

1. My mama told me to be wary of light-headed girls thinking of nothing but boys. These were heavy-headed girls talking about nothing but boys, and I didn't have the feeling I must be wary of them.

2. But are they "girls"? Near the play's beginning, they speak of having grown up in a subculture--the chief black ghettos of America--in which female children pass directly into adulthood, "never having been a girl." Here then is an ethnological schizophrenia: the adolescence (delayed genital activity) of the general traditional Western culture, biblical in root, produces a "person" America's children have held up before them as ideal; but cultures and subcultures with early genital activity [= no adolescence] do not produce such stressed and articulated adults...and the gap intensifies postcoital depression and sexual-action disappointments. Not a line of the play points to a critique of this ethnological dissonance; therefore, on this plain the thing struck me as unrealistic (ironically, in a play billing itself as realism).

3. Of course it's a play, not a sociological treatise. And a play tends to sharpen what we used to call black/white [=evil/good] with dramatic license: the devil is identified simply so early on we can hate her/him [in the case of this story, not even him/her: only him--with God, consequently, simplistically loved as "her"]. The dirty pool here is that the dramatist is asking us to take seriously what she's saying about young black females' disappointment-rage at "nigger" men, whereas all her analytic permits is that the offstage male devils provide a foil for the display of black female virtuosity in several modes (speech, dance, song). I was deeply moved by this virtuosity, even to the praise of God for making such creatures! To modify Shakespeare, "What a creature is woman!"

4. To finish dramatic comments quickly--for I want to comment chiefly on other matters--a number of artistic motifs and sociomodels wove a rich texture. One warp was the standup soloist in jazz improvisation; one woof, the women's consciousness-raising group in its minor, let's-shit-on-the-boys cathartic mood.

5. On the moral and spiritual levels, the play is a witches' brew of perversities and sicknesses:

(1) These girls' psychic world is so small that they are both self-imprisoned and self-canceling, their lunar orbits [*luna*, feminine] determined by the larger and black, sensed but unseen, suns [*sol*, masculine]. As I have had many counselees who demeaned themselves by defining their existence primarily in terms of some male (and I am to visit one of those males in the hospital tomorrow morning, who describes his wife as his stationwagon and his mistress as his sports car), I'm flattered that some girls think us boys that important and have to fight off despising them for it.

(2) The women's movement at its heart is about women's need to move from male dependency (the clinging-vine syndrome, which revulses all worthy men) to what is well described by the German word *Selbststaendigkeit*, standing on your own two feet and defining yourself from within. In a romantic culture, each sex is seduced into defining itself in relation to the other sex, a confusing of the sexual and the divine. The final song of the play half-counters this with narcissism, confusing the self and the divine: "I found God in myself, and I loved her--fiercely." This is the position of callow, frustrated puppy love. It's the early-adolescent illusion that, battered in inept attempts at intimacy, one can find identity sans intimacy, or anyway in narcissistic-masturbatory intimacy ["I can come without him"]. What we see here is indeed only "colored girls," not colored women. On the basis of rumors and reviews, I had hoped for more. I wanted liberated women, and the playwright gave me only half-liberated girls, so I have IFD (idealism to frustration to disappointment).

(3) Because half of moral reality is blocked out (e.g., the girls' complicity in their plight, in letting themselves be sexual playthings of the boys), the drama dully plays out the Game of Victim from self-pity to self-righteousness. Such sickness delays moving to Berne's "games-free," the Bible's "salvation."

(4) A maudlin *cri de coeur* -- good for the belly like a good cry, but offering us the opposite of help in the liberationist task of sorting out authentic/phony tones/overtones: cries against God and/in the human condition [under metaphor of cries against "man"] and for significant intimacy, the King of Love.

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## FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE / WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF

by  
NTOZAKE SHANGE  
*Arranged and Directed by*  
OZ SCOTT

with  
TRAZANA BEVERLEY    LAURIE CARLOS    RISE COLLINS  
SHARITA HUNT    AKU KADOGO  
JONETTE O'KELLEY    ROXANNE REESE

*Scenery by*  
MING CHO LEE  
*Choreography by*  
PAULA MOSS

*Lighting by*  
JENNIFER TIPTON  
*Costumes by*  
JUDY DEARING  
*Music for "I Found God in Myself" by*  
DIANA WHARTON

*Associate Producer*  
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Film of (see theater)  
"A Colored Girl"