



Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Centro de Educação e Humanidades
Instituto de Letras

Marcela Iochem Valente

***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry:
Challenges and Trends presented by an African-American play**

Rio de Janeiro
2009

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Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Prof^ª. Dr^ª. Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro

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To my dear family who has
always encouraged me to go for
my dreams.

To my beloved husband for
being by my side in every moment
and for never letting me down.

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First of all, I would like to thank God for bringing light to me and giving me strength to go ahead;

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*Whatever happened to this nation?
Or did it ever exist?...did it ever
exist with its freedoms and
slogans...the buntings, the
goldheaded standards, the songs?
With Equality, Liberty...In the
West they plow under wheat.
Where is America? I say it does
not exist. And I say that it never
existed. It was all but a myth. A
great dream of avarice.*

David Mamet

RESUMO

VALENTE, Marcela Iochem. *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry: Challenges and Trends presented by an African-American play. 2009. 102 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo mostrar que o teatro é uma eficiente forma de auto-representação assim como uma poderosa arma para a subversão de valores impostos pela sociedade hegemônica. Quando consideramos o teatro Contemporâneo, principalmente aquele produzido pelos então chamados “grupos de minorias”, podemos encontrar vários autores que fazem de suas obras um protesto contra a opressão, a violência e a discriminação impostas pelo excludente discurso colonial. Um exemplo disso é a obra *A Raisin in the Sun* da autora afro-americana Lorraine Hansberry. A autora nos mostra que o teatro pode representar uma possibilidade para que os grupos historicamente excluídos tragam a público a situação de opressão vivenciada, protestando contra ela e subvertendo o discurso hegemônico que tende a valorizar apenas obras pertencentes ao cânone. Podemos perceber que na contemporaneidade muitas histórias tidas por muito tempo como “marginais” ou ainda “ex-cêntricas”, como a dos afro-americanos, por exemplo, passaram a ser conhecidas através de produções transgressoras e subversivas que surgiram na tentativa de expressão do *self* e vieram a dar voz a grupos que até então eram excluídos, ou como Hutcheon os denominou, marginalizados, vindo então a re-escrever suas histórias. Após considerações iniciais relacionadas à teoria do teatro, pretendemos ressaltar através da peça *A Raisin in the Sun* alguns desafios que “o Outro” encontra na busca por sua identidade e por melhores oportunidades prometidas pelo Sonho Americano. Pretendemos também ressaltar alguns desafios apresentados por tal obra ao longo de um possível processo de tradução visto que esta possui muitas marcas culturais. Por fim, discutiremos alguns desses desafios a serem encarados pela Tradução Intercultural na peça *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Palavras-chave: Teatro afro-americano. Identidades. Gênero. Desconstrução. Tradução Intercultural.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to show that theater is an effective way of self-representation as well as a powerful weapon used in order to subvert hegemonic values. When considering contemporary drama, mainly the one produced by the so-called “minority groups”, it is possible to find several authors who made of their works site for protest against oppression, violence and discrimination imposed by the excluding colonial discourse. One clear example of such a work is the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written by the African-American writer Lorraine Hansberry. The author shows that theater can represent a possibility for the historically excluded groups to bring into public awareness the situation of oppression lived by their community, protesting against it and subverting the hegemonic discourse which tends to value just canonical works and stories. In contemporary times, many stories/histories taken for a long time as “marginal” or “ex-centric”, such as the African-Americans’ for example, became known through transgressive and subverting productions that came out as an attempt to express the self, giving voice to groups so far excluded - or as Hutcheon referred to them, “marginalized” - rewriting their stories/histories. After some initial considerations related to the theory of drama, we intend to highlight some of the challenges that “the Other” faces while searching for his/her identity and better opportunities promised by the American Dream in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*. We also intend to present some of the challenges presented by such work during the translation process due to its strong cultural peculiarities. Besides, we intend to discuss some of these challenges to be faced by Intercultural Translation in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Key words: African-American Theater. Identities. Gender deconstruction. Intercultural Translation.

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Harlem

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?

Langston Hughes

FIRST WORDS

In order to accomplish my dreams of following the career I wanted, I had to move from my city countryside to this metropolis – Rio de Janeiro. Although we are talking about just different cities, I felt as living in another country as I missed home in a way I never imagined I would. I felt a little displaced here in Rio because despite having to deal with a different culture and a new house, I did not have my family and friends by my side. I also missed my church, my music band, and all my activities there in a very intense degree.

It was not easy having to adapt myself to this big city and having to negotiate between the habits I had in the countryside and the ones I could have in my new city, away from home. Although Petrópolis is just about one hour from Rio, and for this reason it is considered a city nearby, during my undergraduation I also had to deal with financial restrictions that did not allow me to go home whenever I wanted. This made me miss even more my home and my family, and made the distance seem even bigger than it really was.

Moving from a very small and provincial city countryside to a really big city such as Rio taught me many things. I had to learn how to deal with my new reality, how to support my house, to make new friends, to find a new job, and to live away from those I loved. The most interesting fact after this experience was that after I finished my undergraduation and had the opportunity to go back home, I just couldn't. I tried to live in my city again, but then I felt displaced in my own home. Everything seemed different. People had changed. Places had changed. What surprised me the most was my church. I had been an active Baptist member for seven years, and during those years it seemed that everything and everyone remained the same, but, after just four years away I could not even recognize my church, and my musical band did not exist anymore. It was at that moment that I realized how fluid things are. The fact was that during those seven years I was there, I had changed as well. I just had not noticed that. We live in constant change.

From my going back home, I could understand that nothing is static and that home you once left will never be the same. I felt then as a kind of fragmented subject that could not afford living in my own city, in my own home because I felt displaced there. They did not seem to be the same. And at last, I missed the big city where I had been during the last four years. On the other hand, I could not understand why I was not able to feel home in Rio

either. While I was in my house in Rio, I missed everything and everyone there in Petrópolis, and I just could not see my house here as my home.

This was one of the reasons why I fell completely in love with contemporary literature and the theories related to it. By reading Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, among other theoreticians and learning about the fragmented subjects due to the diasporic processes I started to understand my feelings. Although I am conscious that the experiences narrated in these works are completely different from mine as they deal with different countries, even stronger cultural differences, and even more the real impossibility of going back home, their fragmentation and displacement helped me to understand myself.

Another reason for my choice was completely social. I always wanted to contribute to a better world free of discrimination and prejudice against the ones considered different from mainstream society. Although I am conscious that my contribution is just a drop in the ocean, if everyone decided to worry about their own drops, the world would little by little face many changes. Furthermore, by contributing the way I can - with some discussion on the topic - I know that at least my job is being done, and my drop is there. This reason also justifies my choice for African-American Literature.

The initial project for the development of this dissertation came out for the two reasons previously described and also as an attempt of putting together two important and intertwined fields that are African-American Studies and Intercultural Translation Studies. After a Translation Course that I took during my undergraduation at UERJ, I realized that translation is not a mere interlingual process but in fact, an intercultural one involving much more than knowledge of language. So, I noticed that it was possible to put my two main academic interests – African-American Literature and Translation Studies – together in one single research.

After reading more about Intercultural Translation, I started thinking about the obstacles faced by translators of African-American works, and that led me to do some research on the subject. Still during my undergraduation that research gave origin to some papers of my authorship, firstly about the obstacles found in translation in a generic way, and then more specifically, about the translation of African-American works and their difficulties due to the fragmented identity of the characters and also to the specific language that is used by them. These papers were presented in different academic meetings and later on some of them were even published in the form of article in some periodicals. The more I could develop my research related to this topic, the more I was able to see that this was exactly what I wanted to do during my Master's course. So, after talking to Professor Maria Aparecida

Salgueiro and knowing more about her research I decided to apply to the selective process to the Graduate program at UERJ where I would have the opportunity to go deeper in my intended research and also bring some contribution to this 'not so explored area' so far here in Brazil.

During my initial research into African-American Literature I got in touch with the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written by the African-American author Lorraine Hansberry. After reading this play I became pretty much interested in the questions developed in it, and also in its author. This way, the literary basis for my research was chosen. As I am dealing with a play and theater is not one of the most studied literary genres in our Master course, in spite of its importance and richness, I decided that it was important to start my work with a historical and theoretical research in relation to it.

The approach to theater given in this dissertation is based on a rereading of some of Aristotle's ideas in works such as the ones of Elmer Rice, Marvin Carlson and Christopher Bigsby, pointing it not only as a performing art but also as a literary production and both with considerable importance. Another point developed is related to the historical importance of Theater. As it shows the reality of a society in a given moment, it may also be considered a kind of historical reference.

This dissertation will be divided into four chapters going from considerations about the development of drama to the specific points I wanted to tackle related to Hansberry and her play. The first chapter, divided into three sections has as its aim to show some relevant questions related to the development of Drama and some of its theories. It also presents two meaningful aspects to this research since they are topics always present in the discussions throughout the times namely the historical importance of drama and also the importance of performance.

In the second chapter, also divided into three sections, I will present an overview of the American theater and the awakening of its African-American version which will be presented in the following section. In the last section of the chapter I start working with the specific author I chose, presenting a brief biography of hers in order to bring the reader closer to the further discussions proposed.

The third chapter focuses on *A Raisin in the Sun*, the play chosen as the corpus of this dissertation. In the first section, I provide an overview of the play I am working with and a quick analysis of the main characters. Right after, I discuss the way in which the author of the play deconstructed the ideas presented in the American Dream while showing the reality lived by African decedents in the USA and discussing questions such as the American Dream as an

illusion, the myths of the USA as the land of opportunity and of the melting pot, and also the strong prejudice faced by immigrants in the USA. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss the importance of Lorraine Hansberry in African-American Literature, as well as in American literature itself, bringing also the impact and relevance of her work.

Finally, in the fourth and last chapter I come to the analysis of the difficulties presented in the Intercultural Translation process, specifically in a possible future translation of *A Raisin in the Sun* into Brazilian Portuguese, and point out the probable obstacles that a possible future translator of the play may face. While discussing questions related to the identities of the characters in chapter three, I realized that the translation of such a work offers many challenges. As the speech of the characters in the play bring different information about their identities, the translator of this play, which has not been translated into Portuguese so far, would have to make a careful research to find a way to express all this in the target language. This chapter will be divided in two sections. In the first one I discuss the recent theories of Intercultural Translation and in the second, some of the difficulties that a possible future translator of the play may face during the translation process are pointed out and problematized.

Chapter one
Drama: its essence and two illustrative aspects

1.1 The development of drama

Whatever is its content, (...) theatre works against alienation. It is the public gesture of private people, an endorsement of imaginative freedom and an exercise in communality. The audience is addressed not only as an aggregation of individual sensibilities but also as a group sensitive to the responses of those around them.

Christopher William Edgar Bigsby

The first references found in a research about drama are usually related to the Greeks. This occurs due to the fact that most of the initial considerations related to Western drama are usually addressed as coming from them and the conception of drama known today has many points in common with the Greek drama. Greek plays usually included dance, music, and the most different varieties of art, as some of our modern day plays and musicals usually do. Another relevant fact is that even the word drama had its origin with them, coming from the verb δράμα (drám) meaning "to do" or "to act".

Also an important reference when discussing the development of drama is the Latin Literature that was established about the middle of the second century B.C. Although pretty much based on the Greeks, the Romans, and late classic theories, Latin Literature brought some discussions that also contributed to the further development of drama theorizations. One of the great concerns of the initial discussions in relation to drama was finding a definition for it, and as Aristotle, most of the attempts to this definition came from defining tragedy and comedy - considered the two possible kinds of drama. One relevant definition that was repeated by many later critics being addressed to Latin Literature is the one by Cicero. Clearly based on the Greeks, especially on Aristotle, Cicero defined drama as "an imitation of life, a mirror of custom, an image of truth" (CARLSON, 1989, p.23).

Although most of the discussions concerning drama up to the seventeenth century were related to its purpose and form, during the eighteenth century there was a great development and innovation in theatrical theories. In this point, the focus of discussion turned to the question of performance. In opposition to the theoretical concerns related to the essence of drama and the search for definitions, purposes and patterns to it, came the pioneer work by Luigi Riccoboni (1676-1763) in France, studying the performance and the role of the actor in

theater and giving attention not only to the technical aspect, but also to the emotional one. “The subjectivity came for many to be an essential part of the theory of art” (CARLSON, 1989, p. 196) from this point on.

Afterwards, in the twentieth century, one of the central discussions concerning the theory of drama was related to the importance of the text versus the importance of the actor. A frequent questioning was whether the actor’s role should be regarded as a creative one, considered as a creative art, or if it was merely a medium role for the creative art of the dramatist. Due to its relevance to our discussion, this issue will be further developed in this dissertation along section 1.2 while defending drama as a performing art. Another important discussion to the twentieth century was related to the purpose of theater. One big influence both as dramatist and also theorist in this period was Bertold Brecht. His central concern was the theater’s social and political dimensions. As Marvin Carlson affirms in his book *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present*, “Brecht’s theatre is devised not for some future socialist society, but for the bourgeois society of the present, and its goal is educative: to expose the hidden contradictions within that society” (CARLSON, 1989, p. 384).

In spite of the fact that the idea of developing a kind of drama relevant to the concerns of the common man and aware of the problems of contemporary society was a tendency during the 1930s, Brecht’s radical approach in relation to it was questioned by some of his contemporaries. A serious challenge to his theories during this period was the Marxist perspective of Georg Lukács proposing a literature of “realism”. As asserted and quoted by Carlson, Lukács argued that literature should be a portrayal of the sociohistorical situation of a given society; moreover, the characters should be neither unique nor abstract in order to be generally recognized and interchangeable. Lukács’s criticism on Brecht was related to the lack of subjectivity. Lukács complains that Brecht is too centered in objective facts, and argues that a great drama must be a mix of formal elements interweaved with subjectivity. On the other hand, Brecht argues that the duty of literature is altering the readers’ consciousness, and instead of prioritizing this aspect, Lukács’s works were harmonious and left his audiences satisfied with what they were, leading to no questionings, and having no specific purpose in that sense. Throughout a considerable period, Lukács and Brecht wrote arguments against each others theories. Furthermore, both found followers and supporters: Lukács in Moscow – where he moved to after Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933, and Brecht in America – where he moved to about 1941.

To sum up, some important discussions related to theater during the twentieth century considered issues such as the importance of the actor, the value of the text, the socially concerned theater and the subjectivity of the characters. Just to mention the American Theater, during the 1940s, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams were considered two of the few serious American dramatists and that decade was mostly dedicated to realistic drama in the United States. As Eric Bentley states in *The Playwright as Thinker, a Study of Drama in Modern Times*, a modern tragedy created in modern terms must be “a broad and deep account of the life of the individual” (BENTLEY, 1946, p.33), in addition, theater is supposed to express the existing tensions between society and this individual. As stated by Ernst Fischer in his article “The Function of Art”, “[a]rt is necessary in order that man should be able to recognize and change the world” (FISCHER, 1963, p. 14). Art is a form of self-representation that helps you to recognize yourself in the other - in the theater, or any other artistic representations - and then, question your own world and decide to change it or not.

Afterwards, in the 1950s there was an attempt to break with the concept of realistic drama and, to achieve this purpose, a subversive style of representation was proposed. In this decade, *antirealistic* plays such as *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett - first produced in France - came out conveying humanity’s sense of alienation and its loss of bearings in an illogical and unjust world. This new idea was quickly named *Theater of the Absurd*, and considered by many people a kind of nonsense. On the other hand, the *Theater of the Absurd* is considered by many contemporary playwrights and critics as an attempt to explain the injustice and inconsistency of the world after the World War II, as people had lost their comfort and security of being able to explain the world by reason and logic. Edward Albee, for example, believes that the purpose of the *Theater of the Absurd* is to make man face human condition as it really seems to be because, as quoted by Richard Amacher, to Albee “[t]he Theatre of the Absurd is an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense” (AMACHER, 1982, p. 20). In addition, the *Theater of the Absurd* may be seen as a device used to make people realize their condition and try to understand it. As Flannery O'Connor stated

[w]hen you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs as you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock, to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind, you draw large and startling figures (O’CONNOR, 1998, 806).

Nonetheless, even with the nonrealistic attempt from the 1950s, the socially and politically concerned theater not only prevailed but also strengthened. During the 1960s even groups considered as minorities for their still small representability and political power at that time, such as the African-Americans, started taking part in these new productions. Carlson observed that “[a] continuing point of debate in modern theatre theory has been over whether the theatre should be viewed primarily as an engaged social phenomenon or as a politically indifferent aesthetic artifact” (CARLSON, 1989, p.454). Accordingly, it is interesting to observe that in spite of the discussions concerning drama throughout history and the variety of theoretical material developed, some fundamental aspects remained interweaving the considerations made along the time. The discussion in relation to the social concerned theater for example, was always in vogue. Likewise, the question of the performance versus the text was generally in the center of most discussions. It is also curious to observe that Aristotle’s theories were always considered throughout that time - being reconsidered, reread, taken as basis for developments, or even as a point to be opposed to. In addition, it would be impossible not to mention the relevant “re-readings” of Emil Staiger’s at that time (STAIGER, 1974).

The brief considerations brought in this first section show that although the very beginning of drama was related to performance, the first theories developed were concerned to the literary aspect of such form of art. As the importance of performance as well as the social and historical functions of theater were very discussed topics along time, these two points are going to constitute the following sections of this theoretical chapter.

