

WHAT DOES LORRAINE HANSBERRY AS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT DO IN *THE DRINKING GOURD*? AN ANALYSIS OF HENRY LOUIS GATES VIEWPOINTS

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- **ABSTRACT:** Henry Louis Gates, the most contemporary prominent critic of African-American Studies, has taken Saussure's "signifying" and redefined the term. He describes "Signifyin (g)" in African-American vernacular tradition as a linguistic wordplay which postpones delivery of meaning. He believes in "double-voicedness", which means to speak both the language of the dominant culture and the language of the subordinated and asserts "double-voicedness" as the best epitome of "Signifyin (g)". It is intended to apply the notions of "Double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)" on the manuscript of *The Drinking Gourd* written by African-American female playwright Lorraine Hansberry and with the contribution of them highlight the anti-colonial attitude of her and the postcolonialist features of the play. The research was a library-based qualitative descriptive one and no quantitative result was expected. The mentioned notions were introduced and some stances and examples of "Signifyin (g)" and "double-voicedness" were discovered in the play. Hypothetically this paper concluded that Hansberry's drama attain its anti-colonial features from these African American voices and cultures.
- **KEYWORDS:** Henry Louis Gates. Signifyin (g). Lorraine Hansberry. Double-voicedness. *The Drinking Gourd*. Postcolonialism.

Introduction

The Drinking Gourd [1960] Lorraine Hansberry's second play that was never produced, was written for the commemorating of the Centennial of the Civil War. The government first appreciated it a lot; however, put it aside. Indeed it was published posthumously by Robert Nemiroff. The play can be considered as an explicit objection to American slavery as a system of deploying cheap labor. The horrible and the dehumanised conditions of the slaves of the plantations of Southern America were depicted and the slave system as the foundation for the country's economic philosophy and later capitalistic

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development were introduced. The destructive psychological and physical effects of the slave upbringing on both masters and slaves were highlighted. In spite of being a critical controversial play, few studies have been done on it. For instance, Farrison (1972) in “Lorraine Hansberry’s Last Dramas” considered it a three-act drama which was well suited for television presentation, and in television jargon it may be called “a documentary on American plantation slavery.” He calls it, “imaginative, unified, easily documentable”, and “good dramatic literature and in the best tradition of historical dramas”. Priya (2018) in his “Quest for Freedom in Lorraine Hansberry’s *The Drinking Gourd*” focuses on the notion of slave freedom and specially the “unquenchable thirst” of Hannibal in his article. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory and Griot Houston (1985) in “Lorraine Hansberry: The Politics of the Politics Surrounding *The Drinking Gourd*” state that *The Drinking Gourd* is one of the less known plays of Hansberry and believed the political instance of the play mostly is the result of this lack of popularity. They stated the play was both artistic and political, and it also paves the way for other playwrights who consider no dichotomy between art and politics. The reaction to play production and performance revealed the political atmosphere of the time.

On the other side, Henry Louis Gates is the most prominent African American literary figure who has published a host of articles and books glorifying and appreciating African American literature as part of the Western Canon. *The Signifying Monkey* (GATES, 1988) and *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self* (GATES, 1989) are among the most controversial ones. He proposes and clarifies his critical notions of “Signifyin (g)” and “double-voicedness” in them. Some critics have investigated and illustrated his ideas and directly reflected to his books and notions and 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 Rel/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], 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’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 talked about race and gender subjects and presented the struggles and sexual abuse that female slaves faced on plantations as well as their efforts to practice motherhood and protect their children when their children 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.

As it was expressed limited descriptive studies were done on *The Drinking Gourd* and 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 intended to fill this gap by doing so.

The central theoretical framework of the study was based on Henry Louis Gates ideas about "Double-voicedness" and "Signifyin (g)". Through applying his ideas on the manuscript of *The Drinking Gourd* and by exploring the language of the play, the process of "Signification" and "Double-voicedness" was examined. By doing so, the anti-colonial aspects of the play, accurate picture of bitter slavery and rich identity of African American literature were depicted. This study hypothetically came to this conclusion that Hansberry's drama attained its uniqueness and its anti-colonial properties from these African American voices and cultures. The present study was a qualitative library based research and a descriptive one.

