individuals and community of oppressed women of color. These ideas culminate throughout the text. They show how each woman identifies herself as Kintu, Bintu and becomes Muntu, Bantu.

As Bintu, of men these women are subject to violence without the protection of the law. For example,

lady in red - these men friends of ours
 who smile nice
 stay employed
 and take us out to dinner
 lady in purple - lock the door behind you
 lady in blue - with fist in face to fuck
 lady in red - who make elaborate Mediterranean dinners

& let the art ensemble carry all ethical burdens
 while they invite a couple friends over to have you
 are suffering from latent rapist bravado
 & we are left with the scars (Shange 18-19).

In this context the women acknowledge their position in society and also acknowledge the damage that such a position does to the soul. They are not simply physically scarred, their spirits are in danger of being broken.

It is through the power of Nommo that these women attempt to heal the scars and become Muntu individually and Bantu collectively. Recognizing the confinements of language the lady in orange professes “i dont wanna write/in english or spanish/i wanna sing make you dance/like the bata dance scream...” The ladies respond:

lady in yellow - we gotta dance to keep from cryin
 lady in brown - we gotta dance to keep from dyin
 lady in red - so come on

The women recognize the spoken, written and body movement as word power that can change their condition. Understanding the significance of Nommo here is its ability to create magic within them that aid in altering their exterior circumstances. This tells us that there is no separation between the sacred and the secular, an African notion of reality that is rejected or discounted in Western society.

The entire choreopoem is therefore Nommo in its ability to reposition Kintu (Bintu) into the category of Muntu (Bantu). Individually each woman tells her story, which expresses her frustration with her current condition. In “a nite wid beau willie brown” the lady in red shares her pain with the other ladies which is a direct result of beau

willie's. James Hatch and Ted Shine offer an excellent summary and interpretation of the text that details the significance of this:

This poem is the most dramatic and controversial piece in the choreopoem. It is the graphic and moving story of an African American man who murders his children as their mother implores him for mercy. His powerful characterization makes him a prototype for African American males and a dangerous stereotype for unknowledgeable whites who want to believe that all Black men are like beau willie. He is the product of the system in which he lives; a system where he has been disenfranchised socially, politically, and economically. He was a school dropout because he found nothing there relevant to him or his needs. He was forced to fight a war to liberate the Vietnamese while his brothers and sisters back home were fighting to liberate themselves from America's racial oppression. He cannot find a job that will allow him to support his family or afford him some dignity. He is forced into a corner by racism and has no self-esteem. His frustrations mount and are relieved through drink and drugs. His need for crystal, the mother of his children—his love for her, his masculinity, is defined through his strength, that is, through his violence. Shange does not ask us to forgive beau willie , but she does want us to understand and judge him in terms of the conditions that shaped him . . . (Recent 364)

The conditions that shaped him are the same conditions that weigh upon the lady in red. His pain became her pain and in this section of the choreopoem she shares it with the other ladies by telling beau willie's story in conjunction with her own. In the section following this piece her individual pain becomes a collective lament:

lady in red – I was missin somethin
 lady in purple – somethin so important
 lady in orange – somethin promised
 lady in blue – a layin on of hands [. . .]
 lady in blue – all the gods comin into me
 layin me open to myself [. . .]

They become a community of mourners here. Their lament becomes a chant, a way of using Nommo for spiritual empowerment as they repeat over and over "i found god in myself and i loved her fiercely" (Shange 63). By realizing the power of their language in

conversation and exaltation the women use Nommo to reposition themselves as Muntu on an individual level and as Bantu collectively.

They create a space and time where this is possible and carry it out from the very beginning to the end. When the performance begins

the stage is in darkness. Harsh music is heard as dim blue lights come up. One after another, seven women run onto the stage from each of the exits. They all freeze in positions of distress. The follow spot picks up the lady in brown. She comes to life and looks around at the other ladies. All of the others are still. She walks over to the lady in red and calls to her. The lady in red makes no response (Shange 3).

In the beginning they are suspended in an fixed state, frozen by distress. By the end of the performance, “*all of the ladies repeat to themselves softly the lines ‘i found god in myself & i loved her.’ It soon becomes a song of joy, started by the lady in blue. The ladies sing first to each other, then gradually to the audience. After song peaks the ladies enter into a closed tight circle*” (Shange 63). By the end of the play the ladies have unfixed their locked state and are finally able to move which indicates a resurgence of time. They use their Nommo throughout the play to reach this state, conjuring Hantu for the benefit of their healing. They created a time and space for their own empowerment.

The space for empowerment is the Kuntu, reality or mode they reach in their realization of divinity. Such realization is “a reflection and an objectification of the concepts of the African continuum” which upholds “the belief in the fundamental spiritual nature of the universe [NTU], as well as the attendant belief that man [and woman are] essentially spirit, and as such basically irreducible” (Jackson ix). For Colored Girls . . . offers this reality as truth.

Using Bantu interpretation we see that Shange has created a drama “that has, as its ultimate purpose to reveal and invoke the reality of the particular mode that it has

ritualized. This theater style depends on power and power invocation” (Jackson xi). This interpretation is an example of the ways in which Bantu philosophy provides terms and ideologies that adhere to the spiritual order of the world, which is also an important aspect of theorizing. Unfortunately, such ways of theorizing are often overlooked or discounted which is why Womanism, as a concept opens the door for such interpretations within the theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse.

Bantu Interpretations in Womanist Dramatic Theoretical Discourse

Such use of Bantu to interpret this play frees me from having to use Western terminology to articulate what I identify as an African sensibility. It is a small step using general terms from a rich culture. But it is a profound advance in the direction of developing a method of communication and measurement that broadens my audience to include: other people of color who are also seeking methods of expression that are not founded upon Western ideas and language. As well as, those who seek sincere understanding of the many cultures within the African Diaspora.

As a neo-Africanism⁶ Womanism achieves the possibility of multiple discourses and consciousness. Womanisms ability to combine call and response between creative theorists and traditional theorists and African Philosophy (Bantu) and Western Thought (Euro Philosophical Traditions) has aided in the development of African American Theatre as each discourse inspires the other. It creates a space where traditional theory and creative theory coexist and engage one another on multiple levels. This aids in individual and collective development. This development is unique for every person and

⁶ A neo-Africanism incorporates “a tradition seen rationally, whose values are made explicit and renewed, [. . . assimilating] those European elements which modern times demand; and this is the process the European elements are so transformed and adapted that a modern, viable *African* culture arises out of the whole” (Jahn 16).

must be deconstructed and re-defined at the core in order to achieve the purpose of empowerment. A theory of Womanism Dramatic Discourse is therefore “a genuine Renaissance, which does not remain a merely formal renewal and imitation of the past, but permits something new to emerge” (Jahn 16). It emerges as a new language that synthesizes multiple cultural backgrounds for the purpose of articulation of the damage of silence, oppression and need for empowerment.

Throughout this analysis the various elements of this definition⁷ are exemplified and clarified in the traditional and creative theories. These example texts fit definitions of Womanism and criteria outlining Womanist Drama as artistic propaganda.

⁷ Refers to the African and Euro Philosophical ideas and concepts inherent in the description of the term.

CHAPTER 3 WOMANIST DRAMA

Womanist Drama does not simply refer to dramatic texts written by black women.

Womanist Drama includes text that:

1. consists of one or more aspects of Alice Walker's definition of Womanist
2. places and/or acknowledges woman as the center of the discourse directly or indirectly by empowering woman in addressing her concerns and perceptions
3. acknowledges and respects community
4. addresses issues that includes the concerns of people of color
5. provides testimonials f characters' realities which are impacted by oppression.

Adrienne Kennedy resists confining herself or her work to additional labeling yet she openly acknowledges the significance of the preceding criteria in her work (Kennedy, Lecture). She acknowledges Funnyhouse of a Negro as one of her most important works. It addresses issues and viewpoints that can be considered Womanist.

