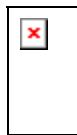


Oral/Portfolio Review English: Literature Major

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Seeking Balance:
An Examination of Women's Friendships in the Seventeenth Century through an
Analysis of Katherine Philips' "Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia"

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Preface

One goal of the English literature major is to demonstrate "an appreciation for the continuity and diversity of American and British literature by studying canonical and non-canonical works in these traditions" (Oral/Portfolio handout). As will be discovered by the reader, the works I have included in this portfolio deeply connect with this particular goal, among others.

The first piece, entitled *Seeking Balance: An Examination of Women's Friendships in the Seventeenth Century through an Analysis of Katherine Philips' "Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia,"* arose out of an assignment to explore the influence of social and cultural settings on seventeenth century writers. Through my readings in the class, I realized that not only had male writers dominated this period of writing, but that these male writers often stereotyped women in their poetry. My immediate reaction to the assignment was to research how women responded to the negative manner in which they were cast; however, available information on this topic quite obviously does not exist in the form of books. Stemming from this idea, I decided to closely examine the poetry of seventeenth century female writer Katherine Philips in order to discover if and how she responded to her contemporaries and to the patriarchal society in which she subsisted. After reading twentieth century critic Adrienne Rich's "When We Dead Awaken: Writing for Re-Vision," I recently added a theoretical framework based on this essay to my paper to more clearly illustrate Philips' feminist and enlightening approach to writing.

Lorraine Hansberry's award-winning drama *A Raisin in the Sun* served as the inspiration for the second work contained in this portfolio. Attempting to emulate Hansberry's style, I penned a sequel to *Raisin*, entitling my play *Today a New Sun Rises for Me*. A work written at the beginning of my college career, my sequel required detailed transformation for inclusion in this portfolio. The result of these changes is a play that includes not only background information on Lorraine Hansberry, but also insights into various aspects of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. My own creative energies are also apparent within the lines of this play. The struggle to deepen the conflict and strengthen the characters truly challenged my critical thinking skills, allowing me to discover that old assignments are easily revived with some work and thought.

The pieces I have chosen for this portfolio display the wide range of abilities I have developed as an English major. I strongly believe the spectrum of ideas presented in my poetry analysis and my play sequel highlight my "strong writing skills that include the ability to synthesize ideas and concepts" and my "ability to produce detailed, sophisticated readings of literary works by studying and practicing a rich repertoire of critical strategies" (Oral/Portfolio handout).

When readers reflect on the poetry of the seventeenth century, poets such as John Donne and the Metaphysicals, Jonson and the Cavaliers, and John Milton often come to mind. The poetry crosses over various boundaries of Neoplatonic, Ovidian, and Petrarchan forms, for example, often with many references to women filling the lines. Described as helpless creatures, seventeenth century women were often shut out from all possibilities of power, and they were generalized into four categories: virgins, women to be married, married, and widowed. In the state of marriage, women were forced to be the submissive, powerless objects of their husbands. Equality and balance within their marriages were of no concern to men of the seventeenth century. Out of the oppressive setting of the seventeenth century arose very few women poets; however, Katherine Philips not only became a poet, but she also displayed her will to survive by responding to the negativity that surrounded the lives of females, especially the oppression of women in marriages. By focusing on the importance of friendships between women Philips used her poetry, specifically "Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia," as an outlet to critique the misogyny and misrepresentations of marriages put forth by male poets, such as John Donne, and the oppressive social settings of the seventeenth century.

In order to better understand Philips's critique of Donne within the lines of her poetry, a reading of twentieth century critic Adrienne Rich's essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing for Re-Vision" may offer a possible theoretical reasoning for Philips's approach. Rich explains readers must challenge the accepted, predominantly white male canon of literature. In her essay, Rich expresses "[t]hat the argument will go on whether an oppressive economic class system is responsible for the oppressive nature of male/female relations, or whether, in fact, patriarchy the domination of males-is the original model of oppression on which all others are based" (35). Rich further develops this point by suggesting that "[r]e-vision-the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction-is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (35). When reading Philips in light of Rich's essay, the reader realizes that Philips was writing for "re-vision" long before the concept was coined by the critic. According to Rich, "Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (35). Apparent in Philips' alterations of Donne's metaphors is this "drive to

self-knowledge." Although her poems do not outwardly attack Donne, for that would seem hypocritical, Philips clearly responds to the fact that "there were all those poems about women, written by men These women were almost always beautiful, but threatened with the loss of beauty, the loss of youth-the fate worse than death" (Rich 39). As will be made evident through the arguments in this paper, Philips does not except Donne's views and attitudes about women. As Rich suggests, Philips looks at writing and knows "it differently than" perhaps her contemporaries, and even some modern critics, do (Rich 35). By transforming Donne's metaphors, Philips completes an amazing feat-she breaks "its hold over us" (Rich 35). Yet, as Rich alludes to, women truly have their work cut out for them. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, through its description of Katherine Philips, is unwilling to move away from the restraints the stereotypical male canon of writers creates. The biographical background on Philips barely covers one-half of the page and states that her poetry is "sometimes reminiscent of Donne's love lyrics" (1679). This pathetic attempt to introduce this significant female writer brings the efforts of both Rich and Philips into an even greater light. The editors of the anthology make no efforts to view Philips' life or her poetry with "fresh eyes," thus Rich's statement that "[t]he enemy is always outside the self, the struggle somewhere else" is made evident (49). Philips' reworking of male literature was quite literally years ahead of itself; however, nearly two centuries later women continue the battle against patriarchy. Rich suggests that while "the creative energy of patriarchy is fast running out[,] what remains is its self-generating energy for destruction" (49).

When attempting to understand Philips' approach of re-vision, an examination of female relationships in the seventeenth century and an understanding of the social and cultural settings within which they were set is vital to comprehending the breadth of Philips' "Friendship's Mystery." According to Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720, "While women shared certain biological experiences which formed the basis of common interests, we need to take account of social distinctions Female friendships might take different forms, depending on social level, kinship, propinquity, religion, age, and individual temperament" (232). For young and single women such friendships consumed a large portion of their lives, and in fact, "[b]onding between women probably occurred early in life" (Mendelson and Crawford 232). The latter half of the century brought about some changes in these relationships. For example, "increasing numbers of single women and aristocratic widows with education and leisure

shared their lives, forming friendships based on the leisured pursuit of literary interests" (Mendelson and Crawford 232). During this time, in 1651, poet Katherine Philips, under the pseudonym Orinda, commenced her "Society of Friendship." Critic Philips Souers' The Matchless Orinda further explored the importance of the society explaining that "[t]he friends of Orinda cannot be considered except in connection with a subject on which a great part of Orinda's fame now rests, namely, the Society of Friendship" (39). The reader must understand Philip's definition of friendship in relation to the society. According to Souers, "For Orinda friendship had a peculiar meaning. It was the Platonic mingling of souls; it had about it a certain mysticism, which made it a kind of religion to be realized only by initiation into its esoteric knowledge" (41). Philips believed this type of friendship could only exist within the boundaries of a same sex relationship, and this "was an ideal which lent itself easily to the inspiration of a society" (Souers 41). For many, the question about the actual existence of the society is perplexing. Another critic Elizabeth Hageman suggests that "[i]n the absence of better evidence that Philips had organized a society with a membership list or a definite program, it seems more reasonable to believe the word 'society' in her poems . . . refers to her social set - what we might now call her network of friends" (Hageman 572). Despite whether or not the society existed purely in word form or a physical form is not as important as the ideals that are expressed in Philips' poems. The theme of Platonic love is seen throughout Renaissance literature; however, many of the writers who explored such a theme "followed the classical assumption that when they wrote of friends they were celebrating relationships between men" (Hageman 573). Why, then, would Katherine Philips choose to alter this traditional reign of thinking and explore the friendships of women?

