

**Problems in Editing American Drama:
The Literary Executor (*A Raisin in the Sun*)**

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This is the most complete edition
of *A Raisin in the Sun* ever
published.

Robert Nemiroff, 1988

When I teach *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, I often devote considerable time to her Naturalist dramaturgy.¹ I talk with students about *Raisin*'s well-made play structure with its cycles of rising and falling action, discuss the use of setting, parse the vernacular but always narratively propulsive dialogue, and emphasize the entanglement of race, economics, and social norms in the characters' dilemmas. But I also point to a fleeting moment when the play deviates from its finely wrought Realist style. Act 2, Scene 1 opens with Beneatha dancing to a record, attired in Nigerian garb gifted her by Asagai in the previous scene. Walter arrives, very drunk, and embraces the African mood in the apartment, praising Jomo Kenyatta, leaping onto the table, verbally painting a savannah scene, and imagining himself as a powerful warrior figure. He and Beneath engage in an exuberant call and response. During that sequence, one stage direction leaps out:

And now the lighting shifts subtly to suggest the world of WALTER's imagination, and the mood shifts from pure comedy. It is the inner WALTER speaking: the Southside chauffeur has assumed an unexpected majesty (S2 79)²

This is a magical moment in the text, when the play suspends Realism for an Expressionist lighting cue. The production's design here ceases to simulate reality and instead represents the inner, subjective experience of a character. But there's something odd about this moment: Lorraine Hansberry never wrote that stage direction.

¹ This essay will be one in a series of essays on the textual criticism of American plays from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Part specific textual criticism, part methodological demonstration, and part polemic, the essays advocate for the application of textual criticism to a set of texts too often treated with indifference to their textuality. (Or, at least, given the challenges posed by copyright for contemporary texts, an argument for treating archival and other sources in a manner that will make future scholarship on these texts easier and more accurate.) The bulk of my polemic will appear in the general introduction to these essays, but may be summarized thus for now: if we had available for the Early Modern period even one tenth of the information we have about contemporary texts, our knowledge of Shakespeare and his contemporaries would be infinitely richer, helping us to better understand the context for playwriting and play-making, and the way meaning unfurls across the production, performance, and reproduction of those texts. Let us not squander the ability to understand our recent and contemporary theatrical milieu by neglecting that information because we do not see its importance today. The other essays will include: a study of *Almost, Maine* by John Cariani and of Cariani's practical edits to the text; an analysis of Tony Kushner's major rewritings of *Angels in America*; and an exploration of *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell and its belated publishing history.

² Citations to published scripts will be primarily inline, using a code explained below to indicate the version cited, followed by a page number. I treat typescripts similarly, with pagination indicated by act-scene-page, where 1-2-5 indicates Act 1, Scene 2, page 5 of the version referenced.

In the years after Hansberry's death in 1965, her ex-husband and literary executor Robert Nemiroff revised the play for new publications. (Two print versions had appeared prior to her death.) Among the changes Nemiroff made was the addition of this stage direction. It has antecedents in textual materials from Hansberry's lifetime. Prompt books used in the original production include cues for exactly this kind of Expressionist lighting during the scene (though at a slightly earlier moment in the dialogue than Nemiroff's stage direction). But neither the play's drafts, nor the editions published during Hansberry's lifetime ever suggested that the play's published text should invoke such an Expressionist gesture. Indeed, Hansberry's text even hints that Walter's inner life should remain inaccessible to the audience: a different stage direction observes that Walter "sees what we cannot" (R 69).

I point out this moment in *Raisin* to my students, but I know now that it does not belong, quite, to the play that Hansberry wrote. And as it turns out, many stage directions and even some dialogue in modern editions of *A Raisin in the Sun* suffer from the same problem. Why and how did today's texts of *Raisin* veer from their originals? What, precisely, are those differences? And what do these changes teach us about our understanding of this important text?

A Raisin in the Sun, the first play by a black female playwright on Broadway, officially premiered on March 11, 1959 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. It was produced by Philip Rose and David J. Cogan, directed by Lloyd Richards, and starred Sidney Poitier as Walter, Claudia McNeil as Mama, Ruby Dee as Ruth, and Diana Sands as Beneatha. It won the Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play. A national touring production followed—though, given segregation in the US at the time, the play did not tour the southern United States. Recognized at the time as a powerful, important work of theater, the play did not, however, move immediately to the center of the US theatrical canon. White reviewers tended to universalize the play's exploration of Black family life, while some Black reviewers regarded the play—at least, in its Broadway premiere—as fundamentally conservative.³ Hansberry died in 1965 at the age of 34, leaving her ex-husband Robert Nemiroff as literary executor. While not ignored in the 1960s and 1970s, the play witnessed a major revival of interest in the 1980s, particularly on stage. This resurgence was due in part to Nemiroff's concerted efforts to promote high-quality revivals and led to sustained attention to *Raisin* as a major dramatic achievement in the theater and on the page. Since then, Hansberry's play—along with her life and other writings, both literary and analytic—has earned wide attention among scholars and the general public.⁴

Despite such attention, the textual status of her most famous work remains extremely muddy and largely ignored.⁵ *Raisin* is anything but a clear and stable authorial text—it has a complex his-

³ For the latter, see most notably Amiri Baraka's reappraisal in B2, "A Critical Reevaluation: *A Raisin in the Sun*'s Enduring Passion." See Robin Bernstein, "Inventing a Fishbowl: White Supremacy and the Critical Reception of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Modern Drama* 42, no. 1 (March 1999), pp. 16–27, on the play's initial critical reception.

⁴ For examples of recent scholarship, consider three recent book-length studies of Hansberry: Imani Perry, *Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry* (Beacon Press, 2018); Soyica Diggs Colbert, *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry* (Yale University Press, 2021); and Charles J. Shields, *Lorraine Hansberry: The Life Behind *A Raisin in the Sun** (Holt, 2022).

⁵ A few observers have addressed the text's alterations, though none in as much detail as this essay offers. Margaret B. Wilkerson, the pre-eminent Hansberry scholar of her generation, first addressed the changes from the 1980s in "A Raisin in the Sun: Anniversary of an American Classic," *Theatre Journal* 38, no. 4 (December, 1986), pp. 441–52. Wilkerson focuses on "recent script revisions" in F2, particularly three scenes I address later: Walter/Travis, the

tory in typescript and each published edition transforms it in ways both small and large. Parsing out textual differences and understanding the motives and processes that produced them reveals important stories about the play's evolving reception and about Nemiroff's role as an editor. Ultimately, we will see how the editing of *Raisin* disguises the play's meaning in 1959, demonstrates Hansberry's sense of the leading edge of Black culture and thought (in ways not evident in the play in 1959), and does not do justice to Hansberry's skills as a dramatic writer.

This essay proceeds as follows: A history of the text comes first, addressing both its origins in typescript drafts prior to production and its subsequent print history in the US and UK. I then break down the kinds of changes to the text that appear in its many print versions, their relative import, and the stated reasons for those changes. A detailed analysis of three different kinds of changes to the text follows: first, a set of passages excised from the original production but restored in subsequent editions; second, some minor but consequential changes in the play's dialogue and staging; and, third, the play's climactic scene, which has undergone significant revision. Finally, I offer an overall assessment of the state of the text as currently in print, as well as of the problems that would require resolution in a complete scholarly edition.

Through this work, I wish readers to understand a rather simple point: current versions of *A Raisin in the Sun* are *already* edited texts. They are not scholarly editions, however, and they fail to identify clearly some important editorial interventions. The scholar's job is not necessarily to strip the play of its editorial accretions, but to specify them, to explain their history and rationale, and, eventually, to offer readers the opportunity to consider the text's transformations as part of the play's legacy and meaning. This essay begins that process of analysis through a rigorous examination of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

History of the Text

Before examining in detail *Raisin*'s textual transformations, I offer a quick sketch of the existing evidence of the play's composition, followed by discussion of its publication and a few other relevant texts.

Mrs. Johnson scene, and Beneatha/Asagai. She says little about the many more, shorter changes made to the text. Woodie King, Jr., "The Restructuring of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*" in *The Impact of Race: Theatre and Culture* (Applause Books, 2003) heavily criticizes Nemiroff, who "saw fit to restructure and allow others to restructure" Hansberry's play. King mixes some accurate critiques of F2 and F3 with some incorrect assumptions about the relationship between the Nemiroff-edited texts and Hansberry's drafts. He sees all of Nemiroff's edits as impositions, going so far as to claim (incorrectly) that the lines in the Beneatha's hair sequence are "rewrites" and "false," rather than documented parts of Hansberry's drafts that were cut in rehearsal. Benjamin Schwartz, "The Unfinishedness & Untimeliness of *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 64, no. 4 (Winter, 2022), pp. 396–415, contrasts four versions of the text (R; the musical adaptation, *Raisin*; F2; and Hansberry's screenplay) and their claim to be "definitive" against Hansberry's radically unsettled politics, which embraces "untimeliness" and "unfinishedness." Schwartz draws here on interpretations of Hansberry by Perry (2018) and Colbert (2021). Like King, Schwartz confuses some details, most notably missing differences among versions of the Beneatha/Asagai scene (406). Finally, Deirdre Osborne, who edited M3, the 2011 Methuen printing, discusses major textual changes in her commentary, with some extended description of the effects of adding Walter/Travis and Mrs. Johnson back to the play. The text offers no detailed breakdown of Nemiroff's editing, however, nor recognizes differences between M3 and the current US editions of the text. Osborne is skeptical of Nemiroff's authority, but adopts his view that the Broadway production was somehow deficient: "the original production in the US (and the UK) did not stage the complete play" (l), Osborne writes. I critique this "incompleteness" argument in my concluding discussion.

Typescripts

This is not an essay in genetic criticism—although that would be a rich method with which to investigate Hansberry’s authorial work. But because, as we will see, Nemiroff sourced many of his changes to the text in Hansberry’s own drafts, tracing where relevant archival evidence might exist will help us explore post-publication edits. From available evidence, I offer the following history of *A Raisin in the Sun* prior to publication. The main archives holding these texts are the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library (L); Yale University’s Beinecke Library (Y); Harvard University’s Theatre Collection at Houghton Library (H); and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (A).

The first draft of the play was completed in November, 1957. Two closely related versions of that text exist in two documents. I designate these versions V1 and V1’, with the documents as follows:

Beinecke Library, Philip Rose Papers, YCAL MSS 438, Box 4 (Y1): A first full draft of the script (V1). Dated “November–1957.” Some passages are crossed out; some words written in pen. It is either a true typescript or a mimeograph, unbound.

Schomburg Center, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 6, Folder 1 (L1): A later photocopy of a typescript (V1’). Some passages are crossed out; some words written in. At least six pages are missing from Act 3. This copy post-dates Y1, as the former includes pen corrections of errors such as doubled words (“then then” [I:1-1]) and additional lines written in pen, which appear typed in L1. This document does not deviate substantively from Y1.

The next version of the text (V2) exists in three documents, of which at least 37 copies were duplicated from a missing typescript. V2 differs from V1 in many ways large and small, particularly in the final scene, though that is still not the version staged in 1959. It likely dates from March, 1958, as referenced in an unsigned letter from director Lloyd Richards to leading man Sidney Poitier, representing to Poitier Richards’ and producer Philip Rose’s views on the text.⁶

Beinecke Library, Philip Rose Papers, YCAL MSS 438, Box 4 (Y2): A mimeographed draft, undated. (The cover page still has a footnote indicating “Title pending permission of Mr. Langston Hughes.” Hughes replied to Hansberry, granting permission to use a line from his poem “Harlem” as her title, in April of 1958.⁷ However, later typescripts, including those used in rehearsals [i.e., well after April, 1958] still include the “Title pending” note.) It is also labeled, in type, as “Property of Philip Rose,” with his address. “15” is written in pencil and circled on the cover, the number typically written by the mimeograph company to count the number of copies produced.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, NCOF+ (Hansberry, L. Raisin in the sun) (A2): An unmarked copy of Y2, from the collection of the duplicating service that produced it, Hart Stenographic. It has no annotations and is numbered “34” on the upper right of the title page.⁸

⁶ Richards Papers, Beinecke, March 27, 1958

⁷ Langston Hughes to Lorraine Hansberry, April 5, 1958, Langston Hughes Papers (JWJ MSS 26), Box 74, Folder 1426.

⁸ Thanks to Doug Reside

Schomburg Center, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 6, Folder 4 (L2): Another copy of Y2. A relatively clean text, though with some annotations in pen and pencil, particularly in the Mrs. Johnson sequence. None of the notes seem to be incorporated into later versions. “37” is written on the upper right of the front cover.

The next version of the text (V3) was used by cast and crew during the first production and produced in at least 61 copies. It was likely drafted by the fall of 1958. I have viewed four documents with this version as the main text (i.e., most pages are identical in content and layout/pagination). However, each of the documents includes revised pages and annotations, some shared among the four documents, some unique or shared only among a few of the documents. One document, at Harvard, includes many changes present in two others (including from December, 1958), but not all. I call that version V3'. And two documents, held at Beinecke, though slightly dissimilar, include very late revised pages, from January and February, 1959; I identify them as V3''. V3 differs from V2 in many ways, particularly in the new ending and an additional Lindner scene, as well as a heavily revised scene between Beneatha and Asagai in Act 3. Both of these scenes, along with some other sections, undergo continual revision documented in V3' and V3''. The plainest document testifying to V3 is:

Schomburg Center, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 6, Folder 3 (L3): A mimeo-graphed typescript draft. Pages are loose but punched for binding. The cover page is similar to that for V2. “Bob Nemiroff,” written in cursive with a pencil, graces the top of the cover page. “61” is written on the upper right of the front cover and circled. There are changes, major and minor, throughout the text. Most notably, many pages in Act 3 are revisions, particularly Lindner’s first appearance, added as 3-1-6 (REV) and 3-1-6A through 3-1-6I. The Beneatha/Asagai scene in Act 3, Scene 2 is also essentially new, with many markings in pencil. 3-2-18 through 3-2-31 indicate “REV”; the following eight pages indicate “NEW.” We can be confident V3 is later than V2 because some minor edits in pen in L2 are incorporated into the typed text here (e.g., the elimination of Beneatha’s apology to Mama after she dismisses God on 1-1-32).

V3' exists in one document:

Harvard Theatre Collection, Godfrey Cambridge Papers, MS Thr 2252, Box 1, Folder 6 (H3): A mimeo-graphed typescript of V3, bound by the duplicating company, with inserted revisions (e.g., 3-2-18/19, noted as revised on 12/19/58) and many annotations in pencil and pen.⁹ In pen at the upper right is the number “5,” and the word “SPARE” written in pencil and underlined. No character or blocking notes are on

⁹ The original ownership of this document is unclear. The title page is signed at the bottom by Lonnie Elder III, who played Bobo in the original production, but also by Charles Richardson, who understudied Travis. Pen sketches of cast members’ faces on the verso of 1-1-33 and 1-1-34 are likely by Richardson, given the quality of the art, the inclusion of titles like “Miss McNeil” and “Mr. Gossett,” and a mis-spelled “Poititer” (1-2-36v). However, a few small pages of notepaper folded into the volume seem to be an actor’s character notes for the part of Beneatha, and thus likely by Diana Sands. Sands and Elder were in a relationship during some part of the production. (See the Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, b MS Thr 1399, Folder 2, which includes a letter from touring stage manager James Wall dated February 15, 1961, regarding a physical altercation over Elder and Sands’ relationship during the national tour.) There is also a Consolidated Edison notice of disconnection of electric service addressed to Elder dated February, 1960. These documents suggests that the script was always, or at some point became, Elder’s.

the script pages, suggesting this was, indeed, a spare that the owner kept up-to-date only with respect to the text itself. It also has in pencil, circled at the top, "Corrected 12/31/58." The script captures the text in transition from pre-rehearsal drafts to the final performance typescripts without, itself, including the texts late production form. It accords with V3'' in many details, esp. the passages excised in pencil, such as "Set off another bomb yesterday" (1-1-3) and cuts to Mrs. Johnson and to Lindner's first visit. Walter/Travis is not cut.

The two documents testifying to V3'' were used by the stage manager and director for the original production, respectively. Both are held at Yale:

Beinecke Library, Yale University, Philip Rose Papers, YCAL MSS 438, Box 5 (Y3a): A mimeo-graphed typescript, bound as part of a larger stage manager's book and used by Mervyn Williams as the prompt book for the premiere production. It includes contact information sheets, separate sheets for prop lists and major lighting cues, and many production details including lighting, sound, and curtain cues in colored pencil (often indicated on the verso, with dialogue on the recto), along with blocking. Like H3, it is marked as "Corrected 12/21/58" on the title page, with additional pencil note "revised" above it. "32" is in the upper right corner. Cuts are very similar to those in Y3b, though there are minor differences. Two cut scenes (Mrs. Johnson and Walter/Travis) are simply removed entirely, the pages discarded. The basic text is V3, but later revisions, mostly dated, include the opening of Act 1, Scene 2 (revisions dated 1/24/59 and 2/12/59) and 3-2-19 (revised 1/23/59). Some extra or edited lines are written in pen. Some details present in Y3b are not present here, such as Walter's entrance line at 1-2-54, which is "Mailman come" (in pen) in Y3b, but unaltered here. "REV" and "NEW" pages mostly track Y3b, though the latter rarely removed old versions, while Williams' copy tends only to keep the latest revisions.

Beinecke Library, Yale University, Lloyd Richards Papers, JWJ MSS 176, Box 42a (mixed materials) (Y3b): A mimeo-graphed typescript, bound into a larger directors' book, this is Lloyd Richards' working copy of the script from the premiere production. Other production materials including a contact sheet for major cast and crew, prop list, and set sketches are included. The first part of this document consists of over 100 pages of manuscript notes on the play and characters. In the script itself, extensive character notes in pen are on the verso of most pages, along with some blocking notes mostly in pencil, interwoven with dialogue. Major and minor pencil and pen edits permeate the script, including excised scenes (Mrs. Johnson; Walter/Travis) and passages (Beneatha's hair). Inserted revised pages are mostly identical to those in Y3a, though this document preserves the superceded pages.

At some point, likely immediately before the premiere, the script was entirely retyped from a copy of V3'', with excised passages removed, added lines set into type, and revised pages incorporated into the main text. The cover page was also reformatted and includes, for the first time, a copyright date of 1959. Additionally, the note about the title's pending permission from Hughes was removed. This is V4 and exists in two documents.

Schomburg, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 6, Folder 2 (L4): A mimeo-graphed typescript, in the upper right, in pencil, labelled "Almost Final Broad-

way Script.” Below, “Two Small Differences 1-1-17 1-2-48.” Both of those pages have short passages bracketed in pencil with a check-mark in the margin. Otherwise, the script is unmarked. The state of the text closely matches V3’’ with written edits and revised pages directly incorporated.

Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, b MS Thr 1399 (H4): A mimeographed typescript, used by stage manager James Wall as the prompt book for the national touring production. The unbound (but hole-punched) script contains extensive markings in pencil both on the text and on the verso of most pages; some blank inserted pages or tabs contain further production notes. Most markings detail performance elements such as light and sound cues and detailed blocking notes, but some include interpretive notes and others supply missing dialogue (notably, Walter’s “Y’all come on. I can’t keep these men waiting all day” on 3-18, where the stage direction indicates “WALTER’s voice calls for them racuously”) or minor corrections. Other materials collected with the script include correspondence about touring logistics and problems, along with programs.

These typescripts give evidence of versions of the play in draft and in production. They help us understand the development of Hansberry’s writing, and how the play was modified for its original stage performances. For later published editions of the text, Nemiroff drew on passages discarded from some of these drafts.

Publications

In 1959, the same year *A Raisin in the Sun* premiered, it was published:

Random House, 1959 (R): Other publishers sought to print the play, but Bennett Cerf’s Random House won the rights.¹⁰ In their early days, Random House had won some fame as Eugene O’Neill’s publisher. They went on to publish a large number of mid-century American plays by some major writers of the period such as William Inge, Arthur Laurents, and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. *Raisin* appeared in hardcover with a dust jacket and multiple photographs from the Broadway production in an insert, typical of the publisher’s plays. The text closely tracks the dialogue and stage directions from V3, though with some text excised as in V3’’, and some excisions restored. It thus differs in many ways from V4. The copy text for Random House’s printing I indicate as V5+, which is not extant. Hansberry was directly involved in the text’s publication, as evidenced by correspondence about page proofs. This same version was printed in *Theatre Arts*, a monthly magazine that featured a contemporary script and production photos in each issue, in October, 1960.

R was the source for the British version of the text.

Methuen, 1960 (M1): Methuen published the British edition of the script in 1960, when the play premiered there. Apart from (a) listing the British cast, rather than the American, and (b) following Methuen’s house style in matters of format and orthography, the text is the same as R.

¹⁰ Cerf to Hansberry, March 24, 1959, Schomburg, Box 18, Folder 15. Page proofs sent May 11, 1959, per Berenice Hoffman to Hansberry. Other offers—suitors included Hill and Wang; Criterion; Little, Brown & Company—are collected in correspondence in Box 63, Folder 3.

The following year, a different publisher released a different version of the play:

Samuel French, 1961 (F1): Samuel French was one of two major publishers of “acting editions” of theatrical texts, oriented for use by professional, educational, and amateur performers. French also handled licensing for performances. French’s text of *A Raisin in the Sun*, bound in French’s standard paper covers, includes details of stage action both in technical (“Crosses C.”) and non-technical (“Gets eggs from ice-box”) language. A stage plot and properties list is included at the end of the text, as is typical of French’s editions. The original Samuel French edition excluded some dialogue printed by Random House, thus it derives from yet another source. That conjectural source for F1 is not extant, but must have been a hybrid of V4 and some stage directions from V3’, particularly Y3a. I indicate it as V4+. This publication post-dates that of the reading edition significantly, and coincides with the release of amateur and stock rights in performance.¹¹

In 1961, the play was collected twice, once in a four-play volume from Vintage Books (an imprint of Random House), and once in a six-play volume from Modern Library (ditto). That same year Columbia Pictures released a film of *A Raisin in the Sun* with the original cast. Hansberry wrote a heavily revised screenplay for Columbia, which made significant changes to many aspects of the stage play. Columbia, however, reverted to a more direct adaptation of the Broadway version. (Publication of Hansberry’s screenplay occurred in 1992 in an edition from Penguin.) To coincide with the film’s release, Random House licensed New American Library to publish under one of its imprints a paperback of the play, copied directly from R.