1.2 Drama as a Performing Art

Most of the initial theories related to theater were concerned with the written text as discussed in the previous section. However, during the eighteenth century the theories of drama turned most of their attention to performance and as a consequence, from the late nineteenth century on performance became one central concern in the theories of drama. Influenced by this change in focus, the actor started having great value according to some theoreticians and the actor’s role and his importance became current points for discussion. According to some critics and theoreticians from this new trend, the actor was even

considered an independent artist that just took ideas from the text in order to create his own art. Yet, as usual in this sort of discussion, there was the traditional view predominating and calling attention to the importance of the text as it has always been the center of most theorization.

Nonetheless, in spite of the great value given to performance during the twentieth century, there were many theories defending the necessity of a text and disregarding completely the importance of the actors, pointing them just as performers of the writers' creative art. Even though, later, some theories considering the value of both text and performance, started to appear. As Dianne Jemison asserts in her dissertation entitled "*A Study of Lorraine Hansberry and her major works*": "[t]heatre is a dramatic art that involves the writing, acting, and producing of a play, with the end result being the performance" (JEMISON, 1972, p.1).

In 1959 Elmer Rice first published *The Living Theatre* in which he presented a series of classes given in the undergraduate School of Arts and Science at New York University. In this book Rice explored the function of theater and also showed a panorama of the development of theater as a performing and literary art. Rice argues that performance and literary text are intrinsically intertwined, and both together compose theater.

Conversely, some other critics, namely Stanislavski, believe that theater is not something to be read, but just to be performed, and for this reason it cannot be considered a kind of literature. Stanislavski's concern about the actor and the performance had a great influence in America during the 1930s and 40s. He published books such as *My Life in Art* (1924), *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and *Building a Character* (1949) all dealing with issues related to the performance and the role of the actor in a play. He was also concerned about showing some techniques such as training of the voice and body, concentration, sense-memory and the like. According to his point of view, the actor must take the raw material from the director and use his own creativity and skills, being himself the artist. Similarly, to those who follow this line, all the impact of theater comes from the performance of the actors - the text just does not matter much.

In the book *Stanislavski on the Art of the Stage* David Magarshack analyses Stanislavski's considerations in relation to theater and he points out that "[t]he only thing one can justly object to in his system is that it demands too much of the actor, but then it is the actor who is the true artist Stanislavski had in mind" (MAGARSHACK, 1973, p.86-87). So, according to Stanislavski, all the importance, success and repercussion of theater comes from the performance, disregarding the written play. In Rice's *The Living Theatre* (1959) this

consideration is quite different. Presenting a counterargument in relation to the subject, he states that literature cannot be left apart when talking about theater because part of it is the literary production and just another part, the performance. He remembers that the main focus of theater is being performed, and not necessarily read, but this fact does not disregard its literary importance.

In addition, Rice argues that “a great drama will almost certainly be a great literary work” (RICE, 1959, p.35) but not necessarily a great literary work written as a play will be a great drama because to be great it must be composed of both text and performance. It is relevant to point out that Rice’s concept of *drama* in this quotation is just addressing performance. Sharing Rice’s ideas in relation to this subject it is still possible to mention the actor, director and theorist Joseph Chaikin who argues that the writer is an indispensable figure while considering a play because each of the pieces presented in it is composed of words and the role of the actor is “transforming ideas into emotion, giving physical form to texts – in other words uniting mind with body” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.104).

Moreover, it is necessary to think of drama as a combination of elements with similar value that need to be well joined and well operated in order to have a great result. And we can’t forget that the device used by the actor to communicate with his audience is the *word*. Thus, as Brazilian professor and critic Sabato Magaldi states (1997), the word is the instrument of the actor in the same way the literary text is, and the role of the actor is playing this instrument the best way he can. Magaldi also points out that in order to exist in a successful way, theater needs the combination of three elements in fact: the text, the actor and the audience. According to him, without one of these elements drama does not exist, and if so, it makes no sense. His argument for this statement is that drama exists only when we have an audience attending an actor or the actors’ interpretation of a text (MAGALDI, 1997, p.8).

Another relevant issue to be commented on in this dissertation is the attainability of theater. Also in *The Living Theatre*, Rice affirms that theater can reach more people than books. He argues that literature is one of the newest arts and it starts only with the usage of the written word, much after the beginning of performance. And even many years after the invention of the written words the communication of literature was very restricted because few were those able to read and write. And not only that, in the beginning the reader needed the original manuscripts to read as there was not a large production of books as we have nowadays, it was a slow and expensive process. Only after the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century the situation of literature as well as the literary author radically changed. After this invention one book was copied million times instead of a dozen times, and

of course, the increase in the amount of books available influenced the increase in reading as well, but even though there were those who did not know how to read. Additionally, we still have to consider that literature is just possible to be understood by those who are able to understand not only the symbols used but also the language applied (RICE, 1962, p. 27-31).

Rice is also attentive to the fact that there are still some financial issues involved in the relation performance versus literary production. Performing drama has a lower initial cost if compared to publishing books. However, in order to keep a play, it is necessary much more money than to keep a book. The money spent by an editor after launching a book is almost none, while the performances always need more and more resources. But he also calls the attention to the other side of the coin saying that to read a book the person has to like literature, to be interested in that specific topic, and buy that book; conversely, when drama is the issue, many people go to the theater even without knowing exactly what it is about, just for fun, and consequently, the performance of a play would possibly reach more people than the written text.

To conclude, I hope that the brief discussion held in the present section has helped the understanding of the equal importance of both performance and text while talking about drama. Although most of the initial theories related to drama were just concerned with the text, we could see that in fact, performance was previous to all of them. If, on the one hand, we had people such as Charles Dullin defending that “the master of theater is the author” (CARLSON, 1989, p. 398) and consequently giving all the credits to the text, on the other hand, we had those such as Stanislavski taking exactly the opposite position. Thus, it is possible to understand that in order to exist and reach its purposes, drama should be composed of more than one element and for the sake of a balanced point of view, one should not give stronger value just to one of them.

According to the facts and points presented, we may realize that performance is very important to drama and can reach many people, even unconsciously. Likewise, the written text has a great importance, and not only is the basis for performance but also a way to preserve the stories performed. Shakespeare worked both as an actor and as a writer. His intricate plots associated with his wonderful usage of language and his interesting portrayal of his society’s conflicts are with us up to today. We should think in similar terms about contemporary plays such as the ones from groups considered marginalized because they are different from mainstream society’s concepts. In an opposite view, they are not just art but rich historical accounts.

1.3 Drama as historical reference

We make theatre for one main purpose: to dramatize a way of looking at the world. And we do that because in our experience it is an effective way of engaging people in important questions. I'm not interested in the theatre except as a device for raising questions, for confronting people with the issues, and making them palatable, interesting, fun, entertaining. I'm not an artist in the sense that I think art is somehow separate from what's going on politically. I think what's going on politically is the most important thing, and if you are an artist you should relate to that in order to make your art meaningful.

Arthur Holden

In order to be understood, a work of art must have something familiar as a reference. If the reference used is not recognized and the situation presented not understood the production makes no sense to the audience. Drama is usually based on real experiences or situations from our daily lives. Many groups used theatrical practices as a weapon against prejudice and discrimination making it a way of self-representation and protest because, as Christopher Bigsby stated in *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama* “the barrier between art and real life is thus eroded, or rather the dualism which leads to such a distinction is rejected by the deliberate inclusion of everyday objects” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.48).

The British theater and film director Peter Brook affirmed that “[t]he theatre is a collaborative art or it is nothing” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.143). According to him it must reflect ‘a universal set of experiences’ and so, it must be a kind of mirror to society helping people to represent and recognize themselves. For this reason, while watching a play it is possible to understand many points about a specific society in a given period. Considering this aspect, drama can be pointed out as a valuable historical reference.

Nonetheless, in order to consider drama a historical reference it is important to bear in mind what conception of history is being used in this dissertation, and what the relation between history and fiction – in our specific case, drama - is. For a long time, the ‘Official History’ was taken as *the* truth about the past. Historians studied events, facts, and their report about these facts were the ones taken as true. However, more contemporary historians are

aware that there is not exactly *one* truth. Many recent discoveries in history have shown that some facts learned as being the true ones some time ago, were in fact misunderstood, incomplete or barely seen through hegemonic eyes; then, by adding their new discoveries, they rebuilt and rewrote such past. One clear example of that is the point indicated as the ‘discovery’ of some countries, such as Brazil. What children learn about it at school nowadays is not what was taught ten years ago. This happens because recent researches of history pointed out to facts that had not been considered so far. Instead of talking about ‘the discovery of Brazil’, history classes nowadays discuss ‘the arrival of Europeans to Brazil’, bringing another perspective to that fact and consequently, another narrative and a new ‘Official History’ - if we may think of “one” today.

Furthermore, it is possible to see that there is not “the truth” but the truths, the same way that it is not possible to talk about history, but about *histories*. It must be clear that the intention here is not to deny the existence of the past and the historical events we learn through the so-called ‘historical accounts’, but we are proposing a more contemporary perspective in relation to it. As critics such as Linda Hutcheon explain:

History is not made obsolete; it is however, being rethought – as a human construct. And, in arguing that *history* does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and ‘gleefully’ deny that the *past* existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts* (HUTCHEON, 1993, p.256).

Thus, having this perspective of history, we may understand that it is in fact, a human construct. A range of events told according to one’s interpretation of it and available to us just in a textual form. In addition, we cannot forget that drama, and literary productions in general, are in fact fictional texts telling stories that did not appear *out of the blue* but from concepts, concerns and events that influenced the reality of a given society, this way, being a kind of reference of that society according to the author’s interpretation of it. Although it cannot be seen as a complete historical account because the culture that is being portrayed is much more complex than its concretization in a given literary production, it is a way of learning about these people’s past and many times even questioning and rewriting this past. And we cannot forget that History is not a complete account as well but a selection of events usually portrayed according to mainstream references and readings of them. And, as Hayden White affirms:

[n]o one denies that historians – of whatever stripe – want to tell the truth about events and persons of the past; the question is: can they ever do so, given the constraints on both unambiguous referentiality, on the one side, and the fictionalizing effects of narrativization, on the other? For my part, I have no doubt that discourse and especially historical discourse

refers to objects and events in a real world – but would add that since these objects and events are no longer perceivable, they have to be constructed as possible objects of a possible perception rather than treated as real objects of real perceptions (...) in my view, one cannot historicize without narrativizing, because it is only by narrativization that a series of events can be transformed into a sequence, divided into periods, and represented as a process in which the substances of things can be said to change while their identities remain the same. Insofar as historical discourse is willy-nilly condemned to narrativization it is by this circumstance alone committed to ideologizing practices, by which I mean the endowment of past events with meanings and values relevant to the promotion of political and social programs in the present for which historians write (WHITE, 2006, P.30).

In *The Idea of Theater*, Francis Fergusson compares playwrights to hunters considering that both of them are always looking for the human nature, and in the case of the playwright, trying to portray it. According to him “modern theater can show many images of human life that are at the same time beautiful and signifying – triumphs from the fruitful hunting in the forest” (FERGUSSON, 1964, p.2).

Similarly, critics such as Eric Bentley affirm that theater is a complex and fluid organism that keeps its basic integrity by some communication attributes or common human characteristics derived from our experience of *life* (BENTLEY, 1967, p.9). According to Bentley “art reflects life” (BENTLEY, 1967, p.23) because, as it is known since Shakespeare’s time, what is produced on the stage is a reflection of a society’s thoughts, concepts and reality and also from a specific historical moment. Aristotle says that what differentiates men from other human beings is exactly this ability of imitating all live creatures.

Furthermore, it is possible to observe several dramatists and theoreticians along the time who defended drama as a valuable source so trustworthy as historical accounts. The nineteenth century German dramatist George Buchner, for example, avers that the duty of the dramatist is “to re-create history in a more direct and living form than that provided by the historian” (CARLSON, 1989, p. 248). According to his point of view, the dramatist is supposed to come as close as possible to history showing the world as it really is, and not as it is supposed to be, as the idealist playwrights did. Even strongly concerned about this issue, it is possible to mention Alfred de Vigny, who argued that “it is the truth which is the goal of dramatic art” (CARLSON, 1989, p. 207) and for this reason, dramatists must understand the facts and events of the age they are depicting in order to begin their work of writing, and instead of manipulating the facts due to political or economical issues, they must show life as it really is. To a certain extent, it is still possible to mention Brecht’s theatre that had as its aim exposing the hidden contradictions within a society.

Another interesting point to be brought to this discussion comes from the German dramatist Christian Friedrich Hebbel. As Carlson observes and also quotes, Hebbel argues

that great drama occurs just while influenced by significant changes in society. Hebbel points some examples to support his ideas including the Greek tragedy - when the naïve conception of the gods was challenged by the new concept of fate; Shakespearean productions - when the Protestant consciousness called the attention to the individual bringing a conflict between man and fate; and even his own time, the nineteenth century - when religion and politics were becoming problematic because “modern man” was looking for less contradictory foundations and institutions (CARLSON, 1989, p. 253). It is interesting that the dramatist not only considers drama a portrayal of life, but he also highlights that it only happens and makes sense because of this life and its struggles because, as Fischer asserts:

all art is conditioned by time, and represents humanity in so far as it corresponds to the ideas and aspirations, the needs and hopes of a particular historical situation. But, at the same time, art goes beyond this limitation and, within the historical moment, also creates a moment of humanity, promising constant development (FISCHER, 1963, p. 12).

While discussing art as a historical reference, it is very relevant to mention contemporary plays from groups such as African-Americans. Their works can be taken as rich historical accounts because they portray in details the reality faced by their group within the society in which they are living. As they have been in a position of different and oppressed for a considerable time, their stories were not always portrayed or if so, they were commonly manipulated in mainstream productions and presented in a stereotypical way, disregarding their feelings and importance. The play *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Lorraine Hansberry, our corpus to this dissertation, is a positive example of this kind of historical account, because the author presents the African-Americans’ reality from inside, showing what it *really* is according to an African-American perspective, and not in a stereotypical way, hiding their real situation and favoring a mainstream point of view.

According to the article that was published one day after the launching of the play, in *The New York Times*:

In *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last evening, Lorraine Hansberry touches on some serious problems. No doubt, her feelings about them are as strong as any one's. But she has not tipped her play to prove one thing or another. The play is honest. She has told the inner as well as the outer truth about a Negro family in the south-side of Chicago at the present time (*The New York Times: March 12th, 1959*).

Furthermore, as Hansberry tells “the inner as well as the outer truth” about a Negro family living in Chicago, her play can be considered a historical account from this specific period and group in society. Although we are conscious that there is not something such as a single truth, but in fact what we have are different perspectives of a given situation or fact,

Hansberry presents an account that would not be possible according to a mainstream point of view. Concluding this section it is important to highlight that “one of the functions of art in mass culture, argued Susan Sontag, would be to “modify consciousness” (HUTCHEON, 1993, p.249), and in order to achieve this modification, it many times questions patterns, and reworks or rewrites our notions of the past.

Chapter Two
African-American Theater: Lorraine Hansberry and the deconstruction
of the American Dream

2.1 American Theater: a brief panorama

American Theater started without a national identity being just sort of an imitation of English Drama and having as its basis the Shakespearean trends. Social, political and economical changes reshaped the theatrical practices along time. Movements such as the Western Renaissance brought a real revolution to Theater and in about fifty years the dramatic movement was considerably changed (RICE, 1962, p. 140). After a while, American Theater instead of a mere copy of the English one, turned into a search for self-representation. As the theater professor and critic Bernard Hewitt noticed in 1967 “American drama did not become completely ‘American’ until about forty years ago [the 1920s], when it attained full maturity” although for a long time it has been looking for its own identity. Before, it “was very strongly influenced by European models, particularly British ones” (HEWITT, 1975, p.3) mainly because: [t]he United States was settled and developed very largely by immigrants from Europe seeking religious and political freedom and the opportunity to improve their economic position (HEWITT, 1975, p. 10).

Elmer Rice (1962) states that there are some moments in history when social changes, historical facts and concerns of society lead to great artistic representation and according to him the Western Renaissance was a period like that. Dramatists from that time were concerned with portraying the world in which they lived in and also the people who inhabited that world. Several patterns that followed up that moment were questioned and some rereading of canonical theoretical works concerning drama started to appear. In the Italian Renaissance, for example, although most of the theoretical works had Aristotle's ideas as rules, many questionings were raised, and some opposition to it started to appear. The Spanish Renaissance also brought several questionings concerning drama, and new tentative definitions came from it. Miguel de Cervantes's attempt to define drama influenced by *Don Quixote* (1605) is an example of accurate observation opposite to Aristotle's ideas. According to Cervantes, while drama was supposed to be a mirror of human life, the model of manners, and the image of truth up to that moment, it was turning then into something completely different that he defined as "mirrors of nonsense, models of folly, and images of lewdness" (CARLSON, 1989, p.61). Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (1580) is also considered a relevant critical work from this period because it considers the discussions emerged during the Renaissance in Europe with a less restricted view. Different from most English

discussions at the time, his work drew upon Aristotle's theory but at the same time considered Plato, Horace and the Great Italian Commentators. Sidney tackled on some of the most discussed points throughout time and tried to bring his own definition to drama. According to his view, it can be seen as a moral utility, an imitation of man with the purpose of teaching him (BRUCH, 2004, p.17). Besides bringing relevant changes to drama Western Renaissance was very influential on the works and theoretical discussions that came next.

Likewise, another moments pointed by Rice as being responsible for many changes in Theater were the XIX and XX centuries. Some facts such as the Industrial Revolution, the Civil War as well as the Immigration Movements into the United States during this period were fundamental to the changes that took place. As Asserted by Hewitt:

[t]hroughout the nineteenth century this country offered golden opportunity for material advancement. The combination of apparently unlimited natural resources and almost complete freedom from government interference brought particularly rapid growth between 1870 and 1900 (HEWITT, 1975, p. 11).

