in the ritual scene at the end. The play is not one of development but of a cumulative effect, which is intensified by the repetition of the theme from different individual perspectives.

Shange’s plays reveal an original and authentic Black female expression. By consciously rejecting the notion of the well-made play, she constructs before the audience stories of survival. The merging of African-American cultural expressions provides new spaces and forms and alternatives in the theatre. The plays discussed above show a marked attention to developing a no-plot form that is centered around personal narratives. The shifting of roles and characters subverts the notion of a univocal heroic subject. The climaxes in both the plays arrive not as a result of a confrontation or catastrophic event but in the transition from the impersonal to the personal, from the personal to the political. The catharsis in the play comes from the ritual celebration of blackness.

In Spell #7, Shange creates a racially segregated space, to acknowledge and attack those areas that denigrate Black people’s self-esteem. Shange allows her characters, particularly her female characters to dream of the possibilities of overcoming social and psychological limitations. Lily pretends to be Rapunzel, she says “i’m gonna simply brush my hair [...] i’m gonna alter my social & professional life dramatically [...]]” (90-91). Natalie too does the same, she states: “being a white
by dint of my will / is much more complicated than i thought it wd be / but i wanted to try it cuz so many men like white girls [...] so i thought if i waz a white girl for a day i might understand this better" (112). Natalie signifies on white women but realizes that the white girl is also a victim of the white man’s sexism, that “part of being a white girl is being absent” (112). A white girl’s whole life is about surviving “this culturally condoned incompetence”(113). She realizes that as a Black woman she has a complex which dates her humanness, so she reverts back to being a Black girl.

The stories of Sue – Jean and Fay reveal a life less ordinary and fraught with longing, loneliness and exploitation. Fay would do anything to have a good time Ross claims “fay tried to shove her flesh anywhere / she took off her hat / bummed a kool / swallowed somebody’s cognac/ and sat down / waitin /for a good time (87). Sue-Jean escapes her world through fantasy. These stories reveal the narrow choices that Black women have, to survive racism and sexism. Shange insists that there are less debilitating and more dignified means of survival than these and offers solutions in spiritual awakening and healing.

Bettina, Lily, Natalie and Maxine illustrate through their experiences in the theatre, how difficult it is for Black women to find roles and not stereotypical roles. Lily says in the opening exchange “i wish i cd get just one decent part” (Spell 77). Bettina comments on how most plays feature white women and if there are any roles left for Black women, they are stereotypical roles. She says “[...] if that director asks me to play it any blacker / i m gonna have to do it in a mammy dress” (78). Millie in
Trouble in Mind echoes a similar sentiment "only chance I get to dress up is offstage. I'll wear them baggy cotton dresses but damn if I'll wear another bandana" (141). Maxine reiterates in her conversation with Ross, how Black women get to play the whore more than any other role. She says, "all they want me to do is put my leg in my face / & smile" (Spell 87).

Shange's direct attack on sexism is found in Act Two, Lily ridicules white directors who underestimate and undermine the intelligence of Black women. Through their improvisation, they signify on white directors and turn them into stereotypes. The next improvisation in the act reveals how Black girls looking for decent jobs become a prey to men as "this brown woman from there might be a good idea [...] everybody knows that rich girls are hard to find [...]" (99). Lou's interjections that "everybody knows that nobody loves the blacks woman" like a white one or that "the black woman from there is not treated as a princess / as a jewel / a cherished lover" illustrate the worldview of men about Black women (101).

However Shange's characters resist being over-determined by Black or white men. They have learned to fight sexism and express themselves in their distinct ways. The altercations between the couples at the end of Act Two reveal that Black women are practical, sensible and independent. Bettina tells Alec, "i'm tired of having to take any & every old job to support us / you get to have artistic integrity & refuse parts that are beneath you" (Spell 105). She sums up "you mean / i shd understand that you the
greatest artist & i’m the trouper?” (Spell 109). This discrimination that Black women face from Black men compounds their alienation. Shange shows however that Black women’s instinct for survival has helped them to confront and cope with racism and sexism in unique ways.

Black women playwrights from Bonner to Shange display remarkable similarities in their approaches to plot and characterization. Plots are structured according to the demands of characterization. Interiority is often revealed through storytelling or monologues and through radical gestures such as avant-garde techniques that Kennedy employs or Shange’s choreopoems, which rely on the narrative rather than the dramatic mode. These temporary playwrights subvert the classic plot structure by refusing linearity. Classic plots are arranged to delineate the character’s growth and transformation. In the delineation of character, all of them expose not only the simultaneity of oppression but also locate the factors that have created her unique identity. An evaluation of these plays reveals the evolution of the Black woman from Rissa to Beneatha and also from Bonner to Shange. These playwrights thus ‘herstorize’ the presence of the Black woman and reveal her journey from slavery to self-hood.
Notes

1 Aristotle. Poetics. 14
67
3 Aristotle. Poetics. 26
Chapter 5

MUSIC AND SPECTACLE

Those who employ Spectacle to parade what is merely monstrous and not productive of fear have no share in the art of tragedy.

-Aristotle

We must move our theatre into the drama of our lives...cuz most black people have some music & movement in our lives ... this is why i find the most inspiring theater among us to be in the realms of music & dance.

-Shange

Music (melos) and spectacle (opsis) are conventionally accorded the status of being artistic options rather than being structurally significant. Ranked fifth and sixth in the hierarchy of dramatic elements, they are considered as “pleasurable accessories”. Melody is considered “the greatest” of these, while ‘spectacle’ is considered “an attraction” and “the least artistic of all the parts” (Aristotle 15).

Butcher notes that “the doctrine which asserted the unique imitative capacity of music, had for Aristotle its theoretical basis in this, that the external movements of
Theatre has multiple methods of conveying meaning and Black playwrights employ unique gestures chief among these being music and spectacle, to stimulate reflection and the collective memory. Black theatre has forged new metaphors for positing the experience of Black people through cultural signifiers. Shange in her introduction to Spell #7 quotes, “we do sing & dance. this is a cultural reality. this is why I find the most inspiring theatre among us to be in the realms of music & dance”(67). This emphasis on music and spectacle is significant, as it is these textural aspects that historicize and validate Black American and African cultural experiences in the theatre. Fabre quotes, “As an attempt to re-activate poetic, musical and gestural languages and systems of communication rising from specific community, black theatre is a process of structuring black cultural givens which are threatened (243).

Black women are “long- memoried women” who transfer and preserve their roots and heritage (Nichols, G. 3). They form a continuum through time and space and consider themselves as crucial links in the history of the race. Black women playwrights create spaces for validating and perpetuating these traditions through music, dance, symbolic gestures, spectacle and rituals. An important feature in their
plays, is the incorporation of these oral or gestural cultural forms, into written texts. Their plays thus become acts of collective self-definition that assert and affirm their positions in the theatre and the community. Bonner, Childress, Hansberry, Kennedy and Shange use these significant elements of Black cultural expression to create a unique and distinct form of theatre.

This chapter examines the ways in which these playwrights use music and spectacle not merely as ‘pleasurable accessories’ but as vital cultural signifiers that validate Black female expression. These elements are crucial in providing the creative space to amplify and encode meanings that are pertinent to their experience as Black women. They parade what Aristotle terms “merely monstrous” to capture cultural consciousness (Poetics 23). These elements manifest a Black woman’s worldview by revealing the world she lives in. By legitimizing this political and cultural reality through music, dance, ritual and spectacle, they subvert the gaze.

In these plays music and spectacle are complementary and are often used simultaneously for heightened effects. For purposes of analysis, since setting is a significant feature of spectacle which influences music, dance and ritual, it will be analyzed first in order to create an atmosphere and context in which specific forms of music and dance feature. Spectacle thus becomes a seminal medium that influences the playwright’s choice of music dance and ritual.
Settings in most of these plays are symbolic in that they affirm a significant Black presence through the arrangement of objects on stage, or their origin and nature. These plays are usually in urban settings delineated not only by concrete detail but also character’s speech and behaviour. The simultaneity of race and class is most evident in the relationship of character to setting. In the expressionistic or allegorical settings of Bonner and Kennedy, the political implications are even more effectively enacted. Regional colourations of North or South and their political implications are also expressed through the setting. Shange’s use of setting is contemporary and powerful in its use of objects and colours, just as the realistic settings of Childress and Hansberry are symbolic extensions of their themes.

Bonner reifies through her expressionistic play The Purple Flower, the determining factors of race, sex and class in a white hegemony. The carefully described setting amplifies the allegorical meanings inscribed in the text. Bonner gives elaborate directions under ‘setting’. “The stage is divided into two sections upper and lower, by a thin board [...] the light is never quite clear on the lower stage, but is bright enough for you to perceive that sometimes the action that takes place on the upper stage is duplicated on the lower” (191- 2). A little later in the directions, Bonner describes “the thin board” as “The Skin – of – Civilization” and adds pointedly that “A thought can drop you through”(192). The choreography suggests that “sometimes the actors get too vociferous – too violent – and they crack through the board and lie twisted and curled in mounds”. The lower stage with dim lighting
reveals "any numbers of mounds there, all twisted and broken and sometimes a "thrust of a white hand- a yellow one – one brown – one black" (192).

Bonner's staging of civilization as a thin skin, extends her philosophy that civilization as understood by Western dictates is as unreal, fragile and pervious as skin. A mere thought can change the lines of demarcation. Bonner illustrates this, in the course of the action, when a Young Us questions the wisdom of Old Woman in throwing a handful of dust into the pot. As a result of his thinking he and several Young Us's "crash through the Thin – Skin of – Civilization and will lie beneath it as "trusted and broken mounds" of humanity (197).

Bonner also creates a metaphorical landscape through her setting of 'Nowhere' as a valley, while 'Somewhere' is a hill. The Us's "live in the valley that lies between Nowhere and Somewhere"(192). When the play begins they are shown taking a siesta, "As usual, they rest with their backs towards Nowhere and their faces towards Somewhere" (192). This effectively sums up the hopes and history of the Black people in American from slavery to the present. The 'Argument' of the play seems to be a dramatic precedent to Martin Luther King's "dream" of an equal society founded on love and mutual respect.

Bonner's characterization is a carefully constructed view of human diversity opposed to the construction of whiteness as undifferentiated sameness. All the Sundry
White Devils look alike. Bonner’s satirical touch is evident in creating them as angels with horns and tails. They have “soft wide eyes and soft hair” (191). This description is subverted by the inclusion of “glowing red horns and tails decorated with bones” (191). The choreography presents them as “artful dancers” their movements are variously described as “adroit, intricate, dignified and deceitful” (191). Bonner’s remarks that they are “artful dancers on the Thin – Skin- of- Civilization” posits the other’s views of the Sundry White Devils. By doing this, Bonner deconstructs the

The reduction of whiteness to sameness is also pertinent. Dyer, in his essay “White” notes that “the strength of white representation [...] is the apparent absence altogether of the typical, the sense that being white is coterminous with the endless multitude of human diversity” (qtd. in Panish xxiv). Here this view is ruptured with the presentation of the Us’ s as the coloured face of ‘human diversity’; according to Bonner’s directions “they can be as white as the White Devil, as brown as the earth, as black as the centres of a poppy [...]” (191). This range of colour is constantly presented in several instances in the play. The opening scene shows a range of coloured hands thrust out beneath ‘the thin skin of civilization’. This presentation is in opposition to the colourlessness of the White Devils. By creating a spectrum of colours, Bonner enjoins her cause to those of other peoples of colour who suffer the same simultaneity of oppression.
This range of colour is also visually striking. This is illustrated in the second episode of the play, when four important characters are introduced in terms of age, colour, and gender, representing a cross section of the Us’s. The four figures are “a middle-aged well browned man, a lighter-browned middle aged woman, a medium light brown girl, beautiful as a browned peach and a slender, tall, bronzy brown youth [...]” (193). This visual impact is as dramatic as Shange’s use of the rainbow in *For Colored Girls*...

Bonner uses stage space effectively to make several significant points. When the Us’s gather together in the third episode, Bonner directs, “Almost naturally, the Young Us range on one side, the Old Us on the other”(194). Bonner notes the divide in perceptions between the older and younger generations. The younger generation has adopted the new ways of learning from white books and new ways of thinking and knowing; whereas the older Us belong to the old ways of instinct, experiential knowledge, spirituality and mysticism. Bonner places Cornerstone in the centre of the stage signifying the vital link that Black women provide for generational continuity, for dialogue between the old and new. As the ‘cornerstone’, she proves her centrality in and seminal influence on the Black community.