New American Library, 1961 (S0): A stand-alone paperback, printed from R to promote the recently released film. It is textually identical to R, though reformatted for paperback.

Hansberry’s final play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window* opened on Broadway in 1965; she was very ill throughout the rehearsals and died of cancer during the play’s premiere run. Upon her death, her ex-husband, Robert Nemiroff, became her literary executor. He edited subsequent publications of *Raisin*:

New American Library, 1966 with Sign (B1): A revised paperback version of *Raisin*, combined with Hansberry’s other Broadway play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window*. (Random House published a stand-alone hardback of *Sign* that same year.) The text included two essays on the latter play and images from both *Raisin*’s 1961 film adaptation and the Broadway production of *Sign*. There are no notes about *Raisin*’s text inside, but the back cover observes that “New to the one-volume edition is the restoration of a scene cut from the original production of *Raisin*.” Presumably, this refers to the Walter/Travis scene at the end of Act 2, Scene 2, though other additions include a lengthy section of dialogue between Beneatha and Asagai at the start of Act 3. This volume and the next one bear a copyright of 1966 by Robert Nemiroff as Hansberry’s literary executor.

¹¹ The copyright date for this publication is 1959, but it was not published until 1961, as confirmed by *Variety*, May 3, 1961, p. 80, and Schomburg, Box 12, Folder 7, “Exhibit A.” On early requests for performance licenses, see Schomburg, Box 7, Folder 15.

New American Library, 1966 (S1): This is an edition of only *Raisin* with identical text, layout, and pagination as B1. It purports to be a an “authorized reprint,” in paperback, of Random House’s hardcover, which S0 was; however, it includes the new passages in B1 without any indication of the new additions. The words “Complete and Unabridged” appear on the front cover of one of the two printings I have consulted. Photographs inserted come from the 1961 film adaptation, like S0. B1 and S1 share a copyright date, and I treat them together in the discussion that follows, as they represent the same published version of the text.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of *Raisin*, in 1984, saw a revival of professional interest in producing the play, spurred in part by Nemiroff’s extensive promotional efforts. He oversaw a new edition of the text that year.

Samuel French, 1984 (F2): As the play’s 25th Anniversary approached, Nemiroff promoted and worked closely with a slew of major revivals, particularly productions at the Studio Arena in Buffalo in January, 1983, directed by Harold Scott; at Chicago’s Goodman Theater in October, 1983; and at Yale Repertory Theatre—where the play’s original director, Lloyd Richards was Artistic Director—the following month, directed by Dennis Scott. Samuel French produced a new edition of their script. This edition incorporated the dialogue that had appeared in R but not in F1, while also adding versions of the new sequences from S1. F2 differs in other significant ways from S1, however, including slightly rewritten passages of the Act 3 Beneatha/Asagai scene and the final scene. Some short sequences of dialogue are bracketed, with indications that they may be cut in performance if the run time of the show—expanded due to the added scenes—is too long. The stage directions differ from those in R and F1, sometimes in minor, sometimes in significant ways. Numerous footnotes about performance pepper the text. The Mrs. Johnson scene is included as an Addendum. A preface by Nemiroff enumerates, for the first time in a published *Raisin* text, precisely how the script has changed from its first printings. An appendix offers material from Hansberry’s published interviews about playwrighting, suggesting that producers might include them in promotional materials for the play.

The first major New York revival was in 1986 at Roundabout Theatre Company, directed by Harold Scott. It then went on a national tour starting at the Kennedy Center and was televised in 1989. With these productions came one more round of textual revisions, which affected both the reading and acting editions of the play.

New American Library, 1987 with *Sign* (B2): A revised readers’ text, with a lengthy introductory note by Nemiroff, appearing first in this revised dual-edition. It incorporates additional text from F2, notably the Mrs. Johnson scene and Travis and the rat—though not, for the most part, the new stage directions that appeared there.

New American Library, 1988 (S2): The stand-alone version of B2. This is the basis for the version printed by Vintage starting in 1994, which is the modern mass-market paperback most widely available as of this writing. The same version also appears in the Modern Library hardback edition of 1995. Nemiroff’s prefatory note from B2 is included, though without the sections from B2 that mention *Sign*.

Samuel French, 1988 (F3): The Thirtieth Anniversary edition by French incorporated yet more revisions, including to text and stage directions, as well as two Ad-denda, both the Mrs. Johnson scene and the Ruth/Travis dialogue about a rat in Act 1, Scene 2, which had been fully incorporated into S2. Early printings of the text included a “Note about this Edition” by Nemiroff, but more recent printings do not.

Later British editions took on some American revisions, but not all:

Methuen, 2001 (M2): A footnote to Nemiroff’s introduction in this volume claims that “The play script that follows in this edition is the full text of the 1988 Vintage publication” (xiii), that is, S2. But it in fact differs from that text in some substantial ways, most notably the end of Act 3. I have only been able to consult a 2020 reprinting of a 2009 version of the text “with additional material and a new cover,” but the “additional material” seems to consist only of the prefatory essay by Joi Gresham, current executor of Hansberry’s Literary Trust. That edition’s copyright notice dates the first Methuen edition as 2001, though of course Methuen printed the original version of the text in hardcover in 1960 (M1).

Methuen, 2011 (M3): Textually similar to M2. An introductory essay by Deirdre Osborne discusses some of the play’s textual history. This is the only published version of the play with textual commentary not by Nemiroff.

Some of these editions have changed imprints or publishers, and many went through multiple printings, often under different covers, but this is the substance of the play’s publishing history in the United States and United Kingdom. Four main moments in the text’s publication thus follow particular events in the life of the play and the death of the author: premiere and first publications, in two different versions, in 1959 and 1961; revised publication of the reading version (with and without *Sign*) in 1966 soon after Hansberry’s death; revised publication of the acting version around the play’s 25th anniversary in 1984; revised publication of both versions in 1988, in the aftermath of a wave of major anniversary revivals.

Other

Due to *Raisin*’s cultural and social import, it has appeared in print in a number of adaptations, including by scholastic publishers. Nemiroff co-wrote the book for a musical adaptation of the play, produced in 1973 on Broadway. The Hansberry archives at the Schomburg include copies of the play in translations into Czech, French, Japanese, Arabic, and German.¹² Many authors requested permission to quote part of the play in publications major and minor, some copies of which are also held among Hansberry’s papers.

Finally, and bearing more directly on this analysis, two printed editions of the text with hand-written annotations, likely by Nemiroff, provide a record of later editorial processes:

Schomburg Center, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 19, Folder 1 (L5): Some pages from S1 have been cut and pasted onto sheets of paper, three-to-a-sheet, with the set of pages then stapled. Each page indicates, in blue pen, passages missing in F1. The entire document is ten pages long, and exists as both the original and a photocopy. Running heads on each page indicate the relevant page in F1.

¹² Schomburg, Box 12, Folder 7, “Exhibit A.”

Schomburg Center, Lorraine Hansberry Papers, Sc MG 680 Box 19, Folder 2 (L6): Correspondence with publishers including notes about the text and some typed dialogue explaining changes. Some photocopies with markings are also included. In addition, there is a complete F2, on the cover of which is written “R[obert] N[emiroff] WORKING COPY NOTATED FOR DISCUSSION.” This includes extensive pencil notes for changes to the text, some adopted in F3, some not.

Stemma

There are thus three branches to the family tree of *Raisin*’s English-language published texts, starting from two roots. R and F1 differed from each other in ways both typical of their type (reading vs. acting editions) and in some textual details, primarily passages present in R but absent from F1. F1 derives from a text related to V4, V4+. R must come from a script (V5+) produced specifically for the publishing house: it looks more like V3 than like V4, but does not incorporate the stage directions that populate F1.

The texts of *Raisin* in B1 and S1 are identical, both derived from R with additional material from V2 and V3. F2 merges some elements from the R–B1/S1 branch into the F1 branch, preserving acting edition-specific stage directions from F1, but also making numerous other changes to the text introduced by Nemiroff. F3 further revises F2. S2 incorporates some of the changes in F2 and F3, but far from all. Meanwhile, M1 matches R, while M2 and M3 pick up S1 and some pieces of F2 and F3, but not all. R and M1, the two first American and British reading editions, contained identical texts (though the latter favoured British spellings). S2 and M3, the current American and British readers’ versions, do not match.

Figure 1 presents a stemma of the relationships among the typescripts and published editions.

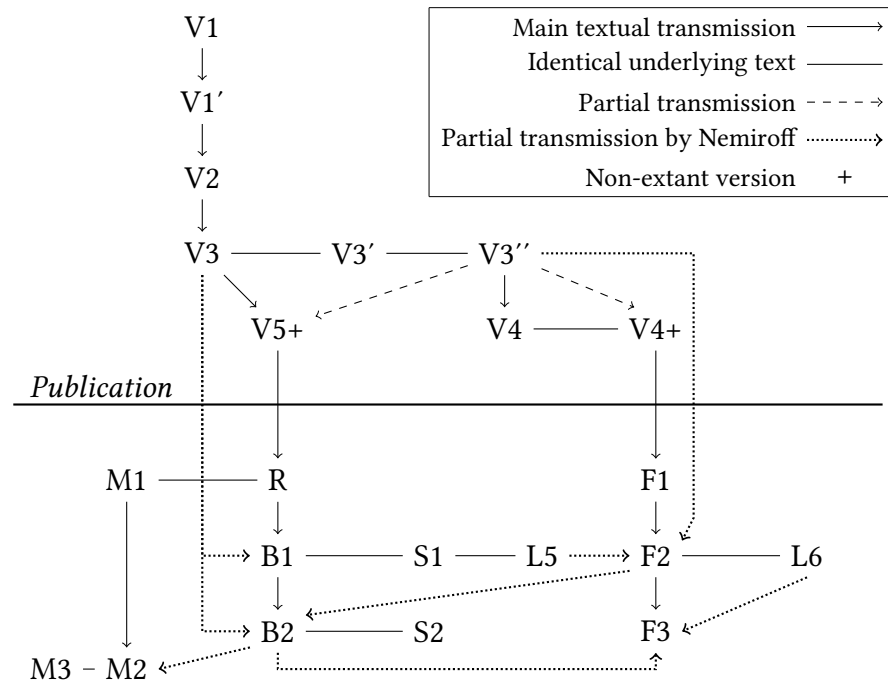
Robert Nemiroff’s Editorial Role

Nemiroff’s work on *Raisin* was only part of how he managed Hansberry’s legacy. In Deirdre Osborne’s words, Nemiroff “assiduously filled in the gaps [in Hansberry’s writings] in ways he felt were true to her artistic spirit (albeit his perception of it), through editing, narrating, dramatising and publishing her unfinished work,” including the musical adaptation of *A Raisin in the Sun*, the collaged play *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, and much more. But Nemiroff was not always clear about his editorial interventions.

First in 1966, and then again from 1983 to 1988, Nemiroff revised *A Raisin in the Sun* in a number of ways. He added scenes and sequences cut from earlier drafts, put material in the Samuel French editions that was present in R but not in F1, edited other sections of dialogue, added new stage directions, and made other minor changes to language and formatting. He was, in short, an editor of the play. B1—and then the stand-alone S1—was the first edition to deviate from extant published versions. Yet it included no introduction or other explanation of the revisions to the R/F1 texts, despite the fact that B1 included a long essay by Nemiroff about *Sign*, with which *Raisin* was printed. I have found minimal contemporaneous correspondence discussing those first changes to the text, only belated explanations in subsequent editions.

Much correspondence by Nemiroff exists from the 1980s, however, along with official published editorial notes and introductions, all explaining some of his editorial decisions and their

Figure 1: Relationships among key *A Raisin in Sun* texts



rationale. The correspondence shows Nemiroff writing first to directors of the play's major revivals in 1983 and 1984, explaining how they should treat the new and edited scenes in S1, and other revisions Nemiroff was developing for F2. By 1985 and 1986, Nemiroff was working with publishers to incorporate these changes, as well as to integrate new ideas garnered from the 25th-anniversary productions.

In F2, B2/S2, and F3, Nemiroff laid out in his introductory essays the same rationales for revisions that he had shared with directors and publishers. His correspondence often uses similar phrasing, most of it focused on a few important motives. In particular, Nemiroff claimed to be “restoring” passages that were cut from the original production due to staging problems and the show's long running time. The Introduction to S2 exemplifies how Nemiroff justified his major editorial interventions. For instance, he relates a story about Diana Sands (the original Beneatha) and her haircut that lead to the excision of Beneatha's new hairdo in the 1959 production and in all printings prior to F2. (I discuss this in detail below.) Other cuts he attributes to “happenstance or unpredictables” of rehearsal, as well as to “running time.” Nemiroff emphasizes concern about the play's length as a major factor in its condensation, underlining the Broadway premiere's uncertain prospects. He does acknowledge that some cuts were “very good” and “focused and strengthened the drama” (xi). Yet it is unclear which cuts those might be, given that almost everything that had been cut he restored—along with even more material that had been cut at even earlier phases of the rehearsal process.

Despite his restoring material and his argument that *Raisin*, as an established American classic, now earned its longer running time, Nemiroff remained extremely sensitive to how the added material might play. For example, F3 publishes the sequence about Travis and a rat only

as an appendix. In the textual note, Nemiroff observes that “exceptional acting” is required to make the scene effective, thus expressing the same concern with staging issues that plagued the original scene. Likewise the scene with Mrs. Johnson, while incorporated into S2, remains in an appendix in F3, because it increases both the show’s expense (another actor to play Mrs. Johnson) and length. Indeed, F3 and F2 both discuss the play’s duration, offering some short “restorations” in brackets for possible cutting, and alluding to other “some small cuts and compressions” to “miscellaneous phrases and lines” that shaved another “three or four minutes” off the play (F2 6).¹³

Why, given these concerns about staging problems and duration, expand the play? Nemiroff cites two major reasons for doing so. First and foremost, Nemiroff “restores” passages because, he claims, Hansberry wanted them restored. Unfortunately, almost no evidence of post-publication script changes comes from Hansberry’s lifetime; we have only Nemiroff’s testimony. Even in the case of small differences—three to ten lines of dialogue—present in R but cut in F1, we cannot be confident about Hansberry’s wishes. (These differences are almost uniformly traceable to cuts during the production process, cuts that made it into V4—and, presumably, V4+, the missing source for F1—but which were not present in V5+, the missing source for R.) Why can we not be sure about Hansberry’s views? Nemiroff observes that “Hansberry put most of [the short cut exchanges] back” in R. But F1 was published almost two years *after* R, meaning Hansberry might have had the opportunity to restore to F1 some of the excised sequences herself, but did not do so. Whether from neglect, indifference, lack of effort from the publisher, or something else, we do not know.

Take one example, from early in Act 1. R prints:

WALTER Not scrambled. (RUTH *starts to scramble eggs*) Paper come? (RUTH *points impatiently to the rolled up Tribune on the table, and he gets it and spreads it out and vaguely reads the front page*) Set off another bomb yesterday.

RUTH (*Maximum indifference*) Did they?

WALTER (*Looking up*) What’s the matter with you?

RUTH Ain’t nothing the matter with me. And don’t keep asking me that this morning.

WALTER Ain’t nobody bothering you. (*Reading the news of the day absently again*)

Say Colonel McCormick is sick.

F1, by contrast, prints only:

WALTER. Not scrambled. (RUTH *beats eggs*. WALTER *notes her action, then puts his clothes on L. end of sofa, crosses above to table. Reading the news absently again*) Say Colonel McCormick is sick.

We can source this change directly to the typescripts. H3, Y3a, and Y3b, all used at some point during production, cut some of the text in pencil, leaving a version like F1’s. L3, which seems to be the ancestor for V5+, does not include any such cuts. The passage as it appears in F1 is, however, slightly nonsensical. F1—despite including significantly more stage directions than R—never indicates a moment when Walter *first* picks up the paper, yet refers to Walter’s reading the paper “again.” This is not a printer’s error: V4 (and, presumably, V4+, the missing source for F1) has the same text as F1, though with slightly different stage directions. Interestingly, the actual pencil cuts in V3” suggest that Walter’s line “Paper come” and the stage direction that followed

¹³ The first references to these kinds of small changes appears in Robert Nemiroff to Harold Scott, June 16, 1983, Schomburg, Box 9, Folder 1.

should have been retained in full, then cutting all the way to “Say Colonel McCormick is sick.” Somewhere between the cuts made in rehearsal and V4, the details got muddled, resulting in a slightly confusing passage in F1.

The dialogue about “the bomb” and a testy Ruth’s second request that Walter cease policing her mood fills in the gap of action missing from F1, with a bit more characterization of Ruth and Walter tossed in. Why was it cut in rehearsals? We do not know. Why did it appear in R after all, when it seems not to have been performed? We cannot claim decisively which version Hansberry preferred. Just because the material was cut in F1 but remained in R does not mean Hansberry actively decided to include it. (As noted, I conjecture that R had a separate printer’s source than F1, V5+, but we do not know how or why they came to be distinct sources. I have found no correspondence between Hansberry and Random House that sheds light on her work on the text or her thinking about the relationship between R and F1.) Similarly, the passage’s absence in F1 and the various production-related typescripts does not mean that Hansberry did *not* choose to keep the fuller scene in the reading edition. Some other passages with pencil cuts in V3” do remain cut in R—but the question of authorial intent is not therefore any clearer.¹⁴ Despite such lack of clarity around Hansberry’s intent, Nemiroff claims the playwright’s authority throughout his arguments about the text.

Nemiroff gives another reason for expanding the play: the new passages “speak directly to issues and concerns unfamiliar to many at the time but inescapable now.” The excised sections “presaged the revolution in black consciousness” that came after Hansberry’s death. Writing in 1983 to a journalist (likely Thulani Davis) about a feature article on Hansberry, Nemiroff called these parts of the play “prophetic,” language Samuel French also used in their circular advertising the new publication.¹⁵ He expands this point in later editorial notes. In S2, he writes that the “revolution in consciousness” about race in the 1960s left most readers and critics assuming that *Raisin*, which premiered in 1959, was mired in older paradigms that have since been superseded. But, he argues, Hansberry’s play in its fullest form demonstrates the prophetic quality of her thinking and writing. Furthermore, quoting both James Baldwin and Ossie Davis, Nemiroff cites a tendency among audiences and critics to deny both the distinctly African American (rather than humanist) strains in the play, as well as the truly impoverished and precarious status of the Younger family.¹⁶ These misreadings Nemiroff blames on the play’s “abridgement” (xii). Travis’ playing with a rat in the street, for example, highlights that the family’s “middle class” circumstances are anything but. And the scene between Mama and Mrs. Johnson “makes clear what, in the eyes of the author, Lena Younger—in her typicality within the black experience—does and does *not* represent” (S2 xv). Thus, whether or not Hansberry wished to “restore” material from earlier drafts, Nemiroff justifies expanding the play because he believes the material will now be understood and appreciated in ways it would not have been in earlier decades.

Nemiroff also cites experience in later productions as inspiring two kinds of changes in the text: first, changes to remedy perceived misreadings by some companies, and, second, changes

¹⁴ For example, neither R nor F1 includes three lines that appear in Y3b (1-1-16) after Walter asks “You know the check is coming tomorrow?” In Y3b, Beneatha answers “Yes—I know it is and I know why it is so important to you.” Walter replies “Do you—does anybody around here really know why anything is important to me?” Beneatha answers “Yes—we understand and nobody is impressed” before continuing with the dialogue as printed in R and F1.

¹⁵ Robert Nemiroff to Thulani (Davis?), October 7, 1983, Schomburg, Box 9, Folder 1.

¹⁶ Nemiroff is not above the same whitewashing generalization in some of his own writing, including his introduction to S2, which observes that the play “is not a specific situation but the human condition” (xvii-xviii).

to incorporate new, productive insights about how best to perform the play. Evidence of the former permeates the Nemiroff production correspondence. Writing to Lloyd Richards, who was the Artistic Director overseeing Yale Repertory Theatre's revival in 1983, Nemiroff was apologetic about suggesting new stage directions for a production supervised by the play's original director: "Please ignore, of course, most of the stage direction additions." Nemiroff explains that "they are there only out of the painful experience of having watched and talked with the actors/directors in many productions in which it became clear that what seemed obvious to us was not at all always understood from the text as written."¹⁷ The lighting cue from Act 2, Scene 1, discussed at the start of this essay, seems to be one example of a stage direction making explicit a design decision that seemed, to Nemiroff, essential to the scene but was never part of Hansberry's texts.

As anxious as he was about the failures of some productions, Nemiroff also learned from the major revivals. During preparations for the Roundabout production in 1986, Nemiroff wrote to Samuel French about his desire to make "other (small) corrections/variations" inspired by the rehearsals.¹⁸ And in modifying in F2 the ending of Act 2, Scene 2 with Walter and Travis, Nemiroff clearly drew on the way the scene was played at the Goodman Theatre, an interpretation about which he wrote approvingly to Richards.¹⁹ Nemiroff is almost never specific about the changes he has made in this vein, nor does he distinguish between his prophylactic edits and new interpretations gleaned from other artists' inspirations. Apart from specifying that "the last scene and, particularly [...] the turning point of Walter's confrontation with Lindner" includes new staging details, Nemiroff does not explain those "fresh insights and discoveries." He merely credits them, in part, to "later directors and actors" (F2 7).

