
ANALYSING WOMEN’S LANGUAGE IN LORRAINE HANSBERRY’S A RAISIN IN THE SUN: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

Dr. Nassourou IMOROU

Assistant Lecturer, American Studies. Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLASH), University of Parakou (UP).

Amadou SALAMI *

Assistant Lecturer, Applied Linguistics. Faculty of Social and Human Science (FASHS), University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC).

ABSTRACT

Drawing on Lakoff’s theory of women’s language, the present study examines the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959, in order to find out if all the characteristics of women’s language are present in the speech of the female characters of the play and not in that of the male characters of the play. Basing on the sampling method, two extracts have been selected from the play. The findings show that some of these linguistic features can’t be found in the speech of the female characters whereas others are found in the speech of the male characters. The results thus prove that the use of women’s language is not a question only of sex or status, but also of other factors such as need, appropriateness, setting, level of literacy and social community.

Key Words: Sociolinguistics, female characters, language, feminism, gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has always been believed that there are differences in the ways in which men and women are talked about in the language and in the ways in which they use the language. But it is only in the 1970s that serious inquiries into the area of gender and language use began. Many disciplines such as anthropology, folklore, history, education, literature, psychology, sociology, and others have contributed to these researches that are of great importance for the domain of sociolinguistics. Moreover, inquiries in this area fall into two major categories. The first one is that of sexism in language, that is, the ways in which speech about men or women differs. The second one is that of gender-related language differences, that is, the differences that exist between the speech of men and that of women.

The present study is concerned with the second category, that is, gender-related language differences, more precisely women’s language. It answers the following question: ‘How does women’s language manifest in *A Raisin in the Sun*?’ It therefore aim snotonlyat providing clarification son the theory of women’s language, butalso at applying the clarifications to the play*A Raisin in the Sun* written by the Black American playwright Lorraine Hansberry in 1959. In other words, it aims at finding out if features of women’s language are present in the speech of the female characters of the play. It also aims at checking if

these features cannot be found in the speech of the male characters of the play.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Lexical Choice

According to Lakoff (1973, 1975), some words are used almost solely by women. These words include some colour terms, swear-words, and adjectives.

2.1.1 Colour Terms

Lakoff (1973, 1975) finds that some colour words such as *mauve* are used almost exclusively by women whereas both sexes avoid using colour names like *beige*, *ecru*, *aquamarine*, *lavender*. This attitude of both sexes is relevant for women as they already have their preferences, but not for men because they have no preferences. The reason for this is that men tend to relegate unimportant decisions to women and naming a colour is considered unimportant.

2.1.2 'Weaker' Swear Words

According to Lakoff (1973, 1975), swear words such as *oh dear*, *oh fudge*, *goodness* are frequently used by women whereas *shit*, *damn*, *hell* are frequently used by men. She emphasises the fact that these particles are not actually 'meaningless' as grammarians use to describe them. She argues that they indicate the relationship between the speaker and the addressee on the one hand, and the relationship between the speaker and the topic on the other. She qualifies the former of 'weaker' and the latter of 'stronger', as an expression of the sub-mentioned relationships.

2.1.3 'Empty' Adjectives

Lakoff (1973, 1975) claims that some adjectives like *adorable*, *charming*, *sweet*, *lovely*, *divine* and *cute* are used most by women. She qualifies these adjectives of 'empty' because they are devoid of any connotation of power in contrast to neutral adjectives such as *great*, *terrific*, *cool*, and *neat*, or the male adjective *groovy*.

2.2 Tag Questions

Lakoff (1973, 1975) clarifies that a tag question is an intermediate between a statement and a yes-no question: it is less assertive than the former (which is used when one has confidence in his knowledge and is very sure that his statement is true) and more confident than the latter (which is used when one lacks knowledge on some point and believes that this gap can be remedied by the answer of the addressee), and that it is used when the speaker lacks full confidence in the truth of his/her claim and needs a confirmation from the addressee.

