

Being and having in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in The Sun*: A Marxist-Existential Perspective

Hamzeh Ahmad Al-Jarrah
English Language and Literature

Irbid National University, Jordan
h.aljarrah@inu.edu.jo

Received : 27/3/2025

Met'eb Ali Alnwairan
English Language, Literature and Translation,

Zarqa University, Jordan
malnwairan@zu.edu.jo

Marwan Harb Alqaryouti
English Language, Literature and Translation,

Zarqa University, Jordan
mqaryouti@zu.edu.jo

Alaa El-Din Sadiq Fares Jarab
English Language, Literature and Translation

Zarqa University, Jordan.
alaeddin_english@zu.edu.jo

Accepted :30/7/2025

Abstract:

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) participates in a larger philosophical dialogue about black liberation. The play presents several black generations in America, each with his or her own dream and nightmare, hopes and fears. The cross-generational dream of liberty is caught between being and having: the existential encounter and material gain. This article explores the tension between being and having in capitalist America. It dissects the clash between historical determinism, class conflict, and existential struggle that leads the scenes and acts of the play. Walter Lee ascribes his family's struggle to an economic one and reduces subjectivity to materialism. He proposes that by changing the material world, the Youngers can understand their situation and, therefore, can improve it. However, Walter Lee is faced with race consciousness that intensifies his dilemma. On the other hand, Mama faces the problem of re-appropriating her consciousness in material temporality, shaping a hybrid combination of Marxist existentialism.

Keywords: Marxism, materialism, African American, existentialism, Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Introduction:

The Preface of the Study:

Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) was an African American playwright, writer, and activist whose works were deeply rooted in the Civil Rights Movement and broader struggles for social justice. As Gordon (2008) recounts, Hansberry witnessed firsthand the effects of racial segregation and discrimination, particularly in housing policies, with her mother "desperately and courageously patrolling" their home against hostile neighbors. Her play *A Raisin in the Sun* remains one of the most significant works in American literature, offering a compelling exploration of African American liberation. Since its Broadway debut in 1959, the play has resonated with audiences through its nuanced portrayal of race, class, and identity in mid-century America. As a groundbreaking work, it captures the struggles of black families in their pursuit of dignity and self-fulfillment in the face of systemic racism and economic hardship. As Matthews (2008) demonstrates, Hansberry's play, inspired by her own family's experiences with housing discrimination in Chicago, continues to be relevant in contemporary discussions on racial and economic inequalities. The themes of aspiration, dignity, and resistance embedded in the narrative extend beyond the historical context of the 1950s, making it a timeless reflection of the ongoing African American struggle for agency and self-determination.

Set against the backdrop of post-World War II America, *A Raisin in the Sun* highlights the limitations imposed on black families striving for economic and social mobility. The play's title comes from Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem," which asks, "What happens to a dream deferred?" This question encapsulates the core struggle of the Younger family as they navigate aspirations deferred by systemic oppression. The play emerged from the context of Chicago's housing rights struggle, marking a turning point in American theater through its authentic portrayal of a multi-dimensional black family.

The quest for freedom and agency has been a dominant theme in African American literature, manifesting in various ideological trends. Some writers, like Richard Wright, emphasized physical resistance and direct confrontation with systemic oppression, while others, like Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin, focused on cultural and moral solidity as a means of self-empowerment (Obourn, 2012). These differing approaches reflect the broader philosophical debate on how African Americans should navigate their existence within a racially stratified society.

During the Harlem Renaissance, figures such as Langston Hughes and Alain Locke celebrated African American culture as a source of resilience and liberation. Their works encouraged racial pride and artistic expression as mechanisms for countering white supremacy, with Harris (2010) noting how

Hughes became Locke's ideal author for his urbane style and emphasis on self-pride and self-esteem. In contrast, later authors, including Ralph Ellison and Toni Morrison, explored the complexities of black identity within an existential framework.

Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* presents the audience with various perspectives among African Americans by highlighting the contrasting realities of economic oppression and the existential dilemmas faced by the oppressed. In a noteworthy study, Colbert (2017) argues that Hansberry viewed capitalism as a merciless and dehumanizing economic system, fueled by white supremacy, designed to deny black people their basic human rights, such as housing and equal opportunities. Her characters grapple with the tension between material success and existential fulfillment, illustrating the dual nature of the African American struggle. Hansberry skillfully explores these two distinctive perspectives in her play as she introduces the ambition for economic empowerment in characters like Walter Lee Younger, while she embodies the deep and authentic back dignity and values in the character of Lena Younger (Mama). This interplay between "being" and "having" forms the core of Hansberry's critique of the American Dream, which Matthews (2008) identifies as central to the play's exploration of the politics of "home" and identity.

Despite the extensive scholarship on *A Raisin in the Sun*, there remains a notable gap in analyses that synthesize Marxist and existentialist perspectives. As Čerče (2019) observes, while the play has been analyzed through a communist perspective in its critique of capitalism, there's more to explore in terms of its existential dimensions. King (2018) examines how personal identity was intricately tied to communal identity in the play, suggesting the intersection of material conditions and existential concerns.

Marxist theory, as articulated by Karl Marx, argues that material conditions shape human consciousness, meaning that economic structures largely determine an individual's possibilities in life. As Das (2022) notes, Marxism "explains the world on the basis of theories of such processes as value relation, class exploitation, capitalist accumulation, and the capitalist state, and advocates self-emancipatory class-struggle [...] aimed at the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism" (p. 343). These structural critiques are directly reflected in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, where Walter Lee's frustration stems from his limited economic opportunities, which he believes define his worth as a man. As Marx and Engels contend in *The Communist Manifesto*, "The bourgeoisie... has resolved personal worth into exchange value" (1848/2002, p. 12), a dynamic clearly at play in Walter's belief that financial success is the only pathway to dignity and autonomy. Building

on this critique of capitalist valuation, Ali and Sameer (2022) explore how existential and cognitive structures shape identity in the play, particularly through the character of Walter Lee. Ultimately, Hansberry's play operates at the intersection of these two theories, illustrating how economic deprivation influences existential crises of selfhood.

Through a Marxist-existential analysis of *A Raisin in the Sun*, this study demonstrates how Hansberry interrogates the tension between "being" (existential selfhood) and "having" (material conditions) as central to the African American struggle. Marx asserts that in a capitalist system, "the less you are, the more you have; the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life" (1844/1959, p. 112), highlighting how material deprivation alienates individuals from their essence—a reality that shapes Walter Lee's belief that his manhood is meaningless without financial success. This tension is also explored in existential terms by Sartre, who states in *Existentialism is a Humanism* that "man is nothing other than what he makes of himself" (1946/2007, p. 22), underscoring the imperative for self-definition in a world where meaning is not given but constructed through choice. Reflecting this philosophical intersection, Khatoon (2021) notes that Hansberry herself addressed how Lena Younger represents the Negro's will to transcend, using home ownership as a metaphor for identity. The play ultimately suggests that true liberation lies not merely in economic empowerment, but in the reclamation of dignity, identity, and historical consciousness—a balance between having and being.