This dramatic effect is also heightened with the lighting that Bonner uses to create an atmosphere. The play begins with the “Sun shining bravely on the valley and hillside alike” and ends in the subtle darkness with lights twinkling on the hill.
"Somewhere", and the shadowy outline of the purple flower in the distance (192). The community rituals around the fire increase the mystery and primeval nature of the rituals in the play, which ends with Finest Blood’s dramatic exit into the still darkness.

The most effective dramatic spectacle is the rituals in the play. The rituals arising from a mythic model, return to origins whose truths, are presented intact. These rituals are cosmogonic in symbolism and in which the creative situation is discovered. They also offer a medium to transcend the oppressive realities they are enjoined to share. The call to the community gathering is made by “the drummer - a short black, determined looking Us,” who represents Africa (194). The drum that is central to African ritual, is itself rife with symbolism. It is an encoding of messages through polyphonic beats, which create underlying contrapuntal rhythms. These rhythms represent the pulse of Black people as they gather as a community.

There is conflict of interest between the old and young, but the outcome is initiated by old woman’s prophetic vision of “a White Devil cut in six places [...]” (196). Old Man sees this as sign and calls for an iron pot to begin the sacred rites of creating New Man. Old Man takes on the role of a ‘shaman’ whose words are echoed by the Old Us’s re-creating ancient rites of chants, call and response, visions and spirits. Old Man calls for dust, books, gold and blood. The symbolism of these items is explained by Old Man who believes he is an instrument of God. He explains: “He
told me to take a handful of dust – dust from which all things came [...]. Put in books that Men learn by. Gold that men live by. Blood that lets Men live” (197).

This call is a call for the creation of a new man, a new attitude and a new day that can be accomplished only through a bloody revolution. Ritual here offers creative possibilities to transform and renew temporal reality. Bonner also ensures that the rituals are African in tone and performance. The iron pot on a burning, bubbling with a mysterious potion has long been a symbol of tribal rituals. Old Man’s chanting and the responses of the congregation parallel the African call – and response structure of rituals that relied on narrative, mime, song and dance.

Finest Blood’s exit into the bushes to capture the sacrificial lamb ends the play. It is obvious when he repeats Old Man’s lines that he has inherited his mantle. He proclaims, “God speaks to you through me! [...] You have taken blood ... you have to give blood” (199). The ritual becomes a sacred rite to restore wholeness to the community.

Bonner’s play The Pot Maker is in contrast to the first one, in terms of setting and ritual. Set against a rural background, Bonner points to the scores of Black women who are inhibited by the choices open to them. Though Bonner was an educated, urban woman, her concern is for the majority of poor Black women who
are denied opportunity for growth and betterment and whose lives are stories of survival to be documented and passed on.

The setting itself is one of contrasts. The house of the Jacksons is small, but it has a large garden. The smoked walls are in contrast to the splashes of colour provided by the red plaid tablecloth, the white sash curtains and the geraniums in red flower pots. The room is "neat" and has a lived – in air with the lamp and "old fashioned wooden clock", the "chairs of various types and degrees of ease" that are scattered around the table (4). The house, despite the poverty, has warmth and an attempt has been made to beautify it. The setting is similar to Lena Younger’s small apartment in Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun, where the assorted furniture and the little touches of colour and beauty alleviate the dreary surroundings and the reality that surrounds it. The geraniums, like Lena’s plant, are a bright statement of rebellion against the squalor and poverty. Nettie Jackson, like Lena, is fastidious about neatness and orders. By contrast, her daughter – in law, suggests an earthy air. Bonner describes her as “a woman who must have sat down in the mud”(5). She does not have Nettie’s sense of beauty or breeding. When she leaves the room in a huff “she slams every thing aside that she passes. Finally, she tips one of the geraniums over” (8). This is the final affront with her mother in – law, as the gesture overturns everything Nettie represents.
The confrontation with Elias, which is both verbal and later becomes physical, is also a dramatic confrontation between the dialectics of morality. It reveals the chink in Elias' Christian armour and their common end in death is a resolution of 'the wages of sin'. However the swinging door which evokes much suspense in the dramatic finale, symbolizes Bonner’s view on the action.

Bonner’s use of ritual in this play is quite different in style and sensibility from The Purple Flower. Set against the Southern Baptist ethos, it reflects the curious blend of African forms and Western religious content. The Black tradition of the sermon relies on the call – and – response pattern, which makes it synonymous with improvisation, spontaneity, interaction and passionate oratory. The sermon attests to the theatricalized character of worship and one sees a movement that takes place from the religious to the aesthetic and a merging of the aesthetic with the religious. The sermon is delivered in a folk style and is based on the oral narrative structure.

Elias creates a church atmosphere by arranging his parents, his wife and her lover “in a row like”(5). He “withdraws a little from them” and appropriates the tone and stance of the proverbial Baptist preacher as he begins with the traditional opening phrase “Brothers and sisters”(5). The allegory of the pot maker, the dialect and diction in the sermon and the strategy used by a weak husband complement the setting and characters. Though Bonner’s technique varies in her two plays, it is evident from her elaborate directions and her attention to detail that she places great
Childress' use of setting is equally significant though her plays are in the realist mode. She places emphasis on the power of objects to accrue new meanings in the context they are placed in. In *Trouble in Mind*, which is staged in a Broadway theatre in New York, Childress creates a typical theatre set with its dressing rooms, wings and assorted props. The props that are leftovers from the last play include "a plaster fountain with a cupid perched atop, garden furniture, tables, benches, a trellis, two white armchairs trimmed with gold gilt" (137). These assorted stage properties create the background for the rehearsals of the play "Chaos in Belleville" and are used by the actors in the play creatively. For example, when Wiletta enters, her aura and charm overwhelm Henry. He treats her like a star by drawing out a small chair but he soon "changes his mind and draws the gilt armchair to the table" (135). The little gesture reflects his attitude to Wiletta. He treats her like a lady who is deserving of such courtesies.

Since *Trouble in Mind* has a play within a – play structure, the play has a theatrical sense to it, especially in the rehearsal scenes. However there are several scenes where the thin line between art and life, truth and fiction become blurred. These moments become the principal dramatic scenes, primarily through the effects
of spectacle. The first moment comes when a nervous Judy is put through her paces by Manners who is determined to rectify her ignorance about moves in the theatre. He sees a crumpled piece of paper that he had earlier thrown on to the stage floor. Eyeing it, he orders Judy to pick it up, changes his mind and commands Wiletta to pick it up instead. Wiletta retorts, "Well, I ain't the damn janitor" (146).

The implications of Manner's action clearly indicate the determining factors that influence social positions. Though both are women, yet the Black woman, Wiletta is a sub denominator in the dyads of race and sex. The action confuses the lines for both Manners and Wiletta; Manners reacts instinctively and pretends it is a lesson in theatrics, while Wiletta also reacts instinctively and pretends she is acting. These lines are constantly transgressed in the play and the interactions become significant as the cumulative effects prove what Childress is trying to say - that in art and in life, the Black woman is 'Other's other'.

In Act Two, Childress introduces Bill O’ Wray, a character actor who is making a speech on tolerance. This spectacle develops ironic overtones as the speech is ridden with cliches and phrases from well-known speeches, but which are juxtaposed with contradictory statements. Bill orates:

Oh, friends, moderation. Let us weigh our answer very carefully when the dark-skinned Oliver Twist approaches our pot and says: "Please, sir, I want some more." When we say "no", remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath. Ohhh, we shall come out of the darkness, and sweet is the pleasure after pain. If we are superior, let us show our superiority (155).
The interruptions of canned applause make a mockery of the pompous rhetoric as they are mis-cued by a nervous Eddie. The total effect is ironic as it ridicules the efforts of racist moderates. Childress literally, upstages the hypocrisy of white moderates in this scene.

Sheldon’s dramatic account of a lynching he witnessed is also used to great effect. Manners is trying to create a mood that will inspire the actors in the scene; he asks Sheldon to narrate his experience of lynching. The white cast is uncomfortable with the story, while it angers and revives old hurts and enmities. Sheldon describes his memory in stark terms. He says:

And then I saw it! Chained to the back of the wagon, draggin’ and bumpin’ along ...(He opens his arms wide) The arms of it stretched out ... a burnt, naked thing that once was a man... and I started to scream but no sound came out... just a screamin’ but no sound... (166).

The description makes Manners uncomfortable and he is forced to confess that “barbarism”, makes him feel wretched. Yet he cannot bring himself to see it from the point of view of Black people. The irony lies in the fact that the scene, which was supposed to create a mood, does indeed create one of resistance. Wiletta refuses to accept Manners direction of the lynching scene.

The last scene in the play is also visually stimulating and expressive of a mood of resistance. Wiletta, who defies Manners, stands to lose her hard – earned role in the play, is resigned to losing her standing in the theatre which to her is only
economic loss. Wiletta becomes a blues heroine as she refuses to sell her soul for gain. In a scene that restores her sense of moral dignity and spiritual empowerment, Childress places her centre-stage in the spotlight, where she recites Psalm 133 to an inspired Henry. Wiletta’s moment in the theatre is also a ritual as it accommodates a collective awareness through the individual’s transformation. Wiletta’s experience creates a distinct sense of temporality as it negotiates between history, tradition and religion and between, theatre and life.

The use of stereotypes is also a strategy used by Childress. Over emphasis of the stereotype puts the onus on the perpetrator who is made to look ridiculous when he perpetuates stereotypes. This is expressly seen in the play “Chaos in Belleville” which stages Black actors in stereotypical roles, clothes and manners. For example, the woman character Ruby and Petunia keep repeating ‘Lord have mercy’ or singing sad mournful songs. Sheldon is asked to whittle a stick and keep praying. Though the Black actors realize that they are expressing a lie and abetting the consolidation of such images; they are equally helpless to change the power equations that implicate them in their own humiliation.

This aspect is also illustrated in graphic detail, in the case of Millie, who is thirty-five years old and carries her dreams in her eyes. Her desire to be comfortable and move up the social rungs is expressed through her clothes and accessories. Millie “breezes in, beautifully dressed in a mink coat, pastel wool dress and hat, suede shoes
and bag” (140). She tells the Black cast that her husband (who is a dining – car
waiter) doesn’t want her working. Yet at the end of the play, she compromises her
beliefs for securing work in the theatre. The ironic implications of Millie’s choices
are revealed by the fact that she can afford her “breathtaking black suit”, “food
freezer” “mink coat”, “suede shoes” and “watch” by playing the role of a Black maid
wearing baggy cotton dresses and a bandana. Millie’s materialism is a foil to
Wiletta’s spiritualism. This is enhanced through spectacle.

Childress uses stage space more dramatically in Wine in the Wilderness.
Freed from the limitations the sets and structure imposed on her in Trouble in Mind,
she explores the power of artistic detail and metaphorical implications in Wine in the
Wilderness. Childress situates this play in Harlem on the night of a riot in 1964. The
scene replicates an artist’s studio in “a one room apartment in a Harlem tenement”
which is in the middle of being re-decorated (23). Childress states in her directions
that the room “is obviously black dominated” in its choice of “sculpture, wall
hangings paintings”; “the room also reflects an interest in other darker peoples of the
world”(23). The objects in the room “a Chinese incense – burner Buddha, an
American Indian feathered war helmet, a Mexican serape, a Japanese fan, a West
Indian travel poster”, gain symbolic significance through the political and cultural
statements they make (23). Western art and culture are significantly absent from this
eclectic collection.
Besides being ‘a Black room’, it is also a room surrounded by art and the materials and props of an artist’s studio. The covered triptych placed on the easel with a drapery covering it, becomes the enigmatic central symbol of the play. The triptych dominates the room and becomes the focus of the action in the play. The platform and backless chair in the room suggests that the artist uses models. The riot scenarios is replicated through the sounds of “screaming, running feet, voices shouting over loud speakers” (122). The opening scene captures the effects of a riot through the aural and visual media. Old Timer’s appearance with a bag of loot points to the violence, arson and looting that accompany a riot.

The triptych itself is a visual treat when the paintings are dramatically displayed in the episode with Old Timer. The first painting reveals “a charming little girl; in Sunday dress and hair ribbon entitled “Black girl hood” (125). The other canvas is spectacular; it “reveals a beautiful woman, deep mahogany complexion”. She is draped in startling colours of African material, very “Vogue” looking. She wears a golden head-dress sparkling with brilliants and sequins applied over the paint; Bill calls her “wine in the wilderness”, “Mother Africa”, “regal black woman hood in her noblest form”(125). The empty canvas awaits “the grass – roots chick” who according to Bill will be a lesson to young Black boys and girls. The action of the play shows how Tommy, ‘the grass – roots chick’ transforms Bill so that he recognizes her true worth and exalts her position to that of “wine in the wilderness”.

