



Reading Lorraine Hansberry's Selected Play In the Light of Henry Louis

Gates

Kamal kadhim Shimal

kamalkadhim@shu.edu.iq

Department of Materials ,College of Engineering, Shatrah University

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6754-6462>

kamalkadhim@shu.edu.iq

<https://doi.org/10.32792/tqartj.v4i46.643>

Abstract

The purpose of writing this research is to highlight some concepts which are proposed by Henry Louis Gates. The analysis will focus on the African American literary critic, filmmaker, historian, and public intellectual in Hansberry's selected plays (-۱۹۶۰ ۱۹۳۰). She was the first African woman to write plays and her plays performed on Broadway. Also, the study shows the critical analysis of the speech by Lorraine Hansberry. He was one of the well-known figures in African American thinking about lighting up the concepts of double 'voicedness' and 'signifying'. Gates explains that signifying in black discourses means modes of figuration itself. We can say that the signifying concept includes signs, testifying, loud talking, calling out one's name, and playing the dozens. According to Gates, the Black concept of signifying differs from its donatives meanings. Typically meanings of this word in English are not satisfactory. Gates in most of his works tries to announce and develop double-voicedness in African American literature. He thinks that African American literature is based on two voices and societies, white and black. In the end, he stresses that the distinctiveness of African American literature will be born from the merging of these two discourses. The Gates' concepts will be applied in *A Raisin in the Sun*. We will analyze the concepts, elements, and dramatic works that she has created. The researcher will explain why it is claimed that the idea of "double voice" can be traced in the dramatic works mentioned. In same time, Both American and African cultures and voices will be highlighted separately and retrospectively.

Keywords: Double-voicedness, Signifying, Ethnicity, Racism, Filmmaker, Hansberry, Gates.





Introduction

Although Hansberry's short life (1930-1960), She was able to make a prominent mark in American literature. She awards many prizes for her plays particularly the first play *A Raisin in the Sun*. It translated into many languages and formed in some countries such as the Soviet Union, the U.K., and France. Hansberry wrote about ٣٤ plays one of them completed by her husband Robert Nemiroff. Moreover, she wrote the manuscript for the Movement and a photographic paper on the civil rights movement. She was very important at that time because she was regarded as the first black woman to write an American literature critic and her writings carried an eloquent and sensitive expression of American culture. Hansberry as a black writer can express the painful, difficult, and biting heart breaking truths almost the torments, that white individuals have given to the blacks. The whites were very unaccustomed to precise criticism, however, they mostly praised her, and this uncovers her imaginativeness. This evidence proved us that she was born in relative wealth and material in the South Side of Chicago.

Henry Louis Gates (١٩٥٠) is an important critic of American literature. His discovery of what may be considered the first book by African American writers. Gates has won numerous prizes for his writings such as *Wonders of the African World*, *Figures in Black: Words, the "Racial" Self*, *The Signifying Monkey*, and *Signs*. He critically publically accepted a six-part PBS documentary series. "The African American: Many Rivers to Cross", traced ٥٠٠ years of African-American history to the second inauguration of president Obama (Gordon & Gordon, -٧٨ ٦٦).

Gates and Hansberry as intellectuals their writings express their reaction and rejection of the discrimination of individuals based on racism. This issue is one of the most significant of recent intellectual social and political movements. It affects





not only the United States but also many people who have suffered persecution due to racial discrimination in other parts of the world. It has had a well-known and often quite separate development from postcolonial studies, which is related only in a complex and vague way (Ashcroft, ٦).

All residents of the United States are self-identified or governmentally defined as African American. Also includes the “set of institutions, communication networks, and practices that help African-Americans respond to social, economic, and political challenges confronting them” (Collins, ٣١٩). Through their writings, I realize the size of the conflict between American culture and African culture (Bressler, ٢٠٥). In other words, we can say the world is divided between two antagonistic cultures, the colonizers and the indigenous society (Tyson, ٤٢١). Over time, indigenous communities felt the effects of literary works that fought against prejudice. As a result, Black Americans in the US have cultivated a "dual awareness" that includes both an understanding of one's own identity and its potential racial interpretation. This duality is also often interpreted as a dual and sometimes conflicting sense of being American and not fully American, and similarly as a dual sense of being both American and African at the same time. Each interpretation has had its path in American and global philosophy, but they all point to the same basic theme of ambivalence and complexity in the African American experience, as this entry describes (Schaefer ٤١١).