This tension between "being" and "having" plays out most vividly in the contrasting worldviews of Mama and Walter Lee, whose differing responses to economic hardship reflect the competing forces of dignity and material aspiration. This is demonstrated in Hansberry's play as Mama gives priority to her need for "being," reflecting a desire to preserve dignity and black culture and heritage. Mama's approach in her struggle reflects the collective black historical consciousness that values dignity over material or mutualistic gains. Maintaining a different perspective, Walter Lee flips the equation by striving to fulfill his desire for "having" and securing financial success while ignoring the existential side of the matter. Clark (2015) explains that this results in an existential dilemma as he struggles to determine his masculinity and identity within the rigid systemic constraints of American society in the 1950s. Overall, Hansberry's standpoint acknowledges the importance of economic stability yet insists that it should not eclipse the need for existential fulfillment. This is shown in the play as the Younger family decides to move into a white neighborhood marking a solid reclamation of space and identity in addition to the economic face of this decision. The severe internal

conflicts within the play reflect the old difficult alternatives—“being” or “having.” This suggests that agency and self-worth cannot be solely defined by material gains and status but must also be rooted in dignity and heritage.

II. Literature Review

Over the years, *A Raisin in the Sun* has been the subject of numerous critical analyses, each offering a distinct perspective on the play’s themes, characters, and cultural significance. Among the most prominent approaches are Marxist, feminist, existentialist, and racial readings, each shedding light on different dimensions of the Younger family’s struggles. For instance, a study by Alaqeel (2022) explores how the play encompasses a multiplicity of mid-20th-century social and economic issues such as feminism and the economic challenges facing black families. In a similar vein, Colbert’s (2017) analysis of the play shows how Hansberry’s play uncovers the ugly face of capitalism as an unethical economic system that collaborates with the ideology of the white elite of the society to exploit black people and deprive them of their basic necessities, such as housing and education. The feminist perspective highlights the play’s portrayal of gender roles, particularly through the characters of Beneatha and Mama. Harris (2020) examines how Hansberry presents a nuanced view of black womanhood, while Prilla (2013) explores how Black feminist thought demonstrates African American women’s unique struggles and resilience. She argues that Beneatha’s rejection of traditional roles and her search for identity align with broader feminist discourses in mid-century America.

From an existentialist viewpoint, Hansberry engaged with existentialist principles while adapting them to the Black American experience. Rose (2014) notes how the play challenges traditional existentialist perspectives by incorporating Black and feminist radical thought. In doing so, Hansberry did not uncritically adopt existentialist ideas but rather interrogated them. As Rose (2014) explains, “Hansberry strongly criticized what she felt were politically and spiritually disabling tendencies among modern existentialists [...] who often celebrated this kind of spiritual death as a form of resistance [...] Rather than leading to freedom, their view of the modern condition led to despair, apathy, or undirected anger” (p. 36). Hansberry’s work, therefore, reorients existentialism away from nihilism and toward a hopeful, collective struggle rooted in love, justice, and survival. Extending this line of thought, Gines (2017) provides a crucial foundation by exploring how existentialism, critical philosophies of race, and feminism intersect, particularly within African American literature. Her analysis offers a framework for understanding the convergence of these theoretical approaches and their relevance to Hansberry’s work.

Building on this, Wilson (2011) applies a neo-Marxist perspective to racial oppression in the United States, emphasizing how economic base and class relations shape systemic inequality. His insights are particularly valuable in contextualizing the Younger family’s struggles, framing their financial hardship within the broader landscape of economic exploitation. Similarly, Wilderson (2003) utilizes Gramsci’s theoretical framework to examine the position of the black American subject in civil society. His work sheds light on the intricate relationship between economic structures and racial identity, a tension central to Walter Lee’s battle with both material deprivation and existential self-definition.

Hansberry’s engagement with existentialist thought is further explored by Colbert et al. (2023), who trace her intellectual connections to figures like Sartre while also considering the unique challenges faced by leftist black American writers in the late 1950s. This dual influence—existentialist philosophy on one hand and economic critique on the other—creates a complex theoretical lens through which *A Raisin in the Sun* can be analyzed.

The intersection of economic and existential struggles is not unique to Hansberry but rather a recurring theme in African American literature. Washington (2001) highlights how literary movements within this tradition have consistently addressed both racial oppression and economic inequality, weaving together social critique with personal and collective identity formation. This longstanding tradition provides a critical backdrop for understanding the layered struggles depicted in Hansberry’s play.

III. Theoretical Framework: Marxist-Existentialism

Marxist existentialism is a theoretical lens that integrates the insights of Marxist materialism and existentialist philosophy, particularly as they pertain to oppression, self-definition, and agency. Traditional Marxism, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, posits that economic structures and material conditions shape human consciousness. As Marx famously states, “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (1859/1970, p. 20). Building on this premise, Marxism argues that class struggle, exploitation, and the alienation of labor are fundamental forces that govern social relations. Existentialism, in contrast, emphasizes the individual’s agency, freedom, and responsibility in creating meaning within an absurd or oppressive world. However, after the Second World War, Sartre started to feel the power of circumstances. Therefore, later existentialism, particularly Sartrean existentialism as articulated in *Search for a Method* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, became more Marxist in nature. Sartre noticed how external circumstances could affect the person’s freedom to

choose (1969/2008, p. 33). Consequently, the lived experience is the basis of Black existentialism developed by such thinkers as Frantz Fanon and Lewis R. Gordon. It mediates between the two perspectives to some extent. Black existentialism approaches freedom as a lived experience. At the same time, it rejects essentialism, asserting that Black identity is not biological but historically constructed and shaped by systematic racism. However, this should not be interpreted as an imitation or an amalgamation of the two theories, as Gordon (2020) reiterates,

What we all have in common is an appreciation of Sartre's unabated commitment to interrogating the dynamics of contingency, freedom, human reality, and problems of their evasion or bad faith . . . Black existential phenomenology emerges from a basic insight. In Fanon's poetic formulation, somehow the Euromodern world has assaulted the dignity of what it means to be human. The violence was historic. It is the concomitant anthropology of capitalism. (p. 502)

The Marxist-existentialist synthesis acknowledges that while material conditions exert immense influence over individuals, existential agency remains crucial in the fight for self-actualization. Figures like Frantz Fanon and Herbert Marcuse have argued that existential crises often emerge from material oppression, and true liberation requires both economic transformation and the reclamation of selfhood. As Parris (2011) notes in her reading of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon "could not write *Black Skin, White Masks* as a purely psychological study because he saw the colonial subject's psychological alienation as the result of the historical and material alienation of European hegemony and colonial rule" (p. 12). This intersection of the psychological and the material is particularly relevant to African American literature, which often portrays protagonists grappling with both systemic racial-economic oppression and personal quests for identity.