In addition, by the end of the XIX century the United States had become a rich country due to the territorial expansion and all the industrial development, and for becoming economically independent they started having more importance in the world economy, although they still did not have a high political position. Rice pointed out that with the independence and the development of a national consciousness, the American literary movement started to emerge, and, although English books were still widely read and English plays sometimes performed, the number of writers concerned with an American representation was little by little finding space among readers (RICE, 1962, p. 142). Along this movement we had many plays from playwrights concerned about portraying their American society and each time reaching a bigger audience.

Furthermore, the immigrant's necessity of self-representation also considerably contributed to the changes in Theater. Members from different nationalities attempted to portray characters from their original countries and cultures. Moreover, because of the new reality of the XX century, there was also a new search for national and cultural values that had been disregarded so far. People from different levels of society and different ways of life were commonly portrayed in theater from this moment on. In that period we started having plays such as *The Melting-Pot* by Israel Zangwill (1908) portraying immigrant families and proclaiming that: "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming... Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians - into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American"

(ZANGWILL, 2005, p.33). Although we know by historical data that the reality was not exactly like that and the melting pot was not as melted as it was supposed to be. Even though, it was a big advance to have plays discussing these racial and ethnic issues.

Some other important names from this period whose thoughts contributed to those changes and shall be at least quickly mentioned in this dissertation are Ibsen who showed the struggles of the middle class of his time; Bernard Shaw with his social and political concerned writings that tackled and criticized subjects such as education, marriage, religion, government, health care, class privilege and the exploitation of the working class; Maxim Gorki who portrayed the marginal, excluded, the other in the Russian society; Eugène Brieux with his moralist plays dealing with forbidden topics for his time; and also John Galsworthy who brought to his plays important discussion about social issues. Although the names mentioned are from different nationalities and had very different styles and backgrounds, all of them developed in their way a social concerned theater that influenced changes worldwide and of course in the United States alike.

It is important to mention the fact that the United States joined World War I and it also had great influence in the changes that were taking place. By the performance the country had during the war they were able to show that the USA was not a pacific country cultivating their land anymore, but on the contrary, they had more power than they were expected to have. This fact made North-Americans look for self-representation and brought a wish of showing pride for their country, opening ways for nationalist as well as subversive works. According to Rice, this general self-criticism and dissatisfaction with the national culture lead to a search for an art that questioned and challenged the existent ideas and that could show a new and subversive way of expression (RICE, 1962, p. 147). As observed by David Mamet “[i]n the theater today we’re beginning to recognize ourselves as Americans. In the sixties we rejected pride in being American. In the seventies the theater is saying that being American is nothing to be ashamed of. But we have to learn with it” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.274).

And in this period of questioning and search for self-representation we also had the so-called minority groups trying to find their places into history by their art productions. They wanted to show their thoughts and feelings in relation to the land of opportunity and also the American Nightmare that many of them faced while searching for the American Dream. They also wanted to produce Theater about themselves, by themselves and addressed to themselves because:

[t]here was no longer a single audience to be addressed, if in truth there ever had been. Now blacks, women, Chicanos, gays, Indians and Chinese addressed themselves, displayed an

image of themselves bestriding in the stage, the central characters in their own drama rather than marginal figures in some national pageant. And dramatic form itself began to fragment and re-form (BIGSBY, 1990, p.11).

Despite the increase in the productions originated by the so-called minority groups, theater had a period of crisis. Facts such as the economical breakdown of 1929 together with the beginning of the movies production in the very end of the XIX century, as well as its quick development in the beginning of the XX century, influenced in the decline of theater. Broadway lost not only in public but also in physical area up to the 60s according to Bigsby. He affirms based on his research that “in 1929 there were seventy-five Broadway theatres used for legitimate productions; by 1959 the figure was thirty-four. In 1929 there were 233 new productions; in 1959 there were only fifty-six” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.19). Another important fact was the increase of the prices in productions after the World War II. As Professor Richard Barr stated

[l]ong before the war, in the twenties and thirties, it was a relatively cheap proposition to put on a play. Most producers capitalized the plays with their own money. (...) After the war, all the costs rose. The situation changed in the theaters themselves. The unions demanded more money for their numbers, real estate taxes went up, and obviously theater costs went up (DOWNER, 1975, p.111-112).

This way, instead of being just an art form and a site for representation, theater became business. The number of plays produced drastically decreased, and the ones that were on the stages were directed to specific audiences because producers, now businessmen, could not risk and lose money. As a consequence, it became much more difficult for playwrights to have their plays performed, and an alternative space was needed for their productions. This space was off-Broadway.

The beginning of off-Broadway, according to some critics, was in 1915 with the production of the Washington Square players that was soon followed by several others. The purpose of this space was allowing those excluded from Broadway business to perform and show their art. However, due to the acceptance and growth of off-Broadway, some time later the focus of the producers had changed as well. As it became profitable, the focus was not that different from the one of traditional Broadway and again, it turned into a business instead of artistic production, excluding the plays that would not reach the expected audience. For this reason, in 1959, off-off Broadway was born because of the dissatisfaction of some members of off-Broadway.

When the playwrights found the Off-Broadway situation becoming untenable, they went to what we now call off-off-Broadway. Off-off-Broadway is really the coffeehouses and, believe it or not, the churches; (...) Off-off-Broadway is any place, not actually a theater where performances are given, and in almost all cases there is no charge made. People, come and

drink coffee and pay for that but the show is free, or they go to the church and may make a donation but the performance is free (DOWNER, 1975, p.117).

As they thought that off-Broadway was losing its sense and becoming just something commercial, they decided to create another possibility that “consisted of an amazing proliferation of theatre groups who performed in any convenient place and who frequently saw themselves as being in revolt against the aesthetic and political values of the society which they inhabited” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.26).

Despite this growth in off and off-off Broadway productions, we cannot forget that we are talking about a period of crises in Broadway Theater. It is interesting to see that although this was a period of decrease, and Broadway Theater became an expensive business losing in audience and space, and also having to concur with movies, there were some people still defending the importance and relevance of theater and trying to keep it alive. They supported that theater was an important artistic production and much better than the movies if talking about representation because as identity, theater is not fixed, and although we have the text and the stage directions, it can suffer some small but considerable and important changes throughout its performance while a movie cannot.

[d]rama requires the active intervention of an audience as the film does not. It requires physical presence. For the black American, the Chicano, the Indian and also for women it is the necessity to intervene (in historical and social processes; in the reproduction of an autonomous self and group identity) which is the essence of their struggle (an intervention whose authenticity is underlined by physical presence – on the picket line, at the lunch counter, in the courtroom). Theatre therefore offers the most compelling and relevant experience. Theatre is about process. It is volatile. Once a film is completed, fully edited and dubbed it is a finished product (BYGSBY, 1990, 365).

There were also those who were surprised with the resistance of theater as Alan Drowner. Being conscious of the impact of television he seemed not to expect such resistance from theater as he claims: “[c]entered on a few acres of fantastically expensive real estate in New York, forced to tailor its offerings to the limited tastes of hit-oriented customers, competing with the free and readily available pastime television, it is surprising that the theater survives at all” (DOWNER, 1975, p.211-212). Meanwhile, despite the decline of American Theater due to several facts such as the ones previously presented, groups considered as minorities continued producing and spaces such as off and off-off Broadway started receiving more and more attention.

One group that produced impressive works of art including plays concerning self-representation and questioning of hegemonic values on off-Broadway, Off-off-Broadway, and even on Broadway itself were the African-Americans. Their Theater can be seen as a social

protest, and as asserted by some African-American critics and artists such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Amiri Baraka among others, this protest and revolt should have the purpose of changing black lives, subverting their expected position of subaltern, and fighting against the oppressive conditions they faced. Due to the relevance of African-American productions and also the importance of off and off-off Broadway, the next section of this chapter will tackle this subject with some more details.

2.2 African-American Theater: the deconstruction of the American Dream

I said racism is a device that, of itself, explains nothing. It is simply a means. An invention to justify the rule of some men over others...

Lorraine Hansberry

Theater is built upon devices. In the theatrical environment, the signification of objects results from their specific usage in the moment.

Harry Elam & David Krasner

One of the biggest changes in the theatrical practices during the XX century was the emergence of companies producing a non-standard theater concerned about social issues, “a theatre which would reach out to those for whom reprocesses Broadway plays had no relevance” (BIGSBY, 1990, p.21). This way came out off-Broadway and off-off Broadway productions as we have seen in the previous section. “On the whole such groups performed plays unlikely to receive Broadway production and looked for an audience substantially different from that which patronized the uptown theater”(BIGSBY, 1990, p.22). Instead of a mainstream audience, they were interested in producing for their own people, and for all those who were excluded from Broadway productions.

Yet at the same time Off and Off-Off Broadway, some regional theaters, and the scatter of small theater groups across the country did explode established views of the potential and function of the theatre and did provide a stage for those excluded as much from the cultural as from the political and economic system. They explored the limits of language and inspected the assumptions behind their own approach to character and plot. They examined the relationship between the theatrical moment and historical event. They explored their own space. They posed questions about the self which perceives. They moved theatre closer to the anxieties, the aspirations, the fears, the social and political urgencies of the people they addressed and whom they invited to share their group solidarity (BIGSBY, 1990, p.37).

Off and off-off Broadway were spaces where the so-called minority groups were able to produce and to be recognized for their works. They produced plays talking about their reality, peculiarities, and anxieties; plays that could address their equals and serve as a way of self-representation. In this space they could have a theater that talked about and to their people helping in the construction and definition of their identities. However, despite the difficulties to produce something out of this space, there were some African-American authors that tried to have their plays produced and recognized outside. Although they faced strong discrimination, they wanted to show their realities and to have the chance of producing outside that limited space making their plays seen by all kinds of audiences, and not only their groups. They also wanted to make out of their productions a kind of protest against the situation faced by those in their position of outsiders. One author that must be mentioned while talking about this subject is Lorraine Hansberry that not only tried but also succeeded in producing outside this specific place portraying the reality of her people to all kinds of audience, including whites. That is why the next chapter of this dissertation is going to be dedicated to her and her work.

While considering the situation of 'the black playwrights' the African-American scholar Darwin Turner talks about their lack of recognition. He argues that the dearth of black playwrights cannot be attributed to a lack of literary talent, but to a lack of opportunity for recognition. He even remembers that some few American blacks gained international fame in other fields before 1920, including Phillis Wheatly, Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes and James Baldwin. Therefore, a combination of elements, including economic, cultural, and social circumstances had restricted the black playwright. As Turner points out, different from most other artists, a dramatist needs a cast, an auditorium with a stage and the adequate equipments, and a great theater in order to attract the audience because in the USA at this time, the work of a playwright would rarely be recognized until appearing in one of the larger theatres in New York for example (TUNER, 1969).

Despite the restrictions pointed by Tuner, there is still the fact that Broadway productions became expensive and for this reason, many successful productions were revived and reshaped in order to cater to the tastes of the potential middle and upper classes white American Audience. The purpose was attracting theatergoers who both had money and were settled in their attributes. Furthermore, it was much more reasonable working on productions for already existent audiences instead of trying new possibilities and having to find new audiences for that.

If blacks appeared in theater, mainly on Broadway, up to the middle of the XX century, it was representing the Christian slave, the carefree primitive, the tragic mulatto, the inferior subject, and the like. If not this way, they appeared in a stereotypical way that did not please them and did not serve as a way of self-representation.

The Negro appeared earlier in American drama, but only as a comic plantation hand or house servant. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, George Harris, a slave, but educated, talented, ambitious, and determined to be free or die in the attempt, is the hero of the first half, and Uncle Tom, simple, honest, loyal, and done to death by the malevolent Legree, is the hero of the second half (HEWITT, 1975, p. 9).

Just during the 1950's, professional theater by blacks started being more possible and accepted, as the nation as a whole was more concerned about their presence. But just after Hansberry's 1959 success *A Raisin in the Sun* this way was really opened to them.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, theater mirrors reality, having a historical importance and being also considered a historical reference. In addition, theater is also a performing art and an opportunity to discuss pertinent issues of a society, questioning, criticizing, and opening the audience's mind to realities that, many times, are hidden. Through a play, it is possible to understand values, questionings, and concerns of an age and civilization and for this reason theoreticians such as Harry Alam and David Krasner argue that "analyzing African-American theater and performance traditions offers insight into how race has operated and continues to operate in American society" (ELAM; KRASNER, 2001, p. 3).

In the article entitled "The Black Performer and the Performance of Blackness" Elam defends that the black performer has a subversive potential. According to him:

[t]hroughout African-American theater history, African-American playwrights, actors, and artists have manipulated the "productive ambivalence" of the black performer to transgress, transcend, and even subvert established racial categories. Performers and performances have effectively challenged racial definitions and provoked audiences to reconsider the sociocultural justifications for racial identifications (ELAM, 2001, p. 288).

Furthermore, although we have been living for centuries in "an imperialist world view that automatically relegates Africa to the margins in matters regarding aesthetics while foregrounding Eurocentric ideals" (SHANNON, 2001, 149) and this way tending to privilege the dominant mainstream culture over the others, we must be attentive to the fact that black theater was of big help in the questioning and redefinition of many patterns, being a kind of effective weapon against racial prejudice.

African-American productions were not only theater for the sake of art, but in fact, theater for the sake of social changes. Still quoting Alam and Krasner: "African-American theater and performance have been and remain powerful sites for creation, application, and

even the subversion of notions of blackness and of concepts of African-American identity” (ELAM; KRASNER, 2001, p. 5-6). Stuart Hall shows us that:

identity is actually something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth. There is always something “imaginary” or fantasized about its unity. It always remains incomplete, is always “in process”, always “being formed” (HALL, 2005, p. 608)

and for this reason “[t]here is not simply one African-American identity but many African-American identities” (ELAM; KRASNER, 2001, p.13) that are invented or constructed according to the moment and situation experienced.

It is also important to consider that theater was a weapon used by many African-Americans to include themselves into the history from which they were excluded, writing themselves into that history and leaving their marks, for or against, the wishes of the dominant society.

Black artists were generally distressed by the bourgeois theater’s encrypted historicism, its particular use of memory and writing, its tendency to resolve social issues in individualistic terms, and (in the era after World War II) its marginalization by television. But they were energized and empowered by the theater’s capacity to shape time and space in contextually potent situations (SELL, 2001, p.64).

This way, even knowing that African-American theater is treated by some with avoidance and negligence, many authors engaged in this practice managed to express themselves through it. Although in some occasions they show their marginal position in society and try to justify what Dixon calls “their ‘outsider’ status” having to negotiate between “the rock of exclusion and the hard place of assimilation” (DIXON, 2001, p. 220) they also question that place delegated to them and try to find voice in the middle of all the oppression faced.

In our contemporary world, due to the developments in the so-called minority studies, also called subaltern studies by some authors, we are conscious that the subaltern does have a voice. Although some theoreticians have affirmed that the subaltern has no space, and “[f]or the ‘true’ subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself” (SPIVAK, 1997, p. 27)¹ we know that literature as well as other kinds of art can be ways of achieving self-representation and having voice. In Spivak’s article “Diasporas Old and New: women in the transnational world” (1996) the author recognizes that the subaltern has voice and is able to promote an “organized resistance” with this voice. And there are even some theoreticians such as Homi Bhabha and Linda Hutcheon who defend that the subaltern’s presence is crucial to the self-definition of the majority group or mainstream society because they are in a position to subvert the

¹ “Can the Subaltern Speak?” article by Spivak first published in 1988.

authority of those who had the hegemonic power, and so, they can influence the redefinition of many concepts and patterns because “[t]hose in power control history. The marginal and ex-centric, however, can contest that power, even as they remain within its purvey” (HUTCHEON, 1992, p. 197). African-American Theater contributes to the understanding of such subject characterized by fragmentation and fluidity in our contemporary world and to the new reality found in the new land while in the search of the American Dream.

In the article “Uh Tiny Land Mass Just Outside of My Vocabulary: Expression of Creative Nomadism and Contemporary African-American Playwrights”, Kimberly Dixon compares the African-American expatriate tradition and displacement to nomadic movements. She states that the experience of migration is a shared cultural memory as an individual experiences it. This phenomenon is so common that even non migratory artists are influenced by it. Even those who stayed, discuss this issue in their works because the ones who left to the new world were, and will continue to be, part of their lives. She mentions nomadism not only as a kind of migratory history but also as a frequent preoccupation in postmodernism with themes such as migration, exile, fluid identities, displacement, among others.

In order to reinforce her argument, Dixon quotes Rosi Braidotti’s concept of nomadic subjects in which the author states that nomadism, in the sense she is considering it, refers to a “kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior. Not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physical moving” (DIXON, 2001, p. 214). According to Braidotti’s concept the idea of migration or nomadism does not necessarily need a physical displacement, instead of it, it requires a “transmobility of thought and identity” and the subversion of concepts and behavior (DIXON, 2001, p.215). A nomadic subject, according to her, is an active and critical subject capable of making decisions and questioning patterns, rejecting or subverting the standardized acts when necessary.

Dixon asserts that:

these artists’ nomadic subjectivity is in keeping with postmodern and postcolonial discourse on the renegotiation of positionality by the monolithic West and its subjects. No longer are oppressor-oppressed or self-Other precise or permanent identities. Subjects now frequently resist their disadvantaged position, while the monolith now finds it fashionable to examine its own oppression at the hand of individuals or the social systems at large (DIXON, 2001, p.216).

