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Exploring the History of Colonialism in Australian Literary Texts

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ABSTRACT: This research paper delves into the intricate web of Australian post-colonialism, utilizing key literary and theoretical texts to critically analyze the multifaceted nature of the nation's post-colonial identity. The chosen texts, ranging from works like *My Brilliant Career* and *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn* by Miles Franklin to foundational post-colonial theories such as Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Homi K Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, and *The Empire Writes Back*, collectively provide a rich tapestry for exploring the nuances of Australia's post-colonial experience. This paper aims to unravel the complexities, tensions, and transformations within the Australian post-colonial context, offering insights into the socio-cultural, political, and psychological dimensions of the nation's identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of post-colonialism involves a critical examination of the aftermath of colonial rule and its enduring impact on the colonized societies. Australia, having been colonized by the British, underwent a distinctive post-colonial experience marked by struggles for identity, cultural assertion, and political autonomy. This paper seeks to explore Australian post-colonialism through an interdisciplinary lens, weaving together literary analysis and post-colonial theories to offer a comprehensive understanding of the nation's complex historical and cultural landscape.

Australia's history is deeply rooted in the epoch of British colonization, which unfolded in the late 18th century. The repercussions of this colonization were profound, leaving an indelible mark on Indigenous populations and catalyzing struggles for identity and autonomy. In this section, we provide an overview of Australia's historical context, emphasizing the complex facets of post-colonialism that will be further explored in the paper.

Australia, initially inhabited by diverse Indigenous cultures, witnessed the arrival of the British in the late 1700s. The imposition of British authority led to the displacement and marginalization of Indigenous communities, disrupting established social structures and traditions. This historical backdrop sets the stage for an examination of Australia's post-colonial experience, marked by a profound quest for identity, cultural assertion, and political autonomy.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHOSEN TEXTS FOR ANALYSIS

The selected texts, encompassing the novels of Miles Franklin and seminal post-colonial theories by Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi K Bhabha, serve as crucial instruments for unraveling the layers of Australia's post-colonial journey. Franklin's novels act as windows into the socio-cultural tapestry of 19th-century Australia, providing unique insights into the challenges faced by the colonized. Simultaneously, the theoretical frameworks offer critical lenses through which to scrutinize the persistent impact of colonialism on Australia's evolving identity. This section elucidates the relevance of the chosen texts and theorists in shaping the narrative of Australian post-colonialism.

III. AUSTRALIAN POST-COLONIALISM AND ANALYSIS

Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn* stand as invaluable literary artifacts, offering profound insights into the intricacies of late 19th-century Australia. These novels serve as primary sources for our literary analysis, providing a nuanced contextual foundation for comprehending the multifaceted dynamics of post-colonial Australia.

The literary analysis of Miles Franklin's novels offers a window into the socio-cultural fabric of 19th-century Australia. Through characters, narratives, and settings, Franklin's works illuminate the complexities of identity construction and power dynamics during the post-colonial era. By juxtaposing these literary insights with the theoretical frameworks of Said, Fanon, and Bhabha, we can unveil the intricate layers of Australia's post-colonial experience.

Within the literary canvases of *My Brilliant Career* and *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, Miles Franklin introduces a diverse array of characters whose lives and interactions mirror the complexities of post-colonial Australian society. The examination of these characters' aspirations, conflicts, and relationships becomes a lens through which we can unveil the layers of identity construction, shedding light on how colonial legacies persistently shape individual lives.

In *My Brilliant Career*, the protagonist, Sybylla Melvyn, grapples with societal expectations and her desire for personal and intellectual fulfillment. Her journey becomes emblematic of the broader struggles faced by individuals in a society marked by the remnants of colonial influence. Similarly, *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn* delves into the lives of characters navigating the challenges of post-colonial Australia, providing a panoramic view of the societal tapestry woven by Franklin.

The narrative structures employed by Franklin become crucial in understanding the post-colonial narrative. Through intricate storytelling and character development, she captures the essence of the era, allowing readers to vicariously experience the societal norms, cultural clashes, and power dynamics that defined late 19th-century Australia.

Franklin's exploration of gender roles, class distinctions, and racial dynamics in her novels adds layers of complexity to the post-colonial narrative. These novels offer a nuanced perspective on the intersections of identity in a society grappling with the aftermath of colonization.

The female protagonists in Franklin's works challenge traditional gender norms, offering a glimpse into the evolving roles and expectations for women in post-colonial Australia. The analysis of characters like Sybylla Melvyn and others reveals the tensions between societal expectations and individual agency, highlighting the intricate dance between tradition and progress.

