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POST COLONIALIST FEATURES OF LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S *LES BLANCS*  
FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF HENRY LOUIS GATES  
CARACTERÍSTICAS POSCOLONIALISTAS DE *LES BLANCS* DE LORRAINE HANSBERRY  
DESDE EL PUNTO DE VISTA DE HENRY LOUIS GATES

KEYWORDS:

Henry Louis Gates,  
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Henry Louis Gates has taken Saussure's term "signifying" and redefined it as a linguistic wordplay which postpones the delivery of meaning and believes in "double-voicedness", this means to speak both the language of the dominant culture and that of the subordinated one. He also asserts "double-voicedness" as the epitome of "Signifyin (g)". This paper intends to apply the notions of "Double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)" on the manuscript of *Les Blancs*, written by Lorraine Hansberry, and highlights the anti-colonial aspects of the play.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Henry Louis Gates,  
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*Henry Louis Gates ha tomado el término "significado" de Saussure y lo ha redefinido como un juego de palabras lingüístico que pospone la noción de significado y creencia en la "double-voicedness", esto significa hablar tanto el idioma de la cultura dominante como en el del subalterno. Double-voicedness es, para Louis Gates, el epitome de Signifyin (g). Este artículo se propone aplicar las nociones de double-voicedness y Signifyin (g) en el manuscrito de Les Blancs, de Lorraine Hansberry, y destaca los aspectos anticoloniales de la obra.*

Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) wrote some plays (*A Raisin in the Sun*, *Les Blancs*, and *The Drinking Gourd*) not only to represent the various angles of colonialism, but also to emphasize the celebration of African American culture, experience, success, and achievement. She was a visionary playwright and believed that human beings own the potentiality to control their inhumanity, oppression and greed; this led her to ask challenging rhetorical questions in her African American plays and on the American stage. A close examination of her plays, her life and information about her sources show that she had political and anti-colonial tendencies. One of her plays that best incorporates political contents and anti-colonial features is *Les Blancs*. She tried hard during her last year of life to write, re-write, polish and refine it. Indeed, it is the product of many discussions she had with her ex-husband Robert Nemiroff, who published the play posthumously. The result of this cooperation is a magnificent drama that asks an essential rhetorical question for the new century: Can the liberation of oppressed people be achieved without violent revolution or not? Although this play is an amazing one, few research or studies have been done on it. A brief summary of what has been discussed about this play is exposed in the following paragraph.

Steven R. Carter in his article “*Colonialism and Culture in Lorraine Hansberry’s Les Blancs*” (1988) revealed that most critics have found parallels between *Les Blancs* and *Hamlet*. “*The Intellectual Spear: Lorraine Hansberry’s Les Blancs*” (1996) by Olga Barrios, proposes that Hansberry enlarged the picture of the world by moving beyond the North American border by publicly denouncing North American Imperialism and Western colonialism, which were implemented on African and other third world countries. Julie M. Burrell has an article named “*To Be a Man: A Re-Assessment of Black Masculinity in Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun and Les Blancs*” (2014). In this paper she pictures positive visions of African American men as political progressive persons, though they are still patriarchal. Cindy Gabrielle in his article “*Remembering the Clichés: Memory and Stereotypes in Baraka’s The Slave, Fuller’s A Soldier’s Play and Hansberry’s Les Blancs*”? (2009) states that contemporary authors who depict stereotypical characters would be considered intellectually biased or mentally colonized. Yet, in Hansberry’s case these characters represent a link between Black people and their past. Philip Uko Effiong, in “*History, Myth, and Revolt in Lor-*

rairie Hansberry's *Les Blancs*" (1998), states that by representing an African colonial scene in *Les Blancs*, Hansberry underlines the need for dialogue between the oppressed and the oppressor.

Equally important is Henry Louis Gates, the most prominent African American literary scholar, who has published several books and articles glorifying and appreciating African American literature as part of the Western Canon. *The Signifying Monkey* and *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* are among the most controversial ones. He proposes and clarifies his critical notions of "Signifyin (g)" and "double-voicedness" in them. Some critics have researched and illustrated his ideas and directly referred to his books and notions, while others have applied them to literary texts. The following paragraph is a brief summary of what they have done.