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The triptych, from which the title is derived, symbolizes the movement from the ideal to the real.

Besides the artistic use of space in the play, Childress also makes visual statements through dramatic scenes. The night after Tommy and Bill's romantic interlude reveals Tommy "dressed in the African wrap". "She removes the wig and fluffs her hair" and Childress adds "we see her taller, more relaxed and sure of herself" (141). All these physical changes are symbolic of Tommy's sense of being and self-worth. Childress use of dress and demeanour is significant here. The last scene is also artistic and effective in its use of visual detail and display. Bill's transformation is reflected in his decision to re-paint Tommy as the "Wine in the Wilderness". After Bill's acknowledgement of her place in the triptych, Tommy takes her seat on the platform, "holding her wig in her lap" (149). Tommy earns her place and name in more ways than one. She is Tomorrow Marie, the hope of generations to come and also the "Wine in the Wilderness".

Childress shows how signs can be mistaken for symbols and vice versa. In her plays, she not only uses objects for artistic appeal but also for their symbolic effects. Through her sense for aesthetic and dramatic effect, she creates an authentic space for creative self-expression.
Hansberry too reflects a similar aesthetic and dramatic sense in her realist plays. The setting in *A Raisin in the Sun* is almost similar to that of *Wine in the Wilderness*. "The action takes place in the Younger's apartment in Chicago's South Side (33). The time is also around the Chicago riots. The setting is reminiscent of Nettie Jackson's home in Bonner's *The Pot Maker*. Hansberry's directions describe the living room as a room that "would be a comfortable and well ordered room, if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being" (33).

Though Hansberry's directions suggest that the furnishings are "tired" from years of use, yet there is also an air of resistance and endurance from the couch to the carpet (34). The family however, takes pride in these "indestructible contradictions" as they tell a history of struggle and survival. The touches of beauty illustrated by the "acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers" disguise "the weariness" that "has in fact, won in this room"; even the light fights its way into the room through "the single window" in the kitchen area (34). The overwhelming fact of survival and resistance is registered through the setting.

The opening scene establishes the setting with a typical family going through the routine and rush of morning ablutions, breakfast and work or school. The marvel of this routine is the intimacy and easy familiarity with which Hansberry describes and directs Ruth's moves in the scene. Hansberry, like Ruth, does not miss a beat or a detail. The moves are finely orchestrated and reflect a woman's world, a Black
woman's world. Through the scene is an everyday ritual, it reflects a day in the life of an average Black woman who juggles the role of mother, wife and domestic worker, all in a day's work. Ruth's actions are almost instinctive and stretch from getting the eggs from the icebox, along with getting the milk and coffee hot and ready to serve. In between these actions, she talks to her husband Walter about Mama's money, to her son about school money; she keeps an eye on the common bathroom to see if it's free, combs Travis's hair, cajoles and cuddles him before sending him off to school. The easy familiarity with the moves shows Ruth's dexterity, creativity and her years of experience in following a routine.

Women's everydayness has never been considered significant to warrant such attention. Women's work is always added as customary or necessary. Hansberry highlights each act as part of the drama of a Black woman's life. This elevation of domestic chores to dramatic action is a feminist gesture that celebrates women's works. Ruth and Lena Younger have worked hard to ensure the survival and comfort of their families and have nurtured dreams of a better life secretly, while sweating over stoves and floors. There is a fierce sense of dignity of labour. There is a continuous stream of action-related domestic chores - cooking, cleaning, ironing, making beds and entertaining. Lena is introduced "fixing a bandana on her head in honor of the forthcoming labors of the day" (47). Similarly Ruth is introduced fixing an apron. These symbols of women's work become significant of class. Black women's role as domestic workers originated in slavery and continue in the present.
Hansberry shows how race, sex and class determine the everyday lives of Black women.

Hansberry’s love for the dramatic is seen in several moments that are visually engaging. In Act One, Asagai surprises Beneatha with a gift. “She lifts out the cloth and runs D. R. to mirror with it and holds drapery up in front of herself”, Asagai “rising from the sofa” “drapes the material about her for the moment and stands back to look at her” (62). This scene is not only a romantic moment but is also significant, as Beneatha’s search for her real self begins with opening, in a sense, the gift of herself and seeing herself from a new cultural perspective. This engagement with her roots is symbolically presented in this scene.

A little later in the play Hansberry includes another feminine ritual before the mirror. Beneatha tries on the Nigerian robe and head-dress at various angles, studying her reflection carefully. The action goes deeper than her reflection and points to her sense of identification with her roots. She decides “to become a Queen of the Nile” (66). Both Childress and Hansberry address the pre-occupation in the sixties, with Africa and all things African. The “Black is Beautiful” movement was a key factor in validating Black and particularly African perspectives of beauty. One of the pertinent issues was hair, “the great hair question” as Beneatha calls it (62). Beneatha, like Tommy discovers herself when she accepts her kinky hair. It is also pertinent to note here that while Hansberry saw a return to roots as part of discovering
identity, Childress saw it as a pointless idealization of the past and posits a clearer grasp of the immediate reality.

Hansberry resurrects other memories when she stages a Yoruba ritual in the Younger household. Beneatha is playing a Nigerian folk song and dances in her costume; a drunk Walter joins in and creates a dramatic scene. "He pulls his shirt open and leaps up on a table" having taken "possession of an imaginary spear and actively spearing enemies all over the room"(75). The ritual presents a warrior's cry to his people to march. Beneatha takes on the role of a captive audience of the great warrior Chief Flaming Spear. The scene is entertaining, but also provides avenues for venting pent-up feelings and a cure for acute 'ghetto-it is' through the role-play. It also showcases Yoruba rituals, clothes, music and languages. Past tradition imposes new meanings on contemporary reality. Walter is ready to hit out at the enemy that lies within and without. This is made clear through the spectacle.

A third scene triggers the collective consciousness with its satiric twist. Walter mimics a slave's behaviour before his master and expresses his frustration through the scene. Walter's rage and helplessness make him go back in historical time, to reopen old wounds and revive a denied consciousness, when he goes down on his knees, imitating a slave groveling in front of his master. Walter surprises his mother and sister with his vile act as he goes down on his "black knees" and "starts crying" "wringing his hands in profound anguishined imitation" crying. "Yassssuh! Great
White Father, just gi’usen de money fo’ God’s sake and we’s ain’t gwine come out
deh and dirty up yo’ white folks neighborhood”(116). This anticipates Mr. Lindner’s
white expectations of Black behaviour and his offer to buy them out of Clybourne
Park, a white neighborhood. The significance of the scene is seen in the last scene
when Walter comes into his own, by refusing Lindner’s terms and moving into their
house in Clybourne Park. Hansberry raises the collective consciousness and
challenges assimilationist behavior that threatened to enslave them again through
Walters projected behaviour. Hansberry offers alternatives to submission in resistance
and revolution.

The most powerful metaphor in the play is a stage prop. Lena’s little potted
plant, which is “feeble” but growing doggedly in a small pot on the window sill (47).
The tale of the plant’s dogged survival against all odds, is the tale of Lena’s struggle.
In the opening scene, Lena walking up to the plant to water it remarks: “Lord, if this
little old plant don’t get more sun than its been getting it ain’t never going to see
spring again” (47). In Act Two when Beneatha expresses surprise at her mother’s
determination to pack “the raggedly looking old thing”; Lena retorts, “that raggedly
looking old thing? It expresses me” (101).

For Lena, the plant symbolizes her spirited children, Walter and Beneatha.
She describes them as “[…] spirited all right … like this little old plant that ain’t never
had enough sunshine or nothing – and look at it” (56). The plant also symbolizes her
hopes and dreams. Lena admits, "Well, I always wanted me a garden like I used to see sometimes at the back of the houses down home. This is close as I ever got having one" (56). Lena tenderly cares for it, she feels the dirt (47), waters it (56) and protects it with sticks and cord (101). The last scene shows her returning, after she has exited, to get her plant. "She comes back in, grabs her plant, and goes out for the last time" (120). Hansberry revives this cliched metaphor and turns it into a powerful symbol of resistance and survival. It becomes a living sign in the hands of a consummate artist like Hansberry.

Hansberry accomplishes a similar feat in The Drinking Gourd. The play written for television is carefully crafted to satisfy the camera’s eye, as well as stimulate the mind’s eye. The brief prelude to the play presents Hannibal, a nineteen year old slave and ten year old Tommy in “a tiny wooded enclosure” (714). Hannibal is pictured playing “spirited banjo themes”, while Tommy is “vigorously keeping time” (714). The prelude is symbolic in its depiction of an ideal world where Blacks and whites create a harmonious environment together. Ten-year old Tommy is still untouched by the real world where discrimination was the order of the day and Hannibal is a romantic idealist who longs for knowledge, freedom and love.

This ideal world is interrupted by the Soldier/ Narrator’s entry into it. He traces the history of slavery from its roots to the present. The guise of the narrator is significant in the context of the imminent war between North and South over
Abolition. The narrator is described as "[...] tall and narrow-hipped, suggesting a certain American generality". Hansberry adds "He is not Lincoln, but perhaps Lincolnesque" (714). The presence of a character with a Lincolnesque look, is a constant reminder of the facts of the Civil War and the issues raised by it. Zinn in A Peopels History of the United States: 1492 – The Present (1995) offers interesting perspectives of Lincoln’s stand, which subverts the heroic adulation of Lincoln’s leadership (182-88).

Hansberry raises similar questions about the real causes of the war. The presence of a soldier in costume is significant in the context. The costume described as that of a soldier "dressed in dark military trousers and boots which are in no way recognizable as to rank or particular army. He is not battle – scarred or dirty or in any other way suggestive of the disorder of war, but his gait is that of troubled and reflective meditation" (714). Hansberry’s choice of a soldier as narrator is a studied move as the soldier is the closest to the causes and effects of a war. However by making him indistinguishable she is clearly adopting a position of objectivity and intimacy. Hansberry points to his omniscient character in the directions, "The plantation, like the matters, he is going tell us about, has no secrets from him. He knows everything we are going to see; he knows how most of us will react to what we see and how we will decide at the end of the play. Therefore in manner and words he will try to persuade us of nothing; he will only tell us facts and stand aside and let us see for ourselves" (115).
At the end of the play, the Soldier/ narrator walks on to the scene, buttoning up his coat "with an air of decided preparation for the war that is immanent. When he has put on his coat, he is recognizable as a "private of – the Grand Army of the Republic. He admits, "Slavery is beginning to cost this nation a lot" and that he is a soldier who is concerned about the nation's "political and economic future" and about "the great American notion of one strong federal union" (735).

Zinn in A People's History states:

With slavery abolished by order of the government [...] its end could be orchestrated so as to set limits to emancipation. Liberation from the top would go only so far as the interests of the dominant groups permitted. If carried further by the momentum of war, the rhetoric of a crusade, it could be pulled back to a safer position. Thus while ending of slavery led to reconstruction of national politics and economics, it was not a radical reconstruction, but a safe one – in fact, a profitable one (167).

Hansberry's disturbing insights thus historicize the unarticulated views of the Black people in America.

Other scenes of equal significance and visual impact abound in The Drinking Gourd. Hannibal's clearing in the woods is symbolic of the free space that he finds far from the real world of the slave quarters or the plantation. In this clearing Hannibal becomes a whole person who longs for freedom, love and knowledge. He realizes all these in this space. It is also the creative space, in which Hannibal plays his banjo and sings of the "The Drinking Gourd". It is a romantic space, as Hannibal and Sarah are
to articulate their feelings of love to each other. It is a mental space where Hannibal learns to read and write and above all, it is space that belongs to him, in which he is master and not slave. In fact, in the play, Hannibal is presented "lying on a little hillock in deep grass with both arms folded under his head, staring at the stars" (716). The stars, are significant here, as they represent, the route to freedom and selfhood. In the course of the play, Coffin, Zeb and Everett discover Hannibal in this space with Tommy, which leads to his horrific blinding. This act points to the attempt at conquering the last personal territory of body, mind and spirit, by an insecure white master.

The curtain opens on two distinct class signifiers. Hansberry's setting describes the Southern countryside, "In the distance, shadowed under the incredibly beautiful willows and magnolias, is a large, magnificently columned, white manor house" (715). In contrast to this, lies the other picture where "Beyond the rows of cotton fields are the little white painted cabins, the slave quarters" (715). These two distinct class signifiers point to the conflict between black and white, master and slave, rich and poor. The areas of action in the Sweet manor, Rissa's slave quarters, Hannibal's clearing and Zeb's farm are all divided, literally by the colour line. Heroism is also defined according to which side the character is on. Thus setting amplifies the conflict through imagery.