١. The Concepts: Double-Voicedness and Signifying

They are related to the discrimination which are the American society based it. African American experience draws the community through voices and cultures, the white and black (Bressler, ٢١٨). Gates shows the black practice is "double-voiced" and that "Signifying" is form of "double-voiced". Individuals are able to communicate in both the language of the dominant culture and the



language of the culture that is subjected to subordination (Klages, 1990). We can say that, African American composition can be a blend of two voices gives it a rich character. Gates thinks the "double voice" can be classified into four concepts related to print communications: anthropological modification, spoken content, spoken content, and spoken content renewal.

Signifying is a metaphor in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, hyperbole, and litotes (Gates, 1989). Gates points out that there are different ways in which signifying is misunderstood, mainly because few analysts have succeeded in describing it as an addition to the concept. It is widely acknowledged that both bug finders and journalists frequently and perhaps inadvertently opt for one of the numerous letters of a word as its complete signification (Gates, 1991).

Roger shows that the signifying concept appears to be a negro term used, if not originally. On the other hand, this means talking in big insinuations, flattery, needlepoint and lying. It means production fun of an individual or situation is indicative of a particular meaning. On occasion, it signifies communication through hand and eye gestures. In this context, it encompasses a comprehensive spectrum of verbal expressions and nonverbal movements. It can be as "a language of implication" or a "technique of indirect argument or persuasion" (Roger, 1990). The main goal of this linguistic game is to insult others. People can show off their skills in rhyming and improvising rhythm in this way. Demonstrating such command of the English language can be a powerful tool for gaining influence in communities that lack access to political and economic power (Klages, 1991). It implies being "signified" by developments of race from the European Renaissance and the "Enlightenment" is "Signed" in this colloquial sense implies being deceived by deceptive and misleading signs (Siemerling, 1991).



٢ . Cultures' Struggle

Hansberry in *A Raisin in the Sun* portrays the African American voice, throughout voices and cultures, black people's struggles and the determination to end national oppression, discrimination, and segregation are reflected in white neighborhoods (Lorraine, ١٣٩). According to Bressler, people speak two languages, the prevailing culture and the subordinated culture (Bressler, ١٢٨).

The struggle of cultures had risen after the Second World War. From that time, appeared new terms such as colonization and post-colonial. This type of struggle created discrimination between the society's individuals. Although the words have historical connotations, literary critics such as Gates have been using them since 1970 to talk about the different cultural impacts of the colonial concept (Ashcroft,186). Writings that aim to challenge colonial viewpoints are also included (Bressler,112).The struggles introduce a new society based on discrimination particularly the race, white and black. Another way of putting it is that the new humans utilize the concept of race as a symbol to make sense of their social surroundings. Instead of being an inherent part of humans or their natural surroundings, race is a socially constructed identity based on cultural or societally constructed symbols. Some examples of physical similarities that might be used to describe racism include skin color, facial characteristics, and hair texture. Racism is based in part on outward appearances. Refinement can thus take a social rather than a biological form.

Individuals classify people into racial groups according on outward appearances rather than attributes that are naturally occurring. Additionally, common social similarities like a shared history, conversation topics, or customs



are typically what define ethnicity. For occurrence, Dark vernacular English could be a troublesome and expressive dialect talked by a few African Americans, in racially confined ranges of the Joined together States. In spite of the fact that social similitudes emerge due to racial groupings. Racial likenesses are not restricted to a whole race, nor does each portion of a race share social likenesses. Such untrue qualifications lead to the harmful which carry out of stereotyping. Such false distinctions lead to the injurious which carry out of stereotyping. Lastly, it might be argued that the emergence of discrete racial groupings within humans that identify as such defines race (Schaefer, 109).

In Act II scene two, Hansberry gives us a clear picture of the conflict of cultures between the African and the American-born blacks. For example, though Asagai and Beneatha have a love story, there are signs of philosophical contradiction. Asagai excites Beneatha to fix her hair to be more suitable with European or Hollywood beauty standards. Asagai is more honest about their relationship than Beneatha and doesn't show his full understanding of Beneatha's "so just because I style my hair, I'm an assimilationist? Asagai: (nonchalantly) I didn't say that, I'm talking more about the type of styles you do" (Hansberry, 70).

