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The Representation of the Female Identity in Sonia

Sanchez's The Bronx is Next

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore how the American African playwright Sonia Sanchez treats the quest for identity in her one-act play, *The Bronx is Next*. It comprises three sections and a conclusion. These three sections give a brief note on Sanchez's life, the distinctive traits of her dramatic world with a focus on the social and cultural responsibility, and her treatment of the topic of identity consecutively. *The Bronx is Next* presents an overall view of Sonia Sanchez's approach to the representation of the black woman's identity. The character of Black Bitch adds much to understand how the black woman is even marginalized and oppressed in the black community. In actual fact, she is the proverbial representation of the female struggle to get her voice strongly heard. The paper rounds off with a conclusion in which the findings of the research have been mentioned

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تمثيل الهوية النسائية في سونيا

سانشيز ذا برونكس التالي

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الخلاصة

يحاول هذا البحث بيان كيف ان الكاتبة الامريكية الافريقية سونيا سانشيز تتناول مسألة البحث عن الهوية في مسرحية برونكس التالي ذات الفصل الواحد. ويتكون البحث من ثلاثة مباحث وخاتمة , وتعطي المباحث الثلاث نبذة مختصرة عن حياة سانشيز ، وابرز خصائص عالمها المسرحي من خلال التركيز على المسؤولية الاجتماعية والثقافية للكاتب المسرحي ومن ثم تناول موضوع الهوية في مسرحيتها قيد البحث. وتقدم مسرحية برونكس التالي نظرة شاملة لتمثيل هوية المرأة السوداء عند سونيا سانشيز، شخصية بلاك بيتش تضيف المزيد لفهم كيف انه تم تهميش المرأة السوداء حتى في داخل مجتمع السود، وفي حقيقة الامر تمثل هذه الشخصية الكفاح النسوي من اجل جعل صوت المرأة مسموعا وبقوة . وينتهي البحث بخاتمة ترد فيها ابرز نتائج هذه الدراسة .

1.1.Introduction

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Sonia Sanchez(1934–) is a world-class poet, playwright, educator, and novelist of international renown. During a career that has spanned over 40 years, Sanchez has lectured and taught at over 50 colleges both in the United States and abroad. She has written over a dozen books of poetry, eight plays, and several novels. Born in Birmingham, AL, Sanchez graduated from Hunter College in 1955 and did postgraduate work at New York University. Like many others, she found herself swept up in the civil rights fervor of the 1960s.¹

In Sanchez's view, writing and political activism were interconnected. She first thought that the blacks were able, and it was necessary for them, to assimilate themselves into white America. However, second to this thought was her influence by the black Muslim leader Malcolm X, who called the blacks to displace themselves from the white society, a stance that had a tremendous impact on Sonia Sanchez's later orientations. With this radical idea in mind, Sanchez embraced Islam and joined the Nation of Islam; yet, she soon returned to Christianity.² Understandably, her conversion into Islam and renegade from it may justify the fact that she underwent a sense of identity crisis which was mainly attributed to the lack of a guiding hand. She found her spiritual self in Islam, profoundly affected by Malcolm X and the ideas he held.

Sonia Sanchez's dramatic works occupy a select space in the development of African American theatre. Particularly during the militant period, she demonstrated a distinctive courage in producing work that threatened the dynamics of black male militant discourse, while she still remained a recognized literary force within that domain. Over time, in her plays she developed purposefully shocking language, often fraught with ritual and aimed toward shattering the complacency of Eurocentric and black audiences. Her ability to raise difficult questions from within the black community, to challenge boundaries in terms of dramatic structure and language, and to offer new terrain in the effort to understand and ameliorate the struggles of black women has resulted in a rich foundation for the several contemporary, successful, young black female playwrights garnering acclaim today. Sanchez thus must be acknowledged as an important figure in the development in general of African American literary tradition and as a key force in the development of African American women's dramatic literature.³

Wood suggests that in her approaches to dramatic structure, for example, Sanchez's use in *Sister Son/ji* (1969) of cumulative memory visions and on-stage shifts in scene is in keeping with Kennedy's unusual "dream landscapes" in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) or *The Owl Answers* (1965). Sanchez's memory visions also anticipate Ntozake Shange's "dream-memories" such plays as *boogie woogie landscapes* (1979). Additional experimental efforts by Sanchez anticipate Shange's and Suzan-Lori Parks's radicalized\reconfigurations of black drama. For example, Sanchez's development of groups paired with choral dancers, rather than scenes or acts, in her play *Uh Huh, But How Do It Free Us?* (1974), provides an alternative dramatic structure where the layering of meaning occurs via implication, repetition, synecdoche and metonymy.⁴ In her recent play *2x2*(2009), Sanchez raises the importance of education in African- American life. This play draws on the fact how black children are not given the chance to educate themselves as to improve their intellectual abilities.