She then claims that tag questions expressing the speaker's opinion for which corroboration is sought, rather than expressing the perception, like "*The war in Vietnam is terrible, isn't it?*" or "*It's a nice day, isn't it?*" are more apt to be used by women than by men. In such cases, the speaker has his/her own opinion but is reluctant to state it badly.

2.3 Question Intonation in Statements

Lakoff (1973, 1975) claims that women have a peculiar sentence intonation-pattern: that of a yes-no question used in a declarative answer to a question. An illustration of this is that when a woman is asked a question like "*When will diner be ready?*", she will not answer with a statement but with a question intonation response like "*Oh...around six o'clock...?*"; and this is as if she is unsure and is asking for confirmation from her addressee.

2.2.4 Hedges

Lakoff (1973, 1975) claims that women frequently use modifiers such as *kind of* (e.g. It's kind of hot in here), *sort of* (e.g. I'd sort of like to see a movie), and *I guess* (I guess I don't understand) which constitute hedges that serve to render a statement less assertive.

2.5 Emphatic Modifiers with Intonational Emphasis

Women, according to Lakoff (1973, 1975), often use words like *so*, *very*, *really*, *utterly*, and *such* with an intensive intonation in order to emphasise their utterances (e.g. I feel *so* happy!, That movie made me *very* sick!, That sunset is *really* beautiful!, Fred is *such* a dumb!)

2.6 Hyper Correct and Polite Grammar

The claims here are that women respect the rules of syntax and pronunciation more than men do, and that this respect of syntax goes along with an excessive politeness. This latter case is reflected in the use of compound requests instead of simple requests or direct orders. A woman, instead of making a simple request like "Please close the door." or "Will you close the door?", or a direct order like "Close the door.", she would make a compound request like "Will you please close the door?" or "Won't you close the door?". In the latter cases, the politeness is doubly expressed.

3. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE IN THE SELECTED EXTRACTS FROM A RAISIN IN THE SUN

As stated earlier, this study aims not only at clarifying the concept of women's language, but also at applying it to two extracts from the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959. The different characteristics of women's language that can be found in the play are thus presented and analysed below.

3.1 Lexical Choice in the two Selected Extracts

Table 1: Lexical choice in the two extracts

Lexical choice	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	08	100%	01	12.50%	07	87.50%
Colour terms	00	00%	00	00%	00	00%
'Weaker' swear words	04	100%	01	25%	03	75%
'Empty' adjectives	04	100%	00	00%	04	100%

Table 1 shows that no colour term has been used by both male and female characters in the two extracts. It also shows that 'weaker' swear words have been used by both male and female characters, but more by female than by male characters in the two extracts. It also displays that 'empty' adjectives have been used only by female characters in the two extracts. All in all, lexical choice has been made by both male and female characters, but more by female than by male characters in the two extracts.

3.2 Tag Questions in the two Selected Extracts

Table 2: Tag Questions in the two Selected Extracts

Tag questions	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	00	00%	00	00%	00	00%

Table2 shows that no tag question has been used by both male and female characters in the two extracts.

3.3 Question Intonation in Statements in the two Selected Extracts

Table 3: Question Intonation in Statements in the two Selected Extracts

Question intonation in statements	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	00	00%	00	00%	00	00%

Table3 shows that no question intonation in statements has been used by both male and female characters in the two extracts.

3.4 Hedges in the two Selected Extracts

Table 4: Hedges in the two Selected Extracts

Hedges	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	05	100%	02	40%	03	60%

Table4 shows that hedges have been used by both male and female characters, but more by female than by male characters in the two extracts.

3.5 Emphatic Modifiers with Intonational Emphasis in the two Selected Extracts

Table 5: Emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis in the two extracts

Emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	00	00%	00	00%	00	00%

Table5 shows that no emphatic modifier with intonational emphasis has been used by both male and female characters in the two extracts.

