Research Journal of Language and Literary Studies

Fall 2025, Volume 5, No.2, pp 129-145

Rhetoric of Resistance in Fiction of the American Revolution: A Postcolonial Critique of Jeff Shaara's *The Glorious Cause*

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Abstract:

Literary narratives memorializing historical milestones of a nation are always imbued with the passionate rhetoric that is cherished collectively and projected institutionally. Especially, in case of representational discourses about the revolutionary wars, the junctures epitomizing the ideals of resistance, the narratives turn more belligerent under the burden of the all-pervasive colonial memories and perpetually perturbing legacies. The kind of combative narration is one of the salient features of the literatures being produced in the former colonies across the globe. In this context, the article attempts to negotiate a fictional rendering of the anti-colonial élan scaffolding the American nation's sense of pride and guiding its historical consciousness with reference to the Revolutionary War. Engaging postcolonial postulates about resistance and the modalities of a revolution in a colonial society, a critique of Jeff Shaara's *The Glorious Cause: A Novel of the American Revolution* (2002) is developed. The analysis unpacks the rhetoric of resistance that is buttressing thematic structure of the novel. Various aspects of the novel, ranging from projection of the nationalist ideals to indictment of the colonizer, have been examined to elaborate the polemical configuration of the selected text. Through

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interpretation of these textual points, it is expounded how the American literary consciousness vociferously rationalizes the Revolutionary War as a national cause. Thus, it is evinced that the ideals of the early national history continue to inform the contemporary American literary discourses.
Key words: American Revolution, Fiction, Ideology, Postcolonialism, Resistance

1. Introduction:

Resistance has constantly held fascination for all nations taking the descriptor 'postcolonial', ranging from India to America and New Zealand to Nigeria. It is the characteristically confrontational contours of postcolonial condition that place dissidence at the centre of its sociocultural consciousness and writings. Because of the dominance of this retaliatory sensibility, the dialectical discursive practices have held sway in the textual terrain of the field, creating a combative rhetoric by coalescing poetics with polemics and politics. Being a part of the cultural continuum, postcolonial literatures are characterized by depiction of various forms of resistance. This combination of the sociopolitical and epistemic resistance shattered the systemic clutches of the colonizer, the colonial capture and the cultural hegemony. The intriguing network of the social contestations bespeaks the historicity of the postcolonial discursive practices and, also, explains how they form an integral part of the existential conditions created by the colonial encounters. Consequently, the "postcolonial expression", in its spirit and the signature structure, "becomes synonymous with resistance" (Jefferess, 2008, p. 16). Hence, the ideals of resistance mark every

significant dimension of the literary productions and critical conceptualizations seeking impetus from the postcolonial position.

The revolutionary wars constitute a significant part of the history of resistance in the postcolonial contexts. Most of the former colonies have won freedom through an "active violent opposition" (Ashcroft *et al*., 2007, p. 43) to the imperial centres. These armed encounters— assigned labels like war of independence, rebellion, mutiny, and insurgency— have always been the contributing to the cause of liberation. The American Revolution is one of the wars of liberation that laid the foundation of the American nation and its ideals of freedom and justice. It turned a scattered society of the unruly colonial subjects into a "thriving nation" (Middlekauff, 1982, p. 246). Therefore, the Revolutionary War remains a national emblem that guides the collective consciousness of the Americans. This revolution has found traction in the fictional narratives of the country. The literary renderings are equally passionate about the projection of the ideals of the revolution.

For this article, Shaara's *The Glorious Cause* (2002) is taken as the primary source. The novel is structured like a historical archive that minutely records the chronology of the Revolutionary War. The extended narrative is given unity with the thematic strings of the rhetoric of resistance, slogans of freedom, and glorification of the heroes like Washington and Franklin. The spatial reach of the novel is equally extended as it covers the events of the revolution from the stretches of New York to the fields of Princeton and Virginia. It is a saga of the progress of a militia that evolved into the great

Continental Army— an army that defeated the "redcoats" considered to be, in Larkin words, "the most powerful force on earth" (in McLaughlin, 2009, p. 127). The encompassing novel narrates the events of the war, contextualizes the happenings, pays homage to the heroes, and describes the details of the diplomatic negotiations. Especially, the narration of the war includes the minute details of the battlefield, ranging from combats to chases. Ultimately, the novel ends proudly declaring the country "an independent nation" (p. 494). A well-documented postscript has also been added to the text of the historical novel to substantiate the narrative.

Contextualized with reference to the American Revolution, the study aims to take up the following research questions as the points of departure for development of a rigorous critique of Shaara's novel:

1. How does the novel project the American national ideals to create a convincing rhetoric of resistance?
2. What are the points of indictment associated with the British Imperialism that repudiate the colonizer's logic of legitimacy?