As in all her writing, her plays stress the responsibility of the members of the African American community to love themselves and one another as a way of transcending racism. She has attempted to bridge the gap between the elite world of academia and the reality of the black experience in the United States. Sanchez's plays are an outgrowth and extension of her poetic craft. ⁵

Sanchez describes the language she heard as having its own cadence and rhythm, as being hip, smart, and straightforward. As in Alabama, she liked what she heard and would imitate it. Her father, a musician, took her to hear jazz and blues artists. The impact of the language and music would resonate in her poetry. ⁶ She calls on her heritage from black music: blues, jazz, and gospel. Her dialogue is innovative in its typography and rhythm and rejects traditional spelling and capitalization (for example, "blk" and "u" for "black" and "you"). The language of white people, she believes, is a form of oppression. While Sanchez is skilled in playing with words and can express herself in a variety of forms, including traditional English prose and poetry and Japanese haiku, in both her poetry and drama she rejects "Eurocentric" language and traditions. She has moved away from her use of vulgarity in her earlier plays toward a more loving, spiritual expression, and her later work in poetry seems less angry,

although it still has strong political content.⁷

In addition to the content of her work, Sanchez became known for her use of black language and her live readings. The rhythm and cadence that she heard on the street took center stage in her poetry. For Sanchez, this was the most appropriate language to communicate honestly with her black audience and get to the truth of their history and the oppressive environment they were in. The call and response, singing, and chanting that marked her readings were also integral to the forthright communication that the language afforded her. In her writing, the language was represented through the formal use of abbreviated spellings, dashes, and other devices.⁸

Sonia Sanchez, one of the few women who were considered part of the Black Arts and Theater movement, was mainly a poet who used to read her poetry during the 1960s. Like Kennedy, she turned away from classical realism and used her poetry to create theater, giving birth to verse plays written in a very visual language. But in contrast to Kennedy's plays, Sanchez's plays were written in consonance with the aesthetic pursued by the artists of the Black Arts movement, as reflected in her one-woman monologue *Sister Son/ji* (1969). Presented in a surrealistic style, the play shows a fifty-five-year-old woman's struggle that stands as a metaphor for that of African Americans throughout history in the US and is, according to Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, "one of the most significant portrayals of the Black Power Movement of the 1960s."⁹ Moreover, Sanchez also uses the stage to address black men and ask them to respect black women, as presented in *The Bronx Is Next* (1968).¹⁰

1.2. Sanchez's Dramatic Vision

Sonia Sanchez's dramatic world is not separable from her own poetic realm, for she has repeated over and over again that her artistic message is to effect change in the black community, a change that causes the African Americans feel proud of their identity. Such a vision is encapsulated in a number of essays that she has written in the course of her life. The significance of these essays resides in the fact that they set the theoretical background for Sanchez's playwriting. Therefore, it is quite significant to examine some of her essays on poetry and drama to get a clearer view of the world she presents.

In her poetry and drama, Sanchez ponders over changing the blacks for the better, a catalyst that never moves from her mind. She is well aware that the black identity is incessantly overshadowed by the white America. In this connection, she affirms:

The most fundamental truth to be told in any art form, as far as Blacks are concerned, is that America is killing us. But we continue to live and love and struggle and win. I draw on my experience or image to clarify and magnify this truth for those who must ultimately be changing the world; not for critics or librarians.¹¹

"America is killing us" is the kernel statement made by Sonia Sanchez. It denotes her cultural awareness of the ever-present white marginalization of the black race. The perennial aim she keeps in mind is to bring home the fact that the black national feelings must be painstakingly aroused in order to establish a black-specific identity and nation.

