

مسرحة المقاومة:

دراسة لمسرحية ذبيبة تحت الشمس للكاتبة لورين هانسبيرى

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة للتقنيات المسرحية التي توظفها الكاتبة الافريقية الامريكية لورين هانسبيرى فى مسرحيتها ذبيبة تحت الشمس لخلق حالة شعورية ثورية مقاومة لسياسات التمييز والتهميش والتميط التي يتعرض لها الافارقة الامريكان. تتركز الدراسة على استخدام هانسبيرى لادوات المسرح الواقعى ومنها مكان وزمن الاحداث وبناء الشخصيات الدرامية وتبنى اسلوب الحوار الهادىء العقلانى وذلك لكشف الحجب عن حياة اسرة من الافارقة الامريكان وما تتطوى عليه هذه الحياة من ضغوط اقتصاديه وقهر سياسى واقصاء ثقافى، فنرى هذه الاسرة المكونة من خمسة افراد تعيش فى شقة من غرفتين تفقر فيها الحياة لكل دواعى الخصوصية، فضلا عن ندرة الخدمات الصحية والانسانية، فالجرذان والصراصير تنافس اعضاء الاسرة للحياة فى هذا المكان الخانق.

و على جانب آخر، تقدم هانسبيرى نماذج متعددللافارقة الامريكان، رجالا ونساء، تهدف من خلالها الى تقديم صورة حقيقية وواقعية لهذا المجتمع، كما تهدف ايضا الى تحطيم الصور النمطية التي انشأتها ثقافة التمييز من قبل البيض. فبالرغم من معاناته التهميش والاقصاء، يظهر الرجل الافريقى الامريكى طموحا راغبا فى تحسين وضعة الاجتماعى ومهتما بامرته، وتظهر المرأة فى صورة النائرة على الموروث الثقافى الذى حرمها حقها فى التعليم و تحقيق الذات واعمال العقل فى كل ما يؤثر فى حياتها حتى لو كان مصدر ذلك اسرتها وبنى جلدتها.

جدير بالذكر ان مقاومة الثقافة العنصرية التي تهدف المسرحية لخلقها تتم ايضا من خلال الحوار الهادىء وتبادل الافكار والاراء بعيدا عن الهسنيريا اللغويه او العنف الثورى. تستفيد الدراسة فى اطارها النظرى من كتاب "نفوس الاهل من السود" للكاتب W.E. B. Du Bois، والذي يقدم فيه الكاتب رؤية و دراسة للاثار النفسية والاجتماعية التي يتعرض له المجتمع الاسود على يد الثقافة العنصرية فى أمريكا.

تنتهى الدراسة الى ان أدوات المسرح الواقعى كما توظفها لورين هانسبيرى قادرة، شأنها فى ذلك شأن المسرح التجريبي، على خلق حالة من الوعى لمقاومة وابطال ما اوجدته ثقافة التمييز العنصرى.

Gordon, Michelle. "Somewhat like War': The Aesthetics of Segregation, Black Liberation and 'A Raisin in the Sun.'" *African American Review* 42.1 (Spring, 2008) 121-133

Hansberry, Lorraine. "The Negro Writer and His Roots: Toward a New Romanticism." *Black Scholar* 12.2 (1981): 2-12.

... . *A Raisin in the Sun*. 1958. New York. Vintage Books, 1994.

Hughes, Langston. "Harlem." *Selected Poems*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 268.

Jose, Sofia C. "Racism in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*." *The Dawn Journal* 3.1 (January-June 2014) 876-883

Lieberman, Robbie. "Measure them Right': Lorraine Hansberry and the struggle for Peace." *Science and Society* 75.2 (April 2011) 206-235

Mafe, Diana Adesola. "Black Women on Broadway: The Duality of Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* and Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls*." *American Drama* 15.2 (Summer, 2006) 30-47

Terkel, Studs. "An Interview with Lorraine Hansberry. May 12, recorded at 1145 Hyde Park Boulevard, Chicago.

Tritt, Michael. "A View from the Stockyards: Lorraine Hansberry's Allusion to the Jungle in the Unfilmed Screen of *A Raisin in the Sun*." *ANQ* 21.1 (Winter 2008) 51-57

Washington, J. Charles. "A Raisin in the Sun Revisited." *Black American Literature Forum* 22.1 (Spring, 1988) 109-124

Wilkerson, Margaet B. "Excavating Our History: The importance of Biographies of Women of Color." *Black American Literature Forum* 24.1 (Spring, 1990) 73-84

Wilkerson, Margaret B. "'A Raisin in the Sun': An Anniversary of an American Classic." *Theatre Journal* 38.4 (Dec., 1986) 441-452.

Wilkerson, Margaret. "The Sighted Eyes and Feeling Heart of Lorraine Hansberry." *Black American Literature Forum* 17.1 (Spring, 1983): 8-13

Willis, Robert J. "Anger and the Contemporary Black Theatre." *Negro American Literature Forum* 8.2 (Summer 1974) 213-216

lies at the heart of the argument of this paper, is that she is up to displaying the scars of oppression and displaying simultaneously the emerging power, and beauty, of the all colored people against the devastating images drawn about them by the dominant oppressive culture.

⁵ Henceforth all other references to the text are taken from the 1958 Vintage Books edition, incorporated hereafter parenthetically in the text.

⁶ This unpublished manuscript is collected, with many others, by Robert Nemiroff, Hansberry's literary executor, and is copyrighted 1980

⁷ Du Bois argues against Booker T. Washington's suggestion that blacks are to have access only to industrial education as this type of education is what they really need.

Works Cited

- Abell, Joy L. "African-American: Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs* and the Civil Rights Movement." *African America: Review* 35.3 (Fall, 2001) 459-470
- Anderson, Marry Louis. "Black Matriarchy: Portrayals of Women in Three Plays." *Negro American Literature Forum*. 10.3 (Autumn, 1976) 93-95
- Bernstein, Robin. "Inventing a Fishbowl: White Supremacy and the Critical Reception of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*." *Modern Drama* 42.1 (Spring 1992) 16-27
- Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. "Black Women Playwrights: Exorcising Myths." *Phylon* 48.3 (1987) 229-239
- Carter, Steven R. "Images of Men in Lorraine Hansberry's Writing." *Black American Literature Forum* 19.4 (Winter, 1985) 160-162.
- Carter, Steven R. "Commitment Amid Complexity: Lorraine Hansberry's *life in Action*." *MELUS* 7.3 (Autumn, 1980) 39-53
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (1903). The Pennsylvania State University, 2006.
- Ghani, Hana' Khalief. "I Have a Dream: Racial Discrimination in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 1.6 (June, 2011) 607-614

¹It is important here to attempt a definition of the word resistance. When first read, the term naturally brings into mind military protestation against oppressive political regimes. As such, the term has been widely used referring to literature produced under occupation. This sort of literature is basically intended to summon attention to and sympathy for those whose land has been occupied. The main concern of this literature is liberation and independence. In this paper, however, the term is used with cultural and social implications. It is used to refer to people's determination (black people in this context) to present a real picture about themselves, to assert their right to exist and their claims for dignity, humanity and fulfilling dreams. It is also defiance of marginalization and stereotyping and an attempt towards authentic presentation.