Even though Asagai's cosmopolitanism and Western education prevent him from being an openly racist, he does teach his students that even the most seemingly free women in the world are actually very much oppressed. No one ever stops bringing it up! This is stated by Hansberry (59). Conventionally, he holds an African perspective. Thus, he has the potential to exhibit chauvinistic tendencies. "I think it's wonderful how our folks keep on pushing out. You hear some of these Negroes around here talking about how they do" (Hansberry, 93). The conflicts not only between cultures, but it became within the family itself. For instance, Walter's ideas were offensive and unacceptable. Someone in his





family should have taken the time to listen, his disappointment was clear "WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!" (Hansberry, ٦٥).

Moreover, the hero of the play Walter is recognizable by everybody who has ever felt overlooked in shows disdain toward boisterous cries to be listened to. It is troublesome in such a swarmed climate as the more youthful family for one individual to be singled out and listened to. The Youngers aren't cruel to disregard Walter and are not completely mindful that they are doing so. They are essentially caught up in the energy of the minute the receipt of the check.

٣. Analyzing Signifying and Double-voicedness in *A Raisin in the Sun*

In A Raisin in the Sun, an irreconcilable drama, Hansberry reveals Black nationalism and African anger. Addison Gayle in his book *The Black Aesthetics* shows that two significant terms had always existed in Black literature: Black Nationalism and Anger "As the Negro writer moves beyond his anger, he develops a new concern for literary discipline and control"(Gayle, ٢٨١).Gayle thinks the modern terminology and the degree which have meaning anger and patriotism are depicted. He considers that in case the dark craftsman inside American society does that without communicating outrage, he can be respected not as a dark craftsman but as an American one " The American Negro remains a cultural nonentity as far as books, television, movies, and Broadway are concerned"(Gayle,٢٨٤).In this context, the appearance of anger and the search for dark patriotism can be respected as a particular form of speech that is reworked like many African American expressions.

Hansberry in his work "THE NEGRO WRITER AND HIS ROOTS: TOWARD A NEW ROMANTICISM" explains that "black women and men do not have equal opportunities in the most basic aspects of American life accommodation and employment, the bitter epic of the black man in this context,



the most hostile nation" (Hansberry, ٧). Accordingly, I can read *Raisin as an* 'Angry Young Man'. It depicts working-class life within a domestic setting, akin to British kitchen sink realism. "The Angry". Moreover, it highlights a male character who worked. Some of the time in worthlessness, to overcome lesson imbalance. The character most frequently situated like Walter in *A Raisin In The Sun*, can be named is " Angry Young Man". The father, who lives in Chicago, and his spouse both aspire to own a liquor store in order to realize their shared American dream.. After all that, Hansberry tells us that Beneatha, the college-aged who trying specialist of the play is Walter's angry double "as slim and intense as her brother. She is not as pretty as her sister-in-law, but her lean, almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own" (Hansberry, ٧٤).

In light of this, I believe that Beneath Younger embodied a black feminist version of the Angry Young Man. The study's author draws the conclusion that Beneatha seems to make fun of her angry brother Walter in order to cast him in a negative light. Her brother Walter was furious, and she was letting him out. "Repetition, with a signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifying, as we shall see" (Gates, ٥٦). According to Henry Gates signifying allows the speaker to repeat, change, and imitate language patterns.

Secondly, double voice is speaking text. The "speaking text" is characterized by the use of colloquial style to speak to readers, with the result that they send out intersecting narrative voices that have absolutely no place for the narrator or hero. Verbal meaning changes the tone and highlights a particular perspective or disagreement. Embedding in authorial agreements places these shapes and forms in the authorship of these compositions and connects them to create a new agreement. Some writers like Sterling Brown, Zora Neal, and Charles confirm the importance of characters' words and the narrator's voice. For connection oral



traditions and written words which African Americans commonly talk about and which are heard in African American communities.

Gates names this type of black writing a "speakerly text". He explains this type of text can bring consideration to the potential of representing the black speaking voice in writing "text that directs attention to its writing and statues as text, related to other text which it signifies upon"(Cates, ٢٠٠). Hansberry utilized this strategy when she chose the title of her play *A Raisin in The Sun*. I can say her play regarded as a reaction to Jean Genet's work *The Black*. He revealed a wonderful pessimistic image of Africans.