By employing a Marxist-existentialist framework, this study argues that Hansberry does not present material success or existential fulfillment as mutually exclusive. Instead, she demonstrates that true liberation for African Americans requires both economic empowerment and a reclamation of selfhood—an insight deeply relevant to contemporary racial and class struggles. By applying this lens, this study highlights how Hansberry critiques both economic determinism and existential despair. Her portrayal of the Younger family underscores that the African American struggle for liberation cannot be reduced to either economic advancement or cultural self-definition alone—it must embrace both in a dynamic and interconnected way.

IV Discussion

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is set in Chicago's South Side after WWII, reflecting the Civil Rights Movement in America in the 1950s. It tells the

story of the Younger family, a poor African American family living in a two-bedroom apartment, struggling to achieve a shared dream of a better life. When the family receives a \$10,000 life insurance check after the death of Big Walter, tensions rise as each family member envisions using the money to fulfill his or her own aspirations (Wilkerson, 1986). Mama wants to buy a house with a backyard, a dream she shared with her late husband. Ruth, who has just discovered she is pregnant, supports Mama's dream because she wants more space for Travis, her young son who sleeps in the living room. Beneatha, Mama's daughter, dreams of becoming a doctor, while Walter Lee, her son and Ruth's husband, wants to invest all the money in a liquor store with his friends. Being a pious woman, Mama opposes Walter's plan, leading to a deep conflict. In an attempt to mediate, Mama puts a down payment on a house in Clybourne Park, an all-white neighborhood, and entrusts Walter with the rest of the money, instructing him to set aside \$3,000 for Beneatha's education. However, Walter disregards her instructions and invests the entire sum in the liquor store.

The climax of the play occurs when Walter's friend runs away with the money, crushing the Youngers' dreams. Shortly after, Mr. Lindner, a representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, attempts to buy back the house to prevent the Youngers from moving into the neighborhood. Initially, Walter considers the offer, but Mama sees this as a dehumanizing act. Their clash escalates until Walter rejects Lindner's offer and asserts his dignity. The play ends with the Youngers preparing to move into their new home, leaving them in a state of hopeful uncertainty about their future.

Hansberry's writings inextricably combine multiple dimensions, such as the issues of race, gender, politics, and freedom. These issues are closely tackled from different perspectives due to, first, the complexity of the African American experience and, second, Hansberry's multiple identity markers as "a self-identified Negro, Lesbian, and Communist, and a political one as well" (Colbert, 2017, p. 158). *A Raisin in the Sun* participates in a larger philosophical dialogue about black liberation, exploring the tension between being and having in capitalist America. Identity, for African Americans, is often entangled in this dialectic, moving from being property, i.e., slaves, to having property. Their freedom was even confiscated by their white oppressors, rendering their very existence contingent upon structures designed to suppress their autonomy. In "On 'Captive' 'Bodies,' Hidden 'Flesh,' and Colonization," Gonzalez (1997) explains, "It is important to understand that the transformation of human beings into property is not part of what some might consider a brief and dated historical event (slavery) but a continuing colonial infectious disease that weaves into our lives

unsolicited ways of becoming and understanding who we are” (p. 130). In this way, Hansberry reveals how the African American quest for identity is inseparable from the historical violence of being rendered a commodity—and the ongoing fight to reclaim personhood.

The generational clash between Mama and Walter Lee in *A Raisin in the Sun* mirrors the historical ideological conflict between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Walter embodies Washington’s belief that black people should seek economic independence, while Mama aligns with Du Bois’s vision of civil rights activism. Wilkerson (1986) explains, “Hansberry equates Mama’s determination with the militant spirit of Du Bois’s position and Walter’s entrepreneurial interests with the materialism associated with Washington’s philosophy” (p. 450). This generational and ideological tension underscores the complexity of Black identity formation in a post-slavery, capitalist society, where the pursuit of progress is deeply entangled with questions of dignity, legacy, and resistance.

Interestingly, Hansberry transferred the well-known case that happened to her family in 1940, known as Hansberry Decision, to a Marxist-existential encounter between the characters in the play. Colbert (2017) pinpoints, “Through writing, Hansberry crafted a freedom practice more expansive in nature than the legal pursuit of freedom and one that accounts for gender and racial violence” (p. 157). The tension between being and having encapsulates almost every character in the play. Hansberry demonstrates how materialism modifies the conditions for the possibility of existential encounters.

The tension between being and having is very clear right from the beginning of the play. The furnishings of the Youngers’ apartment, which were selected “with care and love and even hope,” are now worn out. There was hope for a better future, a dream that Mama shared with her late husband, Big Walter Younger. The Youngers have personalized these pieces of furniture as they carry an ontological dimension. The furnishings were arranged with “taste and pride” (p. 24), revealing the fact that their dignity and identity go beyond the material gain that the performance underscores. It is not just about having furniture but about reflecting their self-worth, emphasizing the existential lived space. As Flynn (2006) explains, the existential lived space includes familiar routes, habitual arrangements, and the personal ordering of objects, all of which “articulate our ways of existing and provide access to the meaning and direction . . . of our lives” (pp. 6–7). In this way, the Youngers’ living space becomes an extension of their identity.

Weariness also hovers over the people who live in this place, as seen in the daily struggles of Ruth, Walter, and Travis. Ruth, for example, is exhausted by poverty and limited choices. Her disappointment is evident in

her characterization: “In a few years, before thirty-five even, she will be known among her people as a ‘settled woman’” (p. 25). Her body, like her spirit, carries the signs of commodification—she toils for survival, her freedom constrained by material limitations. Even her contemplation of abortion is driven by financial concerns, a decision left unquestioned by her Marxist husband, Walter Lee.

Walter Lee represents the intersection of Marxism and existentialism. He feels emasculated by his job as a chauffeur for a white man, believing that his self-worth depends on material success. In a very significant and provocative moment in his confrontation with his mother, he feels that his subjectivity is threatened and, therefore, he feels alienated from the world. He bursts out:

What’s the matter with you all! I didn’t make this world! It was give to me this way! Hell, yes, I want me some yachts someday! Yes, I want to hang some real pearls ’round my wife’s neck. Ain’t she supposed to wear no pearls? Somebody tell me—tell me, who decides which women is suppose to wear pearls in this world. I tell you I am a *man*—and I think my wife should wear some pearls in this world! (p. 128)

In a white supremacist world, Walter feels estranged from the world as a chauffeur for a white man. Marx explains, “it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own” (p. 68). Césaire (1972) expands on this alienation, asserting that black people are “doubly proletarianized and alienated: in the first place as workers, but also ‘as blacks,’ because . . . we are dealing with the only race which is denied even the notion of humanity” (pp. 78-79). Although Walter seems to be more occupied with the material aspect of the situation, Mama, as usual, addresses the existential dimension: “There’s plenty wrong with it . . . My husband always said being any kind of a servant wasn’t a fit thing for a man to have to be . . . And my boy is just like him—he wasn’t meant to wait on nobody” (p. 94). This moment draws a connection between social ontology and the historical legacy of Black struggle—a convergence Sartre (1968) identifies when he writes, “By becoming conscious of itself, the Proletariat becomes the subject of History” (p. 89). Walter’s evolving awareness thus signals the possibility of collective responsibility and agency, aligning with Sartre’s view that true freedom arises not in isolation but through the transformation of oppressive social conditions.

