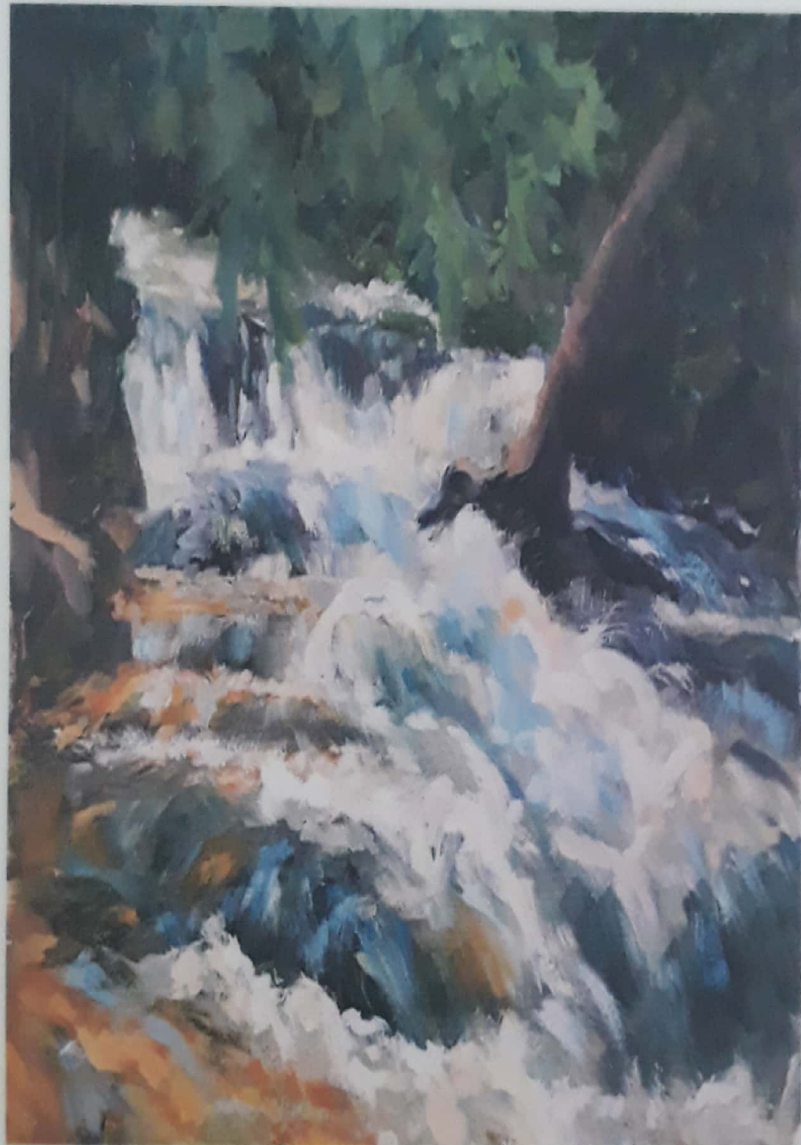


ECHOING CASCADES

*GOMEZ SOPHIA
U. ANAMICA*



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women
(Autonomous)
Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

Title of the Book	:	Echoing Cascades
Editors	:	Gomez Sophia U. Anamica
First impression	:	February 2018
Pages	:	184
Price	:	700
ISBN	:	978-93-86712-18-9
Printed at	:	Laser Point, Madurai-625 003.

Publisher

Department of English
 Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous)
 Accredited With "A" Grade (3rd Cycle) by NAAC
 DST – FIST College since 2015
 Periyakulam-625601, Theni Dt, Tamil Nadu.
 Web:jaceng@annejac.com
 (Affiliated to Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal-624102,
 Tamilnadu.)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Application for such permission should be addressed to the publisher.

Disclaimer

The authors are solely responsible for the contents of the papers edited in this book. The publisher or editors do not take any responsibility for the same in any manner. Errors, if any, are purely unintentional.

