

## A strategy for Cultural Resistance

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The present study aims at announcing a strategy for cultural resistance, regarding marginalized voices in some African American and Native American novels, based on theories of discourse construction. In order to fight back the overwhelming pressure of the hegemonic discourse, marginalized cultures have regularly tried to construct techniques to deactivate the hegemony of the dominant culture. In this sense, the voice of the marginalized culture would primarily rely on the faultlines (Sinfield, 1992, pp.47) which will then destabilize the nodal points on which a dominant culture's field of discursivity is situated. Herein, the studied novels offer counter-discourses which try to resist, negate, and put in suspense the nodal points of the dominant culture. The same resistances can be launched in the cyberspace using new technologies. Accordingly, the supposedly fixated field of discursivity opens up a space for new/forgotten signifiers and allows the redefinition of already existing signs. It is worth mentioning that, at the end of the present study, a strategy or technique will be proposed which can be applied by all marginalized cultures in their way of emancipation.

Subaltern cultures constantly look for the best way to survive despite the overarching presence of the hegemonic discourse and try to find strategies to confront or assimilate the norms of the dominant culture. Novels have been a strategic way to preserve cultural heritage and use the roots of one's own culture to fight back. In this sense, resistance techniques in novels can be assimilated in the cyberspace due to the fact that new technologies have a greater scope and wider audience.

To develop resistance strategies, first, we need to see into the discourse which regulates the marginalized cultures in it. Discourse is a network of different sources of powers; wherein, meaning is fixated and the interests of the dominant ideology is often secured. In a discourse, the articulation cannot simply be practiced and confined to linguistic phenomena and involves various sources, which according to Laclau and Mouffe "pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discourse formation is structured" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, pp. 109). And the ideological beliefs are given credit and receive widespread approval by the help of what Althusser calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) (Althusser, 2004, 701). The institutions that help language to fixate the meaning of fluid signifiers and naturalize the meaning assigned to the signs by the dominant power.

Alice Walker's *Miridian*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* portray people and societies that attempt to construct counter-discourses which usually put in suspense and, then, reformulate nodal points – which are privileged signs around which the other signs are ordered (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, pp.112) – of the dominant culture. What is experienced and practiced in such novels can be a good model for a wide variety of cyberspace users aiming at preserving their cultural heritage and resist against the dominant hegemonic discourse.

These novels demonstrate how the dominant white discourse could reach what Laclau and Mouffe call “a partial limitation of a surplus of meaning” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, pp.111); where the bombardment of the dominant discourse by residual elements open up space for articulating the already existing cultural elements. Accordingly, the banished signifiers in the field of discursivity begin to subvert the dominant discourse. Thus, we can explain how the African American and Native American writers develop counter-hegemonic discourses by articulating elements residual to their ethnic cultures.

Morrison's strategy for resistance is articulated through resisting characters of the novel, i.e. Baby Suggs and Sixo. Herein, seeds of resistances will flower in such grounds: self-definitions, self-love, self-affirmation and hope. In this sense, when an oppressed group tries to define itself according to its own rules/regulations, closures in the oppressive discourse's meanings will no longer have enough oxygen to breathe.

Deconstructing the hegemonic discourse would also be followed by other dissenting characters' language use. Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark* states that: “language [...] can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive ‘othering’ of people [...] we have to] free up the language from its almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains” (Morrison, 1992, pp. x-xi). What is significant here is when such a technique is applied by numerous cyberspace users, a great upheaval will be witnessed in the dominant hegemonic discourse.

In order to dismantle the process of cooption, Morrison devises some strategies which aim at constructing alternative representations. Listening to others and remembering the past – which she calls *rememory* – are two of those effective weapons by which she not only negates the hegemony but also deconstructs the discourse (Morrison, 1989, pp. 29). Listening to/reading Morrison's text is not like receiving some finished stories and living in a kind of isolated capsule. She tells us about the invented or emergent elements and recollected or residual ones which are actively present and participate in articulating alternative voices. Accordingly, as Patricia Hill Collins states “self-defined standpoints can stimulate resistance” (Collins, 1991, pp. 59). Similarly, the cyberspace has the capability to – just like what is evident in literature – open up the closure already imposed on the marginalized consciousness for centuries.

Walker's *Meridian* places the basics of resistance in the personal transformations which have gone through some unfamiliar processes starting from silence. Meridian's refusal to affirm the dominant discourse's rules can be interpreted as civil disobedience by which she negates the hegemonic cultures' ability to use her as a tool fulfilling its needs. Meridian opposes nodal points as she disobeys what has been firmly articulated and inculcated in the masses as natural. Meridian turns to the strategy of story-telling as a way to dismantle the fixed hegemonic meanings of the dominant. Meridian uses folktales – as residual elements – remind her people of the floating signifiers in their culture. Stories, folk songs, and May dances are reconstructed.