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

Gates states that the black tradition is "double-voiced" and Signifyin (g) is the figure of the "double-voiced". In Bakhtin's terms, it means to speak both the language of the dominant culture (Americans) and the language of the subordinated culture (African Americans) (KLAGES, 2011). In other words, it is the assertion that African American literature is a combination of two voices that provides African American literature a rich identity. 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. Examples of these "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 (PAGE, 2011, p. 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 are 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 differently. 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 at the dictionary meanings of “Signify (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 (1989) 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 they (writers and critics) often have chosen consciously or unconsciously one of its several figures, as the total meaning of the word. 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 *The Drinking Gourd*.

Abrams is a famous and prominent literary critic, linguist, and anthropologist who made one of 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, p.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, p. 54; GATES, 1989, p. 238-239; ABRAMS, 1964, p. 51-53).

Abrahams (1964, p.51-53) 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”. 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, 1989, p. 239; GATES, 1988, p. 74-75, ABRAMS, 1964, p. 51-52).

Discussing “Double-voicedness” and “Signifyin (g)” in *The Drinking Gourd*

In *The Drinking Gourd*, Hansberry mirrors Africans anger for the brutalizing effect of United States slavery system 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 (1971, p. xv-xvi) believes that what is new are the terms and degree that anger and nationalism are described. He believes, “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 American one”. So in this case showing anger for cruel effects of slavery 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.

I this paly, Hannibal, a young African American slave cannot cope with a situation. He does not do his job properly and is aggressive toward his masters. He asks Tom, the little son of the master, to teach him how to read and write and in return promises to teach him how to play a musical instrument.

HANNIBAL I was jes teachin’ him some songs he been after me to learn him, suh! (Desperately) He beg me so.

EVERETT (Holding the composition) Did you write this—?

HANNIBAL What’s that, suh?

EVERETT (Hauling off and slapping him with all his strength. ZEB smiles a little to himself watching) THIS! ... Don’t stand there and try to deceive me, you monkey-faced idiot! Did you write this?

HANNIBAL Nosuh, I don’t know how to write! I swear to you I don’t know how to write! Marse Tommy wrote it ...

EVERETT Tommy could print better than this when he was seven! You’ve had him teach you, haven’t you ...

HANNIBAL Jes a few letters, suh. I figger I could be of more use to Marster if I could maybe read my letters and write, suh.

EVERETT (Truly outraged): You have used your master’s own son to commit a crime against your master. How long has this been going on? Who else have you taught, boy? Even my father wouldn’t like this, Hannibal. There is only one thing I have ever heard of that was proper for an “educated” slave. It is like anything else; when a part is corrupted by disease—

EVERETT ... when a part is corrupted by disease—one cuts out the disease. The ability to read in a slave is a disease—

HANNIBAL (Screaming at him, at the height of defiance in the face of hopelessness) You can't do nothing to me to get out my head what I done learned ... I kin read! And I kin write! You kin beat me and beat me ... but I kin read ... (To ZEB) I kin read and you can't—

EVERETT He has told the truth. (To ZEB, coldly) As long as he can see, he can read ... You understand me perfectly. Do it now (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 37-38).

At that time the penalty and punishment for a slave's learning how to read and write was mutilation or making him or her blind. Hannibal was an anarchist and despite knowing about the crime punishment insisted on education. At last he was arrested while he was learning. Gates comments, "Slave education, learning to read, "was a decisive political act; learning to write, as measured by an eighteenth-century scale of culture and society, was an irresistible step away from the cotton field toward a freedom eve larger than physical manumission" (GATES, 1989, p. 45). One of the most difficult activities in slave's life was education since it was legally denied. The masters did not want their never their slaves to study and to learn and to educate. They believed that education was not necessary for the slaves and their main duties were farming and gardening (PIRYA, 2018). By education Hannibal broke and violated the plantation laws which was always considered horrible. When the news reached Everett Sweet, he shouted angrily at Hannibal, "You have used your master's own son to commit crime against you master" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 37) and orders Zeb Dudley to put out the eyes of Hannibal. The masters were against the education since it would open the world around them. And also by education they would gain information about the life, the slave rebellions, the conflicts between masters and slaves and a lot of other things. The masters believed that the educated slaves like Hannibal, would know paths, send messages, and conspire to murder their masters, escape, rebel. The master ordered the overseer to make him blind. The catastrophic situation in the plantation caused Hannibal, Sarah (his fiancé), and his niece to flee. Messiah, Hannibal's older brother, has escaped earlier since the master had sold his wife regardless of him and their little daughter. So in this case not only the descent into the underground as a specific trope is repeated, but also brutality existed in slave plantations are depicted.