Meg Greene in *Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: A Biography* (2012); Yolanda Page in *Icons of African American Literature: The Black Literary World* (2011); Charles Lemert in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings* (1999); Winfried Siemerling in *The New North American Studies; Culture, Writing and the Politics of Re/cognition* (2004); Jim Donnlevy in *Faces of America with Henry Louis Gates, Jr* (2010); Kam Williams in *Black in Latin America: An Interview with Dr. Henry Louis Gates* (2011); John Maddox and Michael Steinkampf in *Continuing the revolution: A Critical Analysis of Henry Louis Gate's Cuba: The Next Revolution* (2015); Peter Erickson in *Picturing Race: Early Modern Constructions of Racial Identity* (2013); Todd Richardson in *Dancing on the Color Line: African American Tricksters in Nineteenth Century American Literature* (2017); Qbádélé Kambon in *Intellectual Warfare, Theory and Practice: Gates, Thornton, White World Terror Domination and the War on Afrocentricity* (2017); Joyce Ann Joyce in *The Black Canon: Reconstructing Black American Literary Criticism* (1987) and her *A Tinker's Damn: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and "The Signifying Monkey" Twenty Years Later* (2008) and Adolph L. Reed Jr. in *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (1999) have discussed Gates' ideas. Kenneth Warren, Adeleke Adeeko, Barbara Harlow and Craig Werner have reviewed *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro- American Literary Criticism by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* (1990). Andrea Powell Wolfe's "Double-voicedness in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: 'loud talking' to a northern black readership*" (2008) is about an autobiographical book by a young mother and fugitive slave called Harriet Ann Jacobs. The book reveals Jacobs' life as a slave and how she attained freedom for herself and her infants. Jacobs writes about race and gender subjects and presents the struggles and sexual abuse that female slaves faced on plantations

as well as their efforts to practice motherhood and protect their children when they might be sold away. Leila Naderi's article (2013), "The Concept of 'Signifyin (g) Monkey' in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison" discusses that Toni Morrison deploys language as an ideological-political tool. She also reveals the plurality and flexibility of the vernacular language. None of these critics or researchers have applied Henry Louis Gates notions of "Signifyin (g)" and "double-voicedness" on Lorraine Hansberry's plays, so this paper intends to fill this gap by doing so.

This paper intends to apply the notions of "Double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)" on *Les Blancs*. Through this, it not only highlights its anti-colonialist passages, but also reflects the rich identity of African American literature. In order to do this, first, the authors of this paper introduce and describe these notions, then, expose postures and examples of them in the play; lastly, the way in which these notions give the play a rich identity is discussed. This study comes to the conclusion that Hansberry's drama attained its uniqueness and its anti-colonialist properties from these African American voices and cultures. The present study is a qualitative library-based research and a descriptive one. The central theoretical framework of the study is based on Henry Louis Gates' ideas about "double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)". Through applying the idea of Henry Louis Gates on Lorraine Hansberry's play and by exploring the language of the play, the researchers examined the process of "double-voicedness" and "Signification" in the play and introduced them as epitomes of anti-colonialist characteristics present in the play, as well as the richness of African voices and cultures.

### *Definitions of "Double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)"*

Gates states that the black tradition is "double-voiced" and that "Signifyin (g)" is the figure of the "double-voiced". Recurring to Bakhtin's terms, this means to speak both the language of the dominant culture (Americans) and the language of the subordinated culture (African Americans) (Klages: 150). In other words, it is the assertion that African American literature is a combination of two voices that provide it with a rich identity. Gates believes that "double-voicedness" can be divided into four notions regarding textual relations: Tropological revision, the speakerly text, the talking text, and rewriting the speakerly. Examples of this "tropological revision" incorporate the protagonist's secret movements, the immigration from

South to North, and figures of the double, containing double consciousness. The “speakerly text” includes the vernacular mode when speaking to the reader by deploying hybrid narrative voices which do not belong to the narrator or the protagonist. The “talking texts” are texts that speak to each other, by revealing a shift from the mimetic to the diegetic. Finally, “rewriting the speakerly text” refers to writer’s reception of vernacular tradition (Gates 92).