²The book is published in 1903. It is a group of essays on race, some of which were previously published in *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. The value of this work lies in its detailed and close analysis of the 20th century problem of the colour line. The book introduces two enduring concepts to the field of African-American discourse, the 'veil' of race metaphor and the resulting "double consciousness" of Negroes. The two concepts allude to the psychological fragmentation of Blacks as they tend to look at themselves through the eyes of others—the dominant culture—, while they sometimes insist on presenting themselves as they actually are. Though these two concepts are namely introduced in the first two chapters of the book, references to them do exist in all the other chapters.

³In "Excavating Our History," Wilkerson observes that Lorraine Hansberry came under direct influence of W.E.B. DuBois' writings upon her movement to New York working for progressive organizations. There, Wilkerson states, she "had her intellect honed and shaped by great black thinkers and artists of the era— W.E.B Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes and ...Louis Burnham ..." (77).

⁴Although Robbie Liebermann in "Measure them Right" argues that Hansberry would not mind violent actions on the way for change, the researcher finds no convincing evidence in Hansberry's corpus which attests to any call for violence as a vehicle for change. Hansberry's message, which

marriage proposal because of Murchison's constant ridicule at the so called black heritage and black pride.

Though the play is meant to resist the practices of the repressive system, it has never adopted a violent or aggressive stage language. The characters' quiet debate-like speech conveys a poignant condemnation of the educational system whose poor outputs are evident in the characters' regional black vernacular. This debate-like nature of the play is part of Hansberry's philosophy that humans are to communicate with, and not to destroy, one another. "The human race," emphasizes Hansberry, "does command its own destiny and that destiny can eventually embrace the stars" ("Negro Writer" 12).

The fruits of Hansberry's play and those of her contemporaries, and her predictions of the turmoil that will plague the communities battling for rights, self-determination and social justice have all come true in the 1960s. The forced housing and school segregation have finally been subject to public dialogue as much as Hansberry had forecast. Rebellions in Chicago and other ghetto communities raged against their oppressive circumstances and the indifferent system. Most importantly is that the revolutionary tone in the play inspired the creation of the artistic arm of the Black nationalist movement with an eye towards changing the image of the blacks in theatre and in life.

"Images of Men" 161). Walter, in the course of the play and through fraudulence of his white friends, undergoes a state of awakening. He comes to understand that his self-development is attainable only by merging himself into his community and by sharing his family's aspirations. Walter finally learns that in order to have a place in the world, he has to be himself and not another.

The resistance message communicated in *Raisin* is also achieved through the casting of other characters who represent the various attitudes within the black community. Although Walter is foregrounded as the epitome of the evolving black consciousness, both Beneatha Younger and her second suitor Asagai are depicted sharing Walter's determination to cast off all imposed misconceptions. Beneatha, challenging her brother's patriarchal authority, is determined to achieve her potential as a physician in order to help herself and the ailing black fellows. An intellectual person, Beneatha defies the conventional wisdom of the repressed woman in search of a rich husband. Together with Asagai, Beneatha embodies the anti-assimilationist tendency within the black community. Though the text does not suggest that Beneatha shares Asagai's vision to return to Africa in order to help the desolate people there, she is never shown as opposing this idea or as ashamed of her blackness. In fact, she would repudiate Murchison's intended

cockroaches, the single bathroom that is shared by many families, the poor ventilation and the missing privacy, all delineate “an image of massed animals penned in a stockyard.”(Tritt 55). This image becomes a metaphor of the human predicament and of forced negligence. The suggestion is that these poor living conditions are criminal.

Hansberry's depiction of various character types within the black community is meant to give the truth about the Blacks' interior life, to challenge the stereotypical images constructed by the white culture and to interrogate the oppressive and unfair capitalist system which legitimized the dreams of the whites and banned or ignored those of the blacks. The black community in turmoil is what characters in *Raisin* dramatize. Overwhelmed by the 'veil of race' and suffering from his sense of 'the double consciousness', Walter Lee Younger, the protagonist, is delineated both as a victim and as a valiant rebel. Walter is always angry spitting venom at his family members who do not value his dreams of self-actualization and material welfare. He quests for emulating the white people being given all chances for a luxurious life. Walter is dramatized as a savior who is out “to tear down the economic and social wall built around him and his family. . . provide greater freedom for his son than he himself has had, and give his family a chance to experience a fresher, more tolerable, more human environment” (Carter

troubled homeland to fight against terrible odds . . . to achieve liberation of his people. ("Raisin" 451)

Asagai's views foresaw the future. After Hansberry's death in 1956, there appeared the independence movements in African countries. There also appeared a number of pan African groups yearning for Africa and for helping the fellow Africans there.

IV

Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* employs a set of realistic stage elements in order to stage a state of resistance and form a counter argument at the workings of the white supremacist society. These elements include the delineation of the ghetto setting, the depiction of various character types within the black community and the use of a quiet conversational language. Through these elements, the play displays the ugly manifestations of racism and imparts a sense of denial and denunciation of the repressive political and economical system. Hansberry's stage realism uncovers the wounds and launches severe criticism of the forced ghettoization and mongrelization of blacks.