Funnyhouse is a version of “the tragic mulatto.” The main character, Sarah, is trapped in her psyche symbolized by the “funnyhouse.” She roams the rooms talking to her alter-egos symbolized by the Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria Regina, Jesus, Patrice Lumumba, all of which are one of themselves. Sarah’s landlady, Raymond (her Jewish lover), and The Mother are also prominent figures in the play. The main issues addressed in the play are issues of race and color, the racism of lighter skinned blacks against dark-skinned blacks (colorisms). It also addresses racism inherent in hair texture

and issues of classism. The play addresses the concerns of a mulatto woman in her communities and the overall society.

Adrienne Kennedy exhibits unctuousness, willful behavior in her decision to tell Sarah's story in Funnyhouse, which was criticized as "a laundering of 'dirty linen' because the racism of lighter Blacks against dark African Americans should not be aired in public" (Hatch and Shine, Recent 334). Although she acknowledges that she is more pre-occupied with race than gender, Kennedy has created a text that reveals that she is "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people male and female" in her depiction of Sarah and her Father specifically in Funnyhouse. Both of them wrestle with the "madhouse" of racism as Kennedy attempts to help them make emotional sense of their anguish. The play consistently returns to the anguish of Sarah and her father:

As for myself, I long to become even a more pallid Negro than I am now; pallid like Negroes on the covers of American Negro magazines; soulless, educated, and irreligious. I want to possess no moral value, particularly value as to my being. I want not to be. I ask nothing except anonymity...My friends will be white. I need them as an embankment to keep me from reflecting too much upon the fact that I am a Negro. For, like all educated Negroes—out of life-and-death essential—I find it necessary to maintain a stark fortress against recognition of myself. My white friends, like myself, will be shrewd, intellectual, and anxious for death. Anyone's death. I will mistrust them, as I do myself, waver in their opinion of me, as I waver in the opinion of myself. (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 336)

Sarah's father exhibits a similar self-loathing:

He tried to hang himself once. After my mother went to the asylum he had hallucinations, his mother threw a dead chicken at him, his father laughed and said the race was no damn good, my mother appeared in her nightgown screaming she had trapped herself in Blackness. No white doves flew. He had left Africa and was again in New York. He lived in Harlem and no white doves flew. Sarah, Sarah, he would say to me, the soldiers are coming and a cross they are placing high on a tree and are dragging me through the grass and nailing me upon the cross. My blood is gushing. I wanted to live in Genesis in the midst of golden savannas, nim and white frankopenny trees and white stallions roaming under a blue sky. I wanted to walk with a white dove. I wanted to be a Christian. Now I am Judas. I betrayed my mother. I sent your mother to the asylum. I created a yellow child who hates me. And he tried to hang himself in a Harlem hotel,

Sarah says of her father who shares her obsession of race that is caused by the racist society they inhabit. (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 340) Neither of them are able to escape the madness that it causes within them or around them. Her father plead as “He put out his hand to her, tried to take her in his arms, crying out --- Forgiveness, Sarah, is it that you never will forgive me for being Black? Sarah, I know you were a child of torment. But forgiveness” (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 340). The repetitious imagery of the Father returning to Sarah, putting out his hands to her reveals his inability to be complete without the forgiveness of his daughter. Likewise, Sarah explains “they told me my father was God but my father is Black. He is my father. I am tied to a black Negro . . . I am bound to him unless, of course he should die” (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 342). Sarah is also incomplete without her father, whom she loathes. Their wholeness is dependant upon one another. These are two examples of how the commits to survival and wholeness of males and females wrestling with racism.

Funnyhouse literally places woman at the center of the play. For instance, “the play is placed in the girl Sarah’s room. The center of the stage works well as her room, allowing the rest of the stage as the place for themselves [. . .] When she is placed in her room with her belongings, then the director is free to let the rest of the play happen around her” (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 335) By suggesting the staging of this play in such a way as this, Kennedy arranges for Sarah’s concerns and perceptions to be central to the overall meaning of the play. Also, the fact that three (Funnyhouse Landlady, Funnyhouse Man and The Mother) out of eight characters are *not* one of themselves. This indicates that the play is all about Sarah and her internal conflicts, which prevent her from escaping the funnyhouse.

Community is acknowledged and respected in character interaction in Funnyhouse. Every member of the community, funnyhouse, takes part in Sarah's reconciliation process as each borrows and shares a common language represented in the repetitious monologues and chants. For example, each of themselves shares a monologue about hair loss:

Man: It begins with the disaster of my hair. I awaken. My hair has fallen out, not all of it, but a mass from the crown of my head that lies on the center of my white pillow. I arise and in the greyish winter morning light of my room I stand staring at my hair, dazed by sleeplessness, still shaken by nightmares of my mother. Is it true? Yes. It is my hair. In the mirror I see that, although my hair remains on both sides, clearly on the crown and at my temples my scalp is bare. And in my sleep I had been visited by my bald crazy mother who comes to me crying, calling me to her bedside. She lies on the bed watching the strands of her own hair fall out. Her hair fell out after she married, and she spent her days lying on the bed watching the strands fall from her scalp, covering the bedspread until she was bald and admitted to the hospital. Black man, my mother says, I never should have let a Black man put his hands on me . . . That is the beginning (Kennedy, Funnyhouse 338).

This excerpt is a very profound piece singularly and the way it is used collectively within the text. Similar monologues within the text presented by different characters consistently reiterate the damage of racist thinking using hair as a metaphor. The constant reference to the hair addresses the colorism/racism by which she is trapped. With hair as a marker for race the loss of her hair exhibits her loss of identity. When the White mother allowed the Black father to touch her the White mother lost her European identity. The hair symbolizes this belief. She passes the belief to Sarah who forms a community, amongst themselves, in order to deal with that loss. Each member repeats the story and in doing so validates Sarah while educating the audience (reader/spectator) as a community on the damage of racism on physical and emotional levels. In addressing this issue in this way Kennedy acknowledges community formation and necessity in identity development.

Kennedy also addresses the impact of internalized racism in Funnyhouse. The play addresses external hegemony from an internal perspective from an outsider within location. Such a position, according to Patricia Hill Collins consists of “social locations or border spaces marking the boundaries between groups of unequal power. Individuals acquire identities as ‘outsiders-within’ by their placement in these social locations” (Collins 279). This takes place with Sarah, the main character, by virtue of her color, as a mulatto, she neither belongs in a black community or a white community and becomes internally undone in trying to reconcile her identity.

The play is a story of a woman fragmented by displacement. “Her mother is light, her father black and African; her mother had status, her father none,” the Negro Sarah is conflicted in terms of race and class hegemony (Hatch and Shine, Recent 333). Her condition of marginality within and outside of multiple communities causes her to experience a mental breakdown during which she attempts to reconcile her multiple selves. “Her loyalty to her European heritage, represented by [. . . the characters] Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Hapsburg, forces her to deny her African heritage, forces her to murder her father, much as the Europeans murdered Patrice Lumumba because he threatened European dominance,” such internal tensions exemplify the intersections of race, class and nationality. Her body and her mind becomes the site where the historical tensions between racial lines, class lines, and nationality intersect (Hatch and Shine, Recent 333). She attempts to reconcile the history of hegemonic domination in all institutions within herself.

The play is a testimonial¹ In this text, Kennedy takes the opportunity to tell the truth from her perspective without shame or guilt. The story is Sarah's testimony. She reveals her position, expresses her anguish and attempts to reconcile her internal conflicts in the presence of herselfs, the three other people, and the audience as reader or spectator. Kennedy presents this set up to the audience via repetitious monologues and in doing so "has carefully forged an emotional bridge that one cannot avoid crossing, regardless of race, age or sex" (Hatch and Shine, Recent 334) She has provided audiences with a detailed account of the impact of racism upon an individual.

