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Remapping 'Dream Deferred' in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

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Abstract. Racial identities, cultural legacy and the experience of slavery had an indelible effect on the dreams of black African-Americans. They strive for a better future but their dreams and aspirations are often shattered and traumatized due to systemic racism. Sad to say even after the slavery was legally abolished, the Negroes still continue to bear the brunt of violence and discrimination.They are disdained by the whites and are often made victims of intolerance.Political rhetoric and constitutional protection have failed to provide safety and security to the black in real sense of the term. These issues have captured the attention of many writers.Lorraine Hansberry is one among them. Her writings delineate the issues related to cultural, racial identity and the deferred dreams of the African-Americans.Recognized as the first African-American woman playwright,her play *A Raisin in the Sun*performed in 1959 on Broadway broughtto her the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.The harsh realities ofAfrican-American life form the background of the play. It portrays black characters, themes and conflicts in a realistic way. Hansberry used her writings as a weapon of protest against the inequality prevalent in the society and fought against the narrow-mindedness and discriminationfaced by her people. The present paper aims at remapping this predicament in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*in great detail.

Keywords: African-Americans; American Dream; assimilation; cultural identity; Dream Deferred; family unity; Race and Slavery.

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?
Or crust and sugar over–
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags

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Like a heavy load.
Or does it *explode*? (Langston Hughes)

Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965)has taken the title of the play *A Raisin in the Sun*from the above quoted poem "Harlem" byLangston Hughes.The poem gives an insight into the helplessness and traumatic life of people and aptly sums up the fact that whether individuals merely yield to their situations when their hopes and ambitions are crushed or if those hopes maintain their influence and arise in unexpected ways.The action of the play examines the deferred dreams of African-Americans, theirfight for identity, and the significance of family, home and liberty. The play made its debut on Broadway in 1959, becoming the first play on the Great White Way written by an African-American woman. This pioneering work continues to echo even today, exploring themes of race, identity, family, and the American Dream. Set against the backdrop of 1950s Chicago, the plot of the play surrounds around a black family called the Youngers.They reside on *South Side* of Chicago in the 1950s.Their individual aspirations clash with societal limitations and familial obligations.The play highlights the issues of assimilation, racism, masculinity and class portraying pride and feminism through the perspective of African-Americans.

In a realistic way, the play deals with the issues of racism and economic oppression. The economic oppression was due to the Great Depression (1929-1939) – an era of distressing and prolonged financial decline. This was particularly a distressing period for economically weaker African-Americans. It worsened their already miserable economic condition. They were the first to be sacked from their jobs in comparison to the whites. Thus, the Great Depression had a large impact on the literature of the time. Writings like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*(1936), John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and many more dealt with the issues and concern related to the Great Depression. These writings thoroughly examine the ruthless challenges faced by labourers. Interestingly, Wright's novel *Native Son* paved the way for Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun.*

The play emerged during a pivotal time in American history when the Great Migration saw a significant movement of African-Americans relocating from the rural South to urban areas in search of better prospect. However, these aspirations were often shattered, a fact

highlighted in *A Raisin in the Sun*. This play reflects the socio-economic struggles faced by African-Americans, besides the growing impetus of the Civil Rights Movement.Portraying the harsh realities of the life of the Youngers, the play opens with thewaiting of the family for insurance money of $10,000 that is likely to come from the late Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Through her characters, Hansberry tries to explore how the dreams and aspirations of African-Americans have been deferred.Poet and critic Amiri Baraka rightly states:

> When *Raisin* first appeared in 1959, the Civil Rights Movement was in its earlier stages. And as a document reflecting the *essence* of those struggles, the play is unexcelled. For many of us it was–and remains–the quintessential civil rights drama (10).

The Younger family's dynamics reveal the tension between individual aspirations and collective dreams. Each of them, Lena Younger (Mama), Walter Lee Younger, RuthYounger, BeneathaYounger, has a dream. They have a preplanned notion in their mind as how they would like to spend this money. Lena Younger, the matriarch of the family, represents the traditional values of family and community. Shedreams of buying a house to fulfill the dream of her late husband whose long cherished desire wasto have a better living environment for his family.The house that Mama dreams of symbolizes hope, stability, and the realization of the family's dreams. It also represents the struggle against racial barriers.Mama's son, Walter Lee, craves for financial success and plans to invest in a liquor storewith his friends, believing it to be the key to wealth and respect.He aspires to achieve wealth and social status considering that the achievement of the American dream will bring contentment and a sense of purpose in life.Walter's wife, Ruth agrees with Mama. She has a strong desire to have their house asthis will bring strength and joy to the family. Both Walter and Ruth always think to give best education, financial security, proper space and opportunity to their son, Travis.