This alienation does not remain confined to class and race. It extends into Walter’s domestic and gender relations. His existential alienation distorts his view of Ruth, turning her into a means of compensation for his lost power. Walter criticizes Ruth, his African American wife, for not supporting him as she should.

He objectifies her, commodifying her to transcend himself, as seen in his supremacist remark: “That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world . . . Don’t understand about building their men up and making’ em feel like they somebody” (p. 34). This remark might be caused by Hansberry’s influence by Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist philosophy as demonstrated in *The Second Sex* (Higashida, 2011, pp. 64-66). Walter objectifies Ruth, seeing her as a possession, reinforcing a supremacist ideology that stems from systemic oppression. His existential crisis arises from his belief that he must “have” in order to “be.” He is in dire need of *having* in order to transcend his limitations and achieve self-actualization.

This conflict between personal identity and systemic oppression not only shapes Walter’s worldview but also permeates the family dynamic, extending its reach to the next generation. Travis’s morning conversation with Ruth reveals his internalization of the importance of money, excitedly anticipating the arrival of the paycheck as a moment of possibility. His enthusiasm suggests how deeply economic conditions define their hopes and expectations. Ruth, on the other hand, shuts down the conversation about money, directing Travis’s attention away from financial concerns and back to something as basic as eating breakfast: “You get your mind off money and eat your breakfast” (p. 28). Her response signals both exhaustion and resignation, highlighting how the pressure of economic survival forces her to prioritize immediate necessities over aspirations.

The tension escalates when Travis reminds his mother, Ruth, about the fifty cents required for school, demonstrating how financial constraints even dictate access to education. Ruth’s inability to provide the small sum reflects the limits of their material reality, reinforcing the idea that their freedom and agency are constantly constrained by financial lack. Yet, the play does not simply present economic deprivation as the defining force in their lives; rather, Hansberry explores how the characters navigate this deprivation while striving to assert their dignity and humanity.

Walter Lee, Travis’s father, intervenes and gives Travis the fifty cents in a moment that reveals Walter’s desire to assert his masculinity and protect his image as a father. The performance captures this significant moment: “(*Reaching down into his pants with a rather important gesture*) Here, son—(*He hands the boy the coin, but his eyes are directed to his wife’s*, TRAVIS *takes the money happily*)” (p. 30). This moment encapsulates Walter’s existential struggle. He desires to be seen as a man, as someone who has control over his family’s destiny, yet he is constrained by economic hardship. As Walter strives to assert his subjectivity, he is challenged by his facticity with limited opportunities under racism. Al-Jarrah (2024) pinpoints, “Subjectivity is what

constructs the relationship between the individual and the world . . . It is the domain of being-for-itself, and, therefore, it is what makes one anxious about one’s authentic mode of existence” (p. 21). Walter’s action reflects the capitalist notion that having money defines one’s value and authority, reinforcing the internal conflict between material success (having) and personal dignity (being). In this moment, Walter clings to the illusion that giving his son money affirms his identity as a man. However, the larger existential question remains: Is manhood defined by what one owns, or by how one chooses to exist in the world? As Mackay (2025) explains, the very label of “man” is a complex construction— “a vortex where the sexed label of male, and the cultural label of masculine meet” (p. 3), producing not a simple identity but “one united and coherent identity” built from layered social expectations.

The answer to this existential question is addressed by Hansberry when Walter appears negligent of Ruth’s contemplation of abortion. Once again, Hansberry invests this moment in presenting an encounter between being and having. Mama intervenes to teach Walter something about dignity and identity and not to surrender to financial hardship: “I’m waiting to see you stand up and look like your daddy and say we done give up one baby to poverty and that we ain’t going to give up nary another one . . . I’m waiting” (p. 69). In doing so, Mama does not merely relate Ruth’s decision to their economic situation; rather, she seizes the moment to reconnect Walter with the historical consciousness of his people and family. Her invocation of Big Walter’s legacy reflects this: “But he sure loved his children. Always wanted them to have something—be something. That’s where Brother gets all these notions, I reckon” (p. 43). This moment underscores the generational transmission of values, echoing Marx’s observation that “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past” (1963, p. 15). Walter’s current crisis is not simply personal—it is the reenactment of a longer historical struggle, where new generations, even as they try to revolutionize their lives, borrow from the past to make sense of their condition.

Similarly, Sartre insists that Man is not only defined by his present actions “but also the weight of his history” (1968, p. 60). As John Bogardus (1973) explains, the family functions as the “vital mediator between the class and the person,” where children unconsciously internalize social roles and class values as absolutes (pp. 67–68). This interplay between personal choice and historical determination becomes clear in Mama’s appeal. Walter must come to see that his ambitions—though veiled in materialism—stem from a legacy of striving for being over having.

Hansberry balances these two paths of black existence—materialism and self-definition—and Walter must come to terms with the fact that an imbalance between these forces leads to the erosion of authentic existence. Through Mama's lesson, he is forced to confront the idea that true freedom is not found in materialism alone but in the ability to assert one's right to exist with pride, even in an antiblack world. This notion is linked with the Youngers' historical struggle through presenting several black generations.

The past for the blacks has two dimensions: the first one is that their being was fixed, reducing their existence to property, and the second is that they need to challenge this past, i.e., facticity in Sartrean terms. Plesa (2021) pinpoints, "We strive to become what we are. Our fixed being in facticity outlines the possibilities and limitations for what we can become and our exercise of them solidifies those possibilities into actualities of what we are" (p.3). By reminding Walter of his father, Mama is invoking this existential struggle. She wants him to make a choice that affirms his dignity as a black man, rather than one dictated by economic desperation. As Christine Howells (1998) notes in her discussion of Sartre's philosophy, freedom is always within and starting from situation, emphasizing that true agency must reckon with the material and social realities that condition it.

