Afrocentrism vs. Eurocentrism in Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and Les Blancs

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1. **Introduction** :

Though the writings of the African American writer Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) tend to show her pride in African culture (Afrocentrism), it is important to begin with the definition of Eurocentrism. This is because the former term appears as a reaction to the latter. Eurocentrism is a product that Europe is the leader of the West, prevalent power on the earth and source of world civilization (Areji, 2005: 55). Generally, it puts the European as the top to all other people and the best example of Man. Although the term as a concept was earlier in practice than Afrocentrism, it was coined in 1988 by Samir Amin, an Egyptian economist who studies in France, in the title of his book *Eurocentrism*. According to Amin, Eurocentrism is "the world view" that is represented by the control of Western capitalism and by considering European culture as "the unique and most progressive" in the cycle order of history. He also explains that the term is a specific kind of "Ethnocentrism-" tendency to view one's own ethnic group as superior to others - and by merging 'European Ethnocentrism' into one word. To him, Eurocentrism is not centered on a specific nation or community, but on a wide range of nations.

The word ''Euro'' in ''Eurocentrism'' somehow overlaps with the word ''West'' or with ''First World.'' In his own words, Amin shows: "The West, on which Eurocentrism is centered, is a heavily underdetermined concept… . Since Eurocentrism is not an ethnic or national category, its explanatory significance must lie elsewhere" (Amin, 1989:165-179). In the Modern Age, however, the centre of Western civilization lies in America but with the same ideology since its high class citizens are Europeans. Further, in the system of Eurocentrism, Africa, in particular,

is the Dark Continent without history; and in comparison with the West, it is regarded as inferior and barbaric (Trevor-Roper, 1964:9).

The terms Afrocentrism and Afrocentricity were coined in the 1980s by the African American scholar and activist Molefi Asante (b. 1942) with the publication of his book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Moses, 1988). Instead of treating them as marginal to Europe, Asante emphasizes that Afrocentricity is concerned with centering on Africans and places African history and culture at the heart of any analysis. It also rejects Western ideology that Greeks were at the head of civilization (Schiele, 2000: 3). In the same regard, the critic I. C. Onyewuenyi (1993:21) asserts that "Afrocentrism, which means African centred-ness, does not violently confront any person or people, but is a resolute attempt to put the records right. It is about placing African people within their own historical framework. It is a demand that the contributions of Africans in all areas of civilization be reflected in world history."

One of Afrocentric diaspora-writers is Hansberry who activates on the Africans and African Americans to develop a sense of belonging to one cultural unity. It is indicated that Hansberry succeeds in using "African ancestral spirits to serve a dim light of hope and strength to help the black family survive in America" (quoted in Effiong, 2000: 35). However, the following pages are devoted to shed light on Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Les Blancs*; and therefore, a deep understanding is given about Hansberry's use of these two contracted terms as a theme in her plays.

II. Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is structured in three acts. It is about a working- class poor African American family, the Youngers, who are living in Chicago's Southside at the

time of the mid-twentieth century. The Youngers are in a struggle for escaping their poverty till their dreams are transferred to reality with the arrival of a check of ten thousand dollars as a life insurance benefit paid on the death of the late father. Each member has an idea about what he/ she would like to do with the money of the check. As the play proceeds, they suffer difficult circumstances that affect on achieving their dreams. The mother Lena Younger, called “Mama” by her offspring, Beneatha and Walter, puts a down payment on a house which is located on Clybourne Park, an entirely white neighborhood. As a matter of white racism that demonstrates Eurocentrism, the racist future neighbors hire a man named Karl Lindner as a "Welcoming Committee" to try to buy their new house and to prevent the neighborhood's integration. Walter, a young man, in a sequence, loses the rest of the money that the mother has saved for her offspring, by getting influenced by his friend Willy Harris, who persuades him to invest the sum on a liquor store and then runs off with the cash. This unexpected loss tests the spiritual and psychological strength of each member of the family, especially Beneatha, a young girl of twenty years old, who tries to prove her Afrocentricity by embracing the "back to Africa" philosophy of her Nigerian friend, Joseph Asagai. The Youngers, thus, must decide: Do they stay or go to their new house? Finally, they refuse the deal of the white man and decide to continue with their plans to move.