Other, smaller changes seem to be made for a wide range of reasons, including errors. For instance, F2 (like F1) did not italicize George's snide "Prometheus" in his exit line in Act 2, Scene 2—but R did. Nemiroff wrote to Random House anxious that the word stay italicized, even though the F2 pages sent out to publishers set the word in roman type.²⁰ In another example, Nemiroff's new stage directions seem to have introduced an error. Writing to Samuel French in November, 1985, Nemiroff asked that the phrase "rich women" on page 32 be changed back to Hansberry's "rich white women."²¹ The original in F1 read: "Shoot—these here rich white women do it all the time" (25). Nemiroff, in an example of how he used new stage directions to punch up the play's humor, had revised in F2 to "Shoot—these here—(*striking a highfalutin pose*)—rich women do it all the time" (32), thereby introducing the error. Another change of heart came with respect to the Mrs. Johnson scene, included only as an addendum in F2. By July, 1985, Nemiroff asked Random House to include it in the body of the text, due to "so much comment from theatre people, critics and scholars who've seen it."²² An April, 1986 letter to Samuel French listed four more minor changes, including the description of Beneatha's hair as "nappy" (see below).²³

The editorial apparatus, such as it is, is inconsistent from text to text. As noted above, B1/S1 includes no textual notes, apart from some non-specific advertising about "completeness"

¹⁷ Robert Nemiroff to Lloyd Richards, October 1, 1983, Schomburg, Box 9, Folder 1.

¹⁸ Robert Nemiroff to Peter (LaBeck?), June 13, 1986, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

¹⁹ Nemiroff to Richards, October 6, 1983.

²⁰ Robert Nemiroff to Gerald Summer, February 12, 1985, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

²¹ Robert Nemiroff to Peter LaBeck, November 25, 1985, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

²² Robert Nemiroff to Sandy McCormick, July 3, 1985, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

²³ Robert Nemiroff to Peter LaBeck, April 30, 1986, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

or “unabridged” on paperback covers of some printings.²⁴ All subsequent editions do include introductions or notes on the text of varying lengths, most devoted to celebrating the play’s success and explaining the import of the “restored” scenes. F2 makes explicit in the text some of the differences between editions, in this case between F1 and F2, by bracketing some of the material missing from F1 but present in R and now in F2. We thus see some of Nemiroff’s editorial work in action in F2. For instance, in the added Beneatha’s hair sequence, a note explains the need for wigs and the contrast meant between Beneatha’s former and new hair (F2 86). And on the second page of the script, Nemiroff includes a lengthy footnote to the opening stage direction’s description of Ruth as “a ‘settled woman.’” This note is worth quoting at length because it is, essentially, Nemiroff’s gloss on a character:

NOTE: The above should not be interpreted to mean that Ruth lacks spirit or strength—or dreams any less fierce than those of Walter, Beneatha or Mama. She is a woman in the middle, torn and seeking to mediate between their needs and dreams, and she subordinates herself because, caring deeply about each, she *chooses* to; but underneath is a fire and strength that will erupt as needs be. For at least one brief moment in this opening sequence, Ruth should visibly give in to the weakness and weariness that engulf her. It is a private moment in which she steadies and quiets herself, perhaps sips a cup of coffee to regain her energies—and then presses on with enforced vigor to the chores of the morning (F2 12).

By F3, this passage is simply part of the stage direction—though not in S2. F2 is thus the closest thing we have to a text that demonstrates the critical borders between Hansberry’s work and Nemiroff’s. Even so, many of the changes in F2 are not made explicit. Moreover, F2 was only briefly in print, is not generally available for sale, and is very difficult to find in libraries. Most versions of *Raisin* are vague about changes to the text, despite Nemiroff’s explanations of his process.

Restored Passages

With the differences among *Raisin*’s multiple texts and Nemiroff’s editorial mission both in view, let us look closely at five major sequences “restored” to the play by Nemiroff. As summarized above, Nemiroff added material Hansberry had cut from the Broadway production due to staging challenges and production length. Each of the five major restored sequences—“major” inasmuch as they comprise dramatic beats otherwise absent from the script—has textual roots in the typescripts. The scenes, and their current placement in the play, are:

- The Rat (Act 1, Scene 2)
- Beneatha’s Hair (Act 2, Scene 1)
- Mrs. Johnson (Act 2, Scene 2)
- Walter/Travis (Act 2, Scene 2)
- Beneatha/Asagai (Act 3)

²⁴ Intriguingly, Nemiroff had relatively more to say about the status of *Sign*’s text in B1, which includes a note about French actress Simone Signoret’s translation of the play. After telling of Signoret’s excitement for the work, he remarks that her French version, like B1—and unlike the Random House printing of *Sign*—uses “several dozen lines” from Act 3, Scene 1 that were neither performed on Broadway nor printed in the hardcover edition.

Nemiroff's prefaces, along with commentary by a range of critics, explain what these added materials contribute to our understanding of the play. The scenes enrich characterizations, investigate a wider range of the Black experience, and probe more deeply the philosophical problems raised by the play's dramatic action. With these five sequences, *Raisin* is a richer, fuller play—and also a longer one, as Nemiroff worries in his introductions—than without them. But the inclusion of these passages in *Raisin*'s published texts is not straightforward. Looking at precisely what was restored, when, how, and why, reveals contradictions and complexities in Nemiroff's approach. For none of these scenes reappears simply "as Hansberry wrote it." By exploring each in turn, we will discover how they do and do not fit into the scripts printed during Hansberry's lifetime.

The Rat

The rat sequence occurs in Act 1, Scene 2. Ruth returns from visiting the doctor, spies Travis chasing a rat in the street below, berates him playing with it, and feels overwhelmed by the vileness of family's living conditions. The passages appear in F3 as an addendum, but are fully integrated into S2 and M2. Nemiroff, introducing S2, describes the scene as "its own sobering comment on just how 'middle class' this family is" (xvi). It consists of two short sections of dialogue, both appearing nearly identically in all the typescript versions prior to V4.

The scene has not been the subject of much critical discussion, perhaps because it is dramaturgically redundant. In the previous scene, Ruth calls the apartment a "rat trap," a term Lena ruefully approves. Earlier in the same scene, we see the family spraying the apartment with a powerful insecticide to kill roaches. They even discuss that the chemicals are likely harmful to Travis' health. When Ruth spots Travis chasing a rat in the street, the stark juxtaposition of innocent children's play and dangerously impoverished living conditions has already been established. Yes, the rat—and Travis' explicit narration of the rat's murder—adds dramatic intensity to the moment, which comes just as Ruth shares news of her pregnancy and, we soon learn, contemplates an abortion. But the encounter underlines rather than enriches the story.

Furthermore, it apparently proved difficult to stage successfully. Nemiroff observes, in an F3 introduction explaining the scene's relegation there to an addendum, that without "exceptional acting" by Ruth and Travis the scene would "shatter [...] audience involvement" (7). The fact that it remains an appendix in F3 suggests some continued ambiguity about its function in the play. The scene appears in all current texts essentially as written in the drafts.

Beneatha's Hair

Unlike the modest critical reaction to the rat, Beneatha's new hairstyle in Act 2, Scene 1 is one of the most widely discussed restorations to the text. Two separate passages in that scene discuss Beneatha's hair, both absent from the Broadway production and early publications. First, George arrives to take Beneatha to the theater, sees her with a new, untreated look, and argues about it with Beneatha and Ruth. Then later, Beneatha, having changed clothes, passes through on her way out with George and takes criticism from Walter. (In between comes a scene among Ruth, George, and Walter.) As printed in R and, with the hair dialogue restored for comparison, in S2, the passages are given in Appendix A.

Both restored sequences have typescript antecedents, though in slightly altered versions, in V1, V2, V3, V3', and Y3b (with the relevant lines mostly struck through in pencil). Neither of the prompt books—Y3a or V4—includes either sequence. As quoted above, Nemiroff explains

that the hairstyle passages were excised because Diana Sands' (the original Beneatha) cropped haircut was unflattering, thus undermining the scene's presentation of "the beauty of black hair" (S2 x).

Much critical attention has been brought to bear on these short passages of text. Soyica Diggs Colbert, for instance, observes that "Calling attention to the discursive and political mandates that shape the body, the shift in appearance [i.e., Beneatha's new hairstyle] corresponds to the evolution of Beneatha's thoughts, and also points to a battle at the site of black women's bodies as to how others perceive them and how that determines the material conditions of their lives."²⁵ Raquel Kennon offers an article-length exploration of the contested meaning of Black women's hair, noting how Beneatha's "intentional choices in cultural self-styling" articulate her own "sense of diasporic identity, companionship, and career" against the forces represented by George, Ruth, Walter, and even Asagai, who first observes that Beneatha's straightened hair was "mutilated."²⁶ With the new hairstyle, Beneatha explores what it means to embody her African heritage. The dress she wears during the African sequence with Walter and Ruth at the start of Act 2 may be only a costume, but the cropped, unstraightened hair marks Beneatha's body more absolutely. Even having changed out of her Nigerian robes and into a more typical dress, her hair still expresses a new self.

In addition to enriching the play thematically, the reinserted hairstyle dialogue resolves some oddities that lingered in earlier versions of the play, including R, F1, and S1. Those oddities are traces of the hair subplot that were never quite properly cleaned up when the main moment revealing the new hair was cut for Broadway. First, after Asagai first calls Beneatha's attention to her hair in Act 1, Beneatha ponders her hair in the mirror twice, the second time "clutch[ing]" at it before she "squinces her eyes as if trying to imagine something." She then "suddenly" and "hurriedly" leaves, announcing to her puzzled mother that she is going "To become a queen of the Nile!" and exiting "in a breathless blaze of glory" (R 53). What did she run off to do? In drafts of the play with a new hairdo, she obviously went off to get her hair re-done. But in R, F1, and S1 she runs off to ... nothing? Without a new hairstyle in the subsequent scene, this dramatic exit becomes a red herring. Second, in R and F1, Beneatha defends her African look to George as "natural." This is a sensible choice of words when the scene includes the new hairstyle, which is, indeed, "natural" compared to the artificially straightened hair she previously sported. But when referring only to her Nigerian dress, the word "natural" is an awkward choice; clothing is not "natural." Third, F1 retained a stage direction from the original second scene that is slightly odd without the new hairstyle. When George compliments Beneatha's appearance in a new dress, he is "*Thoughtful, with emphasis, since this is a reversal*" (F1 58). Without the new hairstyle, George has "reversed" his criticism of Beneatha's African clothes—a slightly odd suggestion because Beneatha has just changed out of her African garb. The "reversal" makes far more sense when George is "reversing" his initial criticism of her natural hair, which she still sports upon her return. All of these minor quirks in the current script make total sense with Beneatha's natural hair restored to the text.

Both hairdo passages were restored first in F2. As with the Mrs. Johnson scene discussed next, however, Nemiroff initially bracketed some of the text, in this case, the entire exchange with

²⁵ Soyica Diggs Colbert, *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 29.

²⁶ Raquel Kennon, "'Africa Claiming Her Own': Unveiling Natural Hair and African Diasporic Identity in Lorraine Hansberry's Unabridged *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Modern Drama* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2021), p. 302.

Walter. A footnote emphasizes that George should affirmatively admire the hairstyle, appending “I mean it—you really look sharp” to his “You look great!” if the Walter dialogue is cut (F2 74). (F2 also changes the costuming note for Beneatha’s return to “a cocktail dress” as in R (77), which changed back to “soft dress” in F3.) F3 does not suggest cutting the brief second exchange.

Kennon’s article engages directly with a further important nuance of the passages’ textual history. Ruth’s reaction to the hairstyle acquires a new adjective in F3 and S2: “nappy.” “You expect this boy to go out with you with your head all nappy like that?” has no precedent in the typescripts, which all read as printed in R. Kennon notes the phrase was “added to a later draft,” but I have not found such a draft from Hansberry’s lifetime.²⁷ The earliest mention of the phrase I have found comes from Nemiroff’s correspondence with publishers and his notes in a pencil-edited copy of F2.²⁸

Beneatha’s hair, though compassing only a dozen lines of dialogue across two short sequences, thus exemplifies the value of excised texts to the whole play, and the manipulations even the smallest scenes have undergone. No published text prints the sequences exactly as they appear in the latest available typescript of V3, where they are cut in pencil. The currently available versions of the text—F3 and S2—both include a notable phrase (“nappy”) not in any of Hansberry’s archival materials. Yet even somewhat altered, the scene fits well into the play, resolving some awkward residue of its absence, and underlining Hansberry’s forward-looking views. Colbert, Kennon, and many more writers have recognized the implications of Beneatha’s new hairstyle, even though it played no role in the original production. Some of that discussion underlines the deep cultural significance of the Afro for the Black women’s liberation movements of the later 1960s and 1970s, which Hansberry did not live to see. In this reading, Hansberry’s original text was prophetic. While the scene was originally cut due to exigencies in production, it seems to have been restored in no small part because the hairstyle had grown in cultural resonance between 1959 and 1984. (Note that the sequences, though extremely brief, were not included in S1 in 1966.) The scene thus exemplifies Nemiroff’s back-formulation of the play’s cultural impact—restoring sequences about “issues and concerns unfamiliar to many at the time but inescapable now” (F2 5). At the same time, however, Nemiroff updates those scenes to suit his perception of the modern audience.

Mrs. Johnson

While Beneatha’s new hairstyle has become integral to the play as currently understood, another added scene hovers at the edge of the text, sometimes included fully, sometimes offered as an appendix. The scene occurs between Mama and Mrs. Johnson, appears through V3 (though the pages are missing from Y3a), and the role of Mrs. Johnson was even included in casting notices, which called for a “neighbor female 40–60.”²⁹ It appears to have been eliminated shortly before the New Haven premiere, as indicated by a letter from Hansberry to the production team in which she directs her director and producer to cut the scene.³⁰ Included as an “addendum” in F2 and F3, the scene appears fully integrated only in S2 and, surprisingly, M3, which leaves out a number

²⁷ Kennon, p. 299. L3 gives “with your head looking like that.”

²⁸ See the notation in the copy of F2 in Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2, p. 69, as well as Robert Nemiroff to Peter LaBeck, April 30, 1986.

²⁹ “Casting News,” *Variety*, October 29, 1958.

³⁰ Lorraine Hansberry to Lloyd Richards, Philip Rose, and Robert Nemiroff, January 11, 1958 (but this must be an error for 1959), Beinecke Library, Philip Rose Papers, Box 5.

of later changes to the text. In S2, a footnote indicates that “The character and the scene of her visit were cut from the original production and early editions of the play” (98). The character has always survived, however, in the margins of the original production: the family refers to Mr. Johnson as the neighbor who slips into the bathroom in the morning, and Travis goes to ask Mrs. Johnson for more cleaning products in Act 2, Scene 1.

Nemiroff describes the scene’s function in notes to F2, F3, and S2 in substantially similar terms. Explaining its excision, he notes that the scene “adds the costs of another character to the cast and ten more minutes to the play.” Justifying its inclusion, he emphasizes that no other scene “makes plain the realities that await the Youngers at final curtain” and, most importantly, it clarifies Lena’s political position (S2 xv). Hansberry scholar Margaret B. Wilkerson goes into greater depth on this point, offering a subtle reading of the dialogue and a clear explanation of how it reshapes our perceptions of Lena Younger and enriches the play’s philosophical register. Far from a conservative, “Mammy stereotype,” Lena comes across in the scene as a “courageous spirit who lends credence and power to the militant struggle.”³¹

Ironically—and exemplifying Nemiroff’s sometimes surprising editorial instincts—F3 suggests possible cuts around precisely the passages that Wilkerson selects for her close analysis. Wilkerson homes in on a brief exchange in which Mrs. Johnson approvingly quotes Booker T. Washington’s maxim that “Education has spoiled many a plow hand,” to which Lena responds that Washington was a “fool” (S2 103). In Wilkerson’s reading, this section firmly aligns Lena with W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP he helped found, and his advocacy for civil rights, and in opposition to the “accommodation and self-sufficiency” promoted by Washington.³² Lena’s radical instincts emerge clearly in this dialogue, refuting any accommodationist interpretation of the character. F3, with Nemiroff’s edits, brackets the entire exchange about Washington. While offering the scene, Nemiroff thus invites any production that does stage it to eliminate Lena’s direct and cutting lines, the very lines that most strongly characterize Lena as “a progressive force.”³³ As with the scene of Travis and the rat, this scene remains at the edge of the text. And even Nemiroff seems uncertain of its function with respect to Mama’s character.

Walter/Travis

One of the most substantial and earliest additions to the text appears first in S1, having been cut only between V3 and V4. At the end of Act 2, Scene 2, rather than simply exiting with the money Lena has given him as he does in R and F1, Walter speaks with Travis about his dreams for their future and delivers a lengthy monologue that culminates in an exultant embrace between father and son. When included, as first in S1, the scene does not differ substantially from the typescripts. Even in March, 1958, members of the production leadership expressed skepticism about the scene. Writing to Poitier about Hansberry’s most recent revisions (likely V2), Richards noted that “Phil and I aren’t convinced of the need for” the Walter/Travis scene. “It’s my opinion, and always has been that we don’t need it. Phil agrees.” Yet Richards noted that

³¹ Wilkerson, “*A Raisin in the Sun*: Anniversary of an American Classic,” p. 450.

³² Wilkerson, p. 450.

³³ Wilkerson, p. 451.

cutting it would require inserting “other clarifications of [Walter’s]” motives, which Hansberry, Poitier, and Richards all worked hard to express throughout rehearsals.³⁴

The scene’s insertion into the play expands our knowledge of and sympathy for Walter. In 1965 correspondence with Nan Talese, Hansberry’s editor at Random House, Nemiroff explains it as

a major revelatory moment in Walter’s character and motivation the unselfish side and the size of his yearning. Lorraine was very troubled when it was cut, then hesitated about the Random House edition. Finally, she had it tried out in the Karamu Cleveland production, where it worked beautifully and [...] was one of the most effective moments in the recent production.³⁵

So eager to include the sequence was Nemiroff that he offered to place it as an addendum and to have the cost of resetting the text “deducted from royalties.” Taking Nemiroff’s testimony at face value, this correspondence is the clearest evidence Nemiroff offers about Hansberry’s desire to add or restore material to the play as published, insisting on her sense of the scene’s dramatic, as well as thematic, importance.

Other critics have agreed with Hansberry’s (and Nemiroff’s) strong feeling for this moment in the play. Writing to Lloyd Richards ahead of the 1984 revival, Nemiroff cites a reviewer of the Goodman Theater’s production to the effect that this scene “will linger longest in memory.”³⁶ And Wilkerson argues that

The placement of this speech is critical to its import for it catches Walter in a rare, reflective moment. Throughout the play, the audience has seen the restless side of Walter, constantly at odds with his family, desperately trying to convince his strong-willed mother of the importance of his plans. This speech is Walter’s only chance in the play to explain his ideas fully, without interruption and criticism.³⁷

Wilkerson argues precisely and convincingly that the scene reshapes our perception of Walter and makes his later (brief) desire to accept Lindner’s offer “attractive and logical.” Its placement within the plot, after Mama entrusts Walter with some of the insurance money, makes sense for the character and follows Hansberry’s drafts—except in one crucial respect. In all the extant typescripts with the scene, the Walter/Travis encounter is its own dramatic unit: Act 2, Scene 3.³⁸ In that position, it serves as the climactic final scene of Act 2, ending the act on a note of possibility. The scene that serves (in R, F1, and all subsequent versions) as Act 2, Scene 3 was instead, in drafts of the play up to V3, the start of Act 3.

By inserting the Walter/Travis dialogue into the end of Act 2, Scene 2, the 1966 edition and all later editions transform the scene’s narrative function, along with our understanding of Walter. Consider the endings of each act in S1 and after: Act 1 ends (in all versions) after Mama reveals

³⁴ Lloyd Richards to Sidney Poitier, March 27, 1958, Beinecke, Lloyd Richards Papers, Box 42, Folder 425. On Walter’s characterization and the rehearsal process, see Philip Rose, *You Can’t Do That on Broadway: A Raisin in the Sun and Other Theatrical Improbabilities* (Limelight, 2004), pp. 21–31.

³⁵ Robert Nemiroff to Nan Talese, September 30, 1965, Random House Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 895, “Lorraine Hansberry.” This is the only evidence from the 1960s about edits to the play with respect to Hansberry’s wishes. Unfortunately, like all such evidence in Nemiroff’s writings, it is hearsay.

³⁶ Robert Nemiroff to Lloyd Richards, October 6, 1983.

³⁷ Wilkerson, p. 447.

³⁸ In an introduction included in at 1995 edition of B2, Nemiroff acknowledges that this was “originally conceived as a separate scene” (xx).

Ruth's pregnancy and planned abortion to Walter, accelerating the conflict and heightening the tension among the characters. Act 2, in the original production and in every published edition of the play, concludes with Bobo's bad news and the family's shock at the complete loss of their remaining funds, intensifying the conflict over the inheritance money. And then Act 3 closes with the family's departure for the new challenge of life in Clybourne Park. When printed in 1966 and after, the Walter/Travis scene is thus a hopeful interlude in a second act that otherwise slides deeper into tragedy.

But in every extant text from Hansberry's lifetime that includes the Walter/Travis dialogue that sequence *ends Act 2*, moving into the second intermission on an upbeat note. The remaining tragic beats, including the crisis of Bobo's reporting Willie's theft, all fall in the third and final act. The typescript drafts have the additional virtue of playing Act 3 as a final, decisive day, whereas the eventual production script and every subsequent edition divides the events of the last day between Act 2, Scene 3 and Act 3 (with only one scene), which takes place "An hour later" than the end of Act 2.³⁹

Perhaps as a way of addressing the new emotional high coming mid-act, F2 offers a quieter ending to the sequence, likely drawing on the Goodman's 1983 staging. In S1 and all other editions except F2, the scene's end reads thus:

WALTER Whatever you want to be—Yessir! (*He holds his arms open for TRAVIS*) You just name it, son ... (*TRAVIS leaps into them*) and I hand you the world!
(*WALTER's voice has risen in pitch and hysterical promise and on the last line he lifts TRAVIS high*)

But F2 dampens the climax:

WALTER Whatever you want to be—Yessir! (*He feints playfully at TRAVIS.*) You just name it, son ... (*quietly*) and I'll hand you the world! (*They embrace.*)

Whether this solution improves upon S1 or no, the scene's emotional high became a problem—in Nemiroff's view—in part because it now comes in the wrong place, as it were. Nemiroff reverted the F2 edit in later publications, but his motive was clear. Although the dramatic function of returning the Walter/Travis scene to the text is justifiable, the structure of the play had changed between the last drafts with the scene and the new drafts without it.