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The slaves themselves are seen in a typical setting at “Quittin’ time”. They file in silently for their evening meal. Hansberry adds: “There is, about all of these people, a grim air of fatigue and exhaustion, reflecting the twelve to fourteen hours of almost unrelieved labor” (715). “They are dressed in clothes characteristic of slaves in a Southern plantation. The men are dressed in rough trousers of haphazard lengths and coarse shirts. The women on the other hand wear “single piece shifts [...] Some wear their hair bound in the traditional bandana of the Negro slave women [...]”. (715).

These stereotypes are perpetuated through popular media as Hansberry Childress and Shange attest in their plays. The bandana in fact has become synonymous with the slave mammy and the contemporary Black domestic worker. It becomes a marker of the humiliation Black women had to suffer in being colonized as servants. Hansberry places Rissa in the spotlight in several scenes to highlight her role and character, while also subverting the stereotype. In the opening scene the focus is on Rissa who serves food to the hungry slaves. She is the acknowledged hub around whom all the action in the slave quarters revolve. Her authority, generosity and concern are established in the way she handles her job and her people.

In the episode in which Hannibal discloses to his mother his secret. Rissa’s love as a mother is expressed through her actions. As Hannibal displays his ability to read from the Bible, there is incredulity written large on Rissa’s face as “with the
wonder, water has joined the expression in her eyes, and the tears come”(729). Even as she stares at him in joy, the implication of Hannibal’s secret causes her to be transformed to stark fear. This is depicted in the way she “Snatches the book from him and hurriedly buries it and runs to the cabin door and looks about”(729). She finally drops to her knees and warns him of the consequences of his crime of learning to read.

This depiction of Rissa as a Black mother subverts the stereotype of the emasculating Black matriarch. Rissa’s range of emotions establishes her as a proud mother who is protective of her children. This is made clearer in Act Three where she tends to her blinded son. As Hiram tries to make amends, she blocks him out. Her body language clearly reveals her loss of respect for and trust in Hiram. She ignores him, without looking up, shrugging and turning from him abruptly during the course of her indictment of his actions.

The last scene shows Hiram suffering an attack outside Rissa’s cabin. Rissa looks out but continues to administer to Hannibal’s need, ignoring Hiram’s cries to her. She sits in her chair rocking back and forth even as Hiram cries die out. Her assertive action is endorsed by the other slaves who turn out their lights against the dying Hiram. Rissa alienates herself and her people from the perpetrators of the heinous crime on her son. Rissa thus asserts herself not as a mammy but as the matriarch who condones the white man’s actions against one of her own. The last
scene shows Rissa removing a gun from Hiram’s gun cabinet and smuggling it out in
the folds of her skirt. Arriving at Hannibal’s clearing she places the gun in Hannibal’s
hand, and Joshua’s hand in Sarah’s. This wordless act speaks of hope and survival.
Rissa severs the umbilical chord by setting her son free. She embraces him and leaves
the stage. While she goes back to her life as a slave, Hannibal, Sarah and Joshua
journey towards a future filled with hope.

Several rituals feature in this play. The rituals of plantation life are captured in
detail through music and spectacle. However two rituals stand out for their dramatic
effect and significance. The first is the community ritual “Raise a Ruckus”, played
inside Rissa’s cabin in Act Two. “Raise a Ruckus” is in the true tradition of slave
theatricals and entertainment that included improvisation of a satirical depiction of
their white masters. These dramatizations, more often secret than official, provided
opportunities for collective expression. They gave these slaves the freedom to be
open through language, gestures and uninhibited emotion. They provided the
catharsis that silenced and oppressed people need to take control of their emotions.

“Raise a Ruckus”, follows the call- and- response tradition in which a leader
begins to tell a story of his master or mistress through satirical verse. This led to other
songs and mimed improvisations that became louder and more uninhibited with each
round, as each singer tried to out do the previous singer with a more interesting or
hideous tale. These subversive acts were important means to extend their feelings
about slavery, through analogies. The role of the ritual is an individual and communal expression and this fact is demonstrated through “Raise a Ruckus”.

By contrast, is the master’s ritual of punishing errant slaves like Hannibal whose only crime was learning the master’s language. Hansberry documents this evidence of the white man’s cruelty in horrific detail. Act Two ends in an aural presentation of the act. Everett strides through the woods “even as […] the tortured screams of an agonized human being surround him” (732). Act Three reifies that act through an explicit spectacle. Hansberry’s directions present the shadow of a man ingeniously strung by all four limbs between saplings, each of which are bent to the ground away from each other. Two male shadows loom near and a voice says “all right, guess we might as well cut him down now … gangrene must’ve set in” (732).

Hansberry does three things in presenting this scene. First she reveals the extent of the horror of the ‘institution’ of slavery by presenting the inhuman and savage nature of the white perpetrator. This violence also foregrounds the fears of the master who is threatened by the slave. And most significantly, Hansberry avenges the crime by using the master’s language to effectively frame him. She thus subverts the gaze through her use of spectacle.

Kennedy, unlike Hansberry’s use of realistic detail, uses fantasy and surreal images to disclose a universe that borders on hallucination, nightmare and death.
Since her plays are antiphonal texts that deconstruct language, Kennedy relies on dramaturgical improvisations that bring the nuances and the suggestive possibilities of images and non-linear structures to life in performance. Overbeck calls these visual effects “visceral evocations of subliminal / emotional realities” (Bryant-Jackson and Overbeck 22). Kennedy creates arresting but enigmatic juxtapositions of spectacle and verbal images.

The setting and images of Kennedy’s play Funny house of a Negro are an organic outcrop of her themes. The funny house is an amusement park, which hosts mirrors, and grotesque images that reflect bizarre, unreal and fragmented views of the real. The funny house thus becomes a trope for Sarah’s world; a world, which creates distorted, images of the Black self. Sarah’s funny house becomes a space where mirrors reflect and subvert images, revealing through the auto-erotic confessional, the haunting of a fragmented world. The displacements in terms of space and time, together with the changes of costume, role and sexual identity reveal “a form of mental miscegenation” (Blau 536).

The play has several scenes, which are set in five areas on stage representing the rooms of Sarah, Queen Victoria, Raymond, the Duchess of Hapsburg and the jungle. Each setting is distinct, yet there are overlapping images and repetitive tropes which coalesce to connect and disconnect to give Sarah’s fragmented world, ‘a method in the madness’. Each of these settings is characterized by the objects and the
lighting which in turn symbolize the conflict of black and white. Kennedy’s presentation of black as unnatural, wired, evil and haunting is juxtaposed with that of white being cheap, colourless, pallid, deathly, unreal and ugly. An aura of death and images of death, blood and gore pervade all the rooms. There is also dramatic use of colours, black, white, yellow and red in each scene.

The set according to Kennedy, is “most explicit when the play is placed in the girl Sarah’s room”, usually centre stage, so that the rest of the stage is free for “herselves” (FH 1). Her room has “a bed, writing table, mirror and a statue of Queen Victoria” (1). Sarah, in her monologue gives a more detailed description in her monologue. She lists “dark old volumes”, “old photographs of castles and monarchs of England” on the wall, and a gigantic plaster statue of Queen Victoria, that Sarah describes as “a thing of astonishing whiteness” (5).

The first glimpse of Kennedy’s staging of contrasts is seen before the curtain opens. The “Curtain” itself is of “white satin” “of a cheap material and a ghastly white” (2). Kennedy points that “the material brings to mind the interior of a cheap casket, parts of it are frayed” and “gnawed by rats”(2). Kennedy literally pulls aside a frayed, cheap and deathly white covering off a black world, making it a curtain raiser on blackness.
Kennedy places her characters who are symbolic representations against this setting. In her use of costume and make up Kennedy creates visual effects that enhance her themes and engage the spectator in a labyrinth of meanings. Before the curtain goes up to reveal Kennedy’s dark world, “A woman dressed in a white night gown walks across the stage [...]”, her most distinguishable feature is her hair “wild, straight and black and falls to her waist”. She moves as in a trance murmuring to herself. She carries before her “a bald head” (2). Sarah/Duchess identifies the “Woman” as her mother, “a white woman, hair as straight as any other white woman’s”(3). The woman’s hair is a contrast to her white night gown, and later to Sarah’s kinky hair. The “wild” quality is repeated in the descriptions of the other selves. It also signifies a fey, immoral character as Raymond describes her as “a white whore” (23). The bald head is a significant leit motif, which points to the falling / fallen hair that manifests itself as a deep – rooted phobia of losing one’s identity. All Sarah’s selves make hysterical remarks about this phenomenon.

The first scene of the play is set in Queen Victoria’s chambers. Here too, there are visual contrasts of darkness and light, black and white. The queen’s chamber has “a dark monumental bed resembling an ebony tomb”, “a low dark chandelier with candles”, and “wine colored walls”. “Her white pillow” is covered with a heap of fallen hair (3). The images of death are exacerbated by the presence of “great black Ravens” (2). The chamber itself is set in “a strong white light” which is “unreal and ugly” while the rest of the stage is in unnatural Blackness (2).
Queen Victoria and the Duchess are presented with their backs to the audience. Queen Victoria is holding a small mirror in her hand. They are dressed similarly in royal white gowns made of the same cheap white satin as the curtain. Their headpieces are white with a net piece that covers their faces. “From beneath both their headpieces springs a handful of wild kinky hair” (3). They wear white “alabaster” masks or are “highly powdered to resemble a mask of death” with its “full red mouth, gouged out dark eyes and a head of frizzy hair” (2). Kennedy reveals the white face of imperialism and its debilitating effects on Sarah’s many selves. The curious distortion of history, time and character situate these conflicts corporeally.

Sarah is presented in her room in the next scene as “she who is a student is also the Negro” (4). Kennedy describes Sarah as “a faceless dark character with a hangman’s rope about her neck and red blood on the part that would be her face” (4). Dressed in black, in contrast to her white selves, her most “noticeable aspect is her wild kinky hair”. She too has “a patch of hair missing from the crown which she carries in her hands” (4). Sarah’s idolization of Victoria, “a thing of astonishing whiteness” reveals her hatred of her blackness and her obsession with whiteness (5).

Sarah in fact reveals in her monologue that “Victoria always wants to tell me of her whiteness. She wants me to tell her of a royal world where everything and everyone is white and there are no unfortunate black ones” (5). Victoria, like the Duchess denies Sarah’s wholeness, reveling in their power to conquer and control her
through the romance of history, literature and religion. The resulting phantasmagoria reflects this fragmentation through distorted images. Sarah establishes herself as a mulatta, a bastard who is the offspring of a white whore and a

As a mulatta, Kennedy portrays Sarah’s divided consciousness and the bastardization of identity and dream. To give her faceless figure some form, Sarah describes herself as “good looking in a boring way, no glaring Negroid features, medium nose, medium mouth and pale yellow skin” (6). She is presented as standing with “a hang man’s rope about her neck”, her face is bloodied, indicating an act of violence (4). In a later scene Sarah / Lumumba confesses that she had bludgeoned her father’s face with an ebony mask. In the last episode, Lumumba rushes in on her with bludgeoned hands. Lights, after the blackout, reveal Sarah hanging over a void. This death wish presented in her first appearance is fulfilled in the last scene. The aura of death encompasses the stage. In this disturbing time warp, the only clue to understanding this montage of surreal images, is Sarah’s burden of blackness and her love for all things white. The hangman’s rope provided Sarah with a lifeline from madness into the black void of death.

The following scene is enacted in Funnyman Raymond’s room, which is above Sarah’s room and “is etched with a prop of blinds which he opens and closes to create contrasts in light and shade”(80). This act also throws up broken images of
Sarah / Duchess who is clinging to his leg in a posture of intimacy revealing that they are lovers. Behind them are mirrors, replicating the funny house of mirrors, which throws up, distorted images of Sarah. Raymond, is the Funnyman of the funny house; he is tall, white and ghostly thin and dressed in a black attire that suggests he is an artist. Raymond’s Jewish origin makes him a foil to Sarah’s hyphenated identity. However while he is “interested in Negroes” he does not empathize or understand Sarah who loves him (6). At the end of the play Raymond dispassionately calls Sarah “a funny little liar” (23).