Walter's sister, Beneatha,aspires to be a doctor, challenging both gender roles and racial expectations.Her ambitions highlight the intersection of race and gender, as African-American women often face additional barriers compared to their male counterparts. Beneatha's

defiance against these expectations testifies to a larger feminist struggle within the context of racial subjugation, underlining the need for both racial and gender equality.Beneathais tryingto find her identity retrospectively. That is why shedoes not endorse of her family member's wishes to assimilate into the white world. The conflictof the family begins from contradictory visions of how to use the insurance money, leading to deep discussions about identity, dreams, and aspirations. Eventually their choice to shift into a predominantly white neighborhood, Clybourne Park, symbolizes a bold step toward racial assimilation.Their ultimate decision to support one another notwithstanding contradictory dreams stresses the importance of unity despite external challenges, reflecting the resilience of Black families navigating a culturally divided society.Thus, initially the character's dreams revolve around the insurance money; nonetheless, by the end of the play, family, dignity and identity replace money.

The action of the play takes place inside the apartment. The introduction of ironing board at the outset of the play makes it an example of 'kitchen sink' realism. All the adult members of the family are fully developed and sensitive, however, Mama and Walter, emerge as dual protagonists.Divided into three conventional acts with distinct scenes,the first Scene of the First Acttakes place on Friday morningin the living room of the Youngers and introduces the main characters and their motives capturing the antagonistic dynamics between Walter and Beneatha. The living room's "furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years–and they are tired" (*A Raisin in the Sun,* 23).Though the furnishings at one time were "selected with care and love and even hope," emphasizing the family's long dissolve dreams, now "[w]eariness has, in fact, won in this room"(23). The weary and careworn facade of the younger's family room is reminiscent of the family's lower-class status. However, the meticulously cleaned room and furnishings still manifests the self-respect of the Younger family.

The play opens with Ruth assuming the role of a traditional housewife, waking the family,cooking breakfast for them and so on. She is in her thirties. She is tired and over worked, a woman who once had beauty, potential and hope but now she looks older than her age because "life has been little that she expected, and disappointment has already begun to hang in her face" (24). Before cooking breakfast for the family, she wakes up her son Travis asking him to go to the bathroom before it is

engaged by the neighbours. They share bathroom with their neighbors, the Johnsons.The fact that they share common bathroom make them late for their respective duties and assignments. The situation offers another example of the younger's humble financial condition. Subsequently, she wakes her husband Walter Lee who is a lean, passionate young man in his middle thirties. He is prone to sudden panickyactions and violent speech habits. A sense of indictment and bleakness is visible in his voice because of his financial crisis.

The conversation between husband and wife – Walter Lee and Ruth – surrounds on the awaited check. Walter desperately dreams of bettering his situation. With his friends Willy Harris and Bobo, he plans to invest the money in a liquor store business. Ruth is annoyed with Walter for hosting his friends in the drawing room that servers Travis's bedroom. She hates his friends and when Walter blames his son for not getting up early, she retorts: "It ain't his fault that he can't get to bed no earlier nights 'cause he got a bunch of crazy good-for-nothing clowns sitting up running their mouths in what is supposed to be his bedroom after ten o'clock at night" (27). In between, Travis comes and demands fifty cents from his mother that she refuses. She is a pragmatic lady whereas Walter strives to uphold the illusion that they are not impoverished while also protecting his own pride, he gives him a dollar.Travis exits and again Walter starts talking about his business plan. Walter views this deal as apossibility for him to free himself from his strenuous and unacknowledged job as a chauffeur. The liquor store symbolizes a chance of their financial stability.Hislonging to have his own business can be linked with his masculine pride. On the other hand, Ruth considers Willy as a "good-for-nothing loudmouth" fellow. Walter tries to convince Ruth citing example of Charlie Atkins who is flourishing in his business.He realizesthathaving one's own business is the only way to success.He persuadesRuth to convince Mama suggesting that all she need,