Despite all the harsh and restrictions faced along the time, African-American writers continue in their struggle against repression and inferiority imposed by the mainstream discourse, although in different ways and levels along the time. They use their art productions as a

representation of their reality constantly working on themes such as displacement, migration and shattered identities. What Dixon calls *the African-American artists' creative nomadism* is a movement in pro of self-representation, a kind of struggle for space and resistance to the oppression constantly faced by 'the other'. Based on the aforementioned ideas, creative nomadism does not mean crossing fixed boundaries in the search of supplies, but it is something more subjective. It is an expression of identity and a search for self-representation, voice and subversion of patterns. That's why many works produced by these so-called minority groups come on the opposite way in relation to the American Dream, many times deconstructing it. Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is a clear example of this kind of work.

In this play, Hansberry shows the difficulties faced by the African descents in urban USA in their search for a better life. As they are a hybrid of two different cultures, they have fragmented identities, and so, they do not fit among the Americans because they are black and they have African ancestors; but they are not Africans either, as they were born and live in America. This way, they are fragmented subjects and suffer constant discrimination and displacement. By using some autobiographical references the author tells the story of a black family who suffers a lot of prejudice and discrimination in their search for the ideals presented in the American Dream and shows that this Dream can easily become a nightmare for the immigrants in the land of the opportunity because of attitudes moved by prejudice. Hansberry works on issues such as race, class and gender. One great character in this play while talking about the American Dream is Walter Lee. A chauffer that dreams of moving up in class, being more than he is, being a big corporate executive and having a life such his white bosses did. This character clearly lives trying to reach the American materialist dream but he comes to a great disillusion by the end of the play having his dreams always differed. Instead of the American 'flourished' dream, he could find a big nightmare full of frustration.

2.3 Lorraine Hansberry: life and work

... in order for a person to bear his life, he needs a valid re-creation of that life, which is why, as Ray Charles might put it, blacks chose to sing the blues. This is why A Raisin in the Sun meant so much to black people - on the stage: the film is another matter. In the theater, a current flowed back and forth between the audience and

the actors, flesh and blood corroborating flesh and blood - as we say, testifying... The root argument of the play is really far more subtle than either its detractors or the bulk of its admirers were able to see."

James Baldwin

Lorraine Hansberry was a Playwright who portrayed in her plays and poems human injustice, suffering and pain. Although she had a short life, her work was strong and effective and it still remains alive. She was born into a middle-class Chicago family from Illinois on May 19, 1930, being the daughter of a prominent real-estate broker, Carl Hansberry, and Nannie Perry Hansberry who were active proponents of civil rights. Hansberry's parents sent her to public schools rather than private ones as a protest against the segregation laws and for the same reason they bought a house in a white neighborhood in Chicago when Hansberry was about eight. Right after they moved, they were welcomed one night by a racist mob, having their home vandalized in this occasion and Hansberry injured. Their experience of discrimination there led to a civil rights case but, although her father was determined to fight strongly against this kind of segregation and won the case before the Illinois Supreme Court, residential segregation continued in Chicago. This event influenced a lot Hansberry's choices and production.

After high school Hansberry studied arts at the University of Wisconsin at Madison for two years, from 1948 to 1950, and there she joined 'The Young Progressives of America' and also 'The Labor Youth League'. It is pertinent to say that this was a predominantly white university and it was her choice to study there. In 1950, bored and disappointed with her college experience, she dropped out and decided to move to New York. There, she took classes in writing at the New School for Social Research to pursue a career as associate editor in the New York City based newspaper, *Freedom* - a radical black paper. During this period she met among others the famous writer Langston Hughes and had the opportunity to attend a seminar on African history under W.E.B. Du Bois instructions (1868-1963). She was pretty much influenced by her father's dedication to civil rights becoming politically active in the Civil Rights movement. She wished to promote social changes and also to speak against the oppression faced by African-Americans.

Her most famous work, the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, was based on events faced during her childhood. It was first produced in 1959 but according to *The Encyclopedia of World Biography* (2004) it was already written in 1957. Hansberry was able to show the situation lived by the African descendants in the USA, and also question it in her play by the story of a

black family who suffers a lot of prejudice and discrimination in their search for the so-famous American Dream. While showing the difficulties faced by the family who attempts to move into an all-white neighborhood, Hansberry deals with themes such as the importance of dreams and the frustration of dreams deferred, the strength of family, the problems of conflicting expectations, and the dangers of prejudice and stereotyping. As in her own experience, the family presented in the play was not welcomed in the neighborhood where they wanted to live, and there, they had to deal with strong prejudice. It is also convenient to say that *A Raisin in the Sun* can be considered an autobiographical work because the situation it depicts is quite similar to the one experienced by the author and her family mentioned before.

Besides *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry was the author of other famous works such as *The Sign In Sidney Brustein's Window* and also *Les Blancs* in 1964, and *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* that was published just after her death, in 1970. This last one, was left incomplete by the writer, but was concluded by Robert Nemiroff, to whom Hansberry was married during a period of her life and the one who took the responsibility “to keep her rich literary legacy alive” (WOODARD, 2004, p.210). This book is considered by many critics, including Nemiroff, a sort of autobiographical account in which Hansberry presents facts about her life, works and even her conception of art and her position towards politics.

In some twenty episodes are excerpts from plays, screenplays, poems, interviews, speeches, essays, fiction, journals, memoirs, other writings, and unpublished works. What emerges by the end of the work is a powerful portrait of a private, often complex, contradictory woman, who was a romantic realist and a political activist. In essence, these are memoirs of an artist, of a young woman who wrote with ease about black life – black nationalism, slavery, financial problems, family squabbles, humor, cocktail parties, and the universal concerns of man's hopes and dreams (WOODARD, 2004, p.212).

Hansberry is got to be extremely relevant to African-American theater for the way she opened to African-Americans, having her play *A Raisin in the Sun* produced on Broadway at a time when it was not expected to find black people in the audiences of such a place, and much less on the stages. It was not even believed to be possible before she did it. As Lisbeth Lipari stated in her article entitled “Fearful of the Written Word: White Fear, Black Writing, and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* Screenplay”: “*A Raisin* was not only the first play on Broadway written by an African-American, it was also the first Broadway play directed by an African-American, Lloyd Richards” (LIPARI, 2004, p.85) and these were reasons enough for this play to be a complete failure in a society full of prejudice as the north American one. And Lipari goes on affirming that “as Hansberry herself has noted, until *A Raisin*, never

before had white people seen black characters talking together outside the presence of whites, nor had audiences, black or white, seen African-Americans portrayed on the screen with dignity, humanity, and complexity” (LIPARI, 2004, p.97).

In the introduction to the play published in 1994 Nemiroff stated that

bringing to Broadway the first play by a black (young and unknown) woman, to be directed, moreover, by another unknown black “first,” in a theater where black audiences virtually did not exist-and where, in the entire history of the American stage, there had never been a serious *commercially successful* black drama! (NEMIROFF, 1994, p.6)

It is needless to say that it was a great challenge to the author. It is worthwhile remembering that Hansberry was not only the first black woman to have a play produced on Broadway but also the first afro-descendant and the fifth woman to receive the Best Play of the Year Award from the New York Drama Critics because of this play. It is also important to mention that this was not the only award of the play in 1960. In the same year it also received the Tony Award for the Best Actor in Play given to Sidney Poitier, the Tony Award for the Best Actress in a Play given to Claudia McNeil and also the Tony Award for the Best Direction of a Play given to Lloyd Richards (*Data from the Internet Broadway Database*).

Hansberry’s work was not only performed on Broadway, but also turned into a movie released by Columbia Pictures in 1961. It counted on a well-known cast that included actors who had performed the play in theater - such as Sidney Poitier. She received a special award at the Cannes Festival being the youngest American, first woman, and the first African-American to win the award for this 1961 version. Later on, in 1973 Neminoff, together with Charlotte Zaltzberg adapted this work and produced a musical called *Raisin* that ran on Broadway for nearly three years and won the Tony Award as the best musical. *Raisin* was revived in 1981, when Claudia McNeil, who had played Lena in the original 1959 production, recreated the role in the musical adaptation. In 1989 it was launched as a made-for-TV movie starring Danny Glover and Esther Rolle and to complete the success, another version of the movie was launched in 2004. In the same year the play was again on the stages of Broadway, in the Royale Theatre. And in 2007, the play got the opportunity to be one more time on the stages of Broadway for three months leading to another adaptation as a made-for-TV movie (based on the 2004 version) which was launched last year (2008).

But, despite all the success and awards previously mentioned, bringing the play to the stage for the first time was a big struggle. Because the cast was black, funding the play was considered risky, and it took more than a year until Hansberry could get all the money required for it. In 1958 she raised funds to produce her play, which opened only in March

1959 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Broadway, meeting with great success. In all places audiences showed a great acceptance to the play. In New York, as it is possible to check in the *Internet Broadway Database* it ran 530 performances in the version in which Sidney Poitier played the role of Walter Lee. The play is a provocative reflection of racial attitudes of the 1950s and the themes developed are applied up to today, being common in our society.

Although Hansberry's success and repercussion, in the 1960s many black artists and critics considered the play just a "failed and degrading integrationist philosophy" (WILKERSON, 2001, p.41), instead of an active resistance to racism and subverting report of African-Americans' conditions. As Margaret Wilkerson's note, one of the causes for that reaction was the fact that *A Raisin in the Sun* "won acclaim from white as well as black audiences during its Broadway production" (WILKERSON, 2001, p.40) and for this reason it was labeled by some critics as integrationist and accommodationist, leading some African descendants to question its value and representability for being popular among whites. In *Chronology of Twentieth-Century History: Arts & Culture* Frank Magill noted that

[p]articularly during the Black Arts movement of the 1960s, many African-American artists objected to the realist form of Hansberry's play, which they saw as artistically conservative. They also saw success on Broadway as a political compromise. Some thought Hansberry sacrificed her integrity to make her message palatable to a white audience. Similarly, many critics have argued over the play's meaning and whether or not the play is assimilationist (MAGILL, 1998, p. 54).

Questioning the same ideas, Amiri Baraka once stated that he, as well as some other artists and critics from his time, were accusing Hansberry's play of being a kind of "passive resistance" but at the same time an integrationist work as well, and they seemed not to like this position of a bourgeois and assimilationist drama. In his essay "A Critical Reevaluation: *A Raisin in the Sun's* Enduring Passion" published as the introduction to the 1995 edition of the play Baraka stated:

young militants like myself thought Hansberry's play was part of the "passive resistance" phase of the movement, which was over the minute Malcolm's penetrating eyes and words began to charge through the media with deadly force. We thought her play "middle class" in that its focus seemed to be on "moving into white folks' neighborhoods," when most blacks were just trying to pay their rent in ghetto shacks (BARAKA, 1995, p. 19).

But later, some of these people could realize the importance and relevance of the play. Even Baraka himself wrote a reassessment of the play after seeing a revival of it in 1986 that is also quoted in the 1995 published essay in which he says:

[w]e missed the essence of the work – that Hansberry had created a family on the cutting edge of the same class and ideological struggles as existed in the movement itself and among the people. What is most telling about our ignorance is that Hansberry's play still remains

overwhelmingly popular and evocative of black and white reality, and the masses of black people dug it true (BARAKA, 1995, 19).

Even having so many controversial reviews, “*A Raisin in the Sun* remains one of the most-produced plays in the United States and one of the most popular with audiences of all colors” (WILKERSON, 2001, p.40). And for those who have an attentive reading of it, it is very clear that Hansberry questions many patterns and subverts many ideas in relation to African-American’s position into the American society at her time.

In the middle of all these discussions and all the success of her work, Hansberry's career was shadowed by a diagnosis of cancer in 1963. After it, she spent the following two years of her life trying to battle against the disease with chemotherapy and radiation, while at the same time continuing to write. During this period she also had marital problems with Nemiroff that ended up in divorce in 1964. Her promising career was cut short by her early death due to cancer in January of 1965 but, her play *A Raisin in the Sun* still lives on as a wonderful story about dreams deferred, family unity, and the struggle against poverty and racism that black families commonly faced during the 1950s and some still have to deal with.

Despite its repercussion, several performances, success in the United States and importance to the African-American studies I am conscious that the play I am dealing with throughout this dissertation is not so well-known outside the US. As it has not been translated into Portuguese so far, in Brazil it is mostly known just among those concerned with the African-American studies or for the two versions of the movies available with subtitles in Portuguese. In addition, the only translation of this play I could find throughout my research was into German, very recently. Thus, I believe that it is important to present to the reader at least an overview of the play before starting to analyze some fragments of it. For this reason, the first section of the following chapter will bring a general view of the play.

Chapter Three
Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

3.1 An overview of the play

A Raisin in the Sun is usually classified as a "living-room" drama set in Southside Chicago. It introduces us to the Younger family and their particular individual dreams that are always deferred. Hansberry starts the first scene of the play giving us a detailed description of the setting where the story is going to take place. She describes the room where most of it happens and tells the reader about time and place. In this initial description, we know that everything is going to happen in Chicago's Southside during the 1950s, and the descriptions presented to us also show that the play takes place in an African-American ghetto. It depicts the way people live there having few choices in a predominantly white society. It is worthy mentioning that what provided the inspiration for the title of the play was Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem" that starts questioning "What happens to a dream deferred? (poem quoted in the beginning of this dissertation) but it was originally named 'The Crystal Stair' after a line in another poem by Langston Hughes. Right at the beginning of the play, after setting the scenery, the reader is introduced to the family whose dreams provide the basis for the play.

Lena Younger, the family matriarch, is expecting a \$10,000 life insurance check from the estate on the death of the family's patriarch. With it, she is planning to retire from her maid's job in a white family house and to place a down payment on a house for her family against the will of her son, Walter Lee Junior, a black chauffeur who wants to use the money to invest on a liquor store. It is very interesting that the first impression we have is that both characters are just pursuing the materialist American Dream of property and money, but in fact, not disregarding the first interpretation mentioned in relation to the American Dream, we may also argue that Hansberry is using their aspirations as a metaphor for the dream of freedom from oppression and subalternity as well as the right to be regarded as a human being with a place to live.

Still being introduced to the family we have Walter's wife, Ruth, also a domestic in a white household who hopes to move into a larger apartment. And fundamental to the discussions I am going to develop later on we have Beneatha, Lena's daughter who dreams of going to medical school, and raises important discussions because of her relation with two "friends" Asagai - a fellow student, that seems to be interested in a relationship with her and behaves as a "modern" African committed to preserving the cultural heritage of his Nigerian

people; and George Murchison – a modern African-American who believes that success lies in imitating whites - scorned by Walter Lee who considers him an “empty assimilationist”.

When the check arrives, the tension within the family starts to be stronger and even clearer to the reader. Walter Lee feels he is entitled to it as the rightful head of the family – according to his sexist point of view. Ruth and Beneatha counter that it is Lena’s money, and she should decide how it is to be spent. Because Lena realizes that the family’s survival depends on their escape from the apartment where they live, she makes a down payment on a “nice house” in Clybourne Park, an all-white residential neighborhood, without consulting anyone. The family’s reactions range from Walter Lee’s disbelief and disappointment to Ruth’s and Beneatha’s joy and anxiety to move as soon as possible.

The plans for the moving day increase the tension atmosphere of the play. Feeling his manhood threatened by his mother’s authority, Walter decides to escape to bars and starts drinking in an uncontrolled way. After some days spent out of home going from bar to bar, Lena decides to look for him, and not surprisingly she finds Walter in his favorite lounge. After acknowledging his desperate need, she opens her purse and entrusts him with the rest of the money, part of which is to be used for Beneatha’s tuition, and the rest for his liquor store. Although she clearly showed that she did not agree with this kind of business, she wanted to see her family united and happy, for this reason, she decided to share the money in order to accomplish everyone’s dreams:

MAMA Listen to me, now. I say I been wrong, son. That I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you. *(She turns off the radio)* Walter-*(she stops and he looks up slowly at her and she meets his eyes pleadingly)* What you ain’t never understood is that I ain’t got nothing, don’t own nothing, ain’t never really wanted nothing that wasn’t for you. There ain’t nothing as precious to me...There ain’t nothing worth holding on to, money, dreams, nothing else - if it means - if it means it’s going to destroy my boy. *(She takes an envelope out of her handbag and puts it in front of him and he watches her without speaking or moving)* I paid the man thirty-five hundred dollars down 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 savings 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. *(She drops her hands a little helplessly)* It ain’t much, but it’s all I got in the world and I’m putting it in your hands. I’m telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be. (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 106-107).

The residents of the all-white Clybourne Park neighborhood have learned of their new neighbors and sent a representative to meet them in order to explain the rules of that place. Mr. Lindner, their representative, carefully disguises his racist attitudes and tries to buy them out speaking in a kind way. Beneatha realizes that he is proposing to avoid their moving and starts to get angry at him. He makes the Youngers a generous offer that Walter Lee refuses

arguing that his family has the right to try a new life, and they will move to Clybourne Park, even against the neighborhood's wish.

This is an impressive scene in the play, and it is all about prejudice. Mr. Linder *kindly* explains to the family that they are not welcome in that neighborhood because they are different, and they would feel as outsiders there, but the neighborhood is not racist. The question is that as the family is different, they are not going to feel comfortable there. He explains:

I want you to believe me when I tell you that race prejudice simply doesn't enter into it. 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. (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.118)

Mr. Lindner and Clybourne Park represent the white neighborhood in Chicago which Hansberry and her family moved to when she was still a child. And the kind of reception she depicts in the book is quite similar to the one her family had in that occasion (situation already mentioned with more details in her biographical notes in this dissertation). In this episode Hansberry is able to show the prejudice that the Other faces in the colonizer's land and the attempt of the hard colonial discourse in posing the different as inferior.