The character of Beneatha is very significant in the play. In comparison with her, the degrees of others’ Afrocentricity are measured. This ambitious girl is a medical student. Her Afrocentricity appears clearly in a scene in which she introduces her friend Joseph Asagai to her mother, “*a woman in her early sixties … . Her bearing is perhaps most like the noble bearing of the women of the Hereros of Southwest Africa*” (Hansberry, 1997, I, i: 1331-1332)[1]. In

Beneatha's words, Asagai is "an intellectual. … He's an African… . He's been studying in Canada all summer" (I, ii: 1341). When she tells her mother that he is from Nigeria, Mama shows her lack of information about her African roots; especially she gives an illustration that matches with another African country named Liberia, declaring that she has never met an African before. Therefore, the daughter requests her mother not to ask silly "questions about Africans [like] do they wear clothes and all that [for] anyone seems to know about when it comes to Africa is Tarzan" (I, ii: 1341-1342). Here, Beneatha is criticizing the concept of Africa as being only regressive until it is rescued by European colonizers, Eurocentricity (Effiong: 40).

When Asagai comes to see Beneatha, he addresses her by using words from his African tribal language such as "Alaiyo," "a Yoruba [west African] word" that he later expresses as: "One for Whom Bread Food Is Not Enough" (I, ii: 1346). He also brings "some records and the colorful robes of a Nigerian woman" (I, ii: 1344) as a gift to Beneatha. He, in addition, instructs her how to put the robe on as he utters several African words like "Ah-Oh *pay-gay-day, oh-gbah-mu-shaay.* (*A Yoruba exclamation for Admiration*)" (I, ii: 1344). Furthermore, he tells her that "it is true that … as perhaps a queen of the Nile" (I, ii: 1344). With such presentation, Hansberry's Afrocentricity is obvious in introducing the beauty of these African traditions of clothing and music.

In their talk, Asagai and Beneatha argue over a very important issue in relation to African Americans, i.e., "Assimilationism," which is defined by Beneath later in Act II, Scene i as "someone who is willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case oppressive culture" (II, i: 1355). In this regard, Beneatha, so is Hansberry, shows herself against the total integration with the Western culture. Further, Asagai's speech about African history, systems and ongoing

battles against the invaders helps Beneatha to understand more about her African roots.

Once more, Beneatha's Afrocentricity emerges when she appears wearing the Nigerian clothes the gift Asagai has brought to her. She, at this moment, turns off the radio, calling its music "assimilationist junk" and playing Nigerian music instead. She also dances around the apartment, claiming to be performing a tribal dance and singing. She explains this to her sister in law, Ruth, that it is a Yoruba "dance of welcome," performed by women when their "men [return] to the village" (II, i: 1353) from hunt or war or alike. Walter, on this occasion, demonstrates his Afrocentricity too. This is done when he acts out some made-up tribal rituals with her, drumming on the table and saying "I am much warrior" (II, i: 1353). At one point, he stands on a table, declaring himself "Flaming Spear." Brother and sister dance to the rhythm of Yoruba song, briefly welcoming and engaging in a segment of their heritage though it is a small one. The performance follows a repetitive pattern with Walter imagining himself as a "*great chief, a descendant of Chaka*," fighting alongside "*Jomo Kenyatta*" (II, i: 1353). Walter becomes plastered. To appreciate this scene of dance, Steven R. Cater in *Hansberry's Drama: Commitment amid Complexity* (1991: 37) observes that Walter reflects an African person with serious overtones. The critic also adds that the African tribal culture is built around hunters and warriors "whose spirits live on in Walter despite the shackling of his ambition and aggressiveness by American society." Anyway, the two Youngers delve into their souls and succeed in practicing their African heritage.

Afrocentrism is also felt in the scene of the second visit of Asagai. On this occasion, he helps Beneatha to resume her activity in life after her despair concerning the loss of her supposed amount by Walter. When the visitor wants to calm her by telling

her that she must not lose hope in life, she tells him that this is merely an idealistic talk and life is completely different, relating the speech with his words of "Colonialism" and "independence" of Africa (III: 1381). Beneatha, so is Hansberry, also shows that there are radical problems within most independent African nations and predicts the future emergence of "neo-colonial African regimes," in reaction to Asagai's dream of independence (Effiong: 37). Once more, Beneatha relates their discussion with Africa and the Africans and debates over some questions in the world which cannot find answers such as his "dreams about Africa and Independence," asking "Independence and then what?'" Obviously, Beneatha, here, represents Hansberry who reflects the real Africa not an imaginary one. Once more, Asagai tells Beneatha that he can find answers for many questions by putting several plans for the changes he seeks to achieve. He, then, speaks about his dream of coming back to his homeland to help bring positive changes, pointing out that: "In my village at home it is the exceptional man who can even read a newspaper … or who ever sees a book at all. I will go home … . But I will teach and work and things will happen, slowly and swiftly" (III: 1382-1383). Furthermore, he asks her to be his wife and to "come home" with him to Africa (Nigeria). Perhaps, for Beneatha, her ancestry may originate in Africa but she has never been and can never be there. In this context, the critic Susan Abbotson in *Masterpieces of 20th- Century American Drama* (2005: 124- 125) views that: "We never learn if she accepts his [Asagai's] invitation to go to Africa." Abbotson partly agrees that Beneatha is right in her suggestion that the blacks need a better understanding of Africa as an important part of their heritage, but she, as the critic illustrates, must not ignore the fact that they live in America and this is part of their heritage too.

