

Transformative Resistance Through Folklore Revival in Joy Harjo and Richard Wright Selected Texts

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to show two memoirs by Joy Harjo, *Crazy Brave* (2012) and Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938). These works of folklore revival are important contributions to our literary repertoire. They allow readers to connect with the customs, beliefs, and art of previous generations by preserving traditions that might otherwise be lost. The study used Michel Foucault's theory of power and Bill Ashcroft's views to illustrate the process of White hegemony over indigenes in the context of folklore revival texts. Folklore texts are essential in reclaiming cultural heritage and preserving traditions, but it is crucial to examine them critically through a postcolonial lens. Resistance in literature has remained a powerful strategy that helped their literature survive the colonial experience and maintain their cultural identity. The study highlights the importance of critically examining folklore revival texts through a postcolonial lens to understand how White hegemony has influenced traditional cultural heritage. This critical examination of texts can help indigenes resist and maintain their cultural identity through literature as a powerful strategy. A lot of studies have been conducted on Black African American Literature but very little dealt with folklore particularly in Joy Harjo and Richard Wright. However, the current study argues that the literature written those have other hidden motives seen in the light of post-colonial theory through the concepts of resistance, hegemony, and hybridity. Joy Harjo and Richard Wright's literature reflect the revival of folklore and cultural traditions that were almost lost due to colonization. This study aims to shed light on the essential role of folklore in African American literature, specifically in works by Joy Harjo and Richard Wright.

Keywords: postcolonial, hegemony, folklore, identity, hybridity.

Introduction

In recent decades, researchers and literary critics have developed a keen interest in studying resistance as a concept, most likely because of its importance and its close connection with postcolonial history. Many scholars have expressed their views on the influence and inspiration of the resistance movement on the cultural history of colonial peoples. The current study attempts to show the resistance of selected writers to the colonization of Native Americans. The idea of resistance is closely related to the concept of Native American traditions that have entered contemporary Native American literature. Here are two Native American writers to study Harjo and Wright. (Bill, 2001).

The themes of the study imply that Native Americans rejected the concept of colonialism altogether and expressed their grievances by flouting colonialism. This has led to a revival of Native American literature, which offers insight into the richness and diversity of their cultures and their experiences of colonialism. These folk revival works show that Native American culture did not completely resist colonialism, but found ways to adapt and incorporate new ideas into it. This led to a revival of Native American literature, offering insight into the richness and diversity of their cultures and their experiences of colonialism. (Moreno, 2018).

Colonists used educational structures such as boarding schools to isolate Native Americans from their own culture. To this day, colonists continue to reward Native Americans who broke away from their cultures to follow the colonists' power and value systems, represented by institutions such as public schools and churches. Historically, folklore has been used to connect ancient traditions, customs, and beliefs (for example, in tales of elves and demons, fairies and elves). Folklore as a concept originated in Europe in the mid-19th century. Over time, however, folklore became a way of expressing resistance, especially among Native Americans. The spiritual values of a nation can be reflected in the folklore of its past. Furthermore, folklore strengthens bonds between generations and creates unity among people as it tells the story of a shared past. Folklore is an integral part of a country's cultural heritage. It comprises a range of traditions, beliefs, customs, and tales that have been passed down from generation to generation. These stories hold immense historical significance, as they reveal the way of life, beliefs, and values of our ancestors. By preserving folklore, we preserve a vital link to our past and gain insight into the development of society over time. Folklore texts have contributed significantly to the revival and preservation of traditional tales, superstitions, legends, rhymes, and proverbs. (Wells, 2006).

One of the most tragic parts of American history is the forcible assimilation of Native Americans into European culture. Under the guise of a "civilizing mission," European settlers sought to erase Native American cultures, and this included destroying their religions, languages, and social structures (Ninkovich, 2020). This forced assimilation has left a lasting impact, but in recent years, there has been a

revival of Native American culture and traditions through various mediums. Among these mediums are folklore revival texts that aim to preserve and pass on the stories, myths, and legends of Native American tribes. These texts, whether in print or digital format, provide a valuable resource for Native American communities as well as non-Native Americans who seek to understand. (Ninkovich, 2020).