The claustrophobic two-bedroom apartment in which the Youngers are cooped up frames and evokes images of exploitation, poverty, indifference and the possibility of the Blacks' violent rage. On the other hand, the unhealthy conditions in which the Youngers live exemplified by the threatening presence of rats and

A Raisin in the Sun

that nothing changes at all . . . and then again the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression even. Guns, murder, revolution. . . . but I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire. (135)

As the previous speech shows, Asagai is Hansberry's image of the black intellectual who is able to reasonably question things and come to sensible results. His talk to Beneatha about Walter's loss of the money reveals a philosopher with a strong sense of purpose and an insightful analysis. He advises Beneatha not to relinquish her dream of helping the "ailing human race" due to her brother's "stupid, childish mistake" (135). Asagai is made akin to Mama in his repudiation of the materialistic aspect of life for the sake of achieving human dignity and integrity. Mama is adamant about moving into Clybourne Park irrespective of the costs and so is Asagai about Africa and helping the desolate there. Asagai's commitment is praised by Wilkerson who observes that

He [Asagai] acts out of a belief in the transcendent power of man and woman, a belief that cannot be shaken by the loss of money, material things, or even the devastation of human betrayal. This faith will be his armor when he returns to his

want a nice – (*Groping*) – simple (*Thoughtfully*) – sophisticated girl . . . not a poet – O.K.? (96)

Asagai is Hansberry's deconstructive tool of all negative stereotyping of the blacks and a means "to popularize . . . the concept of a relationship between African-Americans and Africans" (Bernstein 20). Unlike Murchison whose stage appearance is accompanied with negative response from Beneatha and Mama who deem him a fool, Asagai is favorably introduced. The stage directions indicate that Beneatha receives him at the door "*with pleasure*" (60). Asagai's second appearance features him "*smiling broadly, striding into the room with energy and happy expectation and conversation*" (131). Act Three is dominated by Asagai; he occupies the stage with his "*flow of life*" personality overshadowing all the other characters. Apparently, Asagai is depicted as the voice of the enlightened black revolutionary who sings the beauty of Africa and the ancestors and who is willing to die for the sake of the welfare of his people. Assuming the role of the rebel and communicating a sense of nostalgia for Africa, Asagai shouts:

. . . In my village at home it is the exceptional man who can read a newspaper . . . or who ever sees a book at all. I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village. But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem

Like the other Youngers, Beneatha cherishes the dream of self-actualization, which she finds feasible through her medical education.

Hansberry's project of staging resistance which is grounded in the politics of stark realism entails the creation of other characters representative of the clashing forces within the black community. In this sense, George Murchinson and Joseph Asagai are created in *Raisin* both to deconstruct stereotypes of black people and to pass as character types of the Negro community. Introduced into the drama as possible husbands for Beneatha, the two men dramatize antithetical attitudes towards blackness and the relevant ideas of racial integration and racial tension. Murchison is delineated as a pragmatic assimilationist who cares nothing about black identity or black liberation. His vision of women is similarly superficial. He is ridiculous about Beneatha's quest for education as he subscribes to the view that education is useless and that all a woman is supposed to look for is feminine beauty in order for her to secure a good partner:

Murchinson: That's all you need, honey, forget the atmosphere. Guys aren't going to go for the atmosphere – they're going to go for what they see. Be glad for that. Drop the Garbo routine. It doesn't go with you. As for myself, I

though a rich middle class college student, shallow and traditional. Beneatha's sense of revolt against the traditional woman image is evident in her blocking of Asagai's sexual advances towards her. Asagai's flattering and soft kisses are, to her, just means for patriarchal manipulation and dominance. A prototype of the revolutionary black woman, Beneatha will never allow herself to be in a subordinate position to a man. Her speech with Asagai betrays her revolutionary personality and her refusal of any traditional man-woman relationship:

Beneatha: You see! You never understood that there is more than one kind of feeling which can exist between a man and a woman – or, at least, there should be.

Asagai: (*Shaking his head negatively but gently*) No, between a man and a woman there need be only one kind of feeling. I have that for you ... Now even ... right this moment.

Beneatha: I know – and by itself – it won't do. I can find that anywhere.

Asagai: For a woman it should be enough.

Beneatha: I know – because that's what it says in all the novels that men write. But it isn't. Go ahead and laugh – but I'm not interested in being someone's little episode in America or – (*with feminine vengeance*) – one of them

That's funny as hell, huh! (63-4) [Emphasis added]

considering it as just an idea that she cannot accommodate. In a quiet exchange with her mother, Beneatha explains her viewpoint:

Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God -- there is only man and it is *he* who makes miracles! (51)

Sofia C. Jose attributes Beneatha's denunciation of God to the "cynicism" held by many minority intellectuals, including Lorraine Hansberry, towards religion in the light of the segregation belief favoured by white Christians (881). That is, Beneatha's rejection of God is a rejection of the supremacist practices which the White people exercise over the blacks in the name of religion.

Hansberry casts Beneatha as an exemplary dynamic black woman who refuses to be dominated and who is not hesitant to sacrifice her feminine docility for the sake of asserting her personality. She does not and will not allow any of her two suitors, George Murchison or Asagai, to "minimize her potential" (Brown-Guillory, "Exorcising Myth" 235). In fact, Beneatha denies Murchison's marriage proposal because she finds Murchison,

Beneatha is "the intellectual voice of feminist debate" (Mafe 40). The stage directions describe her in the light of the better education she has accessed, "*she is not as pretty as her sister in law, but her lean, almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own*" (35). In language, Beneatha is distinguished from the rest of the family "*insofar as education has permeated her sense of English – and perhaps the Midwest rather than the South has finally – at last – won out in her inflection*" (35). In attitude, Beneatha is the torch bearer of the black woman's claim for female independence. Remarkably, she is portrayed as always in search of a self-gratifying activity. She moves between play-acting, guitar lesson and horseback-riding, activities which are not in tune with the explicit poverty of the Youngers. In line with DuBois' call for black people not to be limited to industrial education⁷ but to pursue higher education to prepare themselves to be leaders and active participants, Beneatha is depicted stubborn about her dream to be a doctor. Pursuing a medical career is for Beneatha much more vital than catching a bread winner.

Reminiscent of the Angry young men in Osborn's dramas, Beneatha captures the spirit of the rebellious intellectual. She distances herself from all women stereotypes to present herself as a powerful educated woman who is able to question all inherited beliefs. She denounces the conventional conceptualization of God

uniformity in either view point or behavior and that any attempt to impose that uniformity would involve another form of oppression. (51)

Mama's seeming passivity does not stem from a state of helplessness but from a God-fearing and devoted mother. On many occasions, she is presented as a progressive force inspiring much of what other characters should do. Mama assumes her dominant role when she slaps Beneatha ordering her not to voice atheism in the house and when she reproaches her son Walter for allowing his wife to abort her pregnancy. Against her son's will, Mama saves a portion of the insurance money for Beneatha's education. Mama is able to denounce Booker T. Washington's views on the insignificance of good education for the Blacks. In her speech with Mrs. Johnson who reports what Washington has said, "Education has spoiled many a good plow hand," Mama, with all authority, calls him "the fool" (103). This very description aligns Mama with all Washington's intellectual opponents, specifically the most militant W. E. B. DuBois. Mama's rebellious spirit is most evident in her determination to move into Clybourne Park regardless of the Whites' potential violence. To her, human dignity deserves much sacrifice.