Liberation in Hansberry's play consists of the existential interaction between the past, which represents the facticity; the present, which embodies agency; and the future, which constitutes the possibilities. In his review of the play, Frank Rich (1983) highlights the historical breadth of Hansberry's vision:

She saw history whole: Her play encompasses everything from the rise of black nationalism in the United States and Africa to the advent of black militancy to the specific dimensions of the black woman's liberation movement. And she always saw the present and future in the light of the past. (p. 24)

The Youngers reinterpret facts about themselves to transcend toward their true liberation. This embodies the process of becoming, or what Sartre calls being-for-itself. Plesa (2021) reiterates, "The future is the flight toward being that presence lacks but aims toward. In this way, presence lacks complete identity and is constantly in flight toward being (becoming) and away from its past. The for-itself, or presence, is not yet and always striving to be" (p. 4). Thus, liberation in *A Raisin in the Sun* is not a fixed state but a dynamic journey of self-realization—one rooted in an awareness of history, propelled by conscious agency, and sustained by the relentless pursuit of future possibilities.

This philosophical journey toward becoming is dramatized in the pivotal confrontation with Mr. Lindner, where the Youngers must reckon with how

society defines their facticity and whether they will accept or transcend it. Mr. Lindner's offer to buy the house at a higher price is not a simple transaction but a veiled attempt to buy their dignity. Initially, Walter considers accepting the deal, highlighting the existential alienation that black families experience in an oppressive society. However, Mama's firm rejection of Lindner's offer pushes Walter toward an existential awakening. Patricia Plesa (2021) states, "In this way, I am alienated from a dimension of my being that is subject to the freedom of others to judge me based on my facticity" (p. 6). The Youngers feel alienated because they feel that they cannot control their own life and their own choices. Their sense of self-determination, as human beings, is threatened. Racism limits their choices and freedom. Walter's final rejection of Lindner's offer becomes a moment of self-assertion, where he reclaims his manhood and dignity, redefining the power relations between black and white America. By refusing to be reduced to a commodity, Walter affirms his existence beyond material wealth. It is through Mr. Linder that the Youngers see their facticity, i.e., "blacks." By refusing Mr. Linder's proposal, the Youngers reject their facticity, the way Mr. Linder, or the whites in general, look at them. In this way, the play follows the trajectory that moves from having to being.

Hansberry's play does not construct an antagonistic class struggle in the Marxist sense. In Black existentialism, economic power alone does not construct the superstructure. Although the anti-black society remains exploitative, the Youngers are not seeking to overthrow the white social order. They simply wish to exist freely without oppression. As Vontress et al., (2017) note, Black existentialism offers a framework for understanding the racial and historical oppression that has shaped the lived experiences of Black people, foregrounding the lived experience of alienation, invisibility, and cultural distortion—forces that extend beyond economic exploitation alone.

The philosophical tension between being and recognition surfaces most poignantly when the Youngers are forced to confront how the dominant white society perceives their existence—not as subjects, but as problems to be managed. Walter states, "We don't want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be good neighbors" (p. 133). The play subtly explores the existential question raised by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903): How does it feel to be a problem? Mr. Linder tries to dissuade the Youngers from moving into the new neighborhood, using ideologized reasoning. Although, at the beginning of his conversation with the Youngers, he tries to express the good intention of the "welcoming committee," as he calls it (p. 104), the "welcoming committee" turns out to be *unwelcoming*, as noticed by Beneatha. This

committee deals with the Youngers as a problem. He explicitly declares that one of the missions of this committee is to address the problems that the white neighborhood may encounter: “And we also have the category of what the association calls— (*He looks elsewhere*)—(uh—special community problems . . .” (p. 105). Mr. Linder, as a representative of the white system, considers the Youngers as outsiders that threaten the safety of the white community. In “Black Existence in Philosophy of Culture,” Lewis Gordon (2014) dissects such an existential encounter: “This is paradoxical, because their outsider status is produced by such a system. That makes them both internally governed by a system that denies responsibility for the conditions by which they become inconsistent with that system” (p. 99). While the community’s treatment of the Youngers frames them as problems within a racially constructed social order, this imposed identity is further challenged and reframed through Beneatha’s personal journey, which foregrounds the intersection of gender, culture, and existential autonomy.

Beneatha’s character further complicates the being vs. having debate. She must choose between material success, embodied by Murchison’s wealth and stability, and cultural self-discovery, represented by Asagai’s anti-colonial ideals. Beneatha’s struggle to reconcile her career ambitions with her African identity reflects Hansberry’s diasporic vision of Black liberation. Asagai believes in using education to empower his people rather than assimilating into white society, illustrating the anti-colonial ideology in Hansberry’s work (Higashida, 2011). Beneatha, like the rest of the Youngers, must navigate two worlds—one that defines worth through material gain and another that prioritizes cultural and existential fulfillment. However, as “a young, intelligent black woman who is aware of her capabilities,” she “refuses to let anyone, including both of her suitors, George Murchison and Joseph Asagai, minimize her potential” (Brown-Guillory, 1988, p. 123).

This existential struggle is further underscored in Beneatha’s heated exchange with Walter, where he demands gratitude for the family’s financial sacrifices, saying, “It ain’t that nobody expects you to get on your knees and say thank you, Brother; thank you, Ruth; thank you, Mama—and thank you, Travis, for wearing the same pair of shoes for two semesters” (p. 36). His words reveal his deeply ingrained belief that economic survival dictates self-worth and that Beneatha, as a beneficiary of the family’s sacrifices, owes them deference. For Walter, her education is not just a personal ambition but a collective burden, one that must be acknowledged in a world where money defines status, opportunity, and dignity.

Beneatha’s sarcastic response—mockingly dropping to her knees and exclaiming, “FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME!” (p. 36)—is an outright rejection of Walter’s transactional view of

selfhood. She refuses to see her aspirations as indulgences that must be justified through gratitude, nor does she accept that her identity should be bound to financial hardship. Instead, she insists on her right to define herself outside the constraints of economic struggle, resisting the notion that her success must be tethered to the sacrifices of others. Her conflict with Walter mirrors her broader struggle between Murchison’s materialistic worldview and Asagai’s vision of liberation through self-actualization, reinforcing Hansberry’s assertion that authentic being cannot be reduced to financial security alone.

This also shows the generational gap between the characters. The new generation, like Beneatha, seems to be concerned more with existential choice and freedom than with material prosperity. Mama and Ruth discuss with Beneatha the possibility of having Murchison as her husband. Ruth seems enthusiastic about Murchison as a suitable suitor for Beneatha because he is rich:

BENEATHA: (*Wearily*) Oh, I just mean I couldn’t ever really be serious about George. He’s—he’s so shallow.

RUTH: Shallow—what do you mean he’s shallow? He’s *rich*!

MAMA: Hush, Ruth.

BENEATHA: I know he’s rich. He knows he’s rich, too.

RUTH Weil—what other qualities a man got to have to satisfy you, little girl?