Most startlingly, per Nemiroff's own testimony, when Hansberry approved of the Walter/Travis scene in a post-premiere production, she approved of a production that restored it to its place at the end of Act 2. In the correspondence with Random House cited above, Nemiroff notes that Hansberry highly valued the Walter/Travis scene in a production at Karamu House, a historic Black theater in Cleveland. A program from that production in the winter of 1963–64 indicates that they followed the act and scene structure from Hansberry's typescripts, not that used on Broadway and in R and F1. Act 3, at Karamu, has two scenes, the first of which is "Moving day, one week" after the end of Act 2.⁴⁰ Hansberry's approval of using the Walter/Travis scene thus came only in the context of a production that restored the dramatic rhythms of her earlier drafts. But Nemiroff deployed the scene without altering the rest of the act and scene breaks. Indeed, when the 1983 Chicago revival used the scene as the end of Act 2, with a proto-version of the

³⁹ Two more recent Broadway productions took only one intermission. For instance, the revival starring Denzel Washington (2014) put the intermission between the original Act 2, Scene 1 and Act 2, Scene 2, which Nemiroff suggests in F2 (6).

⁴⁰ *A Raisin in the Sun* Program, Cleveland Public Library, Karamu Theatre Files, p. 3.

quieter F2 ending, Nemiroff complained to Lloyd Richards that it was “a big mistake, I thought, because it leaves the audience not knowing quite how to feel or respond.”⁴¹ The reinserted scene does not quite fit in the restructured play, having lost its proper place as the rising action at the end of Act 2.

Beneatha/Asagai

The final major restored scene is the most difficult to assess because it never took as clear a form in the extant drafts as did the other scenes. Yes, Nemiroff revised, in ways large and small, all the above scenes that were put back in later versions of the play. But in those cases, the textual basis for most revisions is clear. In the case of the Act 3 conversation between Beneatha and Asagai, the typescripts offer no clear path to assessing the multiple different versions of that scene that have been printed. And to this day, differences exist among the published editions.

The extant typescripts contain very different versions of this scene. The scene was so unsettled that even H4—the prompt book for the national tour—includes some pencilled-in corrections that appear in F1. Perhaps as a result of the shifting nature of the scene, R and F1 also differ in a few noticeable points (in addition to F1’s typically detailed stage directions). Those differences are (line numbers refer to the first part of Appendix B, Part 1; lines in the right column have the suffix “R”):

- F1 lacks Beneatha’s first line and Asagai’s reply (6R-8R). This seems simply to be a compositor’s error, corrected in F2.
- F1 uses “human being” for R’s “person” (30/31R). “HUMAN BEING” appears over a struck-through “person” in H4.
- F1 reads “close enough to what ails the world” (44), leading directly into Asagai’s admonition “I never thought to see *you* like this.” R has “close enough to the truth” and Asagai responds “Truth? Why is it that you despairing ones always think that only you have the truth?” (44R-47R). R agrees with V3’ and V4.
- In F1, Asagai imagines that his future assassins might “actually replenish all that I *was*.” In R, they “actually replenish me!” (83/83R). F1’s version seems to be a very late change, marked in pen in Y3a, replacing “replenish me” on pages revised January 23, 1959, but typed in V4.
- In R, after Beneatha’s initial incredulous response to being invited to Africa, Asagai responds with a “playful” vision of “sweeping” Beneatha “back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come” (100R-103R). Neither V4 document includes this exchange, nor does F1.
- Asagai ends his African vision with a wishful command, “Say that you’ll come,” in F1 and V4. R misses this line, which, like F1’s missing two lines in the scene’s opening, is likely a compositor’s mistake.
- R’s stage direction at 110R expresses more verbosely the mood of the scene than F1 does, using language also found in V4. F1 reads more chastely, likely from a compositorial misunderstanding, with a laconic and unconsummated “*They nearly embrace.*” That stage direction appears pencilled in the margin of Y3b, aligned with Asagai’s “we will pretend that (*Very softly*) you have only ...” But F1 does not include Y3b’s typewritten stage direction,

⁴¹ Robert Nemiroff to Lloyd Richards, October 6, 1983.

which appears in R, and ignores a pencilled-in “(A kisses B)” in Y3b next to it. H4 notes in pencil that they kiss.

- In R, Beneatha’s final two sentences are “I must sit down and think. I don’t know what to feel about anything right this minute.” This agrees with V3’. F1 prints “I don’t know what I feel about anything right this minute. I’m just going to sit down and think,” which agrees with V4—though H4 inserts “think or” to give “I don’t know what I think or feel” (see 109-111 and 114R-116R).

Even had we only F1 and R to contend with, the choices here are serious ones. At line 83 in both texts, the temporal difference between “me” and “all that I was” offers a significantly different philosophy of political identity and the value of political sacrifice. And the “middle passage” line provides one of the play’s few and fleeting references to slavery—but was cut from Broadway prompt-books, though included for readers. These are good, hard problems, open to resolution by a well-informed editor’s clearly articulated interpretive choices.

In subsequent editions, however, things get really difficult. S1, as shown in Appendix B, Part 2, tracks R closely—so closely that it does not resolve any differences between R and F1, not even a (likely) compositor’s mistake such as the missing “Say that you’ll come.” But S1 adds two significant elements: first, S1 incorporates stage directions that add Walter as a listening presence in the bedroom throughout the scene (30Rff. and 47R-48R). These actions date back at least to V3, which include similar directions for Walter to listen actively to the scene.⁴² Thus in S1, the dialogue between Beneatha and Asagai more explicitly motivates Walter’s decisions in the remainder of the act than R and F1’s stage directions indicate. Second, S1 adds almost fifty lines of dialogue in the middle of the scene. Recall that R diverged from F1 in Beneatha’s remark that medicine is not “close enough to the truth;” Asagai then echoed Beneatha’s “Truth?” This turns out to be a seam in the text, stitching together two passages between which dialogue was cut. Like F1, S1 reads “close enough to what ails mankind” at 49R. Then Beneatha continues, opening up a debate about idealism and realism, African independence, the shape of the future (a line or a circle), and what she regards as Asagai’s religious fervor. Only after Beneatha swears fealty to “truth” (92R) does Asagai pick up the next line in R.

This dialogue traverses a lot of intellectual ground. Wilkerson explains the scene’s import thus:

The spirit of humankind, Hansberry insists, must affirm freedom, justice, integrity, caring—at the expense of comfort or even life itself. It is a courageous statement made in the face of the desperate economic needs of the Youngers of the nation. It is offered as a framework for the liberation struggles of the world, in defiance of traditional American notions of success. The uncut scene in Act III gives full expression to the debate and heightens the philosophical questions implicit in the Youngers’ struggle. When this scene is cut, as in the film, or abridged, as in the early publications and the original production, the import of Hansberry’s philosophical position is diminished and the intellectual dimensions of Beneatha and Asagai are trivialized.⁴³

⁴² H4, however, contains little evidence that Walter was an important part of this scene in the original production. At “Truth?” there is even a cue to dim the lights in the bedroom.

⁴³ Wilkerson, p. 451.

As she notes, some observers felt the longer version could be the “climax of the play.” Nemiroff called it, in his prefaces from 1984 and 1988, “the larger statement of the play.”⁴⁴

V2 attests the entire exchange added in S1 almost precisely, with the passage even bracketed in pen by an unknown hand in L2 (3-2-20-21). (Whether the brackets indicated a place to cut the scene or were a later selection of something to restore is unclear.) But we cannot therefore regard S1 as simply the V2 scene, because V2 ends at Asagai’s “replenish me!” and continues with a different version of the rest of the play, one in which Asagai never invites Beneatha to Africa. Much like the Walter/Travis scene, this large insertion no longer quite fits where it was placed. S1’s Beneatha/Asagai scene is a hybrid, grafting a lengthy stretch of dialogue into a scene with a very different rhythm and shape than the one from which it came.

By the early 1980s, Nemiroff was rethinking the scene again. In a memorandum to “Directors of A RAISIN IN THE SUN,” Nemiroff explains that the S1 version “seems, on stage, perhaps a bit too discursive for the dramatic moment when it occurs.”⁴⁵ He offers then a version that “draws upon another Hansberry draft,” moving some lines around, cutting a few sentences and brief exchanges, and inserting text present in V3 and V3’, which he eventually put back into F3 and S2.⁴⁶

By 1984, Nemiroff decided against some of those additions, trimming from S1, with some text shuffled around, for F2 (S1’s 101–104 become F2’s 55Rff.), as shown in Part 3 of Appendix B. Walter’s presence in the scene was no longer indicated by S1’s stage directions, mentioned above. Instead, F2 includes a footnote offering that Yale Repertory Theatre’s 25th Anniversary production included Walter in the same room until “An end to misery!” when he exits to the bedroom (113). It did not, however, put those stage directions into the main text.

F3 saw one final round of revision, the incorporation of text from V3 at 80R–92R (Appendix B, Part 4). Here, Asagai observes “something wrong in a house” that depended on Walter Senior’s death for any possibility of hope.⁴⁷ S2 follows F3’s dialogue, but with some minor differences of punctuation, emphasis, and phrasing, some of which still raise substantive questions (Appendix B, Part 5). S2 also includes “Say that you’ll come” for the first time in a reader’s edition.

The sequence of parallel versions of the scene in Appendix B—comparing first R and F1, then showing the changing text in each subsequent version—provides all stages of the published text. They reveal a scene that has never been settled, never merely “abridged” or “complete,” but always in flux with respect to its larger shape, in the movement from thought to thought, and in the specific language the characters use. Available evidence from drafts affirms that all “restored” material has roots in Hansberry’s older writing.

But, as in the restoration of Beneatha’s hair, Nemiroff’s selection of that material was far from thorough. For instance, in V1, Asagai moves from his vision of his assassination into quoting Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Hellas: Chorus.” V3 is full of crossed-out words and passages and includes many stretches of dialogue never printed, most of which emphasize the question of Beneatha’s spirit or attitude, rather than the philosophy of politics and action found in other editions.

⁴⁴ cite

⁴⁵ Robert Nemiroff to Directors of A RAISIN IN THE SUN, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2. The letter has copyright dates, typed at the bottom, of 1958, 1959, and 1981, and likely dates from the last-named year.

⁴⁶ In F3, the lines begin “Was it your money?” at 80R.

⁴⁷ The 1995 edition of B2 includes a footnote citing Harold Scott for suggesting including these lines “from another draft” as “transitional lines” (xx).

It is tempting simply to accept Nemiroff's latest edition of this scene, which reasonably fleshes out the intellectual content, draws on legitimate text from Hansberry, and has a comprehensible intellectual and emotional flow. Yet a closer look at both earlier drafts and the current published script reveals opportunities Nemiroff missed in rewriting a scene that seems still unfinished. The first example comes from V2, which, near the top of the scene, reads thus:

ASAGAI (*Turning and studying her finally and crossing to her*) What kind of mood is this? (*He touches her hair gently, thoughtfully, still not captured by her opposite mood*) Have I told you—how this moves me? (*Moving his hand around her face, until his fingers are under her chin, poised to lift the face for a kiss*) How deeply you move me? (L2 3-2-17)

Here, Asagai brings full circle the discussion of Beneatha's hair begun in Act 1, when his criticism encourages her restyled hair in Act 2. In the passage from V2, Asagai remarks on the emotional bond her new hairstyle creates between the two of them. Yet, having restored Beneatha's natural hair in F2, Nemiroff did not restore this one gesture, which makes good emotional sense of the moment and the dialogue. In current editions, Asagai merely remarks, seemingly out of nowhere, "Have I told you how deeply you move me?" How much richer, thematically and for the emotional movement of the scene and the play, if Asagai expresses that Beneatha's new hair binds her to him, and thus prepares him, by the end of their conversation, to imagine their living in Africa together.

The second example of a missed opportunity draws on V3. When Asagai invites her to Africa, he imagines her working there as a doctor. He tells her:

... and in time—we will pretend that (*very softly*) you have only been away for a day—(*She turns her back to him—thinking*) Or—at least that is the way you will make it sound in your letters home. In reality—(*He takes her by the shoulders and turns her to him face to face, quite close*) In reality, you will wear one of those ugly white medical gowns and one of those terrible white things around your head and a stethoscope forever around your neck no doubt—And our house will be full of boxes of vitamin pills and sulfa drugs and I shall have to take time off my duties from time to time to follow you out to the bush so you can deliver babies and give shots, And I will be teased fearfully by old people about my wife who is the arrogant young doctor-woman from America... (H3 3-2-24-5 [REV.])

This is a long passage, and one can understand Nemiroff's reluctance to include it. But: it makes better sense of dialogue in the final pages of the play, after the family has resolved to move:

BENEATHA Mama, Asagai asked me to marry him today and go to Africa—

MAMA He did? You ain't old enough to marry nobody— [...]

BENEATHA To go to Africa, Mama—be a doctor in Africa ...

MAMA Yes, baby—

WALTER *Africa!* What he want you to go to Africa for?

BENEATHA To practice there ... (R 140)

When, in current versions of the script, does Asagai invite Beneatha to "be a doctor in Africa"? He doesn't; and Beneatha never leaves the stage or speaks with Asagai after their scene at the start of the act. This is a minor narrative flaw. We can accept, dramatically, that Beneatha assumes or imagines herself in Africa practicing medicine. But it makes better and clearer sense if Asagai explicitly invites her to work as a doctor in Nigeria. Moreover, the invitation underlines how,

despite Asagai's attempt intellectually to dominate Beneatha in their argument, he still regards her as a full and equal human being—something his romantic rival George never does.

Both of these passages from older drafts improve our sense of the characters and of the play as currently printed. Yet none of the many different published versions of the scene ever picked up this material, focusing instead on repopulating and reshuffling dialogue from the characters' philosophical debate.

I have discussed the major “restored” scenes in the order in which they appear in the text. They appear in different print editions and in different forms, summarized thus:

Scene	S1	F2	F3	S2
The Rat	No	No	Addendum	Yes
Beneatha's Hair	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mrs. Johnson	No	Addendum	Addendum	Yes (with footnote)
Walter/Travis	Yes	Yes (minor rev.)	Yes (reverted)	Yes
Beneatha/Asagai	Yes	Yes (revised)	Yes (revised)	Yes (as F3)

As outlined in the table, the only scene consistently present from S1 on, with only minor revisions in one edition, is Walter/Travis. All other material has accreted in a less regular way, either presented as optional (Mrs. Johnson; the Rat), added late (Beneatha's Hair), or revised multiple times (Beneatha/Asagai).

These “major” edits to the text all have a clear basis in Hansberry's typescript drafts and the prompt books—in that sense they do, indeed, “restore” excised material. They undoubtedly deepen characterization and enrich dramatic mood relative to early published editions. But they leave unresolved some minor textual details that some of the typescript drafts *do* resolve. And they bear a still uncertain relationship to the main body of the text (e.g., Mrs. Johnson's status as an addendum in F3). Finally, Nemiroff's edits, both large and small, change the place, function, and meaning of these scenes on their own and in relation to the whole.

Minor Edits

As complex as those major scenes' restoration is, the many minor changes to the text present, in some ways, an even more difficult editorial challenge. Smaller changes proliferate through the play's multiple editions, but particularly in F2, F3, and S2. They come from a multitude of sources and depend on different rationales. For instance, as noted in the summary of editions above, F1 lacked some passages of dialogue that were present in R. Someone, likely Nemiroff, traced this missing dialogue in L5, which is a photocopy of selected pages from S1. The new Walter/Travis and extended Beneatha/Asagai scene are circled, but so too are multiple, shorter passages of text. For instance, shortly after Beneatha's first entrance, Walter scrutinizes her and concludes “You a horrible-looking chick at this hour” (R 17). Later in the act, discussing George Murchison, F1 excludes Beneatha's criticism of Walter as “a flip” as well as her cutting observation that disliking George Murchison and his ilk for being rich “makes just as much sense as disliking people 'cause they're poor, and lots of people do that” (R 35). These passages are all absent from V3 and V4

but printed in R.⁴⁸ Beneatha's defiant "all the tyranny in the world will never put a God in the heavens" is even more intriguing (R 37). The line appears in only one typescript, Y3b, written in dark black pen (1-1-32). Even the prompt books (Y3a and H4) do not include it; but the line must have made it to V5+, and thence into R alone.

S2 sometimes uses extended orthography and typography to direct theatrical performances more explicitly. For instance, Walter's "evil people" (R 8) becomes "eeeeevil people" in S2. Beneatha's "forgive me, forgive me!" (R 20) turns into "FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME!" (S2 37). Stage directions include more detail in S2. At that same line of Beneatha's, a new direction indicates that Beneatha is "*Pursuing him on her knees across the floor.*" The stage direction for Ruth's "*highfalutin pose,*" which introduced a textual error discussed above, is another example. And, in a clear case of Nemiroff's clarifying the intent of a stage direction for a later generation of performers, he redescribes Walter's minstrel rehearsal for Lindner in Act 3. Hansberry directed that Walter is "*Wringing his hands in profoundly anguished imitation*" (R 134). Nemiroff revises this to "*Groveling and grinning and wringing his hands in profoundly anguished imitation of the slow-witted movie stereotype*" (S2 144)—a strange way to describe a minstrel caricature with antecedents from before the Civil War.

Some words or other phrases have changed, including the addition of "nappy" to describe Beneatha's hair and the conversion of Walter's "fairyish-looking white shoes" (R 74) into "faggoty-looking white shoes" (S2 83).⁴⁹ A few stage directions that indicate ad libbed lines became explicit dialogue. R directs Beneatha and Walter's final exit as follows: "*He and BENEATHA go out yelling at each other vigorously; BENEATHA is heard saying that she would not marry GEORGE MURCHISON if he were Adam and she were Eve, etc.*" (R 141).⁵⁰ F1 offered a different ad lib: "BENEATHA is heard saying 'George Murchison can go fly a kite'" (105). But by S2, Nemiroff has rewritten this passage explicitly as dialogue and selected the insult from R: "BENEATHA *George Murchison! I wouldn't marry him if he was Adam and I was Eve!*" (150) Another example comes on the next page, when Walter hurries Ruth and Mama from off-stage, shouting "Y'all come on! These people charges by the hour, you know!" (S2 151) In R, F1, S1, and F2, we get only a direction that "WALTER's voice calls for them raucously" (R 141). H4 is the only typescript with a specific line written in, but slightly different from that in S2: "Y'all come on. I can't keep hese men waiting all day" (3-18). H4's version reflects respect for other laborers, whereas the version in S2 emphasizes Walter's concern with money—perhaps a less apt choice, given the personal growth Walter has shown in the immediately preceding scene with Lindner. Other added lines come directly from typescript pencil notations, such as "And I'll feel fine! I'll feel fine!" after Walter's minstrel rehearsal, to which H4 testifies (3-12), printed first in F2 (126).

Two more sequences, though brief, exemplify other textual transformations. The first is the start of Act 1, Scene 2. In R, Travis leaves and Beneatha and Mama joke about the immortal cockroaches when Walter dials Willy and has a short phone conversation before leaving (40–41). In F1, the phone rings earlier in the scene; Beneatha answers and hands it to Walter who speaks a few sentences into the phone and exits (33). F1 follows V3 and V4, the changes in which came quite late—Y3a includes two sets of corrected pages inserted at 1-2-36, one dated January 24, 1959

⁴⁸ Other missing passages—too many to enumerate here—include Travis' pursuit of kitchen cleanser from Mrs. Johnson (R 53–4); Ruth's beautiful, plaintive "What else can I give you, Walter Lee Younger?" (R 79); and Lena's bemoaning that she "aims too high" (R 129).

⁴⁹ "Faggoty" is in V4, but not in V3 or any published scripts prior to the 1980s.

⁵⁰ Both Y3a and H4 include pen and pencil insertions of the Adam and Eve line.

and one dated February 12. As with all other cases in which F1 tracks production scripts but differs from R, the question of authorial intent remains an open one—were the changes from R’s version due to staging problems or did Hansberry believe the revisions an improvement on the text?

Another, more difficult problem is Mama’s entrance in Act 3 when she declares they will not move to Clybourne Park after all. R includes lines for Mama in which she reflects on a lifetime of “aim[ing] too high” (129); F1 cuts all of that material. (S1 and S2 retain R’s version; F2 and F3 present hybrid versions, with F2 bracketing some lines.) The typescripts relate a confusing story. F1 matches V4, but the two documents of V3” suggest a third version of the dialogue, one that intercuts Mama’s lament with Ruth’s protestations. Here is Y3b’s version, incorporating pencilled-in dialogue on the blank verso page opposite the text and pencil excisions and insertions on the typed recto:

RUTH Lena—no. We got to go.

MAMA (*SHE sits down, fingers to her brow, thinking*) Lord, ever since I was a little girl, I always remembers people saying, “Lena—Lena Eggleston, you aims too high all the time. You needs to slow downa nd see life a little more like it is. Just slow down some.

RUTH No Lena ...

MAMA That’s what they always used to say down home.

RUTH Bennie—tell her ...

MAMA Lord, that Lena Eggleston is a high-minded thing.

RUTH ... tell her we can still move ...

MAMA She’ll get her due one day.

RUTH ... the notes ain’t but \$125 a month.

MAMA Me and Big Walter just did never learn right.

RUTH We got four grown people in this house—we can work ...