Like the poet, the dramatist must be "a creator of social values."¹² Telling the truth by the medium of writing is seen as one of the essential requirements to achieve this task of creating a system of social beliefs and values. For Sanchez, writing supports her concerted efforts to continue her search for the black identity and the realization of this long-awaited dream, strongly affirming her eternal message that "I keep writing because I realize that until Black people's social reality is free of oppression and exploitation, I will not be free to write as one who's not oppressed or exploited."¹³

In an essay entitled "Poetry Run Loose: Breaking the Rules" (2004), Sanchez examines the causes that interpret her transformation from composing poetry into writing drama, holding the idea that poetry seems to have lost much of its expressivity and powerfulness. She starts her essay by saying:

When I am asked why I decided to write a play, I must say that it is because I actually saw the affinity between being a poet and being a playwright. Every playwright I liked also wrote poetry. I saw the

connection of how closely we pay attention to words as poets. That same kind of attention is paid to the dialogues that we write in the play. So I saw a really kindred kind of spirit going from poetry to the play. I found out once when I was writing a poem that it wasn't going well because so many voices were surfacing. I realized these words, these ideas, these voices really worked better in a play.¹⁴

The borderline that separates poetry from playwriting is the element of dialogue which underpins Sonia Sanchez's aspiration to convey her attitudes towards the problems that are challengingly confronted by the black women. She has a reverence of the black woman whom she sees as "... a resurrection to her true spiritual self."¹⁵

The core dramatic ideas of Sonia Sanchez have been formulated by the great impact of the black political activism of the sixties and seventies. During that period, the blacks had a strong feeling that their national identity was deliberately susceptible to the white arrogance which posed a real and destructive threat to their existence. Such a kind of racial oppression and effacement was clearly mirrored in the fields of politics, education, and economics. William L. Van Deburg states that "These black Americans knew that their quest for a greater share of decision-making power depended upon two factors: (1) a thorough understanding of the power-oriented nature of American institutional life; and (2) the ability to establish a lasting sense of group identity and solidarity."¹⁶

Sanchez admits that drama gives her much space to ventilate the concerns of her gendered identity in a mesmeric manner. In poetry one person's voice may be uttered, whereas drama is the medium by which multiple and different voices can be freely spoken.¹⁷ Salaam states that one of the most distinctive features of Sonia Sanchez's achievements is voice,¹⁸ which is clearly symptomatic of Sanchez's capability to voice the black voicelessness and to speak for the black identity. Such a voice is persistently heard through the language Sonia Sanchez employs in her works.

In an interview in 2005, Sanchez also avers that she is much overburdened with the black woman's position by saying "I wanted my plays to speak to younger women about men's silence around the personal relationships in the movement."¹⁹ During those years that witnessed the marginalization and oppression of women, Sanchez called to free black women from the fetters of the patriarchal hegemony within the black community. Sanchez's defence of women's rights can be strongly seen in another interview in which she affirms that the black woman and her identity are always hardly tested:

If you scratch the surface of any woman of color, you know she's a womanist already. She's had to struggle with men. She had to struggle with her own identity. She's had to struggle in a house, just to be herself. She has to struggle against rape, incest. She's had to struggle to go school. People have attempted to destroy the power of the word feminism.²⁰

It seems quite apparent that Sanchez aims at showing all kinds of oppression suffered black women. She has a firm conviction that women can foster a sense of identity the moment they understand their own personal concerns and strive for freedom in their society.

2. The Representation of the Female Identity in *The Bronx Is Next*

In *The Bronx Is Next*, her first drama, Sanchez answers Ed Bullins's call for street theater with a story of militant, organized African American resistance. A mere five pages of text enact a mime-show of reversal. A character known only as White Cop chastises African Americans for not "putting forth a little more effort" (49)²¹ and for rioting in the streets. Three African American residents of Harlem (Roland, Charles, and Jimmy) offer him a chance to understand their perspectives, by switching roles with him. They become the police; White Cop plays the African American man. They abuse him, accusing him of trying to flee arrest when he does not move, and finally drag him from the stage. As they pull him to his apparent doom, his assailants ignore his protests that he has never hurt nor killed an African American, even if other police he has known have. The building where the play is staged begins to burn, as the last character on the stage predicts, "the Bronx is next"²²

The Bronx is Next presents Sonia Sanchez's vision of the black identity, especially in the militant period. From her very first play forward, Sanchez explores questions of militancy in conjunction with an ever-increasing examination of the value and rights of black women in the black community. The

