

## Resisting Cultural Hegemony in Wright's Selected Texts through Identity Revival

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to show that the Black African transformative resistance in literature has remained a powerful strategy that helped their literature survive. The study used Bill Ashcroft views to illustrate the process of White hegemony over Blacks. Then, to illustrate each text in the light of the post-colonial theory in order to shed light on how the chosen writer gave evidence to the ongoing hegemony in his texts. The final stage used Bill's theory to talk about the resistance and anti- hegemony literature of the chosen writer. A lot of studies have been conducted on Black African American Literature but very little dealt with transformative resistance particularly in Richard Wright. This writer grew in immigrant family in America which represents a challenge to him since he faces the dilemma of abandoning his cultural identity through white hegemony into the mainstream dominant American culture and he is often known for promoting hegemony between the Black Americans and white people. However, the current study which reviewed the literature written by Richard Wight has other hidden motives seen in the light of post-colonial theory through the concepts of resistance, hegemony, and hybridity. It investigated how resistance has been passed down from generation to generation through interpolated literature and how his transformative resistance to white hegemony of the Western culture.

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

There are many groups living in the United States that have not been recognized by society and government because of their race. The Africans-Americans form one of the peoples who are originally from Africa who have become the citizens of the United States. The race concept was introduced to the Americans during colonization. For the African-Americans, racism has led to the refusal to recognize their ethnic and family heritage by the dominant whites, both at government as well as societal level. Thus, the African-Americans saw the need to resist the white hegemony as a form of resistance for equality and justice. The explosion of the Post-Colonial literature is a significant feature of

English literature written in earlier colonized societies like the United States. The literature has also stimulated a variety of concepts and theoretical ideas as a way to analyze various books, novels, essays, poems, and articles, written and published in regions where colonialism and neo-colonialism still persist. Literature has been identified as one of the acts of black resistance against white hegemony in the United States to reveal racism and oppression against the black population by the dominant whites. This study is concerned with the analysis of Richard Wright's novels through a selection of theoretical concepts in a way that specifies the immense variety of Post-

Colonial theory. Discrimination against peoples of different skin color has been one of the by-products of ethnic encounters and colonial domination in the history of the United States of America. The recent years have also seen the rise of white neo-nationalism and the formulation of racist legislations in the United States and many European countries (Keskinen, 2017). The Post-Colonial theory used for this research highlights the dynamics of colonialism as a tool of oppression considered in the current study. White hegemony is another literary theory used in this research to disclose the power configurations of the white-black as master-servant interactions which are the crucial result of colonialism, imperialist abuses, capitalist misuse and white domination, (Smith, 2014). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest that we should not restrict the term Post-Colonial to signify the end of colonialism. The writers assert that "All Post-Colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved the problem" (Ashcroft et.al, 2001). This is proven by the fact that after colonialism, new political elites, mostly indigenous who serve the former colonizers, often take control of the newly liberated countries by way of dictatorship and nepotism which mostly benefits very selected few who give their loyalty to the former masters.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Post colonialism is an intellectual direction that exists since around the middle of the twentieth century. Post colonialism is a period after colonialism and Post-Colonial writings are characteristically categorized by its resistance to European colonialism. Post-Colonial literature often emphasizes race relations and the

special effects of racism. Racial prejudice is a subject that runs through Post-Colonial debate, as white Europeans reliably emphasized their dominance over dark skinned societies. Several forms of dislocation, such as refugee, movement and migration, have been effectively and widely discussed in Post-Colonial theory. The ideas of communal by groups in society play a significant part in the way specific prejudices are conveyed and discriminations are continued and sustained. Ideologies, though, are also likely to vary in their purpose of both present and past social aspects in a specific context, as well as the groups they represent. The key concepts in Post-Colonial ideology by Bill Ashcroft (1998) describe a duo of ideologies hypothesized to maintain social hierarchy and justify intergroup inequality within modern-day Post-Colonial societies (Sibley, 2010). According to the Post-Colonial contexts by Ashcroft (1998), language converts the standard through which notions of reality, order and truth are developed. The power of language is excluded in the development of an actual Post-Colonial expression. For this determination, the discussion of Post-Colonial literature by which the language, by its power, and the symbols, characters (Sibley, 2010) and writings, with its significance of power, has been taken from the dominant European philosophy.

### Texts which were selected:

#### **Hegemony in Black Boy (1945)**

Wright gives an example of resisting cultural hegemony in "Black Boy". He uses the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty to mock the American dream "It became a habit of mine to visit Washington Park of an afternoon after collecting a part of my premium "

(294). While the statue symbolizes freedom and opportunity. In reality, black people are still not given the same level of freedom and opportunities as the whites, then he says "and I would wonder through crowds of unemployed Negroes, pausing here and there to sample dialectic or indignation of communist speakers" Of course, Richard is mocking the American dream that beckons everyone to their 'oasis while the black people are hungry and they can't find jobs like the whites. Wright suggests that white hegemony is being given a much more appealing standard.

#### **Hegemony in Native Son (1940)**

One of the aspects of resistance is the cultural resistance context mostly used in Post-Colonial literature. Richard Wright, like other Post-Colonial authors, used this method by assuming that writing creates acts of resistance that exposes the cultural norms and dualistic thought based on the colonial narrative and deliver an alternative interpretation from colonial authority. On the other hand, resistance has been used as the opposition in context. Based on binary religious beliefs such as good and evil framework, this method encounters the social-material associations formed by colonial variance. Wright created the character of Bigger as a colonized native involved in the struggle for freedom and self-definition. According to the theory of blackness against whiteness by Fanon (Cusick, 2007), there is native's psychological need to face white people as an equal. This matter needs to challenge practice of the white man's tools of domination and the skill to find a chosen innocent enemy alongside whom all the violently encouraged by the cruel structure is focused.