The conflict between Afrocentricity and Eurocentricity is strongly reflected through the argument between Beneatha and George Murchison, her supposed suitor, about the importance of their African heritage. In this respect, he tells her to change her African clothes for they seem unsuitable for where they intend to go. To her insistence on describing George as an "assimilationist Negro" (II, i: 1355), he ironically says:

Oh, dear, dear, dear! Here we go! A lecture on the African past! On our Great West African Heritage! In one second we will hear all about the great Ashanti empires; the great Songhay civilizations; and the great sculpture of Benin and then some poetry in the Bantu and the whole monologue will end with the word heritage! (*Nastily*') Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts! (II, i: 1355).

In response to such harsh overwhelming speech that represents Eurocentricity, Beneatha immediately refutes it and lists some of the glorious things of Africa, demonstrating her Afrocentricity and saying:

GRASS HUTS! … See there … you are standing there in your splendid ignorance talking about people who were the first to smelt iron on the face of the earth! … The Ashanti were performing surgical operations when the English … were still tatooing themselves with blue dragons! (II,i: 1355).

Again, the dramatist uses the character of Beneatha as her mouthpiece. Hansberry intends to demonstrate from such scenes about Africa, as Steven R. Cater (pp. 36-37) observes "that the African heritage of black Americans is a glorious one." The critic also adds that the dramatist feels that the Americans need to be educated about the achievements and values of the Africans.

The dominance of Eurocentrism over Afrocentrism is cleary illustrated by Hansberry in Act III, Scene iii. On this occasion, a man named Karl Lindner comes to the Youngers' apartment to make them change their intention of shift to the white neighborhood for the problem of race and racism. But the Youngers refuse the offer and usher Lindner out. In reaction, the man leaves his card behind, saying:

I don't understand why you people are reacting this way. What do you think you are going to gain by moving into a neighborhood where you just aren't wanted and where some elements well people can get awful worked up when they feel that their whole way of life and everything they've ever worked for is threatened? … (*Almost sadly regarding WALTER*) You just can't force people to change their hearts, son (II, iii: 1373).

After the loss of the amount by Walter, he becomes in inner conflict. He ironically tells his family how proud they were to refuse the offer of Mr. Lindner and how they were sticking to old values. In a strong reaction, Mama argues with him that they are from race that has too much pride to accept such offer:

Son–I come from five generations of people who was slaves and sharecroppers–but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. … We ain't never been that dead inside (III: 1387).

Suddenly, Walter's pride, work and humanity become more important to him than his dream of money. This matter let him express his "Pride" of his family and demonstrate that he comes from a long line of hard-working honest people. He also says that his family members are going to proceed with their plan to move into their new house. Anyway, Walter says this directly to Lindner who comes to

offer the money to buy the Younger's new house:

Well-- we are very plain people. … we come from people who had a lot of pride. ... we are very proud people. And that's my sister … she's going to be a doctor and we are very proud. … And we have decided to move into our house … . We don't want to make no trouble for nobody or fight no causes, and we will try to be good neighbors. That's all we got to say. … We don't want your money (III: 1389-1390).

Ultimately, Mr. Lindner leaves with his papers unsigned. The Youngers move to their new house, convinced that they can succeed if they stick together as a family and resolve to defer their dreams no longer. This is the victory of Afrocentricity over Eurocentricity.

III. Hansberry's *Les Blancs*

Les Blancs (The Whites) (1970) is a posthumous play written and shaped by Hansberry during the last years of her lifetime but the final prints and editing are given by her ex-husband and literary executor Robert Nemiroff **(**Zingale, 1973: 94- 95). Semantically, the word "les blanc" or "leblanc" is a French one that means 'the white' ("Leblanc," 2012).

Hansberry's *Les Blancs* is regarded as the story of "Africa's fight for independence and identity" (Abell, 2001). The dramatist wants to demonstrate the real purpose of the presence of the settlers on African lands and the legitimacy of the struggle of the natives to obtain their freedom. The play takes place in a village located in a fictional white-ruled African Nation called Zatembe. It tells the story of a son of the chieftain of an African tribe called Tshembe Matoseh, who leaves his European wife and newborn child at home in England to see his dying father. Upon his return to Africa, he finds his people, who belong to Kwi tribe, involve in the ongoing rebellion against the European colonials. However, most of the events of the play take place in two locations: The

first is the Mission compound of colonialists that contains a small semi-hospital established years before by the European Reverend Trovald Neilsen, who along with his blind wife have spent forty years in Zatembe. The second is the hut of Tshembe's father where his brother Eric, an illegitimate boy the result of the rape of Tshembe's mother by the European Officer Major Rice, and the mother died during childbirth, lives. As Tshembe wishes to rise above the struggle of the natives against the European settlers, he finds his two brothers, the eldest Abioseh and Eric, each responding to the conflict of colonialism in different ways. In the end, Tshembe, in an effort to protect the African resistance, is tragically forced to kill his brother Abioseh for betraying his people. He also finds that it is difficult to remain a mere observer in the midst of the unrest within his country. Hence, he moves towards taking an action and being a warrior to fight the colonizers for Africa's freedom and independence.