By utilizing the play-within-the-play structure, it emerges racial preference also reveals a slipshod perspective of the dark personality. She aims to criticize his demeanor towards Africans in her play. Hansberry faces the struggle of pointing out the internal nature of Walter's choice artistically, it shows that Asagai's prediction and doubt have come true. Hansberry appears the conflicts through the intertextuality technique. It can be noted when she gives Beneatha another metaphor from African tradition and culture referring to Modingo. Modingo refers to a person who thinks carefully about the time he acts.

Revitalizing the content delivered through spoken communication finally signifies recognition of the black convention. Gates acknowledges that the scholarly discourse reaches its utmost level of blackness when it predominantly relies on metaphors.. Therefore, translation methods that conform to the vernacular tradition of dialect mostly take into account the way the language is used. In some times, a speaker might mean to demonstrate the flaws. Walter defends his plan by saying he didn't build this world " We weren't fit to walk the earth, We weren't never been that poor. (*Raising her eyes and looking at him*)We weren't never been that—dead inside" (Hansberry, ١٢٣).



Some of dialogues between the Hansberry's characters reflect their inside struggles for example the dialogue between Mama and Walter:

MAMA: Baby, how are you going to feel on the inside?

WALTER: Fine! ... Going to feel fine ... a man ...

MAMA: You won't have nothing left then, Walter Lee

His reply to her was that he would be fine, he would feel like such a man. Mama says, " You won't have anything left then, Walter. " He walks toward Mama and claims: I'm going to feel fine, Mama. I'm going to look that son-of-a-bitch in the eyes" (Hansberry, 12). In some time, the struggles or dialogues can be moved into the humor and laughter. The speaker can create this technique or style among friends and people around him.

A Raisin In The Sun is depressing and bitters to such an extent So that it is difficult for the reader to find examples of 'Significance' for humor and laughter. Hansberry further incorporates a measure of arid, sardonic wit which imparts a critical advantage to her satirical production. To give an example, stage directions are frequently used by Hansberry to help actors express themselves when speaking. Ruth looked at him glumly. It's clear that Africa is making a statement tonight. She sets them aside and picks up the iron once more (Hansberry, 73). Therefore, the "drily" delivered outline frequently adds a sense of shrewdness to the backbiting of the characters, as seen in Ruth's utilize of a delicately advising tone in reaction to Beneatha and Walter's execution of African combatants. The word is also used by Hansberry. "dry" in a more critical, ironic way, to draw attention to contested ideas such as religion. In Act 2, Scene 1, Mama assures Beneatha:

MAMA: (Kindly) "Course you going to be a doctor, honey, God willing".



Beneatha Responses: " (Drily) God hasn't got a thing to do with it" Beneatha resents her mother's reliance on faith because it restricts her sense of personal freedom (Hansberry, ٤٧).

Although it is characterized as a "double-voiced talking book," *A Raisin in the Sun* incorporates African guiding concepts that are fundamental to the Dark American experience. It also adds the movements of the imagined. "African" as interpreted by Beneatha and Walter, the play's two siblings. Beneath a's funny yet earnest translation of Nigerian people's dance in Act 2 shows both her ignorance of and her craving for a relationship with Africa. In fact, what unifies Beneatha and Walter is their mutual pride in their African inheritance. (Harrison. Walker. Edwards, ٢٠٠٢).

In *A Raisin In the Sun*, Hansberry shows that escaping from reality doesn't mean away from submission. For instance, Asagai could be a Nigerian man examining within the U.S.A. In spite of the fact that he talks about his considerations with Beneatha, whom he has begun dating, he too affirms this: A slight little man wearing a not-too-prosperous business suit stands there, his eyes haunted and terrified, his hat pulled down tight, brimmed up, around his forehead.. TRAVIS passes between the men and exits. WALTER leans deep into the man's face, still in his jubilation (Hansberry, ١١٣).