#### **Hegemony in The Outsider (1953)**

Wright in *The Outsider* tries to examine the more and crucial risks, the reason why men occasionally pretend, and the purpose why they want to feel superior. Richard Wright uses Cross Damon to examine the basic reasons of the racial problem. The outsider lives outside the dominant community and attempts to comprehend why it is not probable to make a bridge between two worlds separated by simulated norms, affectation and fear, "the actual world man did not need; he was not brave enough to suffer its risks and doubts. His myths wanted to change that world, tame it, make it more realistically significant and tolerable" (p.479). White people used skin color to dominate over black people as they are afraid and want to be certain of a safe world for them. The color is made of racist expectations which hide threats and suspicions. The outsider analyses black people for the reason that they accept their skin color but they ignore the fact that they live in a world ruled by anxiety and fear.

#### **Hegemony in Uncle Tom's Children (1938)**

His short story collection, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938, 1940), might seem to provide exemption to the anti-heroic law. *Uncle Tom's Children* looks into a range of characters who courageously stand their ground in contradiction of white racist horror which involves death, persecution and banishment. The main character is Sue of the collection in *Bright and Morning Star*, (1940). Sue as the Wright hero is the one who overcomes her internal and external struggles to interfere courageously, nobly, and competently on the side of social integrity, transforming herself in the

development of saving the day. Sue may represent the transformative resistance against colonialists through the hope of distinct heroism in the major published literature of Richard Wright.

### **Hegemony in *The Long Dream* (1958)**

The last pages of the novel *The Long Dream* give the reader a picture of the overarching dream that is 'The American Dream'. Wright endeavors in this novel to enlighten his readers to the fact that nothing in this dream is true, everything is manufactured. The 'American Dream' supposedly was (and perhaps still is) built on the tenets of individual liberty (freedom), equality and 'the pursuit of happiness'. This dream resembles the real world which is full of binaries and domination, but it is a fake, and Wright illustrates this in *The Long Dream* – long because it can dominate entire lives from beginning to end.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Colonialism is the acquirement of the colonialist, by instinctive power, of additional markets, more resources of manpower and raw material from the societies. Colonization also manipulates the native's life and their minds. It influences a whole culture to render resistance difficult. Post-colonialism has witnessed the attempts to resist hegemony and hybridity. This study has identified three reasons leading to resistance; namely hegemony, resistance, and allegory. However, white hegemony will be discussed elaborately since it is the key element of transformative resistance. Decolonization which is resistance against the oppressor aims to remove the effects of colonization and it is a reaction to take back their identity and culture. Resistance takes two shapes;

one is armed or military resistance and the other is cultural resistance in which words are the weapon. Sometimes, they both go hand in hand trying to liberate the country and that marks the beginning of the end of colonizers in any particular country. Under such circumstances, resistance in post-colonial literature refutes the very notion of further subjugation. Resistance literature uses the language of empire to repel its dominant ideologies. In other words, the colonized nation is "writing back," speaking either of the oppression and racism of the colonizers or the inherent cultural "better-ness" of the indigenous people (Ashcroft 217).

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Richard gives an example of resisting hegemony in "Black Boy" describing statue of liberty at Washington Park which is a universal symbol of freedom and opportunity for those seeking a better life in America. 'It became a habit of mine to visit Washington Park of an afternoon after collecting a part of my premium' (294) then he says "and I would wonder through crowds of unemployed Negroes, pausing here and there to sample dialectic or indignation of communist speakers" Of course, Richard is mocking the American dream that beckons everyone to their 'oasis while the black people are hungry and they can't find jobs like the whites. Richard attaches the idea of resisting hegemony. He believes in the 'wealthy' dream which deserves admiration, consideration and awareness from the heart. Richard reflects here the aesthetical side of hegemony which bestows uniqueness to the colonizer identity. Richard's ironic feelings are reflected in "The essence of Irony of the plight of the negro in America to me, is

that he doomed to live in isolating while those who condemned him seek the basest goals of any people on the face of the earth" (273) Richard reflects that Black Africans are forced to hegemony emotionally and socially and in terms of economy. Richard Mocks from the Americans policy, that isolated and suppressed who share the culture and land while they are trying to be open to the whole world and seek for the noble goals to achieve. This makes the writer anger and resist the blindness of White Americans.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was the Black African American transformative resistance against white hegemony, as portrayed by Black African American writer. Thus, these themes prevail in the texts selected and analyzed in this study. The main reasons for choosing Wright's works in this study, was that they have been written by Black African American writer. Moreover, the present study includes a close analytical examination of a number of transformation strategies written by Black African American writer. The focus of the study was

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to observe the role of these texts in helping the Black African Americans to resist white hegemony. Overall, Black African American literature is not only a record of his experience, but also a refrain against his despair, both of which is juxtaposed to show his dream of future satisfaction. The current study was to explore white hegemony as a problem that leads to resistance. The selected texts clearly depict how Black African Americans lost their identity. In addition to this, the study shows how Black American surprised the colonizer with identity, which serves as a tool for resisting hegemony. In 'Big Boy Leaves Home ,' Richard has woven the images of black vernacular as a crucial element in African American literature to insert meaning into this annihilation world to remind the reader of slaves who sung subversive spirituals to express their feelings of deprivation , discrimination , marginalization and slavery .Wright demonstrates the element of human existence and the idea of transformative resistance through the revival of using Native language to remind his people of their glorifying history.

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