2.6 Hyper correct and polite grammar in the two extracts

Table 6: Incorrect Grammar in the two Selected Extracts

Incorrect grammar	Total	Male characters	Female characters
-------------------	-------	-----------------	-------------------

	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
		e	y	e	y	
	49	100%	17	34.69%	32	65.30%
Omission of the conjunction 'that'	06	100%	00	00%	06	100%
Informal interrogation	06	100%	04	66.66%	02	33.33%
Informal negation	07	100%	04	57.14%	03	42.85%
Double negation	07	100%	06	85.71%	01	14.28%
Omission of verbs or parts of verbs	10	100%	00	00%	10	100%
Misconjugation	08	100%	01	20%	07	80%
Informal plural	01	100%	00	00%	01	100%
Use of 'done' in place of 'have'	02	100%	00	00%	02	100%
Use of 'them' in place of 'the'	02	100%	02	100%	00	00%

Table6 shows that omission of the conjunction 'that', omission of verbs or parts of verbs, informal plural and use of 'done' in place of 'have' have been used only by female characters in the two extracts. It also shows that informal interrogation, informal negation and double negation have been used by both male and female characters, but more by male than female characters in the play. It as well displays that misconjugation has been used by both male and female characters, but more by female than male characters in the two extracts. It also displays that use of 'them' in place of 'the' has been done only by male characters in the two extracts. All in all, incorrect grammar has been used by both male and female characters, but more by female than by male characters in the two extracts.

Incorrect pronunciation	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	07	100%	01	14.28%	06	85.71%

Table 7: Incorrect Pronunciation in the two Selected Extracts

Table7 shows that incorrect pronunciation has been used by both male and female characters, but more by female than by male characters in the two extracts.

Hyperpolite grammar	Total		Male characters		Female characters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	01	100%	00	00%	01	100%

Table 8: Hyperpolite Grammar in the two Selected Extracts

Table 8 shows that hyperpolite grammar has been used only by female characters in the two extracts.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The data have shown that many of the characteristics of women's speech described by Lakoff (1973, 1975) are sometimes unfindable in women's speech, but sometimes findable in men's speech, as far as the two selected extracts of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959 are concerned. The study thus confirms the claims of Crosby and Nyquist (1977), O'Barr and Atkins (1980) and Brouwer et al. (1979) who have discovered that the linguistic features classified by Lakoff (1973, 1975) as being exclusively characteristics of women's speech, are not found in every women's speech, but can also be found in men's speech.

As far as lexical choice is concerned, colour terms are found to be used by neither male nor female characters in the two extracts. This thus confirms the fact that colour terms are not found in every women's speech. A possible account for this is that when there is no need for naming a colour, neither women nor men will do it.

Still in the logic of lexical choice, 'weaker' swear words are found to be used by both male and female characters, but more by female than male characters in the two extracts. This thus supports the claim that 'weaker' swear words are recurrent in women's speech, but can also be found in men's speech. When one studies the contexts in which the 'weaker' swear words have been used, one discovers that 'weaker' swear words are the most appropriate. If Beneatha and Mama had used 'stronger' swear words instead of 'weaker' swear words, we would have had sentences like "Shit, Asagai" or "Damn, no" or "Hell—(very quietly) So now it's life", and it would have been senseless in those very contexts.

If Asagai also had used a 'stronger' swear word instead of a 'weaker' swear word, the sentence would have been "Shit...please!" or "Damn...please!" or "Hell...please!", and it would have been senseless in that precise context.

In the same logic as well, 'empty' adjectives are found to be used only by female characters in the two extracts. This confirms the fact that women frequently use 'empty' adjectives. When one also studies the contexts in which these 'empty' adjectives have been used, one also sees that 'empty' adjectives are the most adequate. If Mama had used a neutral adjective like 'terrific' instead of "good-looking", we would have had a sentence like "You a terrific boy", which is not a compliment whereas the intention of Mama was to compliment her son Walter.