On the other hand, the difference between the “signification” of Standard English Language and that of the African American Vernacular meaning of the words is highlighted by “Signifyin (g)”. The Standard meaning acts according to the Saussurean law of meaning making, and so these signifiers differentiate themselves from other existing signifiers. But the vernacular meaning is made totally different. It is a deliberate manipulation of meanings and it emphasizes the playfulness of language and meaning making mechanisms. For defining the meaning of the term he looked into the dictionary meanings of “Signifyin (g)” in some dictionaries like, Clarence Major’s *Dictionary of African American Slang*, and Hermese E. Roberts’ *The Third Ear: A Black Glossary*, but was not satisfied with their definitions. Then he investigated Mezz Mezzrow’s glossary of his autobiography *Really the Blues*, J. L. Dillard’s definition, Jim Haskins and Hugh F. Butts’ *The Psychology of Black Language*, and Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner’s *The Dictionary of American Slang* and was not satisfied with them.

Then Gates says that his intention, however, has been to suggest the various ways in which “Signifyin (g)” is (mis)understood, primarily because few scholars have succeeded in defining it as a full concept. He believes writers and critics often have chosen consciously or unconsciously one of its several figures as the total meaning of the word (Gates 1988: 71). He continued to examine more definitions of “Signifyin (g)” by H. Rap Brown, Roger D. Abrahams, Thomas Kochman, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Geneva Smitherman, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Ishmael Reed, and Alice Walker. He found the second group of definitions more practical and acceptable. This paper has chosen to apply Roger D. Abrahams’ definition of “Signifyin (g)” which has been approved and confirmed by Gates on *Les Blancs*.

Abrahams is a famous and prominent literary critic, linguist, and anthropologist who made one the most continuous attempts to define “Signifyin (g)”. The name “Signifying Monkey” shows [the hero] to be a trickster, “signifying” being the language of trickery, that set of words or

gestures which arrives at “direction through indirection.” (Abrams 1962: 125). Roger D. Abrahams describes “Signifyin (g)” like this:

Signifying seems to be a Negro term, in use if not in origin. It can mean any of a number of things; in the case of the toast about the signifying monkey, it certainly refers to the trickster’s ability to talk with great innuendo, to carp, cajole, needle, and lie. It can mean in other instances the propensity to talk around a subject, never quite coming to the point. It can mean making fun of a person or situation. Also it can denote speaking with the hands and eyes, and in this respect encompasses a whole complex of expressions and gestures. Thus it is signifying to stir up a fight between neighbors by telling stories; it is signifying to make fun of a policeman by parodying his motions behind his back; it is signifying to ask for a piece of cake by saying, “my brother needs a piece of cake.” (Gates 1988: 54, Gates 1989: 238-239, Abrams 1964: 51-53).

Abrahams, in the appendix of the glossary of “Unusual Terms and Expressions,” defined “Signify” as “To imply, goad, beg, and boast by indirect verbal or gestural means. A language of implication” (Abrams 1964: 51-53). Abrahams at last concludes that, “Signifyin (g)” is a “technique of indirect argument or persuasion,” “a language of implication,” “to imply, goad, beg, boast, by indirect verbal or gestural means.” He states: “The name ‘signifying,’ shows the monkey to be a trickster, signifying being the language of trickery that set of words or gestures achieving Hamlet’s ‘direction through indirection.’” At last he states that “The monkey, in short, is not only a master of technique, he is technique, or style, or the literariness of literary language; he is the great Signifier.” (Gates 1988: 239, Gates 1989: 74-75, Abrams 1964: 51-52).

### *Discussing “Double-voicedness” and “Signifyin (g)” in Les Blancs*

In *Les Blancs*, an unreconciling drama, Hansberry reveals African anger and Black Nationalism. Addison Gayle in his introduction to *The Black Aesthetics* states that two critical expressions had always existed in Black literature: Anger and Black Nationalism. Gayle believes that what is new are the terms and degree that anger and nationalism are described. He believes that if the black artist in the American society creates without expressing anger, he can be considered not as a black man and artist, but as an Ameri-

can one” (Gayle: 1971). So in this case showing anger and seeking for Black Nationalism can be regarded as a specific trope which is repeated in this text like so many other African American Texts.