On the moving day, the tensions among the family reach a climax when Walter Lee receives the visit of his friend Bobo bringing the worst possible news ever; Lena's money that was under his responsibility never made it to the bank as it was supposed to. He had given it to Willy Harris, a "trusted" business partner, that instead of doing what he was supposed and committed to do, took the money and ran leaving no forwarding address. Walter and his friend Bobo, who was also engaged in the same business, lost everything they had.

BOBO I'm talking about the fact that when I got to the train station yesterday morning-eight o'clock like we planned...Man-Willy *didn't never show up* (...) That's what I'm trying to tell you... I don't know...I waited six hours...I called his house...and I waited...six hours... I waited in that train station six hours... (*Breaking into tears*) That was all the extra money I had in the world... (*Looking up at WALTER with the tears running down his face*) Man, Willy is gone. (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 127-128)

Overwhelmed by that tragic situation, the family members react in different ways. Beneatha is furious and totally repudiates her relationship with Walter. Lena starts to unpack saying they can no longer move. Ruth refuses to give in believing that with hard work they can make the house payments. In desperation, Walter Lee decides to look for Mr. Lindner in order to say he has changed his mind and decided to accept the offer made which would be enough to replace the money he has given away, bringing again the possibility of seeing his mother's dream coming true with the buying of another house.

No one supports Walter's decision feeling contempt for his willingness to sell their dreams so cheaply; however, he decides to call Mr. Linder, even though, asking him to come to their house once more in order to make their deal. Just in the final scenes, after calling Mr. Linder even without his family's consent, Walter has a sort of epiphany recognizing not only who he is but his place within his family and race. As he starts to tell Mr. Lindner they will accept the offer, he realizes what he is about to say and, instead, he refuses it.

WALTER What I am telling you is that we called you over here to tell you that we are very proud and that this-*(Signaling to TRAVIS)* Travis, come here. *(TRAVIS crosses and WALTER draws him before him facing the man)* This is my son, and he makes the sixth generation our family in this country. And we have all thought about your offer (...) And we have decided to move into our house because my father-my father-he earned it for us brick by brick. *(MAMA has her eyes closed and is rocking back and forth as though she were in church, with her head nodding the Amen yes)* We don't want to make no trouble 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)* (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 148).

Walter regains his pride and integrity deciding that the family will take the house after all. The moving day comes, and the family departs for what everyone hopes will be a new and better life, although we are conscious of the harsh they are going to face.

In this play, Hansberry shows the difficulties faced by the African descendants in the USA in their search for a better life. As they are a hybrid of two completely different cultures, they have fragmented identities, and so, they do not fit among the Americans because they are black and they have African descendents; but they are not Africans either, as they are born and live in America. So, they are fragmented subjects – according to Hall – and for this reason, they suffer constant discrimination and displacement.

Although the American Dream indicates that everyone has the right of happiness and freedom, Hansberry showed that it is not exactly like that. In this search for happiness and a better life many people can find only prejudice and discrimination. Hansberry strongly criticizes these ideals in her play, showing that, unfortunately, this dream applies only for those who are white, Americans, from a mainstream family... and not for everyone. For several people who take part in the diasporic movements, such as the African-American family presented in the play I am working with, the American Dream becomes in fact a hard nightmare full of disillusion.

3.2 The construction of identities in the play

The theatre became a necessary tool for the reconstruction of identity and the assertion of moral necessities. At first, in the form of a play like Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun (1959), this accommodated itself to the orthodoxies of Broadway.

Christopher William Edgar Bigsby

In our contemporary world we may affirm that the idea of a fixed and closed identity is no longer acceptable. According to Stuart Hall “[t]he subject, previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities” (HALL, 2005, p.598). One key fact for all these changes is the phenomenon of globalization that makes possible the contact among different cultures and realities. As Hall states quoting Anthony McGrew, “globalization is the process of operating on global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected” (HALL, 2005, p.619). Hall also argues that as globalization dissolves the barriers of distance, it “makes the encounter of colonial centre and colonized periphery immediate and intense” (HALL, 2005, p. 625).

When talking about fragmentation and de-centered subjects, it is impossible not to mention the diasporic movements. Bill Ashcroft defined diasporas as ‘the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions and a central historical fact of colonization’ (ASHCROFT, 1998, p. 68-69). And completing the ideas mentioned so far, it is worthy quoting James Clifford who claims that “diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population” (CLIFFORD, 1997, p.246).

Undoubtedly, these phenomena are fundamental to the studies and analyses of our contemporary society, because this contact among different communities with different cultures and habits as mentioned by Clifford, brings many modifications in both colonizer and colonized, and reshapes communities and identities. They have a high influence in the definition of the postmodern subject who lives trying to learn how to negotiate between the different realities in which he/she lives.

Several theoreticians dealing with cultural studies have been presenting works talking about these fragmented subjects I have been mentioning so far. Each of them

presented different denominations for these subjects and coined different terms to talk about this issue, but analyzing carefully some of these works it is possible to see that in fact they are proposing different terms to discuss one specific phenomenon, that is, the fluid identity of the ones who face changes and cultural contacts by having to handle living “in-between” two different realities. Some of these denominations are: post-colonial subject, the subaltern, the other, the one from the minority groups, among other terms usually used to define those who have faced oppression and suffered prejudice for being different and also having a fragmented identity due to the cultural contacts faced.

In this part of my dissertation I am going to consider some important works by authors such as James Clifford, Bill Ashcroft, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha in order to try to understand the complexity of the subject introduced to us in contemporary literature and mainly in the play that is the issue of this research - Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin In The Sun*.

3.2.1 Colonizer X Colonized: The Inevitable Fragmentation

When contacts with different cultures take place, changes are inevitable. In the post-colonial world it is possible to see that although the colonizer tries to erase the identity of the colonized by imposing his own culture and language, this relation is not exactly like that, and this erasure is not something simple. Both colonized and colonizers are changed by this contact. This happens for reasons such as the ones Paula Moya mentions: “identities are subjects to multiple determinations and to a continual process of verification which takes place over the course of an individual’s life through her interaction with the society she lives in” (MOYA, 1997, p. 139).

This way, even trying to repress the colonized culture, the colonizer has some contact with it, and by this contact he is also changed. All this process leads the subjects involved into these complex relations to a fragmentation of identity in which they try to negotiate with both realities they are facing. As Clifford explains they “mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/ desiring another place” (CLIFFORD, 1997, p. 225) so, they become hybrids of two different cultures, living “in-between” them.

In postcolonial literature, many experiences from the so-called “minority groups” are presented showing their view in relation to the colonial process. The writers from these groups have usually faced this displacement themselves, experiencing this living in a “third place” away from “home”, or sometimes even creating new notions of home and looking for it in their new geographical location. In the introduction to the book *Geographies of Home* Loida Maritza Pérez, a Latina writer born in the Dominican Republic and raised in the United States, affirms that for these groups “survival ultimately depends on creating a home for oneself--“not a geographical site but... a frame of mind able to accommodate any place as home” (PÉREZ, 1999, p. 4).

In her article “Julia Álvarez and the Performativity of Hybrid Identities” Leila Harris states that [b]oth these migrant writers and the female characters they create are influenced by two or more cultures and develop hybrid identities in consequence of the ruptures that result from the cultural and geographic displacement they experience (HARRIS, 2004, p.123). And this hybridity gives them hyphenated identities. The play I am dealing with in this dissertation is one example of this kind of literature I have been mentioning. As I have already pointed out, it is the experience of displacement of an African-American family who are looking for their space into American society although they are constantly considered outsiders and consequently unable to fit it.

3.2.2 A fragmented subject in *A Raisin in the Sun*: Beneatha

In *A Raisin in the Sun* there is a character that can illustrate this fragmented subject we are talking about in a clear way. Beneatha is a fragmented girl that tries to negotiate between her African roots and the reality she faces in American society. It is very interesting to analyze the contrast that exists among the Youngers. If on the one hand we have a family that is searching for a better life and the ideals of the American Dream, having assimilated features of the culture in which they live, on the other hand we have Beneatha, who is in a constant search for her origins. Although she is a woman and an African descendant with just a few opportunities, or almost none, she is interested in studying, insists in doing so, and is able to handle that. At University she meets a Nigerian man, Asagai, that went to the US just to study medicine in a good university, but with no intention of staying there after it, and

much less of assimilating the American way of life. This male character brings to the play characteristics from his culture, and his relation with Beneatha makes her even more confused and fragmented. In her first contact with him at University, she said that she wanted to talk to him about Africa because she was looking for her identity.

ASAGAI ... Do you remember the first time you met me at school? (...) (*He imitates her*)
 “Mr. Asagai – I want very much to talk with you. About Africa. You see, Mr. Asagai, I am looking for my *identity!*”
 (*He laughs*)
 BENEATHA (*Turning to him, not laughing*) Yes –
 (*Her face is quizzical, profoundly disturbed*)” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 62)

There is another interesting passage in the same scene that is also clear to illustrate this fragmentation of Beneatha's. In one of Asagai's visits to her house they have an argument because of her hair. As, up to this point, she does not accept her characteristic kind of hair, she straightens it out and tries to wear it “as the Americans do”. When Asagai sees it, he says that she is an assimilationist that is mutilating her hair in order to fit the American stereotype; but she not only disagrees but also gets very angry at him:

BENEATHA (...) My hair – what's wrong with my hair?
 ASAGAI (*Shrugging*) Were you born with it like that?
 BENEATHA (*Reaching up to touch it*) No ... Of course not.
 (*She looks back to the mirror, disturbed*)
 ASAGAI (*Smiling*) How then?
 BENEATHA You know perfectly well now... as crinkly as yours... that's how.
 ASAGAI And is it ugly to you that way?
 BENEATHA (*Quickly*) Oh, no – not ugly... (*More slowly, apologetically*) But it's so hard to manage when it's, well – raw.
 ASAGAI And so to accommodate that – you mutilate it every week?
 BENEATHA It's not mutilation! (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.61-62)

ASAGAI ... (*A mock dismissal of the importance of the question*) But what does it matter? Assimilationism is so popular in your country.
 BENEATHA (*Wheeling, passionately, sharply*) I am not an assimilationist! (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 62-63)

In this conversation between Beneatha and Asagai, there is an interesting opposition of ideas. On the one hand Beneatha seems to be looking for her identity and asking Asagai to help her in such search, while on the other hand, she is showing that she has assimilated features of the American culture and she does not accept some things in her that are basic characteristics of “her people”. Although this question of the hair seems something with not too much importance to the naïve reader, if we are carefully analyzing questions of identity in this play, it becomes a fact of great importance. The fact that Beneatha wanted to change her hair for not accepting it with its normal characteristics can be seen as an attempt to erase her ancestry, even if in an unconscious way. And it is interesting that despite her assimilation, she even says that she is in search of her “real identity”. James Clifford states that:

[i]n diaspora experience, the co-presence of “here” and “there” is articulated with an antiteleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning (CLIFFORD, 1997, p. 264).

And Beneatha can reaffirm this idea. She is “here” and “there”, or at least looking for this “there”. She is living in the American society and assimilating some of their features, but she is at the same time rejecting it and asking Asagai’s help to “go back home”. Her present is also shadowed in a way by her past that is being desired, but the future obstructed as she cannot go back home, even because this home does not exist. The Africa that she idealized for sure is not the one that she would really face, and there is still the question of the family that has settled down in the US and does not seem to have the wish she does of moving “home” again, as now the US is their home.

In another interesting moment in the play, Beneatha shows her fragmentation one more time by her familiarity with “her culture”. Influenced by Asagai again, she is taken dancing typically Nigerian songs and wearing typical clothes. This happens because Asagai gives her as a present some records and the robes of a Nigerian woman. She loves the present and at the same moment she wears the clothes and starts dancing the songs.

BENEATHA (*stalling this particular conversation. Her hands pressed together, in a deliberately childish gesture*) what did you bring me?
 ASAGAI (*handing her the package*) Open it and see
 BENEATHA (*Eagerly opening the package and drawing out some records and the colorful robes of a Nigerian woman*) Oh Asagai!...You got them for me! How beautiful...and the records too! (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 61)

Although she does not seem conscious of the importance and symbolism of her act, she feels absolutely familiarized with what she is doing, and she really enjoys the songs, the clothes and the dance. She acts as if she was already used to that. The entire situation seemed very natural to her in that moment. And one more time the contrast between her and her family is very interesting. When her brother arrives home and sees her wearing those clothes and dancing those songs, he joins her in the dance, but differently from her, he does so in a mocking way and because he is drunk. Ruth, her sister-in-law, says they are ridiculous and just wasting their time and acting like fools. And, to complete the conflict of ideas in that exact moment, George, one of Beneatha’s friends, arrives to take her to the theater. Sharing Ruth’s opinion, he asks Beneatha to take all those things out and dress up properly. But when she takes the headdress out, her hair is “close-cropped and unstraightened”, as mentioned in the play, and George clearly shows he doesn’t like that: “What have you done to your head – I mean your hair! You look eccentric!” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 80).

This episode is very important for Beneatha because it seems to be the first time when she is really sure of what she wants for herself. As George does not accept her the way she really is, she prefers to quit their friendship. In this point of the play, she shows that she does not want to be an assimilationist, and she likes herself as she really is. Now she is conscious of what it means to be an assimilationist and also of what she does not want to be. She tells George

How can something natural be eccentric? I don't like that George. Because I hate assimilationist Negroes! It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge completely in the dominant, and in this case *oppressive* culture! (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.80 – 81)

By observing this moment in the play, it is possible to see that Beneatha, once more, has to negotiate between her origins and her reality. On the one hand, she has the desire of looking for her origins, being with Asagai and knowing more about Africa, accepting herself the way she really is and being proud of that, wearing those clothes and living that special moment for her. On the other hand, she has to handle living in a sort of assimilationist family that has settled down in the US taking it as their home, sometimes rejecting characteristics from their origins, and seeing her as a fool for doing all that. We also have to consider her friend George that defined the natural as eccentric, and the American as the pattern.

Another important point that calls the attention in the previous quotations is the use of the word “eccentric”. If we problematize this definition given by George to Beneatha’s hair, we may think of more than one possibility to this word having more than one interpretation for it. Checking the possible meanings for this word in *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* I could find: “strange or unusual, sometimes in an amusing way”. In my first reading of the play still during my undergraduation, this eccentric sounded to me as a kind of criticism but the only meaning I applied to it was the one from the dictionary, something like ‘strange’. George, who was used to Beneatha’s straightened hair, found it strange to see it in its natural form. But while reading more carefully I could realize that there could be something else in this adjective as it was certainly not chosen by chance.

In the books *A Poetics of Postmodernism* first published in 1988 and after in *The Politics of Postmodernism* first published in 1989, Linda Hutcheon talks about ‘the Other’ as being the marginal and the ex-centric. She explains that this ex-centric would be referring to those excluded from mainstream society by questions of class, race, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity and so, marginalized by a dominant ideology. According to her, this ex-centric is

the one out of the center, and an ex-centric subject would be both 'off-centered and de-centered'. In her first previously mentioned book, Hutcheon states that "[t]o be ex-centric, on the border or margin, inside yet outside is to have a different perspective, one that Virginia Woolf (1945, 96) once called 'alien and critical,' one that is 'always altering its focus,' since it has no centering force" (HUTCHEON, 1992, p.67). While defining Beneatha's hair as 'eccentric' we may understand that George is criticizing it not only for being 'strange' but also for being ex-centric in the sense of off-centered in relation to the American stereotype. As the American patterns were the ones adopted by George's assimilationist position, Beneatha's natural hair was something out of his patterns.

Beneatha's reaction in relation to this situation (breaking up with George and defending her natural characteristics) showed that she really did not reject her African descendant stereotype. She seemed really interested in knowing more about her origins and the impression we have is that she is happy and amused in knowing more about her ancestry. Beneatha is a fragmented subject trying to understand herself and her identity in construction. She is also an interesting character that is trying to reach a better life in the country in which she lives subverting the colonial discourse that tends to exclude 'the Others'. As Homi Bhabha states "[t]he objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 101). Instead of being passive to it, Beneatha reacted against prejudice and oppression showing that the different is not necessarily inferior.

Even having presented just a few passages from this rich play, it is possible to understand that "[d]iaspora communities, constituted by displacement, are sustained in hybrid historical conjunctures. With varying degrees of urgency, they negotiate and resist the social realities of poverty, violence, policing, racism, and political and economic inequality" (CLIFFORD, 1997, p. 261). Beneatha reacts against the inequality faced in the country where she lives and also fights against it, studying and trying to have a worthy life. She does not accept the prejudice and oppression her family faces and she goes against them. But at the same time she wonders if in Africa it would be the same, if her family would face the same social problems, the same oppression, and the same inequality.

3.3 Impact and relevance of Hansberry and *A Raisin in the Sun*

Hansberry's importance was not only for being the first black female playwright to have a play produced on Broadway. Her importance lies in her courage and skills to discuss serious social problems in her society and also in highlighting the existence of middle class black and white Americans, showing that not all blacks are financially oppressed. She was also a woman beyond her time, and tackled issues such as male oppression, and homosexuality.

A Raisin in the Sun brings us an interesting conflict of values and discusses social problems in Hansberry's environment. Firstly we have Walter, an assimilationist who defines life in material terms, and lives a frustrated life away from the American Dream, but then, finds out the value of his family. Secondly, we can mention Mama, who does not allow America to define her and seems to be the strength of the family. For her, money is secondary, what really matters are family relations, religion, and a life lived with dignity and honesty. Thirdly, we have Beneatha's subversive attitudes and search for identity. Partly inspired by her African friend Asagai and partly by her racial pride; she argues against assimilation and shows a Black Nationalist position.