MAMA Just ain’t our time to be takin on something like that.⁵¹

This is a complicated set of changes, requiring careful deciphering from Y3b. Unsurprisingly, the changes did not survive into V4+ or its printed progeny, F1. Nonetheless, Y3b—and a somewhat less clearly marked, but similar version in Y3a—presents a perfectly viable performance text that turns R’s monologues into a faster-paced sequence that nicely accelerates the dramatic action.

Changes of many kinds—in dialogue, in stage directions, in ad libbed sequences, in pacing and detail—thus proliferate throughout the text’s history and persist in modern editions. Resolving some of these differences would prove relatively simple, but others refuse clear right or wrong answers, while still demanding specific choices. This specificity is precisely what Nemiroff’s approach lacks. His editorial work does not present a clear set of logical imperatives with respect to prioritizing particular texts or selecting particular typescript sources and rejecting others. A scholarly editor would have the ability and obligation to approach these, as well as the longer restored passages discussed above, with greater openness and specificity with respect to sources, assumptions, and method, as well as documentation.

⁵¹ Y3b 3-2-27 (REV.) verso and 3-2-28 (REV.).

The Final Scene: Nemiroff's Revisions

We have seen Nemiroff inserting cut material, reconciling differences between the reader's and acting editions of the text, and seeking to clarify the play for modern interpreters. But there is one final form of revision Nemiroff undertook, most evident in the final Lindner scene. The changes here derive from revisions in 1980s productions. While each relatively minor, they cumulatively create a very different sensibility about Walter's behavior and how we should interpret the family's mood and decisions.

Appendix C offers parallel versions of the final Lindner scene, comparing only R to S2, from Travis' announcement that the movers have come through Lindner's exit. The most notable differences include:

- Starting at around 8R, the stage directions shuffle around, with some minor changes in wording (e.g., Travis' grin transforms from "merry" to "innocent").
- At 36R, S2 emphasizes the threat in Walter's statement. Where R's stage direction indicates Walter still speaking from a posture of supplication, S2 emphasizes "intensity" and a direct gaze. S2 also verbally stresses the violence in Walter's story. Lindner responds with stammering fear ("*frozen*" [42R]). The following line slows the scene down with an extra "*beat*," and explains that this is a "tense" moment.
- Walter's tears (49) are cut.
- At 57R, S2 sends Travis next to Walter at last, having delayed that stage direction in R, where it comes at 11.
- Lindner has lines added in S2.
- S2 adds "brick by brick," a change pencilled into H4.
- S2 changes R's "but we will try to be good neighbors" to "and we will try to be good neighbors" (64/73R).
- R's "That's all we got to say" becomes a more verbose "And that's *all* we got to say about that" (65/74R).
- Stage directions in Mama's speech change slightly, altering the tone of her reply to Lindner (93R).
- Lindner's exit line changes from "I sure hope you people know what you're doing" to "I sure hope you people know what you're getting into" (94/102R).

Let us focus on three main take-aways from these revisions, all of which alter the scene's tone and characterizations. First, the stage directions have been revised in a number of places that change how we might think about the characters' motives. In R, Walter pulls Travis next to him before he begins speaking. Walter's awareness of his son's proximity checks his entire approach to Lindner, as Travis smiles "merrily" in excitement and anticipation. Walter's consciousness of the example he sets for Travis seems to motivate his change in plan—a shift that Mama cleverly encourages when she rejects Ruth's attempt to send Travis away from the scene of Walter's would-be humiliation. Later, Mama's "Can't do a thing with 'em!" (85) thus takes on the "*double meaning*" Hansberry's stage direction indicates: Mama does find her children baffling; she is also proud of them; and, when the going gets tough, Mama can, in fact, still guide her children to make a dignified, ethical choice—as she just did with Walter. In S2, by contrast, the entire first part of Walter's dialogue is between the two grown men. Nemiroff fills the gap in motivation left by Travis's relative absence with much greater anger from Walter. To be sure, Hansberry's

“My father almost beat a man to death” is a threatening line. But her stage directions describe a Walter still groping and grasping for his meaning, still “*Looking down*”, into himself, and not confronting Lindner. Nemiroff emphasizes the confrontation and increases the aggression, adding dramatic beats so the “*tension hangs*.” S2’s Walter lets his anger come all the way to the surface before pivoting to “pride” and choosing to move to Clybourne Park. For Hansberry, the threat seems merely part of Walter’s feeling his way towards how he sees himself and who he and his family are—“pride” is the answer, rather than a “*step back*” from violence.

Fascinatingly, as different as S2 is from R in this respect, S2 represents a milder version of revisions in F2. There we find Nemiroff diverging even farther from Hansberry’s versions of the scene. Like in S2, Lindner interjects frequently as Walter gropes for what he wants to say. But in F2, Nemiroff stresses Lindner’s callousness and amplifies Walter’s anger, pushing both characters to negative extremes:

LINDNER. (*cutting in, impatient to get on with it and just a little more patronizing than he means to be*) Yes, yes, I understand....

WALTER. (*a beat; staring at him*) And my father—(*with sudden intensity as the anger rises in him at the man’s indifference and his own humiliation*) My father almost beat a man to death once because this man called him a bad name or something. (*evenly*) You know what I mean?

LINDNER. (*looking up, frozen*) No, no, I’m afraid I don’t—

WALTER. Yeah. Well—(*flexing his hand and relaxing a little as he deliberately steps back from the precipice.*) what I mean to say is that we come from people who had a lot of pride. (F2 130)

The F2 version, a text in transition from Hansberry’s original, firmly emphasizes the potential for violence between Lindner and Walter. New stage directions dictate emotions such as “*anger*” and “*humiliation*”; the dialogue acquires extra stress when referring to violence; and Walter now “*steps back*” from a “*precipice*” that involves a hand “*flexing*”—perhaps implying an incipient fist—rather than the comparatively mild “*tension*,” as given in S2. This more violent attitude accords with some contemporary observations of the 1989 television production starring Danny Glover. Cultural critic bell hooks, for instance, noted that Glover’s Walter was “a crazed, angry, dangerous black man. Gone was Walter Lee as symbolic representation of collective black ‘yearning’; in his place stood the isolated black male terrorist, an image which lived up to a white audience’s racist notions of contemporary black masculinity.”⁵² Glover’s interpretation made it from the stage and television studio back into F2, significantly transforming R and F1’s depictions of Walter. S2 then reflects a comparatively toned-down version of the scene that Nemiroff and some of later theatrical collaborators staged in the 1980s.

A second notable aspect of Nemiroff’s revisions here appears in the minor rewriting of Walter’s lines at 64, which subtly alters the sense and rhythm of his conclusion. “We don’t want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes—but we will try to be good neighbors,” as given by R, puts “making trouble” and “fighting causes” in an intriguing relationship to “being good neighbors.” The “but” works as a contrasting conjunction. Walter’s line suggests that “fighting causes” might usually be a form of good neighborliness—“but” he and his family will not be good neighbors in that way. S2’s “and” implies that being a good neighbor requires one not to fight for

⁵² bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 2015), p. 2. Osborne calls attention to this review in her commentary (M3 liii).

a cause. In other words, R's "but" contains some ambiguity about Walter's political ideals. Alternatively, we might read the "and" as a promise to remain in the background, to blend into the neighborhood. The "but" might then emphasize that, although the family will not stand up politically, they will not hide their presence, but be fully neighborly. Either way, "and" smooths out the bumpy uncertainty of Walter's "but." The following line, rewritten with four extra syllables, turns a trio of simple iambs ("That's ALL we GOT to SAY") into a metrically irregular statement ("And that's *all* we got to say about that"), which is more colloquial but offers less strength and weaker closure.

Finally, consider Lindner's exit line. R acknowledges the Younger family as agents (despite Linder's dismissive "you people"). In Hansberry's phrasing, the Youngers have taken the decision into their hands, they are "doing" something, an agency that even Lindner acknowledges in his skeptical anger. Nemiroff edits the Youngers to become more passive, merely "getting into" a situation in Clybourne Park. The difference is subtle, to be sure; both versions of Linder's line threaten and menace. But S2 diminishes the family's actions, whereas Hansberry's version played up the importance of their making a choice about their future—however subject they still may be to forces beyond their control.

Where Does This Leave Us?

What do we make, then, of the texts of *A Raisin in the Sun* we have in hand? In some ways, we can state more easily what we do not have than what we do. None of the texts currently sold represents any version written by Hansberry. Rather, on top of a solid, substantial base of the play she wrote and saw performed and published, we have an amalgamation of other parts by her, revised and tweaked by Nemiroff, along with some material inserted by Nemiroff, seemingly developed in productions in the 1980s. Unfortunately, we cannot say with much confidence that R or F1—the two texts published in her lifetime—better represent Hansberry's vision of the play, except insofar as they were literally authorized by her for publication. No one contests, for instance, that Beneatha's new hairstyle was eliminated due to the exigencies of the Broadway premiere. Would Hansberry have restored those brief passages had she lived longer? If she had that instinct, why didn't Nemiroff himself add the sequences in his initial revisions in S1? What would Hansberry have done with Walter/Travis, given that the play's structure of rising and falling action, as well as its use of intermissions, was different on Broadway than in any of the typescript drafts? We do not know.

Nor do all the current printed texts even agree with each other. F3 and S2 remain distinct, not only as acting and readers' editions, but also in the specific details of some scenes and lines. Furthermore, M3, the current British version, adopts only some of the changes from the 1980s. For instance, in the restored Beneatha's hair sequence, S2 prints Ruth's line as "Now that's the truth—it's what ain't been done to it! You expect this boy to go out with you with your head all nappy like that?" (80) M3 restores the dialogue, but prints "You expect [...]" twice (once before, once after Beneatha shows off her hair), never prints "Now that's the truth [...]", and does not adopt "nappy" (58). More strikingly, M3's final Lindner scene remains like that in S1, never incorporating either Nemiroff's extreme changes in F2 or the somewhat subtler version in S2.

Asking these questions about current editions of the play does not require us to reject any of Nemiroff's interventions. But, at bottom, we must recognize that Nemiroff's editorial work is just

that: Nemiroff's editorial work. Nemiroff knew Hansberry intimately for many years. Certainly he had a stronger claim to knowing her intentions than I or any other modern editor. As Deirdre Osborne puts it, Nemiroff worked "in ways he felt were true to [Hansberry's] artistic spirit (albeit his perception of it)" (M3 xviii). Yet even accepting his knowledge and his stated motives leaves us with many conjectures about the text in every edition after R and F1. In other words, we have good cause to treat Nemiroff as merely an editor—an important, early, exceptionally well-informed and powerful editor—but an editor nonetheless. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated throughout this discussion, Nemiroff's editorial presentation of the text in later editions, as well as his specific editorial decisions, warrant a serious, precise reconsideration.

Added to Nemiroff's changes are the exigencies of the publishing process itself, which resulted in various distortions to Hansberry's textual style. Spelling and punctuation, not to mention how the texts format speech prefixes and stage directions, differ among the many published editions. A few pages into Act 3, for instance, Asagai bids Beneatha farwell. In every edition, he says, "All right, I shall leave you"—except F3, in which Asagai says, "Alright, I shall leave you." Who made this change—from "All right" to "Alright"—and why? This is, of course, a minor change, but such changes, which tend to accumulate over time, dilute the flavor of Hansberry's text. The same should be said about punctuation, which undergoes both grammatical regularization (particularly the use of commas where grammatically appropriate, even if not included in the original text) and a consolidation towards each publisher's house style. For example, where Hansberry's typescripts mostly use ellipses when dialogue trails off, Samuel French prefers dashes. (See, for instance, the versions of Beneatha's speech about discovering the power of medicine, in Appendix B.) Such systematic differences need not create a problem in our study of the text. But they mean that we cannot read the play closely without some anxiety about whose text, precisely, we are reading.

Let me put this more plainly: all editions of *A Raisin in the Sun* currently in print, and all published since the first two editions—R, for the reading public, and F1, for theater artists—combine texts we can confidently attribute to Hansberry's artistry with materials selected, placed, and revised by Nemiroff. Far from being a "complete original version" (as the cover of S2 boasts) or the "most complete edition" of the text (as S2's preface promises), these and earlier editions present edited and revised versions. Yes, Hansberry's writing comprises the bulk of the published *Raisin* texts. And I would not argue that the fundamental ideas and characters and spirit of Hansberry's play are somehow lost or blurred by the later accretions and revisions. One might even wish to accept all of Nemiroff's editorial choices. But we can and should be more clear about the history of this text and about the contingent status of many of its passages—including some of those most studied by modern critics.

It is simply impossible to look at any segment of the play and feel confident that it represents an authorial text. Act 1, Scene 1—a very stable section of the text, remarkably consistent from V1 through S2, with relatively few exceptions—provides an excellent case study. Despite its relative stability, even the minor exceptions to that stability are not easily resolved. In both F2 and F3—but not in S2 or M3—Nemiroff revised one of the lines: "Set off another A-bomb yesterday," says Walter, instead of "Set of another bomb yesterday." The revision specifies that the "bomb" was The Bomb, a nuclear weapon, rather than a sign of racial terrorism, as later readers of the play seemed frequently to infer. Nemiroff explained this reasoning in a letter to Methuen, offering that

U.S. daily papers in the 50s almost always buried or totally ignored bombings of blacks moving into white neighborhoods; hence it would be particularly misleading for readers to get the impression that the reference is to the kind of threat the Youngers will face later.”⁵³

Nemiroff may be right about the *Chicago Tribune*’s general news priorities in the 1950s. (A cursory search of *Tribune* records, however, suggests that it was not impossible to find news of racially-motivated terrorism in the first few pages of the paper.⁵⁴) But he ignores the fact that Mrs. Johnson relays “colored newspaper” reports of a bombing in *Clybourne Park* during her scene in Act 2. Indeed, it is typical of Hansberry’s writing to draw such connections between acts and scenes. Nemiroff frequently misses these small connecting nodes—such as Asagai’s reference to Beneatha’s new hairstyle in Act 3—some of which disappeared due to edits for Broadway in 1959. Furthermore, even if Nemiroff is correct about the meaning of the “bomb,” the confusion between atomic weapons testing and racial terrorism produces more (and more complex) layers of meaning. “Set off another bomb yesterday” is a richer text than “Set off another A-bomb yesterday,” as the former contains both possibilities, the latter, only one. Nemiroff’s editorial intervention thus inserts new content to create a *lectio simplicior*—not a typical editorial principle. Based on the connection to Mrs. Johnson’s later reference and the rich ambiguity between international (atomic) violence and national (terroristic) violence, I would reject Nemiroff’s “A-bomb,” though include a note about his edit, his rationale, and the strengths and weaknesses of his reasoning. This is a relatively easy case to deal with, but the details involved in reaching this conclusion are far from simple or obvious. And, crucially, the ability to think about the text in this active way is impossible when relying on any printed edition by itself.

Nemiroff acts always in an editorial capacity. Accessing Hansberry’s authorial intent—even if we wish to privilege it—is far from an easy task. The drafts are patchy in mystifying ways: we cannot be sure that V1, V2, V3, and V4 represent all the play’s stages of development; there may have been intervening drafts, any one of which might shed further light on the writing and revision process. And, of course, I have not discovered printers’ copies of either R (V5+) or F1 (V4+). Moreover, it is essential not to regard any one of these drafts as fundamentally “correct” and the others “corrupt.” V1 represents Hansberry’s first full working-through of the play. Everything else from her lifetime—typescript or published edition—represents a later idea about the material, an idea borne of some reason or other, sometimes reported by contemporary witnesses (who may or may not be reliable), sometimes not. Every edition published after her death has been edited by Nemiroff in some way or another. We cannot simply look at R and F1 and decide that they represent Hansberry’s final thoughts on the play. Yet we have no specific reason to believe that Hansberry viewed the play, as staged and printed in 1959, as “incomplete.” We cannot assume that V1 represents a pristine origin and all later texts are “fallen” and corrupted by the systems of Broadway and Hollywood and publishing. We must simultaneously allow Hansberry her own scope of action as a writer, able and willing to change her mind about the text, to accept suggestions from collaborators, to revise her work to better realize her artistic vision *and* recognize the editorial control Nemiroff exerted posthumously.⁵⁵

⁵³ Robert Nemiroff to Mary Remnant, March 8, 1986, Schomburg, Box 19, Folder 2.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, page 2 on September 14 and 24, 1957.

⁵⁵ Some of that control is reflected in the play’s changing copyright status. Complex legal proceedings resulted in Nemiroff, and eventually his heirs, becoming the named copyright holders of Hansberry’s work, including *A Raisin in the Sun*.

So what kind of an editor was Nemiroff? And how does his editorial approach present Hansberry as a playwright, and this particular play? Based on this study of Nemiroff's work, we can say that his editing strongly promotes Hansberry as a strong playwright of ideas. *Raisin*, in Nemiroff's hands, is more like a play by Bernard Shaw than was the original production, which was rooted in a tradition of family realism redolent of late O'Neill, Hellman, and Inge. Cutting Mrs. Johnson's scene and the longer Beneatha/Asagai dialogue had trimmed the play's philosophical argumentation down only to moments where words meet action. When Walter and Mama argue over the meaning of money, they argue over what *to do* with the money they have earned—ideas always remain rooted in dramatic action, in the 1959 version of the play. By contrast, when, in modern scripts, Beneatha and Asagai argue about the future of political action in Africa, they argue over abstract ideas that don't touch directly on the action of the play. The scene eliminates a "key debate about the relationship between African and black American identities" (M3 l), but without affecting the characters' actions.

Most of these revisions have the benefit of demonstrating Hansberry's remarkable talents as a groundbreaking thinker about Black life. The intellectual threads Nemiroff developed altered the play from a *relatively* conservative drama of Black family life for 1959 into the dramatization of a whole new wave of Black thought that Hansberry recognized and articulated in 1958 and 1959, but that would have been unfamiliar outside of her own circles (Beneatha's hair; the Beneatha/Asagai debate). Hansberry was as "prophetic," in her drafts, as Nemiroff and other writers claimed—but the play staged in her name in 1959 had excised much of that prophecy. To properly grasp *Raisin*'s role in American theater history, we need to distinguish clearly between the play staged and published in 1959, the elements Hansberry originally drafted for the stage, and Nemiroff's reconstruction of those elements. Current texts, all without proper editorial notes, make that assessment nearly impossible.

There are the many other small problems with the text, too, including Nemiroff's edits with little justification in Hansberry's drafts. Minor wording changes such as "nappy" and "faggoty" exemplify such alterations. The persistent differences between reading and acting editions, let alone the British editions, remain a source of confusion.

Most importantly, though, current versions of the play make Hansberry a less astute dramatist than her drafts show her to have been. Consider the Beneatha/Asagai scene: to the extent that their philosophical debate leads to a plan of action for the characters—that she move to Africa with him to practice medicine—Nemiroff fails to restore dramatic moments tracing that relationship within the scene (Asagai's touch of Beneatha's hair; the muddled stage directions about their embrace; Asagai's speech about Beneatha as a doctor). If Nemiroff's edits enrich the play politically and philosophically, they leave it relatively impoverished with respect to Hansberry's craft as a dramatist, some examples of which I offered in the discussion above. We should—and the text should enable us to—attend to the play's shifting political valences in the American theater over a relatively short period of time. But we should also better serve Hansberry's skills as a playwright, acknowledging her ability and willingness to focus her drama to its sharpest point in 1959, but also her ability to craft an even larger dramatic work with the threads all carefully knotted together. In some ways, as strong as the 1959 production must have been, the pressure of staging meant some loose ends were never quite tidied up on Broadway. Unfortunately, Nemiroff was better at reinstating philosophical arguments than he was at giving Hansberry's dramaturgy its full scope.

The edits to *Raisin*, then, help us better appreciate Hansberry's political thought, but, without better editorial clarity, misstate the play's radical political elements from its premiere into the 1980s. And the revised texts do not do justice to Hansberry's craft as a playwright. New editions of *A Raisin in the Sun* should permit students of the play to learn about all these aspects of the play, the text, and its history.

To summarize all of the previous discussion: What we see here is a clear case of a text not yet a century old, initially successful in performance and—after a couple intervening decades—popular in revival, consistently in print, and significantly altered from edition to edition. None of those alterations can lay absolute claim to authorial intent. The two current American editions of the text, S2 and F3, are still not identical. Perhaps more strikingly, the current British editions do not incorporate all of the changes in S2, and are something of a third textual tradition at this point, somewhat influenced by Nemiroff's editorial work in the 1980s, but not entirely altered by it. We can trace generally the history of these textual changes. We can understand, generally, the economic, aesthetic, and political rationales for Nemiroff's (somewhat submerged) editorial practices. And we could even begin, with firm knowledge of these edits in mind, to consider *Raisin's* afterlives as determined by Hansberry's white, male ex-husband, and how they inflect our interpretation of a play rightly regarded as a breakthrough in Black theater, authored by a queer Black woman and originally staged by a burgeoning star Black director. The imbrication of race and gender, not to mention the background of political and cultural changes in the United States, offer us grounds for both understanding and criticizing the play *and* the play's textual history.

Appendix A

Passage 1

R, p. 71

GEORGE (*To BENEATHA*) Look honey, we're going *to* the theatre—we're not going to be *in* it ... so go change, huh?

5 RUTH You expect this boy to go out with you looking like that?

BENEATHA (*Looking at GEORGE*) That's up to George. If he's ashamed of his heritage—

10 GEORGE Oh, don't be so proud of yourself, Bennie—just because you look eccentric.

BENEATHA How can something that's natural be eccentric?

15 GEORGE That's what being eccentric means—being natural. Get dressed.

S2, p. 80

GEORGE (*To BENEATHA*) Look honey, we're going *to* the theatre—we're not going to be *in* it ... so go change, huh?

(BENEATHA *looks at him and slowly, ceremoniously, lifts her hands and pulls off the headdress. Her hair is close-cropped and unstraightened.* GEORGE freezes mid-sentence and RUTH's eyes all but fan out of her head) 5R 10R

GEORGE What in the name of—

RUTH (*Touching BENEATHA's hair*) Girl, you done lost your natural mind!? Look at your head!