The striking example of the revolutionary black woman image which Hansberry underscores is that of Beneatha Younger.

ingratitude narrating how she and big Walter made many sacrifices to keep the family alive:

In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too ... Now here come you and Beneatha – talking ‘bout things we ain’t never even thought about hardly ... You ain’t satisfied or proud of nothing we done (74).

Mama disregards all her family’s plans and dreams about the insurance money. She solely takes the decision to buy a spacious house for the family so that all members may enjoy the psychological freedom. Depicted as oppression fighting, Mama stresses the significance of her family’s relocation to Clybourne Park as this act, Hana Ghani finds, corresponds to Mama’s belief in her family’s “right to refute the economic exploitation of Chicago’s housing industry” (613). At some points in the play, Mama relinquishes control over her children giving each one of them his due space for self-achievement. She leaves Beneatha to dismiss her suitor the wealthy George Murchison. She yields to Walter’s insistence on investing in a liquor store even though the business is in battle with her own beliefs. Steven R. Carter comments:

The pattern set by Lena Younger and her family implies that unity in a struggle against oppression need not involve

Hansberry's women characters are shown capable of intellectual speculation, political struggle and daring self-expression. In this regard, Steven R. Carter notes that Hansberry "peopled her dramas with many powerful female characters whose strength was like that of their creator, but other of her characters were lamed by their efforts to accept the socially-dictated roles" (45). The play features four women characters, Mama, Beneatha, Ruth and Mrs. Johnson. Mama and Beneatha represent antithetical images of the complacent woman of the old generation versus the rebellious one of the present time. Ruth is only significant in relation to showing the debilitating economic pressure her husband is subject to. Mrs. Johnson is used as a dramatic vehicle, or as an intimidating voice within the black community, through which off-stage violence against the blacks is reported.

The family Matriarch Lena younger or Mama, as referred to throughout the play, is a domestic servant, yet is drawn as a woman of considerable strength. Mama undergoes a significant change in the play. At the start of the drama, she meets the black Mammy stereotype: large, dark and authoritative and mostly caring about the safety of her family. Her stage appearance marks her as "*full-bodied and strong Her bearing is perhaps most like the noble bearing of the women of the Heroes of Southwest Africa*" (39). She expresses her resentment at her son's dissatisfaction and

In staging resistance and dramatizing the truth about the Blacks' interior life, *Raisin* features other characters whose dramatic role is to illuminate the tension within the black community and to communicate a message of revolution and liberation. Breaking all biased images of the black woman as lascivious or "sexually insatiable" (Guillory 233), Hansberry presents black women as mature, complex individuals with dreams, aspirations and visions of themselves, and with a sense of revolt against any imposed ideology. Guillory indicates that Hansberry, together with Alice Children and Ntozake Shange, presents characters that are symbolic of "the evolving Black woman" image (233). This image underscores qualities of self-respect, self-sufficiency, assertion and recognition.

"Twice oppressed," the black woman in Hansberry's reasoning, has all the right to be "twice militant," (Terkel). Elsewhere, Hansberry expresses her respect for such militancy. In her unpublished essay *In Defense of the Equality of Men*⁶, Hansberry hailed those American feminist writers for their call for a direct political action as the true key to social transformation. Not surprisingly, Hansberry's dramas are mostly preoccupied with rebellious women characters who denounce the traditional and limiting social roles of women – the homemaker, the sacrificial mother, and the sexual toy, to mention but a few.

generous reimbursement or the threats ahead. Walter's impassioned speech to Mr. Lindner reveals a sense of awakening. He declares:

. . . . Well – what I mean is that we come from people who had a lot of pride. I mean – we are very proud people. And that's my sister over there and she's going to be a doctor – and we are very proud-

. . . .

And we have decided to move into our house because my father – my father – he earned it for us brick by brick. . . . We don't want to make no troubles for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be good neighbors. And that's *all* we got to say about that. (*He looks the man absolutely in the eyes*) We don't want your money. (*He turns and walks away*) (184).

As a revolutionary, Walter raises the motto of dignity at any costs rejecting the white people's pay off in favor of the new spirit of integrity and solidarity that he has eventually acquired. In a sigh of relief, Mama and Ruth acknowledge the realization of Walter's manhood:

Mama (*Quietly, woman to woman*): He finally came into manhood today, didn't he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain...

Ruth (*Biting her lip lest her own pride explode in front of Mama*): Yes, Lena. (151)

The image is a projection of Walter's sense of his deferred dream of recognition and liberation.

It is not survival that Walter is after; it is stirring a radical change in his life and the mere life of his family. Walter yells at all forms of economic oppression and indifference. He seeks money, power, and a substantial move up on the socio-economic ladder. Unlike Mama whose life dream is to move from the cramped apartment to a suburban home, Walter quests for saving his mother from working in somebody else's kitchen, and his wife from attending to somebody else's kids. Walter's dream is morally sound though it is ill-planned as it mainly depends on aligning himself with the White society.

The turning point in Walter's revolutionary journey comes when he loses all the money he invested in the liquor store. This point in the play signals Walter's reconsideration of his materialistic dreams and also a reassessment of his role in helping his family. He takes pride in his blackorigin and values his father's physical labor. He is now able to appreciate both his sister's dreams of personal development and his mother's quest for familial solidarity and getting out of the ghetto life. Walter's self-discovery is evident when he aligns himself with his family's decision to move to the white neighborhood irrespective of all the Whites' offers of

father represents that distorted "old stereotype of the hard working, long suffering black male who literally worked himself to death" (Washington 117). Walter holds his father responsible for the cramped, roach-infested apartment, the shabby furniture, and the worn-out rug on the floor. Significantly, the model example that Walter aspires to emulate is not his father but a White young man whom he saw in town. Walter fancies being one of those white guys "sitting back and talking about things . . . sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars" (74). In a significant visual image, Walter leaps onto a table assuming the stance of an African Chieftain taking pride in himself and defying his victimization. The stage directions read

Walter: . . . Me and Jomo. . . (*Intently, in his sister's face. She has stopped dancing to watch him in this unknown mood.*)
That's my man, Kenyatta. (*Shouting and thumping his chest*)
FLAMMING SPEAR! HOT DAMN! (*He is suddenly in possession of an imaginary spear and actively spearing enemies all over the room*) OCOMOGOSIARY. . .