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the cultural and social settings of the seventeenth century. "When women appeared in literary works about friendship, they were, as a rule, the seductresses who wooed menIt remained for Katherine Philips to assert a philosophy of friendship that took for granted the notion that women could be friends with each other and with men" (Hageman 573). In taking up such a philosophy, Philips most surely would have struggled with the blatant misogyny and assumed hierarchical structure of the seventeenth century. The Norton Anthology website illustrates the severity of this hierarchical system explaining that [i]n Early Modern England, both gender hierarchy, with the man at the top, and the husband's patriarchal role as governor of his family

and household -- wife, children, wards, and servants -- were assumed to have been instituted by God and nature. So ordered, the family was seen as the secure foundation of society and the patriarch's role as analogous to that of God in the universe and the king in the state. Given the fact that the husband was viewed as the head of the family, women faced many negative consequences, besides simply being a servant to the man. In fact, "[m]arriage was cited as the key reason for excluding women from public offices and duties, for their duty to obey their husbands prevented them from acting as independent persons" (Wiesner 31). In addition to women's complete lack of independence, "a married woman was legally subject to her husband in all things; she could not sue, make contracts, or go to court for any reason without his approval . . ." (Wiesner 31). The fetters placed on women in the realms of the law and the home shackled a woman's sexuality.

The issues surrounding women's sexuality included notions about both chastity and honor. In fact, the two concepts seem to be inextricably linked to one another. Women were constantly reminded "that their spiritual and social worth resided above all else in their practice of and reputation for chastity. Unmarried virgins and wives were to maintain silence in the public sphere and give unstinting obedience to father and husband . . ." (Norton Website). In addition to upholding the ideals of chastity, women also faced the notion that for them, "honor was a sexual matter" (Wiesner 34). In connection to ideas on reputation critic Merry Wiesner explains that in most parts of Europe, women of all classes were allowed to bring defamation suits to court for insults to their honor, and it is clear from court records that they did this frequently; such records also indicate that the worst thing a man could be called was "thief," while for women it was "whore." Because of ideas of female sinfulness, irrationality, and weakness drawn from tradition, religion, and science, however, women . . . were never regarded as able to defend their own honor completely without male assistance (34).

Similar views of women were also quite apparent in seventeenth century poetry written by male poets. For example, John Donne, who wrote at an earlier time than Philips, often "attacked" women in his poetry and, quite ironically, also alluded to the fact that spiritual and physical love could be intermixed. The speaker in Donne's "The Apparition" has an attitude of pure hatred towards the woman being addressed in the poem. Imagining himself returning as a ghost to the bed of his ex-lover whom he refers to as a murderer, the speaker portrays the woman in the poem as an immoral, shameless creature. In

addition to the woman being cast in this light, the speaker dwells on the stereotypical inferior and weak images of women. In line 11, he refers to her as a "poor aspen wretch," suggesting that just as "aspen leaves flutter in the slightest breeze," she is a trembling, unstable figure (Abrams 1248). Donne clearly uses many of the seventeenth century ideals of women in his poetry, yet he still suggests that a type of religious love was possible despite some of his other overtly misogynistic views. Given the conditions of the relationships between men and women during this time period, it should not be of great surprise that a woman poet, such as Philips, would use her poetry to explore ideas surrounding female friendships.

In "Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia," Philips who had read John Donne's poetry, responded to both the misogyny and positive, spiritual love imagery present in his poetry, and displayed how same sex friendships provided an outlet for the repression one would encounter through marriage. She provided an alternate social reality for women during the seventeenth century. The first stanza of the poem, obviously a new rendition of Donne's "Canonization," begins "Come, my Lucasia, since we see/That Miracles Mens faith do move . . ." (line 1-2). In the opening lines, Philips tries to conjure a sense of togetherness, emphasizing the word "we." In fact, Philips displays the importance of unity and equity throughout the first stanza using words such as "let's" and "our" to emphasize these ideals. Philips' first stanza also articulates the idea that the sense of love to which she is referring has a religious power that can serve as an example for the "dull angry world" (line 4). Together, with her friend, the speaker wants to prove "[t]here's a Religion in our Love" (line 5). From the outset, Philips' asserts that the relationship she shares with her friend is of a sacred, religious quality; it is not until the end of Donne's "Canonization" that the speaker suggests he and the lover will be "canonized for love" (line 36). By moving this ideal to the beginning of her poem, Philips' seems to imply the idea of sacredness and equality is of greater importance than to that which Donne alludes.

The next stanza again enforces the balance between the friends using the word "we" in the first line. In the next several lines, Philips continues to move away from the hierarchical ideas of the seventeenth century by creating ideals for that alternate social reality. The speaker says "[t]hat Fate no liberty detroyes/But our Elections is as free/As Angels, who with greedy choice/Are yet determin'd to their joyes" (lines 7-10). Philips suggests that fate cannot destroy the liberty and freedom the two

women find in their friendship; they are both equal to make their own choices and decisions, an idea quite different from that of male/female relationships during the seventeenth century.

In the third stanza, Philips deepens the images of togetherness, beginning the first line with the accented word "Our" (line 11). While male poets, such as Donne, often used first person pronouns, in a negative manner, to assert their power and plural pronouns to coerce their lover into sexual acts, Philips uses them positively suggesting that the "hearts are doubled" (line 11). The stanza, echoing and transforming Donne's metaphors about alchemy, continues, "Here Mixture is addition grown;/We both diffuse, and both ingross:/And we whose minds are so much one,/never, yet ever are alone" (Lines 12-14). Words such as "Mixture," "diffuse," and "one" precisely display Philips' positive feelings on equality. She even taps into images of two becoming one suggesting that the friends' minds will be in tune to the degree that they will be in balance, and never separate. The combination of the words "never" and "ever" stresses the importance of harmony to an even greater extent.