The framing explains the tentacular conceptual structure of the study that invokes historical ideas, theoretical postulates, and literary depictions to locate resistance in the postcolonial context. However, for development of the argument, the scope of the study is delimited only to the selected novel. Thus, it is primarily a literary critique of Jeff Shaara's *The Glorious Cause* (2002). He is a famous novelist who writes about wars with reference to the American history, ranging from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War. He has been appreciated for his "extensive research" (Jouni Jussila, 2015,

p. 7) that he has conducted to gather material for fictionalization of the historical wars.

2. Literature Review

The study requires review of the crucial relevant aspects for contextualization of its argument. Therefore, critical sources regarding the following areas have been studied and situated: postcolonial literatures and resistance, American postcoloniality and historical writings, and the American Revolutionary War.

Postcolonial Literatures and Resistance:

Ramone (2011) is a thorough exploration of various literary and theoretical mainstream trends in the field of postcolonial studies. She critically locates the prominent fictional works within the conceptual frames offered by the leading theorists to explain the ideologically motivated nature of the kind of writings. She contends, grounding her argument in the readings of the acclaimed texts like Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), that the representative postcolonial narratives are counter-discursive in their nature. Therefore, she uses the term "counter-text" (p. 169) for the novels to connote the inherently combative predilection of the postcolonial novels. The study extensively covers the fictions of resistance coming from across the globe: South Asia, Africa, Canada, and Caribbean.

Chandra (2015) renegotiates the discourse of resistance by approaching it peculiarly through the South Asian transformations about the social category of subaltern. He places the issue "as a critical social science concept" (2015, p. 563) to stress the materiality of the dynamics influencing its conceptualizations and acknowledge "the complex

workings" (2015, p. 563) at play in the context. Through meticulous consideration of various "comparative cases" (2015, p. 570), the study proposes a more inclusive and translational approach for understanding and configuration of the subalterns as the old formations, Chnadra thinks, are losing relevance to the contemporary multicultural social realities. Thus, the study is an erudite survey and dissection of the various nuances of the issue of resistance to explain the ever-changing nature of the social phenomena. In the light of the theoretical niches identified in the broad spectrum of subaltern ideas of resistance, the few possibilities are explained and suggested in the study.

Ohs (2025) focuses on resistance from the perspective of the ideological apparatuses that have been controlling the cultural capital of the postcolonial countries. Torn between the western dialects of the Right and the Left, the former colonies were unable to institutionalize and promote the indigenous cultural models that could support their endeavours to grow along the turns of the time. Ohs has explained the role of the intellectuals in the Third World societies who aspired and persuaded "to think beyond the traditional [western] frameworks (2025, p. 25). He takes the African anti-colonial intelligentsia as a representative liberating force for all the former colonies grappling with issue of cultural imperialism. In so doing, he has used a radical idiom of resistance to support his avid argument about the indispensability of the ideological freedom for the social progress of the postcolonial world.

American Postcoloniality and Historical Writings:

Singh and Schmidt (2000) have presented a comprehensive coverage of several postcolonial dimensions relevant to the American literature. At the outset, the study approaches the contemporary questions of identity and culture to communicate the complexity and confusions central to the subject matter and, also, to the positionality of the interpreter of the postcolonial phenomena. It also offers a thorough rendering of the presence of the postcolonial contents in the historical and traditional literary works. As no study of the American version of the postcolonial conditions is possible without engagement with the issue of race, Singh and Schmidt have paid due attention to the problematic discourses and culture of racial prejudice. Precisely, the work maps "the borders" U.S studies and postcolonialism "share and cross" (2000, p. 5).

Schueller's study (2004) locates the American literature and sociocultural realities at the cusp between a postcolonial identification and an imperialist aspiration. On the one hand, the American society emerges as a postcolonial entity because of its colonial history and the omnipresent multiculturalism. On the other hand, the country aspires to be a cultural imperialist and a colonizer proudly perched on the slogan of "exceptionalism" (2004, p. 162). She asserts presence of the conformist trends in the American studies with reference to the Eurocentric cultural imperialist trends. Although she acknowledges the presence of "revisionist histories" (2004, p. 162) in the American historiographical space, she identifies a conspicuous lack of the ant-colonial idiom that informs the intellectuals from the Asian and African regions. In this way, Schueller's argument simultaneously points a lack in the American studies and

mentions a potential for a more conscious critique of the prevalent cultural injustice.

Cooper (2020) has offered an interesting argument about the role of the postcolonial thought in reviving an interest in the colonial histories. He has observed that the revisionist propensity of the postcolonial approach has attracted the critical attention in the intellectual world. Resultantly, the traditionally established epistemologies have been reconsidered and contested to create a space for the alternative visions and silenced voices. The postcolonial demand for inclusion of the peripheral and marginalized segments into the historical currents has vocally been appreciated in the study. Thus, the study is an informed critique of the social consciousness that, also, theorizes the problems at the intersection of postcolonial frameworks and historical investigations.