After the American Revolutionary War, pressure on Native American lands led to wars and increased tensions between the various groups. Assimilation appears to be a convenient and desirable phenomenon because it rests on two assumptions: firstly, the savage nature of Native Americans would not enable them to coexist in a civilized white world. Secondly, assimilation might destroy this barbarism and convert the native population to the expansion of the civilized world of Christianity. Historically, strategies for assimilating Native Americans into American society have been fraught with violence and oppression. Boarding schools, relocation programs, and sexual assault were all colonizing tactics used to assimilate Native American people. (Ninkovich, 2020).

This erasure of Indigenous identity has resulted in many modern Native peoples' mixed-race heritages, disqualification for tribal enrollment, and lack of knowledge, culture, and language. The first US institutions of higher education were initially developed to convert Indigenous people into assimilated, White-passing, Christian citizens. While some Native Americans accommodated to White man's education to gain the ability to survive in a world dominated by European Americans, others resisted all attempts at forced assimilation. Unfortunately, Native Americans who succumbed to the assimilationist agenda found that they were accepted by mainstream society only if they completely abandoned their cultural heritage and adopted the practices and beliefs of dominant Euro-American culture.

This sort of assimilation forced Native Americans to give up their traditional ways of life, language, and customs in order to fit into a society that was often hostile towards their existence. Native Americans who chose to assimilate into mainstream American culture were often faced with the harsh reality that they had to completely abandon their cultural heritage in order to be accepted and not face discrimination or prejudice. For instance, American Indian boarding schools emerged during the late 19th century as a means for the U.S. government to forcibly assimilate Native Americans into Euro-American culture. These boarding schools aimed to strip Native American children of their names, languages, cultural practices, and even food, replacing them with Anglo-American culture. For almost a century, Native American children were forcefully removed from their families, communities, and tribes and sent to these boarding schools under oppressive assimilation policies with the goal of eradicating their culture and assimilating them into the dominant society.

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of applying postcolonial theory to Native American folklore and to show how Native American folklore has played an important role in shaping American history. Provides a history of Native Americans showing the events that led to assimilation and resistance to the loss of Native American culture and traditions. In addition, comments by Joy Harjo and Richard Wright works, the authors selected for this study, are accompanied by a brief critical literature review

Traci Sorell defined Native Americans as a unique spiritual relationship with nature and the land, a rich cultural legacy passed down through generations and a history of perseverance and resilience in the face of colonization and oppression. This definition shows the complexity and diversity of Native American cultures and highlights the importance of recognizing their unique perspectives and contributions. It is crucial to acknowledge and respect the diversity of Native American cultures, and to work towards preserving their traditions and knowledge for future generations. Furthermore, it is important to educate ourselves on the often-overlooked history and experiences of Native Americans and to advocate for their rights in matters such as land preservation and representation in government. It is crucial to acknowledge and respect the diversity of Native American cultures, and to work towards preserving their traditions and knowledge for future generations. Furthermore, it is important to educate ourselves on the often-overlooked history and experiences of Native Americans and to advocate for their rights in matters such as land preservation and representation in government. (Sorell,2021).

According Tania Thomas, acculturative stress is caused by forced acculturation and has been experienced by Native Americans, refugees, and immigrants who face difficulties in adapting to a new culture, language, and social environment. This stress can have a significant impact on mental health, leading to depression or anxiety. Mental health professionals need to understand the nuances of acculturation and its effects on individuals so that they can provide culturally sensitive care and interventions that address the underlying stressors and promote resilience during the acculturation process. (Thomas, 1995).