Even though Kennedy does not adopt Womanism as a label, she admits that her work does meet the criteria. "If you are a daughter or have children you could be womanist," she explains when addressing the label (Kennedy, Lecture). She believes these roles inspire sensibilities that make production of work that follows Womanist Dramatic criteria possible.²

As a creative theorist, Kennedy is a part of a tradition of Black female playwrights who use art as propaganda and meet Womanist Dramatic criteria. Traditional theorists and other creative theorists' textual conversations inspire the production of such works. Like these other playwrights, Kennedy develops a unique theoretical approach in creative

¹ Testimony is an important element of spiritual growth, particularly in the black church. It involves standing before everyone and telling ones story. In the storytelling the speaker admits to strength, weaknesses, challenges and victories. It is a form of release that empowers the spirit in the presence of the community

² Bonner and Shange's works exhibit these sensibilities and meet the criteria. But there is not enough space in this analysis to provide as detailed an interpretation as the one that appears here. However, I am confident that the interpretations of these texts in other sections of this analysis will offer a consistent interpretation that accesses these criteria even though they are addressing other aspects of Womanist Dramatic Discourse.

form by which to empower oppressed individuals and groups. Such an approach leads to another important aspect of a theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse.

CHAPTER 4 DRAMATIC THEORY

There are two types of Dramatic Theory, spoken languages, apparent in the development of African American Theatre, which directly relates to social, political and economic development in the Black community.

Traditional Theory¹

Traditional theory involves essays, speeches and other traditional forms of writing that offer a theoretical approach to improving the conditions in which African Americans practice art and which impacts the way we live in America.

W.E.B. DuBois initiated the first conversations concerning the development of African American Theatre. He was “an activist, historian, economist, novelist, poet, and playwright, as well as founder of a drama company, the KRIGWA players, which performed Black plays” (Baraka, “Not Just Survival” 39). He developed some of his most compelling arguments in the form of speeches, essays and articles that “advocated ‘a drama written by Negroes, produced by Negroes and supported by Negroes,’ a true national theater” (Baraka, “Not Just Survival” 39). DuBois founded his argument on the

¹ *How Males fit Into Womanism*

All of the traditional theorists I refer to in this analysis are male yet they exhibit womanist ideas. For example DuBois and Baraka’s artistic solutions contain elements of Kuntu Drama as outlined by Paul Carter Harrison. Kuntu Drama can be closely linked to Womanism because of its spiritual content. Kuntu drama as a definition fits part 3 of the womanist definition. All of the traditional theorists address womanist concerns, but most importantly they inspire the womanist drama production that places woman at the center and addresses the same concerns discussed by the men from a female perspective.

premise of the negative implications of Minstrel shows,² which evolved out of White American's distorted perceptions of Black Americans. DuBois believed that Black citizens must take charge of the ways we are perceived by writing, producing and supporting our own work.

DuBois wrote several articles and gave many speeches for developing strategies for a Negro Theatre ethic. In February 1926 he published a questionnaire³ regarding the long controversy "within and without the Negro race as to just how the Negro should be treated in art—how he should be pictured by writers and portrayed by artists" (DuBois, "Questionnaire" 165). In this publication, the question arises in response to the myths created about African Americans by White Americans which have "contended that while the individual portraits may be true and artistic, the net result to American Literature to date is to picture twelve million Americans as prostitutes, thieves and fools and that such 'freedom' in art is miserably unfair" (DuBois, "Questionnaire" 165). DuBois argues that such incessant negative depictions "is the kind of thing, indeed which might be effective in preventing many excellent Negro writers from speaking any truth which might be

² For a visual of minstrel images refer to Appendix C. Other texts that provide additional information on blackface minstrelsy include: The ghost walks : a chronological history of Blacks in show business, 1865-1910 ©1988 by Henry T. Sampson or Inside the minstrel mask : readings in nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy © 1996 edited by Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara.

³ The specific questions asked in the questionnaire include: 1) When the artist, black or white, portrays Negro characters is he under any obligations or limitations as to the sort of character he will portray? 2) Can any author be criticized for painting the worst or the best characters of the group? 3) Can publishers be criticized for refusing to handle novels that portray Negroes of education and accomplishment, on the ground that these characters are no different from white folk and therefore not interesting? 4) What are Negroes to do when they are continually painted at their worst and judged by the public as they are painted? 5) Does the situation of the educated Negro in America with its pathos, humiliation and tragedy call for artistic treatment at least as sincere and sympathetic as "Porgy" received? 6) Is not the continual portrayal of the sordid, foolish and criminal among Negroes convincing the world that this and this alone is really and essentially Negroid, and preventing white artists from knowing any other types and preventing black artists from daring to paint them? 7) Is there not a real danger that young colored writers will be tempted to follow the popular trend in portraying Negro character in the underworld rather than seeking to

considered unpleasant" (Van Vecten qtd in DuBois, "Questionnaire" 165). Such a prospect would be detrimental to Negroes according to DuBois. In his 1926 speech, "Criteria of Negro Art", he explains that "...as artists we face our own past as a people [. . .] a realization of that past, of which for long years we have been ashamed, for which we have apologized [. . .] this same past is taking on form, reality and in a half shame-faced way we are beginning to be proud of it" (DuBois, "Criteria" 292). Baraka encourages artists to use this past as inspiration and not as a source of shame. He explains that:

. . . it is the bounden duty of black America to begin this great work of the creation of *Beauty*, of the preservation of *Beauty*, of the realization of *Beauty*, and we must use in this work all the methods that men have used before [. . .] he has used the *Truth* – not for the sake of truth, not as a scientist seeking truth, but as one upon whom *Truth* eternally thrusts itself as the highest handmaid of imagination, [. . .] *Goodness* – goodness in all its aspects of justice, honor and right" (emphasis mine, DuBois, ("Criteria" 296).

DuBois argues that by using Beauty, Truth and Goodness Negro artists can use Art as propaganda that inspires these sensibilities within the community and convince the White America of the humanity of Black Americans. He expresses that:

...all Art is propaganda and ever must be. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda (DuBois, "Criteria" 296).

This example exhibits the ways in which artistic and cultural development is theorized in the medium of a speech/article. This form of theory is more widely accepted because of its Western structure of theorizing and has proven to be acknowledged as a powerful tool in developing African American Theatre.

paint the truth about themselves and their own social class? – DuBois, W.E.B., "Questionnaire" *Crisis*. February 1926.

Womanist Dramatic Discourse initiates an analysis of traditional theorists like DuBois and uncovering the call and response he engages with creative theorists like Marita Bonner leads us to identifying existing weapons and creating new ones to assist us in the ever-present war for the right to self-determination artistically and politically. We will investigate this exchange in more detail following an analysis of creative theory.

Creative Theory

Creative theory involves artistic forms of expressing ideas such as playwriting, poetry, song, dance, etc. These mediums of expression offer a theoretical approach to improving the conditions in which African Americans practice art and advance politically in America.

Creative theory is rooted in African Philosophy in which the message is traditionally performed using song, dance, storytelling, art, etc. Traditional theory rooted in Western thought dictates the message in the form of speech, essay, articles, etc. Creative theory expects audience participation whereas traditional theory expects the audience to remain silent until the speech is over. Neither theoretical approach is wrong or bad but I find that creative theory and its African roots and the site of the exchange between the two theories are a profoundly interesting area for further research.

One example of a creative theory is Marita Bonner's The Purple Flower, which tells the story of a community of working-class people, the Us, and their pursuit for a higher status. The community is divided into groups based on gender, age, color and belief. The women are the foundation of the community but the men speak for the community. The young are distrustful of the old, feeling that the old have failed them in the past. Their divisions amongst one another prevent them from fighting the White Devils, the ones who oppress them. It is not until they collectively recognize their

oppressor that they are able to unite and empower themselves by returning to an African tool of empowerment, conjuring, which inspires action: bloody revolution. At the end of the play the oppressed group, the Us, are listening for the opportunity to revolt against the White Devils as viciously as they have been attacked and oppressed.