On the subject of tag questions and question intonation in statements, they are found to be used neither by male nor by female characters in the two extracts. This thus supports the claim that tag questions and question intonation in statements are not found in every women's speech. The account for this is also that when there is no need for using tag questions or using question intonation in statements, neither women nor men will use them.

As far as hedges are concerned, they are found to be used by both male and female characters, but more by female than male characters in the two extracts. This thus confirms the fact that hedges can also be found in men's speech. When one studies the contexts in which the hedges

have been used, one realises that the hedges really have their places where they have been used. If Mama had not used the hedge “kind of”, we would have had sentences like “You get all nervous acting and wild in the eyes” and “You always tied up in some knot”, whereas Mama does not actually mean that her son Walter has wild in the eyes or that he is tied in a knot. She rather means that she can see through the eyes of her son that he is being wild toward the rest of the family and that he is isolating himself from the rest of the family.

If Walter also had not used the hedge “kind of”, we would also have had sentences like “they are driving me crazy” and “that ain’t a job”, and it would be understood that Walter is becoming ‘mentally sick’ and that his job is not a job, whereas he does not mean so. He actually means that he is getting nervous and that he is not earning enough from his job.

On the subject of emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis, they are found to be used neither by male nor by female characters in the two extracts. This thus confirms the fact that emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis are not found in every women’s speech. The account for this is still that when there is no need for using emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis, neither women nor men will do it.

Concerning hyper correct and polite grammar, incorrect grammar and pronunciation have been found to be used by both male and female characters, but more by female than male characters in the two extracts. This thus supports the claim that hyper correct grammar and pronunciation can also be found in men’s speech. The fact that the play is taking place in an informal setting (i.e. at home), the fact that the characters who make most use of incorrect grammar and pronunciation are unlettered or have a very low level of literacy, and the fact that the characters belong to the Black American community (a community that has the reputation of not respecting rules of grammar and pronunciation), can account for the use of incorrect grammar and pronunciation by both men and women in the selected extracts. If the play were taking place in a formal setting, if the characters who make use of incorrect grammar and pronunciation were lettered or had a very high level of literacy, and if the characters belonged to the White American community, the results would have been others.

Hyperpolite grammar is found to be used only by female characters in the two extracts. This confirms the fact that women frequently use hyperpolite grammar. When one also studies the context in which the hyperpolite grammar has been used, one can notice that hyperpolite grammar is the most adequate. If Beneatha had not used hyperpolite grammar by avoiding the “please”, we would have had a sentence like “Excuse everything”, which may be interpreted as an order rather than an excuse.

To sum up, it should be retained that the use of women’s language is not a question only of sex or status, but also of need, appropriateness, setting, level of literacy and social community.

5 CONCLUSION

This study is carried out in order to check if all the existing claims on women’s language are verified in the case of the Black American community and to come up with new findings on the topic. It inquires into the manifestation women’s language in the play *A Raisin in the Sun* written

by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959 and set in Chicago's Southside, sometimes between World War II and 1959. It, thus, provides clarifications on the theory of women's language, and then applies the clarifications to two extracts selected from the play by checking if features of women's language can be found in the speech of the female characters of the play and not in that of the male characters of the play.

The findings are presented, tabulated, analysed and discussed. The discussion has driven to the conclusion that the use of women's language is not a question only of sex or status as some previous studies have proved, but also a question of need, appropriateness, setting, level of literacy and social community.

REFERENCES

1. Brouwer, D., Gerritsen, M., & De Haan, D. (1979). Speech differences between women and men: on the wrong track? *Language in Society*, 8, 33-50.
2. Crosby, F. & Nyquist, L. (1977). An empirical study of Lakoff's hypotheses. *Language in Society*, 6, 313-322.
3. Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and woman's place. *Language in Society*, 2, 45-80.
4. Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. New York: Harper & Row.
5. Lorraine, H. (1959). *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York City: Random House.
6. O'Barr, W. & Atkins, B. (1980). "Women's language" or "powerless language"? In McConnell-Ginet, S., Borker, R., and Furman, N. (eds.). *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.