The landlady, Mrs. Conrad complements Raymond, as a funny woman in her house of mirrors. The two of them are the only real characters besides Sarah. She too is described as “a tall, thin, white woman dressed in a black and red hat” (9). Throughout her first speech to an imaginary tenant in her boarding house, she laughs “Like a mad character in a funny house” (8). The landlady appears again at the end of the play to laughingly announce that “the poor bitch has hung herself” (22). Both Raymond and Mrs. Conrad offer perspectives that are realistic clues to understanding Sarah’s fragmented world. However these only serve to confuse the truth that is presented. These two white figures are haunting figures from Kennedy’s own childhood experiences that are encoded in her remark “It always seemed to be that the white world was doing this, ridiculing the Negro”(Oliver 190). The contemptuous laughter and the derogatory remarks portray them as the grotesque monsters of an amusement park.
The Duchess and Jesus engage in a bizarre pantomime in the Duchess’ chandeliered ballroom with “SNOW falling”, “a black and white marble floor” and “a bench decorated with white flowers, made of obviously fake materials”(16). The room is in darkness, but suddenly turns “BRILLIANT” with the appearance of the yellow hunchback Jesus who carries “a red paper bag” from which he pulls out his fallen hair (16).

Jesus is presented as a grotesque hunchback who represents a distorted vision of life. Dressed in white rags and sandals, he is a yellow skinned dwarf who is also obsessed with his falling hair. Kennedy’s disenchanted view of Christianity and its role in subjugating the will and denying the hopes of Black people is presented in her caricature of Jesus. Instead of saving the world, he is preoccupied with saving his hair and his position. His yellow skinned, dwarfed and hunch-backed appearance points to the lack of wholeness and spirituality of the religion, which betrayed its followers.

The last scene is presented “in the jungle” with its terrifying nightmarish environment with a “RED SUN, FLYING THINGS, wild black grass” that covers the entire stage (20). It has a dream – like progression in terms of space and time. The lighting creates the effect of a “Jungle that has overgrown the chambers with a violence and a dark brightness, a grim yellowness” (20). The primordial self that is inhibited in civilized spaces is released in the jungle of the unconscious. The
subliminal effect of the jungle runs through and overcomes all other “chambers” that Sarah inhabits.

While Sarah’s many selves are predominantly white, her dark self is inhabited by a Black man. This black man is the beast who raped Sarah’s white mother, bludgeoned her with an ebony mask and looks for Genesis in “the midst of golden savannas” in order to save the race (14). As Patrice Lumumba, the assassinated African revolutionary, he represents a Black messiah torn between his culture and history and his white education and religion. He is goaded by his mother to be a Black Messiah who will take them “off the cross” (14). He is presented as a Black man whose “head appears to be split in two with blood and tissue in eyes” and carrying “an ebony mask” (14). The symbolism points to his origins, his violent death and to his blackness which destroyed Sarah’s purity and sanity.

Kennedy also relies on spectacle and theatrical movements to create disturbing effects and meanings. These visual effects continue to connect and disconnect throughout the play, with other clues and objects that Kennedy arranges in her play with careless precision. The first of these is the appearance of the “woman” in white who walks across the stage in a trance, carrying a bald head. The bald head appears twice again, each time after Lumumba’s narrative, when it drops from a string to signify his death. The head in her hand symbolizes her victory, as he was
the black beast" who raped her (4). In a similar fashion, Sarah is presented with a hangman's rope around her neck, which points to her suicide at the end.

Parades and processionalis are also rituals of spectacular effect that Kennedy uses time and again in this play and in A Rat's Mass. The parade of Sarah's many selves walk through "the suspended wall" of Sarah's fragmented consciousness (4). The black curtains in the darkness represent Sarah's mind, her conscious and unconscious selves and the dreams and nightmares that play on and in her mind. This expressionistic technique of revealing her tormented psyche is repeated in the queen's chamber and in the climax of the jungle scene.

The ritual scene begins with a processional of the many selves wearing "nimbus" to suggest they are "Saviours" (20). The speeches are incantatory and their movements wild. As the rhythm increases, the tempo reaches a frenzy followed by a dramatic pause and a ritual chant. The selves laugh, shout and run about wildly "as though they are in victory" (22). The next scene shows the triumph of these selves as Sarah is sacrificed at the altar of whiteness. The scene reveals the conquest of blackness by white history, religion and culture and it reveals that whiteness, like blackness, is an image, but which nevertheless has the power to subdue, enslave and destroy.
The presence of several images throughout the play adds a sense of continuum to the discontinuous appearance of selves and the varying perspectives. The mirror and the kinky hair are two such tropes. Kennedy places mirrors in three scenes in the play to extend its significance as a funny house that reflects distortions. The white selves of Sarah use a small hand mirror to constantly check their appearances. Raymond’s room is a funny house of mirrors. These mirrors reflect the image of ‘the fairest one’ alienating the rest. This object symbolizes not only the gaze of Western civilization but also its narcissism, which warrants its continuity and perpetuates the basis for the other’s otherness. The mirror, symbolizing the gaze, becomes the great classifier.

The presence of kinky hair on the white characters, the mounds of fallen / falling fair and the red paper bag with fallen hair are disturbing images. The intensity of falling hair grows until the Duchess and Jesus grow bald. This loss of identity is terrifying and is enacted again and again, culminating in baldness. The bald head that falls from a wire that the woman carries and the Duchess’ bald head that drops from the chandeliers, manifest the horror of decapitation and death. This trauma of losing ones hair or head and becoming either a faceless mask like Sarah’s or a bludgeoned head like Lumumba’s, is terrifying to the white selves of Sarah. The survival of whiteness is possible only with the annihilation of the sources of threat.
In *A Rats Mass* Kennedy explores the same theme with an exit into metamorphoses, madness and death. The hallucinatory images and confessions are similar to those of Sarah. Brother and Sister Rat, like Sarah the mulatta, are “pale Negro children” who have metamorphosed into rats under the gaze of Rosemary (*ARM* 55). They live in a rat’s house “which resembles a church with beams”, red carpet runner, candles and Nativity figures (55). Brother and Sister Rat are half-human, half-rodent. Brother Rat has “a rats head, a human body and a tail”, while Sister Rat has “a rats belly, a human, a tail” (55). As the play progresses, they become more and “more rat-like in their movements and voices” (63). This signifies the degeneration of the Negro children who metamorphose into rats under the watchful eye of Rosemary. They remain in hiding, fearing detection and death traps. The play’s repetitious dialogues, ritualistic movements, incantatory chants and surroundings give it its title.

Rosemary is presented wearing “a Holy communication dress and has worms in her hair” (55). She represents Western civilization, culture and religion. Her beauty, purity and superiority are reflected in her name, appearance and demeanour. However, the outward semblance jars as Kennedy places a head of worms on this monolith, signifying the putrefaction of Western religiosity with its sepulchral hypocrisy. Rosemary’s head is filled with vile thoughts that are manifested in the Rats’ confession of incest. Jesus and his entourage reveal the inhuman face of Western civilization in the annihilation of the siblings. Nazi-like in their methods,
Kennedy portrays Christianity's brutal massacre of the innocence and purity of other cultures. The picturization of Jesus as a Nazi points to the state apparatus of religion that is used to dominate and oppress. At the end, only "Rosemary remains" - a monolith that stands only at the cost of the fallen (65).

Kennedy's world is a black and white one, which she re-creates on the stage through spectacle. Her depiction of bizarre images, grotesque scenes and weird rituals is a sign of a world gone awry. The expressionism reveals this phantasmagoric world through symbols that are designed to shock, surprise, defy and disturb. Her dramatic use of theatre, space, colours and objects make her plays, challenging. Though ambiguous at first, the visual effects grow and connect to create a total effect. Kennedy's use of spectacle as a powerful means to extend, amplify and challenge meanings makes her one of the most exciting innovators in contemporary American theatre.

Shange's improvisations are also innovations that use theatre space creatively to express and authenticate African – American culture. The choreopoem, itself an original theatrical innovation, explores the different realities that influence and affect a Black person's life. Through early African theatrical improvisations of music, mime dance, narrative and ritual, Shange re-visions the past through her contemporary articulations of Black experience. Shange's theatre raises the consciousness of Black people by empowering them through languages that define their realities.
Shange's *For Colored Girls* ... makes a visual impact by illustrating its title dramatically through its seven coloured characters dressed in the colour of the rainbow. Shange adds "The rainbow is a fabulous symbol for me. If you see only one color, it's not beautiful. If you see them all, it is" (qtd. in Lester 26). Shange directs all the seven girls in different monochromatic costumes to "run onto the stage from each of the exits" and "freeze in postures of distress" (3). Lester states that "visually and aesthetically, these women are a rainbow, and only collectively are they are able to dramatize the fullness of black female identity" (26). He also adds that using images of 'Colored girls' in conjunction with the rainbow highlights the structural significance of colours, and its use in characterization" (26). Shange's use of a conventional symbol is made unconventional by her inclusion of 'brown.' instead of indigo; and 'purple' as a blend of indigo and violet. The inclusion of the non-rainbow colour 'brown' is significant as it represents these coloured girls and their earthly grass - roots attitude. The idealism of the rainbow is grounded in the reality of earth brown.

Choreography plays a very important role in Shange's plays. Movements thus become stylized gestures that draw attention to the significance of each act and also enhance the aesthetic dimension. This is seen in the scene that follows the prologue where the lady in red 'tags' the other and they freeze till the music awakens them and they dance to the music of the Dells, a popular male rhythm 'n' blues group. While the lady in yellow sings along with them, the lady in orange and blue "parody the
lady in yellow and Dells” (9). She chastens them with a look, a clear sign of the camaraderie that exists between them. There are several instances of choreography and mime, which add movement to the narrative.

A change of mood after Willie Colon's music is indicated by “a sudden light change”, “all the ladies react as if they had been struck in the face” (16). This stylized gesture precedes the poem on rape, which points to the unpredictable nature of the crime or the rapist. That an acquaintance or friend can assault a coloured girl in like a slap across the face. The gesture speaks more than words as it illustrates the shock and violence of the de-humanizing act.

The section on “sechita” is mimed by the lady in green who “dances out sechita’s life” (23). The conjunction of word and gesture is effective as they connect the subject of the narration and the narrator at a higher level. Sechita’s costume is that of a dancer with “her splendid red garters, blk diamond stockings darned art yellow threads” and “an ol starched taffeta can-can fell abundantly orange”(24). The narrative affords much scope for dramatic choreography as it winds its way over the dancer’s rituals before her performance. This feminine ritual celebrates the exotic beauty of this Egyptian goddess as she “ […] threw her heavy hair in a coil over her neck / […] spread crimson oil on her cheeks / waxed her eyebrows / n unconsciously slugged the last heard whisky in the glass” (24).
The poem ‘Harlem’ is also a mimed piece, which narrates the fears of a coloured girl as she walks through a Harlem street, beginning at the bus stop. The ladies in yellow and purple are the other ladies who mime their apprehensions about being accosted by a Black man. The lady in orange then mimics how a Black man follows her thus revealing the constant threat of being molested, abused and reduced to a sex object. The role of the Black man who follows the coloured girl is the narrator herself, who reveals how “reglar beauty & a smile in the street / is a set-up”(24).

Shange also uses choreography to create breaks or transitions between poems and issues, as was illustrated by the prelude to the section on ‘rape’. After the section “the love like sisters” (42), the coloured girls react to “sharp music”, each lady dances as if catching a disease from the lady next to her, suddenly they all freeze”(42). This movement is significant as it portrays a chain reaction of realizations that being Black and female is like being marked by a disease that requires a social quarantine for the rest of their lives.

In the following section, the ladies in orange, yellow, blue and purple construct a Black girl’s world. In deference to the pain of this narration, the ladies in red, green and brown stand frozen. Pained by the suffering, they remain petrified in their despair. The lady in yellow tries to move them, but they remain inscrutable, till she almost leaves the stage. The lady in brown initiates their awakening, as they
engage in a ritual that affirms them. The ritual of “layin on of hands” is a feminist ritual, which heals wounded psyches. The bonding of these women is a healing of old wounds, as they each confess “fingers near my forehead”, “strong”, “cool”, “movin” “makin me whole” (62). The lady in blue acknowledges that she has experienced “layin on bodies / layin outta man” but she “waz missin something” (62). As they lay hands on each other and hold each other, they find “holiness” released and embrace the world of nature around. In this experience, they find God in themselves. This ritual ends with the seven ladies forming “a closed tight circle” (64).

Rituals are sacred to Shange, as she sees in them, the means of salvation from the material world that oppresses and alienates Black people. As the women lay hands on each other, re-visioning older African rituals and Christian healing rites, they journey towards a spiritual place that helps them to create a dialectic between the real and the ideal. By creating a new world based on their own terms, they re-locate themselves in a world of love and shared togetherness. The circle is the archetypal image of the community; it signifies both the relation of each member to the central nucleus and the ties among members. The circle exemplifies their common connectedness. Through the ritual, these Black women create a mythic model, which restores while it renews.