In the "Prologue" of *Les Blancs*, Hansbery clearly demonstrates her Afrocentricity. In this domain, she prepares the stage before the rise of the curtain to stress the importance of nature in African traditions:

Five minutes before curtain time the sounds of the African bush are heard stereophonically around the audience from the rides and rear. They begin quite softly: sounds of crickets, frogs and "bush-babies," the occasional cry of a bird and a "laughter" of a hyena (Hansberry, 1994, I, Prologue: 41)[2].

To show that the African land is under the control of a European Mission, Hansberry indicates that "*the outlines of the Mission can be seen in silhouette"* (I, Prologue: 41). Then, she moves to introduce the African tradition of drum and its uses according to the different situations. In a development, such a distinctive element that reasserted the African culture is followed by an appearance

of an African woman dancer, "*majestic and motionless*," who is described as:

Black-skinned and imposing, cheeks painted for war, about her waist a girdle of hammered silver, she does not wear a "sarong." From her 'Wrists and ankles hang bangles of feathers and silver which provide their own staccato accompaniment as she begins to dance (I, Prologue: 41).

The appearance of this woman is followed by an "*unearthly 'laughter' of a hyena*" (I, prologue: 41). The hyena, here, is a symbol for the raped Africa, as this will be illustrated in the ongoing events of the play. When the dancer hears the hyena's voice, she walks toward "*a spear*" that is "*planted in the earth*," pulls it out and "*raises it high*" (I, prologue: 41). She, in the expression of Barrios (1996: 30), is "a woman warrior who first appears on an open stage, clutching a spear from the earth and holding it high. This woman warrior symbolizes the African continent."

Eurocentricity is intensified in the description of the European Mission. The first scene opens with Dr. Marta Gotterling, a white European woman in her thirties who serves as a doctor in this Mission. She has given up her homeland for some personal reasons, finding solace and satisfaction in offering treatment to the African natives. The other character we come across in the play is Charlie Morris, a white American journalist in the late forties, who has come to Africa to gather materials for a book about the small hospital of the Mission that has been run by the white minister Reverend Trovald Neilsen and his wife for forty years. In fact, Reverend Nielsen, went "across [the] river" to achieve many things among them "a wedding, a funeral, twelve baptisms," etc. (I, i: 44). We are also introduced to Willy Dekoven, another missionary doctor who has given up his home in Europe to work as a doctor in this Mission.

The arrival of Tshembe Matosah, who has been living in

Europe, to his African homeland, Zatembe, to see his dying father reflects a strong struggle between Eurocentricity and Afrocentricity. Tshembe's first appearance is marked by his clear influence with European life. Hansberry provides vivid description of him in her stage direction: "*Over the rise comes TSHEMBE MATOSEH, a handsome young African in worn and rumpled city clothes, his tie loosened, jacket slung over his shoulder, a travelling bag in one hand*" (I, ii: 53).

However, throughout the play several conversations among different characters gradually take place and obviously demonstrate the conflict between Eurocentricity and Afrocentricity. At the outset, the conversation between Tshembe and Eric short awhile after the former's arrival can be seen as political. It starts with Eric's initiation to Amos Kumalo's "coming home. To Zatembe" (I, ii: 56). Kumalo is an African negotiator for solving the problem of Africa's independence with the colonizers in Zatembe. He is now in Europe and is expected to come to negotiate with the European settlers about Zatembean freedom and independence. Tshembe, in a reply to Eric, points out that the negotiator will return home just for "talk," nothing will be new like all other responsible Africans in the Western World.

The struggle between Eurocentricity and Afrocentricity is also reflected in Tshembe's speech to Abioseh who has joined "St. Cyprian's" to be a priest and totally indulges into European precepts. Abioseh, in reaction, concentrates on Tshembe's word "resistance," and instead he says: " 'Resistance.' Tshembe? You mean the terror… . You are not involved in this trouble- are you?" "All Africa is involved in this trouble," Tshembe answers (I, ii: 59). Their different attitudes towards their hometown and tribe are also best expressed in their different moods: Abioseh speaks about feelings toward and "feelers" of Africa's colonial problem and Tshembe talks about

"resistance" and action. Tshembe indicates that: "We are our father's sons. Our people expect it" (I, ii: 61). Abioseh refuses to participate in his father's funeral rites because this deed contradicts his Catholic doctrines. Such change of the name and rejection of African tradition make Tshembe address Abioseh, saying:

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! (I, ii: 61).

