

SHANGE, Ntozake - For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, N.Y., 1977.

Who is Ntozake Shange?

Zaki Shange, as it is known in U.S.A., is a young author, one of the most admired poets known nowadays in U.S.A., and she had the honor of having three of her plays represented at the same time in New York. Her work is dedicated to the women of the "third world". She lives today in New York where she teaches literature in Columbia University.

"For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf", started her professional career in New York, in the "Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre" and it had such great success that from there it went to the "Booth Theatre" on Broadway where it opened in September of 1976, and is still playing today to full houses.

Shange knows Brazil and she thinks of coming here for the opening of her play.

N. Shange's work:

IF there is one artist whose work best symbolizes the arts explosion, it is Ntozake Shange. Her choreo-poem, "For Colored girls. . .", breaks the boundaries between poetry and theater, dance and realism, verbal meters and jazz rhythms, street talk and "high art". Nurtured by both the new voices of black poets and the shared vision of feminist groups, Shange has burst into the nation's consciousness without compromise, and with an art that speaks real life.

Her work had origin in a group of poems represented not in a theatre but in a space in S. Francisco, in California, with the author and some poems, music and five women reciting and dancing on the spur of the moment. It was exactly at that time, in S. Francisco, 1974, that the group had other contacts with different women coming from various parts of the world to the

to the University. In the dancing classes, N. Shange exchanged some ideas with those women and started collecting their experiences forming a whole that involves every woman in the world. This inspired Shange to study literary women's problems from Ancient times till the present. Parallel to literature, she dedicated her time to dance and corporal expression, as main parts of her poetry.

From those informal and improvised choreopoems, appeared "For Girls". The poems were numbered, without titles, staged by girls of every race; each of those girls were named "Lady in blue", in brown, in green, etc., trying to give us a message of women from all colors, races, nameless, timeless, and placeless - a feminine experience throughout all times.

Then came the last title "For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf"; all the poems were entitled by the name "choreopoem", so describe the deep relation between poetry and dance. This choreopoem reflects, in words and movement, the different moments of a woman's life - her successes, her fights, her errors, her passions, showing to us a perspective of the woman as a human being, discovering her identity is the world where she lives.

A colored woman being, a marron one, forgotten in society, woman "of never having been a girl" sings her melody, a melody of self-assertion, her song brighter and happier than her and in a warm dance, the one in yellow, in purple in red, in green, in blue and in orange appear putting an end to their own vast worlds, "moved to the ends of their own rainbows" and being born again.

Harsh music is heard and the thym increases violently and accelerates more and more, till it stops.

And silently the colored women become colored, delicate children, growing, growing slowly till they become girls, being accompanied by an appropriate musical rhythm.

Suddenly they are women again and each one on the stage of life tells in a musical way of dancing her problems, her anguish and her hopes. There were the black folks and their music, there on the stage, crying for freedom in real a search for woman's



"For colored girls. . ." is an inner complex frustrated love song, planted in a woman's heart, in a colored woman's heart, that is nothing more than a lamentation:

"Ever since I realized there waz someone callt a colored girl an evil woman a bitch on a nag i been tryin not to be that & leave bitterness in somebody else' cup/ come to somebody to love me without deep & nasty smellin scald from lyi or bein left screami in a street fulla lunatics/whisperin slut bitch bitch niggah. . . (3)

It is a desperate, deluded song of women who don't believe any more in men's love. I would say. It is a song of someone who suffered in the skin all rude men's treatment. . . and the play ends with a woman chorus, into a closed tight circle ( a femi  
nine circle):

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"i found god in myself  
& i loved her/ i loved her fiercely"

Even god is her. . . isn't that also a proof of their les  
bian tendency, after being deluded by men's love?

"I waz missin somethin" - lady in red  
"a layin on of hands" - lady in purple  
"not a man" - lady in blue

But the end comes as lady in brown says:

"&this is for colored girls who have considered suicide/ but  
are movin to their own rainbows". . .

MARIA HELENA NORONHA

PART II - LITERARY CRITICISM

LESLIE FIEDLER: HAMBURGER, LIT AND COCA-COLA

(excerpts from a Lecture given by Leslie Fiedler at the  
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in August of 1979).