In the fourth stanza of "Friendship's Mystery," Philips transforms yet another set of Donne's metaphors—those found in "The Relic." In Donne's poem, the female is once again viewed as a weak, inferior figure; the relic, a bracelet strung of the woman's hair, moves from a symbol of integrity to a sign of the speaker's resentment of the woman's connection to him. Philips, once again opening the stanza with a plural pronoun "We," looks at the commitment in the relationship not as a negative aspect, but rather as an "Ornament" (line 20). The tension that accompanies the word "Captivity" in line 16 is quickly released with the word "free" at the end of line 18. Philips' speaker suggests that in her relationship she is freer than others and that she feels "Not Bondage," but rather a connection that is a key component in the friendship (line 20).

The next stanza opens with the speaker asserting the fact that it is difficult to find things that she does not share with her friend. She says, "Divided joyes are tedious found,/And griefs united easier grow" (lines 21-22). The word "united" serves to further the image of two transforming into one. Philips sees no problem in working through a problem together, but rather suggests that by working through it as one, the issue will seem less complicated. This clearly speaks to the law ideals of the seventeenth century discussed earlier in this paper suggesting that women consistently required the aid of their superior to solve their problems. The remainder of the stanza alters another of Donne's poems, "The Sun

Rising." Philips' speaker says, "We are our selves but by rebound,/And all our Titles shuffled so,/Both Princes, and both Subjects too" (lines 2325). Because the poem is written from one woman to another, Philips has grounds for changing Donne's idea that "She is all states, and all princes I,/Nothing else is" (lines 2122). Philips, using the word "Both" twice in the final line of the stanza, reveals that the women are both equal. In Donne's lines, the "princes" are quite obviously in a dominant position over the "states." Philips offers that the titles are insignificant, and simply "shuffled" together, which displays a balance in the friendship - a balance that completely lacks both in the lines of "The Sun Rising" and the cultural norms of the seventeenth century.

The notions of balance and equality seem to culminate in the final lines of the poem that once again begin with the accented words "Our hearts" (line 26). The word mutual in this line serves to empower the other images of two becoming one that run throughout the poem. When stating "While they (such power in Friendship lies)/Are Altars, Priests, and Off rings made," the speaker goes so far as to suggest that there is a complete fluidity in her exchange of roles with her friend (lines 27-28). She continues, "And each Heart which thus kindly dies,/Grows deathless by the Sacrifice" (lines 29-30). With these final two lines of the poem, the speaker again reveals the balance Philips seemed to be striving to achieve. The love has an almost-immortal characteristic to it; one heart will not be sacrificed for the other, but that the hearts, and thus the love, will grow deathless because of the desire of both friends to give to the relationship.

The

"s" sounds in the last line serve to further enhance the image of the fluid exchange of roles between both friends. Interestingly, it is not only images of misogyny that Philips addresses in this work.

While I discussed the issue of misogyny in earlier paragraphs, I find it also crucial to recognize Philips' transformations of some of Donne's more positive, highly spiritual metaphors. For example, the first stanza of "Friendship's Mystery" echoes Donne's "The Canonization," which, in general, is said to be a poem that asserts the notion of true, authentic love. In such a love, the body and soul seem to be melded together in an almost-mystical sense. Why would Philips choose to alter an image that attempts to convey ideas of such spirituality? While the line "us canonized for love" in Donne's poem suggests

the couple has been made holy because of their strong love, Philips changes the idea to read "There's a Religion in our love." She begins with the idea with which "The Canonization" concludes. With both poems there is a sense love has a religious power; however, while Donne's view of love refers to the feelings between a man and a woman, Philips looks at a same sex friendship. Perhaps with both her movement of the idea to an earlier part of the poem and her emphasis on the importance of togetherness, Philips is making a statement about the idea Donne asserts about love at the end of his poem. She seems to suggest that because of the social context surrounding marriages in the seventeenth century, such a level of spiritual and physical love that Donne defined was not attainable between a man and a woman. Philips even implies that relationships, thus friendships, between women provided a channel in which to obtain such a level of spirituality-a religious love. She understood that balance and equality were not realistic ideas in the state of marriage during the seventeenth century, and due to this reality Philips realized the vital purpose and benefits of friendships between women.

Several centuries have past since the days of Katherine Philips, yet as a young woman of the twenty-first century, I found myself being drawn into the ideas she presents within her poetry. Reflecting on this connection, I found it somewhat odd that I related to the poetry because I am not oppressed in my male/female relationship. Yes, there are many women in society who are involved in domestically abusive relationships. Women do get raped and are sexually harassed; however, even given these occurrences, I do not feel oppression of women today can be compared to the oppression of women during the seventeenth century because the social and cultural contexts are different. Stepping back, though, I realized that Philips' poetry truly moves beyond a simple crying out for women's rights. Yes, she does respond to Donne's misogyny and misconceptions about relationships between men and women. Philips defends women and rightly so, but at the same time, she also paints a beautiful picture of female friendships. This, I now know, is what captivated me; the importance of women's friendships fits within cultural and social settings of any time period. The friendships of women represent something far greater than relationships between men and women. I would like to use a personal example to illustrate this point. Just as friendships between women began during their early years during the seventeenth century, the same is true today. I was a mere three years old when I met the fiend who has been a constant in my life for the past seventeen years. Her name is Laura and I can honestly say she is

the most considerate person I have ever met. I consider it an honor to have been involved in a friendship with her for such a long period of time. When I read Philips' poem "Friendship's Mystery" my mind drifted off to this friendship I share with Laura, and I completely grasped the passion the poet shared for her friend. In fact, I once wrote a paper for a college writing class reflecting on the friendship Laura and I share. I feel that the following excerpt displays the power of relationships between women Philips alludes to in her poem. Although, it is not articulated nearly as powerfully or as eloquently as Philips' poem, I feel that it displays that women still place a tremendous amount of value on their same sex friendships. The friendships continue to provide balance and fluidity in a woman's life. The inspiration for the following lines came from the celebration I shared with Laura after my high school graduation ceremony.

Ignoring the shouts, screams, and sounds of laughter, she opened her arms.
Straight to them I flew. Pure bliss and pride began streaming down her cheeks.
Nodding her head, she silently bestowed me with her congratulations. Tears
tumbled from my eyes in response. Normally, a pair of calmness, we quickly
became two trembling, bawling figures representing eternal friendship. With her
rich brown eyes she looked straight into my tear-filled hazels as we realized our
bond could only grow stronger.

No longer could we conceal ourselves behind the contours of our mother's legs as
we did the first time we met. The momentous act of graduation seemed to sketch
an invisible mark into our timeline of trust - a mark indicating a lifetime of
camaraderie and trust was bound to continue. Two tiny, innocent little girls had
blossomed into adulthood, and they stood weeping tears of trust . . . tears of
happiness . . . tears of friendship.

Laura and I have guided one another through everything from broken hearts to family
deaths. Looking at my friendship with Laura or the speaker's relationship with Lucasia,
it is important to note that although many years have gone by and cultural and social
contexts have obviously changed, women's friendships still offer a security of absolute
equality, balance, and trust.