Critics agree, despite their disputes, that identity and survival are central themes in Native literature, besides the significant role of storytelling about their survival and history. Alfred A. Cave's observation on how Native Americans relate normal events to spiritual forces highlights the importance of understanding cultural beliefs in mental healthcare, where culturally bound beliefs about mental illness and treatment can serve as significant barriers to seeking help. Mental healthcare providers must acknowledge and respect the spiritual dimensions that may be intrinsic to Native American patients' experiences of mental health issues. Furthermore, the importance of storytelling in Native literature underscores the value of narrative therapy as an

approach to mental health treatment that recognizes and honors individuals' unique experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Post-Colonial Reading on Native American Studies one of the most significant challenges in Native American studies is addressing the impact of colonialism on indigenous communities. To better understand this impact, scholars have taken a postcolonial approach to studying Native American studies. By acknowledging the lasting effects of colonialism and recognizing the experiences and expertise of Native Americans, postcolonial scholars have been able to create a more inclusive and honest representation of Native American history and culture. Postcolonial studies have played a crucial role in highlighting the impact of colonialism on indigenous communities, including Native American Studies. Furthermore, this approach has allowed scholars to challenge previously held Westernized viewpoints and explore different ways of understanding the experiences of Native Americans. Louis Owens' scholarly essays "Mixed Blood Message", which are criticisms of literature and film of Mixed-blood Messages, rely on great postcolonial theories to analyze the intersections of ethnic and racial identity with cultural representations in literature and film. Owens' work is significant in providing insightful critiques of portrayals of mixed-race identity in literature and film through the lens of postcolonial theories. Owens' essays demonstrate the importance of recognizing the complexities and nuances of mixed-race identity, particularly in a postcolonial context where power dynamics exist that can impact how mixed-race individuals are represented and perceived. (Bier wert,2004).

Furthermore, Owens argues that the portrayal of mixed-race individuals in literature and film has consequences beyond just entertainment, as these representations can influence how people view and understand mixed-race identities in real life. Joy Harjo, born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on May 9, 1951 and a member of the Muskoka tribe, has made significant contributions to the world of literature as a poet, musician and writer. Her Indigenous heritage, which is a dominant inspiration in her work, has earned Joy Harjo many accolades throughout her career. Her exceptional work in literature has made her a celebrated figure in the world of art and culture, with numerous awards that recognize her contributions to the field. (Owens, 2001).

According to Acosta, the eager reader should read Harjo's poetry with an understanding of her ethnic past, her comprehension of culture and myths, folklore, and the story of her ancestors' past. Joy Harjo's Indigenous heritage plays a vital role in her poetry and plays, as she draws from her understanding of culture, myths and folklore to create her work. Wilson's assessment of Harjo's work highlights the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the cultural background that shapes an artist's creativity. Joy Harjo's poetry and plays represent an essential contribution to literature, as they resonate with the cultural heritage of her Indigenous background. (Acosta,2014).

In the early 20th century, socialism was gaining popularity in many parts of the world. As a result, it began to be reflected in the literature of that time. One prominent writer who incorporated socialist themes into his work was Richard Wright. In his works, Wright explored the struggles and experiences of African Americans, examining the impact of social and economic conditions on their lives. Capitalist system created and perpetuated inequality, particularly for marginalized communities like African Americans. As such, he used his writing to shed light on the struggles faced by these communities and promote socialist ideals. Wright's most famous and influential work, "Uncle Tom's children," was a prime example of his use of socialist themes in literature. In "Uncle Tom's children," Wright examined the effects of poverty and racism on society, portraying the protagonist's desperate attempt to break free from his repressed existence. Wright's socialist beliefs were evident in both his fiction and nonfiction works. He believed that the capitalist system created and perpetuated inequality, particularly for marginalized communities like African Americans. (Ellis, 2006).

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Methodology

The study of Native American resistance is a complex and multifaceted concept that demands thorough consideration of underlying factors, such as assimilation, displacement, and disturbance. Assimilation, in particular, plays a critical role in understanding the basis of Native American resistance. Specific texts will be analyzed in the next chapters according to how they are related with the concept of resistance. For example, "Uncle Tom's children" by Richard Wright and "Crazy brave," by Harjo. Furthermore, the texts emphasize the impact of displacement and disturbance caused by forced assimilation policies of the government on Native American communities. (Lerma, 2012).