BENEATHA: You wouldn’t even begin to understand. Anybody who married Walter could not possibly understand. (p. 43)

This exchange further underscores the generational rift between the characters, revealing their conflicting perspectives on existence and material success. The younger generation, embodied by Beneatha, prioritizes existential choice and self-definition over financial stability, while Ruth, shaped by economic struggle, views wealth as the most practical and desirable asset in a partner. When Beneatha dismisses George Murchison as “shallow,” Ruth immediately challenges her, equating his wealth with his worth: “Shallow—what do you mean he’s shallow? He’s *rich*!” (p. 46). For Ruth, material prosperity is not just a luxury but a necessity, a means of security in an unforgiving world.

Beneatha, however, resists this notion, rejecting the idea that a man’s value is dictated by what he has rather than who he is. Her sarcasm—“I know he’s rich. He knows he’s rich, too” (p. 46)—suggests that George is defined by his financial privilege, reducing his identity to a mere extension of his wealth. Beneatha refuses to be confined by this worldview, instead seeking an existence shaped by intellectual fulfillment and cultural authenticity. Her rejection of

George reflects her larger rejection of assimilationist values, a refusal to measure life's worth through economic status alone.

The tension heightens when Beneatha delivers a biting critique: "Anybody who married Walter could not possibly understand" (p. 46). Her words expose the ideological distance between her and Ruth, drawing a direct parallel between Walter and George. Like George, Walter equates financial success with self-worth, believing that money is the key to personal and social liberation. Beneatha sees this obsession with wealth as a hollow pursuit, an existential trap that strips individuals of their ability to define themselves outside the confines of capitalism. Hansberry crafts this moment to illuminate the larger existential conflict at the heart of the play. Beneatha's defiance challenges the prevailing belief that having money determines one's place in the world, asserting instead that being—existing with purpose, freedom, and cultural integrity—is the true measure of a meaningful life.

The conversation about Murchison resumes, but this time, Hansberry skillfully links class, race, and being together. Beneatha relates Murchison's qualities as a person to his family and class, showing her class consciousness: "The Murchisons are honest-to-God-real-foe rich colored people, and the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are rich colored people. I thought everybody knew that. I've met Mrs. Murchison. She's a scene!" (p. 47). Beneatha's sharp critique of the Murchisons reveals her disdain for the ways in which material wealth distorts selfhood, turning individuals into status-obsessed figures who define themselves by what they own rather than by who they are. Her remark that "the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are rich colored people" highlights the way in which economic privilege fosters elitism, even within historically marginalized groups. For Beneatha, wealth is not inherently liberating; instead, it imposes a new form of constraint, forcing individuals to conform to the expectations of the privileged class. Her sarcastic tone about Murchison's mother—"She's a scene!" (p. 47)—reduces Mrs. Murchison to a caricature of artificiality, reinforcing Beneatha's belief that those who pursue status at the expense of authenticity have surrendered their sense of being to the trappings of material success. Her critique suggests that the Murchisons, despite their financial success, remain bound by the same oppressive structures that govern white society, seeking validation through having rather than being. In rejecting the Murchisons, Beneatha affirms her desire to craft an identity that is not dictated by class privilege but by intellectual and cultural fulfillment, positioning herself in opposition to the materialistic values that define both the Murchisons and, to some extent, her own brother, explaining, "Listen, I'm

going to be a doctor. I'm not worried about who I'm going to marry yet—if I ever get married" (p. 47).

Beneatha's refusal of any external or materialistic values as determiners of one's worth extends to religion. She embodies the Sartrean atheistic doctrine, which rejects any religious correlation between Man and the meaning of life—an outlook that directly collides with Black existentialism embraced by Mama. Sartre (2007/1946) himself declares that man "is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be" (p. 22). This uncompromising stance is echoed in Beneatha's defiant conversation with Mama about her future, in which she openly expresses her rejection of religious belief.

Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God—there is only man and it is *he* who makes miracles! (p. 48)

For Beneatha, existence is not to be shaped by external forces but by one's own conscious effort, an ethos that aligns with her relentless pursuit of her potential and self-definition.

This moment exposes the collision between generational worldviews, where Mama represents a collective history of endurance, rooted in faith as a source of strength, while Beneatha demands a vision of the future untethered from the past. Beneatha's frustration is not merely with religious doctrine but with the erasure of human effort. Her exasperation stems from the belief that credit for progress should not be displaced onto an unseen force but rather attributed to those who labor, resist, and create. Beneatha's rejection of God echoes her rejection of economic determinism; just as she refuses to accept a world in which existence is dictated by divine will, she resists one in which identity is reduced to material acquisition or social conformity. Her existential stance disrupts the frameworks that govern the Younger household—where Mama finds meaning in faith and Walter equates self-worth with financial success, Beneatha insists on self-definition beyond both theological and capitalist structures.

Hansberry presents Beneatha's philosophy as an act of radical agency, a challenge to the notion that freedom is bestowed rather than seized. As Hansberry writes in *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*: "Man is unique in the universe, the only creature who has in fact the power to transform the universe... I think that the human race does command its own destiny and that that destiny can eventually embrace the stars" (Hansberry, 1971, pp. 40-41). In this sense, *A Raisin in the Sun* is more than a play about a black family—it is a philosophical

inquiry into existence, self-definition, and the human condition itself.

Beneatha's insistence that man makes miracles reflects her broader belief that liberation is not to be awaited but forged, a sentiment that aligns with her vision of medicine as an instrument of tangible change. In rejecting God, Beneatha does not merely dismiss religion—she dismantles the idea that existence is subject to forces beyond human control, positioning herself as the sole architect of her own becoming. Her declaration parallels Nietzsche's proclamation: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (1974, p. 181). In this light, Beneatha does not mourn the loss of divine authority; rather, she embraces its absence as an opportunity to revalue existence on human terms. She embodies Nietzsche's vision of the individual as "a rope stretched between the animal and the Übermensch—a rope over an abyss" (1966, p. 14), engaging in the atheistic notion of self-overcoming.

In contrast, Walter Lee's existential crisis is not rooted in metaphysical rejection but in material deprivation. This is clear in the confrontation between Mama and Walter Lee when the insurance check arrives. As Mama does not approve of Walter's proposal to invest the money in the liquor store, he bursts out:

Well, *you* tell that to my boy tonight when you put him to sleep on the living-room couch . . . (*Turning to MAMA and speaking directly to her*) Yeah—and tell it to my wife, Mama, tomorrow when she has to go out of here to look after somebody else's kids. And tell it to *me*, Mama, every time we need a new pair of curtains and I have to watch *you* go out and work in somebody's kitchen. Yeah, you tell me then! (65-66) This moment crystallizes the collision between being and having, as Walter's mounting frustration erupts into a direct challenge to Mama's vision of dignity and endurance. His words—"Well, you tell that to my boy tonight when you put him to sleep on the living-room couch"—are steeped in resentment and despair, exposing his belief that pride and self-respect mean little when weighed against the daily humiliations of poverty. Walter does not merely speak of financial hardship; he speaks of the erosion of selfhood, the suffocating reality of watching one's existence be defined by lack.