Bronx is Next, Sanchez's first play, is quintessentially a black militant play, focusing on the impact of American racism and the radical response of the black community to that oppression. The central focus of this play is an examination of the frustrated anger brewing in isolated and impoverished black communities and the militant vision that recognizes these communities as prime places for fostering revolutionary change. The play is bold in tenor. As one-dimensional characters, the militants perform radical actions in the play (enhanced by ritual images of fire as a source of cleansing) that are more significant than character development. The characters' grass roots response to the debilitating effects of exploitative slum-lords and unlivable conditions in the Harlem ghettos culminates in the young militant characters' plans to burn all of the tenements down. The destruction of the environment in which blacks are racially imprisoned emphasizes that "blacks expose the criminal behavior of whites; it offers the white world the "show" of their challenge."²³ After convincing or forcing their neighbors to move into the streets or be burned, three black revolutionaries, Roland, Charles, and Jimmy begin to set fire to the slum apartments in their neighborhood. Theirs is a violent and triumphant street-informed "strategy" (35), a response to the vicious conditions of racial poverty in the black New York boroughs.²⁴ The prime mover that led Sanchez to write this play is that she felt that the black identity was threatened by the white domination. She explains why she composed this play, " ... I wrote that play because I wanted to show how urban cities were killing Black Folks, how death permeated our soul as it is in these ghettos,... and to show also how the possibilities of organizing people to take them South where they had come from and to begin to rebuild."²⁵ Women had to survive in these miserable ghettos which are "kinda hot and awful" (28). T. Sarada describes the ghetto in a vivid manner: The ghetto is a fixed structure, the creation of the imperialistic-capitalistic culture which has crippled the physical and psychological health of the African American women. They wage relentless wars to merely survive. Survival becomes a crucial aspect of the lives of African American women since they are at the vortex of numerous powers oppressing them in a concomitant manner. The highly paralytic ghetto structure, therefore, becomes a battleground wherein numerous capitalistic, economic, imperialist and patriarchal forces ravage the psyche of women. ²⁶

The Bronx is Next examines Sonia Sanchez's approach to the representation of the black woman's identity. The character of Black Bitch is a typical example of the marginalization of the black women. She struggles to get her voice strongly heard. Hence, she utters her resounding speech indicating her protestation against the black patriarchy:

Yeah. I know what I am .(Looks around) But all you revolutionists or nationalists or whatever you call your [self] – do you know where at? I am a black woman, and I've had black men who could not love me or my black boys- where you gonna find black women to love you when all this is over- when you need them? As for me I said no black man would touch me ever again (32)

Sanchez employs elements of black revolutionary dramatic rhetoric most directly in this play, presenting black vernacular as agitational language and using ritualized symbolic action with socio-political education and unification of the audience as the ultimate goal. Yet, even at this earliest moment in her playwriting career, Sanchez also demonstrates an effort to address latent complications within the militant agenda—primarily sexism. This courageous effort culminates in what Mike Sell deftly describes as "the most acutely self-critical, resolutely revolutionary plays of the Black Arts era"²⁷ (71–2). In this first play, Sanchez initiates a burgeoning self-reflexive interrogation of the black militant community through the characters Old Sister and Black Bitch, whose experiences illustrate a central criticism concerning generational and sexist bigotry evident in male militant discourse and activism.²⁸

The opening of the play and its setting indicate the significance of the historical background to set the dramatic events in motion. The setting in Sanchez's dramatic macrocosm clearly reflects the thematics she seems at first glance concerned with in her play *The Bronx Is Next*. The stage directions reveal how the setting is related to the issue of identity:

The scene is a block in Harlem- a block of tenement houses on either side of a long, narrow ,

dirty street of full garbage cans. People are moving around in the distance bringing things out of the houses and standing with in the streets.... It is night. The time is now. (25)

Historically situated, Harlem is associated with the black search for identity, especially the memories of the glorious past. the idea of home is encapsulated in this place, for it exemplifies the ontological entity. The geographical locale or landscape foregrounds the figuration of identity in Afro-American literature.²⁹