Hansberry also introduced in her play a middle class back guy, George Murchinson. Still not being a member of the family, he is also related to Beneatha in the play. Despite being a Negro as she is, he makes fun of her search for identity, and refuses to take her out one night because of an African cloth she is wearing and her natural hair. George is an interesting character created by Hansberry because he shows that there were also successful blacks in the USA in 1959.

Most of the success the play had probably comes because it is a social concerned discussion about human beings and their quest for human dignity. This play could reach audiences of all kinds and it is alive up to our days. In addition to the racial issues discussed by her in the play, Hansberry also contributed to the understanding of questions such as abortion, discrimination and Africa. Ruth's possibility of abortion, (not presented in the movie, just in some editions of the play) lead to some discussion about the topic later on. Beneatha's search for her origins also raised questionings and interest about Africa. Mr. Linder's attitude towards the family, and the family reaction in relation to it, opened ways for discussions about racial discrimination and resistance.

In order to know more about the repercussion of the play, mainly in the US, I decided to research about it not only in newspapers from that time and books about it, but also on the internet, and to my surprise, the first time I researched just the name of the author plus the title of the play I am working with, I could find more than one hundred sixty thousand

references. Although it was a hard job and took me over a month, I decided to look at each reference found and select the ones reliable and pertinent to my research. Some websites that provided helpful information to this dissertation were *The Internet Broadway Database*, *The Internet Movies Database*, *Lorraine Hansberry's Theater Official Website*, and *The New York Times*. From these websites I could take some information which were not available in the books I used in my research such as interviews and reviews from the launching of the play. Another website that provided helpful information about her was *The University of Wisconsin-Madison- library: Open Dissertations and Theses*. There, I could find a dissertation from 1972 talking about Hansberry and most of her works. another valuable discovery was the first review published right after the opening of the play showing the first impressions people had in relation to it.

On March 12th 1959, *The New York Times* published a review of the play showing its success in the first night of performance and also pointing out possible reasons for it. This review considered the play a portrayal of Negroes reality and a contribution to their increasing struggles at that time. As it is said in the closing paragraph of this review:

[a]ll the crises and comic sequences take place inside Ralph Alswang's set, which depicts both the poverty and the taste of the family. Like the play, it is honest. That is Miss Hansberry's personal contribution to an explosive situation in which simple honesty is the most difficult thing in the world. And also the most illuminating (*The New York Times: March 12th, 1959*).

After reading this first review from *The New York Times* I decided to look for articles, reviews and any kind of material related to her in the media, and in this research, I could find several pieces of information about her in *The New York Times* itself, and also in some websites from radios and universities. Although I presented some quotations from such material throughout this dissertation, I decided to present the most relevant ones in full as an appendix due to their historical importance, richness and also difficult access. Some of them are not available on the internet as full text for free, and I had to buy the ones that seemed most relevant to my research.

Still concerning her relevance and impact, I was also interested in checking how strong it was in the USA. Lots of homage were paid to her along the time and as her legacy, it is possible find a theater named in her honor in San Francisco *Lorraine Hansberry Theatre*, which is specialized in revivals of African-American plays. There is a song named after her play *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* by the singer and pianist Nina Simone. I also got in touch with two schools and a university that used her name: Lincoln University's first-year female dormitory that is named *Lorraine Hansberry Hall*; a school in the Bronx called

Lorraine Hansberry Academy; and an elementary school in St. Albans, New York The Lorraine Hansberry School.

Despite the places named after her, it is still possible to mention that both *A Raisin in the Sun* and *A Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (also from her authorship) are richly discussed and debated in high school English classrooms. Likewise, it is important to mention the homage paid to her in the form of a documentary; ceremony; and a little bit after, a play (a monologue praising her). In 1975, a documentary about her life and works named *Lorraine Hansberry: The Black Experience in the Creation of Drama* was launched in the USA under the direction of Ralph J. Tangney. Afterwards, in 1996, another homage was paid to her in the form of a ceremony. As *The New York Times* described the event “[s]cenes from plays and teleplays by the author, who died of cancer in 1965 at age 34, were presented, as were interviews with her” (*The New York Times*, February 11th 1996). This event counted on the presence of actors who performed her most famous play, such as Sidney Poitier; important playwrights, namely Amiri Baraka; as well as other artist. It seemed to be a beautiful event that highlighted one more time all her importance and influence in later artistic productions. As asserted in *The New York Times*:

At the end of the tribute, which was filled with the bracing idealism that filled Miss Hansberry's writing, a student choir from Camden, N.J., sang "Young, Gifted and Black." The song, by Nina Simone, which shares its title with a book and play about Miss Hansberry's life, was based on a speech Miss Hansberry gave before her death at an awards ceremony for aspiring black writers. While the chorus sang, a passage by her illuminated a screen overhead: "I care. I care about it all. It takes too much energy not to care" (February 11th 1996).

Not only that but very recently, in September 2007, there was one more homage being paid to the author, but in this time in the form of a play. *The New York Times* published another review entitled *In Daunting Times, Her Dreams Were Not Deferred*, talking about a play that portrayed Hansberry's trajectory:

Biography and history bubble through "Love to All, Lorraine."

Adapted, acted and co-directed by Elizabeth Van Dyke, this one-woman show pays homage to Lorraine Hansberry, the renowned author of "A Raisin in the Sun".

"Love to All, Lorraine" poses daunting challenges of compression and performance.

Its admirable ambition embraces not only one woman's story but also the tumultuous background of white discrimination and black response that ultimately imbued that life with enduring significance

And here, too, is a context that stretches from Southern bigotry to Northern bias and encompasses recollections of Paul Robeson and his newspaper, Freedom, where Ms. Hansberry worked; the McCarthy era, when she was followed by F.B.I. agents; W. E. B. Du Bois, accused of being a foreign agent; Brown v. Board of Education; Langston Hughes; the Harlem of decades past; Louis Armstrong, James Baldwin and others (*The New York Times*, 2007).

Similarly to all the contributions left by Hansberry already mentioned in this dissertation, it is impossible not to mention her contribution in relation to gender discussions. Although there were not many references to this issue while searching about her, her homosexuality was affirmed in a 1957 letter to the lesbian periodical *The Ladder*. Even by the time of her death, this facet of her life was not widely known as such sexual option would have had serious repercussions for Hansberry's reputation, and the authorship of the letters was just revealed after her death, before it they were assigned just with the initial letters from her name.

I think it is about time that equipped women began to take on some of the ethical questions which a male-dominated culture has produced and dissect and analyze them quite to pieces in a serious fashion. It is time that 'half the human race' had something to say about the nature of its existence. Otherwise--without revised basic thinking--the woman intellectual is likely to h d herself trying to draw conclusions-- moral conclusions--based on acceptance of a social moral superstructure which has never admitted to the equality of women and is therefore immoral itself. As per marriage, as per sexual practices, as per the rearing of children, etc, In this kind of work there may be women to emerge who will be able to formulate a new and possible concept that homosexual persecution and condemnation has at its roots not only social ignorance, but a philosophically active anti-feminist dogma. But that is but a kernel of a speculative embryonic idea improperly introduced here.

Men continue to misinterpret the second-rate status of women as implying a privileged status for themselves; heterosexuals think the same way about homosexuals; gentiles about Jews; whites about blacks; haves about have-nots (*The Ladder*, 1957).²

Just to close this section, I would also like to point out to the fact that Hansberry chose to fight for the civil rights cause and also the gender one even by her death time. *The New York Times* from January 29th 1965 published an article called “Lorraine Hansberry Left Funds to Rights Cause” where they asserted that “Miss Lorraine Hansberry, the playwright, who died in New York on Jan. 12, left part of her \$115,000 estate to the civil rights cause”.

After all these revivals, homage, and discussions raised by Hansberry’s play, it is possible to see that her work not only remained alive throughout the time, but it is also very contemporary and pertinent even to our own society in the twenty-first century. Even if in a different scale, the themes proposed by her in *A Raisin in the Sun* as well as her other works are still present in our society, and there are people struggling against them even in our days. What has kept the play current is the accurate portrayal of the difficulties ‘the Other’ experiences due to discrimination, an issue that remains a problem up to our days not only in the US but all over.

In addition, after the analyses proposed in this dissertation I was led to think how difficult it would be to translate a work full of cultural peculiarities such as Hansberry’s one.

² Letter signed "L.H.N ." [Lorraine (Hansberry) Nemiroff] from *The Ladder*, vol. I, no.II (Aug. 1957, page 30) available at:
http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Lorraine_Hansberry:_To_%22The_Ladder,%22_May,_August_1957

The complex characters she presents and the peculiar scenery in which they are inserted will probably bring many difficulties during the translation process. Furthermore, a translation not conscious about the importance of each cultural element she brings in this play may not have the same impact in the target language and culture. For this reason, the following and last chapter of this dissertation is going to deal with some issues related to Intercultural Translation Studies and its importance and contribution to the translation of a play like *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Chapter four
The contributions of Intercultural Translation for
a possible translation of *A Raisin in the Sun*

4.1 Translation as a meditation of cultures

During a considerable time, Translation Studies were considered a branch of Language Studies without any relation to Literary or Cultural ones. Although in our current academic setting there is still a strong tendency to consider this separation, Translation Studies have been recently taking a different way, turning its attention to cultural aspects and showing that these areas have more points in common than they are believed to have. The tendency to limit translation as a simple activity concerned about taking texts from one language to the other being faithful to the author's words, has been problematized and reevaluated in recent times.

During the last two decades, Translation Studies are opening ways to new perspectives. The concerns about linguistic aspects are giving space to problems concerning intercultural ones. Pretty much influenced by the coming out of theories such as the feminist and postcolonial ones, as well as the globalized setting in which we live in, our knowledge about culture and cultural differences were questioned and the supposed control under the cultural transfers as well as the cultural barriers have been calling each time more attention. If in the past the Translation Studies were limited to questions of language, due to the development of recent researches in this area, we are now aware that Cultural Studies can bring very important contributions to it. In fact, there are some theoreticians from this area already considering Intercultural Translation as a branch in these studies. In the United States and England for example, where theories related to these studies are being developed for a while, we now can even talk about Intercultural Translation Studies, that would be included in the concerns of Compared Literature.

In this context, it is important to remember that translation is a question of choice and in order to achieve the right ones, the translator must be aware of the cultural aspects involved in this process. As professor Susan Bassnett affirms "translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer" (BASSNETT, 1999, 2). According to this conception of translation, it is possible to understand that this process is something much more complex than it was thought to be for a long time.

It is easier to understand the close relation between Translation and Cultural Studies if we consider that both of them work with contacts among different cultures, "[b]oth are concerned with the transmission of elements from one culture to another, both are affected by

the process of relocation” (BASSNETT, 1999, 13) and the translator is, in fact, a kind of mediator to such contacts.

Consequently, Intercultural Translation demands a deep knowledge of the source and target cultures in question, as well as the history of the source and target people involved in the process. In addition, researchers such as professor Bassnett argues that looking at translation means being deeply compromised with questions related to culture interaction, because “translations are embedded in cultural and political systems and in history” (BASSNETT, 1999, 6). For all the reasons presented here, the translator, to a certain extent, shall also be inserted in the context in which he is working.

To accomplish communication between different cultures, it is fundamental to bear in mind that translation is supposed to be a cultural process that must take not only information and fact to the other language, but also a way of thinking and valuing of another culture. That’s why the translator is in fact a mediator. Besides, even being attentive to all the points raised so far, it is necessary to admit that due to the complexity of each element of this process, Intercultural Translation can always be seen as incomplete, because it is impossible to translate all the historical, linguistic, political, and religious contexts of a society. No text can ever be fully translated in all its aspects: perfect homology is impossible between translation and source. Choices must be made by the translator; there are additions and omissions in the process, no matter how skilled the translator (TYMOCZKO, 1999, 23). Furthermore, to translate is necessarily to fragment and select, and for this reason the role of the translator is so relevant and full of responsibility. The translator is the one responsible for the choices that are going to be made, being also responsible by the new production that is going to be born from his translation to the target language and culture. And considering that each culture has its peculiarities, concepts and beliefs, and many times they are not translatable, the translator has to decide among

a variety of choices: to omit the reference or pick some ‘equivalent’ in the receptor culture on the one hand, and on the other to import the word untranslated (with an explanation in a footnote perhaps), add an explanatory classifier or an explicit explanation, use a rare or recondite word of the receiver language, extend the semantic field of a word in the receptor language, and so on (TYMOCZKO, 1999, 25).

Thus, we have to assume that a translation is not necessarily a final and unique one. In fact, the cultural translation that take place along the process can be seen just as one of the possible readings that can be done of a culture, never being able to be seen as the only one possible or the right one. We cannot forget that the culture that is being translated to another culture is

always more complex than its concretization in a literary work, this literary work is just one of the innumerable possibilities of this culture bringing only some of its aspects and peculiarities, not all of them. And we cannot forget that the translator's choices also influenced in this final product we have.

In the book *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* we find several relations between Postcolonial Literature and Intercultural Translation. We have an interesting analyses that proposes a comparison between both areas in which Bassnett defends that as Postcolonial Literature, Intercultural Translation demands a detailed study of the cultures involved in order to make possible to the translator first understand what is happening in that work, and then, find equivalents for that phenomenon in the target language and culture. She also mentions that "transposing the literary genres, forms, proverbs and metaphors of the source culture will be equally problematic to translators and post-colonial writers alike" (BASSNETT, 1999, 30). Besides professor Bassnett, it is also possible to mention other theoreticians such as professor Maria Tymoczko from University of Massachusetts. The Compared Literature professor underlines that the focus of both Intercultural Translation and Postcolonial Literature are very similar as both are concerned with the transmission of cultural elements and are affected by a process of replacement. As she points out

although there are differences between literary translation and post-colonial writing, such differences are more significant *prima facie* than they are upon close consideration. The two types of textual production converge in many respects; as the metaphor of translation suggests, the transmission of elements from one culture to another across a cultural and/or linguistic gap is a central concern of both types of intercultural writing and similar constraints on the process of relocation affect both types of texts (TYMOCZKO, 1999, 23).

For the importance of this subject, even well known theoreticians from the Cultural Studies namely Homi Bhabha already considered some points of it. In the article *How Newness Entres The World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and The Trials of Cultural Translation* Bhabha affirms that the hybridism of the postcolonial subject shows the identification with the cultural differences and these ones are definitely untranslatable. According to him:

[t]he migrant cultures of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare, of a 'full transmissal of subject-matter'; and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference (BHABHA, 1994, 321).

Although the cultural translation is pointed as impossible by the author, he also mentions that translation has a big relevance and is a form of mediating intercultural relations among countries, besides being a bridge for the cultural transmission among nations. According to the author, in our globalized world full of modifications, there is a constant necessity of adaptation, and this happens many times, by means of translation, not only considering the linguistic aspects, but also, or even mainly, being aware of the subjects involved and their cultures. Translation has a great relevance because it is a form of mediating intercultural relations among countries. Besides introducing new information in another culture, translation explains one culture to the other, making popular one knowledge that before was restricted to an elite that had the domain of both codes. We may say that to the source culture, translation can be seen as the price of visibility; while to the target one, it would be a sort of window opened allowing new conceptions and perspectives to come.

Some authors such as Robins affirm that Globalization makes the encounter of colonial centre and colonized periphery immediate and intense (ROBINS, 1991, 25), this way originating a fragmented subject with subjective identity. While considering this fragmented subject Stuart Hall points out that they are, in fact, “products of the new *diasporas* created by the post-colonial migrations. They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them” (HALL, 1996, 629).

Considering literature produced by immigrants or groups seen as minorities – such as Chicanos, African-Americans, among others – the intercultural aspect of translation is not only necessary but also fundamental. It is quite difficult to find a great translation to this kind of literature without being conscious of the cultural aspects involved. If the translator is not aware of the cultural peculiarities existent in the text he is working with, he will probably not find adequate equivalents in the target language. Besides, these works have many peculiar characteristics such as, the cultural hybridism of the diasporic subject, the fragmentation of this subject shattered among his origins and the new world in which he is living, besides the constant doubt between assimilation of the new or the maintenance of the origins. A translation that does not consider these features will make the work poor in the target language, many times, having its meaning lost, or not so clear.

Literary works from African-American writers bring many challenges to their translators because many authors use this space to express their reality and protest against it giving voice to their people, and for this reason, they make use, many times, of a specific kind of language from a community, with cultural peculiarities from a specific region. In order to translate such a work, it is fundamental that the translator is conscious of the great value and

importance of Intercultural Translation being attentive to all the points previously presented. It is still necessary to mention that while talking about such a special kind of literature, there are lots of challenges concerning translation because of the complexity of the plots and mainly of the characters. Such problems exist because of the strong social role of this kind of work, what makes it a powerful instrument of expression of the community portrayed.

Besides, we can't forget that, as Stuart Hall affirms:

Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities that are not unified around a coherent 'self' (HALL, 1996, 598).

And this is exactly Beneatha's case. A translation that does not consider such element will deform or even not be capable of expressing the character in the appropriate form.

Finally, we may say that Intercultural Translation is a reality inside recent researches and it cannot be simply ignored or seen with prejudice inside the literary studies. Contemporary literature, in special the ones produced by displaced subjects, need to be analyzed and translated under a new perspective, attentive to all the questions that interweave them and with knowledge enough to understand the social, cultural and political issues that involve the production of such works. Instead of trying to separate Translation studies from Cultural ones and labeling translation as related just to language issues, we must unite knowledge in order to reach works with better quality and more conscious of their cultural aspects. Only this way, these works may achieve more recognition, analyses, and conscious translations.