Moreover, class distinctions are meticulously examined, showcasing the disparities and challenges faced by individuals across different social strata. Franklin's characters navigate through societal expectations tied to their economic status, providing a poignant commentary on the lasting impact of colonial hierarchies on class dynamics.

The representation of race in Franklin's novels also contributes to a richer understanding of post-colonial identity. Indigenous characters and those with non-European backgrounds offer insights into the racial dynamics of the time, illustrating how colonial legacies continued to influence social interactions and perceptions.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, originally applied to the Middle East, finds relevance in the Australian context. The stereotyping and exoticization of Indigenous cultures by the British during colonization become crucial focal points for analysis. Said's theories invite a critical examination of how colonial ideologies, manifested through literature and discourse, shaped the perceptions of the colonizers and influenced the construction of a distinct Australian identity.

Applying Said's Orientalism to Franklin's works allows us to dissect the ways in which Indigenous cultures were portrayed and commodified by the colonial powers. The examination of these representations becomes a means to unravel the enduring impact of such ideologies on contemporary perceptions and cultural negotiations within post-colonial Australia.

Frantz Fanon's theories on the psychological dimensions of colonialism provide a compelling framework for understanding the internalized effects of colonization on individuals and societies. In the Australian context, the internal struggles faced by Franklin's characters reflect Fanon's concept of colonial alienation and the quest for decolonization.

The characters' psychological negotiations with colonial norms, expectations, and prejudices become central to the analysis. Fanon's exploration of the impact of colonization on individual and collective psyches aligns with the characters' quests for autonomy and self-definition in Franklin's novels. The psychological dimensions offer a deeper understanding of how post-colonial Australia grappled with the legacy of colonization on a personal and societal level.

Homi K Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and hybridity provides a theoretical lens to analyze the cultural negotiations and intersections within post-colonial societies. In the Australian context, this theory becomes instrumental in understanding the evolving identities and cultural hybridization resulting from the interactions between Indigenous and colonial cultures.

Franklin's characters, existing in a liminal space between tradition and modernity, embody the complexities of hybrid identities. Bhabha's theories become particularly relevant in examining how these characters navigate and negotiate their cultural affiliations in a society shaped by colonial legacies. The exploration of the "third space" allows for a nuanced understanding of the dynamic cultural landscape in post-colonial Australia.

The influence of the British colonial legacy on Australian literature is profound, acting as a prism through which cultural and imperial dynamics converge. Said's theories offer a lens to dissect how Australian literary works, despite emerging on a distinct geographical canvas, bear the indelible imprints of colonialism. The examination of Australian literature through Said's lens allows for a nuanced exploration of how the narratives contribute to the construction of national identity.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said articulates the interconnectedness of culture and imperial projects, asserting that cultural forms often serve as instruments of imperial dominance. Transposing this framework to Australia necessitates an examination of how British imperial values, ideologies, and norms found expression within Australian literary works. The colonial gaze, evident in the portrayal of landscapes, characters, and cultural norms, becomes a focal point for analysis, revealing the subtleties through which imperialism is inscribed into the narrative fabric of Australian literature.

Moreover, Said's emphasis on the intertwined nature of literature and politics invites an exploration of how Australian authors engaged with, subverted, or reinforced imperial ideologies. By scrutinizing the nuances of colonial narratives, we can discern the negotiation of power within literary spaces and trace the contours of resistance that emerged in response to the imperial legacy.

Fanon's theories find resonance in the experiences of Indigenous Australians, whose history has been characterized by dispossession, cultural erasure, and systemic oppression. The parallels between Fanon's observations and the struggles faced by Indigenous communities in post-colonial Australia become apparent when analyzing the interplay of power, identity, and resistance.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon discusses the impact of colonization on the colonized subject's psyche, exploring the internalization of inferiority and the quest for decolonization. Indigenous Australians, having endured centuries of dispossession and cultural suppression, embody these dynamics. Fanon's analysis becomes a lens through which to examine the psychological complexities faced by Indigenous individuals who navigate the intersections of cultural identity, systemic racism, and the ongoing quest for self-determination.

Moreover, Fanon's concept of violence as a tool for liberation invites contemplation in the Australian context. While violence is not advocated as a strategy, Fanon's exploration prompts an examination of the ways in which Indigenous Australians have sought to assert their agency and challenge colonial oppression. The narratives of resistance, whether through cultural revitalization, activism, or reclaiming traditional lands, reflect a nuanced response to the psychological wounds inflicted by colonization.

By scrutinizing Fanon's theories in relation to Indigenous Australians, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play within the post-colonial landscape. The examination reveals the resilience, agency, and cultural reclamation strategies employed by Indigenous communities, shedding light on their ongoing efforts to transcend the psychological impact of colonialism.