The only two female figures in the play, Old Sister and Black Bitch, experience the fierce disrespect of male militants. Early in the play, Old Sister refuses to cooperate with the young men's demands that she leave her home. When Charles points out to her that she cannot take anything but "jest the important things," Old Sister replies, "Yes son, I knows what you say is true. But you see them things is me. I jest can't leave them" (25). These paraphernalia give an unspeakable sense of identity. Charles recognizes in this moment that the woman's resistance could hold up the progress of his plan. Without a second of remorse, knowing full well that he will shortly be engulfing that tenement in flames, he sends the woman back to her apartment with the comforting remarks, "You don't have to come tonight. You can come some other night when we have room for your stuff." The old woman ironically responds, "Thank the lord there is young men like you who still care about old people" (26). Charles's thoughtless dismissal and actual eventual murder of Old Sister demonstrate a cruel callousness of the young male militants toward the aged in the community. While this act certainly evidences the focused thinking of the militants that will not allow individuals to undermine the larger purposes of the movement, it also points to Sanchez's awareness of ambiguity concerning the negative impact of militant events on the community.³⁰

Black Bitch supports her family and enters a flesh trade to protect her two sons and herself. The White patriarchal consumer culture sees her body as a commodity that is transferred from hand to hand. She lacks a number of human necessities like love, understanding and companionship. Therefore, she is eager to find a man who can meet all these things.³¹ She describes herself by saying "A smart-assed-black-that's me. Smart enough to stay clear of all black bastard men who jump from black pussy to black pussy"(31-32).

When the male black militants inadvertently meet White Cop, they ask him about the reason behind his presence in Harlem. He answers them that he regularly visits Black Bitch to woo her and he returns to his white wife and his two boys. In his response to them, he feels himself superior, and he tells them to call him Jimmy "son." As they start molesting him, he threatens them by saying, "... you just wait... you just wait..." .They decide to act a play in which roles are changed. The relationship between White Cop and the black militants is one of role-reversal. Sanchez reverses the roles taken by these characters in that the black men imagine themselves white policemen, and by force White Cop becomes the black man on the streets of Harlem. In a show of protestation, White Cop asks "How would it help-what good would it do?" (29). The performance begins with Charles, Roland, and Jimmy doubting the real intention behind White Cop's fast running:

CHARLES. Hey slow down boy. What's your hurry?

WHITE COP. (Stop running) Yes. What's wrong officer?

JIMMY. Why you running so fast?

WHITE COP. I just felt like running. I was feeling good, so I decided to run.

.....
CHARLES. Boy! Who's chasing you? What did you steal?

(30)

In America, the black man is a suspect person if a crime is committed in the vicinity. The image of the black as a representation of evil still lurks in the white mind, an image which is totally reversed here. It is a play within a play performance in which White Cop becomes the victimized party. The black man feels racially prejudiced against this 'white dude,' accusing him that he may feel "silly being black...."(29).

Like Sonia Sanchez's other plays, *The Bronx is Next* is heavily tinged with the reminiscences of the past which leave their remarks on the present. The recollections of characters illustrate their attempt to construct their modern identity through the marginalization by the other. Memory plays a significant role in displaying how these characters are stereotyped to represent Sanchez's quest for identity. This representation of the feminized black identity is quite transparent in the dialogue between Black bitch and Roland:

BLACK BITCH. Two. Two boys. Two beautiful boys. Smart boys you hear? they hear? They read. They know more than me already, but they still love me. Men. They will know what a woman is for. I'll teach them. I ain't educated, but I'll say- hold them in your arms-love them-love your black woman always. I'll say i am a black woman and I cry in the night. But when you are men, you will never make a black woman cry in the night. You hear. And they'll promise.

ROLAND. Oh shit. Another black matriarch on our hands-and with her white boyfriend. How you gonna teach them all this great stuff when you whoring with some white dude who kills black man everyday? How you explain that shit to them?

BLACK BITCH. (Laughs-high piercing laugh-walks over to WHITE COP). Explain this? (Points to WHITE COP on ground) I only explain the important things. He comes once a week... and dreams his dreams. They ain't 'bout me. Explain him to my boys. (Laughs) Man. I am surviving.

(32)

In this man-dominated society, the black woman has to seek for her survival. As she believes, her frequent sensual dates with White Cop are viewed as necessary for raising her two sons. Although she is poor and alone, she finds her hope for them is that her sons, unlike other black men, "will never make a black woman cry in the night." Her words "Man, I am surviving" affirm the rugged existence forced on her by the capitalistic forces that work against her.³²

Charles and Roland intend to accompany White Cop to Black Bitch's apartment so that he may apologize, and it is clear by now that he is their own prisoner and they will not set him free. He does not know what is running around him, especially in Harlem:

WHITE COP. I've seen people moved into the street. That's all. Nothing else. I want to know nothing.