> to do is just sit down with her when you drinking your coffee one morning talking 'bout things like you do and … you just sip your coffee, see, and say easy like that you been thinking 'bout the store and all, and sip some more coffee, like what you saying aint't really that important to you – And the next thing you know, she be listening good and

> asking you questions and when I come home–I can tell her the details. This ain't no fly-by-night proposition, baby. I mean we figured it out, me and Willy and Bobo. (32-33)

Walterwants to be rich so that his family should live a respectable life with head held high.Nonetheless, Ruth views his idea of business as dangerous, irresponsible and unreliable. Perhaps Hansberry is trying to advocate Walter's "get-rich-quick scheme as putting the health of both the Younger family and their Chicago community at risk" (Thomas, 474).

The conversation between the couple goes on and in between Beneatha enters.A twenty year old college student,she is very slim and fanaticlike her brother.She has her own unique beauty. She is in a bitter relation with her brother. She wants to be a doctor whereas Walter is apprehensive of medical cost and considers it a burden on family that will infringe on his own dreams. Eventually, he suggests her to be "a nurse like other women–or just get married and be quiet" (38). In contrast, Beneatha opines: "That money belongs to Mama, Walter, and it's for her to decide how she wants to use it. I don't care if she wants to buy a house or a rocket ship or just nail it up somewhere and look at it. It's her. Not ours–*hers*" (36-37). Throughout the play, we find her criticizing capitalism "the inequality of the sexes, and racist discrimination, but her expressions of frustration are often unclear to her listeners" (Orem, 191). Her hostile relation with her brother is because both of them are inflexible, rigid, obstinate and prone to argument and the basic cause of disagreement rests on insurance check – a symbol of their hopes and dreams.

Walter goes for his work. Mama, "a woman in her early sixties, full-bodied and strong" enters. Quickly she senses that Beneatha and Walter were arguing over insurance check. Ruth informs her that Walter is planning to invest the money in liquor business to which she disapproves. Deeply religious lady,she is conscious the checks and balances of good and bad works that are recorded in heaven. Once Ruth realizes that she cannot convince Mama to second Walter's business plan, she tries to delight her in fantasy suggesting to trip somewhere to Europe or South America or someplace, "I'm serious. Just pack up and leave! Go on away and enjoy yourself some. Forget about the family and have yourself a ball for once in your life" (43). Mama unlike her son is a realist. Theprevalent inconsideratedivision of class and race of the society

isdifficult for many to cross. Ruth wants to be sure of Mama's plan to spend the money. Mama explains some amount will be spared for Beneatha's education and the rest amount she wants to invest in purchasing a house that was long cherished dream of her husband Big Walter too. Since their marriage, they dreamt of having their own house. Painfully their dream never turned into reality during his life time. Ruth seconds Mama's decision. Mama recalls the loving and caring nature of her husband. He was fond of his children beyond expression. Ironically, Mama's or Big Walter's dream has a chance to be realized through his death. There were plenty of wrong things with him such as he was

> hard-headed, mean, kind of wild with women–plenty wrong with him. But he sure loved his children. Always wanted them to have something–be something. . . . Big Walter used to say, he'd get right wet in the eyes sometimes, lean his head back with the water standing in his eyes and say, "Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams–but He did give us children to make them dreams seem worthwhile." (45-46)

Beneatha enters and reveals her plan to start guitar lesson to which Ruth and Mama tease because of her ephemeral passions such as horseback-riding and photography. Beneatha defends herself that all these hobbies are to showcase her hidden talent. Changing the topic, Mama enquires about her courtship with George Murchison. An educated man,Murchison represents the black wealthy man.His words show hisdislike for other blacks. Beneatha considers him a complete 'shallow':

> George looks good–he's got a beautiful car and he takes him to nice places and, as my sister-in-law says, he is probably the richest boy I will ever get to know and I even like him sometimes–but if the Youngers are sitting around waiting to see if their little Bennie is going to tie up the family with the Murchisons, they are wasting their time (49).

