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Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the *Critical Insights* Series ***Critical Insights: A Raisin in the Sun***

James Baldwin wrote of Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, "Never before in the entire history of the American theatre had so much of the truth of black people's lives been seen on the stage." Hansberry's depiction of a working-class African American family living on Chicago's South Side in the 1950s dramatizes evocatively their urban backwater chronologically poised between the civil rights movement and the black activism of the years to come, as each of the characters struggles with issues of cultural assimilation and resistance. Essays in this volume approach *Raisin in the Sun* as a resonant social document, as a frequently staged play and iconic film, and as an ambitious work of theatrical realism crafted by a dramatist not yet thirty.

This volume, like all others in the *Critical Insights* series, is divided into several sections. It begins with an introductory "About This Volume" essay, followed by another work titled "Leverage, Risk, and Fragility in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*," by Edwin Wong. This is followed by a Biography of William Shakespeare written by volume editor Robert C. Evans.

A collection of six critical contexts essays are intended to treat the novel

- 1) From a historical vantage point
- 2) In terms of its critical reception
- 3) Using a specific critical lens
- 4) And by comparing and contrasting it with another important work.

This section opens with an essay by Peter J. Bailey titled, "Historical Background: Lived Experience" followed by a piece by Robert C. Evans, "*A Raisin in the Sun: Surveying Early Reviews of the 1959 Play*," This essay explores early reviews of *A Raisin in the Sun* and how, despite the immediate popular and critical attention, maybe reviews were often brief and few in number. The following two articles are written by Sid Sondergard and Rebecca Bell-Metereau respectively. The first, "'Completely disinherited': Revisions and Extensions of *Raisin* in Hansberry's Unfilmed Shooting Script," goes to dissect Hansberry's decisions about what to change or add to the play for the movie adaptation, and the implications of each. In the next essay, "'Which of the Closets?': the Deflected Gay Subtext of *A Raisin in the Sun*," Bell-Metereau discusses the unique experience of Hansberry being black and a lesbian, and the interwoven subtext of gender identity and sexuality within *A Raisin in the Sun*, allowing another lens of examination to the text. In the final essay by D. Quentin Miller, "Hansberry, Baldwin, and the Origins of Black Broadway," Miller explores both Baldwin and Hansberry's Importance

as black voices in Broadway, as well as the relationship between the two playwright's and the audience response to each of their plays.

Following these four Critical Context essays is the **Critical Readings** section of this book, which contains the following essays:

- The Paradoxical Victory of the Younger Family in *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Joyce Ahn
- The Power of Mentorship: The Impact of Alice Childress on Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Amy Leshinsky
- "In These Trying Times, All That We Have to Cling to Is Each Other": Family Dynamics in *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Peter J. Bailey
- The "W" Word: The Inscription and Erasure of Whiteness in *A Raisin in the Sun*, by Sue Norton
- "There's no such thing as a white folks neighborhood:" Hansberry's Imprint on the Chicago Housing Market, by Amy Leshinsky
- Ideas in Motion: Beneatha's Pan-African Dream and Hansberry's Radical Activism, by Sara Marzioli
- *A Raisin in the Sun's* Theatrical Legacy, by Angela Sweigart-Gallagher
- *A Raisin in the Sun: A Survey of Reviews of the 1989 and 2008 Films*, by Robert C. Evans

Each essay in *Critical Insights: A Raisin in the Sun* includes a list of **Works Cited** and detailed endnotes. In the final section, **Resources**, easy-to-follow lists are provided to help guide the reader through important dates and moments in the author's life, beginning with a **Chronology of Lorraine Hansberry's Life**. This is followed by a list of **Works by Lorraine Hansberry** and a **Bibliography**. Finally, this section closes with an **About the Editor** section, **Contributors**, and a detailed **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world's most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia's most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: A Raisin in the Sun* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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