Katherine Philips' poem "Friendship's Mystery: To My Dearest Lucasia" displays the significance of women's friendships as an alternate reality for the misogyny and misrepresentations asserted by male poets and the norms of society in the seventeenth century. Marriage was a hierarchical institution; men were the subjects and women were their objects. The oppression present in marriage represented a much broader view of women in society. Even in literature, the female was viewed as an inferior, helpless creature or an evil seductress. In her poetry, Philips is able to critique such notions by creating an alternative outlet for women. This outlet, a highly religious, spiritual friendship between women, offered the security of trust, balance, and love. Even in the twenty-first century, women continue to recognize the importance of a spiritual mingling of their souls.

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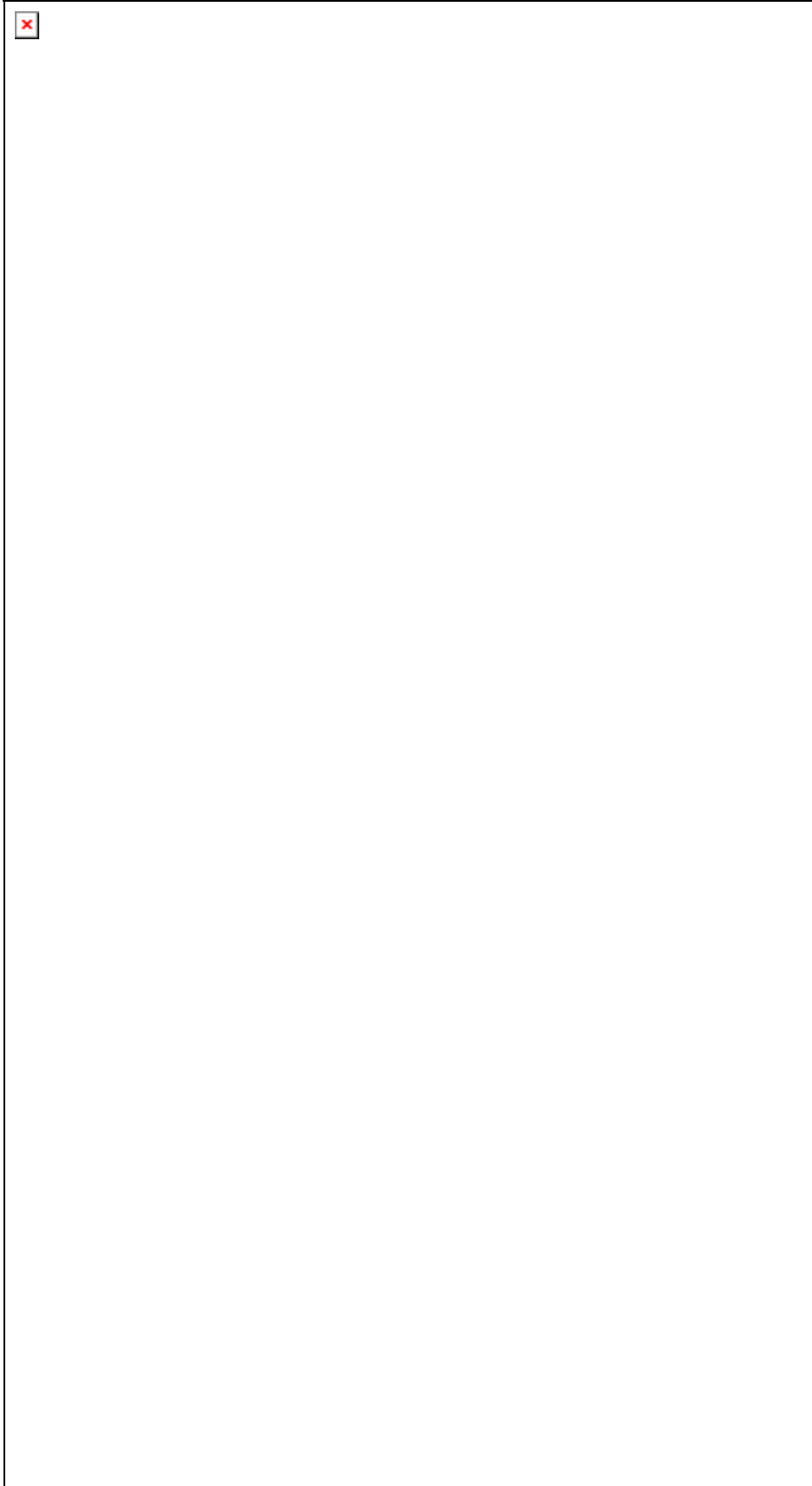
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* Norton Topics Online: www.wwnorton.com/nael



TODAY A NEW SUN RISES FOR ME I

The Sequel to Lorraine Hansberry's
A Raisin in the Sun

1 This title, in my eyes, is supposed to conjure up an image different from that of a raisin drying out in the sun. The title of my play is meant to suggest a new beginning and another chance. The words of my title come from a quote by Anne de Lenclos in *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, which reads "Today a new sun rises for me; everything lives, everything is animated, everything seems to speak to me of my passion, everything invites me to cherish it..." (23). Nearly three years have passed since I originally wrote this play, and I now feel I have the ability to deepen the conflict and develop my characters more fully. In the spring semester of my junior year, I enrolled in a class entitled The Civil Rights Movement; this class greatly increased both my knowledge and awareness about the many aspects of the movement. In addition, I feel that my views on feminism have matured since my writing of my first play; moreover, my mind has continued to open and develop through my various experiences as a college student. I hope to use this increased awareness to achieve my goals of deepening the conflict and strengthening my characters (Canfield 195).

2

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, one of my favorite plays, serves as the main source of inspiration for this drama that I am attempting to create. *A Raisin in the Sun* was Hansberry's first play and was an immediate Broadway success (Malpede 163). *Raisin* also earned Hansberry the New York Drama Critics' Award for the 1958-1959 season (Malpede 163). Along with the success of the actual play, this dramatic work also "establish[ed] her as the most prominent woman playwright in the country" (Malpede 163). Hansberry was obviously troubled, however, by the label of "Negro." According to the foreword of her autobiography, "Nothing ever said about her, for example, more amused or alternately struck such sparks of wrath from her than the notion that she was `a writer who happened to be a Negro. (An early, admiring interviewer . . . intended that misquote as a compliment; there was a hot exchange of letters concerning it, but the designation lingered because it was . . . what most Americans were only too eager to hear)" (Hansberry xxiv).

(In order of appearance)³

Ruth Younger ⁴

Walter Lee Younger⁵

Tamika Younger ⁶

Joanie Star⁷

³ This cast list appears in a similar fashion to that in *A Raisin of the Sun*. In *Raisin*, Hansberry placed the character sketches within the text of the play, as opposed to with the cast list. As I attempt to imitate Hansberry's style, I will also place my character sketches within the text.

⁴ Ruth Younger was an actual character from Hansberry's *Raisin*.

⁵ Walter Lee Younger was an actual character from Hansberry's *Raisin*.

⁶ Tamika Younger is a character from my imagination.

⁷ Joanie Star is also a character from my imagination.

3

The action of the play is set in a primarily "white" neighborhood in Clybourne Park, a suburb of Chicago. The play occurs during the 1960s.