The family is amazed. But Beneatha remains rigid and express her indifference towards George because he is a rich coloured people

and that he is more snobbish than rich white people. She hates him because he does not endorse her wish to be a doctor. Mama tries to convince her that she must not hate George because he is well off. Ruth opines that she will get over all these in due course of time. Beneatha intervenes she should not bother whom she is going to get married if ever she marries. The word 'if' leaves Mama and Ruth shocked. Mama emphasizes that God will definitely translate her dream of becoming a doctor into reality. Beneatha drily replies "God hasn't got a thing to do with it" (50). Enraged Mama, warns her never to speak like this.But Beneatha goes on to say:

> 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 got tired of him getting credit for all 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)

Obviously Beneatha denies the existence of God disapproving religion as a means for controlling the world. Mama is shocked and slaps her directing to repeat "[i]n my mother's house there is still God" (51). Beneatha's moral conviction and new philosophy is in sharp contrast to Mama's rigid beliefs in Christianity. Unable to understand her temperament, Mama is troubled to see a"generational and ideological gap" that exit between them – because Lena represents a pastness that is not quite past enough for Beneatha's "nationalistic fervor" (Matthews, 564). This scene ends here and we notice that the focus of the play shifts in the next scene with the dramatic tension swiftly rising to the surface.

The Second Scene of the First Act takes place on the following Saturday morning. The Youngers are engaged in cleaning the apartment that shows their pride in maintaining the cleanliness in their home. The anticipated arrival of the insurance check fosters anoptimisticambiance. Likewise, the speculation over Ruth's pregnancy adds an element of anxiety and tension to the scene. Amidst the phone rings and Beneatha answers the call. The call is from her classmate Joseph Asagai who wishes to visit her house that morning. Beneatha's appeal that her mother should

refrainfrom asking ignorant questions about Africa stresses the fact that many African-Americans in the mid 20thcenturies had limited knowledge of African life and culture and they used to consider themselves as Americans. Ruth's pregnancy is instantaneouslyintertwined with financial worries. Ruth bears the liability for literally carrying the childbesides for shouldering a substantial part of the additionaleconomictrouble. Ruth and Beneatha, representing a younger generation of women, respond differentlyto the news. Mama senses that Ruth saw a female doctor to get an abortion. Their conversation is interrupted when Travis comes back from outside. He shares his story of chasing and killing of rat. This narrativeunderscores the harsh realities of life in the segregated south side of Chicago and revives Ruth's anxieties that the family's current home is not anappropriate place for her son'supbringing. Asagai arrives and this prompts Beneatha to reflect on her identity particularly related to her hair which leads her to question whether she is an Africanist or an assimilationist. Though Beneatha expresses an interest in her African legacy, her straightened hair suggests a massage of assimilation.As a compliment to her African identity, Beneatha realizes that she must allow her hair to exhibit its natural and unassimilated form.She begins to embrace her natural hair. Besides, her hair symbolizes her identity as a woman and is interlinked with established white concept of feminine beauty. Beneatha's assertion that her family suffers from ghettoizinghighlights the inherent dangers associated with life in a segregated neighbourhood. Beneatha'sreaction that Asagai's love is insufficient is a testimony to the fact that she does not merely crave for love but for a partner who is equally committed to her principles of equality and freedom.On the contrary,Mama's hospitality epitomizes the pride that she takes in her family and theirbehaviourwith others. With the nickname "Alaiyo" that means "One for Whom Bread–Food–Is Not Enough" (65), Beneatha's aspirations and desire for something more than mere survival, whether in love or in life, is duly acknowledged by Asagai that she sincerelyvalues. Beneatha takes great pride in her African nickname which effectively encapsulates her commitment to her dreams. Thus, Beneatha's character embodies the exploration of cultural identity and self-discovery. Her interest in African culture, along with her rejection of assimilation into white society, reflects a growing awareness and pride in her identity.