. . .

Walter: THE LION IS WAKING . . . OWIMOWEH! (*He pulls his shirt open and leaps up on the table and gestures with his spear*) (78).

10). As previously noted, Walter is always seen angry raging against what Beneatha describes as the “rat-trap” house (44). His stage appearance betrays dissatisfaction with his socio-political reality. He “*is inclined to quick nervous movements and erratic speech habits*” with a “*quality of indictment*” in his voice, the stage directions outline (25). Mama notices the rising agony in him, “something eating you up like a crazy man. . . . the past few years I been watching it happen to you. You get all nervous acting and kind of wild in the eyes” (72). Walter is furious at his wife’s indifference to his dreams and potentials. He is overwhelmed by the fact that he is thirty five years old and is still unable to provide for his family and save his wife and his mother from the humiliating domestic service. Walter always shouts at the weary environment he lives in and at the oppressive society whose doors are open only to the whites.

In his journey towards self-recognition, the angry Walter does not subscribe to Mama’s resignation or to her vision of the peaceful life or even to her protestant ideals. He is determined to act out the myth of the American dream at its fullest and to be part of the American capitalist system. Poverty and the forced economic limitations on the blacks whose effects are obvious on the Youngers’ lifestyle stimulate Walter to stage an emphatic ‘No’ to his mother and his father’s black middle class concepts. To him, his

measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (9)

Walter's awareness of his potential and worth clashes with the low image the dominant culture has of him. Walter, in the words of Elizabeth Brown Guillory, is "the walking wounded," who

insists that he be treated like a human being. A contented slave he is not; instead, he struggles to free himself and others from oppressive forces. Because of a positive sense of self he can and does reach out to others In short, this character, which is diametrically opposite to the image of the incorrigible black beast that dominated the American stage for so many decades, refuses to be anybody's sacrificial lambs and boldly keeps going in spite of his wounds. (232)

Walter's portrayal corresponds to DuBois' 'double consciousness' and Guillory's the 'Walking Wounded.' The two terms share the vision of the black person as a tormented creature who understands well how he is looked at by the dominant culture yet strives to project a positive image of himself. He is "the emerging black consciousness" that "signals the wave of the future (Wilkerson, "The Sighted Eyes"

matriarchal qualities" (Anderson 93). Mama's complacency and her sense of resignation in terms of achieving less than she deserves are shown as religiously inspired – part of her protestant religious beliefs. Manual labor, to her, gets a mythical and a Biblical meaning as it is compared to Jesus' sacrifice. It is not the financial or material rewards that count, it is the meaning of sacrifice and devotion which should be valued. Mama and Big Walter have sacrificed their life through physical labor for the sake of their family. The family are expected to be grateful.

Against Mama's initial passivity, Walter's revolutionary personality is foregrounded. His battle with the repressive system and the attendant psychological fragmentation consume much of the theatrical space and time. In his internal torment and his resistance to the indifference of the oppressive white culture, Walter becomes Hansberry's realization of Du Bois' "double consciousness" and "the veil of race", the very result of living in a racially prejudiced society. DuBois states:

... the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of

seems to be in tune with the white supremacist structure of the society, Walter, in the manner of Jimmy Porter in Osborne's *Look Back in anger*, and by virtue of the myth of the American dream, cherishes great expectations in himself and in the society around. Unfortunately, his dreams are met with denial. In consequence, he spits venom on everything and everyone around him. He displays various forms of aggression towards his wife for being pregnant and so increasing his financial troubles. He shouts at his mother for not giving him the insurance money. He ridicules his sister's dream of completing her medical studies. He despises himself for being a chauffeur spending most of his life in a car, at the beck and call of his boss.

Through casting two protagonists, Mama and Walter, Hansberry shows the clash between the old spirituality and the new militancy. Mama realizes the difference, "something has changed, boy. In my time we was worried about not being lynched . . . but now different we done become" (74). Within the racist community Mama has experienced, the greatest achievement of a colored person was just to stay alive and go unnoticed. With this vision, Mama headed north seeking security and never challenging the Whites' claim for supremacy. Symbolically, Mama, throughout the play, is depicted attending to some plants which she grows and waters ritually, and which stand as "an ever-present reminder of her

models or icons of the black community and of the inherent tension that tears it out (213). Most importantly, Hansberry's dramatic presentation of characters is meant to defy, and also to de-construct, all stereotypical images of the black people as thieves, dangerous criminals or as plain people capable only of silly behaviors.

Hansberry's portrayal of characters shows the rising tension within the black community. Mama's old spirituality is contrasted with the new militancy of Walter, Beneatha and Asagai who, in their totality, present a vivid image of the evolving black people. Walter catches the audience's attention through his constant anger laden and broken speech at the surrounding oppressive environment. Beneatha is always out for any creative means to express herself; she shifts from one self-enriching activity to another. Asagai yells at the Youngers' dependence on the insurance money of their deceased father urging all to have a purposeful life. *Raisin* is thus peopled with various character portraits. There are the black militant, the black assimilationist, the black rebel and the tolerant black matriarch. The dominant image, however, is that of the black rebel questing for, in the words of DuBois, "self-conscious manhood" and struggling "to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (9).

A play with two protagonists, Mama and Walter, *Raisin*, traces the black person's validation of his humanity and claim for life. While Mama, by virtue of old age and little expectation in life,

Mr. Lindner's whole speech with the Youngers, though made quiet and relaxed in tone, betrays a sense of menace, hostility and aggression. Threateningly, Lindner, in his two on-stage appearances, peppers his speech with phrases such as "Negro invasion," "them bombs and things [whites] keep setting off," "battlegrounds," "resistance," and "holding the line." He names the Youngers's decision to move to the Clybourne park "an occupation" (148). These textual references and many others attest to the Chicago's housing battle and the relevant "forced mongrelization" of the blacks (Hirsch, qtd. in Gordon 129). Through the Clybourne park episode, Hansberry uncovers, rather mockingly, how White supremacists are always in defense of their racial purity against black barbarism. The disapproving uproars of the audience in response to this anti-miscegenation can be detected in Beneatha's sarcastic words, "what they think we going to do – eat 'em? (121).