As a creative theory The Purple Flower artistically identifies and interprets hegemonic domination in society. She identifies a dominant class in the Sundry White Devils and a subordinate class in the US's (Bonner 207). She describes the White Devils explaining, “they must be artful little things with soft wide eyes as you would expect to find in an angel. Soft hair that flops around their horns. Their horns glow red all the time—now with blood—now with eternal fire—now with deceit—now with unholy desire [. . .] they are artful little things full of artful movements and artful tricks [. . .] Sometimes they dance as if they were men—with dignity—erect [. . .] they are artful dancers on the *Thin-Skin-of-Civilization*” (Bonner 207). The White Devils present themselves as a more civilized culture and therefore have the rights to hold the position of higher class. She describes the US's explaining that “they can be as white as the White Devils, as brown as the earth, as black as the center of a poppy. They may look as if they were something or nothing” (Bonner 207). The US can only be described in comparison to the White Devils who are so splendid in their “civilization” the US are unfairly disproportionate in their ability to measure up. Such a description offers an excellent interpretation of racist ideology in America with the White Devils representing White America as the dominant class and the US representing Black America as a subordinate class.

Bonner identifies the impact racism has had upon the subordinate class by acknowledging colorisms amongst the US. She offers color-coded descriptions of the US. For example, “*There comes up the road, a middle-aged well-brown man, a lighter-brown middle-aged woman, a medium light brown girl, beautiful as a browned peach and a slender, tall, bronzy brown youth who walks with his head high.*” The color references in describing the US indicate that there is a hierarchy based on color as the lighter browned girl is described more desirably than any of the others (Bonner 208). This exhibits an internalized racism.

Another prevalent internal division within the US is generational. Each us is described as Old, Young or Middle-Aged and their opinions on how to get up the Hill vary depending upon their age. The following excerpt is an exchange between OLD US, YOUNG US and CORNERSTONE who is a Middle-Aged US.

OLD MAN – I want to tell you all something! The Us can’t get up the road unless we work! [. . .]

A YOUNG US – You had better sit down before someone knocks you down! They told us that when your beard was sprouting.

CORNERSTONE (to YOUTH) – Do not be so stupid! Speak as if you had respect for that beard!

A YOUNG US – We have! But we get tired of hearing “you must work” when we know the Old Us build practically every inch of that hill and are yet Nowhere [. . .]

CORNERSTONE – It was not time then.

OLD MAN – Here comes a Young Us who has been reading in the books! He’ll tell us what the books say about getting Somewhere [. . .]

YOUNG MAN – I’m through! I do not need these things! They’re no good! [. . .] There isn’t anything in one of these books that tells Black US how to get around White Devils.

OLD MAN – I thought the books would tell us how!

YOUNG MAN – No! The White Devils wrote the books themselves. You know they aren't going to put anything like that in there! (Bonner 209)

The US, coming from different generations and perspectives are unable to agree on how to best get up the Hill. The young are distrustful of the old and they middle-aged basically referees the exchanges. The generational division prevents them from getting up the Hill.

The setting of the play identifies the physicality of racism in class division. “The stage is divided horizontally into two sections, upper and lower, by a thin board” or the Thin-Skin-of-Civilization (Bonner 207). The upper section represents the upper class (Whites, in racist/racial terms) while the lower section represents the lower class, Blacks. The thin board is the color line that divides us. She explains that *“the main action takes place on the upper stage.. The light is never quite clear on the lower stage but its is bright enough for you to perceive that sometimes the action that takes place on the upper stage in duplicated on the lower”* (Bonner 207). This indicates that the racist ideals expressed and performed within White America have become imitated within Black culture, which is again exemplified in terms of colorism/racism.

As the play opens the conflict between the US and the White Devils, and they way the US deal with that conflict is revealed. The story begins as

the US's are having a siesta beside a brook that runs down the Middle of the valley. As usual they rest with their backs toward Nowhere and their faces toward Somewhere. The WHITE DEVILS are seen in the distance on the hillside. As you see them, a song is borne faintly to your ears from the hillside.

The WHITE DEVILS are saying:

You stay where you are!

We don't want you up here!

If you come you'll be on par

With all we hold dear.

So stay—stay—stay—

Yes stay where you are!

A LITTLE RUNTY US – Hear that, don’t you?

ANOTHER US (lolling over on his back and chewing a piece of grass) - I ain’t studying ‘bout them devils. When I get ready to go up that hill—I’m going! (he rolls over on his side and exposes a slender brown body to the sun) Right now, I’m going to sleep (and he forthwith snores) (Bonner 208).

In this excerpt Bonner critiques the consent to domination that the Us display. Each us individually desires to get up the Hill but none, to that point had actively pursued it. She suggests as the play continues that in order for oppressed individuals to change their condition it takes a collective will.

Bonner offers the possibility of collective will occurring by identifying a mutual enemy. After many years of trying to elevate in status using every available legal means the US’s finally unite to target one particular White Devil which implies a revolt against all White Devils (Bonner 211-212). This identifying a common enemy inspires a new movement that calls for a bloody revolution.

Bonner acknowledges that this change will come from many influences. This is exhibited in “the US toiled to give dust for the body, books to guide the body, gold to clothe the body. Now they need blood” (Bonner 212). In her text, Bonner theorizes that oppressed people must use all of the accessible tools to dismantle oppressive institutions. She also explains in her text that a bloody revolution is necessary in cases where violence and economic exploitation work together to subjugate oppressed people. She theorizes that blood is required retribution when blood has been shed.

The Purple Flower is not simply a surrealistic interesting story about the conflicts between two opposing groups. It offers solutions for dismantling racist systems of oppression using an artistic form. Such is a creative theory.⁴

Each of these plays interpreted in this analysis uses surrealism to address issues related to oppression and offers solutions of empowerment that alters the physical and spiritual essence individually and collectively. In the next section I will discuss traditional theory and creative theory together and explain how even though they may be talking about different subjects on the surface, they work together to create a space where they discuss similar subjects beneath the surface. Such interaction creates a space where possibilities emerge.

⁴ Each play could be interpreted in such detail to discuss its relevance as creative theory but there is not enough space or time to provide as an involved analysis as the one presented here. Yet the creative theory in each play is apparent in the interpretations I provide for each in other sections.

CHAPTER 5 DISCOURSE

Call and Response

Call and Response is an important aspect of African-American cultural communication. It is a practice commonly observed in musical styles and expressions developing out of African audience traditions¹ (Hatch, “Here Comes Everybody” 152). According to Hatch, “African religious ritual and Afro-American gospel tradition share three attributes: communally active participation (congregation/audience); collective improvisational performance within the ritual; and shared belief that the ritual (ceremony/performance) will legitimate realities that are individually and socially efficacious. These three attributes are found in the Afro-American church and later in their theatre,” such is the nature of call and response between African American theatre theorists and African American artists (Hatch, “Here Comes Everybody” 152). In this analysis of call and response the theorists are calling out to the artists (audience) to create art for social change. The audience or artist responds by developing works that explain which social changes are necessary and how to achieve them. They both interact

¹ By audience tradition I am referring to the ways in which people practice viewing a performance. There are specific cultural differences in audience response to performance. For example, European audiences tend to view performance from a distance, in silence until a noticeable break or the end of the performance at which time they acknowledge acceptance or rejection of the message by clapping or walking out. African audiences on the other hand participate in the performance by singing along or talking back. They often do not wait for a noticeable break before interjecting. The participation of the audience is expected in African performance patterns. Such an audience tradition has been documented with African American audiences, which shows the survival of yet another African cultural practice.

simultaneously, overlapping in speech and ideas similarly to the African audience tradition.

Therefore, call and response is the fundamental communication amongst traditional and creative theorists to create myths and realities for the benefit of African American artistic and political development² on one level. It is an exchange and validation process that connects multiple discourses³ on another level, all of which agree that there is power in words and images.