This exploration of cultural heritage contrasts sharply with the pressures of conforming to dominant societal norms, showcasing the

complexity of Black identity in a racially stratified society.Asagai leaves and the Younger's focus shifts to the insurance check which has now arrived. Travis delivers it to his grandmother. All of them are excited and wants to be sure the amount is correct. Mama recalls the fact that the money she has received is the compensation for the life of her husband. Tearfully she states: "Ten thousand dollars they gave you. Ten thousand dollars" (69). Subsequently, Travis goes outside to play and Mama enquires Ruth's visit to the doctor. She senses something is wrong.Soon Walter enters and enquires about the check. He is so much obsessed with the check that he hardly bothers his wife's condition. Excitedly, he shares his plan to invest the money in liquor store that his mother rejects. Walter states:

> You ain't looked at it and you don't aim to have to speak on that again? You ain't even looked at it and you have decided– (*Crumpling his papers*) Well, you tell that to my boy tonight when you put him to sleep on the living-room couch . . . Yeah–and tell it to my wife, Mama, tomorrow when she has to go out of here to look after somebody else's kids. And tell it to me, Mama, every time we need a new pair of curtains and I have to watch you go out and work in somebody's kitchen. Yeah, you tell me then! (71)

Remarking these words, Walter stands up to go away. Ruth wants to speak to him but he scolds her not to come.Annoyed and unable to argue with him, she comes back and goes into her bedroom. Mama is pained to see the bitter relationship between her son and his wife. She tries to decipher what is wrong with them. Walter says he is fed up with his present condition and wants to make more money. For him, the insurance money means a lot.He realizes that economic hardship obstructs his ability to perform his duties as a father, husband and son. Mama tries to make him understand that he should be satisfied as he has got a job, a loving wife, a sweet boy. Walter is stunned: "Mama, a job? I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and I say, "Yes, sir; no, sir; very good, sir; shall I take the Drive, sir?" Mama, that ain't no kind of job . . . Mama, I don't know if I can make you understand" (73).Washington aptly remarks: "Walter's character, such

as his iron will, his high expectations of himself, and his determination to succeed, are those which often reduce him to the role of villain when he is compared to his mother" (112).These words of Walter aptly sum up his frustration with his present life. He is depressed for being undervalued, overworked and trapped in a cycle of poverty. He often feels stuck with limited opportunities for professional growth.

Mama feels sorry to notice Walter's obsession with money. Trying to divert his attention, she says"once upon a time freedom used to be life–now it's money" (74). He remains headstrong. Eventually, Mamarevealsthat Ruth is expecting and has decided to abort. Knowing this, he is traumatizedexclaiming: "No–no–Ruth wouldn't do that" (75). Mama asserts that a woman can go to any extent when her world gets ugly. Ruth too joins and confirms that she has decided to abort and that she has already made a five-dollar down payment. Complete silence encircles them. Mama expects from her son to be audacious and make Ruth understand the fact that she cannot destroy his child. They are the people who give children life – not destroy the unborn child. Speechless Walter walks out. Furiously Mama says: "you are a disgrace to your father's memory" (75) and she also leaves.

The First Scene of the Second Act opens later on Saturday. Ruth is ironing and Beneatha is dressing for a date that evening.Entering in a Nigerian dress gifted to her by Asagai, she dances to the rhythm of Nigerian music showing pridein her African dress. Meanwhile, Walter appears in an inebriated condition and starts dancing loving the beat of the drum in the music. This illustrates that Nigerian music becomes for him "a kind of drug or narcotic that lulls him into a state of listlessness which allows him to escape depression" (Washington 117). Nevertheless George's arrival disrupts Walter's escapecacophonously bringinghim back to reality and his dismal circumstances. Walter expresses his disdain for George:

> I see you all all the time–with the books tucked under your arms–going to your . . . "clahsses." And for what! What the hell you learning over there? Filling up your heads . . . with the sociology and the psychology–but they teaching you how to be a man? How to take over and run the world? They teaching you how

> to run arubber plantation or a steel mill? Naw–just to talk proper and read books and wear them faggoty- looking white shoes . . . (84-85)

Evidently, Walter satirizes George's bourgeoisie attire. He has a hatred for contemporaryeducation system as the educated individuals do not align his norms and concept of education.Walter thinks that the most successful persons are those who manage America's business no matter educated or uneducated. Ironically, he fails to understand that basic education is a necessity for success in any field. Moreover, he questionsGeorge's masculinity with the homosexual connotation of the word faggoty. George retaliates before departing by referring to Walter as "Prometheus" with a view to underscore Walter'slack of knowledge. Hansberry deftly portrays the intra-racial tension in African-American community. Society often categorizes black individuals in a single and indistinct group. Wealthy African-Americans often exert greater effort to differentiate themselves from their poor counterparts in comparison to the whites.