However, Abioseh reflects himself totally leaning toward Western archetypes.

The next talk is between Tshembe and the Reverend's wife Madame Neilsen, a blind old woman and the exceptional one of all the settlers in Zatembe because she supports the uprising. This is done when the former comes to the Mission to tell the latter about his father's death, the chieftain Old Aboiseh. Significantly, the talk reflects that the life of the city has influenced Tshembe and adapted his new look according to "the way of city men" (I, iii: 67). He has also got some "decent education" and becomes a "well spoken" man (I, iii: 67).

Euorocentrism can be clearly seen through the behavior of Major Rice, a colonial officer in his fifties who symbolizes Western military encroachment in Africa. In this respect, Rice refers to Zatembe as "*our* New World" and "No place on earth like it" (I, i: 48). This reveals him as a typical colonial white man. When Major Rice, to show the contrast with Madame Neilsen, comes to "require cooperation" between the missionaries of the hospital and the soldiers, he views Tshembe and addresses him as " kaffir." "We do not have 'kaffirs' here… . We have friends who are Africans" (I, iii: 68), Madame Neilsen replies. It is obvious that the Major intensely detests the Africans,

ad addressing them as “terrorists,” "savages," "Kaffirs," “cannibals,” “uncivilized,” and "darkies." He, short a while, goes ahead speaking about his first foot on Africa. He, in this situation, makes Zatembe his home at the expense of local lives and traditions:

…This is my country… . I came here when I was a boy. I worked hard. I married here… . This is our *home*… . Men like myself had the ambition, the energy and the ability to come here and make this country into something . . . (I, iii: 70-71).

However, he continues in his racial imperialistic speech, turning from time to time to see Tshembe’s expression, declaring that Africa is the colonialists’ land and the Africans have no right in it because they, in his own expressions, do not deserve it for their savagery.

To recreate an African-colonial talk in *Les Blancs* that expresses the opinions of both sides, Hansberry puts a dialogue between Tshembe and Charlie. Despite Charlie's desire to build a bridge with Tshembe, their relationship still doesn't extend beyond the superficial level. In fact, the journalist wants to talk meanwhile they drink and smoke cigarettes. He also starts the conversation with shaking hands. These matters arouse Tshembe to demonstrate his Afrocentricity, addressing the American that: “For a handshake, a grin, a cigarette.... you want three hundred years to disappear-and in five minutes! Do you really think the rape of a continent dissolves in cigarette smoke? … This is Africa. Mr. Morris, and I am an African” (I, iii: 74). Tshembe bitterly utters to Charlie the pain and anger persisting on the Africans by the colonialists. For example, he compares between the “scars” occurred on Zatembe’s hills as the result of the invaders’ search for gold and other valuable metals with those on Charlie’s homeland’s hills which are natural. In reaction, Charlie argues with an important matter concerning the sacrifice of the white

Missionaries in Africa who have civilized the Africans and taught them how to read and write. He also asks Tshembe not to mention such expressions like “imperialism,” inviting him to forget “even for five minutes” this African issue and to “throw away yesterday's catchwords?!” (I,iii: 78). Once more, this speech takes no way to the ears of Tshembe, who says: "Sacrifice!" There, you see it is impossible! You come thousands of miles to inform us about "yesterday's catchwords"? Well, it is still yesterday in Africa, Mr. Morris, and it will take a million tomorrows to rectify what has been done here— (I, iii: 78). He also adds that though the service of any sort even tiny that has been offered by the missionaries in the hospital of Zatembe cannot be ignored, their contribution is regarded as nothing in front of the rape and exploitation of Africa by the white invaders. When Charlie sees such thought, however, he intently tells the other “*You hate all white men*, don't you, Matoseh?” (I, iii: 78). In return, Tshembe presents one of the most racial arguments in the play:

Oh, dear God, why?... . Why do you all need it so? This absolute lo-o-onging for my hatred!... . I shall be honest with you, Mr. Morris. I do not "hate" all white men-but I desperately wish that I did (I, iii: 78).