Such a concept is eloquently articulated in DuBois 1926 speech to the NAACP and Amiri Baraka's 1965 manifesto as both outline the potential in using art as propaganda. Each work makes a call for active communal participation, collective improvisational performance and a belief that art will legitimate Negroes/Blacks as a people and create a space in which blackness becomes holy and no longer derogatory. The creative theorists respond to these respective calls and thereby participate in a Womanist dramatic tradition. The relationship between the two theoretical styles has been instrumental in developing the myths and realities that empower and inspires people of color on many

² In addressing artistic and political development I must refer back to the historical eras outlined previously. The seven documented eras of African American Theatre history can be documented in terms of :1) linear timeline of what happened first, 2) the political struggle of people of color as they are artistically portrayed over a period of time, 3) the content of the work produced during that time which document the impact these portrayals had on the social development of Black people 4) the ways Black people resisted or assimilated in artistic endeavors revealing their acceptance or rejection in mainstream America. I find that each era not only gives a historical account of the art produced, it is a telling indication of what occurs politically during the time the works are produced. Therefore, the call and response between traditional and creative theorists is a fundamental form of communication on an artistic and political level.

³ By multiple discourses I am referring to what I call the spoken languages (creative theory and traditional theory) and the metalanguages (Bantu and Euro Philosophical Traditions) within the interior language (Womanist Dramatic Discourse). All of these elements provide the tools needed to discuss a broader range of concerns. The conversations are occurring in these separate areas but they are also occurring amongst/between these areas. All of which, in varying ways address the power of images in discussing the concerns of a specific community.

levels. The merging of these two forms of theory create a space in which Womanist Dramatic Discourse takes place.⁴

Just as Womanism is the intersection where Feminism, Black Liberation, Labor and Gay Rights movements meet Womanist Dramatic Discourse is the intersection where creative theory and traditional theory meet as a critical site for theorizing. For example, Womanism is the space where these intersections can be deconstructed and re-defined in order to dismantle patriarchy and empower oppressed individuals and marginal groups. It begins with the individual which is sometimes necessary in order to establish the function of the collective (Collins 280). Such empowerment comes with self-definition and self-realization as “naming oneself and defining ideas that count as truth are empowering acts” for those damaged by years of silencing (Collins 237). Its relevance and power in developing African American Theatre lies in its ability to engage multiple discourses. Likewise, Womanist Dramatic Discourse is a space where conversations/intersections can be de-constructed and re-defined in order to dismantle the use of images (theatrical images specifically) as a tool for oppression and use those images as tools of empowerment individually and collectively. Just as Womanism begins with the individual to establish a collective function, Womanist Dramatic Discourse begins with the analysis of individual parts of the discourse, which eventually leads to the overall discourses. This approach is empowering because it addresses the historical marginalization of non-Western ideas. For example Womanist Dramatic Discourse

⁴ Both theories address similar issues but they use different mediums of expression. Traditional theorists address the need for political development and introduce artistic criteria as a method of spreading the idea and achieving the goal. Creative theorists on the other hand use this artistic criteria as guidelines in developing art forms and spread the ideas to audiences by indirectly referring to ideas expressed by traditional theorists and developing strategies of their own regarding social and political development.

allows for interpretations of text using African Philosophy with or without Western Thought. African Philosophy, specifically Bantu Philosophy, has credence in Womanist Dramatic Discourse without needing validation from institutions founded upon Euro Philosophical principles. This leads to the self-realization and self-determination Womanism inspires within individuals which can inspire African American Theatre development in theory and practice as an entire body of knowledge. Therefore, the nature of call and response in Womanist Dramatic Discourse is a critical site for theorizing for the purpose of developing African American Theatre as a more effective form of art as propaganda.

What creative and traditional discourse reveals

A theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse between creative and traditional theory also reveals how the use of multiple discourse has been instrumental in the development of African American art and the community. Marita Bonner's The Purple Flower (1928), Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro (1962), and Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow Is Enuf (1975) perform Womanist Dramatic Discourse by engaging spoken languages and metalanguages that empower oppressed individuals and groups. Call and response between creative and traditional theorists have been instrumental in African American theatre development.

The Purple Flower (1928) Marita Bonner⁵

Motivated by the lingering negativity of the Minstrel image W.E. B. DuBois made a speech in 1926 to the NAACP.⁶ DuBois realized the impact of the Minstrel image upon the perceptions and expectations of Negroes. Minstrel shows portrayed Negroes as culturally dependent, incompetent, ignorant, lazy, and unworthy of basic human rights. Such perceptions influenced legislation, which impeded the progress of Black Americans in various arenas.

DuBois 1926 speech to the NAACP called for the use of art as propaganda in opposition to the minstrel image and its negative results. Marita Bonner responded with The Purple Flower (1928). DuBois claims that “we who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans can not” (DuBois, “Criteria” 290). Marita Bonner displays this vision in a surrealistic portrayal of race and class and various internal group divisions in The Purple Flower. Such divisions include the WHITE DEVILS in Somewhere vs. the US’s who are Nowhere (class), OLD US vs. YOUNG US (generational), and internal color hierarchies suggested by light, brown and dark US (racism/colorism) (Bonner 208). These divisions display the deep impact of oppression from various angles. They prevent the US from progressing but not from dreaming as “we have within us as a race new

⁵ The Purple Flower tells the story of a community of working-class people, the Us, and their pursuit for a higher status. The community is divided into groups based on gender, age, color and belief. The women are the foundation of the community but the men speak for the community. The young are distrustful of the old, feeling that the old have failed them in the past. Their divisions amongst one another prevent them from fighting the White Devils, the ones who oppress them. It is not until they collectively recognize their oppressor that they are able to unite and empower themselves by returning to an African tool of empowerment, conjuring, which inspires action: bloody revolution. At the end of the play the oppressed group, the Us, are listening for the opportunity to revolt against the White Devils as viciously as they have been attacked and oppressed.

⁶ In this speech, titled “Criteria of Negro Art” DuBois basically outlined the ways in which images had been used against Negroes up to that point. He encouraged the production of Truthful art that showed the humanity of Negroes displaying all faults and perfection. He urged artists not to be afraid to tell the truth, for it is the only way to truly fight the negativity of the lingering minstrel.

stirrings; stirrings of the beginning of a new appreciation of joy, of a new desire to create, of a new will to be” according to DuBois (“Criteria” 292). Bonner acknowledges these new stirrings as restlessness represented in the US’s futile attempt to leave Nowhere (the valley) to get to Somewhere (highest hill) having “started out by merely asking permission to go up. They tilled the valley; they cultivated it and made it as beautiful as it is. They built roads and houses even for the WHITE DEVILS. They let them build the houses then they were knocked back down into the valley” (Bonner 208). This is one such example of the type of hegemonic domination that DuBois refers to in his 1926 NAACP speech and Marita Bonner responds to in The Purple Flower 1928.

Another issue that DuBois addresses in his 1926 speech is the internal division within the black community, which Bonner identifies and explains in The Purple Flower. For example, she Bonner addresses generational division among the Us in response to DuBois’ observations. DuBois mentions the growing awareness of the Negro youth which is “a different kind of Youth, because in some new way it bears this mighty prophecy on its breast, with a new realization of itself, with new determination for all mankind” (DuBois, “Criteria” 292). As a member of this youth, Bonner acknowledges the difference in each generation’s approach to racial and class progression symbolized by the internal conflicts within the Us between the Old Us and the Young Us mediated by the Middle Aged Woman Us who is called CORNERSTONE. This concept is exemplified in the following passage:

OLD MAN – I want to tell you all something! The Us can’t get up the road unless we work! [. . .]

A YOUNG US – You had better sit down before someone knocks you down! They told us that when your beard was sprouting.

CORNERSTONE (to YOUTH) – Do not be so stupid! Speak as if you had respect for that beard!