The second type of “double-voicedness” is “speakerly text.” The “speakerly text” is characterized by using the vernacular mode for speaking to the readers, and as a result they deploy hybrid narrative voices that do not totally belong to the narrator or the protagonist. Indeed verbal signifying reforms language and highlights a particular aspect or argument. Signifying in written traditions puts these shapes and forms in writing and links these writings to create a live fresh tradition. Writers such as Charles Chesnutt, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Zora Neale Hurston emphasize on narrator’s voices or characters’ words to make a connection between written words and oral traditions that African Americans typically speak of and that are heard in African American communities. African American language incorporates a lot of varieties. It includes Black Vernacular English, testifying, toasts, the dozens, snaps, storytelling, folk sayings, narratives, sermons and songs and lyrics. It means some writers signify on written traditions by drawing the reader’s attention to oral shapes of communication. Gates calls this kind of black writing a “speakerly text.” He discusses that these texts pay attention to the possibilities of representing the speaking black voice in writing (Gates 1988: xxv). Actually the slaves were sent to different places, for example to the North, but, their Southern culture did not change and they could signify on various things. For instance in *Les Blancs* once Peter says:

Yes, Bwana. De young boys- dey read the books... dey go to the city... dey tinks dey want be white men in black skins. Without the white man- de jungle close on Africa again. De huts be empty of God and de water turn to dust and de tsetse fly rule de savanna again” (Hansberry: 58).

He exploits “dey” instead of “they”, “tinks” for “thinks” and “de” instead of “the”. Major Rice said, “I simply know the proper relationship. I am devoted to the blacks (Which is a lie.) who work for me and whom I have helped to civilize” (Hansberry: 58). Indeed he is not aware of the fact that Peter is signifying on him. This case can be considered as a dramatic irony.

Also Gates stated that the third version of “double-voicedness” is “talking texts”. Talking texts reveal the intertextuality of African American literature. They are texts that speak to each other, but express a shift from

the mimetic to the diegetic. In some cases they show a change from an effort to depict life as precisely as possible to one where the narrator confirms a self-conscious control over the narrative. Lorraine Hansberry used this technique when she selected the title for the play *Les Blancs*. Jean Genet wrote *The Blacks* (1959) and revealed a tremendous negative image of Africans. By using the framework of a play within a play, he shows racial prejudice and also reveals a stereotypical aspect of black identity. Hansberry decided to write him back by writing her play named *Les Blancs*. She intended to criticize his attitude towards Africans in his play. As it is noticed, she did not explain her objection directly and clearly, but she implied it by picking up such a title. In this way she not only signified on his title, but also deployed intertextuality. There is another intertextuality between *Les Blancs* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Ironically, the activities of Abioseh reflect the warning from Asagai in *A Raisin in the Sun* (as well as that of Hansberry) that African “winners” in the end will not guarantee peace and freedom. Asagai meant he was not sure about the future policy of the Africans toward Colonialism.

Hansberry faced the conflict of indicating the internal nature of Tshembe's selection artistically and this shows the Asagai's prediction and doubt have come to reality. Another instance of intertextuality is observable in *Les Blancs*: Hansberry, who instinctively recognizes the inappropriateness of relying only on a Western literary tradition, has provided Tshembe with another metaphor from African lore, culture and tradition referring to Modingo. He is the wise hyena and lives between the lands of the elephants and the hyenas. Modingo means a person who thinks carefully before he acts. The hyenas who are the earliest settlers of the forest request Modingo to solve their problems with the elephants. The quarrel was concerning their land. The elephants wanted more space because of their sizes. Although Modingo perceives the discussion; he hesitates to interfere. Since Modingo thinks for too long, the elephants move in and remove the hyenas from the jungle completely. That is why the hyena laughs even now and his laughter is such a terrible one. His laughter is a bitter one because he was reasoning. Hansberry does not move back from the discussion and does not become disappointed because of the theme which was implicit in her play. She does not make the situation simple, maybe a less brave dramatist might do that. What is absolutely obvious is that Hansberry keeps this idea in her mind when she creates Ntali, the African man. Ntali makes great efforts to involve Tshembah in African rebellion. As the readers notice Tshembah has hesitation until almost the end of the play.

And finally “rewriting the speakerly text” refers to the acceptance of the Black tradition. Gates believes that literary discourse is the blackest when it is the most figurative. And so that modes of interpretation that are in harmony with the vernacular tradition of language mostly pay attention to the manner of language usage.

In some cases, a speaker might signify to indicate the faults of (someone or something) in a disapproving way or put down a person or group of people. In *Les Blancs*, Tshembeh noticed Eric had become interested in politics and said to him:

TSHEMBEH; When did you become interested in politics, Little Toy? Does your doctor whisper politics when he pours your whisky?

ERIC: (Bitterly, lifting his head above it) He discusses many things with me. TSHEMBE (Somewhat chastened) How should I know what Kumalo will do? And don't call them terrorists: that's for the settlers. Call them rebels, or revolutionaries. (Looking off with his own sad irony) Or fools. But never terrorists (Hansberry: 24).