Hansberry does not resolve this conflict entirely; instead, she presents it as the defining crisis of black existence in a capitalist society. Walter's anguish underscores the existential trap of poverty, in which dignity and agency are constantly at odds with material need. His words, charged with bitterness, do not simply challenge Mama—they lay bare the central question of the play: Can selfhood exist independent of economic power, or is being inevitably swallowed by having?

This question exposes the limits of existential freedom within an oppressive economic structure, reflecting

Sartre's latter Marxist inclination (Judaken, 2008, p. 6-8). While Sartre's early existentialism would suggest that Walter is free to create meaning despite his circumstances, his later, more Marxist-influenced perspective acknowledges that poverty and systemic racism impose real constraints on Walter's ability to act freely. Walter's identity is shaped not just by his choices but also by the economic forces that determine his access to power and self-definition.

Hansberry, like Sartre in his later works, rejects the idea that existential freedom can be exercised in a vacuum. Instead, she highlights the dialectic between being and having, showing how economic deprivation warps selfhood and limits agency. Walter's desperation to assert his manhood through wealth reflects Sartre's argument in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), where he acknowledges that material conditions shape consciousness and that true freedom can only be achieved through collective resistance to oppression (Anderson, 1993, pp. 87-131).

Walter's struggle thus aligns with Sartre's turn to Marxist existentialism, illustrating that freedom is not simply an internal act of self-definition but is shaped and constrained by economic and social forces. As Flynn (2006) explains, "existentialism meets Marxism and tries to humanize it," recognizing that "social causality... enriches individual action, without dissolving it in some impersonal collective" (p. 101). Seen through this lens, Walter's existential crisis is not merely personal—it is deeply embedded in the material realities of racism and class oppression. Sartre's later philosophy underscores that true freedom requires the transformation of oppressive conditions. Expanding this critique, Gordon (2020) argues that "capitalism, as a form of idolatry, offers itself as the god under whom all must be commodified. It produces a subject who must proverbially 'have it all'" (pp. 502–503). Walter's initial pursuit of wealth reflects this ideological pressure. However, the Youngers ultimately reject this capitalist illusion, moving forward not simply as homeowners but as individuals who assert their dignity and define meaning on their own terms within an anti-black world.

Defining their identity entails an existential negotiation of past, present, and future. Consequently, the Youngers refuse the kind of self and identity imposed upon them by the whites. They always understand their existence in relation to their past facticity. Beşe and Aras (2013) emphasize, Ignoring the African and African-American heritage means refusal of self-identity and living according to the limitations determined by the others . . . So, the African-American culture must be generated by combining African past and American experience by keeping the past in mind. (p. 29)

By the end of the play, Walter understands that he "cannot live with the denigration of his family's pride"

(Wilkerson, 1986, p. 443). The Youngers' journey suggests that while "having" may shape opportunities for "being," true selfhood emerges from choices that prioritize dignity over material gain. Despite their financial independence, racism continues to shape the Youngers' reality. By the end of the play, the Youngers recognize that economic empowerment alone does not equate to true liberation. Instead, they embrace collective resistance and self-affirmation, realizing that their dignity transcends material wealth.

V Conclusion

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* weaves Marxist and existentialist theory in a rich dialectic to explore the profound tension between material possession and human selfhood in the African American experience. The play breaks down the dichotomy between "being" and "having," showing that genuine freedom can neither be achieved on economic terms nor on abstract ideals of selfhood unrelated to material conditions. Through the younger generation's conflict within the Younger family, specifically between Mama, Walter Lee, and Beneatha, Hansberry depicts how capitalist oppression and racialized injustice warp identity, aspiration, and dignity.

Walter's crisis of identity illustrates how the quest for economic power becomes one for reclaiming masculinity and power in a capitalist, racist universe. Mama's unyielding insistence on dignity and heritage invokes a deep consciousness that *to be*—grounded in historical consciousness and moral allegiance—should not be bought. Beneatha, by contrast, is the embodiment of intellectual and cultural self-knowledge of a new generation aspiring to freedom of self-definition independent of religious legacy and capitalist accommodation.

Lastly, Hansberry does not present a monolithic solution but rather invites the reader to consider emancipation as a dialectical process—one that requires both the material means *to be* and the existential courage to define one's self beyond material and economic borders. In describing the struggle between economic being and authentic being, Hansberry demands that black identity must be reclaimed not only in property ownership but also in claiming personhood, pride, and agency. The Youngers' final resolve to move forward, despite uncertainty, is an existential act of defiance—a declaration of *being* in a world that continually seeks to repress it.

References

- Al-Jarrah, H. (2024). The existential void in Iain Reid's *I'm thinking of ending things*. *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, 22(4), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7912/CGP/v22i04/17-32>
- Ali, H. H., & Sameer, A. K. (2022). I can't breathe: A study of identity and hybridity in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Journal of Socio-Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 34-42. [10.26655/JELCS.2022.1.5](https://doi.org/10.26655/JELCS.2022.1.5)
- Anderson, T. C. (1993). *Sartre's two ethics: From authenticity to integral humanity*. Open Court.
- Beşe, A., & Aras, D. (2013). Cultural spaces and marginality in *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Interstudies*, (13), 23–33.
- Brown-Guillory, E. (1988). *Their place on the stage: Black women playwrights in America*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bogardus, J. (1973). *Sartre's contribution to Marx's concept of alienation* (Master's thesis, The University of British Columbia). The University of British Columbia Library. <https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0101303>
- Čerče, D. (2019). Race and politics in twentieth-century Black American play: Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. *American Review of Theatre*, 46, 227–239. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-018-0464-7>
- Césaire, A. (1972). *Discourse on colonialism*. Monthly Review Press.
- Clark, K. (2015). Black male subjectivity deferred: The quest for identity and authority in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. In *Black Women Playwrights* (pp. 115-131). Taylor & Francis.
- Colbert, S. D., Jones Jr., D. A., & McGinley, P. (2023). *Existentialisms: Blackness, literature, performance*. *American Literature*, 95(1), 115–121. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-10345393>
- Colbert, S. (2017). *Practices of freedom: Lorraine Hansberry, freedom writer*. *Callaloo*, 40(2), 157–173. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2017.0106>
- Das, R. J. (2022). Marxism and revisionism in the world today. *Capital & Class*, 47(3), 383-406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03098168221139287>
- Alaqeel, O. (2022). A Marxist reading of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). *Arab World English Journal*, 6(2), 176-188. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol6no2.13>