In this regard, Philip Effiong (p.48) argues that despite the protagonist’s linkage to Europe, he does not reject his racial and cultural African identity. At the end of their talk his struggle increases with the appearance of the African armed woman like apparition, accompanied with the sounds of drums. Meanwhile the woman mimes the years of slavery and slaughter by her hands, he directly addresses her but without looking at her to escape and forsake the struggle. She, finally, throws him the spear which he instinctively takes:

NO! I WILL NOT GO! It is not my affair anymore!... . I have a wife and son now!... . (*She signifies the slaughter, the enslavement*) I know all

that! But it is not my affair anymore! (*He sinks to his knees*) I don't care what happens here-anywhere!... I am not' responsible! (*She rises: a warrior summoning him urgently, insistently, unrelenting*) It is not my affair! (… *she sweeps up the spear and halts, bolding it vertical before her*. *TSHEMBE turns to face her, She holds it rigid/or an instant, then tosses it, still vertical, to him, and he catches it instinctively. Screaming as he clutches it*) I HAVE RENOUNCED ALL SPEARS!! (I, iii: 81).

The second encounter between Tshembe and Charlie takes place at Matoseh's hut to discuss the issue of Kumalo's negotiation. He frankly tells him that it is impossible for the whites to talk and negotiate while there is killing by the "terrorists" because the life of one white equals more than hundreds of blacks. Tshembe points out that the moment of Kumalo's effect on the revolutionaries is vanished for they have not got anything from his talk that Europeans only "listen" when they are "forced to" through violence. He, in addition, tells him: "your concern for nonviolence is a little late" (II, ii: 91). In a development, the African declares that he represents for him "not an individual but a tide, a flood, a monolith: 'The Bla-a-acks !' " (II,ii: 91). In a challenge, the American declares himself "the Whites." However, their argument reaches its highest point as Tshembe frankly advocates the deep purpose of the settlement of the colonialists in Africa. In this point, he interrogates the purpose of white settlers who cut thousands of distances to open such dirty small hospital that must be closed if it has been placed in America, spending much money in all worldly changes on all hospitals of such kind. Again, the American is not convinced of the African speech, arguing that such hospital "is better than nothing" and before that time there was "Nothing" (II, ii: 93). But Tshembe contradicts him on such matter and indicates that such encounter must be stopped.

Hansberry reflects another conflict between the two opposed

ideologies in the conversation between Tshembe and Peter, an African porter. In this regard, Peter and Ngago, an African revolutionary and poet, come to Tshembe's hut to ask him to be with other natives to discuss the critical events occurred on them by the invaders as well as to decide and determine the armed struggle as the main means of resistance. In order to arouse Tshembe and stimulate his innermost volcanic hatred towards colonial invaders, Peter narrates a tale of oral African folk art about a wise hyena called Modingo that must give right judgment to settle the quarrel between a group of hyenas, which stands for Africa, and a cattle of huge elephants, which represents the settlers. This "fable," as Philip Effiong (p. 49) illuminates, is from "Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1953) and retold by Hansberry in *Les Blancs* upon the tongue of Peter "to buttress an ideological message to Tshembe." Clearly, Modingo is referred to Tshembe. The elephants exemplify white invaders. The hyenas qualify as virtuous black victims who must take arms against the invaders; their continued laughter is a response to the "bitter joke" (II, ii: 95) played on them by the elephants. Anyway, Peter ends his speech, saying: "Tshembe Matoseh, we have waited a thousand seasons for these "guests" to leave us. Your people need you" (II, ii: 95). In reaction, Tshembe say: "the Europeans have a similar tale which concerns a prince" (II, ii: 95). But such attitude lets Peter face Tshembe that he is "full of what the Europeans have," explaining it "is a good thing to discover the elephant has a point of view, but it is a crime to forget that the hyena most has justice on his side!," and insisting on that: "Your people need you" (II, ii: 95-96). The other, in his struggle and as a Modingo-like, replies that: "If they need a Modingo to study the tides while the sea engulfs them-I am their man! But a leader I am not" (II, ii: 96). To arouse him more to think seriously of taking action, Peter tells him that his father was one of the revolutionaries

and a "commander in the Freedom of the Land Army" (II, ii: 96). But Teshembe's struggle makes him declare: "I am not interested in killing, Anyone. Especially harm less old missionaries and their wives… . They sing hymns and run a hospital!" (II, ii: 96). In response, Peter says: "Nor I. But they are a part of it" (II, ii: 96)- means even the good whites must bear the sin of their race like Madame Neilsen who will be killed by the fire of the revolutionaries later. Tshembe argues Peter with Kumalo's supposed role in negotiations and persistently requests to give "Kumalo his chance" (II, ii: 97), a matter that makes Peter bitterly argue that the "chance" of Kumalo has been gone. Tshembe tells him that he will go to see Kumalo before the negotiation takes place and to ask him to tell the settlers that they only have "one season to grant… [their] demands" (II, ii: 97). Obviously, Tshembe places his hopes for peace on his former mentor, Kumalo.