When Tshembeh asked Eric about their father's last talk, Eric answered rudely:

ERIC (Curtly—to hurt in return): Only of his ancestors, what else?

TSHEMBE: Why do you say it like that, Eric?

ERIC: Because it's true. He was just an old savage who went to his death rubbing lizard powder on his breast and chanting out his kula or some damn thing!

TSHEMBE (Grabbing the boy violently): So did our mother! Do you despise her memory too? Have they finally turned the world upside down in your head, boy? (Hansberry: 24)

Eric intended to show his lack of respect for his heritage and his ancestors. He is somehow confused between matters. As it is mentioned in the play their mother was raped by Major Rice and Eric was born. He is disturbed and annoyed at such a colonized society. On one side, he is not accepted by Africans and on the other, he is not approved by Europeans. It is noticeable that he had taken the decision to battle terrorism from one side and disregards his culture, heritage and tradition from the other. Tshembeh questions how a drug-addicted, alcoholic homosexual boy could be interested in Politics. He belittles and criticizes Eric in this way and simultaneously reveals his amazement and objection. Eric wanted to de-

fend his land and people; however, his brothers were not satisfied with his decision. They made attempts to prevent him. Eric said, "I am summoned! They want me! I know it is time to drive the invaders into the sea. And that I shall carry the spear and shield if our father." (Hansberry: 61). Abioseh mocked him and said, "And shall I also paint your cheeks? Sit down, boy." Tshembah reflected, "You are half European. Which part of yourself will you drive into the sea! And what will you do when your doctor calls, Eric? It takes more than a spear to make a man." (Hansberry: 61). Again Eric was made fun of and criticized severely by his brothers. They not only could not believe their half European brother be an anti-colonialist supporter, but also were unhappy and disagreed with his politics. Eric got annoyed and reflected. He said to Tshembah, "What does it take Tshembah? You teach me! What does it take to be a man? A white wife and son?" (Hansberry: 61). Tshembah on one hand was obsessed with his own anti-colonialist thoughts and on the other with echoes of the hyena like figure. But till the end of the play Tshembah could not take a definite clear decision. Abioseh, Eric's Christian Brother, had been vanished into Christianity and did not believe in war at all.

As Abrams mentions, one of the meanings of "Signifyin (g)" is to persuade or "cajole" somebody into doing something. Reverend Neilson and his good intentioned wife were sent to that country some years before. As it is implied, he repeatedly cajoled the natives to overlook the colonialist's mistakes and brutality. As Madame Neilson once mentioned in the play, if he were there, he would persuade the natives to keep calm, go home and neglect the awful situation which was created by the colonialists.

In other cases, a speaker can signify to create humor and laughter among friends and people around him or her. This play is gloomy and bitter to such an extent that the reader can hardly find examples of 'Signification' for humor and laughter. When Tshembah told Eric that he had a child, Eric playfully reflected, "You got some girl in trouble!" Eric thought that his brother had a baby without marriage (Hansberry: 22).

As it is observed, signifying may suggest sharp bitter criticism to the listeners as well as others. When Tshembah saw the Bible that the Reverend gave him, he told Eric, "It started Abioseh huffing and puffing his way to heaven" (Hansberry: 46). Tshembah implied religion's role in colonialism. He meant Colonialists took advantages of religion and religious ideologies. He intended to say even Christianity and churches have betrayed Africans. Even some times the slaves mocked their masters. Tshembah and

Charlie talked about Major Rice. Ironically Tshembah called him ‘too kind’ (Hansberry: 48).

Tshembah and his brothers Abioseh and Eric talk about several issues such as African customs and traditions, religion and resistance. They had strong conflicts. All the conflicts can be regarded as examples of significations. Abioseh and Eric protested to Tshembah’s ideology and Eric called Tshembah’s talking funny. Tshembah got annoyed and answered, “I think funny.” There was a conflict between the two brothers over following the tradition or not. Tshembah believed they had to respect traditional mourning ceremonies while it was not meaningful for his brothers. For instance, he believed they had to paint their cheeks with yellow ochre, and keep rattles in their hands and dance to chase away the spirits of evil that had taken their father away (Hansberry: 25- 26).