II.

Hansberry's portrayal of characters is another effective stage mechanic in her project of staging resistance. In fact, Hansberry's creation of characters is achieved in conjunction with the ugly manifestations of the setting. Though "Hansberry's people–," argues Robert J. Willis, "Mama, her son Walter, her daughter-in-law Ruth, her daughter Beneatha and her grandson Travis – present a believable world," they transcend this realistic depiction to pass as

Younger family's physical departure from Chicago's ghetto and to what Hansberry saw as necessary mass movement to reconstruct the social order" (133).

Denaturalizing segregation and inspiring resistance onto the Blacks, Hansberry brings to the forefront the Clybourne Park episode to launch poignant criticism on the Whites' maneuvering strategies to block housing integration. The "Paternal language," which is both "a language of victimization and terrorism" and a "language of miscegenation and degeneration," as Gordon observes, is among the rhetorical weapons which Mr. Lindner, the Chairman of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, employs in defending theso-called racial purity of the Clybourne community. Romanticizing the Whites' sense of Paternalism in dissuading the Youngers from their movement to the Clybourne park, Mr. Lindner drags sympathy for those "hard-working, honest [White] people who don't really have much but those little homes and a dream of the kind of community they want to raise their children in" (117). Racial prejudice and white patronizing characterize Lindner's talks with the Youngers: "It is a matter of the people of Clybourne Park believing . . . that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities." (118)

Ruth: Clybourne Park? Mama, there ain't no coloured people living in Clybourne Park.

Mama: (*Almost idiotically*) Well, I guess there's going to be some ~~no~~.

Walter: (*Bitterly*). So that's the peace and comfort you went out and bought for us today! (93) [Emphasis added]

Mrs. Johnson, the Youngers' black neighbor, reminds the Youngers of the impending danger awaiting them in Clybourne Park. Mrs. Johnson talks about anti-integration bombing in Clybourne:

Johnson: (*Lifting her head and blinking with the spirit of catastrophe*). You mean you ain't read 'bout them colored people that was bombed out their place out there.

....

Mama: (*Wearily*). We done thought about all that Mrs. Johnson. (102)

This reported off-stage violence that relates to the Clybourne Park functions as a tool for uncovering the wounds that are inflicted by the anti-assimilationists and that are confronted and resisted by the Blacks. Hansberry's treatment of anti-black violence is in itself a way for inspiring a revolution as it puts both black and white audience in front of an ugly reality. Gordon adds another dimension to the Youngers' relocation to the the Clybourne park. He believes that the imperative to move to Clybourne Park refers to both "the

as Hansberry's suggested solution to the problem of segregated areas. Reconstruction of the social order by means of creating segregated free neighborhoods may be a step towards social reconciliation.

The Clybourne neighborhood, to which the Youngers plan to move and which is referred to but never staged, projects a more powerful tool of resistance as it juxtaposes with the "claustrophobic apartment" setting (Tritt 52). To the Youngers, the place is a mixed blessing as it simultaneously represents salvation from the ghetto life and a direct confrontation with the sting of racism. The place is rife with violence, threat, and anti-integrationist attitudes. The news that they are moving to that place breeds into the Youngers feelings of fear and intimidation as they are expecting the White inhabitants' wrath. Remarkably, Ruth and Walter's initial response is one of bafflement and confusion, if not denial.

Ruth: Where is it?

Mama: (*Frightened at this telling*) Well- well – it's out there in Clybourne Park-

(*Ruth's radiance fades abruptly and Walter finally turns slowly to face his mother with incredulity and hostility*)

Ruth: Where?

Mama: (*Matter-of-factly*) Four osix Clybourne Street, Clybourne Park.

Ruth: (Struck senseless with the news, in its various degrees of goodness and trouble, she sits a moment, her fists propping her chin in thought, and then she starts to rise, bringing her fists down with vigor, the radiance spreading from cheek to cheek again) Well- well- All I can say is – if this is my time in life – MY TIME - to say good-bye –(And she builds with momentum as she starts to circle the room with an exuberant, almost tearfully happy release)- to these goddamned cracking walls!-(She pounds the walls)- and these marching roaches!-(She wipes at an imaginary army of marching roaches)- and this cramped little closet which ain't now or never was no kitchen!... then I say it loud and good, HALIEUJAH! AND GOOD-BYE MISERY ... I DON'T NEVER WANT TO SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AGAIN! (She laughs joyously, having practically destroyed the apartment, and flings her arms up and lets them come down happily, slowly, reflectively, over her abdomen aware for the first time perhaps that the life therein pulses with happiness and not despair) (92-3).

Ruth's confused feelings over the family's possible movement to the risky White neighborhood is both a repudiation of Chicago's segregated communities and a way of raising public red flags on the miserable reality of black life. Ruth's happiness could be interpreted

visible Chicago's political and economic infrastructures of deliberate segregation.

The cockroaches episode is given much emphasis in the play by referring to it several times turning it into a ritual that the Youngers have to perform every Saturday. Gordon believes that the cockroach cleaning attests to "the callous neglect and economic exploitation of ghettoized communities (127). That these environmental hazards are highlighted is a suggestion that they are criminal and that there is little municipal sanitation service. After all it is the lives of Negro children that are endangered and as long as Negroes can have new children every year, the matter of their sanity is nonsensical. This is one side of the ugly multi-sided face of racism which Hansberry exposes.

Throughout the play the scars of living in a segregated rats and roaches-infested neighborhood are centered. It is a state of confusion which haunts Ruth upon hearing the news of their impending relocation to a white neighborhood. The audience watches her "*raising both arms classically*" saying "PRAISE GOD"! and addressing her husband in an imploring manner "please, honey-let me be glad. . . you be glad too" (91). Despite the news that the new house is located in an all-white area, Ruth is enthusiastic and determined to accept the challenge. Quoted at length below is the stage directions which describe Ruth's response:

and worn furniture- the very destructive results of the ghetto life. The theatrical image featuring Beneatha “*in dungarees, with a handkerchief tied around her face*” and “*on her knees*” spraying insecticide into the cracks in the wall and “*under sofa with behindupraised*” (54) suggests a moral crisis which afflicts those who have to raise their kids in ghettoized slums. Part of the dialogue between Beneatha and Mama underlines the severity of that moral crisis:

Mama: Look out there, girl, before you be spilling some of that stuff on that child [Travis]!

....