Act I

Scene 1: Tuesday morning.
Scene 2: Tuesday afternoon.

Act II

Scene 1: Monday morning, seven years later.
Scene II: Wednesday afternoon. 8

8 This page, continuing in my endeavor to emulate the style of Lorraine Hansberry, corresponds to a similar plan in *Raisin*. The setting of this play occurs in Clybourne Park, the neighborhood where the Younger family moved to in *Raisin*. The neighborhood is primarily white and the location also relates to a particular situation from Hansberry's life. Stay tuned . . .

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The Younger living room is a comfortable, open area. The furniture appears worn, but it is apparent that great care is taken in keeping the room neat and tidy. A sofa table, adorned with pictures of the family, including Beneatha (Walter's sister), Mama (Walter's deceased mother), and Travis (the son of Ruth and Walter), sits in the corner of the room. Many windows, including a large picture window, constitute the left wall of the living room.

In stark contrast to the apartment where the Younger family lived in A Raisin in the Sun, this home, although nothing fancy, displays the family's pride in every corner. The weariness and slight despair of the apartment no longer exist; moreover, this house shines with life and hope.⁹

To the right, exists a type of hallway. One should assume several bedrooms are found in this hallway. The kitchen is also to the right of the living room. Again, in great contrast to the old apartment, the kitchen holds a kitchen table and contains a generous amount of space for kitchen activities. A very well-lit space, the kitchen sparkles with pride.

Time: 1960.

Place: Clybourne Park in Chicago.

⁹ The Younger's "new" house, the one that I have "created," stands in great contrast to the apartment the family lived in during *Raisin*. In her stage directions for "Raisin," Hansberry describes the apartment living room as an area "that would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being" (Hansberry 23). I tried to create a very bright, open space with this new house. With all the natural light in the new house, it differs greatly from "the sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day [that] is only that which fights its way through this little window" (Hansberry 24). The viewer (reader) must realize, however, that Hansberry did not intend for *Raisin* to be associated with a "happy ending." In fact, Hansberry remarked in an interview that if someone "thinks that's a happy ending . . . I invite him to come live in one of the communities where the Youngers are going!" (Nemiroff 11). The bright, optimistic nature of the house is set in contrast to the malevolence of society.

At Rise: The set glows from the brightness of an early spring morning. The sound of an alarm clock blares from the bedroom hallway. A sleepy-eyed, Ruth enters the kitchen, puts on a pot of coffee and begins preparing oatmeal for breakfast. She is dressed for work, wearing a wool plaid skirt, a sweater, and pumps.¹⁰

Because of the strain on her earlier in her life, she appears older than her age of forty; however, something in her eyes hints at pride. As she prepares breakfast, she keeps checking the clock, apparently waiting for the rest of the family to rise for the day.

Ruth: Morning time! Let's go now. Get a move on Tamika and Walter. *(She continues moving about the kitchen, setting the table and pouring the juice. The house remains otherwise dead silent.)* GET YOURSELVES OUT HERE, NOW! *(First scuttling steps move down the hallway, followed by larger, heavier footsteps. Tamika and Walter Lee appear. Tamika, an eleven-year-old with chubby cheeks, is a cute little girl who wears her hair in an Afro. ll She wears pink flannel pajamas and is shy and reserved, but very bright for her age. She is an observant child. Walter Lee, a man of about forty-five, also appears older than he is due to the stresses from earlier on in his life.)* 12 Finally!

Tamika: *(Carrying a book under her arm.)* Geez, Mama! I was coming, I was coming.

Walter: *(Sleepily.)* Let's just eat, or I'm gonna be late for work.

10 Although Ruth cleaned houses in *Raisin* and did not have a job in my first draft of this play, I have decided to make her a school secretary. In revising this play, I am attempting to give Ruth more substance. Her job as a school secretary displays that she has taken ride in her abilities.

11 Tamika! She is the "daughter" not only my imagination but also the daughter of Walter Lee and Ruth. Ruth was pregnant at the end of *Raisin*, and I decided she deserved a daughter. Tamika is also a slightly altered version of a young Lorraine Hansberry. According to biographer Anne Cheney, Hansberry was a "fat, bookish . . . girl" (2). As a child, Hansberry was very observant and an outsider. As Cheney explains, though, these observant ways of Hansberry greatly benefited her as a writer. Here, in *Today*, young Tamika possesses these emotional and physical traits of a young Lorraine. I'd like to mention Tamika is the namesake for a special high school friend of mine. '2 In *Raisin*, Walter Lee was a very gruff, pessimistic individual. He constantly felt sorry for himself because of both his job and his status in society. A constantly-happy Walter Lee was at the center of my first play; however, in an attempt to strengthen my other characters, I allowed Walter to grow more slowly during this revision. In addition, he now owns the limousine service, as opposed to simply serving as a driver.

6

Ruth: *(Ignoring the complaints of her family begins dishing out the oatmeal.)* What are you reading now, girl? *(With a hint of pride in her voice.)* Always reading, you are. One book after another.

Tamika: *(Waking up a little. Her father appears to do the same.)* A book about Emmett Till, Mama. We're studying him in school right now. He's the little boY from the Southside of Chicago, just like us, who was murdered in Mississippi. 3

Walter: *(Waking up a bit.)* Ruth, you remember when his picture ran in *Jet* magazine? Shocked the hell outta me.

Tamika: (*Replies in a matter-of-fact manner.*) We talked 'bout the magazine in class. Ms. Jackson said his mama wanted the picture in there so the whole world could see what'd been done to her boy.

Ruth: (*With a sad look on her face.*) I can't even imagine the pain that mother experienced . . . I would've done the same thing. Run that picture for all to see what those white men did to that boy.

Tamika: (*In an excited voice.*) Right now, in Nashville, there's lots of students sittin' at lunch counters so that blacks can eat beside the whites.

Walter: (*Surprised.*) Now 'Mika, you even know where Nashville is? How you know where it's at?

Tamika: (*Proudly.*) Mama taught me all the states, Daddy. Someday I want to be like those students in Nashville. I wanna go to college and learn things that'll help people get along better.

Ruth: (*Smiling.*) Tamika, if there's one thing that I've learned since we moved from that old apartment, it's that you just got to put your mind to the test. No one's telling me that I gotta clean some white ladies' houses no more. And look at your daddy. He moved his way up from being a limo driver to managin' all the other drivers . . . now you go run and get yourself ready for school. (*after taking a few more bites of oatmeal, Tamika exits to bedroom.*)

13 As I mentioned, I was enrolled in a Civil Rights class last year, and I really had a strong desire to incorporate some of my knowledge from that class into this play. The story of Emmett Till fit well into the context of my play because, as stated, he hailed from the Southside of Chicago - the place where my play is set. According to *Voices of Freedom*, "In the forty years since World War I began, Chicago's black population had grown up from some forty thousand to half a million. Many blacks had moved up from the South, seeking jobs and a better way of life. Of those, 75 percents hailed from Mississippi. Emmett Till was part of the emigrant community and was closing the circle that summer, traveling back to his family's home place" (Hampton 2).