A YOUNG US – We have! But we get tired of hearing “you must work” when we know the Old Us build practically every inch of that hill and are yet Nowhere [. . .]

CORNERSTONE – It was not time then. (Bonner 209)

In revealing these internal communal conflicts Bonner displays “a realization of that past, of which for long years we have been ashamed, for which we have apologized” (DuBois, “Criteria” 292). Instead of offering an apology Marita Bonner offers a solution.

Bonner denounces the need for apology and instead makes a call of her own in the text. DuBois claims “it is the bounden duty of black America to begin this great work of the creation of beauty, of the preservation of Beauty, of the realization of Beauty, and we must use in this work all the methods that men have used before” (DuBois, “Criteria” 296). Thus Bonner calls for “dust from which all things came [. . .] books that Men learn by. Gold that Men live by. Blood that lets men live” (Bonner 211). In this call and response Bonner acknowledges the necessity of the work encouraged by Booker T. Washington and education encouraged by W.E.B. DuBois. But she also acknowledges that it will take more than elevated financial status to make social progress. She, in fact, calls for a revolution of blood. In the text she claims that

a New Man must be born for the New Day. Blood is needed for birth. Blood is needed for the birth. Come out, White Devil. [. . .] It may be my blood – it may be your blood – but everything has been given. The Us toiled to give dust for the body, books to guide the body, gold to clothe the body. Now they need blood for birth so the New Man can live. You have taken blood. You must give blood (Bonner 212).

Using art as propaganda as DuBois suggests, Bonner makes a bold call by ending the play with all of the characters listening to determine if it is time for a revolution (Bonner 212). The interchange of call and response between DuBois and Bonner indicate

the beginning of the time of revolution as the Womanist Dramatic tradition developed out of this movement. DuBois was the first to publicly address the use of art as propaganda and Bonner was the first to use a play as a call for social revolution without the subtlety of social protest popular at the time. Womanist Dramatic tradition develops out of this idea of revolution rather than protest.⁷

For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow is Enuf (1975)
by Ntozake Shange⁸

Similarly an exchange between Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange can be identified and interpreted as a pivotal influence in the development of Womanist Dramatic Theoretical Tradition within African American Theatre as part of a Womanist Dramatic Theoretical Discourse. Amiri Baraka, formerly known as Leroi Jones, wrote a 1965 manifesto, titled “The Black Revolutionary Theatre,”⁹ which sparked the movement that changed black art forever (Pinkney 141). This manifesto was a response to every artistic and political call made up to that historical moment. It was also a call to all people who shared Baraka’s view of integration and assimilation as an attack against blackness. His call led to diverse responses from those who agreed that it was time for

⁷ Social Protest deals mainly with expressing discomfort with conditions in subtle ways. The poetry of the Harlem Renaissance provides excellent examples of social protest. Social Revolution, on the other hand, not only expresses discomfort, it demands results. Poetry of the Black Arts/Black Power era provides excellent examples of social revolution. For further info see Dr. Mikell Pinkney’s text: The Theoretical Development of African American Theatre and Drama.

⁸ For Colored Girls is a collection of poems performed by seven women of color who articulate their individual and collective experience as Black women in America. Although the women move between varying emotional states they find solace in song and dance as they celebrate and grieve simultaneously. The play begins with distress as each woman silently freezes into a pose and it ends with victory as each woman chants and dances. It is a story about surviving, healing, connecting and empowering. It is not about bashing black men, it is simply about making emotional sense for black women who have been historically ignored in struggles against oppression. In the end it is the understanding of their relationship with god, each woman’s self, and one another that gives them what they need.

⁹ In this essay Baraka basically attacks White America’s refusal to acknowledge how deeply embedded racism is within the society. He also outlines new politically militant criteria for Black art which includes:

Blacks to fight back in the development of a theatre that “must accuse and attack because it is a theatre of victims” which was predominated by Black men’s attack of white men in an artistic arena (Baraka, “Black Revolutionary 4). Such a male-centered attack limited female voices in the Black Revolutionary theatre but inspired a Womanist revolutionary theatre documented by Ntozake Shange’s response in For Colored Girls . . . (1975). Even though Womanist theatre appears to pre-exist this period it can be clearly documented in this era, specifically in Shange’s choreopoem. Although this text is not a direct response to Baraka’s 1965 manifesto its creation is definitely influenced by Baraka’s call for a Black Revolutionary theatre therefore marking yet another influential moment in African American theatre development.

Baraka’s manifesto “outlined new politically militant criteria for African-American Drama” which included the four fundamentals prescribed by DuBois¹⁰ in the Harlem Renaissance (Pinkney 141). Shange’s work practices this criteria in a way that shifts the gaze from the tensions between black men and white men as the center of the revolution and places “colored” women directly in the center of the discourse from which they were previously excluded. This Womanist approach succeeded in the continued development of a Revolutionary Theatre within an African American tradition.

Baraka claimed “the Revolutionary Theatre should force change, it should be change...’ on all levels but directly focused on the social status and conditions of Black

¹⁰ DuBois Four Fundamental Principles for Negro Art: 1) ***About us***. That is, they must have plots which reveal Negro life as it is. 2) ***By us***. This is, they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just what it means to be a Negro today. 3) ***For us***. That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval. 4) ***Near us***. The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro people. (Pinkney 109)

Americans" (Baraka, "Black Revolutionary" 4). For Colored Girls . . . forced change by establishing a new form called "the choreopoem, exploring the mean realities of life for seven African American women who have given their love unconditionally to men who degrade and abuse them" giving agency to previously silenced Black female voices (Hatch & Shine, Recent 363). This form expanded Baraka's concept by including a black female perspective. Baraka's approach was an attempt to "'EXPOSE' the racial ills of Western society and teach Whites the ramifications of hatred and denial of 'the Supremacy of the Spirit'" (Baraka, "Black Revolutionary" 4). Shange's approach exposed the impact of these racial ills upon the black community and attempted to teach Black men as well as Western society the ramifications of hatred and denial black women experience in being the cornerstone of the community. This is exemplified in the following passage:

i am really colored & really sad sometimes and you hurt me
 more than i ever danced outta/ into oblivion isnt far enuf to get outta this/
 i am ready to die like a lily in the desert/ & i cdnt let you in on it cuz i didn't know/
 here is what i have/ poems/ big thighs/ lil tits/ & so much love/ will you take it
 from me this one time/ please this is for you [. . .] /I'm finally bein real/ no longer
 symmetrical & impervious to pain (Shange 44).

This excerpt speaks to the impact of hegemonic domination upon black women in attempting to articulate the depth of their pain to black men and Western society. This aspect of oppression was previously overlooked, understated, or one-sided in explanations voiced in earlier Revolutionary works.

Shange's metalanguage¹¹ and spoken language is powerful and follows the protocol of the 1965 manifesto. Baraka explained that "the language will be anybody's, but

¹¹ Addressed metalanguage in terms of Bantu in the Womanist/Womanism section.

tightened by the poets backbone. And even the language must show what the facts are in this consciousness epic. We will talk about the world, and the preciseness with which we are able to summon the world, will be our art” (Baraka, “Black Revolutionary 5). It is with such language and preciseness that Shange constructs For Colored Girls... as a poem including various regional dialects, accents, and languages to engage Shange’s discourse with Baraka and the world (Hatch & Shine, Recent 363). “We must take dreams and give them reality,” according to Baraka and Shange appears to agree as she structures For Colored Girls... as a collective dream with seven women representative of the colors red, purple, yellow, orange, brown, blue, and green (Baraka, “Black Revolutionary 4). None of the women have names outside of their color. This is also symptomatic of colorisms as Black women tend to be judged by their complexions. This strategy is similar to the symbolic names used by Marita Bonner and Adrienne Kennedy to represent multiple members of the community and multiple consciousnesses within the self. The women are so connected in the delivery and stories of the choreopoem that it is difficult to tell if they are individual women or are multiple consciousness of the same woman bearing different marks upon her soul. It is through this dreams reconciliation of reality that Shange makes emotional sense for the woman/women in her text.