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 they 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. They do it by drawing the reader's attention to oral shapes of communication. Gates (1988) 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. 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.

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. The title of the play, *The Drinking Gourd*, is an allusion to a poem of the same title. 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 order to understand the nature of "Signifyin (g)" in African American literature, it is suggested to the readers to find the differences between the different effects of the oral tradition in African American culture. Verbal signifying makes attempt to use special words or phrases and provide them new fresh meanings for confirming a point of view by the means of innuendo or indirection. 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. When Zeb, the new overseer meets Hannibal for the first time, in *The Drinking Gourd*, summons him. Hannibal does not draw off his cap at first, later Zeb tells him whether there is something wrong with his cap. By saying this, Zeb implies Hannibal has had disrespectful behavior and knocks him down. The slave owners frequently belittle not only the slaves, but also their own colleagues. When Coffin tells Zeb of Hannibal's absence, he becomes angry and tells him why he has stood there like a dumb ape (Drinking 35). Zeb has to leave for finding Hannibal as soon as possible even before reporting his absence. Insults as epitomes of "Signification" are observed frequently in this play. For instance, Hannibal is observed while reading and writing accompanying Tom, Everett pulls off and slaps Hannibal and tells him why he has deceived him and he calls Hannibal a monkey-faced idiot (HANSBERRY, 1994).

In other cases, a speaker can signify to create humor and laughter among friends and people around him or her. This play is so sad gloomy and bitter that hardly the reader can find examples of 'Signification' for humor and laughter. In different situations and contexts the word is written differently. Sometimes the (g) is omitted, and so the word is known as either signifyin' or siggin'. In addition signifying owns different names in different places and times. Verbal signifying could be dubbed joanin', riffi n', reading, or sounding. It should be remembered that Signification not only exists in African and African American oral culture but also in African American literature. Geneva Smitherman, who is a linguist in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* writes "improvisation" or "spontaneous creation" in the context of language is "originality". She states excellent signifying "involves rhetorical hyperbole, irony, indirection, metaphor,

and development of ‘semantically or logically unexpected’ statements” (SMITHERMAN, 1986, p. 70).

In the play *The Drinking Gourd*, the narrator who is a soldier tells, “[...] labor was so plentiful that it was cheaper to work a man to death and buy another one than to work the first one less harshly” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 5). The soldier implicitly says the workers receive low amount of wages and live in a very bad condition. It is economical for the slave owners to substitute a new hand for the dead one and not to pay enough wages to them. In another situation, in reaction to the workers gathering, Zeb tells them who has called a holiday around there. By telling this he implies they should not gather together purposelessly and should continue their jobs (HANSBERRY, 1994). In a scene when Zeb, the new overseer intends to describe the new times of working in the cotton field, he tells the hands are to be in the fields an hour and a half before regular time. By hands he means the African slaves and this technique can be considered as synecdoche. He said,

The hands are to be in the fields an hour and a half before regular time and we’re cuttin’ the noon break in half and we’ll hold’em an hour and a half longer than the usual night quittin’ time.[...] And any hand who donot learn fast enough will learn it fast enough when I get through with’em (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 33).