In Spell # 7, Shange uses the power of suggestion to great effect, especially through spectacle. Shange writes, “there is a huge black – face mask hanging from the
ceiling of the theatre as the audience enter”. “Even after the lights fade, the mask
looms even larger in the darkness”(71). This “grotesque, larger than life
misrepresentation of life” confronts the audience with its historical role and its
significance in contemporary theatre (71). Shange uses the all-pervasive aura of the
mask as a continuous reminder of its presence in the theatre. Cronacher states that “in
Spell # 7, Shange reveals the many ontological, political and historical connotations
of black face” (193).

Minstrel shows not only parodied high art but also fetishized the Black as
‘other’. By imitating his manners and dialect, the white entertainer in ‘black face’,
played out his own desires and phobias. Minstrelsy created stereotypes that were
perpetuated not only by white but also by Black entertainers. Though the Jim Crow
laws banned minstrelsy, it continues to cast its shadow in popular media where
Blacks still inhabit the mask of blackface. Shange acknowledges the power of the
mask to control black expression, but she also deconstructs the meaning of the mask
by implicating whites.

The minstrel mask is foregrounded at three points in the play. At the
beginning of the play, it engages the audience at different levels. The minstrel show
and the unmasking that follows, is in conjunction with the enormity of the mask’s
influence on the lives of Black actors in the theatre. At the end of Act One, the mask
descends and remains suspended through the intermission, to remind the audience
that adopting the mask is an act of self-destruction, of being controlled by white culture.

At the beginning of the Act Two, Lou signals the mask to go up, to accommodate the unmasking of the minstrels / actors who dare to act out their fantasies. When it finally comes down at the end of the play, it not only reflects the imposition of racist stereotypes but also affirms that they can free themselves by loving themselves into wholeness. Spell #7 is about the power of black magic to exorcise the spell of minstrelsy and to grant the power to love being coloured. Shange reclaims black magic from its negative connotations and promotes “geechee jibara quick trance for technologically stressed third world people” and advocates it as a cure from the desire to be to be white (Three Pieces 65).

The magician Lou, who casts the spell is “is dressed in the traditional costume of Mr. Interlocutor; tuxedo, bow tie, top hat [...]” (71). Shange appropriates the role of the Interlocutor from the traditional minstrel show and uses it to signify on whites. However Lou, signing upon the white audience, like the trickster figure in African folklore also initiates the action and facilitates the narration. Through his magic he causes the mask to appear and disappear and through his spell # 7, he empowers the Black actors to strip their minstrel masks and become people. He thus literally becomes the medium through whom the Black actors find themselves and take possession of their social and psychological spaces.
The costume and movements of Lou would excite the audience, much like the prelude of a traditional minstrel show which began with an empty stage and a gloved hand gesturing from the wings before the whole minstrel appeared. While Lou makes his claims as a magician, the company of actors enter in “in tattered fieldhand garb, blackface and the countenance of “stephan fetchit 4 when he was frightened” (72). When Lou claps his hands, the company go through all the motions of a minstrel show, showcasing “every period of Afro- American entertainment” (73). They end with a “bow a la Bert William’s” whose bow was an exaggerated feminized act that signified on white women and black men simultaneously (73). A reference to Williams 5 here is to recall a historical figure who was a splendid performer and yet had no choice but to humiliate himself and his race in order to survive as a Black entertainer. Blacks in blackface had to paint themselves blacker than they were, even though Black minstrelsy was a subversion of white minstrelsy.

Lou’s summons to Alec to unmask himself leads to his transformation, as it signifies a stripping off the layers of fear, ignorance and low self-esteem. Alec narrates his experience of living in the shadows by enacting a lynching episode, which causes the others to tear off their masks. Dahlia sheds “not only her mask, but also her hideous overalls and pickaninny – buck wheat wig to reveal a finely laced unitard, the body of a modern dancer” (75). This act is also an unmasking, as Dahlia claims her territory as a contemporary. Black woman. Her revealing costume celebrates her blackness and femaleness. Spillers notes that Black women were absent
in minstrel shows (MBPM 67). In stripping her mask and clothes off, she reveals herself as a legitimate presence and discards the stereotypical, genderless costume assigned to slave women. Dahlia thus subverts the gaze and claims her place on the stage. Cronacher points out that Shange “writes herself back into a history in which she was excluded by virtue of her sex and implicated by virtue of her race” (190).

Shange sets this metadrama in “a lower Manhattan bar” “with tables, chair, candles and a jukebox. When lights come on after the minstrel show and Dahlia’s dance, it reveals the bartender, Eli, “setting up for the night” as he arranges furniture (75). As Eli recites his poem, the actors walk in their street clothes, doing steps that are “reminiscent of their solos during their minstrel sequence” (76). This detail establishes that they are the same actors from the minstrel show.

In this play too, Shange uses role-play to illustrate the personal narratives of the actors. There are four impressive scenes that capitalize on their visual appeal and effects. The first is Alec’s narration of an encounter with a lynch mob. Though the incident seems distant, it revives the fears and the horrors. This is similar to Sheldon’s moving account of a lynch mob in Trouble in Mind by Childress. Ross and Maxine play-act the story of Fay who is “into having a good time” (85). While Ross narrates his encounter with Fay, Maxine takes on the role of Fay. The rest soon join the fantasy, till Maxine carried way by the act stops and remarks, “when am I gonna get a chance to feel somethin’ like that” (87).
In a similar fashion, Alec and Natalie enact the story of Sue-Jean, narrated by Alec. The first person and third person accounts synchronize to create a dramatic effect. Lily’s dramatic narration of her fantasy is illustrated by matching “words with movements” (90). The repetitive actions of brushing her hair reveal her obsession, inspiring Bettina to take the role of a therapist. This improvisation is a surprise, which adds a touch of spontaneity to the role-play. The seduction rituals of white men and Black girls are also dramatic as Alec and Lou narrate the story of a Black girl seduced by a foreigner. Maxine and Ross indulge in the fantasy with mime, song and dance as they play-act the role of the Black girl from nowhere.

The play ends with a ritual of a more serious kind, just as For Colored Girls... does. After Lily and Natalie speak uninhibitedly of their experiences as Black women and Alec adds a historical perspective of oppression from slavery to racism, Lou casts a spell on the crowd. He then “fixes them up good & colored” and beckons to them to chant “colored & love it”. Shange directs that “it becomes a serious celebration, like church / like home /” (116). As they chant, the minstrel mask comes down, thus subverting the meanings of the mask. This ritual is a rite of passage into a world of self-love and acceptance.

Shange’s sense of tradition and theatre is manifested in her creative use of the choreopoem through which she reclaims new languages to create new meanings in the theatre. The creative use of the rainbow and the minstrel mask reveal her own
quest for authentic media to capture Black experience. In an over-determined space, she creates new expressive gestures that re-vision the notion of ‘straight theatre’ and moves it into the drama of Black lives.