Appendix Pages

Keys:

A1=Colour terms; A2='Weaker' swear words; A3='Empty' adjectives; B=Tag questions; C=Question intonation in statements; D=Hedges; E=Emphatic modifiers with intonational emphasis; *F1a=Omission of the conjunction 'that'; *F1b=Informal interrogation; *F1c=Informal negation; *F1d=Double negation; *F1e=Omission of verbs of parts of verbs; *F1f=Misconjugation; *F1g=Informal plural; *F1h=Use of 'done' in place of 'have' or 'has'; *F1i=Use of 'them' in place of 'the'; F2=Incorrect pronunciation; F3=Hyperpolite grammar.

Appendix 1: First extract (pages 27-30)

ASAGAI. Hello, Alaiyo—

BENEATHA (*holding the door open and regarding him with pleasure*). Hello...(long pause) Well—come in. And **please excuse** (*F3) everything. My mother was very upset about my letting anyone come here with the place like this.

ASAGAI (*coming into the room*). You look disturbed too...Is something wrong?

BENEATHA (*still at the door, absently*). Yes...we've all got acute ghetto-itus. (*She smiles and comes toward him, finding a cigarette and sitting*.) So—sit down! How was Canada?

ASAGAI (*a sophisticate*). Canadian.

BENEATHA (looking at him). I'm very **glad you** (*F1a) are back.

ASAGAI (*looking back at her in turn*). Are you really?

BENEATHA. Yes—very.

ASAGAI. Why—you were quite glad when I went away. What happened?

BENEATHA. You went away.

ASAGAI. Ahhhhhhhh.

BENEATHA. Before—you wanted to be so serious before there was time.

ASAGAI. How much time must there be before one knows what one feels?

BENEATHA (*stalling this particular conversation; her hands pressed together, in a deliberately childish gesture*). What did you bring me?

ASAGAI (*handing her the package*). Open it and see.

BENEATHA (*eagerly opening the package and drawing out some records and the colorful robes of a Nigerian woman*). **Oh, Asagai! (A2)**...You got them for me!...How **beautiful (A3)**...and there records too! (*She lifts out the robes and runs to the mirror with them and holds the drapery up in front of herself.*)

ASAGAI (*coming to her at the mirror*). I shall have to teach you how to drape it properly. (*He flings the material about her for the moment and stands back to look at her.*) Ah —Oh-pay-gay day, oh-gbah-mu-shay. (*a Yoruba exclamation for admiration*) You wear it well...very well...mutilated hair and all.

BENEATHA (*turning suddenly*). My hair—what's wrong with my hair?

ASAGAI (*shrugging*). Were you born with it like that?

BENEATHA (*reaching up to touch it*). No...of course not.

[*She looks back to the mirror, disturbed.*]

ASAGAI (*smiling*). How then?

BENEATHA. You know perfectly well how... as crinkly as yours...that's how.

ASAGAI. And **it is ugly to you that way? (*F1b)**

BENEATHA (*quickly*). **Oh, no (A2)**—not ugly... (*more slowly, apologetically*) But it's so hard to manage when it's, well—raw.

ASAGAI. And so to accommodate that—you **mutilate it every week? (*F1a)**

BENEATHA. It's not mutilation!

ASAGAI (*laughing aloud at her seriousness*). **Oh...please! (A2)** I am only teasing you because you are so very serious about these things. (*He stands back from her and folds his arms across his chest as he watches her pulling at her hair and frowning in the mirror.*) Do you remember the first time you met me at school?... (*He laughs.*) You came up to me and you said—and I thought you were the most serious little thing I had ever seen—you said: (*He imitates her.*) "Mr. Asagai—I want very much to talk with you. About Africa. You see, Mr. Asagai, I am looking for my identity!" (*He laughs.*)

BENEATHA (*turning to him, not laughing*). Yes—(*Her face is quizzical, profoundly disturbed.*)

ASAGAI (*still teasing and reaching out and taking her face in his hands and turning her profile to him*). Well...it is true that this is not so much a profile of a Hollywood queen as perhaps a queen of the Nile—(*A mock dismissal of the importance of the question*) But what does it matter? Assimilationism is so popular in your country.