4.2 Possible difficulties in the translation into Portuguese of *A Raisin in the Sun*

The first difficulty in a translation of *A Raisin in the Sun*, would be finding an equivalent to the title in Portuguese. As it was already mentioned in this dissertation, this title came from a line of a poem entitled "Harlem" by Langston Hughes and a literal translation of it would make no sense to Portuguese speaker readers. The poem is also related to theme of the play itself. It brings questionings about dreams deferred and their destinies asking if they "dry up like a raisin in the sun" or if by the end they just "explode". The play develops

exactly this issue, the way in which an African-American family deals with their dreams deferred due to the lack of opportunities to some immigrants in the USA.

Although this play has not been translated into Portuguese yet, the two versions of the movie available in DVD have subtitles translated into Portuguese. The title chosen for the movie in Portuguese was *O Sol Tornará a Brilhar* (*The Sun is going to Shine Again*), with the loss of the idea of procrastinated dreams present in the title in English and with the inclusion of a certain atmosphere of hope instead. Besides this question of the title, there is still the peculiar kind of characters Hansberry created, each one bearing strong cultural characteristics.

One interesting character in relation to this issue is Beneatha, character already analyzed in chapter three. A completely fragmented subject whose language shows her in-between identity, Beneatha's discourse goes through several and significant variations throughout the play. There are moments when she shows a constant search for her "self" and her origins singing Nigerian songs brought by Asagai as a gift to her with considerable easiness. There are other moments when she uses expressions or slangs that are not formal as her English is and seem characteristic of *Ebonics - Black English* - being closer to her family's speech: "That raggedy-looking old thing" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.121). Conversely, in some other occasions, when inserted in the colonizer's context, such as the University, among her white friends or even the black assimilated ones, Beneatha speaks *Standard English* to show that she dominates such a code using even more complex verb tenses, such as the present perfect, and words that are not understood by some, such as *assimilationist* whose meaning she even has to explain: "I have never asked anyone here to do anything for me!" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.37); "Because I hate assimilationist Negroes! It means someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case *oppressive* culture" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 81). Sometimes her speech is so formal that she even uses words not common in our daily speech sounding Shakespearean English. "Thee is mad, boy" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.38).

This peculiar use of language the character has is of such great importance to the play that the author even reinforces the fact in the stage directions given before Beneatha's first speech. According to Hansberry: "[h]er speech is a mixture of many things; it is different from the rest of the family's insofar as education has permeated her sense of English" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.35). As Steven Carter points out in his analyses of the usage of language in the play: "[a]bove all, extensive education does modify speech patterns of all classes and regions, and even changes them almost entirely as in the case of Beneatha

Younger” (CARTER, 1993, p.29). Carter defines Beneatha’s speech as “largely formal English interspersed with youthful slang” (CARTER, 1993, p.31). As her identity, her speech is in-between her highly educated patterns, strictly following the standard rules and her ghetto family’s reality.

If the cultural characteristics of a work as well as the importance of these characteristics to a specific group are not recognized, translation may ignore some of these features bringing a great loss to the translated work. One example of such situation can be observed in the subtitles of *A Raisin in the Sun* in Portuguese. Although subtitling is not our focus in this research, it is interesting to see that the translation into Portuguese lost this Intercultural aspect we have been mentioning so far. In movies where we have characters such as Beneatha, we rarely have these cultural aspects expressed, and characteristics such as the ones from Beneatha’s speech are usually lost. All the characteristics brought in her discourse were erased in the translation to the subtitle, and the spectator that is not able to understand English will not be able to recognize this fragmented characteristic in Beneatha’s use of language, fact that is intrinsically related to her fragmented identity. We know that the translation for subtitling has a series of extra difficulties and that it demands lots of knowledge about the technical aspects involved and the necessary softwares and rules to be followed. But although there are many limitations, there is the possibility of showing such cultural aspects if they are known by the professional who is working on that translation.

When dealing with the use of *Ebonics*, we have many questions and points to consider before choosing the possible equivalent. How would it be best translated into Portuguese? What register could be considered a correspondent to it in Brazil? Would it be a good solution to use a kind of language from lower class population in Brazil? Or maybe the language of the Negroes in Brazil? But, is there a language of Negroes in Brazil? What about non-standard English rules applied in expressions such as: “onliest”, “knowed”, “He begin”? And those peculiarities from a specific culture such as food, habits, objects? As the Brazilian professor Maria Aparecida Andrade Salgueiro argues, when we are searching a linguistic variation in Portuguese to correspond to *Ebonics* we cannot forget that the language spoken by Negroes in Brazil varies from region to region, from state to state. The idea is understanding the elements and concepts which were considered in the work in order to make decisions about how reproducing the original dialogs in a way it represents an equivalent segment in relation to the original text (SALGUEIRO, 2007, p.75).

During the translation process, the choice of the appropriate kind of language to be used is quite complex because language usually brings social and cultural characteristics

embedded. Choosing an equivalent to the Ebonics in *A Raisin in the Sun* for example, is a difficult task considering that we are talking about two distinct societies with different values histories and realities. It is still relevant to remember that the *Black English* is a localized phenomenon in American society without a direct correspondent in Portuguese. Besides, it must be considered that:

The choice of one language variety over another as much as of one language over another 'signals social meanings to listeners and readers'. Hence it is important to examine 'acts and choices: on shifts between different languages, between a standard and nonstandard dialect or a mixture of all these, according to the social situation (PRASAD, 1999, p. 47).

Thus, considering all the points presented and discussed in this chapter, it is possible to realize that Translation is not characterized as a mere inter-lingual process anymore. Instead, it is an intercultural process responsible for translating cultures, and not only texts. When considering literary productions from Historically Excluded Groups, or the so-called minorities, it is necessary to bear in mind all the complexity of the plots and characters presented as well as all the cultural aspects involved. These works are sites for protests, self-representation and questionings and for this reason, the translation of this kind of literature must consider much more than linguistic aspects, but also historical, social, political and cultural ones.

CONCLUSION

Although for a long time theater, literature, and art in general have been based on a reproduction of the white, male and Western stereotype seen as fixed and stable, or as Stuart Hall defined it - “rational, cogitative, and conscious subject at the center of knowledge” (HALL, 2006 p. 603), contemporary literature has been opening ways for those historically excluded subjects with their fragmented identities. Due to all the cultural contacts that constantly take place in our contemporary world, we came to know that instead of rational and centered subjects what we have are fragmented and fluid subjects with identities always in construction, always in process. Contacts such as Colonizer x Colonized and their consequences made us question the closed and stable identities, and by recognizing they are always in transit, new ways to portray these subjects were born. Post colonial literature is a way of protest and self-representation that shows the impact of such relations in both colonizers and colonized and consequently it is considered

[a] way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records, administrative and scientific writing. It is a form of deconstructive reading (ASHCROFT, 2002, p. 193).

It is deconstructive in the sense that it challenges hegemonic values and subverts traditional patterns. If on the one hand all artistic productions which had not the hegemonic group of a certain society as basis were excluded or ignored for a long time with the purpose of silencing the subaltern and erasing his/her identity, on the other hand, the artistic productions of such groups have been a way out for them, giving them the voice that for a long time was denied. To many of those groups, such as the African-Americans, art was the only possibility for representation and theater – both as text and performance – was a way of showing their reality to all kinds of people, subverting hegemonic oppression.

Through their productions and plays many groups considered ex-centric by the colonizer could write their stories/ histories inserting themselves in the society in which they were living in and leaving their marks there, inserting themselves into official History which tended to deny their presence and space. Their position in society allows them to question and subvert hegemonic authority influencing in the redefinition of patterns and leading to questionings and changes.

This dissertation tried to show that the theater produced by groups considered as minorities by some, have been a way of self representation and protest in the colonizer's land. Talking more specifically about the Africa-Americans, their productions bring important accounts about their daily lives, having a historical value, and bringing another version of history that many times is hidden by mainstream official history. Their accounts question and deconstruct the hegemonic patterns and discourse highlighting cultural differences.

Many critics, playwrights, directors and theoreticians along time have considered drama a mirror of society, thus, as Peter Brook pointed out, being a collaborative art, and reflecting universal experiences. This way, through the ideas developed in this dissertation, we hope we have been able to show that theater is not only an effective way of self-representation but also a powerful weapon used in order to subvert mainstream values and patterns. Plays such as *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry show that theater represents a possibility for the excluded to bring their situation of oppression into public awareness, making out of it a protest against colonial discourse. In contemporary times, the “marginal” or “ex-centric” has been subverting patterns and trying to express him/herself and to rewrite his/her stories/histories with works that “focus attention on the cultural productions of subjects marginalized by virtue of their race and/or ethnicity” (SMITH; WATSON, 1998, p.24).

A Raisin in the Sun, considered an autobiographical narrative, was a site for protest and a contribution to African-Americans' history. As Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith affirm such literary space allows the silenced people to “theorize a politics of language and experience, write the contradictions of their multiple identities in ways that enable other[s] ... to reshape the paradigms and politics of identity in narrative” (SMITH; WATSON, 1998, p. 25). According to Watson and Smith autobiographical narratives are instruments that give voice to silenced people, many times, focusing attention on the marginalized subjects.

Furthermore, Hansberry's story about a Negro family living in Chicago and facing all the harsh brought because of the ethnic prejudice of that community can be considered a historical account from that specific period and group. Although we highlighted along this dissertation that there is not something such as a single truth but different perspectives of a given fact, Hansberry presents an account that would not be possible according to hegemonic eyes who tend to present stereotypical and simplified views of the Other, bringing just the colonizer's perspective. Thus, it is important to mention that

[t]he stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation which, denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for

the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations (BHABHA, 1994 p. 107).

In addition, we hope to have shown that as “cultures are bonded spaces characterized by a plurality of codes and languages, it is not surprising that translation has come to figure prominently in contemporary literature” (SIMON, 1999, 58). A translation not conscious of the importance of the cultural elements involved in a work such as Hansberry’s one may not have the same impact in the target language and culture. This is the reason why we have discussed some challenges that a possible future translation of *A Raisin in the Sun* may bring. A work full of cultural peculiarities such as Hansberry’s one is very difficult and challenging to translate and the complex characters presented in the peculiar scenery in which they are inserted are difficult points to portray in another language and culture due to the fact that “Translation is not only a process of linguistic exchange; it is *work* which enables a new book to come into being” (SIMON, 1999, 66). This new book is supposed to reach the target audience being comprehensive but, at the same time, it has to introduce the source culture and its peculiarities to the target one.

Furthermore, Hansberry introduced us to hybrid subjects with fluid identities having to live in a “third place” according to Hall, or “subjects in-between” in search of their identities according to Homi Bhabha. Subjects such as Beneatha, divided between the assimilation of the current culture in which they live and the process of looking for their origins, usually full of memories, and sometimes even the desire of living all that again, going back “home”. The problem is that this home is romanticized and does not exist anymore. So these people “connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways” (CLIFFORD, 1997, p. 259).

Thus, considering all the points presented and discussed in this dissertation, I hope it is possible to realize that Literature, and specially, Contemporary Literature demands careful translation due to the cultural, political and historical points involved. It is interesting that Hansberry shows she is conscious of this Intercultural aspect in her play in a conversation between Beneatha and Asagai:

BENEATHA: You didn’t tell us what Alaiyo means...for all I know, you might be calling me Little Idiot or something...

ASAGAI: Well...let me see... I do not know how just to explain it...The sense of a thing can be so different when it changes languages (HANSBERRY, 1994, p.65).

In the previous quotation, the character Asagai is not able to explain the meaning of a word from his language to Beneatha in English, because as he notices the sense of a word, an

object, an expression or even a gesture can be completely different in another language due to the fact that language is embedded in a cultural system. When considering literary productions from those groups who were historically excluded for a long time, or the so-called minorities, it is necessary to bear in mind all the complexity of the plots and characters presented as well as all the cultural aspects involved in their productions. They make of their works sites for protests, self-representation and questionings needing much more than attention with linguistic aspects, but also historical, social, political and cultural ones.

To conclude, I hope this dissertation showed the importance and relevance of Lorraine Hansberry and her play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Hansberry's work was a portrayal of the oppression faced by African-Americans at her time, and not only her work, but also her life was a constant questioning and protest against all kind of discrimination. As observed by Carter:

Hansberry used her new fame to gain attention for ideas about black social, political, and economic liberation. She went on television and spoke about the needs of her people, as well as in lecture halls, at fund-raising programs for civil rights groups, in debates with other artists and public figures, and, on one memorable occasion, in an emotion-packed small group meeting with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. She spoke on the same topic in her creative works (CARTER, 1993 p.10).

Even receiving so many controversial reviews at her time for being attended and praised by whites, Hansberry's work still remains alive and successful. Instead of a stereotyped view of blacks of her time, she presented a more realistic portrayal of their situation and questioned their position in America. As Baraka asserts: "Hansberry's play still remains overwhelmingly popular and evocative of black white reality" (1995, p.19-20). It ended up by opening ways to several relevant discussions about race, gender and social class which were to be developed later on.

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O SOL TORNARÁ A BRILHAR. Directed by Daniel Petrie. 1961. 1 DVD (128 min.), son., black and white, subtitled.

O SOL TORNARÁ A BRILHAR. Directed by Kenny Leon. 2008. 1 DVD (131 min.), son., color, subtitled.

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Annex I



Available at:

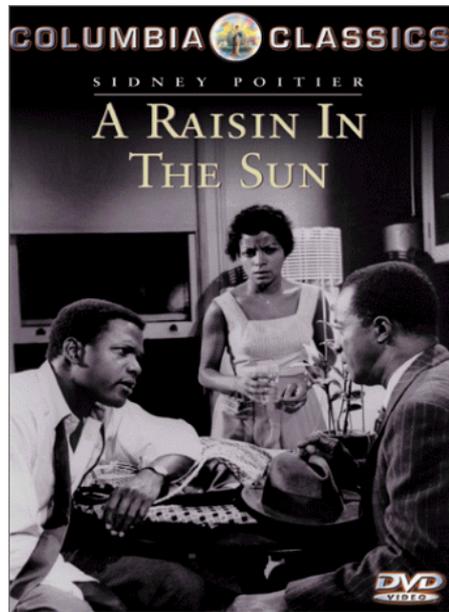
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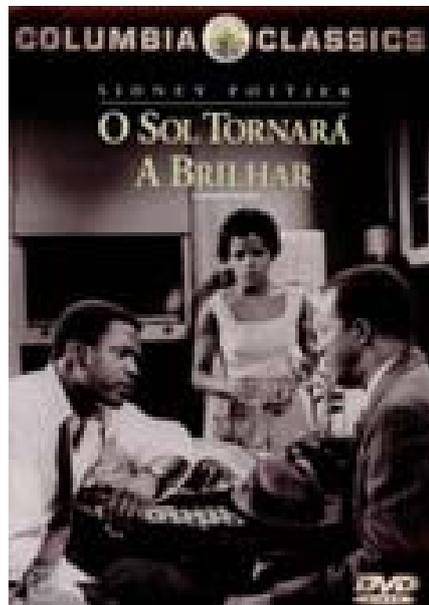
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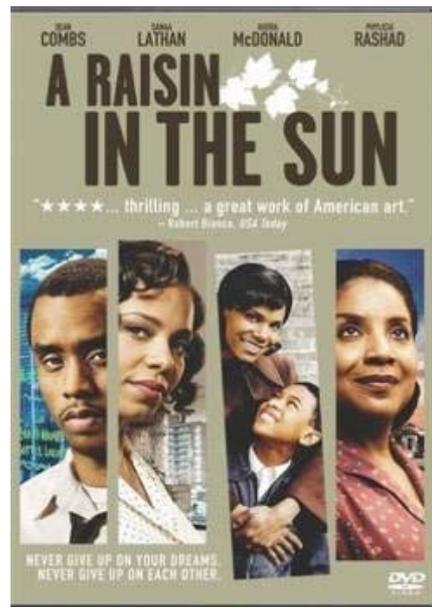
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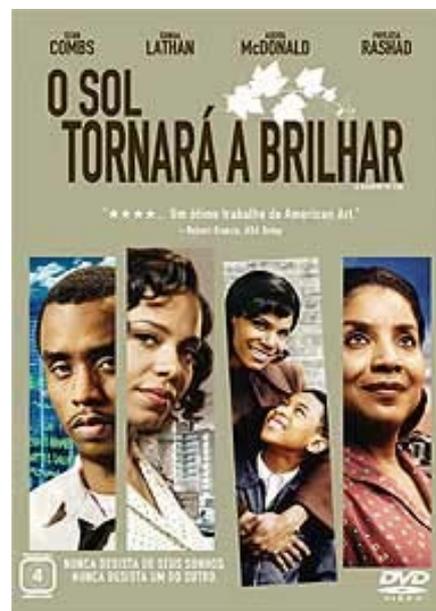
The cover of the movie in English
(The 1961 version)



The cover of the movie in Portuguese
(The 1961 version)



The cover of the movie in English
(The 2004 version)



The cover of the movie in Portuguese
(The 2004 version)

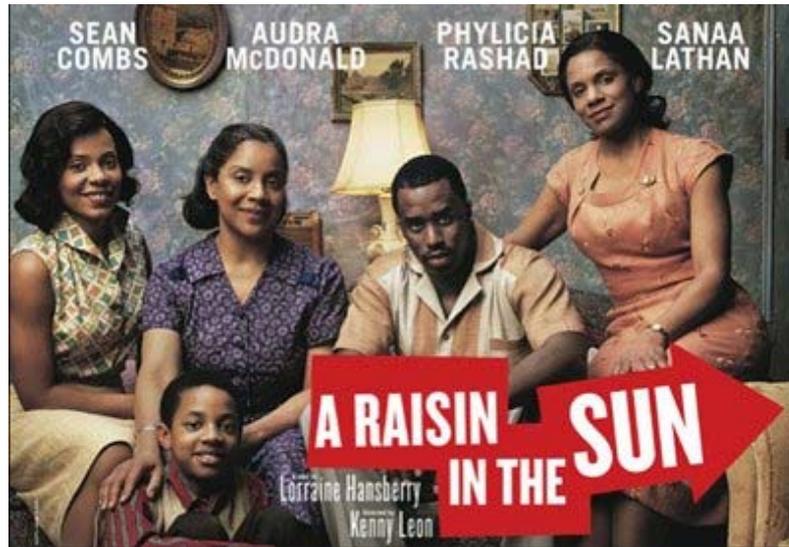


Photo for divulcation of Made-for-TV-Movie (2008)

A Raisin in the Sun - 2/25/08 - 8pm on ABC

“*A Raisin in the Sun*, the famous play by Lorraine Hansberry, is being adapted as a three-hour ABC TV movie starring and executive produced by Sean Combs, who has reunited the recent Broadway cast. The movie will also feature Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald, John Stamos and Sanaa Lathan.”