- 9 Black Women - Racism, Sexism and The American Dream – A Womanist Reading of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* 49
D. Joy Sophy
- 10 Black Feminism – A Pervasive View 59
G.Vijayalekshmi
- 11 Toni Morrison's Genuine Portrayal of African American Voice in *Beloved* 65
Dr.Gomez Sophia
- 12 Sanguinity and Fortitude in the Poems of Langston Hughes : An Overview 72
U.Anamica
- 13 Racial Identity in Lorraine Hansberry's 'Raisin in the Sun' 76
A. Jaseema Banu
- 14 Mckay's Poems: A Massive Outbreak to Harlem Renaissance 83
J.Sharmila
- 15 Songs of Sorrow: Afro-American Spirituals, A Glimpse 90
Angeline Sorna
- 16 A Depiction of the Vicious World in Toni Morrison's "*The Bluest Eye*" 96
P.Selvarani

RACIAL IDENTITY IN LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S 'RAISIN IN THE SUN'

A. JASEEMA BANU

"I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character."

- Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King is one of the most prolific writers and orators in American history. His dream is not intended just for those with white skin, he wanted ALL to be judged by content of character. His words, and his dream, indeed urged Americans to move swiftly on racial justice. He spent most of his time encouraging people to continue fighting against racism and to "not wallow in the valley of despair".

Playwright, author, and activist, Lorraine Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois. The granddaughter of a freed slave, she was the youngest of four children. She was one of the first playwrights to create realistic portraits of African-American life. *A Raisin in the Sun* can be considered a turning point in American art because it enumerates so many important issues during the 1950s in the United States.

Racism is a major issue that has affected the United States since its discovery. Racism is the hatred by a person of one race pointed at a person of another race. Racism is one of the social issues which exists in Lorraine Hansberry's play, 'A Raisin in the sun.' It relates the story of a working-class African-American family with dreams. 'Every dream has a story behind it.' Hansberry often clarified the global struggles by explaining them in terms of female participants. She was particularly interested in the situation in Egypt, "the traditional Islamic 'cradle of civilization', where women had led one of the most important fights anywhere for the equality of their sex". She used black vernacular language throughout the play and broaches important issues and conflicts.

such as poverty, discrimination, and the construction of racial identity in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

'A Raisin in the sun' is essentially about dreams as the main characters struggle to deal with oppressive circumstances that rule their lives. In this play, Lorraine Hansberry focused both on the social conditions of African-Americans and their quest for identity in a segregated society. The issue of identity is central in the play. It is materialized through the younger family's struggle to integrate into the White community of Clybourne Park and the reluctance of whites to let Blacks into "their communities".

Hansberry wrote that she always felt the inclination to record her experiences. At times, her writing, including *A Raisin in the Sun* (which is based on her family's trauma when they moved into a white neighbourhood in Chicago in 1938) – is recognizably autobiographical. During this era, segregation – the enforced separation of blacks and whites was still legal and widespread throughout the South-Northern States, including Hansberry's own Illinois, had no official policy of segregation, but they were generally self-segregated along racial and economic lines. Chicago was a striking example of a city carved into strictly divided black and white neighbourhoods.

Initially titled *The Crystal Stair*, *A Raisin in the Sun* was completed in 1957. A play about a struggling black family in Chicago, the play derives its title from a 1951 poem by Langston Hughes:

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

Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

It was the first play written by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway. The twenty nine year old author was the youngest American playwright and only the fifth woman to receive the New York Drama Critics Award for Best Play. Over the next two years, it was translated into 35 languages and was being performed all over the world.

The play opens with Hansberry's description of the younger's living room. The younger family is living in the Southside of Chicago. The family expects an important sum of money, a life insurance check that amounts to \$10,000. Each of the adult members of the family has an idea as to what he or she would like to do with this money. Lena Younger ('Mama'), the matriarch of the family, wants to buy a house to fulfil a dream which is shared with her husband. Mama's son, Walter Lee younger, would rather use the money to invest in a liquor store with his friends. He believes that the investment would solve the family's financial problems for ever. Walter's wife, Ruth younger, agrees with Mama and hopes that she and walter could provide more space and opportunity for their son, Travis. Finally, Beneatha, Walter's sister and Mama's daughter, wants to use the money for her medical school tuition. She also knows that her family members are not interested in joining the white world. Beneatha instead tries to find her identity by looking back to the past and to Africa.

A Raisin in the Sun explores not only the tension between white and black society but also the strain within the black community, over how to react to an oppressive white community. The hybrid nature of African-Americans' identity is the main cause of their rejection. They are willing to rebel against the position that society has forced on them because of their race and class in order to fulfil their dreams. The younger family symbolizes failed integration of Blacks in the American society of the late 1950s and early 1960. The context in which the work is produced

In addition, Beneatha's fight with George and the rest of the family represents a large battle within the black community whether to enhance and celebrate their differences from whites or to join white culture and try to elevate their status within it. This desire to join white culture, referred to as assimilationism, is a contentious issue for the black community in the 1950s and 1960s.