A sagai could be a Nigerian man looking at inside the Joined together States. In show disdain toward of the truth that he analyzes considerations with Beneatha, whom he begins to date, he as well fights that "between a man and a lady there require be as it were one kind of feeling... For a lady that ought to be sufficient." Sure, this feeling exists for a man, but it doesn't require it to be enough. Beneatha could probably escape the persecution of American bigotry by returning. In other words, the return to Africa itself entails submission to virile authority. However, Beneatha is herself irresolute concerning her possess



dreams. Talking with Asagai, she depicts a childhood occurrence in which a companion, Rufus, was truly harmed.

However, Beneatha is undecided with respect to her dreams. Talking with Asagai, she depicts a childhood occurrence in which a companion, Rufus, was truly harmed: "I remember standing there looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it all up..... and the next time I saw Rufus". Beneatha is so amazed at this capacity and at the wish it offers, that she yearns to carry out restorative ponders herself. "I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again" (Hansberry, 119).

Conclusion:

In this scholarly article, in *Raisin in The Sun* by Hansberry was explored and analyzed, alongside the relevant literature. To elaborate, the concepts put forth by Gates were also discussed. "Double-voicedness" and "Signifying" presented and applied to the play. Gates specifies "Double-voicedness" as the acknowledgment that American African literature may be a mixture of two voices which give American African literature a wealthy character. It's supposed to speak two languages, subordinated culture and the dominant culture language. Gates believes that "double-voicedness" can be classified into four types of textual relationships: the speakerly text, rewriting the speakerly, tropological revision, and the talking text. Gates made a distinction between the conventional English interpretation of "signification" and its casual speech counterpart known as "Signifying". He thoroughly examines the distinct connotations of "Signifying" and ultimately concludes that only a few scholars have truly grasped



its genuine implications.. By applying the ideas in play *A Raisin in the Sun*, a few positions and illustrations of "Double-voicedness" and "Signifying" were found. The presence of Black Nationalism and Anger within the play is viewed as a "tropological revision". "Speakerly text" describes the vernacular language used by many African characters in the play. An example of "talking text" is presented with the oblique title, *A Raisin in the Sun*. The anti-colonial aspects of the play are brought to light through the use of "Signifying" examples, which also serve to emphasize the text's profound distinctiveness as an example of African American literature. Also, we draw the conclusion that the American society has changed from a time when Black Americans were seen as lower-class and powerless due to the conflicts between white and black Americans. White bigotry claims them in every way imaginable. *A Raisins In Sun* reveals these situations in many ways. It depicts the lives of black individuals with their vision and their struggle to push for their vision. The younger family who endures destitution and discrimination can survive despite overpowering deterrents within the handle, a More youthful family meets numerous obstacles from insiders or pariahs who don't concur with their vision.



References:

- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *KEY CONCEPTS IN POST-COLONIAL STUDIES*. Routledge, ١٩٨٨.
- Abrahams, Rodger D. *Deep Down in the Jungle*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, ١٩٦٤.
- Bressler, Charles. E. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Fifth ed. Pearson Education, ٢٠١١.
- Collins, Patricia H., *BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* Second Ed. Routledge, ٢٠٠٠.
- Gordon, Lewis R. and Jane Anna Gordon, *A Companion to African-American Studies*, Blackwell. ٢٠٠٦
- Gates, Henry L. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford, ١٩٨٨.
- Gayle, Addison. *The Black Aesthetics*. New York: Doubleday, ١٩٧١.
- Gates, Henry L. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African- American Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, ١٩٨٨.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. "A Raisin in the Sun." *African American Scene book*. Routledge, ٢٠١٤, ٥٧-٦٢
- Hansberry, Lorraine. "THE NEGRO WRITER AND HIS ROOTS: TOWARD A NEW ROMANTICISM." *The Black Scholar*, vol. ١٢, no. ٢, ١٩٨١, pp. ١٢-٢ *JSTOR*, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 4106800](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106800). Accessed ١٨ Dec. ٢٠٢٣.





Thi Qar Arts Journal

VOL4 NO 46 JUNE. 2024

- Harrison, Paul. Walker, Victor Leo. Edwards, Gus. (٢٠٠٢) Black theatre: ritual performance in the African diasporas. Temple University Press, Philadelphia. The USA.
- Klages, Mary. *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum, ٢٠١١.
- Schermerhorn, Richard A. "Ethnicity in the perspective of the sociology of knowledge." *Ethnicity*, April ١٩٧٤ , pp. ١-١٤