Slaves did not do signifying only for amusement. During slavery, it had a more practical function. Indeed the power of signifying is in its changeable power. Old words and expressions are given new fresh meanings not only to persuade or cajole, but also to amuse. Many slave spirituals (religious songs) deployed signifying that was beneficial for the slaves. In the middle of slavery, a lot of slaves could not do any physically violent actions against their masters and so they used “Signifyin (g)” as a type of connotative manipulation that implement clever mental processes. In fact they treated the speaker with both indirection and implication. Sarah H. Bradford (1886) in *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People* writes about songs and slave spirituals that include critical hidden clandestine messages to contribute or hint to other slaves about incoming possible dangers. In this play, slaves sometimes recite a poem called “The Drinking Gourd”. It is both the title of the play and the name of the poem cited in it. So it is an allusion to a poem which contains a hidden secret message for escape. Songs like “Follow the Drinking Gourd” and “Steal Away to Jesus” were smartly prepared examples of songs exploited by the slaves to send and imply clandestine messages and double meanings covered in it.

For the old man is a-waitin’
For to carry you to freedom
If you follow the Drinking Gourd.
Follow- follow- follow...
If you follow the Drinking Gourd...”
“Steal away, steal away,
Steal away to Jesus.
Steal away, steal away home-

I ain't got long to stay here.
 My Lord he calls me,
 He calls me by the thunder.
 The trumpet sounds
 Within- a my soul-
 I ain't got long to stay here.
 Steal away, steal away,
 Steal away to Jesus.
 Steal away, steal away home-
 I ain't got long to stay here. (PARKS, 1928, p. 18).

With this manner of communication the slaves could send messages between themselves, while outsiders were not aware. By changing words in this way, they decrease the risk of message discovery and their detection. As if masters and overseers knew the clandestine meanings of the songs and spirituals, they did not like slaves singing. When Coffin protests to Rissa for folks singing, she states whether she has been supposed to stop folks from opening and closing their mouths (HANSBERRY, 1994). As it is clear, signifying would provide smart criticism to the listeners. Even some times the slaves mocked their own masters. In another occasion in the play a number of children and youngsters recite a meaningful song.

Joshua: "My old marster promise me
 Mmm Mmm Mmm
 That when he died he gona set me free
 Mmm Mmm Mmm
 Well, he live so long 'til his head got bald
 Mmm Mmm Mmm
 Then he gave up the notion of dying at all!"
 All: "Come along, little children, come along!
 Come where the moon is shining bright!
 Get on board, little children, get on board-
 We're gona raise a ruckus tonight!"
 Sarah: "My old mistress promise me
 Mmm Mmm Mmm (mimicking)
 "Say-ra! When I die I'm going to set you free!"
 Mmm Mmm Mmm
 But a dose of poison kind helped her along
 Mmm Mmm Mmm
 And may the devil sing her funeral song! (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 28- 29).

While reading this poem Sarah, Hannibal's fiancée makes gestures naughtily and helps and leads "Mistress" to her grave with a weaving movement of her hands and it this way not only chorally and orally but also with mimicry and gestures they criticize their unpleasant situation. Everybody sings this song in his or her turn and so the chorus is repeated by all (HANSBERRY, 1994). They pretend cleverly and innocently that they are not aware

of the real meaning of their song; however, the reader knows that they are quite aware of the implied meaning of their songs. So this song has double meaning and the hidden secret one is the main focus and the core of the attention of the singers.

In spite of the fact that Africans lived in America for a long times, they continue to exploit this art of language play in their traditions in different religious spiritual songs, in rhymes, in myths, in ballads, preaching, spirituals, work songs, rap and blues. African Americans have become masters of connotative meanings incorporating metaphorical, symbolic, and hidden meaning with the contribution of these verbal traditions. In this situation not only the speakers but also the listeners require smartness and cleverness. Coffin and Hannibal have conflict with each other and Coffin goaded on his running off (HANSBERRY, 1994). In a scene, Coffin objected to Hannibal's running off. He says:

Coffin: Jes who you think pick your cotton ever'time you decides to run off?

Hannibal: Reckon I don't worry 'bout it getting' picked.

Coffin: You betta stop that sassy lip of yours with me boy or –

Hannibal: Or what, coffin-?

Coffin: You jes betta quit, thas all (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 29).