Walter: (*In a hushed tone.*) Ruth, I know that 'Mika's a smart girl, but we ain't got enough money to send her to college. You both just big dreamers. And I don't know if I like the idea of her wantin' to go be like those students in Nashville. She be our little girl.

Ruth: (*Nodding her head*) Yes, Walter Lee, she's our little girl - but little girls grow up. They all grow up.

Curtain

SCENE 2

The light of the afternoon sun has fallen upon the house. Ruth, having changed out of her work clothes, now dons a housecoat. She is sitting on the couch, paging through a magazine, when Tamika is heard bursting through the kitchen door. Muffled sobs can be heard echoing from the kitchen. Soon, Tamika appears in the living room.

Ruth: *(Tossing the magazine on the table, she immediately begins talking to Tamika.)* Baby, baby! What's wrong . . . why the tears? Are you sick? Did you have a bad day at school? *(She begins softly rubbing Tamika's back.)*

Tamika: *(Still crying, she sits in silence, trying to calm down. After a few moments, they both sit down on the couch, and Tamika begins sharing her story with Ruth.)* Oh, mama. We were talkin' about the Emmett Till book in school today and I said that someday I wanna be like those students in Nashville. *(Her sobs start increasing once again.)*

Ruth: *(Continuing to rub Tamika's back, Ruth waits for Tamika to finish her story.)* What then, 'Mika? What happened when you told your class that?

Tamika: *(Taking a deep breath, she prepares to finish her story.)* Well, no one even said anything during class, but then after school, on my way home, Joanie Star from down the street started yelling at me. She kept sayin' Emmett Till got himself in trouble for talkin' dirty to that white woman. *(Choking up a bit.)* She told me I could never be like the people in Nashville 'cause her daddy told her little black girls don't belong in school.

Ruth: *(In a strong, yet comforting voice.)* Tamika, let me tell you somethin' very important. When your daddy, grandma, and I decided to move to this neighborhood some white man, name Mr. Lindner, tried to pay us money not to move here. But, Tamika, we didn't give into him. We knew he was just tryin' to keep blacks out of this neighborhood. We stood up for what we believed was right. We stood up for what we knew we deserved. *(Looking Tamika straight in the eye.)* You deserve respect 'Mika. I don't want no one to ever try to tell you any differently. You understand?

Tamika: *(Wiping her eyes.)* Yeah, Mama, I guess.

Ruth: *(Giving Tamika a kiss on the cheek, Ruth gets up from the couch and starts walking towards the kitchen.)* Now, I'm going to go get started on dinner. Why don't you take a little rest on the couch before dinner. *(Ruth leaves the room, heading to the kitchen to begin dinner. She is heard moving around the kitchen, gathering supplies. The clanking and closing of cabinets and movement of pots and pans can be faintly heard coming from the kitchen. In the living room, Tamika lies on the couch flipping through a book she has taken out of her school bag. Suddenly, a scuttle can be heard and seen outside the picture window.)*

(Coming from the outside is the voice of Joanie Star. Joanie is the white elevenyear-old neighbor of the Younger's. Several other white children also scuttle around the window.)

Joanie: (*Joanie has a very whiny, bratty tone of voice. She sounds snotty and spoiled.*) Little black girl thinks she's so smart. She thinks she's going to go to Nashville and change the world. My daddy said no little blacks belong anywhere except the kitchen or cleaning the white people's houses. (*The children begin laughing at Joanie and pointing inside at Tamika. Tamika gets up off the couch to go see what is causing the commotion. As she is walking across the room, half of a brick comes crashing through the picture window. Glass shatters everywhere, and Tamika falls to the ground in a state of shock. The rock does miss hitting her; however, out of fear, she begins crying again. The children run off.*) 14

Ruth: (*Screaming loudly from the kitchen.*) MIKA, BABY, MIKA. WHAT ON EARTH?! (*Entering the living room, Ruth notices her child lying on the floor with the shards of glass surrounding her. Trying to hold back the tears, she leans over to pick Tamika up out of the glass when Walter Lee enters the living room, apparently just arriving home from work.*)

Walter: (*Very upset, Walter heads straight for Ruth and Tamika, picking up the child and setting her on the couch.*) Ruth, 'Mika, what the hell is going on?

Ruth: (*Very angry.*) Ignorance, Walter Lee. That's what's goin' on. Children made fun of Tamika after school today, and I think they were the kids who threw that (*Pointing to the rock.*) through the window. Thank God Tamika's okay, but we are going to go over to the Star's house and have a little discussion with them. (*Walter wears an expression of hurt and anger on his face. He picks up Tamika and places her in his lap. Hugging Tamika, he replies to Ruth's statement.*)

Walter: (*Nodding his head.*) We'll call tomorrow, Ruth. You're right. We can't let this go.

Curtain

14 This is the situation to which I referred in an early footnote. According to Cheney, Lorraine and her sister "went inside to the living room, and a brick came crashing through the window" (4). Although Hansberry was not hurt, Cheney explains that the brick nearly missed hitting and killing her. Many critics say that this incident may have provided "the germ for A Raisin in *the Sun*" (Cheney 4).

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Time: 1967, the middle of the night.

Place: Same as the first act.

At rise: The house of the Youngers is slightly different. The same furniture exists, but it may be moved around a bit. The scene opens during the middle of the night, so the house is dark. A soft spotlight shines on Tamika who is asleep at the kitchen table. A copy of WEB. DuBois Souls of the Black Folk, 'S along with several crumpled pieces of notebook paper, lie on the table next to Tamika. A sealed envelope rests between the pages of the book. Tamika has matured into a tall, lean young woman. Ruth enters the kitchen, appearing curious as to why Tamika is sleeping at the table.

Ruth: (After turning on the light in the kitchen, she begins lightly tapping Tamika on the shoulder.)

Tamika, baby, Tamika. Why you sleeping in the kitchen? Come on, now, why don't you head to your room. Look's like you've done enough homework for tonight.

Tamika: *(Slowly waking up, she answers sleepily.)* Oh, hi Mama. I wasn't studying. I was just out here finishing something up and reading a little. I couldn't sleep.

¹⁵ I have decided to allow Tamika to read W.E.B. DuBois simply because he was a good friend of the Hansberry family (Cheney 4). "Langston Hughes, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and other luminaries" often visited the Hansberry family (Cheney 2).

12

Ruth: (*Sitting down next to Tamika.*) Couldn't sleep? Somethin' on your mind baby?

Tamika: (*Motioning to the letters.*) Mama, see all of these letters strewn about here. Well . . . well, they're all scholarship essays. Actually, (*pulling the envelope from the book*), here's the final one. (*Pauses.*) Mama, I know Daddy wants me to go to school near here, but this essay . . . this essay is for Howard.¹⁶

Ruth: (*Knodding.*) For Howard University, 'Mika?