The arrest of Kumalo by the colonial authority of Zatembe at the airport on the charge of "conspiracy" change the events of the play. When Tshembe knows that Kumalo has been arrested, he never says anything but the shock is too strong on him because he feels that all the Africans have been deceived and mocked. On this occasion, the warrior woman appears accompanied with the rise of drumming: "*the laughter dies in his threat as the WOMAN appears. He straightens slowly to face her*" (II, iii: 106).

The play also introduces another conversation among the three brothers over the decision of tacking action against the settlers. However, each one of the three brothers responds to the new patriotic situation and shows his struggle. Eric, to begin, is totally, soul and body, with the revolutionaries and against the settlers in spite of his being a half African. He strongly declares his refusal to his two brothers' offer of taking him out of Africa and deciding his future, saying: " I am staying here-where I belong!... They call me by the name my mother

gave me-… Ngedi. Thev have asked me to take the oath " (II, iv: 109). On the other hand, Abioseh is totally different from Eric in the point of his strong loyalty to the European side in spite of his pure African ancestry. He is against the native's resistance to get their independence, presenting his objection of Eric's enthusiasm. Throughout a slip of tongue, Eric mentions Peter as one of those who asks him to oath. Wickedly, the African priest questions Peter's such attitude, saying that he "must be stopped" (II, iv: 109), and Major Rice must know his role in "terror." In addition, he states that the settles are creatures like the natives and they are practical men who devoted their time for offering the best for the African. Furthermore, he hopes that he will be in a high ruling position. In astonishment, Tshembe evaluates him as "all together committed to" the white settlers, but Abioseh contradicts him, pointing that he is "committed… [to] civilization-and to Africa!" (II, iv: 110). As Tshembe reproaches his brother for such beliefs and principles, Abioseh says: "Yes, Tshembe-but it is not I… . It is you who have sold yourself to Europe! It is I who chose Africa! (II,iv: 110). From Abioseh's speech, Tshembe's is revealed as much a European slave as Abioseh for he is emotionally tied to Europe, hesitant to fight for independence at home, and chooses to be a mere observer of the "mounting tensions"(ibid., p. 50).

As Tshembe comes to the Mission to warn Peter from Abioseh's treachrous decision, another conversation between Charlie and Dr. Dekoven takes place in the presence of Tshembe. Here, the journalist receives a reproach by Dekoven about his being sure that the Reverend, who is not available in the Mission for some works out of the village, will come and cut large distances through the jungle to save Kumalo. As the doctor continues his talk, he mentions the real faces of the invaders in which he divides them into two parts: The first is that the chief aim of their invasion of Africa is to train and prepare blacks for

jobs that serve European interests. He, in this part, also shows that there is no development at all on the Africans' status but to kick them back in order to be away of realizing any progress because if any native understands the reality of a thing, he will be an endless danger on the whites. The second face or reason of colonialists is their deception not to the natives only but also to the white Missionaries who, before their coming here, think they will come to change the land to the one of dreams but soon they discover the harsh reality. When Tshembe hears this revelation, he looks to the journalist who seems "disturbed" at this moment. In reaction, the latter asks the African about the number of the natives "in this village can even read," "Read what? Drums? Everyone. Books? Six, eight, a dozen at most," Tshembe ironically answers (II, v: 114). Furthermore, Dekoven ironically explains the achievements of this Mission, which has been found along four decades to educate and civilize the natives but hardly one can see even one African a doctor in it. He also refers to the natives' attempts of delegations with the Reverend to get their rights but without any results. The doctor, then, shifts in his talk to Old Abioseh as the only man who defied the Reverend and did not do anything the natives did like smiling or moving, but he held the paper that included their pains and expressed one thing: death for freedom. When Tshembe has heard Dekoven's speech, he rises upstage and announces that Old Abioseh is his father. In reaction, the doctor feels that Tshembe will be like his father, turning to him, saying: "They will murder us here one day - isn't that so, Tshembe?... . All of us…. . They are quite prepared to die to be allowed to bring it to Africa. It is we who are not prepared: To allow it or to die" (II, v: 116).

In developments, the confrontation between Tshembe and Peter from one side and Rice and Abioseh on the other one takes place. Rice comes bringing the news of the murder of the Reverend by resistance

fighters. The Reverend stands for a colonial leader whose goal in Africa is superficially for help but in essence it is deeply imperialistic. However, the Major is told by the real identity of Peter by the treacherous Abioseh. Then, he kills him. The stage direction in the end of this scene reads:

PETER drops the tray and runs and, in split-second succession, the SOLDIERS and RICE open fire. He falls, jerks-and lies dead at TSHEMBE'S feet, The SOLDIERS Turn their guns on TSHEMBE. "ABIOSHA starts to pray. RICE crosses to the body and puts his gun away… . TSHEMBE sinks to his knees beside PETER (II, v: 117- 118).