- Flynn, T. R. (2006). *Existentialism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Fromm, E. (2004). *Marx's concept of man*. Continuum.
- Gines, K. T. (2017). *At the intersections: Existentialism, critical philosophies of race, and feminism*. Routledge.
- Gonzalez, G. M. J. (1997). On 'captive' 'bodies,' hidden 'flesh,' and colonization. In L. Gordon (Ed.), *Race and existentialism* (pp. 129–133). Routledge.
- Gordon, L. (2020). Sartre's influence in Black existentialism. In M. C. Eshleman & C. L. Mui (Eds.), *The Sartrean mind* (pp. 501–514). Routledge.
- Gordon, L. (2014). Black existence in philosophy of culture. *Diogenes*, 59(3-4), 96–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192113505409>
- Gordon, M. (2008). "Somewhat like war": The aesthetics of segregation, black liberation, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. *African American Review*, 42(1), 121–133.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40301308>
- Hansberry, L. (1971). *To be young, gifted, and Black*. Random House.
- Hansberry, L. (1994). *A Raisin in the Sun*. Vintage Books.
- Howells, C. (1998). Sartre, Jean-Paul (1905–80). In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved 1 Jul. 2025, from <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/biographical/sartre-jean-paul-1905-80/v-1>. doi:10.4324/9780415249126-DD062-1
- Harris, L. (2010). *The philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and beyond*. Temple University Press.
- Harris, T. (2020). Christianity's last stand: Visions of spirituality in post-1970 African American women's literature. *Religions*, 11(7), 369.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11070369>
- Higashida, C. (2011). *Black internationalist feminism: Women writers of the Black Left, 1945–1995*. University of Illinois Press.
- Khatoon, Y. (2021). *A Raisin in the Sun: The impacts of racial segregation and identity crisis*. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 5(2), 78–87.
[http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-II\)1.8](http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-II)1.8)
- King, E. S. (2018). African Americans and the Crisis of Modernity: An Interpretation of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Ethnic Studies Review*, 41(1-2), 53–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/esr.2018.411207>
- Mackay, F. (2025). Positive humanity, when? Is masculinity worth saving? *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2025.2502679>
- Marx, K. (1859). *A contribution to the critique of political economy* (S. W. Ryazanskaya, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Marx, K. (1963). *The poverty of philosophy*. International Publishers. (Original work published 1847)
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2002). *The communist manifesto* (S. Moore, Trans.). Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1848)
- Marx, K. (1959). *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844* (M. Milligan, Trans.). Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1844)
- Matthews, K. L. (2008). The politics of "home" in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Modern Drama*, 51(4), 556–578.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/md.51.4.556>
- Nietzsche, F. (1966). *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1883)
- Nietzsche, F. (1974). *The gay science* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1882)
- Obourn, M. (2012). Early civil rights "voice work" in *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 58(2), 238–266.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24247034>
- Parris, L. T. (2011). Frantz Fanon: Existentialist, dialectician, and revolutionary. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(7), 4–23.
- Plesa, P. (2021). Reassessing language subjectivity: Freedom and authenticity in neoliberalism. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678211032065>

- Prilla, L. (2013). Black feminism thought of Beneatha Younger in the play of *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Darma Persada]. Repository Unsada.
- Rich, F. (1983, October 5). *Theater: Raisin in the Sun, ' anniversary in Chicago*. *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/05/theater/theater-raisin-in-sun-anniversary-in-chicago.html>
- Rose, T. (2014). *Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and the "illegible" politics of (inter)personal justice*. *Kalfou Journal*, 1(1), 27–60. <https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v1i1.9>
- Sartre, J-P. (1968). *Search for a method* (H. E. Barnes, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1957)
- Sartre, J-P. (2008). *The itinerary of a thought* (J. Mathews, Trans.; P. Anderson, R. Fraser, & Q. Hoare, Interviewers). In *Between existentialism and Marxism* (pp. 1–30). Verso. (Original work published 1969)
- Sartre, J-P. (2007). *Existentialism is a humanism* (C. Macomber, Trans.; J. Kulka, Ed.). Yale University Press. (Original work published 1946)
- Vontress, C. E., Woodland, C. E., & Epp, L. (2007). Cultural dysthymia: An unrecognized disorder among African Americans? *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 35(3), 130–141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2007.tb00055.x>.
- Washington, R. E. (2001). *The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt: A Sociology of Literature Perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wilderson III, F. (2003). Gramsci's black Marx: Whither the slave in civil society? *Social Identities*, 9(2), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350463032000101579>
- Wilkerson, M. B. (1986). *A Raisin in the Sun: Anniversary of an American classic*. *Theatre Journal*, 38(4), 441–452. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3208286>
- Wilson, C. (2011). The dominant class and the construction of racial oppression: A neo-Marxist/Gramscian approach to race in the United States. *Socialism and Democracy*, 25(1), 211–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2011.541182>

الكنونة والامتلاك في مسرحية "زبيبة في الشمس" للورين

هانزبيري: رؤية ماركسية-وجودية

علاء الدين صادق فارس جراب	مروان حرب القريوتي	متعب علي النويران	حمزة أحمد الجراح
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها والترجمة	قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها والترجمة	قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها والترجمة	اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها
جامعة الزرقاء	جامعة الزرقاء	جامعة الزرقاء	جامعة إربد الأهلية
alaeddin_english@zu.edu.jo	mqaryouti@zu.edu.jo	malnwairan@zu.edu.jo	h.aljarrah@inu.edu.jo

القبول: 2025/7/30

الاستلام: 2025/3/27

الملخص:

تُشارك مسرحية "زبيبة في الشمس" للورين هانزبيري (1959)، في حوار فلسفي أوسع حول تحرير السود، وتُقدّم المسرحية أجيالاً سوداء متعددة في أمريكا، لكلٍّ منها حلمه وكابوسه، آماله ومخاوفه. يقع حلم الحرية العابر للأجيال بين الوجود والامتلاك: بين المواجهة الوجودية والمكاسب المادية. تستكشف هذه المقالة التوتر بين الوجود والامتلاك في أمريكا الرأسمالية، وتُحلّل الصدام بين الحتمية التاريخية، والصراع الطبقي، والنضال الوجودي الذي يُحرّك مشاهد وأحداث المسرحية. يعزو "والتر لي" نضال عائلته إلى صراع اقتصادي، ويُختزل الذاتية إلى المادية، ويقترح أنه بتغيير العالم المادي، يُمكن لعائلة "يونغر" فهم وضعهم، وبالتالي تحسينه. مع ذلك، يواجه "والتر لي" وعيًا عرقيًا يُفاقم معضلته. ومن جهة أخرى، تواجه "ماما" مشكلة إعادة توظيف وعيها في الزمن المادي، مُشكّلةً مزيجًا هجينًا من الوجودية الماركسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الماركسية، المادية، الأمريكيون الأفارقة، الوجودية، لورين هانزبيري، زبيبة في الشمس.