Baraka called the revolutionary theater a theatre of victims by which everyone would see through the eyes of the victimized (Baraka, “Black Revolutionary” 5). For Colored Girls... consists of a chorus of victims each singing her song of oppression “they decry their condition, pleading for the respect that is their due” (Hatch & Shine, Recent 363). The stories in the text accomplish Baraka’s protocol,

What we show must cause the blood to rush, so that pre-Revolutionary temperaments will be bathed in this blood, and it will cause their deepest souls to

move, and they find themselves tensed and clenched, even ready to die, at what the soul has been taught. We will scream and cry, murder, run through the streets in agony, if it means some soul will be moved, moved to actual life understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be. We are preaching virtue and feeling, and a natural sense of the self in the world” Baraka demands in his manifesto, calling to action all who will hear (Baraka, “Black Revolutionary” 5).

Ntozake Shange hears and produces a work bathed in blood speaking directly about the violence inflicted upon the black female body under the guise of love via rape, abortion, and ever-present threat of pending violence (Shange 17-23). In this work she created a manifesto that denounced this violence and offered an internal remedy in the women’s chant in the end “i found god in myself and i loved her fiercely/i loved her fiercely.” This inspires a powerful sense of worth and dignity among black women and within the black community. In her response to Baraka’s call for a theater of victims, Shange creates a theater of victors. She promotes the realization that we do not have to look outside of ourselves to find peace and progress that we must, in fact, look within and first find love of self and amongst each other by returning to the Spirit. Such an approach is the heart of Womanist dramatic tradition.

The call and response between these theorists exemplify the power of language and conversation in African American culture, specifically in terms of theatre. Using different approaches each theorist contributes valuable ideas and strategies for the benefit of African American cultural development. Together they create a space where theory and practice coexist. It begins with the theory of what should be done, continues with the production of that theory in the form playwriting, and then leads to the reality of that idea in the performing of the work.

Analysis of this site where theory and practice work together is an excellent area for further research.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

It is my hope that introducing a theory of Womanist Dramatic Discourse will create a space where new possibilities of theorizing emerge. By dissecting the theoretical framework into parts I aim to show how its components make use of existing theories and theoretical frameworks like Feminism, and traditional theory and identified Bantu and creative theory as valid tools of interpretation. Womanist Dramatic Discourse also leaves room to enhance these existing theories by finding ways of making them more accessible to a larger audience.

In this analysis I am also advocating further research in the areas of Womanism, to inspire those who may or may not view Womanism as a valid concept. I am in favor of finding ways of interpreting literature and theory using womanism that are applicable to diverse understandings. I find that Womanism is capable of being used in this way and should be used more effectively.

I am also advocating further research in the areas of Womanist Drama using the criteria outlined in that section of this analysis. By using the criteria and analyzing texts it would be interesting to discover the conversations occurring between creative theorists in these texts. I am certain that there is a wealth of knowledge to be discovered in such conversations as well as a wealth of knowledge that can be created by conversing in this way.

Further research in the area of Dramatic theory would outline and validate the difference in theoretical forms used by people of color. It would address the gestalt

nature of African Americans, specifically and provide a framework for discussing the ways we use our interior languages to express ourselves. In this section we begin to understand how our forms of expression have evolved and how to better recognize theory in diverse forms. It expands our expectations and ability to receive theory in every language.

I am profoundly interested in seeing further research in the area of Discourse, the call and response between traditional theorists and creative theorists. I am convinced that the exchange between the two has been the foundation of African American Theatre development and is the way to the future. We must uncover the treasures in this area in order to enrich our knowledge and understanding of ourselves and our culture.

In this analysis I have developed a theoretical framework, described its parts, its function and provided examples of why I think it is necessary. Overall this analysis offers Womanist Dramatic Discourse as an interior language encompassing spoken languages (traditional and creative theory) and metalanguages (African Philosophy and Western Thought) which inspire speech. It is my belief that we cannot be silenced if we recognize our access to possibilities in multiple forms of speech and create spaces through conversation where that speech is validated.

“Possibility is what moves us,” and Womanist Dramatic Discourse creates a multitude of possibilities for theoretical development in old and new forms, spoken and metlanguage and conversation (Baraka “In Search of”). It provides us with possibilities where we can speak in our own tongues and not fear persecution or rejection for doing so.

APPENDIX A GLOSSARY

African Philosophy – African systems of thought developed in Non-Western environments. (Examples in this text include Bantu Philosophy)

Artistic Work – refers to creative theory.

Bantu Philosophy – used in this paper in general terms as way of using a pre-colonial world-perception to exemplify an African Philosophy. Basically broken into Four Categories: Muntu (plural Bantu), Kintu (plural, Bintu), Hantu and Kuntu. The four categories are encompassed in NTU which can be equated to Western perceptions of God and the Universe, but a major difference lies in the connectedness of all things within NTU. Ways of moving between the four categories is called Nommo, word power. For a more detailed description of the terms refer to Jaheinz Jahn's Muntu and other ethno-philosophical texts that explain African religious principals. (this is a basic interpretation of Jahn's description of Bantu in Muntu.)

Black (African American) Theatre Theorists (traditional theorists)- intellectuals developing theories for social/political/artistic progress in the form of traditional essays/speeches. (Examples in this text include: W.E. B. DuBois, Amiri Baraka)

Colorism – an interiorized color consciousness that enables us to see the various shades of our complexion, hair texture, and physical features as others see us. (Canon 71) For more info see Kathy Russell Midge Wilson and Ronald Hall, The Color Complex (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992).

Creative Theory – theory in artistic form. (examples : The Purple Flower, Funnyhouse of a Negro, For Colored Girls . . .)

Hantu – time and place (Bantu term)

Interior language – the overall languages of the people, includes spoken language and metalanguage. (my interpretation of a term used by Wole Soyinka)

Kintu (plural **Bintu**) – things, the property of Muntu (Bantu term)

Kuntu – reality or mode (Bantu term)

Metalanguage – the subtle language, what typically inspires the direction of the spoken language, represents the sensibilities that inspire the thought that incite the speech. Examples in text includes: African Philosophy exhibited in Bantu and Western Thought exhibited in Feminism). I find that African metalanguage typically inspires creative theory whereas Western metalanguage typically inspires traditional theory. This also inspires how we hear and perceive speech. (my interpretation of a term used by Wole Soyinka)

Muntu (plural **Bantu**) – man, human being, the only category endowed with the power of speech (Bantu term)

Nommo – word magic, speech power, speech action, the spoken word which is endowed with the power of moving the universe (or moving within NTU) in order to effect all other categories. (Bantu term)

NTU – universe, God, the Source of all life (Bantu term)

Playwrights (creative theorists) – artists (artistic intellectuals) who create dramatic literature in various structures in an attempt to develop theoretical concepts in artistic form rather than a traditional theoretical form. (Examples in this text include: Alice Walker, Marita Bonner, Adrienne Kennedy, Lorraine Hansberry, Ntozake Shange).

Pragmatic functional art form – an art form that could express the internal anger and frustrations of African-Americans while at the same time utilizing their energies to create imaginative positive change. (Pinkney 110)

Scholarly Work – refers to traditional theory.