In the final and the main important conversation between Tshembe and Charlie, Charlie accuses Tshembe that he is a hypocrite and mere talkative who argues the others to participate in resistance and action but he remains only an observer who wants to see the events from far distances on TV: “you hypocrite! What makes you so holy? …Where are you running, man? Back to Europe? To watch the action on your telly?... . Tshernbe, we do what we can. We're on the same side” (II,vii: 123). Finally, “*CHARLIE holds out his hand. TSH£MBE studies him and, at last, takes it. Then: as the chopper circles back again, the African lifts their clasped hands towards the sky*” (II, vii: 123). Tshembe, however, is convinced that Charlie is not only sincere but truly in accord with the natives' struggle against the invaders, asking: "what does it prove, Morris? What will it solve?" (II, vii: 123). Clearly, he knows that there are forces at work stronger than their ability to bring about change. But their attitudes should be different in degree.

After such final encounter between the two men, Tshembe discusses the consequences of his choice and struggle with Madame Neilsen, who encourages him to take an action against the invaders.

Therefore, each of most characters in the play arouses a

struggle in Tshembe concerning his choice of taking take action and being a resistant not a mere observer. However, it is the moment of the ceremony of the late Reverend funeral in which Abioseh calls his sermon as a Christian priest. At this moment, Tshembe "*enters unseen, wearing the robe his father had last worn to the Mission, and walks slowly to MADAME*" (II, ix: 127). When Abioseh continues in his sermon, he senses his brother's presence; then the two confronted. Such struggle is accompanied with the entrance of some native warriors with their weapons; among them is Eric. The stage direction of this scene draws:

As ABIOSEH turns back to him, TSHEMBE takes out the pistol he has been concealing in his robe and considers it, not so much seeking courage as thoughtfully, then levels it. For a moment the two brothers stand facing each other, aware of all the universal implications of the act; the one pulls the trigger, the other falls, and with a last effort at control TSHEMBE crosses to the body, kneels and gently closes ABIOSEH'S eyes (II, ix: 28).

Tragically, Tshembe is forced to kill Abioseh in an effort to protect the resistance of his people for independence. However, the shot he fires attracts the attention of outside government forces that begin to shoot. At the same time and as if "it is a part of it" (II, ii: 96), Madame Neilsen falls dead by the fire of the shoots on the stage, "*the WOMAN appears*" (II,ix: 128). As Tshembe holds the dead Madame Neilsen, we understands that he decides his choice in which he becomes a warrior fighting for his Afrocentricity as well as for the freedom and independence of his homeland that have been raped for centuries by the colonial settlers in Africa.

V. Conclusion

The research shows that each one of the two opposed ideologies, Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism, glorifies the culture,

civilization and community that belong to it. On one hand, Eurocenticism concentrates on the ideology of Focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world by regarding European culture and man as the origin and superior. On the other hand, Afrocentrism is the ideology of emphasizing or promoting emphasis on African culture and the contributions of Africans to the development of Western civilization.

The study also reflects that Hansberry bears the African heritage and culture in her blood. Therefore, she reveals Afrocentrism in her writings. Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Les Blancs* prove that African culture is rich in art, music, science and literature. The treatment of Hansberry of the two ideologies in her selected plays shows the victory of Afrocentrism over Eurocenticism for the writer has an African origin.

The analysis of the two chosen plays reveals that Hansberry's treatment of the racial issues comes out of her own self. Hansberry presents a challenge to the whites in her handling of the blacks' struggle to prove their identities; yet she seems a pacifist in her messages in *A Raisin* but a militant and violent in *Les Blancs*, proving that talk and discussions to get rights are not enough without power and prestige. In the two plays presented, the dramatist portrays the whites as diplomatic and wicked as well as they have two faces: the first is an external one that is demonstrated as good and helpful for the blacks, whereas the second is an internal or a hidden one that is realized as wicked and purposeful. This can be expressed in the character of Mr. Lindner and the association behind him in *A Raisin* and the character of Reverend Neilsen and those missionaries like him in *Les Blancs*.

Notes

[1] All quotations concerning the text of the play are taken from:

Lorraine Hansberry, (1997), "A Raisin in the Sun," in *Literature: Drama, The Elements of Drama*, edited by Laurence Perrine (New York: Southern Methodist University), pp.1321-1392.

[2] All quotations of *Les Blancs* are taken from:

Lorraine Hansberry, (1994), "Les Blancs," in *The Collected Last Plays: Les Blancs, The Drinking Gourd and What Use are Flowers?*, edited by Robert Nemiroff (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc.), pp. 40-128.

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