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Reconstructing the image of transformative resistance against white hegemony in Richard Wright's selected works

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the reconstructing the image of transformative resistance against white hegemony Richard Wright's *The Outsider*, *Uncle Tom's Children* and *The Long Dream*. It examines Richard's deviation from the traditional depiction of the blacks' resistance into a more subversive literary register reviling the oppressive white hegemony in the course of the selected novels. It is revealed that the analysis of colonial oppressive domination will be elaborated by applying Guy Poitras' concept of hegemony; and its contradictory opposition will be interpreted through Ben Baer's concept of deracinate resistance.

Keywords: Deracinate, Hegemony, Post-colonialism, Resistance, Wright.

Reconstruyendo la imagen de la resistencia transformadora contra la hegemonía blanca en las obras seleccionadas de Richard Wright

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar la reconstrucción de la imagen de la resistencia transformadora contra la hegemonía blanca *The Outsider*, *Uncle Tom's Children* y *The Long Dream*. Examina la desviación de Richard de la representación tradicional de la resistencia de los negros en un registro literario más subversivo que critica la opresiva hegemonía blanca en el curso de las novelas seleccionadas. Se revela que el análisis de la dominación opresiva colonial se elaborará aplicando el concepto de hegemonía de Guy Poitras; y su

oposición contradictoria se interpretará a través del concepto de resistencia desmoralizada de Ben Baer.

Palabras clave: Desracinar, Hegemonía, Poscolonialismo, Resistencia, Wright.

This significance of this study lies in that it considers the ways Richard Wright manipulates the traditional image of the blacks' resistance; and how he reconstructs it via an aesthetic depiction of white hegemony. The study, accordingly, will provide a contextual and textual analysis of the characters to explore the blacks' transformative resistance as an antithesis of white oppressive hegemony in Richard Wright's *The Outsider*, *Uncle Tom's Children* and *The Long Dream*. Hence, the study will apply concept of hegemony and deracinate to identify the postcolonial interplay between the marginalized black minority and their oppressors.

Being so, the analysis unravels the appropriation of deracinate as a contrary animosity against persecutory white hegemony. As such, the concept of deracinate is going to be applied as the nexus of transformative resistance which embodies Wrights' subversive indictment of white belligerent hegemony. In this manner, the selected novels offer a genuine approach to the conventional sense of resistance and its palpable transformation to obliterate the white onerous authority.

Post-colonialism, as a critical discipline, presents the concept of hegemony in relation to the colonizing power. This power exerts

devastating destruction against the colonized people. In the broadest sense, the concept of hegemony is the core conceptual manifestation of colonial authority that imposes its culture, rule and military restriction upon the colonized people. Thus, its critical reception inherently perpetuates hegemonic colonial stereotypes, such as deprivation, exclusion, exploitation and so forth. By the same token, the white hegemony might devastate the lives of the oppressed minority through emphatic ethnic judgment that puts white supremacy in the highest rung of social hierarchy (KVET & MATIASKO, 2018).

Furthermore, the critical ramifications of hegemony comprises the degrading the blacks potential capacity to confront their oppressors. That is, the long persecuted black people are not permitted to develop self-affirmation protection of their existence against the white hegemony i.e., they are devoid of any responsive reaction towards oppression. They still remain in passive since they are overwhelmed by colonial residuals governing their entire status quo.

As a matter of fact, the oppressed black people attempt to be free of colonial hegemony by dint of military confrontation which, in the long run, is suppressed. In essence, this is the traditional ambience of the blacks' resistance per se. However, traditional ways of resistance becomes futile; and it does not fulfill the blacks' aspiration of gaining independence and burgeoning life. In a striking way, they expunge white hegemony by reconstructing the inherited image of their resistance.

In *The Ordeal of Hegemony*, GUY POITRAS (2019) argues that through the concept of hegemony, “the regional reality was, for the most part, a postcolonial hegemony” (p.10) which is imposed and “held an overwhelming advantage in economic, military, and political power” over the oppressed black people (p.15).

In Wright’s *The Outsider*, the protagonist, Cross Damon exemplifies Wright’s portrayal of white hegemony in severe rough and raw terms. The titular insights render the novels an allegorical representation of the protagonist’s suffering from racial segregation which makes him alienated from the dominant, or hegemonic American white society. This personal alienation is the analogy of the word “outsider”; and it meticulously reveals Cross Damon’s reality of being a stranger in his society. He lives a world that is devoid of respecting the marginalized Negros, like Cross Damon.

His experience epitomizes Wright’s perception of the white racial hegemony; and, in so doing, he delineates the whites as being responsible for producing suppressive. Just so, he offers a conspicuous conviction of such hegemony in scathing literary expressions. Consequently, hegemonic marginalization makes Cross Damon lead a nihilistic life. He drinks heavily. Later, he commits four bloody murders. Therefore, he is often at loggerheads with white people who use power to subjugate him and make him a man of inferior social value. He always screams out “that’s enough;” that implicitly refers to Wright’s discontent with the white hegemony.