Tshembah stated that he did not believe in these beliefs; however, their fellow people expect them to do it for their father and society. Abioseh became Christian and he was called Father Paul Augustus. By noticing this fact Tshembah became angry and agitated and said:

Such is the marketplace of Empire! You, the son of a proud elder of the Kwi, are now pleased to change your ancient name for that of a Roman Emperor! You came home not to pay respects to your father but to rail against a few pots of innocent powder (Hansberry: 27).

Tshembah believed colonialists have various methods for colonizing different people, countries and cultures. He believes this time religion is the means for dominating people. Even Reverend Neilsen who came to their area some years ago seeming to have good intentions towards African people, but he came there to ensure the continuation and permanence of colonialism.

The moral conflict between Tshembah and Abioseh was a form of signifying. Tshembah stated, “You have found Reason in a bit of dirty ash and Humiliation in the rattles and feathers of our ceremonies!” Tshembah made a contrast between African religion and ceremony with Christianity (Hansberry: 27). Abioseh was very glad with his situation and said, “Some-day a black man will be Archbishop of this Diocese, a black African Cardinal. Think of what that will mean!” (Hansberry: 27). Abioseh answered:

I know the tale of Jesus. But I think now if there was such a man he must have been what all men are: the son of man who died the death of men.

And if the legend is true at all that he was a good man, then he must have despised the priests of the temples of complicity! I am going out to our people (Hansberry: 28).

Tshembah put Christianity and religious people under question by saying:

Abioseh, I know the tale of Jesus. But I think now if there was such a man he must have been what all men are: the son of man who died the death of men. And if the legend is true at all that he was a good man, then he must have despised the priests of the temples of complicity! I am going out to our people (Hansberry: 28).

Abioseh and Tshembah talked about their father's funeral. Tshembah insisted on obeying the national regional customs, but Abioseh, a Christian priest, regarded the customs as absurd and unnecessary. Abioseh told, "And what do you propose we do at the ceremony, my disenchant-ed, world traveled young intellectual? Should we also paint our cheeks?" (Hansberry: 26).

Once Eric read a newspaper and informed Tshembah of Kumolo's arrival to Africa. Tshembah talked about Kumolo and implied that nothing was intended to be done by them. They, these politicians only talk and talk (Hansberry: 23).

ERIC: What will he do in Zatembe?

TSHEMBA: What did he do in Europe? Talk! Talk, talk, talk. That is what the African does in Europe. He wanders around in the cold in his thin suits and he talks (Hansberry: 23).

Even though African Americans tried to adjust themselves to the conditions of an industrial environment, signifying practices continued, particularly in traditional African American places.

Hansberry looked at Schweitzer as the model and a source of inspiration for the Reverend Neilsen. However she signified upon a nice and good portrait of colonialism and colonialists and made efforts to express their true brutal, ugly face. People similar to Reverend Neilson had migrated to African territory as doctors or as religious figures to make Africans civilized, healthy and Christian. Marta told Charlie that Reverend Neilson had come to Africa with a "particular" great idea. But later the reader un-

derstands that Reverend Neilson had come there holding imperialist ideas in his mind (Hansberry: 15). Hansberry made this character as a parallel to Albert Schweitzer. In 1952 he won the Political Radicalism and Artistic Innovation Nobel Peace Prize for his medical missionary in the Gabon territory of West Africa. People around the world appreciated him for bringing “civilization” to “the dark continent” and building a hospital in the jungles of Lambarene. However later people became disillusioned with his real intentions (Kemayó: 48). As it is shown in the play after a long time of colonial existence in that place, the natives still suffer from lack of equipment.

Gates states that there are particular deep-rooted recurrent motifs in African American literary tradition. One of them is the African American matriarch. Such a significant motif is a literary technic which has dominant features and particular functions in African American literature. Writers have showed repeatedly a stereotypical cliché picture of African Americans in literature. Indeed the archetype of the African American matriarch is not clear, but the depiction of African American women in literature can be detected everywhere. Some critics like Robert Staples (1970) stated that a host of writers create matriarch stereotypical figure and most of these women are caretakers or have mean jobs. On the other hand, African Americans create another sort of stereotypical matriarchs that can be regarded as superhuman (Harris: 110). So in literary and nonliterary picturing of African American matriarchs, these figures are developed a rather familiar appearance.