BENEATHA (*wheeling, passionately, sharply*). I am not an assimilationist!

ASAGAI (*the protest hangs in the room for a moment and ASAGAI studies her, his laughter fading*). Such a serious one. (*There is a pause.*) So—you **like the robes? (*F1b)** You must take excellent care of them—they are from my sister's personal wardrobe.

BENEATHA (*with incredulity*). You—you **sent all the way home—for me? (*F1b)**

ASAGAI (*with charm*). For you—I would do much more...Well, that is what I came for. I must go.

BENEATHA. Will you call me Monday?

ASAGAI. Yes...We have a great deal to talk about. I mean about identity and time and all that.

BENEATHA. Time?

ASAGAI. Yes. About how much time one needs to know what one feels.

BENEATHA. You never understood that there is more than one kind of feeling which can exist between a man and a woman—or, at least, there should be.

ASAGAI (*shaking his head negatively but gently*). No. Between a man and a woman there need be only one kind of feeling. I have that for you...Now even...right this moment...

BENEATHA. I know—and by itself—it won't do. I can find that anywhere.

ASAGAI. For a woman it should be enough.

BENEATHA. I know—because that's what it says in all the novel that men write. But it isn't. Go ahead and laugh—but I'm not interested in being someone's little episode in America or—(*with feminine vengeance*)—one of them! (*ASAGAI has burst into laughter again.*) That's funny..., huh!

ASAGAI. It's just that every American girl I have known has said that to me. White—black—in this you are all the same. And the same speech, too!

BENEATHA (*angrily*). Yuk, yuk, yuk!

ASAGAI. It's how you can be sure that the world's most liberated women are not liberated at all. You all talk about it too much!

Appendix 2: Second extract (pages 36-39)

MAMA (*still quietly*). Walter, what is the matter with you?

WALTER. Matter with me? **Ain't (*F1c) nothing (*F1d)** the matter with me!

MAMA. Yes there is. Something eating you up like a crazy man. Something more than me not giving you this money. The past few years **I been watching (*F1e)** it happen to you. You get all nervous acting and **kind of (D) wild in the eyes**—(*WALTER jumps up impatiently at her words.*) I said sit there now, I'm talking to you!

WALTER. Mama—I **don't need no (*F1d)** nagging at me today.

MAMA. Seem like **you getting (*F1e)** to a place where **you always tied up (*F1e)** in some kind of (D) knot about something. But if **anybody ask (*F1f) you 'bout (*F2)** it you just yell at **'em (*F2)** and bust out the house and go out and drink **somewheres (*F1g)**. Walter Lee, people can't live with that. Ruth's a good, patient girl in her way—but **you getting (*F1e)** to be too much. Boy, don't make the mistake of driving that girl away from you.

WALTER. Why—what **she do (*F1f)** for me? (*F1b)

MAMA. She loves you.

WALTER. Mama—I'm going out. I want to go off somewhere and be by myself for a while.

MAMA. I'm sorry **'bout (*F2)** your liquor store, son. It just wasn't the thing for us to do. That's what I want to tell you about—

WALTER. I got to go out, Mama—(*He rises.*)

MAMA. It's dangerous, son.

WALTER. What's dangerous?

MAMA. When a man goes outside his home to look for peace.

WALTER (*beseechingly*). Then why can't **there never be no (*F1d)** peace in this house then?

MAMA. **You done found (*F1h) it in some other house? (*F1b)**

WALTER. No—there **ain't (*F1c) no (*F1d)** woman! Why do women always think there's a woman somewhere when a man gets restless. (Coming to her) Do you know what this money means to me? Do you know what this money can do for us? (*Coming to her.*) Mama—Mama—I want so many things...