GEORGE What have you done to your head—I mean your hair! 15R

BENEATHA Nothing—except cut it off.

RUTH Now that's the truth—it's what ain't been done to it! You expect this boy to go out with you with your head all nappy like that? 20R

BENEATHA (*Looking at GEORGE*) That's up to George. If he's ashamed of his heritage— 25R

GEORGE Oh, don't be so proud of yourself, Bennie—just because you look eccentric.

BENEATHA How can something that's natural be eccentric? 30R

GEORGE That's what being eccentric means—being natural. Get dressed.

Passage 2

R, p. 77

(BENEATHA enters, dressed for the evening in a cocktail dress and earrings)

GEORGE Well—hey, you look great.

5 BENEATHA Let's go, George. See you all later.

RUTH Have a nice time.

S2, pp. 85–6

(BENEATHA enters, dressed for the evening in a cocktail dress and earrings, hair natural)

GEORGE Well—hey—(Crosses to BENEATHA; thoughtful, with emphasis, since this is a reversal) You look great! 5R

WALTER (Seeing his sister's hair for the first time) What's the matter with your head?

BENEATHA (Tired of the jokes now) I cut it off, Brother. 10R

WALTER (Coming close to inspect it and walking around her) Well, I'll be damned. So that's what they mean by the African bush ... 15R

BENEATHA Ha ha. Let's go, George.

GEORGE (Looking at her) You know something? I like it. It's sharp. I mean it really is. (Helps her into her wrap) 20R

RUTH Yes—I think so, too. (She goes to the mirror and starts to clutch at her hair)

WALTER Oh no! You leave yours alone, baby. You might turn out to have a pin-shaped head or something! 25R

BENEATHA See you all later.

RUTH Have a nice time.

Appendix B

Part 1

F1

ASAGAI (*Crosses R. above sofa, D.R., crosses L. front of sofa to barrel, crosses R. to BENEATHA.*) I came over—I had some free time. I thought I might
 5 help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people—but for me—it is another feeling. Something full of
 10 the flow of life, do you understand—Movement, progress—it makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai—

15 ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment!
 20 With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted.

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA (*Sits on sofa.*) Gone!

ASAGAI (*BENEATHA rises, crosses U.R. of sofa, sits R. arm of sofa.*) I'm very
 25 sorry—And you now?

BENEATHA Me?—Me? Me, I'm nothing—Me. When I was very small—we used to take our sleds out in the
 30 winter time and the only hills we had were the ice covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down
 35 them all day—and it was very dangerous, you know—far too steep—and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk—and we saw his face

R

ASAGAI I came over ... I had some free time. I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some
 5R people ... but for me ... it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress ... It makes me think of Africa. 10R

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai ... 15R

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away? 20R

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted.

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA Gone! 25R

ASAGAI I'm very sorry. And you, now?

BENEATHA Me? ... Me? ... Me I'm nothing ... Me. When I was very small ... we used to take our sleds
 30R out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down
 35R them all day ... and it was very dangerous you know ... far too steep ... and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk ... and we saw his 40R

40 just split open right there in front of
us—And I remember standing there
looking at his bloody open face think-
ing that was the end of Rufus. But
the ambulance came and they took
45 him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up—and the next time I saw Ru-
fus he just had a little line down the
middle of his face—I never got over
50 that—

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one
human being could do for another,
fix him up—sew up the problem, make
55 him all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world—I want-
ed to do that. I always thought it
was the one concrete thing in the world
that a human being could do. Fix up
60 the sick, you know—and make them
whole again. This was truly being
God—

ASAGAI You wanted to be God—?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure.
65 It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people
and how their bodies hurt—

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring—
70 ?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI (*Rises.*) Why?

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
deep enough, close enough to what
75 ails the world.

ASAGAI (*Crosses L. to C.*) I never
thought to see *you* like this. You!
Your brother made a mistake—and
you are grateful to him. So that now
80 you can give up the ailing human
race on account of it. Now you can
talk about what good is struggle; what
good is anything? Where are we all
going? And why are we bothering?

face just split open right there in front
of us ... And I remember standing
there looking at his bloody open face
thinking that was the end of Rufus.
But the ambulance came and they took 45R
him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up ... and the next time I saw Ru-
fus he just had a little line down the
middle of his face ... I never got over 50R
that ...

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one
person could do for another, fix him
up—sew up the problem, make him 55R
all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world ... I
wanted to do that. I always thought
it was the one concrete thing in the
world that a human being could do. 60R
Fix up the sick, you know—and make
them whole again. This was truly
being God ...

ASAGAI You wanted to be God?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure. 65R
It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people
and how their bodies hurt ...

ASAGAI And you've stopped car- 70R
ing?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
deep enough, close enough to the truth. 75R

ASAGAI Truth? Why is it that you
despairing ones always think that only
you have the truth? I never thought
to see *you* like that. You! Your brother
made a stupid, childish mistake—and 80R
you are grateful to him. So that now
you can give up the ailing human
race on account of it. You talk about
what good is struggle; what good is

85 BENEATHA (*Rises, crosses L. to him.*)
 AND YOU CANNOT ANSWER IT!
 All your talk and dreams about Africa
 and independence. Independence and
 then what? What about all the crooks
 90 and petty thieves and just plain id-
 iots who will come into power to steal
 and plunder the same as before—only
 now they will be black and do it in
 the name of the new independence—
 95 You cannot answer that. (*Turns, crosses
 R. to armchair and sits.*)

ASAGAI (*Shouting over her.*) I LIVE
 THE ANSWER! (*Pause.*) In my vil-
 lage at home it is the exceptional man
 100 who can even read a newspaper—or
 who ever *sees* a book at all. (*Crosses
 R. in to her, sits on sofa.*) I will go
 home and much of what I will have
 to say will seem strange to the peo-
 105 ple of my village—But I will teach
 and work and things will happen, slow-
 ly and swiftly. At times it will seem
 that nothing changes at all—and then
 again—the sudden dramatic events
 110 which make history leap into the fu-
 ture. And then quiet again. Retro-
 gression, even. Guns, murder, rev-
 olution. And I even will have mo-
 ments when I wonder if the quiet was
 115 not better than all that death and ha-
 tred. But I will look about my village
 at the illiteracy and disease and ig-
 norance and I will not wonder long.
 And perhaps—perhaps I will be a great
 120 man—I mean perhaps I will hold onto
 the substance of truth and find my
 way always with the right course—
 and perhaps for it I will be butchered
 in my bed some night by the servants
 125 of empire—

BENEATHA THE MARTYR!

ASAGAI Or perhaps I shall live to

anything? Where are we all going? 85R
 And why are we bothering?

BENEATHA *And you cannot answer
 it!* All your talk and dreams about
 Africa and Independence. Indepen-
 dence and then what? What about 90R
 all the crooks and petty thieves and
 just plain idiots who will come into
 power to steal and plunder the same
 as before—only now they will be black
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ASAGAI (*Shouting over her*) *I live
 the answer!* (*Pause*) In my village at
 home it is the exceptional man who
 can even read a newspaper ... or who 100R
 ever *sees* a book at all. I will go home
 and much of what I will have to say
 will seem strange to the people of
 my village ... But I will teach and
 work and things will happen, slowly 105R
 and swiftly. At times it will seem
 that nothing changes at all ... and
 then again ... the sudden dramatic
 events which make history leap into
 the future. And then quiet again. Ret- 110R
 rogression even. Guns, murder, rev-
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 at the illiteracy and disease and ig-
 norance and I will not wonder long.
 And perhaps ... perhaps I will be a
 great man ... I mean perhaps I will
 hold on to the substance of truth and 120R
 find my way always with the right
 course ... and perhaps for it I will be
 butchered in my bed some night by
 the servants of empire ...

BENEATHA *The martyr!*

ASAGAI ... or perhaps I shall live

be a very old man, respected and esteemed in my new nation—And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and outmoded, and I will not understand and do terrible things to have things my way or merely to keep my power. Don't you see that there will be young men and women, not British soldiers then, but my own black countrymen—to step out of the shadows some evening and slit my then useless throat? Don't you see, they have always been there—that they always will be? And that such a thing as my own death will be an advance? They who might kill me even—actually replenish all that I was.

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all that.

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moaning and groaning and tell me what you plan to do.

BENEATHA Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a suggestion.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*Rather quietly for him.*) That when it is all over—that you come home with me—(*Rises, crosses L. to kitchen.*)

BENEATHA (*Slapping herself on the forehead with exasperation out of misunderstanding.*) Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*Crosses to L. end of sofa. Quickly understanding the misunderstanding.*) My dear, young, creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean; home—to Africa.

BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured*

to be a very old man respected and esteemed in my new nation ... And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo; perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and outmoded, and I will not understand and do terrible things to have things my way or merely to keep my power. Don't you see that there will be young men and women, not British soldiers then, but my own black countrymen ... to step out of the shadows some evening and slit my then useless throat? Don't you see they have always been there ... that they always will be. And that such a thing as my own death will be an advance? They who might kill me even ... actually replenish me!

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BENEATHA (*Slapping herself on the forehead with exasperation born of misunderstanding.*) Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*Quickly understanding the misunderstanding.*) My dear, young creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean; home—to Africa.

BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured*

amazement.) To—to Nigeria—? (*Rises, turns, crosses R. to front of kitchen table.*)

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Crosses L. to her with genuine romantic flippancy.*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and in time—we will pretend that—(*Very softly.*) you have only been away for a day—Say that you'll come. (*They nearly embrace.*)

BENEATHA (*Pulling away, crosses up back of kitchen table.*) You're getting me all mixed up—

ASAGAI Why—?

BENEATHA Too many things—too many things have happened here today. I don't know what I feel about anything right this minute. I'm just going to sit down and think. (*Crosses D.C., sits on sofa and props her head on her hand.*)

ASAGAI All right, I shall leave you. (*Crosses to C. above table. BENEATHA starts to rise.*) No—don't get up. Just sit a while and think—Never be afraid to sit a while and think. (*Goes to the C. door and turns.*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought—" (*He exits.*)

amazement) To—to Nigeria? 170R

ASAGAI Yes! ... (*Smiling and lifting his arms playfully*) Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come— 175R

BENEATHA (*Unable to play*) Nigeria?

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Coming to her with genuine romantic flippancy*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and, in time, we will pretend that—(*Very softly*)—you have only been away for a day— 180R 185R

(*She turns her back to him, thinking. He swings her around and takes her full in his arms in a long embrace which proceeds to passion*) 190R

BENEATHA (*Pulling away*) You're getting me all mixed up—

ASAGAI Why? 195R

BENEATHA Too many things—too many things have happened today. I must sit down and think. I don't know what I feel about anything right this minute. 200R

(*She promptly sits down and props her chin on her fist*)

ASAGAI (*Charmed*) All right, I shall leave you. No—don't get up. (*Touching her, gently, sweetly*) Just sit awhile and think ... Never be afraid to sit awhile and think. (*He goes to door and looks at her*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought ..." 205R 210R

Part 2

R

ASAGAI I came over ... I had some free time. I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people ... but for me ... it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress ... It makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai ...

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted.

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA Gone!

ASAGAI I'm very sorry. And you, now?

BENEATHA Me? ... Me? ... Me I'm nothing ... Me. When I was very small ... we used to take our sleds out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day ... and it was very dangerous you know ... far too steep ... and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk ... and we saw his face just split open right there in front of us ... And I remember standing

S1

ASAGAI I came over ... I had some free time. I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people ... but for me ... it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress ... It makes me think of Africa.

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there looking at his bloody open face
thinking that was the end of Rufus.
45 But the ambulance came and they took
him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up ... and the next time I saw Ru-
fus he just had a little line down the
50 middle of his face ... I never got over
that ...

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one
person could do for another, fix him
55 up—sew up the problem, make him
all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world ... I
wanted to do that. I always thought
it was the one concrete thing in the
60 world that a human being could do.
Fix up the sick, you know—and make
them whole again. This was truly
being God ...

ASAGAI You wanted to be God?

65 BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure.
It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people
and how their bodies hurt ...

70 ASAGAI And you've stopped car-
ing?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
75 deep enough, close enough to the truth.

there looking at his bloody open face
thinking that was the end of Rufus.
But the ambulance came and they took 45R
him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up ... and the next time I saw Ru-
fus he just had a little line down the
middle of his face ... I never got over 50R
that ...

*(WALTER sits up, listening on the
bed. Throughout this scene it is im-
portant that we feel his reaction at all
times, that he visibly respond to the 55R
words of his sister and ASAGAI)*

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one
person could do for another, fix him
56R up—sew up the problem, make him
all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world ... I
wanted to do that. I always thought
it was the one concrete thing in the
65R world that a human being could do.
Fix up the sick, you know—and make
them whole again. This was truly
being God ...

ASAGAI You wanted to be God?

70R BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure.
It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people
and how their bodies hurt.

75R ASAGAI And you've stopped car-
ing?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI Why?

*(WALTER rises, goes to the door of
his room and is about to open it, then
stops and stands listening, leaning on
the door jamb) 80R*

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
deep enough, close enough to what
85R ails mankind—I mean this thing of
sewing up bodies or administering
drugs. Don't you understand? It was

a child's reaction to the world. I thought that doctors had the secret to all the hurts.... That's the way a child sees things—or an idealist. 90R

ASAGAI Children see things very well sometimes—and idealists even better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I left off—you still care. This is what you see for the world, for Africa. You with the dreams of the future will patch up all Africa—you are going to cure the Great Sore of colonialism with Independence— 100R

ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Yes—and you think that one word is the penicillin of the human spirit: "Independence!" But then what? 105R

ASAGAI That will be a problem for another time. First we must get there.

BENEATHA And where does it end? 110R

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery!

ASAGAI (*Smiling*) You sound like a French intellectual. 115R

BENEATHA No! I sound like a human being who just had her future taken right out of her hands! While I was sleeping in my bed in there, things were happening in this world that directly concerned me—and nobody asked me, consulted me—they just went out and did things—and changed my life. Don't you see there isn't any real progress, Asagai, there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around, each of us with our own little picture—in front of us—our own little mirage that we think is the future. 120R 130R

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI Truth? Why is it that you despairing ones always think that only you have the truth? I never thought to see *you* like that. You! Your brother
 80 made a stupid, childish mistake—and you are grateful to him. So that now you can give up the ailing human race on account of it. You talk about what good is struggle; what good is
 85 anything? Where are we all going? And why are we bothering?

BENEATHA *And you cannot answer it!* All your talk and dreams about Africa and Independence. Independence and then what? What about
 90 all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power to steal and plunder the same as before—only now they will be black

ASAGAI What you just said—about the circle. It isn't a circle—it is simply a long line—as in geometry, you know, one that reaches into infinity. And because we cannot see the end—we also cannot see how it changes. And it is very odd but those who see the changes are called "idealists"—
 140R and those who cannot, or refuse to think, they are the "realists." It is very strange, and amusing too, I think.

BENEATHA You—you are almost religious.
 145R

ASAGAI Yes ... I think I have the religion of doing what is necessary in the world—and of worshipping man—because he is so marvelous, you see.

BENEATHA Man is foul! And the human race deserves its misery!
 150R

ASAGAI You see: *you* have become the religious one in the old sense. Already, and after such a small defeat, you are worshipping despair.
 155R

BENEATHA From now on, I worship the truth—and the truth is that people are puny, small and selfish....

ASAGAI Truth? Why is it that you despairing ones always think that only
 160R you have the truth? I never thought to see *you* like that. You! Your brother made a stupid, childish mistake—and you are grateful to him. So that now you can give up the ailing human
 165R race on account of it. You talk about what good is struggle; what good is anything? Where are we all going? And why are we bothering?

BENEATHA *And you cannot answer it!* All your talk and dreams about Africa and Independence. Independence and then what? What about
 170R all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power to steal and plunder the same
 175R as before—only now they will be black

95 and do it in the name of the new Independence— You cannot answer that.

ASAGAI (*Shouting over her*) *I live the answer!* (*Pause*) In my village at home it is the exceptional man who
100 can even read a newspaper ... or who ever *sees* a book at all. I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village ... But I will teach and
105 work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem that nothing changes at all ... and then again ... the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into
110 the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression even. Guns, murder, revolution. And I even will have moments when I wonder if the quiet was not better than all that death and hatred.
115 But I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long. And perhaps ... perhaps I will be a great man ... I mean perhaps I will
120 hold on to the substance of truth and find my way always with the right course ... and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire ...

125 BENEATHA *The martyr!*

ASAGAI ... or perhaps I shall live to be a very old man respected and esteemed in my new nation ... And perhaps I shall hold office and this is
130 what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo; perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and outmoded, and I will not understand and do terrible things to have things my
135 way or merely to keep my power. Don't you see that there will be young men and women, not British soldiers then, but my own black countrymen ... to step out of the shadows some

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180R can even read a newspaper ... or who ever *sees* a book at all. I will go home and much of what I will have to say
185R will seem strange to the people of my village ... But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly
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210R esteemed in my new nation ... And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo;
215R perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and outmoded, and I will not understand and do terrible things to have things my
220R way or merely to keep my power. Don't you see that there will be young men and women, not British soldiers then, but my own black countrymen ... to step out of the shadows some

140 evening and slit my then useless throat?
Don't you see they have always been
there ... that they always will be.
And that such a thing as my own
death will be an advance? They who
145 might kill me even ... actually re-
plenish me!

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
that.

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
150 ing and groaning and tell me what
you plan to do.

BENEATHA Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges-
tion.

155 BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*Rather quietly for him*) That
when it is all over— that you come
home with me—

BENEATHA (*Slapping herself on the*
160 *forehead with exasperation born of mis-*
understanding) Oh—Asagai—at this
moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*Quickly understanding the*
misunderstanding) My dear, young
165 creature of the New World—I do not
mean across the city—I mean across
the ocean; home—to Africa.

BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding*
and turning to him with murmured
170 *amazement*) To—to Nigeria?

ASAGAI Yes! ... (*Smiling and lift-*
ing his arms playfully) Three hun-
dred years later the African Prince
rose up out of the seas and swept the
175 maiden back across the middle pas-
sage over which her ancestors had
come—

BENEATHA (*Unable to play*) Nige-
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180 ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Coming*
to her with genuine romantic flippancy)
I will show you our mountains and
our stars; and give you cool drinks
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ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
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BENEATHA Do? 235R

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BENEATHA (*Slapping herself on the*
forehead with exasperation born of mis-
understanding) Oh—Asagai—at this
moment you decide to be romantic! 245R

ASAGAI (*Quickly understanding the*
misunderstanding) My dear, young
creature of the New World—I do not
mean across the city—I mean across
the ocean; home—to Africa. 250R

BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding*
and turning to him with murmured
amazement) To—to Nigeria?

ASAGAI Yes ... (*Smiling and lift-*
ing his arms playfully) Three hun-
dred years later the African Prince
rose up out of the seas and swept the
maiden back across the middle pas-
sage over which her ancestors had
come— 260R

BENEATHA (*Unable to play*) Nige-
ria?

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Coming*
to her with genuine romantic flippancy)
I will show you our mountains and 265R
our stars; and give you cool drinks
from gourds and teach you the old

185 songs and the ways of our people—
and, in time, we will pretend that—
(*Very softly*)—you have only been away
for a day—

(*She turns her back to him, thinking. He swings her around and takes her full in his arms in a long embrace which proceeds to passion*)

BENEATHA (*Pulling away*) You're getting me all mixed up—

195 ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA Too many things—too many things have happened today. I must sit down and think. I don't know what I feel about anything right
200 this minute.

(*She promptly sits down and props her chin on her fist*)

ASAGAI (*Charmed*) All right, I shall leave you. No—don't get up. (*Touching her, gently, sweetly*) Just sit awhile and think ... Never be afraid to sit
205 awhile and think. (*He goes to door and looks at her*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally
210 wrought ..."

songs and the ways of our people—
and, in time, we will pretend that—
(*Very softly*)—you have only been away^{270R}
for a day—

(*She turns her back to him, thinking. He swings her around and takes her full in his arms in a long embrace which proceeds to passion*)

275R

BENEATHA (*Pulling away*) You're getting me all mixed up—

ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA Too many things—too many things have happened today. I must sit down and think. I don't know what I feel about anything right
280R this minute.

(*She promptly sits down and props her chin on her fist*)

285R

ASAGAI (*Charmed*) All right, I shall leave you. No—don't get up. (*Touching her, gently, sweetly*) Just sit awhile and think ... Never be afraid to sit
290R awhile and think. (*He goes to door and looks at her*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought ..."

Part 3

S1

ASAGAI I came over ... I had some free time. I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people ... but for me ... it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress ... It makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai ...

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted.

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA Gone!

ASAGAI I'm very sorry ... And you, now?

BENEATHA Me? ... Me? ... Me I'm nothing ... Me. When I was very small ... we used to take our sleds out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day ... and it was very dangerous you know ... far too steep ... and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and

F2

ASAGAI (*crosses R. above sofa, D.R., crosses L. front of sofa to barrel, crosses R. to BENEATHA*) I came over—I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people—but for me—it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress—it makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai—

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted!

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA (*sits on sofa*) Gone!

ASAGAI (*sits next to BENEATHA on sofa. BENEATHA rises, crosses U.R. of sofa, sits R. arm of sofa.*) I'm very sorry—And you, now?

BENEATHA Me?—Me?—Me, I'm nothing—Me. When I was very small—we used to take our sleds out in the winter time and the only hills we had were the ice covered stone steps down the street. And we used to fill them with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day—and it was very dangerous, you know—far too steep—and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk—and his face

40 hit the sidewalk ... and we saw his
face just split open right there in front
of us ... And I remember standing
there looking at his bloody open face
thinking that was the end of Rufus.
45 But the ambulance came and they took
him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up ... and the next time I saw Ru-
fus he just had a little line down the
50 middle of his face ... I never got over
that ...

