

**Discourse Construction and Counter-Hegemonic Discourses
in *The Beloved* By Toni Morrison**

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In contemporary American society the dominant discourse of the white contend to suppress ethnic minority cultures. Throughout the American history, Euro-Americans have devised their own discourse in order to legitimize their colonization and suppress Native and African Americans as it is evident in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. In order to reach the goals, the white people attached certain meanings to the signs which privileged the white culture over other ethnic minorities. How they have tried to articulate their discourse, its effects on the mentioned minorities and how this dominant discourse is resisted are the sole concern of this essay. Laclau and Mouffee's theory on discourse is used to show how opposing cultures have tried to articulate their discourse in the mentioned novel and also how the ethnic minorities in the mentioned novel try to attach different meanings to the floating signifiers in order to construct a discourse specific to their own culture. In this sense, Alan Sinfield's theory of faultlines and Raymond Williams' theory of Dominant, Residual and Emergent and also theories of Michel Bakhtin, Louise Montrose, and Antonio Gramsci are used to show how the minorities channelize their resistances against the dominant Euro-American discourse. The outcome of such resistances is not the focus of this essay, what is most significant is to find ways, according to the

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resisting strategies in the mentioned novel, to resist against the dominant hegemonic culture and also to construct a theory for cultural resistance.

One of the key issues facing minor/suppressed cultures is new generation's loss of identity and their assimilation of Euro-American standards. Studies on the novel written by a minority writer would help the readers to understand that identity loss and assimilation are not just problems facing specific nations/cultures. In fact, African Americans have encountered the same problems; for hundreds of years they have been under hegemonic pressure of the white culture, they have been casted as others and inferior beings who must be tamed and regulated. Thus, it would be helpful to know how they coped with the problems of cultural assimilation, individual loss of identity, hegemonic oppression and spiritual diseases caused by socio-political and economic subjugation. The novel under study in this essay – *Beloved* by Toni Morrison – offers different ways to resist against the dominant culture's hegemonic discourse. The problem is not that of subversion or subverting the dominant, but the question is how a member from a minor culture can articulate his/her dissenting. Accordingly, the essay's focus is not to deal with strategies of subversion, instead, attention will be paid on the faultlines.

Discourse can be considered as a web-like construction in which signifiers meet closure and meanings become fixed in a way to secure the dominant ideology's interests. In this sense, when it is said that one of the main aims of the Anglo-American discourse is to subjugate other cultures, the whys and hows of such a discourse construction must be clarified.

Besides, the novel under study aims at constructing counter discourses. The mentioned writer needs elements in order to articulate her counter discourse. Another question to be tackled with is from where such elements are collected. What belongs to African Americans has been abandoned and eradicated by the dominant white culture; it was unspeakable and in most cases was not regarded as significant enough to be brought under consideration. Articulating the unspeakable can also be regarded as a significant problem ahead of the mentioned novelist and her resisting characters. Moreover, the essay will map out certain strategies for resistance in accordance to the mentioned novel. Readers of the novel will come across three types of characters: white characters who exercise power and try to subjugate members of other minor cultures, submissive characters experiencing spiritual diseases and alienation as they try to assimilate the dominant norms, and finally resisting characters who offer

dissenting voices and alternative discourses. A significant problem comes into view when talking about the concept of resistance to the Anglo-American discourse as it is also a problem facing our people too: Are resistances futile or do they weaken the hegemonic power of the dominant? Will oppressed cultures vanish beside their articulated dissenting voices? Thus, the essay's aim is to shed light on the issues of oppression, resistance and discourse construction.

Colonizing powers seek to legitimize their evasion over the dominated and the first step to do is to construct a hegemonic discourse in which the demonized other is casted as an inferior being or as a tool in the hands of the capitalist system. According to the standards of this hegemonic discourse, the white and his belongings are nodal points around which the Native American and African American people are defined. In other words, new meanings are attached to signs which try to legitimize and naturalize the hierarchy of the Euro-Americans over all other ethnic minorities.

Having in mind the mentioned novel, it seems that the white hegemonic discourse has used almost the same methods in order to subjugate the minorities. Using mass media, schools, universities, churches and other Ideological State Apparatuses, minorities in the American society are constantly confronted with messages that convey their inferiority. The sole concern of the writer in the mentioned novel is the cultures for which she is writing. She uses elements from her own cultures in the form of memories, behaviors and folkloric songs in order to articulate the floating signifiers and create a discourse of her own. When characters come into contact with the dominant culture, contradictions within that dominant discourse come into view. Contradictions constitute faultline which will destabilize the nodal points of the dominant discourse. In other words, faultlines create questions which explode the beams supporting the shafts of the mine of the dominant discourse. Moreover, the mentioned novel selects cultural elements from the past, or residual elements, and it also creates new ones, emergent elements. The impact of these cultural rehearsals is devastating on the dominant culture; it prepares the ethnic minorities with an appropriated tool to resist/negate the rules and the regulation of the hegemonic discourse.

Key words: Discourse, Grand Narrative, Dialogized Heteroglossia, Morrison, The Beloved, Articulation.