MAMA. Yes, son—

WALTER. I want so many things that they are driving me **kind of (D)** crazy... Mama—look at me.

MAMA. I'm looking at you. **You a (*F1e) good-looking (A3)** boy. You got a job, a **nice (A3)** wife, a **fine (A3)** boy and—

WALTER. A job. (*Looks at her*) Mama, a job? I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and I say, "Yes, sir; no, sir; very good, sir; shall I take the Drive, sir?" Mama, that **ain't (*F1c) no (*F1d) kind of (D)** job... that **ain't (*F1c) nothing (*F1d)** at all. (*very quietly*) Mama, I don't know if I can make you understand.

MAMA. Understand what, baby?

WALTER (*quietly*). Sometimes it's like I can see the future stretched out in front of me—just plain as day. The future, Mama. Hanging over there at the edge of my days. Just waiting for me—a big, looming blank space—full of nothing. Just waiting for me. (*Pause*) Mama—sometimes when I'm downtown and I pass **them (*F1i)** cool, quiet-looking restaurants where **them (*F1i)** white boys are sitting back and talking **'bout (*F2)** things... sitting there turning deals worth millions of dollars... sometimes I see guys don't look much older than me—

MAMA. Son—how come you talk so much **'bout (*F2)** money?

WALTER (*with immense passion*). Because it is life, Mama!

MAMA (*quietly*). **Oh (A2)**—(*very quietly*) So now it's life. Money is life. Once upon a time freedom used to be life—now it's money. **I guess (D) the world really do (*F1f)** change...

WALTER. No—it was always money, Mama. We just didn't know about it.

MAMA. No... something has changed. (*She looks at him.*) **You something (*F1e)** new, boy. In my time **we was (*F1f)** worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too... Now here come you and Beneatha—talking **'bout (*F2)** things we never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. You **ain't (*F1c) satisfied or proud of nothing (*F1d) we done (*F1e)**. I mean that you had a home; that we kept you out of trouble till **you was (*F1f)** grown; that you don't have to ride to work on the back of nobody's streetcar—**You my children (*F1e)**—but how different **we done become (*F1h)**.

WALTER. You just don't understand, Mama, you just don't understand.

MAMA. Son—**do you know your wife (*F1a)** is expecting another baby? (*WALTER stands, stunned, and absorbs what his mother has said.*) That's what she wanted to talk to you about. (*WALTER sinks down into a chair.*) This **ain't (*F1c)** for me to be telling—but you ought to know. (*She waits.*) **I think Ruth (*F1a)** is thinking **'bout (*F2)** doing something to that child.

WALTER (*slowly understanding*).—No—no—Ruth wouldn't--

MAMA. When the world gets ugly enough—a woman will do anything for her family. The part that's already living.

WALTER. You don't know Ruth, Mama, if you think she would—

[*RUTH opens the bedroom door and stands there a little limp.*]

RUTH (*beaten*). Yes I would too, Walter. (*Pause*) ...

[*There is total silence as the man stares at his wife and the mother stares at her son.*]

MAMA (presently). Well—(*Tightly*) Well—son, I'm waiting to hear you say something...I'm waiting to hear how you be your father's son. Be the man he was...(*Pause*) **Your wife say (*F1f) she (*F1a) don't (*F1f) want your child.** And I'm waiting to hear you talk like him and **say we (*F1a) a people (*F1e) who give (*F1f) children life,** not destroys them—(*She rises.*) I'm waiting to see you stand up and look like your daddy and **say we (*F1a) done give up one baby to poverty and that we ain't (*F1c) going to give up nary another one...**I'm waiting.

WALTER. Ruth—

MAMA. If **you a (*F1e) son of mine,** tell her! (*WALTER turns, looks at her and can say nothing. She continues, bitterly.*) You...you are a disgrace to your father's memory. Somebody get my hat