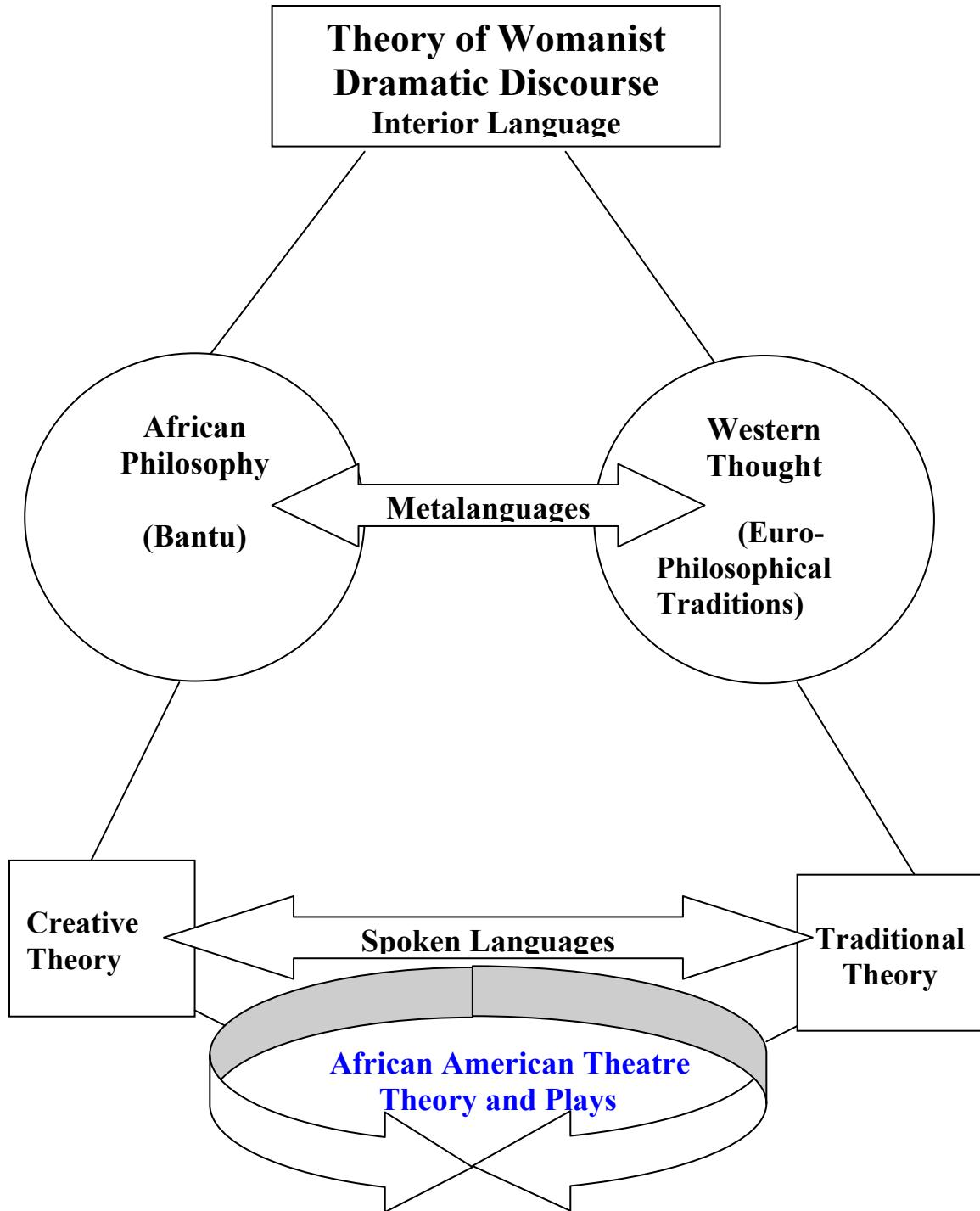
Spoken language – the surface language, what is typically spoken and heard aurally (on the surface). Examples in this analysis include: traditional theory and creative theory. (my interpretation of a term used by Soyinka)

Traditional Theory – theory in traditional essay or speech form. (Examples: DuBois 1926 Speech “Criteria of Negro Art,” Baraka’s 1965 Manifesto “The Revolutionary Theatre” etc.)

Western Thought – Western systems of thought developed in Western environments. (Examples in this text include American and European approaches to analysis)

Womanist Dramatic Discourse - inspired by Alice Walker’s term Womanism; a theory of call and response between traditional theory and creative theory which incorporates Western and Non-Western theoretical and cultural evolution through literature and performance.

APPENDIX B
WOMANIST DRAMATIC DISCOURSE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK



APPENDIX C
MINSTREL IMAGE

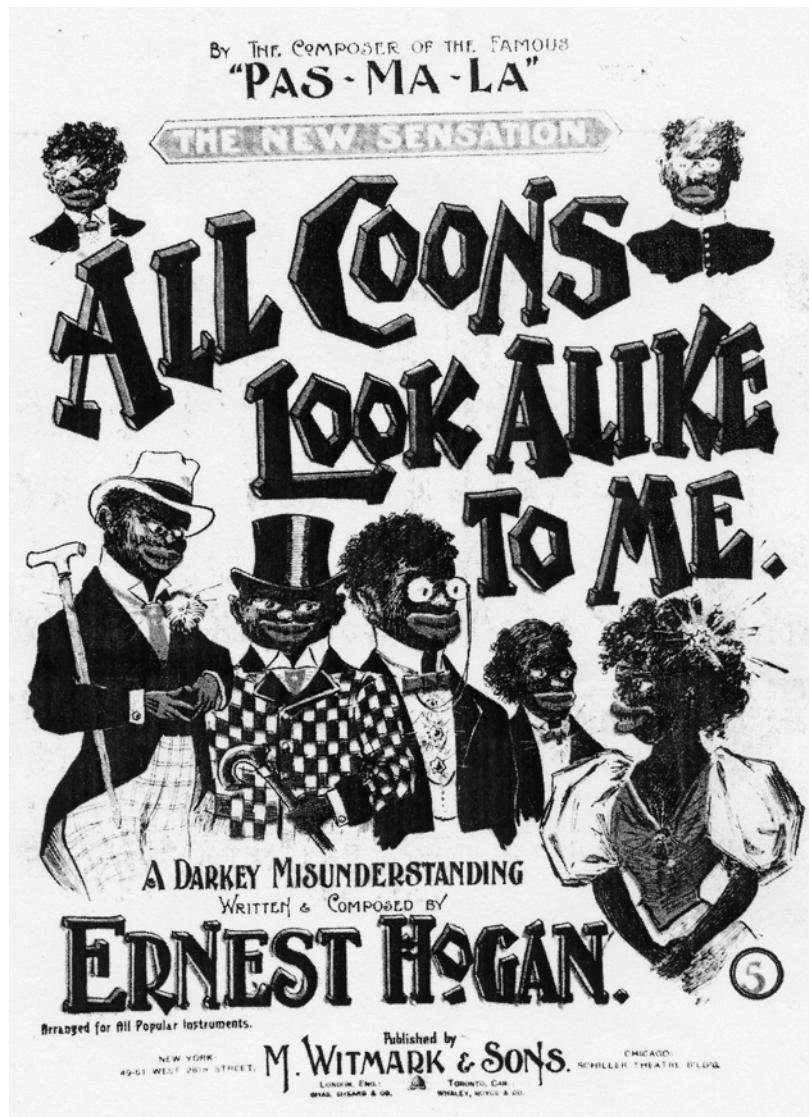


Image from:
Sampson, Henry T. The ghost walks : a chronological history of Blacks in show business, 1865-1910. Metuchen, N.J. : Scarecrow Press, 1988

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Monica T. White began her educational career at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in French from the University of North Florida. She is completing her Master of Arts in English focusing on Postcolonial Theory and African Diaspora Literature. She teaches Expository and Argumentative writing and Writing About Images and Identity in Literature in the English Department at University of Florida. She has directed several plays including August Wilson's Joe Turner's Come and Gone and was Assistant Director for the world premier of Ntozake Shange's most recent megapoem lavender lizards and lilac landmines: Layla's Dream. She will pursue a Ph.D. with a focus in theatre and performance studies within a postcolonial context.

This work is the first step in the direction of knocking down the barriers between theory and practice, material and spiritual understanding, and academic and creative writing.