Beneatha: (Drily) I can't imagine that it would hurt him-it has never hurt the roaches.

Mama: Well, little boys' hides as tough as Southside roaches. You better get over there behind the bureau. I seen one marching out of there like Napoleon yesterday.

Beneatha: there's really only one way to get rid of them, Mama-

Mama: How?

Beneatha: set fire to this building! (55)

The humiliating and provocative image of Beneatha spraying insecticide together with Beneatha's emotional rage at the family's poor economic conditions, as the above dialogue reveals, makes

one bedroom. The apartment second room which, as the stage directions indicate, "*was probably a breakfast room,*" serves as the bedroom for Walter and his wife, Ruth. As such, the apartment setting, like that of the Chicago location, represents an explosive revelational image and functions as a resistance agency by evoking into audience's mind ugly images of a miserable human life. The crowded apartment summarizes and comments on the end of the Youngers' life journey. Though the Youngers have cherished the American dream and have worked hard all their life looking for a good space and a sense of dignity, they have come to that point in their life at which the only salvation from ghettoization is the insurance money brought to them at the death of the family patriarch Big Walter. Apparently, the situation is meant to stir irony and satire as the survival of a family depends on death. In this regard, Asagai, one of Beneatha's suitors, is used by Hansberry to point a finger of blame at the destructive values of the dominant capitalist system. Wittingly, Asagai cries out, "Isn't there something wrong in a house-in a world- where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man?"(135)

The apartment setting still provides a fertile soil for stimulating the audience's mind about the interior reality of the Blacks' life. It is a strong message of indictment and resistance that is imparted through displaying the blacks as preys to rats, roaches

accommodate the living of too many people for too many years- and they are tired"(23). The stage directions also indicate a discrepancy between the past and the present. The relaxed atmosphere of the past which is also connoted by the "*furnishings [that] were actually selected with care and love and even hope*" is interrupted by the realization that this "*was a long time ago.*" The Youngers' present is one of utmost helplessness as "*the once loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery.*" The sarcasm is intensified when we see that "*a table or a chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface*" (23).

Ghettoization, or "acute ghetto-itis" as Beneatha cynically describes (60), is once again enforced through the miserable conditions of the apartment. The five-member family are condensed in a small and crowded flat where the living room is simultaneously the dining room and also the bedroom for young Travis. There is only one single window from which "*the sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day . . . fights its way through this little window*" (24). A sense of privacy is denied in this small apartment. Mama and her university student daughter Beneathashare

women and 34% of black men in the city worked as domestic servants. . . . But black unemployment in the city doubled that of whites; the majority of black taxpayers' children, like Hansberry herself, attended overcrowded, under-funded schools on half-day shifts; and black voters found themselves caught within Chicago's far-reaching Democratic Machine (123).

In other words, the Chicago location and the reference to the post Second World War era become an objective correlative for the long history of the Blacks' inhumane living conditions, the poor education, the miserable life and above all else the forced urban segregation. The Chicago setting is thus meant to expose and to denaturalize the racist working of the Whites and their resistance to the Blacks' integration into the American society with its promising dreams of success and wealth.

The Chicago setting is foregrounded as an identity and as an external social reality thus betraying a sense of confinement and entrapment. The Youngers are cast as pumped into a two-room apartment with a roaches-infested kitchenette and a shared bathroom. Poverty and misery are imparted through the detailed description of the Youngers' small apartment in which, as the stage directions indicate, the "*furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to*

family are overtaken by frustration and disappointment arising from the socioeconomic pressures. The focal point in the play is the family's clashing plans for the insurance money they got after the death of the father. The family matriarch, Lena Younger or Mama, dreams of using the money to buy a big house with a garden and a backyard for the whole family. Her thirty-five-year son, Walter Lee, insists on investing the money on a liquor store as away of escaping this "economic and psychological trap" (Wilkerson, "Raisin" 443). Beneatha, Walter's sister, dreams of pursuing a medical career. Walter's Wife, Ruth, and his little son, Travis, are presented as suffering creatures, victims of poverty and poor conditions, and nurturing hopes of salvation.

This miserable, yet aspiring, family is presented as living in "Chicago's Southside, sometime between World War II and the present" (*Raisin* 22)⁵. The place and time of the play take the audience back in history to the heart of the turmoil when blacks were subject to ghettoization and alienation. Michelle Gordon explains:

By mid-century, Chicago's South Side had become one of the most densely crowded ghettos in the US, where two generations of Hansberry had waged, with lawyers and guns, local and national campaigns against racial segregation, terrorism, and injustice. Like the Youngers, 64% of black

A Raisin in the Sun

79

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

As the rhetorical question in the title suggests, the poem is a cry of pain and unfulfilled dreams, and an expression of the black person's determination to have a voice and to protest against all forms of oppression. The emotional force of the poem and the tone of resistance are those which Hansberry's *Raisin* captures and develops into a well-made play of classical dramatic structure and modern concerns. Through the evocative tropes of ghettoization and the portrayal of suppressed and suffocated characters who try to make sense of their existence, *Raisin* uncovers the crimes of the White system. *Raisin* challenges the illusion set forth in popular culture that "people are white. Negroes do not exist" ("Negro Writer" 4). These assumptions have always agitated the black consciousness and so created feelings of hatred and disgust, not to mention resistance.

With this text and context in mind, and through her "sighted eyes and feeling heart" ("Negro Writer" 12), Hansberry sets out to stage a few-week period in the life of a working-class black family, the Youngers, living in Chicago's South Side during the 1950s. The

prime ancient and persistent enemy of man – abound in this world. (“The Negro Writer” 11)

It is due to these painful experiences that Hansberry’s works are devoted to resisting all oppressive ideologies, racist or sexist, calling for change, not necessarily through violence⁴ but through uncovering the truth about the life of the oppressed.