Meanwhile, Mama comes back and joins them. She ignores Walter and addressing Ruth enquires about Travis. Eventually she responds to Walter saying she had gone on a business purpose. Walter is afraid; perhaps she has spent the insurance money. Travis enters. She informs him that she had gone out and bought for him a house. Travis is thrilled over this news. Mama suggests him first to thank God and then to his late grandfather because of whom now he has his own house. Everyone except Walter is happy to know that now they have their own house. Addressing her son, she says:

> It's–it's a nice house too . . . Three bedrooms–nice big one for you and Ruth. . . Me and Beneatha still have to share our room, but Travis have one of his own. . . And a nice big basement (92).

Mama advises her son to be happy because having one's own house is really a blessing. Nevertheless, Walter thinks she has butchered his dream. Bitterly, he remarks "so that's the peace and comfort you went out and bought for us today" (93). With this remark, Mama is saddened and raises her eyes to meet his finally. She assuages him saying that she

tried her best to find the nicest place in the least amount.She was sad to see the plight of her family. Their condition was worsening day by day: "We was going backwards 'stead of forwards–talking 'bout killing babies and wishing each other was dead . . . when it gets like that in life–you just got to do something different, push on out and do something bigger" (94). She wishes that her son will say something. He will now appreciate that she has done right thing. Nevertheless, Walter's remark pushes her in further agony. He says:

> What you need me to say you done right for? *You* the headof this family. You run our lives like you want to. It was your money and you did what you wanted with it. So what you need for me to say it was all right for? . . . So you butchered up a dream of mine-you-who always talking 'bout your children's dream (94-95).

Remarking on this, Walter closes the door behind him and Mama left alone. She thinksdeeply over his last remark and this scene comes to an end.

The Second Scene of the Second Act opens a few weeks later on Friday. Georgeand Beneatha come back after a date. He wants to kiss whereas Beneatha declares she lovesto talk. This "affirms that orality is her artistic form, one that Mama fears may get her in trouble" (Kiser, 450). Beneatha faces such struggle. George further states:

> I want you to cut it out, see – The moody stuff, I mean. I don't like it. You're a nice-looking girl. . . all over. 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 want a nice–(*Groping*)–simple (*Thoughtfully*)–sophisticated girl … not a poet–O.K.? (*A Raisin in the Sun*, 96)

George does not allow Beneatha to articulate her feelings that shows his "conservative gender politics, believing that women should be kept out of the political and artistic sphere" (Kiser, 450). The content of

Beneatha's words hardly matters to George. His mind is completely immersed on her body that he wants or rather continues to "grope" throughout the scene. Unable to understand her words, George dismisses her voice,: "I don't go out with you to discuss the nature of "quite desperation"or to hear all about your thoughts" (*A Raisin in the Sun,* 96-97).Beneatha subsequently enquires about purpose of reading books and going to schools. He asserts that these activities are done primarily at gaining knowledge, achieving good grades, completing course and ultimately obtaining a degree. Beneatha rejects George's perspectives detesting that he is trying to silenceher voice.In between, Mama enters. Sensing the unusual situation, Mama asks Beneatha what the matter is and agrees with her that she should not waste her time with a fool like George.Subsequently, Mrs. Johnson, a "squeaky wide-eyed lady of no particular age, with a newspaper under her arm" enters. She comes on the pretence of offering the Youngers congratulations for their new house and on Ruth's pregnancy. In fact,her true intention is to undermine their choice to settle in predominantly white society. Mrs. Johnson refers to a recent newspaper article related to a Chicago family that shifted into a white locality, "I guess y'all seen the news what's all over the colored paper this week . . . You mean you ain't read 'bout them colored people that was bombed out their place out there?" (100). The discussion goes on between them and eventually when Mrs. Johnson refers that Walter should be satisfied with his present job as a chauffeur to which Mama disagrees. Mrs. Johnson feels offended and leaves.