Available at:

http://images.google.com.br/imgres?imgurl=http://img212.imageshack.us/img212/7052/119690958104ccb8161e1eccw6.jpg&imgrefurl=http://rant-room.blogspot.com/2008_01_01_archive.html&usq=_bda4baJnh_JyLUoEnfDzs0WTpzo=&h=274&w=400&sz=40&hl=pt-BR&start=16&um=1&tbnid=9P8DJJwhxVyvpM:&tbnh=85&tbnw=124&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dlorraine%2Bhansberry%26hl%3Dpt-BR%26rlz%3D1T4GGLR_pt-BRBR272BR273%26sa%3DX%26um%3D1

Annex III

February 17, 2008

TELEVISION

Deferred Dreams That Resonate Across Decades

By FELICIA R. LEE

IN the shabby living room of a Chicago apartment a frustrated young chauffeur dreams of owning a business and buying pearls for his wife. His fiery sister, a college student, dreams of becoming a doctor. His weary mother dreams of a nice home for them all, and his pregnant wife dreams of just holding on until their poverty eases.

That's the family Lorraine Hansberry gave the world when "A Raisin In the Sun" made its Broadway debut in 1959.

Since then its reincarnations have included a 1961 film with Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee, a 1989 made-for-TV movie starring Danny Glover and Esther Rolle, and a highly praised 2004 Broadway production featuring Sean Combs, Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald and Sanaa Lathan.

Now that classic play about the struggles of the Younger family will become a three-hour film special on ABC on Feb. 25. The film features the 2004 Broadway cast, and its producers are hoping a new generation of viewers will find relevance in Hansberry's story, which revolves around dissension in a poor, African-American family over what to do with the deceased father's \$10,000 life insurance policy. The reach of broadcast network television has the potential to bring many more fresh eyes to the story.

"This play is saying what all the politicians are saying in this election year: It's time for a change, and it's time for a dream," said Kenny Leon, who directed the play on Broadway and, with the ABC special, makes his film directing debut.

"If you look at what's missing in our society — the strength of families, the idea that dreams come true — not so much has changed since 1959," said Mr. Leon, whose long résumé includes being the founding artistic director of True Colors Theater Company in Atlanta and directing the work of August Wilson and Toni Morrison.

Black people had plenty of dreams in 1959, when Hansberry's play became the first by a black woman produced on Broadway. Many were just deferred, as Langston Hughes wrote in the 1951 poem "Harlem: A Dream Deferred," which contains the line that lends the play its title: "What happens to a dream deferred/Does it dry up/Like a raisin in the sun?"

In an era when most schools, jobs and neighborhoods were racially segregated, and Southern blacks faced high barriers to voting, Hansberry's play was hailed as groundbreaking. The language was searing and poetic, and the African-American characters were written with complex and evocative interior lives.

Through the character Beneatha, who dates an African man and hopes to live in Africa someday, "A Raisin in the Sun" anticipated the black enchantment with things African. Through the relationships between Lena and her children and Walter Lee's quest for manhood it telegraphed the seismic shift in gender relations and the generation gap.

It angered Hansberry, though, that some white critics praised the play for being universal and not a "Negro play," as if a play about black people could not also be universal. Over the years some blacks also derided it for being preoccupied with middle-class concerns about integration and home ownership.

Observing the reactions James Baldwin said he believed that the public's judgment was clouded by contemporary realities. "I personally feel that it will demand a far less guilty and constricted people than the present-day Americans to be able to assess it at all; as a historical achievement anyway, no one can gainsay its importance," he wrote in "Sweet Lorraine," his 1969 essay about Hansberry.

The well-received 2004 revival, a quarter-century after Baldwin wrote those words, established its continued importance. The play registered one of the highest box-office draws for a nonmusical on Broadway, and both Ms. Rashad and Ms. McDonald won Tony awards. Many young theatergoers were no doubt enticed by the opportunity to see Mr. Combs, more familiarly known as the rapper P. Diddy, in the role of Walter Lee. Mr. Combs said in an interview that he believed the new film would find a more receptive audience than ever before, as the nation becomes less racially polarized and talks more about class divisions.

“Everything that’s said, everything that’s going on in this film, every color, every nationality, can relate to the struggle of wanting to be somebody, wanting to have better for their family and feeling like the dreams are slipping away,” Mr. Combs said.

Ms. Lathan, who plays Beneatha, said she viewed her character as a stand-in for Hansberry. The playwright’s own middle-class family desegregated a white neighborhood in Chicago, and she too chafed at the restrictions placed on women. “Lorraine was ahead of her time, Beneatha was ahead of her time,” Ms. Lathan said. “But the meaning of the word classic is that it transcends generations and time and has a profound truth to different people at different times.”

ABC executives said they hope that their film will take its place among the great interpretations of Hansberry’s work. To this end they submitted the film to the Sundance Film Festival: the first time, they said, a film created for broadcast network television was screened there.

During a panel discussion following a screening in Manhattan this month, the cast again addressed questions about how the play remains relevant.

“Right now, in New Orleans, there’s a family waiting for a \$10,000 check,” Mr. Combs said, referring to the money the Youngers squabble over.

Ms. Rashad, who plays Lena Younger, said she saw the tale as multilayered, telling the love stories of three couples as two generations fight about the meaning of money and success. Lena, a housekeeper and baby sitter for a white family, was part of the migration of blacks to Northern cities, where they sought to escape the brutal realities of the South. That migration brought new problems too. Lena misses her husband, who died after a hard life as a laborer. Her sense of loss is even more acute when her son, Walter Lee, tells her that world is divided between the haves and have-nots and that “money is life.”

For Walter Lee, meanwhile, watching his wife take in laundry and his young son, Travis (played by Justin Martin), sleep on the sofa of their cramped apartment becomes unbearable, and he argues for investing his father’s money in a liquor store. Lena wants to retire, buy a house and to put away some money for Beneatha’s schooling. But she entrusts some of the insurance money to her son, with disastrous results.

“Remember that O’Casey, the Irish playwright, was really inspiring for Lorraine Hansberry,” Ms. Rashad said during a break in filming one December morning in 2006. “If you really look at that statement, ‘money is life,’ it applies to people all over the world. And when people think life is money, they begin to lose their freedom, no matter who or where they are.”

On that day the film’s final scenes were being shot in a rambling studio in Toronto. In one scene Walter Lee informs his family that he will tell a representative from the “home improvement” association (played by John Stamos) that the family will take his money in exchange for not moving into the all-white neighborhood where his mother had just bought a house.

But Lena is outraged by that decision. “I come from five generations of slaves and sharecroppers, and ain’t nobody, nobody in my family ever let somebody pay ’em no money as a way of telling us that we wasn’t fit to walk the earth,” she tells Walter Lee. “We ain’t never been that poor or dead inside.”

Paris Qualles, who adapted the play for the movie, said he believed that scenes like that will rivet new audiences. “America is still, by and large, in denial about its racist past and the tentacles that continue forward until today,” he said. “That’s why it’s relevant.”

Mr. Qualles, who wrote the screenplays for “Tuskegee Airmen” and “The Rosa Parks Story,” which were also created for television, said he used small touches to make “Raisin” more contemporary. He cut terms like “hep cat,” for example, and included more adult language than in the 1961 film. His biggest change was to let the audience see Ruth’s search for an illegal abortion at the local beauty parlor, a search only hinted at in the play.

In the end one of the biggest draws for contemporary television viewers could well be Mr. Combs.

“In many ways seeing him there makes the film feel contemporary,” said Craig Zadan, one of the film’s executive producers. “We see the film through his eyes.”

Mr. Zadan and his partner, Neil Meron, decided to bring “A Raisin in the Sun” to TV after seeing the 2004 Broadway revival. They have plenty of experience translating stage productions to film, “Chicago” and “Hairspray” being two prominent examples, and they said they believe Hansberry’s drama will continue to resonate.

“As families become more and more fractured, we’re anxious to hold on to the notion of family,” Mr. Zadan said. “Over the years we’ve seen the death of the middle class.”

As for Mr. Combs, he said that to play Walter Lee he drew on his experience of not always knowing the way to make a dream come true. The character’s bewilderment, rage and despair are familiar to generations of black men and have been the subject of many songs in Mr. Combs’s hip-hop world.

“I’m not playing P. Diddy, I’m not being P. Diddy to Walter Lee,” Mr. Combs said. “The thing that I can relate to is the thing that a lot of people may forget, because of certain successes I’ve had. But I’ve felt where he’s at. I’ve been where he’s at. I think we’ve all been where he’s at.”

Available at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/arts/television/17lee.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print

September 15, 2007

THEATER REVIEW | 'LOVE TO ALL, LORRAINE '

In Daunting Times, Her Dreams Were Not Deferred

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

Biography and history bubble through “Love to All, Lorraine.”

Adapted, acted and co-directed by Elizabeth Van Dyke, this one-woman show pays homage to Lorraine Hansberry, the renowned author of “A Raisin in the Sun,” the 1959 play that was the first drama by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway.

Co-directed by Woodie King Jr., this intermissionless presentation by the National Black Touring Circuit spans Ms. Hansberry’s brief life (1930-65) and is drawn from her writings. Brimming with affection for the author and an acute sensitivity to her accomplishments and her times, “Love to All, Lorraine” poses daunting challenges of compression and performance.

Its admirable ambition embraces not only one woman’s story but also the tumultuous background of white discrimination and black response that ultimately imbued that life with enduring significance.

Here is Ms. Hansberry’s childhood with a brilliant father who battled racism; her loveless upbringing; her activist youth; her marriage and divorce; her commitment to writing; her triumph; and, all too early, her impending death from cancer.

And here, too, is a context that stretches from Southern bigotry to Northern bias and encompasses recollections of Paul Robeson and his newspaper, Freedom, where Ms. Hansberry worked; the McCarthy era, when she was followed by F.B.I. agents; W. E. B. Du Bois, accused of being a foreign agent; Brown v. Board of Education; Langston Hughes; the Harlem of decades past; Louis Armstrong, James Baldwin and others.

Ms. Van Dyke's re-creation of these men is less a transformation than an imitation, but her play, set in Ms. Hansberry's studio on the eve of yet another surgery, is so fast-moving that these brief introductions add to its liveliness.

Taken as a whole, "Love to All, Lorraine" is infused with spirit and determination that overcome a structure that ultimately denies its depth. For those who have lived through the times it revisits, the play evokes recognition of battles fought, won and yet to be won. For younger audiences it is filled with guideposts that can arouse curiosity and illuminate the past.

It is presented as a benefit for Going to the River, a festival of staged readings by African-American female playwrights, produced by Ms. Van Dyke.

"Love to All, Lorraine" continues through tomorrow at the Ensemble Studio Theater, 549 West 52nd Street, Clinton; (212) 352-3101, ensemblestudiotheatre.org.

Available at:

<http://theater2.nytimes.com/2007/09/15/theater/reviews/15lorr.html?n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/H/Hansberry,%20Lorraine>

February 11, 1996

THE NIGHT

Honoring Lorraine Hansberry

By **BOB MORRIS**

LAST Sunday, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a branch of the public library in Harlem, presented a benefit tribute to Lorraine Hansberry, the author of "A Raisin in the Sun." It was an evening of art, politics, idealism and intellectual glamour.

Sidney Poitier, Cicely Tyson, Phylicia Rashad, Odetta, Babatunde Olatunji and others paid homage to Miss Hansberry before an audience of 1,000 at the Majestic Theater, on West 44th Street.

Scenes from plays and teleplays by the author, who died of cancer in 1965 at age 34, were presented, as were interviews with her. In one, from a 1959 show that was never broadcast, Mike Wallace, the CBS correspondent, raised the question of whether Miss Hansberry was given the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for "A Raisin in the Sun" because of her race.

She answered gently: "I would imagine that if I were given this award for being a Negro, it would be the first thing ever given to a Negro in this country."

The audience applauded as if she were among them.

Amiri Baraka, the playwright, said later: "She wrote about the black struggle for democracy in a language of thrilling ideas. She wrote about ideology as real life."

Nikki Giovanni, the poet, added: "Writers live on that fine line between insanity and Jesus. If you want to tell the truth, you have to pick up your pen and take your chances. She made it possible for all of us to look a little deeper."

Mr. Poitier recalled bringing Miss Hansberry onto the stage of the Barrymore Theater on the opening night of "Raisin" in 1959. "In all my years as an actor," he said, "I have yet to have a more rewarding experience."

At the end of the tribute, which was filled with the bracing idealism that filled Miss Hansberry's writing, a student choir from Camden, N.J., sang "Young, Gifted and Black."

The song, by Nina Simone, which shares its title with a book and play about Miss Hansberry's life, was based on a speech Miss Hansberry gave before her death at an awards ceremony for aspiring black writers. While the chorus sang, a passage by her illuminated a screen overhead: "I care. I care about it all. It takes too much energy not to care."

There was more politics than art the following evening in the Rainbow Room at a premiere party for "City Hall," the film starring Al Pacino as a corrupt New York mayor.

Politicians, including Senator Ernest F. Hollings, Democrat of South Carolina, mingled with other authority figures like Police Commissioner William J. Bratton and the domestic dictator Martha Stewart. And former Mayor Ed Koch, who has a cameo role in the film, dined with Mortimer Zuckerman, the developer and publisher. "I liked it," said Mr. Koch, who later gave "City Hall" a good review in his syndicated column. "But I'm biased. I'm in it."

Available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/11/style/the-night-honoring-lorraine-hansberry.html?pagewanted=print>

The New York Times
nytimes.com

March 12, 1959

REVIEW

A Raisin in the Sun

By BROOKS ATKINSON

In *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last evening, Lorraine Hansberry touches on some serious problems. No doubt, her feelings about them are as strong as any one's.

But she has not tipped her play to prove one thing or another. The play is honest. She has told the inner as well as the outer truth about a Negro family in the south-side of Chicago at the present time. Since the performance is also honest and since Sidney Poitier is a candid actor, *A Raisin in the Sun* has vigor as well as veracity and is likely to destroy the complacency of any one who sees it.

The family consists of a firm-minded widow, her daughter, her restless son and his wife and son. The mother has brought up her family in a tenement that is small, battered but personable. All the mother wants is that her children adhere to the code of honor and self-respect that she inherited from her parents.

The son is dreaming of success in a business deal. And the daughter, who is race-conscious, wants to become a physician and heal the wounds of her people. After a long delay the widow receives \$10,000 as the premium on her husband's life insurance. The money projects the family into a series of situations that test their individual characters.

What the situations are does not matter at the moment. For *A Raisin in the Sun* is a play about human beings who want, on the one hand, to preserve their family pride and, on the other hand, to break out of the poverty that seems to be their fate. Not having any axe to grind, Miss Hansberry has a wide range of topics to write about-some of them hilarious, some of them painful in the extreme.

You might, in fact, regard *A Raisin in the Sun* as a Negro *The Cherry Orchard*. Although the social scale of the characters is different, the knowledge of how character is controlled by environment is much the same, and the alternation of humor and pathos is similar.

If there are occasional crudities in the craftsmanship, they are redeemed by the honesty of the writing. And also by the rousing honesty of the stage work. For Lloyd Richards has selected an admirable cast and directed a bold and stirring performance.

Mr. Poitier is a remarkable actor with enormous power that is always under control. Cast as the restless son, he vividly communicates the tumult of a highstrung young man. He is as eloquent when he has nothing to say as when he has a pungent line to speak. He can convey devious processes of thought as graphically as he can clown and dance.

As the matriarch, Claudia McNeil gives a heroic performance. Although the character is simple, Miss McNeil gives it nobility of spirit. Diana Sands' amusing portrait of the overintellectualized daughter; Ivan Dixon's quiet, sagacious student from Nigeria; Ruby Dee's young wife burdened with problems; Louis Gossett's supercilious suitor; John Fiedler's timid white man, who speaks sanctimonious platitudes-bring variety and excitement to a first-rate performance.

All the crises and comic sequences take place inside Ralph Alswang's set, which depicts both the poverty and the taste of the family. Like the play, it is honest. That is Miss Hansberry's personal contribution to an explosive situation in which simple honesty is the most difficult thing in the world. And also the most illuminating.

Available at:

http://theater2.nytimes.com/mem/theater/treview.html?pagewanted=print&_r=1&res=FC77E7DF173AE062BC4A52DFB5668382649EDE