Post-colonial resistance refers to the various ways in which colonized peoples have resisted and challenged colonialism, both during the period of direct colonization and in the aftermath of decolonization. This is an important topic that sheds light on the ways in which colonized peoples have sought to reclaim their autonomy and agency, despite being subjected to a system of domination and oppression. Post-colonial resistance takes many forms, from armed uprisings and political movements to cultural expressions of identity and solidarity. One effective form of post-colonial resistance is the strategy of hybridization, which involves blending aspects of multiple cultures to create a new, distinct identity that challenges the hegemony of colonialism.

Some Native Americans chose to assimilate into white American culture in

order to survive in a world dominated by European Americans. However, many faced rejection from both European Americans and Native American society. On the other hand, there were those who actively resisted all attempts at forced assimilation. Displacement caused by policies of forced assimilation is another important factor in Native American resistance. The displacement of Native Americans from their native land due to colonization and policies of forced assimilation has had a major impact on their cultural systems, traditional support. (Cullen, 2017).

The research's special focus on folklore mirrors Fanon's opinion that cultural practices and artifacts can be utilized as weapons in the fight against colonialism. According to Fanon, an important phase in the decolonization process was the reassertion and reclamation of indigenous cultural forms, which gave oppressed peoples the opportunity to reject the colonizer's cultural dominance and declare their humanity. Accordingly, the study of how societies challenge and subvert repressive systems through folklore is consistent with Fanon's idea of cultural praxis as a tool for liberation. The study embodies Freire and Fanon's emancipatory goals by elevating the voices and lived experiences of oppressed communities via the lens of folklore. Participants are empowered by the research methodology to critically analyze their own situations and take part in in the fight. (Lamboloto, 2024).

Native American customs, culture, and way of life were all negatively impacted by colonization. The eviction of the Native Americans from their homeland, their integration, and disturbance are the most obvious effects of this colonization. Even so, Native American communities have managed to fight colonialism in a number of ways in spite of these harsh conditions. The revival and preservation of Native American cultures, languages, and traditions has been one of the most significant ways that these tribes have fought colonization.

Bill Ashcroft 'book, "The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures" discusses how memory and remembrance function in postcolonial literary works. It makes the case that writers can upend colonial narratives and recover oppressed viewpoints by using their own and collective memories. These writers contest the selective forgetfulness of colonial powers and establish indigenous epistemologies as grounds of resistance by remembering and testifying to collective memories. A crucial component of the decolonial fight, the act of remembering in postcolonial literature enables spaces for grieving, healing, and articulating counter-hegemonic ideas. (Bill ,2001).

The study of Native American folklore and European intrusion is a fascinating field that explores the interactions between indigenous cultures and European colonizers. This field of study delves into the cultural, social, and psychological impacts that European colonization had on Native American tribes. In addition to the aforementioned cultural similarities, American Indian nations share a common historical relationship with European colonizers and the United States government that has been characterized as, at best, exploitative and, at its worst, genocidal. This

study is the presenting of a vivid depiction of assimilation and disturbance as Seeds of resistance following Frantz Fanon and Bill Ashcroft views about the natives. The new aspect of this study is the application of Frantz Fanon's views on natives to the depiction of assimilation and disturbance as seeds of resistance in Native American folklore in the face of European intrusion. The study of Native American folklore and European intrusion sheds light on the ways in which European colonizers sought to assimilate Natives into European culture, often suppressing Native culture and identity in the process. One aspect of this field of study is the examination of Native American folklore in relation to European intrusion. This includes exploring how Native American folklore reflects the experiences and stories of their people, as well as how it incorporates elements of European influence. Moreover, the study examines how European intrusion has affected Native American beliefs and practices. As a response to this, postcolonial theory was developed as a means of examining the consequences and effects of colonialism on colonized lands and the colonized people realized the need to pen to express the depth of their oppression and the loss of culture, land and lives at the hands of the colonizers. (Wells, 2006).