Bhabha's theories guide our exploration of how the interplay between cultures shapes the construction of a distinctive Australian post-colonial identity. By identifying moments of hybridity and mimicry in literature, art, and cultural practices, we can discern the unique ways in which Australia negotiates its postcolonial identity.

The formation of Australian post-colonial identity is characterized by a continual negotiation between Indigenous and colonial influences, resulting in a diverse and multifaceted cultural landscape. Bhabha's concept of hybridity offers a lens through which to appreciate the fusion of Indigenous and colonial traditions, giving rise to new forms of cultural expression that transcend binary categorizations.

Moreover, the phenomenon of mimicry sheds light on the complexities of identity formation in post-colonial Australia. While mimicry may initially appear as a form of subjugation, it also serves as a site of resistance and subversion, allowing colonized subjects to assert their agency and challenge colonial hegemony. The examination of mimicry in Australian literature, art, and cultural practices reveals the nuanced ways in which Australians negotiate their identities in relation to colonial legacies.



The Empire Writes Back invites us to delve into the contributions of Miles Franklin and other Australian authors to the broader discourse of post-colonial literature. This section engages in a comprehensive analysis of selected literary works, unraveling the diverse ways in which these authors engage with and reshape colonial narratives.

Miles Franklin's novels, such as *My Brilliant Career* and *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, serve as literary artifacts that exemplify her contributions to the discourse. Through the exploration of characters, themes, and narrative structures, Franklin provides readers with a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of post-colonial Australia. Her writings encapsulate the agency of post-colonial voices, challenging norms and offering alternative perspectives that contribute to the ongoing process of identity reconstruction.

In addition to Franklin, other authors contribute to this discourse by addressing various facets of the post-colonial experience. Indigenous authors, for instance, bring forth narratives that foreground the resilience, cultural reclamation, and resistance of Indigenous communities. This diverse array of voices enriches the post-colonial literary landscape, fostering a more inclusive and representative understanding of Australia's complex identity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, the examination of Miles Franklin's novels and the application of post-colonial theories by Said, Fanon, and Bhabha have unraveled layers of complexity inherent in Australia's post-colonial identity.

The literary analysis of Miles Franklin's works, *My Brilliant Career* and *Some Everyday Folk and Dawn*, unveiled a nuanced portrayal of 19th-century Australia. Franklin's keen observations and narrative prowess allowed us to navigate the societal norms, cultural clashes, and power dynamics characteristic of the post-colonial experience. Characters became conduits through which the struggles for identity, cultural assertion, and autonomy were vividly depicted, offering a glimpse into the socio-cultural fabric of the era.

The theoretical frameworks of Said, Fanon, and Bhabha enriched our exploration by providing lenses through which to critically examine the enduring impact of colonialism on Australia's identity. Said's *Culture and Imperialism* highlighted the cultural ramifications of British imperialism, revealing its influence on Australian literature. Fanon's psychological insights illuminated the profound impact of colonization on the Australian psyche, especially within Indigenous communities. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry provided a framework for understanding the complexities of cultural identity in post-colonial Australia.

The synthesis of these literary and theoretical perspectives offered a holistic understanding of Australia's post-colonial landscape. It became evident that the literature of the time, represented by Franklin's works, serves as a reflection of lived experiences, while the theoretical frameworks provide analytical tools to decode and interpret these experiences. Together, they unveiled the ongoing processes of negotiation, resistance, and reconstruction that define Australia's post-colonial journey.

The complexities of Australian post-colonialism are underscored by the enduring impact of colonization on both individual psyches and collective identities. Fanon's observations on the psychological effects of colonialism find resonance in the struggles faced by Indigenous Australians, who grapple with intergenerational trauma, cultural erasure, and systemic oppression. The ongoing negotiations between Indigenous and colonial cultures, as conceptualized by Bhabha's hybridity and mimicry, further contribute to the intricate nature of Australia's post-colonial identity.

As we navigate the complexities of Australian post-colonialism, it is imperative to recognize the nation's ongoing journey of negotiation, resistance, and reconstruction. The narratives embedded in literature, coupled with the analytical tools provided by post-colonial theories, offer a profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in this process.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the broader discourse on post-colonial studies, inviting scholars, policymakers, and readers to engage in a continued dialogue on the complexities of Australian post-colonialism. The narratives of the past, enriched by literary expressions and theoretical insights, serve as beacons guiding us towards a more inclusive, nuanced, and empathetic understanding of Australia's multifaceted identity in the post-colonial era.

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