After their challenge and conflict, Coffin tells Rissa that she will pay for his wild boy that she had birthed. Rissa answers wittingly what she is supposed to do, whether she should send his son back to the Lord (HANSBERRY, 1994). By answering in this way not only she is not quiet about cruelty and injustice, but also as a servant and slave is polite to her superior.

By becoming master of these language techniques, they attained a particular sort of psychological strength over their masters. Since it is essential people who were made to exploit English instead of their native language to rebel against standardized English. Gradually Slaves developed and gradually found new identities and created distinct words for communication. Slaves deployed seemingly English words and phrases and sentences with their own intonations, pronunciations and meanings. Since keeping influence and power was impossible for African Americans, they tried to communicate with one each other and with their masters with signification. Slaves had a catastrophic situation in the South. African Americans faced so many difficulties not only in employment but also in politics. Naming a few are slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and discrimination. It made them to move from the South to the North, to many industrialized cities. So can be considered as the main results of Great Migration. By moving to the North, African Americans took their traditions with themselves. Rissa, Hannibal's mother tries to persuade her son not to flee by reminding him of his brother's escape from plantation and tries to persuade Hannibal to be calm and satisfied by his life. She reveals Hannibal the already used clothes of the master as a sign of master's favor to Hannibal. Hannibal almost screams and says he does not want Marster Everett's bright red jacket and he does not want Marster Sweet's scraps. Hannibal cries that he does not want anything in this whole world but to get off that plantation (HANSBERRY, 1994). Rissa said:

What's the matter with you, Hannibal? The one thing I allus planned on was that you and Isaiah would work in the Big House where you kin get decent food and nice things to wear and learn nice mannas like a real genamun. (Pleadingly) Why, right now young Marse' got the most beautiful red broadcloth jacket that I heard him say he was tired of already—and he ain't hardly been in it. (Touching his shoulders to persuade) Fit you everywhere'cept maybe a little in the shoulder on account you a little broader there (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 30).

Hannibal answered, (Almost screaming) “I don't want Marster Everrett's bright red jacket and I don't want Marster Sweet's scraps. I don't want nothin' in this whole world but to get off this plantation!” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 31). In response to above mentioned protest, Rissa said, “How come mine all come here this way, Lord? I done tol' you so many times, that you a slave, right or not, you a slave. 'N' you alive- you ain't dead like maybe Isaiah is” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 31). Even though African Americans tried to adjust themselves to meet conditions of an industrial environment, signifying practices continued, particularly in traditional African American places.

So playing with language became important and it was used a lot. When their tradition and culture entered into written literary traditions, this kind of word play continued in many shapes. When African Americans began to write publically, they changed westernized contexts, particularly biblical religious verses, and with the help of this manner they tried to talk about their need for equality indirectly. “Signifyin(g)” appeared as a rhetorical technique for African American writers to prove their humanity and to show their ability to reason for themselves. It also provided way for African American writers to show their anger about the institution of slavery implicitly, indirectly, explicitly and directly. They did so, since the masters sent or sold their husbands or their wives or their children without paying attention to their familial relations and ties. The masters used to dishonor females and beat the slaves and their families.

In *The Drinking Gourd*, the master sells Isaiah's wife and sends her to another plantation regardless of her being married and having a new born baby. Her husband cannot tolerate such a predicament, leaves his baby and the rest of his family and escapes to the North. When Zeb, the new overseer comes to the cotton field for the first time, Coffin, one of the drivers, who has had some hatred of Hannibal, tells him of Hannibal's anarchist attitude and Isaiah's flee. Zeb decides to punish and belittle Hannibal immediately. Zeb tells Hannibal that why his escaped brother had not come back and had not carried Hannibal and his mother off Paradise yet. Zeb told Hannibal, “Well, now, is that so? Well, what you doin' still hangin' 'round here? Ain't your brother never come back and bought you and your mama and carried you off to Paradise yet?” (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 34).

The psychological ruin of slavery was as dreadful as its physical destroy. Slaves sometimes wrote against their masters and the hegemonic culture, wrote to prove their ability to reason and wrote to prove their humanity. In all places writers might indirectly or even unintentionally create a tradition by distinguishable ways to show ones opinion. Theorists and critics might evaluate or put the manner in which a writer rejects, develops

and makes fun of a person or situation under question. These writes and critics not only may do it with African American language, but also with different types of characters and themes.