Tamika: Yes, Mama. The essay's for Howard University. Howard University in Washington, D.C. But, I've been sitting out here, reading and thinking. I really don't think I'm going to send it. I started thinking about how you and Daddy have helped me so much, and I just don't see how'd it be fair for me to go far from home.

Ruth: (*Placing her hands on top of Tamika's hands.*) 'Mika, you know we always wanted what's best for you. We want to see you grab good things that come your way. Why Howard? Everything I read about that school right now talks about the problems they been having there.

Tamika: (*Eagerly nodding.*) Exactly, Mama. That's just it. Things are changing at Howard. Students are challenging the old ways of the school. I want to be part of the change. I want to help make the change. (*Pauses.*) But even so, I would never disobey you and Daddy to jump into something like that.

Ruth: (*Not quite sure what to say.*) 'Mika, it's late. Why don't we leave this mess for the morning. You go get some sleep now. (*Leans over to hug her daughter.*) Don't worry about Howard or your daddy. We'll talk more about this later. Okay, baby?

Tamika: (*Kissing her mother on the cheek.*) Thanks for listening, Mama. 'Night. (*Exit Tamika.*)

Ruth: (*Begins straightening out the items on the kitchen table. After some thought, she removes the envelope from the book and stuffs it into the pocket of her robe. Turning off the light in the kitchen, she exits.*)

Curtain

¹⁶ From 1967-1968, the students at Howard University protested the school's traditional method of teaching about black culture. Students held sit-ins and the notion of "black is beautiful" swept across campus. Because of the many changes occurring at Howard, I decided it was the perfect school to have Tamika pursue. I feel the changes at the school reflect the transformations occurring in the Younger household.

13

Scene 2

About one month after the nighttime discussion, the scene opens in midafternoon. Again, the lighting reflects the dimmer light of late afternoon. Ruth and Walter are in the kitchen discussing the Tamika-matter as the curtain rises; however, they cannot be seen, only heard. Walter has aged somewhat over the last six years and is wearing a dress shirt and pants, having just arrived home from work. The focus is on the hallway next to the kitchen, where Tamika stands.

Ruth: *(In a very serious tone)* Walter Lee, I need to talk to you 'bout a phone call I received at school today.

Walter: *(Paging through the newspaper lying in front of him on the kitchen table).* What's that Ruth? What'd you say?

Ruth: *(Growing frustrated.)* Walter Lee, Tamika got accepted to Howard University. They're going to pay her way through.

Walter: *(Dropping the paper, he answers her in a shocked tone.)* Ruth, did you just say Tamika's goin' to Howard? I said there's no way she's livin' that far from home.

Ruth: *(Shaking her head, she begins speaking in a very calm, rational tone.)* Walter Lee, imagine if we hadn't taken a chance with buying this house. 'Magine if we'd accepted that cash from Lindner. You'd never have had the courage to change jobs. I *know* I'd still be cleanin' houses if we weren't livin' here. Don't you see, baby, 'Mika needs to do the same. She needs to take some chances.

Walter: *(Frustrated.)* But Ruth, we different. We're adults. 'Mika's only a child.

Ruth: Walter Lee, there ain't good reason you can give me for that child to stay here. She told me that she wants to go there and be part of the changes. She wants to grow, Walter Lee. We need to let her do that. *(As Ruth is finishing this statement, Tamika enters. She heads straight for her father.)*

Tamika: *(In a determined voice.)* Daddy, I wasn't going to send that letter to Howard. Actually, I didn't send it. Mama, you sent it didn't you? *(Ruth nods.)* I can't tell you I how feel right now knowing I can be part of Howard University. Both you and Mama have made me who I am today and the person I am wants to go to Washington D.C. *(Walter Lee, seeing the excitement in his daughter's eyes, begins nodding his head in agreement.)*

Walter: *(Slowly).* 'Mika, I'm still not convinced 'bout this, but maybe you and your Mama are right. Maybe you're ready to go.

14

Ruth: *(In a determined voice.)* Tamika, I trust you, baby. I know you'll be part of something. Part of something real big. Respect your dreams, child. 17 Respect your dreams or they'll dry out like raisins.

Curtain

17 As I have attempted to do throughout this entire play, I have once again tried to imitate Hansberry's style of *Raisin*. According to Karen Malpede, "Hansberry's ability to create not one central character but a network of many compelling personalities allowed her to end up, always on the side of freedom and hope" (164). Freedom and hope are the exact qualities that I feel complete the play. No one knows if Tamika's college experience will be successful. No one knows what the future holds with the Younger's house; however, an overwhelming feeling of hope is sparked by the closing of the play . . . at least in this playwright's eyes!

Scene one: A Day in the Life of the Annotated Bibliography.

The setting is a small college library. The stale smell of old books fills the room, and the soft whispers of procrastinating college students quietly echo throughout the library. A table, completely covered with notebook paper, pencils, binders, and a yellow book, sits in the center of the stage. With no time to spare, Cassie, a strawberry blond senior, digs through the piles Her annotated bibliography and play are due.

Searching for sources, she did not realize they would come alive for her -just as soon as she read them, that is

Works Cited

Adams, Michael. "Lorraine Hansberry." The Dictionary of Literary Biography. Ed. M.

Thomas Hester. Vol. 26. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1992.

- ***Cassie: Where on earth will I ever find a good overview source for this research paper?***
Suddenly the DLB jumps off the shelf into her hands
DLB (proudly): I am here to serve you!
Cassie sits down and reads the book.
Cassie: Wow. The DLB was a great overview source that provided me with tons of facts about Lorraine Hansberry's life. Not only did it have a picture, but also short criticisms of her plays and facts about her life. This book was definitely a great jumping off point for my final research paper.

Canfield, Jack. Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul. Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, Inc., 1996

- ***Lying in bed late one night, Cassie stresses about how she will write her play.***
Cassie: Inspiration . . . I need inspiration.
Suddenly her bolster knocks her in the head, and "Chicken Soup" lands in her hands.
Book: I am here to inspire you, complete with quotes, stories and more.
Cassie: Oh, thank you. You have just provided me with a title for my play.

Cheney, Anne. Lorraine Hansberry. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

- ***Cassie (wandering about the library): I really, really need a good source for finding out the inside scoop on Hansberry's life.***
Book: I am here to save you day!
Cassie: Thank you so much. Not only do you include a well-organized time line of Hansberry's life, but you are filled with little anecdotes about her life. These really help me reach a more personal level in my research.

Hampton, Henry, ed. Voices of Freedom. New York: Bantam Books, 1990.1

- ***Cassie (digging through her backpack): My Civil Rights book. I can't believe I still have this thing in here. Maybe I can use it for this play.***
Book: Cassie, open me up right this second. I will provide a great deal of

inspiration for you to help strengthen the plot. I am filled with oral histories from those who were connected with the Civil Rights Movement.

Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. New York: Vintage Books, 1958.