In *Les Blancs*, Lorraine Hansberry has created Madame Neilson, Eric and Tshembah surrogated mother, and Reverend Neilson wife. She has created Madame’s portrait in a manner that somehow moves away from the usual common representation of matriarch figure. In other words Hansberry signifies on stereotypical matriarch figure by choosing a white European woman instead of an African one. Although most white people in that place are hypocritical, Madame is loyal and truthful to the Natives. She stood in sharp contrast to all those colonialists’ figures. Although she was physically blind, she had insights and as Tshembe’s surrogate mother and teacher, urged him to become a warrior for his people and to start struggles against colonialism and Eurocentrism in his country. She is the one who is worried about Eric’s addiction to alcohol and homosexuality. Eric is the mulatto child of Old Tshembah and is born after his wife, was raped by Major Rice. Madame in protesting to Eric’s drinking said to Dekoven, “First will come the liquor fumes and then will come Eric.” Dekoven reflected, “The boy can’t help it! Why must you pick after him about it!”

and Madame answered, “No, he can’t help it any more than you can help giving it to him, can he- my dear, tortured Dekoven!” (Hansberry: 18).

### Conclusion

In this paper Lorraine Hansberry’s drama, *Les Blancs*, was introduced and the literature which was related to it was examined. On the other hand, Henry Louis Gates’ notions of “Double-voicedness” and “Signifyin (g)” were introduced and were applied on the play. He defines “Double-voicedness” as the assertion that African American literature is a combination of two voices that provides African American literature a rich identity. It means to speak both the language of the dominant culture and the language of the subordinated culture. Gates believes that “double-voicedness” can be divided into four versions regarding textual relations: Tropological revision, the speakerly text, the talking text, and rewriting the speakerly. Then he takes the “signification” defined previously by Ferdinand de Saussure and redefined the term. He made a difference between the Standard English meaning of “signification” and its vernacular one called “Signifyin (g)”. He researches the various meanings of “Signifyin (g)” in different text and comes to this conclusion that only few critics have got the true meanings of it. For instance he asserts Roger D. Abrams definition of the term. Abrams describe it as follows:

1. Signifyin (g) “can mean any number of things.”
2. It is a black term and a black rhetorical device.
3. It can mean the “ability to talk with great innuendo.”
4. It can mean “to carp, cajole, needle, and lie.”
5. It can mean “the propensity to talk around a subject, never quite coming to the point.”
6. It can mean “making fun of a person or situation.”
7. It can “also denote speaking with the hands and eyes.”
8. It is “the language of trickery that set of words achieving Hamlet’s ‘direction through indirection.’”
9. The Monkey “is a ‘signifier,’ and the Lion, therefore, is the signified”.

He described “Signify” as “To imply, goad, beg, and boast by indirect verbal or gestural means. A language of implication” and at last concludes

that, “Signifyin (g)” is a “technique of indirect argument or persuasion,” “a language of implication,” “to imply, goad, beg, boast, by indirect verbal or gestural means.”

By applying the notions on the manuscript of *Les Blancs*, some stances and examples of “Double-voicedness” and “Signifyin (g)” were found. Anger and Black Nationalism found in the play were considered as “tropological revision”. The vernacular language exploited by some Africans in the play was regarded as “speakerly text”. The allusive title, the allusion to “hyena” and to *A Raisin in the Sun* were introduced as examples of “talking texts”. By depiction of some examples of “Signifyin (g)” in the play, not only the anti-colonial aspects of the play were highlighted, but also the rich identity of this text as a representative of an African American literature was proved. Eric, the illegitimate son of an African family is the result of the rape of a native by one of those colonizers. Eric is in conflict with himself, his family and the society. He is neither an African, nor an American. He expresses his anger bitterly in some situations and they are examples of “Signification”. Abioseh is an assimilated native, who has been melted in colonialist’s religion. He is not aware that he has been misused as a puppet and the religion in which he has been melted, is actually a colonialist device in his hand. His boasts and brags with his brothers and other natives are instances on “Signifyin (g)”. Tshembah the protagonist of the play suffers from a lot of tensions and conflicts. He has been torn between his calm European life and the critical situation of Africa and Africans. He cannot even tolerate the rarely good natured colonial people. At last he decides to struggle against the colonialists overtly, since he perceives it as the only option left. Reverend Neilson, a colonialist figure, was sent to that area some years ago. As it is implied most of the time, he persuaded and cajoled the natives to overlook the shortcomings of the situation and the colonialist’s brutality. By applying Gates ideas, not only Hansberry’s anti-colonial attitude has been proved, but also the rich identity of her text was revealed.

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