Meanwhile, Ruth receives a call fromMrs. Arnold, the wife of Walter's boss.She informs her that Walter has not been absent from work for the last three days. He will be sacked if he does not join soon.Walter admits that he borrowed the car of his friend Willy Harris and visited places like South Chicago, Green Hat, Wisconsin and so on. Knowing all this, Mama senses that her son is passing through a typical psychological predicament. She firmly declares:

> I paid the thirty-five hundred dollars down on the house. That leaves sixty-five hundred dollars. Monday morning I want you to take this money and take three thousand dollars and put it in a saving account for Beneatha's medical schooling. The rest you put in a checking account – with your name on it. And

> from now on any penny that come out of it or that go in it is for you to look after. For you to decide. . . . It ain't much, but it's all I got in the world and I am putting it in your hands. I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be. (106-107)

Walter is flabbergasted to learn that his mother has placed her trust in him regarding the money. In his excitement, he hardly listens to Mama's words of saving three thousand dollars for Beneatha's medical schooling. Travis comes and Walter excitedly shares his dream with him of working in an office, a lovely home with gardener, driving a nice car and sending him to best college and so on. This scene ends here.

The Third and last Scene of the Second Act takes place one week later on Saturday. The family is likely to shift in their new house. Ruth is all alone in the living room. Beneatha enters with a guitar. Overjoyed for their new house,Ruth has already bought new curtains though she does not know the size of the windows. Ruth eagerly says to Beneatha that she went on a date the night before with her husband, Walter, and that they held hands together throughout the show. Perhaps their relationship is flourishing, "The picture wasn't much good, but that didn't seem to matter. We went–and we held hands" (111). She continues to say that they enjoyed together. Meanwhile, Walter comes back with a large package. He starts dancing with his wife.Excitedly, he begins to mock his sister lightheartedly calling her "the chairman of the Committee on Unending Agitation" because she repeatedly talks about race. Beneatha does not mind at all that shows that their relationship also seems to be getting better. Eventually, the door bell rings and Beneatha answers the call. She is astonished to witness a middle-aged white man in a business suit from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association. Having a briefcase in his hand and consulting a small piece of paper,he enquires aboutMrs. Lena Younger. As Mama is not at home, Walter speaks with him. His name is Mr. Karl Linder. He presents the association as welcoming committee for newcomers to the locality and mentions about the recent violencethat occurred following the relocation of a black family. This is a strategyto dissuade them from moving into the white community.Linder wants an open dialogue where they can sit and discuss.He informs, "It is a matter of the people of Clybourne Park

believing, rightly or wrongly, as I say, that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities" (118). These words make the Youngers dumbfounded.Surprisingly, Linder goes on to make a generous offer to purchase the house from them. Boldly, Walter asks Linder to get out of their house. Linder exits and Mama and Travis enter.

Unaware of what happened in her absence, Mama is sad that still packing has not been completed. Beneatha informs her that someone came to see her and that he does not want that they should move to their new house. She prays to Lord to protect the family.Again the door bell rings, tense and anxious Bobo enters unexpectedly and wants to talk to Walter about their misfortune. Both of them have given their share of the money to Willy for investing in the liquor store. However, they are betrayed. Willy ran away with their money. In a moment of despair,Walter cries out, "THAT MONEY IS MADE OUT OF MY FATHER'S FLESH" (128). Learning of Walter'scheating, everyone is distressed that all the rest money even Beneatha's share for schooling is gone. The scene comes to an end with Mama looking to heaven for strength.This sort of happening delineates the fact that the concept of the American Dream that is central to the play is portrayed as largely impossible for the Youngersbecause of their racial and socio-economic status. Walter's aspirations of investing in a liquor store reflect a desire for economic empowerment and social mobility. However, the barriers he faces – limited job opportunities and racial prejudice –underline the idea that the American Dream is often afantasy for African-Americans. This tension between aspiration and reality serves as a critique of the socio-economic structures that perpetuate inequality. Washigton observes:

> We have sympathy for him [Walter] in spite of the fact that he bullies his wife, ridicules his sister's dream, deceives his mother, and attempts to bribe state officials in Springfield in order to get a liquor license for the business. Even more serious than these defects in his character as they affect his dream, and hence the welfare of his family, is his flaw in judgment; he considers Willy Harris a successful businessman when he is really untrustworthy con man. (120)

Third and last act of the play takes place an hour later on the same day. Having no knowledge of Youngers' financial loss, Asagai comes to the apartment to help them in packing. He is shocked to see the changed feelings of Beneatha. He comes to know that Walter is deceived and lost all the money. This has changed Beneatha's positive idealism and it has been replaced by a loss of faith in humanity. All her dreams and hopes are deferred that changesher mind completely. She believes that medicine is inadequate to addressthe problem of the society:

> What about all the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before–only now they will be black and do it in the name of new independence– WHAT ABOUT THEM?! (133-34).