CHARLES. Would you believe that it's happening on every street in Harlem?

WHITE COP. (Nervously) I'm not interested. I just want to leave and go home. I'm tired.

CHARLES. Yeah man. You look tired. Look. Do me a favor. I want to go the bitch's place and apologize. You know it wasn't right. Hurting her like that. Come with me. Hey Roland. Shouldn't he come with me?

ROLAND. Yeah man. He should. After all, he knows her better than you. He can tell you what approach to use with her.

WHITE COP. No. I don't want to go. I don't want to see her again. It's all finished now. I'm tired. You tell her. Just let me go on home.

(34)

White Cop has his own conceptions about his world, but he is entirely in the dark about the blacks' real conditions. By now, he has experienced the life of a black man, and he comes to realize the fact that home and family mean much to the black man. He first tries to intimidate them in an authoritative tone of voice, " But I am white! I'm white. This can't be happening- I am white" (35). He also claims that he has never done bad to the black, " I have never hurt or killed a black person in my life./Yes. I heard talk that some cops did-that they hated black people-but not me" (34-35).

In the end, these men make crucial decisions for all the blacks. Roland doubts the real motives behind the action of burning the ghettos, but he and his companions never think to defy their leaders. Speaking to Charles, Roland wonders in a bewildering way " You think this is the right strategy burning out the ghettos? Don't make much sense to me man. Orders is orders. You know what's going

down next." Then comes the answer: "The Bronx is next..." (35). Here Sanchez indicates that a male dictatorship, whether it is the black power movement or its speaking subject the Black Arts Movement, cannot represent the interests of the black people if it limits freedom of participation in the desired future change.³³

Conclusion

Given her poetic achievements, Sanchez's dramatic products display her interest in the concept of self-quest and black identity building. She has a keen desire on reflecting on the female pursuit after self-independence in both the black and the white societies. Her plays are militant in orientation in that black women set themselves the task of freeing their community even if action happens.

Sonia Sanchez in her plays gives much space to represent the feminist orientation to reach self-identity and self-independence. She never feels tired of reiterating the fact that the black women endure the brunt of the patriarchal society which suppresses the attempt to construct a female identity. All Sanchez's female characters are entangled in identity crisis, a fact that shows her oppression and belittling her identity during the Black Power Movement. Like Adrienne Kennedy, Sanchez historicizes the world she draws in her plays.

Reduced to its broad outlines, *The Bronx is Next* draws on the fact that Sanchez unleashes an opprobrious criticism on the oppression of black women and overstepping their identity. In her portrayal of the militant action as a way to foster a new sensibility in the establishment of the black identity, Sanchez does not necessarily rationalize and legitimize the use of violence. Her characters' strong reactions to what happens to their identity are emblematic of the vogue of her age. Despite all forms of oppression, her female characters tend to be more resilient than before, and they are very quick to get over their identity crisis.

Notes

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20. Joyce A. Joyce, "Interview with Sonia Sanchez: Poet, Playwright, Teacher, and Intellectual Activist," in Joyce A. Joyce (ed.), *Conservations with Sonia Sanchez*, (Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 2007,) 185.
21. All quotations from Sanchez's plays chosen in this study are taken from *Sonia Sanchez, I'm Black When I'm Singing, I'm Blue When I Ain't and Other Plays* . Further references will appear parenthetically in the text
22. Quoted in Sarada, 72.
23. Geneviève Fabre, *Drumbeats, Masks and Metaphor: Contemporary Afro-American Theatre*, trans. Melvin Dixon. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983), 84.
24. Wood, "Shaking Loose: Sonia Sanchez's Militant Drama ," 50.
25. Joyce, "Interview with Sonia Sanchez: Poet, Playwright, Teacher, and Intellectual Activist," 199.
26. Sarada, 189.
27. Quoted in Barrios, 202.
28. Wood, 53.
29. Melvin Dixon in his interesting book *Ride out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* affirms that there exists a strong relation between place and identity. He mainly studies and analyzes this subject in selected novels by African-American novelists such as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and other novelists.
30. Wood, "Shaking Loose": *Sonia Sanchez's Militant Drama*," 51.
31. Hochstein in Nelson, 376 .
32. Sarada, 189.
33. Hochstein in Nelson, 377 .

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