Like Shange, Bonner, Childress, Hansberry and Kennedy explore new possibilities to authenticate Black female expression on stage. One of the most expressive, original and powerful avenues is Black music. Black music is a domain that offers the best example of cultural independence and artistic autonomy. Shange quotes:

```
sound
falls around me like rain in other folks
[.................................]
live in music
live in it
    wash in it
i cd even smell it
wear sound on my fingers
sound falls so fulla music
ya cd make a river where yr arm is &
hold yrself
hold yrself in a music (qtd in Lester 35).
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Black music is the language through which Black people give uncensored accounts of their experience. This non-verbal text has become a primary dramatic element with a life and significance of its own. Through it, Fabre points that “people affirm their ability to control chaos, to confer meaning on absurdity, to restore spirituality”(220).
African-American dance is still a spectacle but its qualities of rhythm, visual effects, symbolic force and concrete expression justify its incorporation as a vital characteristic of Black drama. From its precedents in African rituals and cultural expression, music and dance were vital elements of theatrical performance. Denied the use of the drum from the Middle Passage, slaves had to create their own music, which they did by clapping and stamping which led to several indigenous dance forms that are reminders of historical moments. Senghor quotes “We are a people of dance, whose feet grow strong by beating upon the ground” (qtd. in Fabre 232-33). Music and dance therefore are acts of resistance in an oppressive society.

The confluence of music and dance in Black American culture is reflected in the theatre, which relies on textural details to make it distinct. Bonner, Childress, Hansberry Kennedy and Shange use music and dance to express a connection between its rhythms and their lives. The history of Black women’s drama from Bonner to Shange is also the history of Black music from slavery to the seventies. The following analysis of the use of music and dance in the selected plays is structured to present a historical evolution of music and dance from slavery to the seventies. This would reveal how these five playwrights have been affected by these elements and that this study covers all the principal forms of Black music and dance.

Bonner’s views on Black music is articulated by Old Man in The Purple Flower who states, “There are pipes of Pan that every us is born with. Play on that,
soothe him ... lure him ... make him yearn for the pipe. He’ll come out and he only comes to try to get pipe from you”(196). The history of American music is primarily the history of Black music and the history of Black music in America. The appropriation of Black music points to the American domination of other cultures and its attempt to de-historicize it through compromise.

Panish emphatically argues that though Black American culture is hybrid it still is “a hybrid black signifier” and needs to be seen in this light in order to avoid being “compromised by their comodification” (xvi). However it is pertinent to note that Black culture, especially music, derives its distinctness from its cultural inheritance from Africa, its diasporic experience, and from negotiated positions that derive from being a subordinated subject. While Black music grew out of oppression it rapidly became a codified language in which to record experiences. It also became a means to confound the master with its subversive content and form, its contrapuntal rhythms and improvisations.

The Purple Flower begins with a song sung by “the White Devils seen in the distance “on the hill ‘Somewhere’”(192). The song echoes through the valley of ‘Nowhere’ “faintly”:

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! (192).

The childish ditty reveals the racist attitude of the White Devils, while also echoing their own insecurities. The song encapsulates the argument of the play that Bonner makes that "the White Devils [...] try every trick known and unknown, to keep the Us’s from getting up hill. For if the Us’s get the hill [...] then there, they will be Somewhere with the devils" (192).

The action in the play is initiated by the response of the Us’s to the provocation in the song. It is interesting to note that at the end of the play, the White Devil in the bushes is lured to his sacrificial death at the hands of the piper, Finest Blood. Old Man warns Finest Blood to "bring his gifts and offer them to him" (198). Bonner records these gestures in the play, one that points to the evolution of a codified language that confused whites. A whole repertory of music and songs evolved from this situation – slave songs, work songs, spirituals and gospel.

To counter the effects of the songs, Bonner situates African polyrhythms in the third episode play. "A drum begins to beat in the distance" (194). The drum is an archetype that stirs racial consciousness, as seen in the reaction to the sounds: "all the Us's stand up and shake off their sleep" as the drummers "strong vigorous jabs [...] make the whole valley echo and re-echo with the rhythm"(194). This music overpowers the faint echoes of the white chorus. The centrality of the drum in African
communities is emphasized here. The talking drum calls the community to a gathering and the Us’s spontaneously respond to the rhythms with their dancing. Southern notes that like music, dance was a form of communication, as well as creative expression and recreation (20). Bonner shows how music and dance aided the collective expression of experiences in oppressive cultures.

The Drinking Gourd by Hansberry goes beyond Bonner’s expressionist play. Set in realist surroundings, the play explores life on a Southern plantation in the nineteenth century. The title of the play is derived from a slave song of that name. The play presents an intimate picture of life in the slave quarters. The slave recorded the circumstances of his daily life in song, almost like a diary of events. The play pays tribute to the documentation of these experiences through the slave songs, spirituals and blues.

The play begins with “Stark, spirited banjo themes” (714). The phrase aptly describes the circumstances that Hannibal is placed in, in terms of his reality and spirit. Southern states that “the most common plantation instruments were the fiddle and the banjo”(182). These instruments were often improvised from available resources to resemble African instruments. The banjo thus became a symbol of the slave’s determination to create a space for free expression. This is the first impression of Hannibal, a carefree man in his own space.
During the soldiers narration "one of the most plaintive of the spirituals" is sung by "unseen slaves" (715). The song begins on the narrator's cue- "that third force is labor" (714). The song presents slaves at work, singing a song of freedom and heaven. Singing accompanied all kinds of works and repertories of work songs developed according to the kinds of works performed on the plantation. In her postscript to the play "Notes on Two Songs..." Hansberry notes that is was a "widely used signal song" (736). Southern describes it as "an alerting song" (744).

The song on closer examination reveals secret strategic locations such as "green trees bending" and "tombstones bursting" as Hansberry points in her postscript (736). Southern notes that "the slaves often sang together as they returned from their fields at the end of the day" (165). Hansberry observes this detail as the song fades away even as the driver calls "Quittin tim! Quittin tim!" (715).

The title song "The Drinking Gourd" is sung by Hannibal in his clearing, even as he shares his dreams of escape to freedom. The song itself was considered a metaphor for the escape route charted by the Big Dipper, which pointed North. However, it became more significant during slavery as it served as a map of the Underground Railway 6. Hannibal's song points to the subversive activities on plantations. Hansberry pays tribute to these Black heroes and heroines who risked their lives to follow the road to freedom. Hannibal sings:
For the old man is a-waitin'
For to carry you to freedom if
You follow the drinkin' gourd.
Follow -- follow -- follow...
If you follow the drinking gourd (7DG 717).

The action of the play follows Hannibal's road through pain and suffering to freedom. It 'herstoricizes' the resistance of thousands of slaves like Hannibal, Isaiah, Sarah and Rissa whose dreams of freedom inspired plans and routes of escape. The song plays again in the background, at the end of the play, signaling a journey from dream to reality, from slavery to freedom.

In Act Two, Hansberry presents intimate pictures of a slave community gathering in Rissa's cabin late in the evening. Hansberry notes that "the collection of slaves have formed a circle" around which the "slaves sing and perform 'Raise a Ruckus'"(727). Recreation included improvisations, which satisfied their master, accompanied by song, dance and mime. These dramatizations provided opportunities to express their feelings openly emphatically and satirically. Southern notes that "singers vied with one another in poking fun at their master" "making up their verses as they say and each trying to outdo the previous singer (183). "Raise a Ruckus" signifies on the oppressor and therefore is an illustration of the Signifyin' Monkey's presence on the plantations.
The play song is sung by singers who form a circle around the leader. The others join in on the chorus. This choreography derives from African call and response patterns, which symbolizes the relationship between the individual and the community and the circle or ring demonstrates the same. In the play, Hansberry presents two whole rounds of the performance. Joshua, who is in the centre of the singing circle, sings the first verse. He sings:

My old marster promise me
Mmm ... Mmm ... Mmm
That when he died he gonna set me free
Mmm ... Mmm ... Mmm...
Well he live so long 'til his head got bald
Mmm ... Mmm ... Mmm...
Then he gave up the notion of dying at all (727).

The chorus joins in the lively chorus:

Come along! Little children come along
Come where the moon is shining bright!
Get on board, little children, get on board
We're gonna raise a ruckus tonight (727)

Sarah's verse satirizes their mistress who promised her freedom. Sarah pantomimes how with a dose of poison, she helped her “Mistress along” (727).

The third verse ends abruptly on the first line as, Coffin, the slave driver descends on the entertainment. These clandestine performances are subversive acts that deconstruct the stereotype of the happy banjo-playing darkie. Through these
distinct cultural signifiers Hansberry presents the conflict between black and white, master and slave.

Hansberry includes a spiritual which is sung “plaintively” by a slave “somewhere in the distance” (733). The familiar spiritual sung in the background creates a sense of hopeless despair even as Rissa nurses her blinded son’s festering eyes. In a footnote, Hansberry suggests three spirituals “Lord, how come me here?” “Motherless Child” and “I’m Gonna Tell God All of the My Troubles”. All of them speak of suffering and faith in God who seems to have turned his back on them. These spirituals belong to the blues – spirituals group of slave songs as the plaintive personal note belongs to the blues and the Christian references to the spiritual tradition.

In A Raisin in the Sun Hansberry presents song from the slave era, revealing the impact of history and tradition on the lives of Black families, like the Youngers. Though they live in the Chicago of the sixties yet, they still face racism. It reveals that the circumstances that gave rise to slave songs and spirituals still remain and that they validate the contexts in which they are sung. In Act Three of the play, Ruth sings a “joyous penetrating statement of expectations” “Oh Lord, I don’t feel no ways tired” “Children Oh glory Hallelujah” (92). The song styled like the homiletic spiritual improvises on the spur of the moment and is like a preacher’s shout and the congregation’s response. A happy Walter cajoles his mother with the popular spiritual
"All Gods Chillun Got Wings" (102). Walter sings the song in celebration of being able to extricate himself from difficult circumstances and being able to fly with the choices he now has.

The resurgence of spirituals and blues in the sixties points to the militancy and protests of the times, which used these songs to declare their dissent or despair. These songs inspired a dissonant music with disturbing rhythms called jazz. Playwrights in the sixties therefore used this music and its historical precedents to register their feelings on stage and to recall the past. Childress' play Trouble In Mind takes its title from a blues song, just as Hansberry used a slave song, "The Drinking Gourd" to address her theme. Each act begins and ends with "blues music". The play's title is also synonymous with the play—within—the play entitled "Chaos in Belleville".

Though the blues originated in slave songs yet it became popular by the name around the turn of the century. Associated with the poor and the lonely, its haunting, earthy lyrics and melody sang of the sadness of the ages. These sorrow songs were personal responses to specific situations and were usually improvisations that took shape during performance. However the notes of despair were also tinged with a note of irony or humour as the blues singer vows to accept or challenge the situation he is in. It is this spirit of defiance that characterized the songs of the lady blues singers of the twenties. Mamie Smith, Edith Wilson, Ethel Waters, Ma Rainey called the "Mother of the Blues", Bessie Smith called "Empress of the Blues", "Sipper"
Wallace, Chippie Hill and ‘Queen’ Spivey were some of the greatest of the spirited blues singers of the century.

Childress specifies that a ‘Woman Singer’s on a blues record be played at the end of Act One. This is especially significant as it amplifies the spirit of Wiletta who has just made a defiant statement. She fumes “Where the hell do I come in? Every damn body pushin’ me off the face of the earth! I want to be actress... hell, I’m gonna be one, you hear me? Yes dammit ... and why not? Why in the hell not?” (154). The lady blues singer’s record is in at this point. Childress thus uses the spirit of the blues to reflect Wiletta’s courage and defiance in the face of despair and celebrates the resilience of Black women.

The play also reveals the stereotypes imposed on actors in the theatre. Their roles were often reduced to singing and praying. This stereotype of the happy slave was created on the plantation where white masters and slave drivers kept the slaves singing as they worked to rule out time for plotting escapes. Hansberry includes this moving detail in The Drinking Gourd when Zeb, shouts to the slave drivers: “Now, everybody get to work; and lets have a song there! - make noise, I say [...] keep ‘em at a good pace till the break, and for Gods sake keep em singin’. Keeps down grumbling!” (730).
Slaves were expected to sing as well as work, the rhythms aiding coordination and alleviating the drudgery of monotony and the hard labour. This detail is also built into the script of “Chaos in Belleville” where traditional slave songs are sung by the Black characters. Sheldon sings “Time of trouble is a lonesome time” (161), and Wiletta sings “Keep me from sinkin’ down / 0 Lord” (163). During rehearsals, Manners asks Wiletta to sing a song that captures the mood of what she is feeling. Wiletta sings a sad spiritual that she had learned as a child. She is overcome by despair at being reduced to a singing darkie and her renditions of the song affects the other Black actors as they are transported back to slavery. However as Manners goads her into reacting like a stereotype, she snaps and sings the same spiritual with “strength and anger” (152).

Childress uses the same song “Come and Go with Me to that Land” twice. The first time, Wiletta complies with Manners expectation of a stereotype; the second time round, she subverts the role by singing it defiantly. Childress adds, “The song is overpowering, we see a woman who could fight the world” (152). The playwright deconstructs the stereotype by locating in the play a real Black woman. Childress subverts the gaze by empowering Wiletta to re-write history from a Black woman’s perspective and to take control of the way whites appropriate Black forms to inhibit and reduce them to minstrels.
Stereotypes were also perpetuated through Broadway musicals, and became popular in the sixties and early seventies. These musicals were song and dance routines built around Black themes and legends such as Eubie Blake, Fats Waller, Charlie Parker, Ma Rainey and Mahalia Jackson. Though they afforded Black entertainers a foot hold on and off Broadway, yet they were in may respects ‘blackface’ shows. All these musicals looked to the past for music and dance. Black musical theatre rode on a wave of nostalgia, a trend that Shange criticizes in her foreword to Spell # 7. She states “we are compelled to examine these giants in order to give ourselves [...] an independently created Afro – American aesthetic. But we are going abt this process backwards by isolating the art forms & assuming a very narrow perspective vis- a – vis our own history” (67). Spell # 7, which integrates music and dance with words, is an attempt to move into “the drama of [Black] lives” (Foreword 67).

Childress’ writing in the sixties also comments on this trend which was in danger of reviving minstrelsy and stereotypes in the theatre. All the Black actors in Trouble in Mind have featured in a musical and audition for ‘real’ parts in the play. However they are reduced to the same roles that they wish to discard. Henry makes a reference to Wiletta’s role in a musical “Brownskin Melody” (137). Childress is perhaps alluding to the 1944 musical “Brownskin Models” written by Miller featuring Irene Higginbotham.7 Sheldon too makes a reference to a musical that he
and Millie had sung in (158), and to John who was “one of the children in the last
revival of *Porgy and Bess*”(144).

In *Wine in the Wilderness*, Childress portrays responses of Black men and
women to political and historical moments. Sonny- man and Old Timer revive an old
slave song called “Massa’s in de cold ground” 9. The song spells the death of the
master (135). This song is sung against the sounds of riots in the background. Sonny
– man and Old Timer sing gleefully adding to the moment, their feelings about
racism. Tommy sings “Great day, the world is on fire”, a spiritual in the emancipation
/ apocalypse cycle of songs (143). These songs speak of Judgment Day. They
became popular during the Civil War as songs of liberation and apocalypse. The song
signifies Tommy’s emancipation and self – affirmation and her hopes and feelings are