True progress, it seems, is beyond imagination and that our fate is not in our control. In contrast, Asagai sticks to his belief in progress. He is optimistic for his people in Africa despite many difficulties they face. He is of the view that one should not regret over past rather focus on present and try to make our future bright. Asagai reminds her that the money that is lost was not earned by her. Had her father been alive, she would have received the money. From here onwards, she listens to Asagai carefully and subsequently agrees to consider his marriage proposal and his request that she should move to Nigeria and practice medicine. She does not respond immediately. Walter entersand this disrupts their conversation. He frantically begins to search Linder's telephone number and leaves as and when he finds it ignoring Beneatha's sarcastic comments, "Symbol of a Rising Class", "Titan of the System" (138). With these words Beneatha is "critiquing" her brother's "capitalist ventures", "Expressing such emotions in a free manner grants the community–the audience and other characters – an opportunity to connect over difficult situations such as surveillance, violence, and poverty" (Kaiser, 451).

Meanwhile Ruth and Mama enters and it seems they are figuring out what to do next as family is again facing the same crisis. Unable to decide whether it is better to move or cancel the idea, Mama reflects that how people used to say about her that she is having too big dreams: "Lena–Lena Eggleston, you aims too high all the time. You need to slow down and see life a little more like it is. Just slow down some" (*A Raisin in the Sun,* 139). Mama resigns to her fate and suggests to give up their

dream of moving. This suggestion upsets Ruth more than anyone else. Shortly thereafter Walter enters and states that he has decided to sell the houseto Linder. Aghast, the women of the house, Mama, Ruth and Beneatha look at Walter.Nevertheless, moved by Mama's remarksconcerningthe black pride, Walter changes his point of view and lets Linder down:

> 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– (148).

The phrase "we are very proud" need our attention. Walter offers Linder an "amalgamation of the opinions voiced from the "homes occupied by Beneatha, Ruth and Mama – race, pride, pragmatism, and a hopeful faith in the good of humanity" (Matthews 567) Walter reveals that they have decided to move and live in Clybourne Park.This is indeed a very significant and heroic moment showinghisentry into manhood. He refuses to exchange his family's racial pride and dignity for money. Walter emerges as Ward observes to be, "the most unique creation of his time and ours" because of his "behavior throughout the play" (225).

It is here that Beneatha declares her decision to become a doctor in Africa and Asagai's marriage proposal. Walter retorts that she should marry a wealthy man like George Murchison.She bluntly refuses, "I wouldn't marry him if he was Adam and I was Eve!" (150). They continue to argue as they did in the beginning of the play. Mama is pleased that ultimately her son came to manhood. Ruth is also happy. Mama makes sure to bring her plant with her taking a last look at the apartment before leaving it forever.Her plant symbolizes her caring and nurturing nature, over and above the family's dreams for a better future.Despite the challenges they face, the play finally conveys a message of optimism and resilience. The Youngers' determination to claim their place in a new home symbolizes a broader struggle for dignity and equality. Their journey reflects the perseverance of African-Americans who, despite inherent obstacles, continue to strive for a better future. This message resonates with audiences, emphasizing the ongoing fight for racial justice and equality.

To sum up, Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is a powerful exploration of the African-American experience. It is more than just a family drama and intricately weaves together cultural and racial issues, creating a rich description that examines the complexities of the African-American life.Reflecting on the importance of having dreams and aspirations even in worst situation, the play underlines how systemic racism and prejudice impact the aspirations and struggles of African-Americans in the 20th century.Through its complex characters and rich themes, Hansberry is trying toemphasize the importance of cultural identity and family unityand invites audiences to mirror on the nature of dreams and the societal barriers that persist in their quest. Its lasting legacy continues to encourage us to examine it from various perspectives making it a seminal workof Afro-American literature and theater.

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