Cross Damon's bitter alienation experience emerges in his encounter with three white men. When he runs up huge debts to these men, they deride him because he is black. Moreover, he feels teased; and correspondingly, he screams "that's enough" in order to make them respect him as a human being. To his disappointment, they continue insulting him; and they do not care for his imploring requests. As a result, he – for the first time – feels that he differs from the white people's class.

The three men looked silently at Cross. He knew that they liked him, but he felt that they were outside of his life, that there was nothing that they could do that would make any difference. Now more than ever he knew that he was alone and that his problem was one of a relationship of himself to himself. (p.14)

Cross Damn's feeling of alienation is created by the white oppressive hegemony. However, he develops vindictive reactions towards this hegemony. He wants to avenge himself on the white men's derision and their taunting remarks about his personality as a Negro man who is inferior to his white counterparts. His response evokes a sense of resistance. He needs to get rid of his inferiority by opposing the white hegemony. The critical presumption of resistance is the concept of deracinate.

In general, the concept of deracinate meticulously means the "root" of a specific ethnic group. Such root attempts to exterminate

any form of hegemonic existence over the indigenous people's homelands. Yet, the redolent nuances of the concept of deracinate develops to encompass the crux of authentic resistance. The colonized blacks suffer from the oppressive burden of the colonizers. For this reason, they react against hegemony and its pertinent colonial implications.

The evocative colonial connotation of the concept of deracinate posits tenacious innuendoes about the possibility of rejecting the white hegemony. In this sense, the concept of deracinate has a concomitant affinity with the legitimate notion of resistance. Moreover, it suggests contiguous relative visualization of establishing self-autonomy away from any aspect of colonial hegemony. Here, the colonized people, especially the blacks, begin to formulate their own identity by liberating it from hegemonic confines; and, accordingly, they could bolster their capacity to ignore the colonial hegemony and make their decisions.

As a result, they could resist the white hegemony vis-à-vis constructing their ethnic genuinely, regardless that hegemony. Consequently, deracinate is a resisting attitude that condemns the atrocities and excessive practices of the hegemonic colonizers against the black people.

The lurking impetus of the concept of deracinate is the contradiction with the white hegemony in all its aspects. It refutes any

kind of domination on the colonized people's national peripheries. It does not accept the dissemination of the white hegemony's economic, cultural, social and ideological traits on the blacks' native milieus. In essence, there is a common consensus on the forced presence of the white hegemony on the colonized people's lands. Notwithstanding, such presence is severely opposed by the blacks who refuse to cope with hegemonic agendas.

At this point, deracinate is the culmination pinnacle of the blacks' aversion to allowing any form of suppressive white hegemony to be on their circumferences. Their strong will and fortitude enable them to adamantly assail with the white hegemony. They predominantly show vehement repudiation of hegemony's despotic strata. BEN BAER (2019), in *Indigenous Vanguard: Education, National Liberation, and the Limits of Modernism*, claims that the concept of resistance entails several colonial factors; whereby

The political causes of resistance are more important and more proximate, and stem from a double imperative: a *political* and historically determined self-interest, and a *social* demand of responsible (quasi-)citizenship (Italics added) (p.107).

In addition, the blacks initiate deracinate response to the white hegemony in order to make their hegemony "be deracinated" (p.107).

Wright's *The Outsider* tackles this deracinate resistance by means of Cross Damon's insistence on committing murders. He

pursues his identity through uprooting the source of evil caused by the white hegemony. In one of the central incidents, for example, he kills a communist person. In doing so, he feels relieved because he thinks that he could regain a certain degree of dignity that was persecuted by the white social hegemony. Accordingly, his crimes embody his strong stamina to resist this hegemony and deracinate its roots. Cross Damon resists the authority and power of the white hegemony.

He believes that he can lead other oppressed Negroes to their liberty. On that account, he thinks that his crime a kind of “ethical murder” that fortifies his adoption of the unscrupulous Machiavellian dictum – the means justifies the end – by which he is able to “lie, to dodge, to blend with the changing hues of the foliage” (p.311). Having such malicious personality, he resists the white hegemony; and through murder, he finds an escape from hegemonic oppression.

Wright’s omniscient narrator conveys Cross Damon’s acrimony against the hypocrite white politics; the fact that serves as an impetus to his desire to kill them to reclaim equality with other white people in the same society:

Cross felt that at the heart of all political movements the concept of the basic inequality of man was enthroned and practiced, and the skill of politicians consisted in how cleverly they hid this elementary truth and gained votes by pretending the contrary (p.315).

Thus, Cross Damon's rejection of the white hegemony is blatant revelation of his stout resolution to deracinate – uproot – oppression through personal resistance.

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