Stories bring the floating signifiers back to the field of discursivity. As a result, with the help of folk songs and tales the alienated or marginalized subjects find moments to articulate their elements and tilt the fixity of the nodal points. Another significant instance of resistance is her grandmother's, Feather Mae, rejection of all organized religion. Her refusal does not only represent the community with alternative meanings but also can stand as a good example for defiant characters resisting the dominant. Generating questions about the validity of the dominant discourse's rules and regulations, the text aims at reconstructing a counter hegemonic discourse.

Throughout the novel, the production of meaning is hugely grounded in the consciousness of the readers who must actively participate in the process of constructing meaning. Herein, it is worth mentioning that when a resisting activity – like what we have in the novels under study – is articulated in the cyberspace, an active consciousness is needed to make the users aware of the process due to the fact that cyberspace users are compelled by the dominant to repeat different sentences/illustrations/actions which invite them to think and rethink the discursive constructions. But, when emergent or residual cultural elements are presented, they invite the users to construct faultlines which negate the dominant hegemony. Faultlines or questions posed by the marginalized cultural elements force the readers/users to pause and think; they would eagerly decode the fixed meanings and construct new meanings.

In subverting the dominant, Native and African Americans side with each other through one character who is Meridian's great grandmother, Feather Mae. The residual elements collected by Meridian around the legends of Feather Mae enables her to present the blacks and the Natives as victims of a same hegemonic process. In this sense, Feather Mae, gaining power by living among the residual elements, becomes Meridian's model for resistance.

Moreover, in novels like Erdrich's *Tracks* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, the language use is also put in suspense in favor of using Native cultural signs, as Julia Kristeva states “one should begin by positing that there is within poetic language (and therefore, although in a less pronounced manner, within any language) a heterogeneousness to meaning and signification” (Kristeva, 1980, pp. 133). Herein, it is proposed that cyberspace is also able to launch severe attacks on the nodal point and the articulatory system of the dominant discourse, as Jorgenson and Philips states, in a specific kind of discourse, a wide range of possibilities are delimited as

“an attempt to stop the sliding of the signs in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning” (Jorgenson and Philips, 2002, pp. 27).

In refusing to assimilate the dominant culture’s standards, the suppressed cultures are in a position to restate the value of their own culture. That is, the subjugated individuals become aware of other possibilities of meaning in the field of discursivity. They reintroduce floating signifiers – with the help of new technologies – which had been banished by the dominant discourse. By the time the individuals stop to look for floating signifiers, the official version of the naturalness will no longer be a valid point of reference. In this way, dissidence is not just a kind of “refusal of an aspect of the dominant” but a devastating mechanism which aims to revitalize counter-discourses after subverting the dominant. The novels under study followed a specific pattern for resistance prompting us to depict a strategy for cultural resistance:

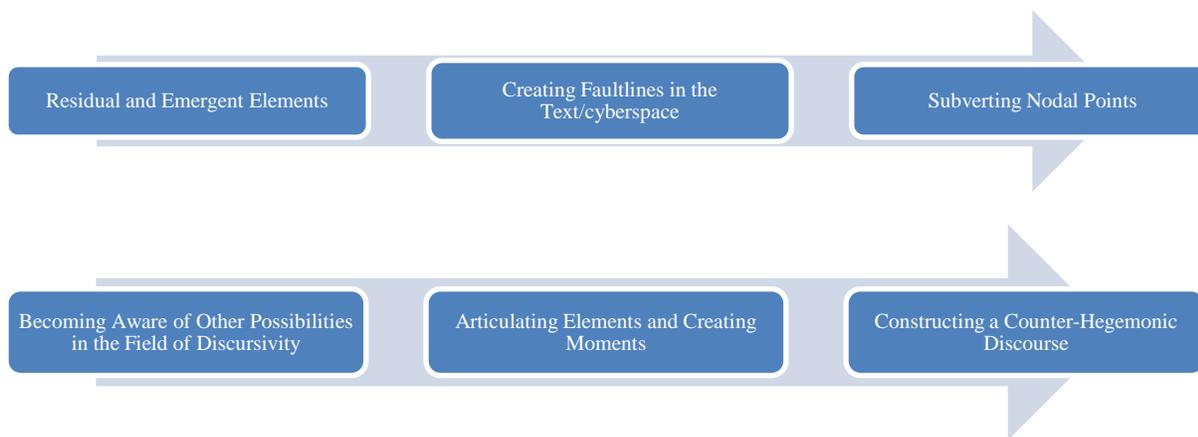


Figure 1. stages in constructing a counter-hegemonic discourse used both in real and cyber spaces

The diagram indicates the help that the residual elements can give us to create faultlines in the dominant discourse in order to subvert the nodal points in an ideological discourse. This in turn will make us aware of other possibilities of signification in the field of discursivity which opens up space and time for articulating elements and, finally, ending up in constructing a counter-hegemonic discourse that will redefine and re-territorialize the discursive space we are in.

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