Produced in the 1950s, *Raisin* testifies to the then rising tension and resentment that dominated America after the Second World War that finally ended up in civil rights and feminist uprisings. In reference to that historical context, Margaret B. Wilkerson states that the play “captured the struggle and spirit of blacks who were fighting for liberation from segregation and the debilitating effects of racism” (“Excavating History” 75). Significantly, Hansberry prefaces the play quoting Langston Hughes’s poem “What happened to a Dream Deferred” from which the play borrows its title and in which the tone of racial tension cannot be missed:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

A Raisin in the Sun

contingent . . . but appeal to audiences across racial and gender lines . . . (Mafe 31-2)

Based on the author's childhood experience of the Housing segregation policy, *Raisin* records Hansberry's expression of and reaction to the miseries of African American, the inhumanity of Man to Man and the feeling of indifference and seclusion internalized by Negroes in America. The speech that the playwright delivers at the opening of the play bears much of the emotional drives in the play and also gives insight into Hansberry's direction and purpose in her playwriting:

I was born on the South Side of Chicago. I was born black and a female. I was born in a depression after one world war, and came into my adolescence after another. While I was still in my teens the first atom bombs were dropped on human beings . . . I have lost friends and relatives through cancer, lynching and war. I have been personally the victim of physical attack which was the offspring of racial and political hysteria . . . I have, like all of you, on a thousand occasions seen indescribable displays of man's very real inhumanity to man; and I have come to maturity . . . knowing that greed and malice and indifference to human misery, bigotry and corruption, brutality and, perhaps above all ignorance, -- the

appropriate place in the discussion particularly in the part on character analysis.

II

A Raisin in the Sun (Henceforth *Raisin*) is the first play by a black woman to be produced on Broadway and to win the New York Drama Critics' Award in 1959. The play has received widespread critical acclaim as it "reflects that moment in U.S. history when the country was poised on the brink of cataclysmic social and legal upheavals that would forever change its character" (Wilkerson, "Raisin" 442). The play "pulses" with Hansberry's "outrage at social injustice and her desire for change" (Lieberman 208). Together with Ntozake Shange's *four colored girls*, *Raisin* has been praised for its 'duality' of interest: its 'universality' and its 'particularity.'

By stressing female agency, self-definition, and 'the right to choose,' these plays posit constructive models of 'universal femininity.' They also . . . signify important sites of black feminism in the larger socio-historic context of patriarchal civil rights and black nationalist movements, as well as exclusive White feminist movements. By striking these balances between the 'universal' and the 'particular,' Hansberry and Shange ultimately manage to target a specific

audience's perception of how coloured people lead their life. This point has not received enough attention from scholars and researchers who have privileged the play's thematic concerns at the expense of its theatrical potentials. The researcher claims that the realistic form employed by Hansberry in *Raisin* is able to carry the message of oppression and frustration in an innovatively engaging manner. The researcher adopts the textual approach to pinpoint the formal aspects in the play which are argued to be betraying a sense of resistance and protest.

The analysis, particularly in its thematic dimension, is informed by W. E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*² in which DuBois introduces the concept of the 'double consciousness' and the metaphor of the 'veil of race' which both lie at the heart of Hansberry's project of staging resistance³. Against these two concepts, DuBois presents a penetrating analysis of the tension within the black people's mind, how they are perceived by others as opposed to how they perceive themselves. *Raisin* then dismantles how black people are traditionally perceived and at the same time presents a vivid image of the reality of those black folks as human beings with full stature and with dreams and aspirations of no less value than those shared by their fellows in humanity. References to DuBois's book will be introduced in the

Jones), Langston Hughes, among many others, have, through their realistic dramas, brought the Africa-American situation to the foreground. Their works succeeded in "replacing the stereotype 'nigger' image of buffoonery and low comedy with angry characters designed to forge Black consciousness into a literature that speaks not only for the Black man but also for the underground experiences of all Americans" (Willis 213). The issue of black woman's suppression at the hands of her male counterpart has been given its due share of attention.

This paper examines the theatrical strategies employed by an African-American dramatist, Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), in her play *A Raisin in the Sun* to resist and challenge the practices of the white supremacist society against the Blacks. The argument is that in this play, Hansberry uses the theatrical tools as a medium for a passionate engagement with the consequences of the racist system. Hansberry dramatizes different levels of resistance, intellectual resistance¹ in this case, making use of a wide range of theatrical possibilities which include the evocative setting, the portrayal of realistic characters caught in the grip of outrageously oppressive economic and political conditions, and the communication of ideas through the quiet dialogic debates in the black vernacular. These dramatic tools are presented in a way to raise awareness, uncover the scars of racism and sexism, and prompt a reassessment of the

Theatre has always been a launching pad for revolutionary ideas on society reformation. Modern and contemporary theatre in particular has taken the issue to hitherto unexplored territories interrogating matters of racism, ethnicity, gender discrimination, colonialism, and above all the relevant issues of coexistence and human welfare. The theatre of Henrik Ibsen, for instance, and that of his disciples in England, Ireland and elsewhere have championed the discussion of women's rights and place in the patriarchal societies. The British theatre in the 1960s witnessed the emergence of those Angry Young Men, of whom John Osborne is the most renowned, expressing, through an array of theatrical possibilities, the growing sense of dissatisfaction with all aspects of life. In Ireland, Sean O'Casey launches a bitter attack on the social conditions of the time and the suffering Dubliners. Analogously, Black theatre in America has striven to instill and inspire a sense of resistance for and protest against all forms of tyranny.

While the avant-garde black theatre, like that of Adrienne Kennedy, Maria Irene Fornes, August Wilson, to mention but a few, has created a fertile soil for presenting the traumatic effects of the African-American experience, the realistic theatre has proven as capable in addressing the same issues of trauma, psychological fragmentation and distorted consciousness. Lorraine Hansberry, Alice Childress, Ntozake Shange, Imamu Ameri Baraka (*Le Roi*

Abstract: This paper aims to explore the theatrical strategies which Lorraine Hansberry employs in *A Raisin in the Sun* to challenge the workings of the white supremacist system. The realistic setting, the depiction of characters and the adoption of the quiet conversational tone in the black vernacular, are argued to be the tools the play uses to generate public testimony of urban black life, to present a penetrating truth about the interior life of the blacks and also to provide a prophetic vision of the rising tide of anger in the US and in the world. The analysis is informed by W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk* in which the author, through a series of articles, comments on the painful psychological and social experience of the Blacks in America. The paper concludes that the realism of *Raisin* is capable of communicating a powerful message of resistance in no less effective manner than that achieved by the experimental theatre. *Raisin* exposes the oppressors, their tools of oppression and the ensuing consequences of that oppression.

Key words: Ghettoization, Double consciousness, The walking wounded, Objective correlative, White supremacy, The evolving black, Deconstructing stereotypes.

“I say all of this to say that one cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know and react to the miseries which afflict this world.” (Hansberry “The Negro Writer” 11)



Staging Resistance: Lorraine Hansberry's
A Raisin in the Sun

Par 

Dr: Haris Abdulwahab Fayez
Faculty of Arts, sohag University