Gates states that there exist 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. In deed 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, 1995). So in literary and nonliterary picturing of African American matriarchs, these figures are developed a rather familiar appearance. In *The Drinking Gourd* Lorraine Hansberry has created Rissa, the matriarch figure, in a way that somehow deviates from the normal representation of matriarch figure. Or in other words Hansberry signifies on stereotypical matriarch figure. Hiram visits Hannibal and Rissa after the overseer makes him blind. She is very sad and Hiram tells her that he is totally blameless and is not responsible for Hannibal's blindness. Rissa answers bitterly that how can it be possible to be the master of some people but not the rest. Hiram becomes angry and tells her that she is going too far. Rissa reflects to him and tells what he would had done to her. She asks teasingly whether his overseer would gouge out her eyes too. Rissa Said, "Oh-? What will you have done to me? Will your overseer gouge out my eyes too? I don't 'spect blindness would matter to me. I done seen all there was worth seein' in this world- and it didn't 'mount to much. I think this talkin' disturb my boy" (HANSBERRY, 1994, p. 42). As it is seen Rissa does not act like a dumb victim. She protests to cruelty and injustice. She puts her master's authority and strength under question and even mocks him. Even she ignores her master when he feels heart attack and needs her help. At it is observed her master dies because of her negligence. In another situation she helps Hannibal, her fiancé and her granddaughter to escape by stealing the master's gun.

As it was mentioned before allusions or influences can be regarded as epitomes of "Signifyin (g)". In this technique, which is called intertextuality, consciously or unconsciously there is a relation between texts. In intertextuality African American writers make reference to a text or are inspired by it and simultaneously have their own creativity. Lorraine Hansberry utilized this technique by selecting the title *The Drinking Gourd* for the play and by citing this poem in her play.

Conclusion

In this paper Lorraine Hansberry's drama, *The Drinking Gourd*, 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 investigates 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: Signifyin (g) "can mean any number of things". It is a black term and a black rhetorical device. It can mean the "ability to talk with great innuendo." It can mean "to carp, cajole, needle, and lie." It can mean "the propensity to talk around a subject, never quite coming to the point." It can mean "making fun of a person or situation". It can "also denote speaking with the hands and eyes." It is "the language of trickery that set of words achieving Hamlet's 'direction through indirection'". 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 *The Drinking Gourd*, 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 was introduced as an example 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. In so many instances discussed above, the soldier narrator's narration, Zeb talking, Rissa's sentences and Hannibal speech were considered and discussed as examples of signification. 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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- **RESUMO:** Henry Louis Gates, o mais proeminente crítico contemporâneo de estudos afro-americanos, tomou de Saussure o termo "significando" e o redefiniu. Ele descreve "signifyin (g)", na tradição do vernáculo afro-americano, como um jogo de palavras linguístico cujo significado só se revela posteriormente. Ele acredita na "voz dupla",

que significa falar tanto a linguagem da cultura dominante quanto a linguagem dos subordinados, afirmando em seguida que “a voz dupla” é o melhor epítome de “signifyin (g)”. Pretende-se aplicar as noções de “double-voicedness” (“voz dupla”) e “signifyin (g)” na análise do manuscrito *The Drinking Gourd*, escrito pela dramaturga afro-americana Lorraine Hansberry. Pretende-se, ainda, contar com essas noções quando será dado destaque à atitude anticolonial e as características pós-colonialistas da peça. A pesquisa, realizada em bibliotecas, é qualitativo-descritiva e não se espera um mero resultado quantitativo. As noções mencionadas foram introduzidas e algumas posições e exemplos de “signifyin (g)” e “dupla voz” foram descobertos na peça. Hipoteticamente, este artigo concluiu que o drama de Hansberry obtém as suas características anticoloniais por meio dessas vozes e culturas afro-americanas.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Henry Louis Gates. Signifyin (g). Lorraine Hansberry. Voz dupla. *The Drinking Gourd*. Pós-colonialismo.

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