Discussions

Joy Harjo and Richard Wright state that *Crazy Brave* and *Uncle Tom's children* are two memoirs about power, the characters with constant struggle to achieve their positions in society. Furthermore, achieving their position in society has become more important and challenge their life and existence. Remembrance has to do with the power by which an individual's produced or reproduce and recreate concepts. The two writers write that they have often heard the Native elders focusing on the role of remembering things about their past. They describe these deep senses of remembrance as identifying the current place, at the present time without, forgetting the past. The Indian and African indigenes are people who recognize their old place and time as well as their current place and time'. Joy Harjo and Richard Wright write on memories and described them as something powerful that revolve within the past, present and future. Joys and Wright's language is believed to be a main tool to indicate any personal's self-awareness and moral prudence, and so his opportunity for interaction with others. (Lazic, 2013).

A key theme that emerges in Richard Wright's "*Uncle Tom's Children*" is the power of remembrance and how the trauma of the Jim Crow era is inscribed upon the bodies and psyches of African Americans. One way Wright explores this is through the use of folklore and oral tradition. Through this lens, Wright's exploration of remembrance in "*Uncle Tom's Children*" reveals the vital role that folklore and oral tradition play in shaping the memories, experiences, and very sense of self for those whose stories have so often been marginalized or silenced. In grappling with the legacy of trauma, the characters in these stories find strength, solace, and a renewed sense of purpose by tapping into the wellspring of their cultural heritage. (Epelbaum & Bush, 2021).

Throughout the collection, the characters draw upon a rich tapestry of folktales, superstitions, and communal memories to make sense of their lived experiences under oppression. In "Bright and Morning Star," for instance, the protagonist Sue summons the folkloric figure of the "bright and morning star" to give her strength and courage in confronting the horrific legacy of her son's lynching. This act of remembrance through folklore becomes a defiant form of resistance against the forces that would seek to erase or bury the painful histories of the Black community. Similarly, in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," the narrator recounts the lessons and "folk wisdom" imparted by his elders on navigating the treacherous landscape of segregation. These oral traditions function as a means of collective memory, allowing the characters to ground their individual identities and traumas within a broader cultural narrative of struggle and resilience. By weaving folklore so intricately into the fabric of his stories, Wright underscores how the preservation and transmission of these oral histories is essential to the psychological and spiritual survival of African Americans under Jim Crow. The act of remembering, whether through funeral rites, folktales, or communal wisdom, becomes a powerful force for identity formation and resistance against systemic oppression. (Berrey, 2009).

Results

The primary objective of this research is to examine how Native American writers portray Native Americans' resistance to cultural dominance, extinction, and assimilation. Writing by Native American authors was a primary criterion in the selection of the aforementioned works for this study. A substantial and critical component of Native American culture has always been their literature. Native American traditions and values are passed down through the generations via their literature. To further oppose assimilation and maintain their distinct identity in the face of colonization, Native American literature serves as a weapon. In order to gain insight into how poetry and storytelling assist Native Americans in their resistance to assimilation, a recent study was conducted. The study's outcomes suggest that poems and stories by Native American authors, in particular, Poems and stories served as a counternarrative to their dejection in addition to serving as a record of their experiences. The Native Americans' resistance to assimilation was aided by these poems and stories, which expressed their hope for future fulfillment. American Native Studies offers new perspectives on investigating and educating Native peoples by looking at the social contexts in which these works are implemented. Further, the field of Native American studies has lately focused on finding out the significance of Native literature. The study additionally pointed out the significance of Native literary theory and aesthetics unique to individual tribes for the production and analysis of modern American Native literature.

Conclusions

This study was a postcolonial approach towards the analysis of Joy Harjo's *Crazy Brave* and Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*. These two memoirs try to show

how people are fighting very hard to achieve their position in the society. However, they face a number of difficulties in this regard. The overall aim of this study is the Native American resistance against cultural hegemony, cultural erasure and cultural domination, as portrayed by those writers. Thus, these themes display in the two memoirs selected and analysed in this study. The main criteria in selected works in this study, is that they have been written by Native American writers. Moreover, the current study contains a close analytical examination of a number of folklore memoirs written by two Native American writers. The focus of the study is to note the role of these two memoirs in helping the Natives to resist hegemony.

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