*(WALTER sits up, listening on the
bed. Throughout this scene it is im-
portant that we feel his reaction at all
55 times, that he visibly respond to the
words of his sister and ASAGAI)*

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one
person could do for another, fix him
60 up—sew up the problem, make him
all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world ... I
wanted to do that. I always thought
it was the one concrete thing in the
65 world that a human being could do.
Fix up the sick, you know—and make
them whole again. This was truly
being God ...

ASAGAI You wanted to be God?

70 BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure.
It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people
and how their bodies hurt.

75 ASAGAI And you've stopped car-
ing?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI Why?

80 *(WALTER rises, goes to the door of
his room and is about to open it, then
stops and stands listening, leaning on
the door jamb)*

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
deep enough, close enough to what

just split open right there in front of
us—And I remember standing there
looking at his bloody open face think- 45R
ing that was the end of Rufus. But
the ambulance came and they took
him to the hospital and they fixed
the broken bones and they sewed it
all up—and the next time I saw Ru- 50R
fus he just had a little line down the
middle of his face—I never got over
that—

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one 55R
human being could do for another,
fix him up—sew up the problem, make
him all right again. That was the most
marvelous thing in the world—I wanted
to do that. I always thought it was 60R
the one concrete thing in the world
that a human being could do. Fix up
the sick, you know—and make them
whole again. This was truly being
God— 65R

ASAGAI You wanted to be God—?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure.
It used to be so important to me. I
wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
used to care. I mean about people 70R
and how their bodies hurt—

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring—
?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI *(rises)* Why? 75R

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem
deep enough, close enough to what

85 ails mankind—I mean this thing of
sewing up bodies or administering
drugs. Don't you understand? It was
a child's reaction to the world. I thought
that doctors had the secret to all the
90 hurts.... That's the way a child sees
things—or an idealist.

ASAGAI Children see things very
well sometimes—and idealists even
better.

95 BENEATHA I know that's what you
think. Because you are still where I
left off—you still care. This is what
you see for the world, for Africa. You
with the dreams of the future will
100 patch up all Africa—you are going
to cure the Great Sore of colonialism
with Independence—

ASAGAI Yes!

105 BENEATHA Yes—and you think that
one word is the penicillin of the hu-
man spirit: "Independence!" But then
what?

ASAGAI That will be a problem for
another time. First we must get there.

110 BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of
an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery!

115 ASAGAI (*Smiling*) You sound like
a French intellectual.

BENEATHA No! I sound like a hu-
man being who just had her future
taken right out of her hands! While
I was sleeping in my bed in there,
120 things were happening in this world
that directly concerned me—and no-
body asked me, consulted me—they
just went out and did things—and chang-
ed my life. Don't you see there isn't
125 any real progress, Asagai, there is only
one large circle that we march in, around

ails mankind. It was a child's way of
seeing things—or an idealist's.

ASAGAI Children see things very 80R
well sometimes—and idealists even
better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you
think. Because you are still where I
left off. You with all your talk and 85R
dreams about Africa! You still think
you can patch up the world. Cure
the Great Sore of Colonialism—(*loftily,*
mocking it) with the "penicillin of In-
dependence!" 90R

ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Independence *and then*
what? What about all the crooks and
petty thieves and just plain idiots who
will steal and plunder the same as 95R
before, only now they will be black
and do it in the *name* of new inde-
pendence—WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

ASAGAI That will be a problem for
another time. First we must get there. 100R

BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of
an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery! To
stupidity! Don't you see there isn't 105R
any real progress, Asagai, there is only
one large circle that we march in, around
and around, each of us with our own
little picture—in front of us—our own
little mirage that we think is the fu- 110R
ture.

and around, each of us with our own
little picture—in front of us—our own
little mirage that we think is the fu-
130 ture.

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said—about
the circle. It isn't a circle—it is sim-
135 ply a long line—as in geometry, you
know, one that reaches into infin-
ity. And because we cannot see the
end—we also cannot see how it changes.
And it is very odd but those who see
140 the changes are called "idealists"—
and those who cannot, or refuse to
think, they are the "realists." It is very
strange, and amusing too, I think.

BENEATHA You—you are almost re-
145 ligious.

ASAGAI Yes ... I think I have the
religion of doing what is necessary
in the world—and of worshipping man—
because he is so marvelous, you see.

BENEATHA Man is foul! And the
150 human race deserves its misery!

ASAGAI You see: *you* have become
the religious one in the old sense. Al-
ready, and after such a small defeat,
155 you are worshipping despair.

BENEATHA From now on, I wor-
ship the truth—and the truth is that
people are puny, small and selfish....

ASAGAI Truth? Why is it that you
160 despairing ones always think that only
you have the truth? I never thought
to see *you* like that. You! Your brother
made a stupid, childish mistake—and
you are grateful to him. So that now
165 you can give up the ailing human
race on account of it. You talk about
what good is struggle; what good is
anything? Where are we all going?
And why are we bothering?

BENEATHA *And you cannot answer*
170 *it!* All your talk and dreams about

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said—about
the circle. It isn't a circle. (*His ges- 115R*
tures paint the picture as he talks.) It
is simply a long line—as in geome-
try, you know—one that *curves* into
infinity. And because we cannot see
the end, we also cannot see how it— 120R
changes. And it is very odd, but those
who *see* the changes—who will not
give up—we call *them* "idealists." But
I never thought to see *you* like this,
Alaiyo. *You.* Your brother made a 125R
mistake and you are grateful to him
so that now you can give up the ail-
ing human race on account of it! You
talk about what good is struggle, what
good is anything! Where are we all 130R
going and why are we bothering!

BENEATHA AND YOU CANNOT AN-
SWER IT!

Africa and Independence. Independence and then what? What about all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power to steal and plunder the same as before—only now they will be black and do it in the name of the new Independence— You cannot answer that.

180 ASAGAI (*Shouting over her*) *I live the answer!* (*Pause*) In my village at home it is the exceptional man who can even read a newspaper ... or who ever sees a book at all. I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village ... But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem that nothing changes at all ... and then again ... the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression even. Guns, murder, revolution. And I even will have moments when I wonder if the quiet was not better than all that death and hatred. But I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long. And perhaps ... perhaps I will be a great man ... I mean perhaps I will hold on to the substance of truth and find my way always with the right course ... and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire ...

BENEATHA *The martyr!*

210 ASAGAI ... or perhaps I shall live to be a very old man, respected and esteemed in my new nation ... And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo; perhaps the things I believe now for my country will be wrong and out-

ASAGAI (*Shouting over her*) I LIVE THE ANSWER! (*Long pause as he crosses to her and marshalls the words to truly reach her.*) In my vilage at home it is the exceptional man who can even read a newspaper—or who ever sees a book at all. (*crosses R. in to her*) I will go home and much of what I will have to say will seem strange to the people of my village—But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly. At times it will seem that nothing changes at all—and then again—the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. And then quiet again. Retrogression, even. Guns, murder, revolution. And I even will have moments when I wonder if the quiet was not better than all that death and hatred. But I will look about my village at the illiteracy and disease and ignorance and I will not wonder long. And perhaps—perhaps I will be a great man—I mean perhaps I will hold on to the substance of truth—and perhaps for it I will be butchered in my bed some night by the servants of empire—

BENEATHA THE MARTYR!

ASAGAI (*He smiles, softening.*) Or perhaps I shall live to be a very old man, respected and esteemed in my new nation—And perhaps I shall hold office and this is what I'm trying to tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things I believe now for my country will

moded, and I will not understand and
do terrible things to have things my
way or merely to keep my power.
Don't you see that there will be young
220 men and women, not British soldiers
then, but my own black countrymen
... to step out of the shadows some
evening and slit my then useless throat?
Don't you see they have always been
225 there ... that they always will be.
And that such a thing as my own
death will be an advance? They who
might kill me even ... actually re-
plenish me!

230 BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
that.

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
ing and groaning and tell me what
you plan to do.

235 BENEATHA Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges-
tion.

BENEATHA What?

240 ASAGAI (*Rather quietly for him*) That
when it is all over—that you come
home with me—

BENEATHA (*Slapping herself on the
forehead with exasperation born of mis-
understanding*) Oh—Asagai—at this
245 moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*Quickly understanding the
misunderstanding*) My dear, young
creature of the New World—I do not
mean across the city—I mean across
250 the ocean; home—to Africa.

BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding
and turning to him with murmured
amazement*) To—to Nigeria?

255 ASAGAI Yes ... (*Smiling and lift-
ing his arms playfully*) Three hun-
dred years later the African Prince
rose up out of the seas and swept the
maiden back across the middle pas-
sage over which her ancestors had

be wrong and outmoded, and I will
do terrible things to have things my
way or merely to keep my power.
Don't you see that there will be young
175R men and women, not British soldiers,
but my own black countrymen—to
step out of the shadows some evening
and slit my then useless throat? Don't
you see they have always been there—
that they always will be? And that 180R
such a thing as my own death will be
an advance—actually replenishing all
that I was.

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
that. (*crosses away*) 185R

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
ing and groaning and tell me what
you plan to do.

BENEATHA (*turning*) Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges- 190R
tion.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*rather quietly for him*) That
when it is all over—that you come
home with me— 195R

BENEATHA (*slapping herself on the
forehead with exasperation and cross-
ing away*) Oh—Asagai—at this mo-
ment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*quickly understanding the
misunderstanding and crossing after
her*) My dear, young creature of the
New World—I do not mean across the
city—I mean across the ocean: home—
to Africa. 200R
205R

BENEATHA (*slowly understanding
and turning to him with murmured
amazement*) [To Africa?

ASAGAI Yes! (*Smiling and lifting
his arms playfully*) Three hundred 210R
years later the African Prince rose
up out of the seas and swept the mai-
den back across the middle passage
over which her ancestors had come—

260 come—

BENEATHA (*Unable to play*) Nigeria?

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Coming to her with genuine romantic flippancy*)
265 I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and, in time, we will pretend that—
270 (*Very softly*)—you have only been away for a day—

(*She turns her back to him, thinking. He swings her around and takes her full in his arms in a long embrace which proceeds to passion*)
275

BENEATHA (*Pulling away*) You're getting me all mixed up—

ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA Too many things—too
280 many things have happened today. I must sit down and think. I don't know what I feel about anything right this minute.

(*She promptly sits down and props her chin on her fist*)
285

ASAGAI (*Charmed*) All right, I shall leave you. No—don't get up. (*Touching her, gently, sweetly*) Just sit awhile and think ... Never be afraid to sit
290 awhile and think. (*He goes to door and looks at her*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought ..."

215R

BENEATHA (*unable to play*)] To—to Nigeria—?

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Drawing close beside her and guiding her eyes upward and out, he raises one hand to reveal the vista that awaits them. With genuine romantic flippancy:*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and in time—we will pretend that—(*very softly*)—you have only been away for a day—Say that you'll come. (*He turns her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion.*)
220R
225R
230R

BENEATHA (*pulling away suddenly crosses up back of kitchen table*) You're getting me all mixed up—
235R

ASAGAI Why—?

BENEATHA Too many things—too much has happened today. I don't know what I feel about anything. I'm just going to sit down and think. (*crosses D.C., sits on sofa and props her head on her hand*)
240R

ASAGAI All right, I shall leave you. (*Crosses to C. above table. BENEATHA starts to rise.*) No—don't get up. Just sit a while and think—Never be afraid to sit a while and think. (*goes to the C. door and turns*) How often I have looked at you and said, "Ah—so this is what the New World hath finally wrought—"
245R
250R

Part 4

F2

ASAGAI (*crosses R. above sofa, D.R., crosses L. front of sofa to barrel, crosses R. to BENEATHA*) I came over—I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people—but for me—it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress—it makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai—

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted!

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA (*sits on sofa*) Gone!

ASAGAI (*sits next to BENEATHA on sofa. BENEATHA rises, crosses U.R. of sofa, sits R. arm of sofa.*) I'm very sorry—And you, now?

BENEATHA Me?—Me?—Me, I'm nothing—Me. When I was very small—we used to take our sleds out in the winter time and the only hills we had were the ice covered stone steps down the street. And we used to fill them with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day—and it was very dangerous, you know—far too steep—and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down too

F3

ASAGAI I came over—I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people—but for me—it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress—it makes me think of Africa.

BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai—

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted!

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA (*sits on sofa*) Gone!

(*ASAGAI sits next to BENEATHA on sofa. BENEATHA rises, crosses upstage right of sofa, sits right arm of sofa.*)

ASAGAI I'm very sorry—And you, now?

BENEATHA Me?—Me? Me, I'm nothing—Me. When I was very small—we used to take our sleds out in the winter time and the only hills we had were some ice covered stone steps down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day—and it was very dangerous, you know—far too steep—and sure enough one day a kid named Rufus came down

fast and hit the sidewalk—and his face just split open right there in front of us—And I remember standing there
45 looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it
50 all up—and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face—I never got over that—

ASAGAI What?

55 BENEATHA That that was what one human being could do for another, fix him up—sew up the problem, make him all right again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world—I wanted
60 to do that. I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again. This was truly being
65 God—

ASAGAI You wanted to be God—?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. It used to matter. I
70 used to care. I mean about people and how their bodies hurt—

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring—?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

75 ASAGAI (*rises*) Why?

BENEATHA Because it doesn't seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind. It was a child's way of seeing things—or an idealist's.

80 ASAGAI Children see things very well sometimes—and idealists even better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I
85 left off. You with all your talk and

too fast and hit the sidewalk—and his face just split open right there in front of us—And I remember standing there
45R looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it
50R all up—and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face—I never got over that—

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one human being could do for another,
55R fix him up—sew up the problem, make him alright again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world—I wanted to do that. I always thought it was
60R the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again. This was truly being
God—

ASAGAI You wanted to be God—? 65R

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. I used to care. I mean about people and how their bodies hurt—
70R

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring—?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI (*rises*) Why?

BENEATHA (*passionately*) Because
75R it doesn't seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind! It was a child's way of seeing things—or an idealist's.

ASAGAI Children see things very
80R well sometimes—and idealists even better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I
85R left off. You still care. You with all

dreams about Africa! You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism—(*loftily, mocking it*) with the "penicillin of Independence!"

90 ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Independence *and then what?* What about all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who

95 will steal and plunder the same as before, only now they will be black and do it in the *name* of new independence—WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

ASAGAI That will be a problem for

100 another time. First we must get there.

BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery! To

105 stupidity! Don't you see there isn't any real progress, Asagai, there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around, each of us with our own little picture—in front of us—our own

110 little mirage that we think is the future.

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said—about

115 the circle. It isn't a circle. (*His gestures paint the picture as he talks.*) It is simply a long line—as in geometry, you know—one that *curves* into infinity. And because we cannot see

120 the end, we also cannot see how it—changes. And it is very odd, but those who *see* the changes—who will not give up—we call *them* "idealists." But I never thought to see *you* like this,

125 Alaiyo. *You*. Your brother made a mistake and you are grateful to him so that now you can give up the ailing human race on account of it! You talk about what good is struggle, what

130 good is anything! Where are we all

your talk and dreams about Africa! You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism—(*loftily, mocking it*) with the "penicillin of Independence!"

90R ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Independence *and then what?* What about all the crooks and petty thieves and just plain idiots who

95R will steal and plunder the same as before, only now they will be black and do it in the name of new independence—WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

ASAGAI That will be a problem for

100R another time. First we must get there.

BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery! To

105R stupidity! Don't you see there isn't any real progress, Asagai, there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around, each of us with our own little picture in front of us—our own

110R little mirage that we think is the future.

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said—about

115R the circle. It isn't a circle. (*His gestures paint the picture as he talks.*) It is simply a long line—as in geometry, you know—one that *curves* into infinity. And because we cannot see

120R the end, we also cannot see how it—changes. And it is very odd, but those who *see* the changes—who dream, who will not give up—are called idealists ... and those who see *only* the circle—

125R (*ironically*) they call each other the "realists!"

BENEATHA Asagai, while I was sleeping in that bed in there, people went out and took the future right out of my hands! Nobody asked me—they

130R

going and why are we bothering!

BENEATHA AND YOU CANNOT ANSWER IT!

135 ASAGAI (*Shouting over her.*) I LIVE
THE ANSWER! (*Long pause as he crosses
to her and marshalls the words to truly
reach her.*) In my village at home it
is the exceptional man who can even
140 read a newspaper—or who ever sees
a book at all. (*crosses R. in to her*)
I will go home and much of what I
will have to say will seem strange to
the people of my village—But I will
145 teach and work and things will hap-
pen, slowly and swiftly. At times it
will seem that nothing changes at all—
and then again—the sudden dramatic
events which make history leap into
150 the future. And then quiet again. Ret-
rogression, even. Guns, murder, rev-
olution. And I even will have mo-
ments when I wonder if the quiet was
not better than all that death and ha-
tred. But I will look about my village

just went out and changed my life!

ASAGAI Was it your money?

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI Was it your money he gave
away? 135R

BENEATHA It belonged to all of us.

ASAGAI But did you earn it? Would
you have had it at all if your father
had not died?

BENEATHA No. 140R

ASAGAI Then isn't there something
wrong in a house—in a world—where
all dreams, good or bad, must depend
on the death of a man? I never thought
to see you like this, Alaiyo. You. Your 145R
brother made a mistake and you are
grateful to him so that now you can
give up the ailing human race on ac-
count of it! You talk about what good
is struggle, what good is anything! 150R
Where are we all going and why are
we bothering!

BENEATHA AND YOU CANNOT ANSWER IT!

ASAGAI (*shouting over her*) I LIVE 155R
THE ANSWER! (*Long pause, as he
crosses to her and marshalls the words
to truly reach her.*) In my village at
home it is the exceptional man who
can even read a newspaper—or who 160R
ever sees a book at all. (*crosses right
in to her*) I will go home and much
of what I will have to say will seem
strange to the people of my village—
But I will teach and work and things 165R
will happen, slowly and swiftly. At
times it will seem that nothing changes
at all—and then again—the sudden
dramatic events which make history
leap into the future. And then quiet 170R
again. Retrogression, even. Guns,
murder, revolution. And I even will
have moments when I wonder if the
quiet was not better than all that death
and hatred. But I will look about my 175R

155 at the illiteracy and disease and ig-
norance and I will not wonder long.
And perhaps—perhaps I will be a great
man—I mean perhaps I will hold on
to the substance of truth—and per-
160 haps for it I will be butchered in my
bed some night by the servants of
empire—

BENEATHA THE MARTYR!

ASAGAI (*He smiles, softening.*) Or
165 perhaps I shall live to be a very old
man, respected and esteemed in my
new nation—And perhaps I shall hold
office and this is what I'm trying to
tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things
170 I believe now for my country will
be wrong and outmoded, and I will
do terrible things to have things my
way or merely to keep my power.
Don't you see that there will be young
175 men and women, not British soldiers,
but my own black countrymen—to
step out of the shadows some evening
and slit my then useless throat? Don't
you see they have always been there—
180 that they always will be? And that
such a thing as my own death will be
an advance—actually replenishing all
that I was.

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
185 that. (*crosses away*)

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
ing and groaning and tell me what
you plan to do.

BENEATHA (*turning*) Do?

190 ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges-
tion.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*rather quietly for him*) That
when it is all over—that you come
195 home with me—

BENEATHA (*slapping herself on the
forehead with exasperation and cross-
ing away*) Oh—Asagai—at this mo-

village at the illiteracy and disease
and ignorance and I will not wonder
long. And perhaps—perhaps I will
be a great man—(*She looks at him oddly,
turns away.*) I mean perhaps I will 180R
hold onto the substance of truth—
and perhaps for it I will be butchered
in my bed some night by the servants
of empire—

BENEATHA THE MARTYR! 185R

ASAGAI (*He smiles, softening.*) Or
perhaps I shall live to be a very old
man, respected and esteemed in my
new nation—And perhaps I shall hold
office and this is what I'm trying to 190R
tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things
I believe now for my country will
be wrong and outmoded, and I will
do terrible things to have things my
way or merely to keep my power. 195R
Don't you see that there will be young
men and women, not British soldiers,
but my own black countrymen—to
step out of the shadows some night
and slit my then useless throat? Don't 200R
you see, they have always been there—
that they always will be? And that
such a thing as my own death will be
an advance—actually replenishing all
that I was. 205R

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
that, [sic] (*crosses away*)

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
ing and groaning and tell me what
you plan to do. 210R

BENEATHA (*turning*) Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges-
tion.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*rather quietly for him*) That 215R
when it is all over—that you come
home with me—

(BENEATHA, *slapping herself on the
forehead with exasperation and cross-
ing away:*) 220R

ment you decide to be romantic!

200 ASAGAI (*quickly understanding the misunderstanding and crossing after her*) My dear, young creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean: home—
205 to Africa.

BENEATHA (*slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured amazement*) [To Africa?

ASAGAI Yes! (*Smiling and lifting his arms playfully.*) Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come—

215 BENEATHA (*unable to play*)] To—to Nigeria—?

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Drawing close beside her and guiding her eyes upward and out, he raises one hand to reveal the vista that awaits them. With genuine romantic flippancy:*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs
220 and the ways of our people—and in time—we will pretend that—(*very softly*)—you have only been away for a day—Say that you’ll come. (*He turns her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion.*)
230

BENEATHA (*pulling away suddenly crosses up back of kitchen table*) You’re getting me all mixed up—

235 ASAGAI Why—?

BENEATHA Too many things—too much has happened today. I don’t know what I feel about anything. I’m just going to sit down and think. (*crosses D.C., sits on sofa and props her head on her hand*)
240

ASAGAI All right, I shall leave you.

BENEATHA Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!