constrained in the “Joyous spiritual” (143).

Both Childress and Hansberry also make references to other forms and styles
of Black music and dance. In *A Raisin in the Sun*, Walter puts a record on, which
inspires Ruth to dance with him. They burlesque the old Warwick style social dance,
which is dancing “cheek to cheek, torsos poked but behind”(94). Hansberry revives
the dance hall steps of the brass band era of the twenties and thirties that revived old
steps such as the cakewalk chalk line, two- step and soft – shoe shuffle10. Beneatha
thinks Ruth and Walter are old fashioned, as jazz was currently the music gaining
popularity.
Similarly in *Wine in the Wilderness*, Childress makes a reference to Bill who puts a “rock record on” and Tommy goes into her “dance [...] simply standing and going through some boo- ga- loo motions (132). The boo – ga – loo is a fast stepping dance which usually accompanies the steady rhythmic patterns of blues and jazz. Childress inclusion of this detail points to two significant observations. First, that Tommy as a grass – roots chicks is uncomfortable and unaware of recent trends in music and dance and secondly that she is rooted in Black culture, unlike the rest who have assimilated white trends.

Rock is a predominantly white improvisation of Rhythm ‘n’ Blues which is largely dominated by Black musicians, though a few Black musician like Chuck Berry and Little Richard contributed to the movement. Also 1964, the year in which the play is set, is a significant year in Rock history as British groups like the Rolling stones and the Beatles impacted American music. These groups however warmly acknowledged their indebtedness to Black bluesmen, Rhythm ‘n’ Blues and Rock ‘n’ Roll stars. Childress makes a topical reference to the event by including Rock in her play."

It is also interesting note how both Hansberry and Childress address Africa in the sixties. Hansberry revives African culture by introducing Asagai who influences Beneatha’s journey to self- discovery. For Hansberry, rootedness in the past, in Africa, was a means to survive and resist assimilation. She creates a space for Yoruba
culture, through costume, music and dance and articulates her views through Beneatha and Asagai. Beneatha wears an African robe and headdress, sings along with "a Nigerian melody", attempts a Nigerian "welcome dance" and tries to pick up a few phrases (*Raisin* 74). She is caught between two choices; Hansberry portrays this dilemma through spectacle, music dance and ritual.

Childress too includes African details in *Wine in the Wilderness* in the setting and in Tommy’s transformation, after her night with Bill. She is dressed in an African wrap, with her hair fluffed up, not unlike the African model on Bill’s canvas. However Childress takes pains to show that dwelling on the past, as Bill does, points to an idealization of it and does not address reality. Kennedy’s plays refer to Africa as the origin of race consciousness; her connections to her roots cause her to raise ontological questions.

Deeply influenced by African culture, Shange incorporates these signifiers in her plays. In an unpublished interview Shange claimed that “European writers continue to store vast amounts of information about themselves in their novels. As a writer of a color I have to do that too” (Lester 210). Shange reveals in *For Colored Girls...* how coloured girls find moments of freedom in music and dance, which are accessible though their own creative energies and which could become the source of their empowerment. Several poems celebrate the creative fantasy that music and dance afford them, allowing them to transcend a physical world that limits their
physical and creative possibilities. The lady in yellow narrates her excitement on “graduation nite” (7) where she danced the night away to the music of “smokey robinson” (8). The uninhibited pleasure and fulfillment that young coloured girls experience through music and dance, is revealed here. The lady in blue’s poem is “a thank you for music”, which though can never replace love, yet can heal (13). In her poem she pays tribute to the Jazz artistes, Archie Shepp and Willie Colon. (12). Through music and dance ‘sechita’ transforms the sordid reality of the gaze of white men into a ritual in which she as an Egyptian goddess “kicked viciously thru the nite/ catchin stars tween her toes” (25). Shange celebrates the creative energies that are found in rituals from African culture, which give these women a mystical power to transcend their situations.

Music and dance also channels their feelings of hurt and anger, betrayal and rejection into something creative. The lady in orange releases her suppressed feelings through dance. Unable to find healing in words, she exorcises her demons through dance. She quotes:

i done forgot all abt words
ain’t got no definitions
i wanna whirl
with you (15).

These coloured girls experience through music and dance an exhilarating release. It offers them the space to forget about the hurt and glory in the affirmation that music and dance gives them. The ladies dance to the music of Willie Colon and
find a liberation of body mind and spirit, through it. They repeat, “we gotta keep from cryin’ / we gotta keep from dyin’” (15). The lady in yellow confesses:

i survive on intimacy & tomorrow / that’s all i’ve got goin
& the music waz like smack & you knew abt that /
& still refused my dance waz nut enuf /
& it waz all I had (45).

The lady in yellow seeks not only catharsis but also comfort in music and dance.

Shange sees in music and dance, a medium to spiritual awakening. It is through dance and music that these seven coloured girls express their newfound assertiveness. As they chant together about how unique they are, they join in a dance that “reaches a climax and all of them ladies fall out tired, but full of life and togetherness”(49). These cultural bonds unite them in a ceremony of shared togetherness, which in turn create a sense of connectedness that transcends time and space and history. The re-awakening of a deep primal spirit that causes a spiritual bond of love is possible through their common love for music and dance.

The structure of For Colored Girls... rests on a song motif that develops from “dark phrases and half – notes” (3), to “a song of joy” (63). The narrative traces this development from girlhood to womanhood, and from worthlessness to self-love and love of the community. These transitions are captured through choreography, song and dance. Girlhood is poignantly expressed through the singing of two popular Black female songs from Black tradition. The two songs—“mama’s little baby likes
shortening” and “little sally walker” capture the growth from infancy to girlhood (6). This is followed by the poem “graduation nite” which narrates the rites of passage both socially and sexually from girlhood to adulthood.

The first song “Mama’s little baby likes shortnin”’ is a traditional Black song that mothers sing to their children (6). It reveals a state of innocence, tender care and the security of parental love, more specifically, maternal love. This world coloured by love shuts out the realities of the world. The play song, which is accompanied by vigorous clapping and dancing, reveals a girl’s world. Song and dance become areas for playful togetherness and self – expression. This carefree world with its simple pleasures are far removed from a world that will oppress and humiliate them, that will take away their songs of joy and leave them with “the melodylessness of her dance”, “half notes scattered without rhythm”(4). These songs are placed after their introduction. Even though these seven women come from different cities across America, yet through song and dance they ignore their differences and create a world of shared togetherness. These street songs evolve into “a righteous gospel” mirroring their evolution from the material to the spiritual (5).

Through her plays, Shange also documents the invaluable contribution made by Black musicians. In For Colored Girls... she alludes to the contemporary music of the seventies, which was primarily an era of rhythm ‘n’ blues. Beginning with Colon’s flute music influenced by New Orleans jazz bands, she also includes the
music of other popular rhythm ‘n’ blues artistes such as the Dells, an all male group, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, Archie Shepp and William ‘Smokey’ Robinson.

In Spell # 7, she covers the history of Black music and dance from slavery to the late seventies. She juxtaposes the past with the present, revealing the intimate connections between forms and historical moments. From Bert Williams to Bob Marley, from minstrelsy to reggae, Shange pays tribute to these culture bearers who created “an independently created afro-american aesthetic” (Foreword 67).

However Shange also expresses her pain of knowing the cost these musicians and entertainers had to pay to exhibit their talents and survive in a racist world. Using the minstrel mask to unmask white collaboration in the dehumanizing act of minstrelsy, Shange portrays stereotypes and deconstructs them. Shange quotes, “I included a prologue of a minstrel show [...] the minstrel may be “banned” as racist / but the minstrel is more powerful in his deformities than our alleged rejection of him / for every night we wd be grandly applauded” (Foreword 68).

Minstrelsy, a form of theatrical performance, was an appropriation of slave theatrical performance by whites. Parodying the signifyin’ discourse of slave performances, they regaled their audiences with comic interludes that de-humanized and commodified the slave, on stage. Black minstrels were accomplices in their own humiliation, as they corked their faces blacker than they were. The stereotype
perpetuated by minstrelsy was that of a grinning black man, mimicking the gestures and language of white man, who played the banjo, clapped ham bones and grinned idiotically. Black minstrels created a niche for themselves on the stage with their song and dance routines. Southern contends “that though the nineteenth century minstrel established stereotypes that persisted into the twentieth century”, yet “blackface minstrelsy was a tribute to the black man’s music and dance, in that the leading figures of the entertainment world spent the better part of the nineteenth century imitating his style” (96).

Shange too pays tribute to the legacy that was wrought through “the involuntary constriction ‘n’ amputations of their humanity” (Foreword 68). She also avers that minstrelsy still exists, as it is evident in the appreciation of the audience for these minstrel’s performance on stage. The minstrel show in the play traces the history of every period of American entertainment from acrobats, comedians, tap dancers, Calindy dancers¹¹, Cotton Club choruses¹², Apollo theatre¹³ and du wop¹⁴ groups. This show ends with the proverbial minstrel finale a la Bert Williams.

Shange makes an important change in the minstrel show by including women who were absent on the stage and in the narrative. However Dahlia refuses to be objectified and throws off the sexless costumes of the minstrel. After the minstrel show, the actors assume their real selves in Eli’s bar where through the music and dances of their choice, they let down their masks and inhibitions. Through the play,
she places contemporary music forms in a ceremony of shared remembrance, connecting not only the actors but also the audience. The songs and dance forms she employs amplify contextual and historical meanings.

In Eli’s bar, the company dance to “we are family” by “sister sledge” (Spell 76). The song establishes the fact that they are united by factors of race and class. They ‘boogie’ through Eli’s monologue, which Shange points, indicates that these people have worked and played together. Music and dance thus become an index of intimacy and shared history.

The song “music for the love of it” by “butch morris” is positioned soon after the section on the reactions of white’s to black entertainers (Spell 81). This “catchy uptemp” beat inspires them to do a “dance that highlights their ease with one another & their familiarity with all the new dance steps” and signifies the innate love of music that Black entertainers manifest (81). Shange showcases the natural rhythms that Black people have which makes them react instinctively to any form of music. This agility, versatility and fluidity of expression is showcased in this play.

Shange also incorporates other coloured influences on Black dance such as the ‘samba’ from Brazil, the ‘tango’ from Latin America and the ‘reggae’ from the Caribbean (Spell 97). The jukebox becomes a significant prop through which the
history of Black music is manifested. Each song that is played or sung creates a mood, experience feelings or captures the essence of the dramatic moment.

In Act Two of Spell #7 when the men stage a seduction of the black girl, they sing "stevie wonder's", hit melody "isn't she lovely" (102 – 103). The song objectifies the Black girl from a white perspective, as Ross and Eli express that though "the whole world knows that nobody loves the black woman like they love white women", yet the same woman is vulnerable to sexual advances (103). To capture the essence of the whole world and the seduction and the glamour and passion of an "international affair", Shange includes the tango, a Latin American dance, danced to "tara's theme" (103). At the end of this section, after the women put them right, they sing 'Smokey' Robinson's song "ooh baby" which is a heart felt song and a lyrical apology. Ross sings:

i did you wrong / my heart went out to
play / but in the game
i lost you / what a price to pay / i'm cryin' (105).

By the end of the second verse the women relent, accept their men, while Lily joins the men in the third verse. The song takes a different significance when Lily sings:

i'm just about at the end of rope
but i can't stop trying / i can't give up hope
cause i / i believe one day / i'll hold you near (106).
It speaks of the Black woman’s isolation, her loneliness and longing to be accepted as she is. This section of Act Two ends with a moving declaration of love and loyalty expressed through Bob Marley’s reggae song “I wanna love you everyday & every nite” (107). The song celebrates their reconciliation and the hope of a shared destiny, a partnership of love often found missing between Black men and women.

Though Shange excludes Black men from the sisterhood of Black women in the previous play, here she accommodates them to ensure the wholeness and healing of Black women. The play thus ends with a joyous celebration of a spiritual awakening that creates a re-visioning of their selves and contexts. The journey metaphor from slavery to self—hood is reflected not only in this history, but also in the lives of actors who evolve from minstrels to real people. Shange celebrates Black cultural forms through her choreopoem, by creating new spaces for identifying, documenting, authenticating and legitimizing Black experience.

Though Kennedy’s use of Black music is missing from this analysis, her indebtedness to these forms cannot be underestimated. Kennedy does not use music, song or dance, though there is an orchestration of sounds, rhythms and movements that produce a dance—macabre in the plays. The use of Jazz rhythms, contrapuntal rhythms and repetitious dialogues create discordant aural patterns. These patterns reflect the harsh music and jangled tunes that echo in the minds of Sarah, Brother and Sister Rat, reflecting the conflicts that rage through the Black female psyche.
Black women playwrights from Bonner to Shange forge new metaphors and meta-languages that codify the aesthetics of a culture into a structure of signs and create new forms of expression that defy the dictates of Western dramaturgy. These Black women playwrights subvert the gaze by positing a Black female perspective of history and culture that has long been absent. The creative Black female consciousness is manifested through these vital signifiers of music, dance, spectacle and ritual. By elevating these elements, by amplifying their significance and making them synonymous with Black women’s theatre, they validate cultural models that they rely on, for a sense of rootedness and belonging. As vehicles of transference, they place on record the significant role that Black women have played in perpetuating the history and culture of the race. Bonner, Childress, Hansberry and Shange create authentic spaces for creative self-expressions that celebrate Blackness and femaleness and with the inclusion of these vital signifiers, move theatre into the drama of their lives.
Notes

3 In the traditional minstrel show, the interlocutor is ‘the straight man’ who puts on a sophisticated air while he sets up jokes and parodies for ‘the two end men’. The two end men are traditionally silly, who miss the interlocutor’s points, speak in the dialect of Blacks and shuffle, play ‘hambones and tambourine’ and sing ‘darkie songs’.
4 Stephanfetchit—a stereotype from minstrel shows who always trembled and rolled his eye every time the master called for him.
5 Bert William’s (1874 – 1922) Southern, 477. Egbert Williams & George Walker’s vaudeville act made them acclaimed for their performance. Popularized the cakewalk in England & France. After Walker retired, he joined the white world of entertainment as a featured performance. (298–299)
6 The Underground Railway was one of the earliest activities of the Abolitionists, which was not a railroad, but an organization of people, black and white who helped fugitives to escape to safety. This underground road had its ‘stations’, ‘conductors’ and ‘lines’, which were worked out and communicated through songs. Southern’s note on the Underground Railroad (142) and Zinn’s documentation of personal accounts of slave escapes (170–78).
8 Southern notes that Porgy and Bess served as a showcase for talented singers from 1935 through its numerous revivals (408). She adds that there were five Broadway revivals between 1940 – 1982 (542).
9 Written by Stephen Foster in 1850, the greatest songwriter of the 19th century.
10 These dance steps of plantation origin were revived during the late nineteenth century and popularized through dance halls, nightclubs and dance competitions. They have passed into the repertory of black dance forms.
11 A song entitled ‘Calindy’ (1867) accompanied a kind of contrivance in which 2 dancers faced each other, advancing and retreating in time to music. Southern, 181.
12 Cotton Club choruses- the Cotton Club opened in 1927 in Lennox avenue, Harlem, N.Y., essentially a white club it was dominated by Black musicians. Southern 373–456.
13 Apollo Theater was situated in the heart of Harlem; it became synonymous with Black music. Many Black singers, from Lena Horne to Stevie Wonder made their debuts here.
14 Du- wop groups – Jazz men who “jammed” at night clubs during the early 40’s creating rhythms complex polyrhythms, steady but light and subtle beats, dissonant harmonies, tones, colour & irregular phrases.