- *As Cassie sifts through her piles once again, she finds an actual play written by Hansberry and recalls reading it earlier in the semester.*
Play: I'm what makes Hansberry who she is. I am the product of her life and her imagination. For this reason, I am probably the most useful source you have when it comes to figuring out what exactly Hansberry wrote about. I am the product.
Cassie: Yes ... now, I remember. I absolutely loved you. Especially after reading some criticisms about you, I really do feel like you allow me to better understand who Hansberry is.

Hansberry, Lorraine. To Be Young, Gifted and Black. New York: Vintage Books, 1969. 2

- *Leaning over to book that dropped on the floor, she discovers this book*
Book: I am Hansberry's autobiography. Not only do I provide background on her life, but I also offer unique tidbits from her plays.
Cassie: I really think that you can help me discover an insight into Hansberry's unique writing style. Thank you!

Malpede, Karen. "Lorraine Hansberry: An Introduction." Women in Theatre. New York: Limelight Editions, 1983. 163-174.

- **Book:** Although I am just another criticism, I offer you actual letters written by Hansberry that deal with her plays.
Cassie: I know . . . I am so happy I found you. I really like reading the actual letters written by Hansberry because then I can actually see how she felt about what she wrote. It's like reading Hansberry's criticisms of herself. You are definitely an insightful source.

1 Added after 2000 revision.

2 Added after 2000 revision.

As the saga of Playwright Sloan continues, she realizes that she has an abundance of sources that just will not be able to be used within the context of her play; however, listed below are several of the supporting "actors and actresses " who had a large role in revealing details about Hansberry's life to the budding playwright. These supporters not only helped inspire Sloan's play but also provided her with great insight into the mind of Lorraine Hansberry.

Works Consulted

"Different Kind of Hamlet." Telegraph Herald 6 March 1998.

- *As Cassie digs through the pile of scattered papers, she comes upon this article her Dramatists professor had provided her with earlier in the year.*
Cassie: You are an extremely helpful article because you help bring Hansberry's works into the 90s. Plus, you provide quotes from people of today who still react to the deceased Hansberry's drama.
Article: Wow! I am honored that you praise me so.

Gomez, Jewelle. L. "Lorraine Hansberry: Uncommon Warrior." Reading Black,
Reading Feminist. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Penguin Group,
1990. 307-317.

- **Book: I am so glad that you found me. I am filled with criticisms that deal both with the issues of race and gender, something Hansberry often dealt with and struggled with during her lifetime. You will be so pleased with my contents because I offer various views and opinions from men and women alike. Cassie: You are just what I was looking for, and it is wonderful because you were more recently published. This means that you, like the newspaper article, can provide me with recent reactions to Hansberry's drama.**

Leeson, Richard. Lorraine Hansberry: A Research and Production Sourcebook.
London: Greenwood Press, 1997.

- **Book: Well, here I am. I am just another source and just another book about Hansberry, but I definitely can provide you with some more interesting facts about her life. Plus, I include plot summaries of her plays that will allow you to see what other aspects of life she dealt with in her drama.**
Cassie: I am very happy I found you. Although I would love to read all the

other plays of Hansberry, there just isn't enough time, but you offer me a chance to still see the issues she dealt with in her plays.

Lorraine Hansberry: The Black Experience in the Creation of Drama. Videotape. Narr.

Claudia McNeil. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1992. 35 min.

- *As Cassie continues digging through the piles upon piles she finally comes across another useful source -- a video.*
Video: Here I am ... the answer to all your prayers. I give you Lorraine Hansberry in person. You can see her gestures, watch clips of some of her plays, and simply learn about her by actually listening to her talk. Can you find a better source?
Cassie: Well, let's not get too proud. All these sources are very useful, but it is great to see Hansberry in the flesh. I really feel like I can get to "know" her by hearing her speak and just watching her interact with the interviewer.

Wallace, Michele. "Variations on Negation and Heresy of Black Feminist Creativity."

Reading Black, Reading Feminist. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York:

Penguin Group, 1990. 52-68.

- **Book:** Here I am again. I am such a useful source! I am so glad that you found me. I am filled with criticisms that deal both with the issues of race and gender. This is something Hansberry often dealt with and struggled with during her lifetime. You will be so pleased with my contents because I offer various views and opinions from men and women alike.
Cassie: You are just what I was looking for, and it is wonderful because you were just recently published. This means that you, like the newspaper article, can provide me with recent reactions to Hansberry's drama. Thank you!

The curtain drops as Cassie, wearing a tremendously large smile, realizes her research and her paper are now complete.

Cassie Sloan

Reflective Essay

My parents instilled a passion for reading in me even as a toddler; years later, an excellent, extremely motivational third grade teacher encouraged my writing in ways that all teachers should note. At the age of eight, I was a child who loved reading and writing, and at the age of eighteen, I was a first-year student at Loras College who decided to major in English. I am now a senior in college (thinking about that fact literally sends a strange mixture of frightened, yet excited shivers charging through my body) and a very different person than that nervous first-year student I used to be.

The entire idea sounds almost trite-I've grown tremendously through my college days; however, as I have spent the last three months mulling over what to highlight in this reflective essay, I am being completely honest when I say I have matured into someone the Cassie from three years ago might not even recognize. I would not say my greatest strength as an English major is my ability to compose an "A" paper or my confidence in reading an assigned work and discussing its characters and conflicts during class. What defines my greatest strength is indeed my ability to recognize that I-which encompasses both my mind and heart have grown, matured, and become more open-minded throughout my course of time with the English department.

As a first year student, I had no concept of what was meant by the word patriarchy. Feminism was some farfetched, radical notion that I felt had no impact on my life or me. Immediately, however, upon enrolling in English classes, a new world began to unfold before my eyes. I began to soak up the information that was presented, in addition to soaking up what I was reading and writing about in my many English courses. The most important element, of course, is that this process continues to this day. I constantly attempt to draw connections between English classes and courses in other content areas; moreover, I realize that I will not leave college as the perfect English scholar. Recognizing this fact the notion that I must continue to grow and evolve- is truly my key asset as an English major.

Had I believed that I had grown into the ultimate English student, this portfolio would not have been possible. By adding to my poetry analysis, my first essay, as well as

restructuring certain parts of it, I recognized that I have changed even from last spring. Approaching a paper I wrote as a first-year student (that I might mention had not been touched since that time) was an uplifting experience. My ability to strengthen my characters and recognize the need for a deeper conflict brought my growth process into light. I am even able to draw connections between these two works-one a critical essay and one a creative play.

I exalt in the fact that the feminism that once seemed so foreign to me now functions as the

overriding theme of this portfolio. In my eyes, Katherine Philips and Lorraine Hansberry are two extremely strong women to be incorporated into this piece. Philips, as one of the few women writers of the seventeenth century, and Hansberry, as one of the first women and African-American dramatists, are connected in that they both wrote against great opposition. Three years ago I do not believe I would have recognized such a connection; three years from now, I would hope to be able to draw even greater connections between these two women. I realize that I must utilize my recognition of growth and the ever-changing progress of our minds and knowledge to the best of my ability to assist me in not only my future pursuits in the area of English, but also in my life as well.