ASAGAI (*quickly understanding the misunderstanding and crossing after her*) My dear, young creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean: home—to Africa. 225R

BENEATHA (*slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured amazement*) To Africa? 230R

ASAGAI Yes! (*smiling and lifting his arms playfully*) Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come— 235R

BENEATHA (*unable to play*) To—to Nigeria—

ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Drawing close beside her and guiding her eyes upward and out, he raises one hand to reveal the vista that awaits them. With genuine romantic flippancy:*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs
240R and the ways of our people—and in time—we will pretend that—(*very softly*) you have only been away for a day. Say that you’ll come. (*He turns her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion.*)
250R

BENEATHA (*pulling away suddenly*) You’re getting me all mixed up— 255R

ASAGAI Why—?

BENEATHA Too many things—too much has happened today. I don’t know what I feel about anything. I’m just going to sit down and think. (*crosses downstage center, sits on sofa and props her head on her hand*) 260R

ASAGAI Alright, I shall leave you.

(Crosses to C. above table. BENEATHA
starts to rise.) No—don't get up. Just
245 sit a while and think—Never be afraid
to sit a while and think. (goes to the
C. door and turns) How often I have
looked at you and said, "Ah—so this
is what the New World hath finally
250 wrought—"

(crosses to center above table. BENEATHA^{265R}
starts to rise.) No—don't get up. Just
sit a while and think—Never be afraid
to sit a while and think. (goes to the
center door and turns) How often I
have looked at you and said, "Ah— 270R
so this is what the New World hath
finally wrought—"

Part 5

F3

ASAGAI I came over—I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people—but for me—it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress—it makes me think of Africa.

10 BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai—

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

20 BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted!

ASAGAI And it's gone?

BENEATHA (*sits on sofa*) Gone!

25 (*ASAGAI sits next to BENEATHA on sofa. BENEATHA rises, crosses upstage right of sofa, sits right arm of sofa.*)

ASAGAI I'm very sorry—And you, now?

30 BENEATHA Me?—Me? Me, I'm nothing—Me. When I was very small—we used to take our sleds out in the winter time and the only hills we had were some ice covered stone steps

35 down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day—and it was very dangerous, you know—far too steep—and sure enough one

40 day a kid named Rufus came down

S2

ASAGAI I came over ... I had some free time. I thought I might help with the packing. Ah, I like the look of packing crates! A household in preparation for a journey! It depresses some people ... but for me ... it is another feeling. Something full of the flow of life, do you understand? Movement, progress ... It makes me think of Africa.

10R BENEATHA Africa!

ASAGAI What kind of a mood is this? Have I told you how deeply you move me?

BENEATHA He gave away the money, Asagai ...

ASAGAI Who gave away what money?

BENEATHA The insurance money. My brother gave it away.

ASAGAI Gave it away?

20R BENEATHA He made an investment! With a man even Travis wouldn't have trusted with his most worn-out marbles.

ASAGAI And it's gone?

25R BENEATHA Gone!

ASAGAI I'm very sorry ... And you, now?

BENEATHA Me? ... Me? ... Me, I'm nothing ... Me. When I was very small ... we used to take our sleds out in the wintertime and the only hills we had were the ice-covered stone steps of some houses down the street. And we used to fill them in with snow and make them smooth and slide down them all day ... and it was very dangerous, you know ... far too steep ... and sure enough one day a kid

30R

35R

too fast and hit the sidewalk—and his face just split open right there in front of us—And I remember standing there looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it all up—and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face—I never got over that—

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one human being could do for another, fix him up—sew up the problem, make him alright again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world—I wanted to do that. I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again. This was truly being God—

ASAGAI You wanted to be God—?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. I used to care. I mean about people and how their bodies hurt—

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring—?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI (*rises*) Why?

BENEATHA (*passionately*) Because it doesn't seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind! It was a child's way of seeing things—or an idealist's.

ASAGAI Children see things very well sometimes—and idealists even better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I

named Rufus came down too fast and hit the sidewalk and we saw his face just split open right there in front of us ... And I remember standing there looking at his bloody open face thinking that was the end of Rufus. But the ambulance came and they took him to the hospital and they fixed the broken bones and they sewed it all up ... and the next time I saw Rufus he just had a little line down the middle of his face ... I never got over that ...

ASAGAI What?

BENEATHA That that was what one person could do for another, fix him up—sew up the problem, make him all right again. That was the most marvelous thing in the world ... I wanted to do that. I always thought it was the one concrete thing in the world that a human being could do. Fix up the sick, you know—and make them whole again. This was truly being God ...

ASAGAI You wanted to be God?

BENEATHA No—I wanted to cure. It used to be so important to me. I wanted to cure. It used to matter. I used to care. I mean about people and how their bodies hurt ...

ASAGAI And you've stopped caring?

BENEATHA Yes—I think so.

ASAGAI Why?

BENEATHA (*Bitterly*) Because it doesn't seem deep enough, close enough to what ails mankind! It was a child's way of seeing things—or an idealist's.

ASAGAI Children see things very well sometimes—and idealists even better.

BENEATHA I know that's what you think. Because you are still where I

85 left off. You still care. You with all
your talk and dreams about Africa!
You still think you can patch up the
world. Cure the Great Sore of Colon-
ialism—(*loftily, mocking it*) with the
90 "penicillin of Independence!"

ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Independence *and then*
what? What about all the crooks and
petty thieves and just plain idiots who
95 will steal and plunder the same as
before, only now they will be black
and do it in the name of new inde-
pendence—WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

ASAGAI That will be a problem for
100 another time. First we must get there.

BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of
an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery! To
105 stupidity! Don't you see there isn't
any real progress, Asagai, there is only
one large circle that we march in, around
and around, each of us with our own
little picture in front of us—our own
110 little mirage that we think is the fu-
ture.

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said—about
115 the circle. It isn't a circle. (*His ges-
tures paint the picture as he talks.*) It
is simply a long line—as in geome-
try, you know—one that *curves* into
infinity. And because we cannot see
120 the end, we also cannot see how it—
changes. And it is very odd, but those
who *see* the changes—who dream, who
will not give up—are called idealists
... and those who see *only* the circle—
125 (*ironically*) they call each other the
"realists!"

BENEATHA Asagai, while I was sleep-
ing in that bed in there, people went

left off. You with all your talk and 85R
dreams about Africa! You still think
you can patch up the world. Cure
the Great Sore of Colonialism—(*Loftily,*
mocking it) with the Penicillin of Inde-
pendence—! 90R

ASAGAI Yes!

BENEATHA Independence *and then*
what? What about all the crooks and
petty thieves and just plain idiots who
will come into power and steal and 95R
plunder the same as before—only now
they will be black and do it in the
name of new Independence—WHAT
ABOUT THEM?!

ASAGAI That will be a problem for 100R
another time. First we must get there.

BENEATHA And where does it end?

ASAGAI End? Who ever spoke of
an end? To life? To living?

BENEATHA An end to misery! To 105R
stupidity! Don't you see there isn't
any real progress, Asagai, there is only
one large circle that we march in, around
and around, each of us with our own
little picture in front of us—our own 110R
little mirage that we think is the fu-
ture.

ASAGAI That is the mistake.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI What you just said about 115R
the circle. It isn't a circle—it is sim-
ply a long line—as in geometry, you
know, one that reaches into infin-
ity. And because we cannot see the
end—we also cannot see how it chan- 120R
ges. And it is very odd, but those
who see the changes—who will dream,
who will not give up—are called ide-
alists ... and those who see only the
circle we call *them* the "realists"! 125R

BENEATHA Asagai, while I was sleep-
ing in that bed in there, people went

130 out and took the future right out of
my hands! Nobody asked me—they
just went out and changed my life!

ASAGAI Was it your money?

BENEATHA What?

135 ASAGAI Was it your money he gave
away?

BENEATHA It belonged to all of us.

ASAGAI But did you earn it? Would
you have had it at all if your father
had not died?

140 BENEATHA No.

ASAGAI Then isn't there something
wrong in a house—in a world—where
all dreams, good or bad, must depend
on the death of a man? I never thought
145 to *see you* like this, Alaiyo. *You*. Your
brother made a mistake and you are
grateful to him so that now you can
give up the ailing human race on ac-
count of it! You talk about what good
150 is struggle, what good is anything!
Where are we all going and why are
we bothering!

BENEATHA AND YOU CANNOT AN-
SWER IT!

155 ASAGAI (*shouting over her*) I LIVE
THE ANSWER! (*Long pause, as he
crosses to her and marshalls the words
to truly reach her.*) In my village at
home it is the exceptional man who
160 can even read a newspaper—or who
ever *sees* a book at all. (*crosses right
in to her*) I will go home and much
of what I will have to say will seem
strange to the people of my village—
165 But I will teach and work and things
will happen, slowly and swiftly. At
times it will seem that nothing changes
at all—and then again—the sudden
dramatic events which make history
170 leap into the future. And then quiet
again. Retrogression, even. Guns,
murder, revolution. And I even will

out and took the future right out of
my hands! And nobody asked me,
nobody consulted me—they just went 130R
out and changed my life!

ASAGAI Was it your money?

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI Was it your money he gave
away? 135R

BENEATHA It belonged to all of us.

ASAGAI But did you earn it? Would
you have had it at all if your father
had not died?

BENEATHA No. 140R

ASAGAI Then isn't there something
wrong in a house—in a world—where
all dreams, good or bad, must depend
on the death of a man? I never thought
to *see you* like this, Alaiyo. *You!* Your 145R
brother made a mistake and you are
grateful to him so that now you can
give up the ailing human race on ac-
count of it! You talk about what good
150R is struggle, what good is anything!
Where are we all going and why are
we bothering!

BENEATHA AND YOU CANNOT AN-
SWER IT!

ASAGAI (*Shouting over her*) I LIVE 155R
THE ANSWER! (*Pause*) In my village
at home it is the exceptional man who
can even read a newspaper ... or who
ever sees a book at all. I will go home
and much of what I will have to say 160R
will seem strange to the people of
my village. But I will teach and work
and things will happen, slowly and
swiftly. At times it will seem that
nothing changes at all ... and then 165R
again the sudden dramatic events which
make history leap into the future. And
then quiet again. Retrogression even.
Guns, murder, revolution. And I even
will have moments when I wonder if 170R
the quiet was not better than all that
death and hatred. But I will look about

have moments when I wonder if the
 quiet was not better than all that death
 175 and hatred. But I will look about my
 village at the illiteracy and disease
 and ignorance and I will not wonder
 long. And perhaps—perhaps I will
 be a great man—(*She looks at him oddly,*
 180 *turns away.*) I mean perhaps I will
 hold onto the substance of truth—
 and perhaps for it I will be butchered
 in my bed some night by the servants
 of empire—

185 BENEATHA THE MARTYR!

ASAGAI (*He smiles, softening.*) Or
 perhaps I shall live to be a very old
 man, respected and esteemed in my
 new nation—And perhaps I shall hold
 190 office and this is what I'm trying to
 tell you, Alaiyo, perhaps the things
 I believe now for my country will
 be wrong and outmoded, and I will
 do terrible things to have things my
 way or merely to keep my power.
 195 Don't you see that there will be young
 men and women, not British soldiers,
 but my own black countrymen—to
 step out of the shadows some night
 200 and slit my then useless throat? Don't
 you see, they have always been there—
 that they always will be? And that
 such a thing as my own death will be
 an advance—actually replenishing all
 205 that I was.

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
 that, [sic] (*crosses away*)

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
 ing and groaning and tell me what
 210 you plan to do.

BENEATHA (*turning*) Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges-
 tion.

BENEATHA What?

215 ASAGAI (*rather quietly for him*) That
 when it is all over—that you come

my village at the illiteracy and dis-
 ease and ignorance and I will not won-
 der long. And perhaps ... perhaps I 175R
 will be a great man ... I mean per-
 haps I will hold on to the substance
 of truth and find my way always with
 the right course ... and perhaps for
 it I will be butchered in my bed some 180R
 night by the servants of empire ...

BENEATHA *The martyr!*

ASAGAI (*He smiles*) ... or perhaps
 I shall live to be a very old man, re-
 spected and esteemed in my new na- 185R
 tion ... And perhaps I shall hold of-
 fice and this is what I'm trying to
 tell you, Alaiyo: Perhaps the things
 I believe now for my country will be
 wrong and outmoded, and I will not 190R
 understand and do terrible things to
 have things my way or merely to keep
 my power. Don't you see that there
 will be young men and women—not
 British soldiers then, but my own black 195R
 countrymen—to step out of the shad-
 ows some evening and slit my then
 useless throat? Don't you see they
 have always been there ... that they
 always will be. And that such a thing 200R
 as my own death will be an advance?
 They who might kill me even ... ac-
 tually replenish all that I was.

BENEATHA Oh, Asagai, I know all
 that. 205R

ASAGAI Good! Then stop moan-
 ing and groaning and tell me what
 you plan to do.

BENEATHA Do?

ASAGAI I have a bit of a sugges- 210R
 tion.

BENEATHA What?

ASAGAI (*Rather quietly for him*) That
 when it is all over—that you come

home with me—
 (BENEATHA, *slapping herself on the forehead with exasperation and crossing away:*)
 220 BENEATHA Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!
 ASAGAI (*quickly understanding the misunderstanding and crossing after her*) My dear, young creature of the
 225 New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean: home—to Africa.
 BENEATHA (*slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured amazement*) To Africa?
 230 ASAGAI Yes! (*smiling and lifting his arms playfully*) Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out
 235 of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come—
 BENEATHA (*unable to play*) To—to Nigeria—
 240 ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Drawing close beside her and guiding her eyes upward and out, he raises one hand to reveal the vista that awaits them. With genuine romantic flippancy:*) I
 245 will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and in time—we will pretend that—(*very softly*)
 250 you have only been away for a day. Say that you'll come. (*He turns her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion.*)
 BENEATHA (*pulling away suddenly*)
 255 You're getting me all mixed up—
 ASAGAI Why—?
 BENEATHA Too many things—too much has happened today. I don't know what I feel about anything. I'm
 260 just going to sit down and think. (*crosses*

home with me— 215R
 BENEATHA (*Staring at him and crossing away with exasperation*) Oh—Asagai—at this moment you decide to be romantic!
 ASAGAI (*Quickly understanding the misunderstanding*) My dear, young creature of the New World—I do not mean across the city—I mean across the ocean: home—to Africa. 220R
 BENEATHA (*Slowly understanding and turning to him with murmured amazement*) To Africa? 225R
 ASAGAI Yes! ... (*Smiling and lifting his arms playfully*) Three hundred years later the African Prince
 230R rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come—
 BENEATHA (*Unable to play*) To—to Nigeria? 235R
 ASAGAI Nigeria. Home. (*Coming to her with genuine romantic flippancy*) I will show you our mountains and our stars; and give you cool drinks
 240R from gourds and teach you the old songs and the ways of our people—and, in time, we will pretend that—(*Very softly*)—you have only been away for a day. Say that you'll come. (*He swings her around and takes her full in his arms in a kiss which proceeds to passion*) 245R
 BENEATHA (*Pulling away suddenly*) You're getting me all mixed up— 250R
 ASAGAI Why?
 BENEATHA Too many things—too many things have happened today. I must sit down and think. I don't know what I feel about anything right 255R

*downstage center, sits on sofa and props
her head on her hand)*

ASAGAI Alright, I shall leave you.
(*crosses to center above table. BENEATHA
265 starts to rise.*) No—don't get up. Just
sit a while and think—Never be afraid
to sit a while and think. (*goes to the
center door and turns*) How often I
have looked at you and said, "Ah—
270 so this is what the New World hath
finally wrought—"

this minute.

(*She promptly sits down and props
her chin on her fist*)

ASAGAI (*Charmed*) All right, I shall
leave you. No—don't get up. (*Touch- 260R
ing her, gently, sweetly*) Just sit awhile
and think ... Never be afraid to sit
awhile and think. (*He goes to door
and looks at her*) How often I have
looked at you and said, "Ah—so this 265R
is what the New World hath finally
wrought ..."

Appendix C

R

MAMA (*Opening her eyes and looking into WALTER's*) No. Travis, you stay right here. And you make him understand what you doing, Walter
 5 Lee. You teach him good. Like Willy Harris taught you. You show where our five generations done come to. Go ahead, son—

WALTER (*Looks down into his boy's eyes. TRAVIS grins at him merrily and WALTER draws him beside him with his arm lightly around his shoulder*) Well, Mr. Lindner. (*BENEATHA turns away*) We called you—(*There is a profound, simple groping quality in his speech*)—because, well, me and my family (*He looks around and shifts from one foot to the other*) Well—we are very plain people ...

20 LINDNER Yes—

WALTER I mean—I have worked as a chauffeur most of my life—and my wife here, she does domestic work in people's kitchens. So does my mother.
 25 I mean—we are plain people ...

LINDNER Yes, Mr. Younger—

WALTER (*Really like a small boy, looking down at his shoes and then up at the man*) And—uh—well, my father, well, he was a laborer most of his life.

LINDNER (*Absolutely confused*) Uh, yes—

WALTER (*Looking down at his toes once again*) My father almost beat a man to death once because this man called him a bad name or something, you know what I mean?

S2

MAMA (*Opening her eyes and looking into WALTER's*) No. Travis, you stay right here. And you make him understand what you doing, Walter Lee. You teach him good. Like Willy
 5R Harris taught you. You show where our five generations done come to. (*WALTER looks from her to the boy, who grins at him innocently*) Go ahead, son—(*She folds her hands and closes her eyes*) Go ahead. 10R

WALTER (*At last crosses to LINDNER, who is reviewing the contract*) Well, Mr. Lindner. (*BENEATHA turns away*) We called you—(*There is a profound, simple groping quality in his speech*)—because, well, me and my family (*He looks around and shifts from one foot to the other*) Well—we are very plain people ... 20R

LINDNER Yes—

WALTER I mean—I have worked as a chauffeur most of my life—and my wife here, she does domestic work in people's kitchens. So does my mother.
 25R I mean—we are plain people ...

LINDNER Yes, Mr. Younger—

WALTER (*Really like a small boy, looking down at his shoes and then up at the man*) And—uh—well, my father, well, he was a laborer most of his life. ... 30R

LINDNER (*Absolutely confused*) Uh, yes—yes, I understand. (*He turns back to the contract*) 35R

WALTER (*A beat; staring at him*) And my father—(*With sudden intensity*) My father almost beat a man to death once because this man called him a bad name or something, you 40R

LINDNER No, I'm afraid I don't.

40 WALTER (*Finally straightening up*)
Well, what I mean is that we come
from people who had a lot of pride.
I mean—we are very proud people.
And that's my sister over there and
45 she's going to be a doctor—and we
are very proud—

LINDNER Well—I am sure that is
very nice, but—

WALTER (*Starting to cry and fac-*
50 *ing the man eye to eye*) What I am
telling you is that we called you over
here to tell you that we are very proud
and that this is—this is my son, who
makes the sixth generation of our fam-
55 ily in this country, and that we have
all thought about your offer and we
have decided to move into our house
because my father—my father—he earned
it. (*MAMA has her eyes closed and is*
60 *rocking back and forth as though she*
were in church, with her head nod-
ding the amen yes) We don't want to
make no trouble for nobody or fight
no causes—but we will try to be good
65 neighbors. That's all we got to say.
(*He looks the man absolutely in the*
eyes) We don't want your money.

(*He turns and walks away from the*
man)

70 LINDNER (*Looking around at all of*
them) I take it then that you have de-
cided to occupy.

BENEATHA That's what the man said.

LINDNER (*To MAMA in her reverie*)
75 Then I would like to appeal to you,
Mrs. Younger. You are older and
wiser and understand things better

know what I mean?

LINDNER (*Looking up, frozen*) No,
no, I'm afraid I don't—

WALTER (*A beat. The tension hangs;*
then WALTER steps back from it) Yeah. 45R
Well—what I mean is that we come
from people who had a lot of *pride*.
I mean—we are very proud people.
And that's my sister over there and
she's going to be a doctor—and we 50R
are very proud—

LINDNER Well—I am sure that is
very nice, but—

WALTER What I am telling you is
that we called you over here to tell 55R
you that we are very proud and that
this—(*Signaling to TRAVIS*) Travis, come
here. (*TRAVIS crosses and WALTER draws*
him before him facing the man) This
is my son, and he makes the sixth 60R
generation our family in this coun-
try. And we have all thought about
your offer—

LINDNER Well, good ... good—

WALTER And we have decided to 65R
move into our house because my father—
my father—he earned it for us brick
by brick. (*MAMA has her eyes closed*
and is rocking back and forth as though
she were in church, with her head nod-
70R *ding the Amen yes*) We don't want to
make no trouble for nobody or fight
no causes, and we will try to be good
neighbors. And that's *all* we got to
say about that. (*He looks the man ab-*
75R *solutely in the eyes*) We don't want
your money. (*He turns and walks away*)

LINDNER (*Looking around at all of*
them) I take it then that you have de-
cided to occupy ... 80R

BENEATHA That's what the man said.

LINDNER (*To MAMA in her reverie*)
Then I would like to appeal to you,
Mrs. Younger. You are older and
wiser and understand things better 85R

I am sure ...

80 MAMA (*Rising*) I am afraid you don't understand. My son said we was going to move and there ain't nothing left for me to say. (*Shaking her head with double meaning*) You know how these young folks is nowadays, mister. Can't do a thing with 'em. Good-
85 bye.

LINDNER (*Folding up his materials*)
Well—if you are that final about it ...
There is nothing left for me to say.
90 (*He finishes. He is almost ignored by the family, who are concentrating on WALTER LEE. At the door LINDNER halts and looks around*) I sure hope you people know what you're doing.
95 (*He shakes his head and exits*)

I am sure ...

MAMA I am afraid you don't understand. My son said we was going to move and there ain't nothing left for me to say. (*Briskly*) You know 90R how these young folks is nowadays, mister. Can't do a thing with 'em! (*As he opens his mouth, she rises*) Good-bye.

LINDNER (*Folding up his materials*) 95R
Well—if you are that final about it ...
there is nothing left for me to say.
(*He finishes, almost ignored by the family, who are concentrating on WALTER LEE. At the door LINDNER halts and looks around*) 100R
I sure hope you people know what you're getting into.
(*He shakes his head and exits*)