The American Revolutionary War:

John Ferling (2007) is a typically American nationalist account of the Revolutionary War that is evidently marked by the hyperbolic expressions. His introductory note approaches the insurgency as “a world war” (p. xii) and places it on the global arena. However, the focal point of his study is that the British had lost the war despite their privileged position, in terms of the ground realities. On the contrary, the Americans had won the war transcending their limitation and, thus, making “a miracle” (p. 573). He implies that American struggle was scaffold by the moral uprightness. Contextualizing the movements and the moves during the wars, Ferling contends that achieving the goals of the American Revolution was a dream

that was materialized through the struggle of the revolutionaries who changed the history of the world.

Morgan (2024) offers a meta-historical review of the evolution of the varying perceptions of the American Revolution through different temporal phases up to the contemporary times. The study presents a comprehensive account of the events of the war and it attempts to situate all the events to explain the triggers of the insurgency. Moreover, it goes beyond the happening of the revolution and covers the reception of it as a national landmark throughout the history since its occurrence. In other words, Morgan discusses the factors influencing the representational preferences alongside narration of the events of the war. This attitude—encompassing approach, focus on inclusivity, understanding of temporality, and realization of plurality give the study a new historicist flavour.

Khudoyberdiev (2025) approaches the American Revolution through the prism of a fictional work. For the purpose, he has selected Cooper's famous novel The Spy (1821) that was written on the theme of the war. The novel is considered a seminal literary text with reference to the historical fiction in America. In so doing, he has explicated the various components of "the novel's nationhood discourse" (2025, p. 131) to show the sociopolitical situatedness of the text. For instance, the fictional delineation of the great stature of the revolutionary leaders like Washington has been emphasized. Thus, Khudoyberdiev has read Cooper's novel to contend that a literary works contributes not only to the aesthetic real but instead it can actively engage with historicity, the existential conditions, of a society.

3. Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical underpinning for development of the argument is taken from the field of postcolonial studies. For the purpose, from the plethora of postcolonial perspectives, the question of resistance is taken as the guiding notion for theoretical framing of this study. The issue of resistance is "central" (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 86) to all dimensions of the postcolonial conditions and thought. The kind of realization of prevalence of the perspective of resistance is reflected also in McLeod's critical idiom that he has ascribed to the postcolonial literary writings, that is, "a literature of resistance" (McLeod, 2007, p. 115). Moreover, Leela Ghandhi has suggested significance of the issue by asserting resistance as a "double" of "colonial power" (1998, p. 142). All these pronouncements of the prominent postcolonial critics attest the essentiality of the discourses and practices revolving around the epicenter of resistance in the paradigm of postcolonialism.

The pervasive issue of resistance appears in different forms in different contexts. A revolutionary war is its point of culmination when an armed insurgency erupts to dismantle the colonial structures of exploitation and expansion. Loomba (2005) has tried to consider what makes sense of "alienation" evolve into an act of "revolt" (p. 154). Moreover, Young has posited pertinent points about the spirit of revolt as it is conspicuously present in "tricontinental societies" (Young, 2001, p. 44). The masses of the colonized regions "armed with the aura" in Young's words, "of the national liberation" (2001, p. 62) posed both ontological and epistemological challenges to the existing exploitative power structures.

Thus, resistance manifests itself in various forms and formations, ranging from "epistemic resistance" (Sippel & Ucelo Jiménez, 2025, p. 1174) to "insurgency" (Gopal, 2019, p. 20).

4. Methodology:

The method of textual analysis has been used to accomplish the postcolonial critique of the selected texts. The interpretive process for formulation of inferences with reference to the text is in accordance with the approach explained by Belsey (2013). The analysis moves from words to discourse in its entirety and also engages with the required contextual details. To support the interpretive process of the textual analysis of the selected novel, the conceptual framing of the interpretations is accomplished in the light of the postcolonial theorizations and elaborations of the issue of resistance.

5. Discussion and Analysis:

The selected novel, *The Glorious Cause* (2002), encapsulates the American national rhetoric of resistance that takes the revolutionary war as the historical point where the ideals of the great nation germinated. From the title to the postscript of the text, all structural and thematic components of the novel are in conformity with the national discourse about the ideals of liberation, resistance, and justice. In Shaara's hand, the novel becomes a history of the American "patriotism" and "heroism" (Shaara, 2002, p. 127). Some of the prominent perspectives of the patriotic rhetoric present in the narrative have been negotiated in the following discussion.