The interaction between Beneatha and Asagai reveals how serious Beneatha is about finding her identity. Beneatha does not want to assimilate into, or become successful in the dominant white culture of the 1950s. Yet she wants to acclimate herself to an educated American life. Many African-American intellectuals and writers, especially in 1960s, faced this dilemma. The status of Beneatha's education remains unambiguous, but it is clear that she intends to accept Asagai's proposal, his beliefs, and his dreams. She maintains her independence from female convention by accepting Asagai and rejecting the financially secure and socially acceptable George Murchison.

When Bobo, one of Walter's friends arrives and announces that Willy Harris has run off with all the money that Walter invested in the liquor store, he starts to crumple down on the floor as Ruth just covers her face in horror. He starts to pound the floor with his fists, sobbing wildly, "That money is made out of my father's flesh". Mama begins to beat Walter. Her beating him is the only way for her to force Walter to realize his mistakes and look for a way to correct them.

The only white character in the play, Mr. Karl Linder is a representative from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, which offers the youngers more money they were to pay for the house in exchange for not moving to Clybourne Park. Mr. Karl Linder says, "Our association is prepared, through the collective effort of our people, to buy the house from you at a financial gain to your family." All become very upset and they manage to control their anger. Walter firmly tells Mr. Linder that they would not accept the offer and asks Mr. Linder to leave immediately. Walter is proud of his race and acts as the man of the house when he turns down Mr. Linder's offer of money for not moving into Clybourne Park. Mama closes her eyes, as if she were hearing a great

sermon in church. Beneatha and Ruth are finally proud of Walter, and everyone believes that Walter now has finally become a man. The youngsters will no longer defer their dreams. Instead, they will face the future as Walter does Mr. Linder - directly and strongly, without blinking. As Aretha Franklin says, "We all require and want respect, man or woman, black or white, it's our basic human right."

From a Marxist point of view, ideology is one of the means used by these classes to oppress other social groups. According to Alice Walker, an African American author, who viewed society especially Black women as, "the mule of the world", this caused black women to become emotionless and hopeless. As they struggle throughout their life, they suffer from Poverty that gives Pain, Dilemma that makes Irresolution, Racial Identity that reflects Slavery, Hatred that provides Hopelessness and Discrimination that renders Alienation. All these traumas lead to death. The great people like Rev. George Lee, Emmett Louis Till, Ducksworth Jr., Paul Guihard from Mississippi, Willie Edwards Jr., William Lewis Moore from Alabama and John Earl Reese from Texas were also killed mercilessly.

On the Civil Rights Memorial are inscribed the names of individuals who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom during the modern Civil Rights Movements from 1954 to 1968. They are Martin Luther King, an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most important voice of the American Civil Rights movement, which worked for equal rights for all. Booker T. Washington, the most recognized national leader, orator and educator, emerged from slavery in the deep south, to work for the betterment of African Americans in the Post Reconstruction Period. Harriet Tubman is well known for risking her life as a 'conductor' in the underground Railroad, which led escaped slaves to freedom in the North. By refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus in 1955, black seamstress Rosa Louise McCauley Parks (1913-2005) helped to initiate the civil rights movement in the United States and Malcolm X, an African-American Muslim minister and human rights activist is a courageous advocate for the rights of blacks.

Dave Matthews says, 'Nothing is black or white, nothing's 'us or them'. But then there are magical, beautiful things in the world. There's incredible acts of kindness and bravery, and in the most unlikely places, and it gives you hope.' Alice Walker urges Black people to pave the way for future generations to eliminate the distress experienced by her and many others. In Lorraine Hansberry's 'A Raisin in the Sun', the younger's family has renewed their determination to pursue their dream and move to the house in Clybourne Park despite the obstacles which stand in their way. It is clear that the family will face opposition and racism in their new place of residence and they believe that they can succeed if they stick together as a family and resolve to defer their dreams no longer.

Works Cited

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*, Vintage Book Edition, New York, 1994, Print.

Kumari Meena. *Alice Walker*, Bhasker Publications, Kanpur, First Edition, 2011, Print.

<https://www.brainyquote.com>authors>.

*Torrential are they
Their voices keep echoing*



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women
(Autonomous)
Periyakulam, Tamilnadu, India

ISBN 978-93-86712-18-9



9 789386 712189