One of the most conspicuous features of promotion of the traditional celebratory rhetoric is present in the title of the novel— it has been titled as

The Glorious Cause. This evinces that Shaara's narrative discourse imbibes the fervor of the nationalist sensibility evolved in the country. The word 'glorious' has twofold significance in the context of the novel, that is, it combines the logic of legitimacy with the sense of sublimity. In other words, the title enthusiastically states the political charged Americanized viewpoint of the fictional narrative. Hence, the title of the text yokes together perspectives of validation and laudation to contribute to the passionate historiographical discourse peculiar to the American writings about the revolution.

In addition to the transparently opinionated titling of the text, the pattern of nomenclature used for the war is indicative of the postcolonial combative narration: "mission" (Shaara, 2002, p. 67), "Revolution" (Shaara, 2002, p. 239), and "war of independence" (Shaara, 2002, p. 285). All the descriptors that are attached to the event of great significance reflect the collective consciousness of the society. Also, the frequency and the tautological use of the phrases of the kind is suggestive of the optionality of the author. These qualifiers associated with the war explicitly declare that the decision of the American people to dismantle the British imperial rule was an admirable step towards achievement of the goal of emerging as a great nation. Ultimately, the message of the resistance is conveyed right from the point of departure.

An elaborate articulation of the rhetoric of resistance has also been embedded in the narrative. The element is more pronounced in the confident proclamations of the revolutionary leaders. For instance, Benjamin Franklin proudly speaks about the significance of the armed

resistance: “my country was little more than a rumor until our flag appeared from the masts of warships” (Shaara, 2002, p. 365). Moreover, Franklin wrote to Gibbon, in response of his indifferent attitude in France predicting the “fall of the British Empire” (Shaara, 2002, p. 237). The rhetoric employed by all the revolutionary heroes— Washington, Franklin, Hale and others— is marked by the loud articulations of the ideals of the anti-colonial resistance. The voices of these leaders are representative of the national sentiment about the goal of liberation. Therefore, placing the anti-colonial pronouncements as a core component of the novel is a manifest avowal of the contemporary conformity of the American people with the ideals of the past, epitomized through the Revolutionary War.

Besides projecting the cause of the revolutionary struggle, the novel also narrates the American sensibility about the depraved demeanour of the cruel English. The sensibility is communicated in the novel in a charged language of detestation and idiom of aversion. During an exchange with Admiral Howe, Franklin censures the unwarranted moves of the English by clearly saying that they want "destruction of our nation (2002, p. 38). Also, Washington denounces the violence of the English forces in a passionate manner and states in agony that “their armies have killed and maimed” (Shaara, 2002, p. 303) the innocent Americans. Delineation of redcoats as the perpetrators of the inhuman violence and merciless pillage is announcement of the cruel character of the English government.

The British imperialism has been debunked and, to appropriate Sigwart’s expression, their “logic of legitimacy” (2013, p. 407) has been repudiated in the novel. Franklin challenges the rhetoric of benevolence,

encoded in the promise of betterment: “You suggest that under your control, we can become an empire to rule the world”. As the promise of prosperity is considered a signature colonial gimmick of the colonizer by him, he rebuts it plainly: “You take, your plunder, you strip the land” (Shaara, 2002, p. 258). The kind of narration bespeaks clarity of the stance regarding the unjust act of attempting to continue the colonial rule. It is also a precise declaration of the legitimacy of the revolt, rather its indispensability, which dismantled the British imperial system in the American region. The anti-colonial sensibility finds its way in Washington’s clear statement: “we are saying to England, your system does not work here” (Shaara, 2002, p. 285). Therefore, the nation fought the war to ensure freedom for the future generations and building of an independent nation.

To sum up, the novel is emblematic of the rhetoric of resistance and liberation that has always been cherished by the Americans. The novel narrates various shades of the confrontation to depict a complete picture of the insurgency. Also, the portrayal of the heroic American and villainous English characters supports the central theme of the novel— resistance. Furthermore, this rhetoric of resistance is supported by the sense of the national pride: “no nation on this earth has accomplished what America is attempting to do” (2002, p. 155). Thus, the novel is a narrative of resistance that delineates and validates various forms of anti-colonial resistance.

6. Conclusion:

The analysis of the text, through the prism of the relevant postcolonial postulates, unpacks all the relevant points present in the novel to resolve the research questions and draw a substantiated conclusion in the light of the critical interpretations. Firstly, the analysis has evidenced that the novel unequivocally projects the American national ideals to create a convincing rhetoric of resistance against the British rule in the region. Accordingly, the rhetoric of the text is pivoted on justification of the American agenda of the war, that is, the revolutionary rationale has been warranted. All the revolutionaries have generously been praised for upholding the great national cause of liberation. Secondly, the British logic of legitimacy, the colonial discourse of the benevolent master, has also been contested and rejected vociferously. The indictment is founded on several legal, moral, and political grounds. Thus, it becomes obvious that the contemporary American consciousness relies on the traditional and official rhetoric of the Revolutionary War that is always considered an emblem of the moral supremacy in the American society.

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