



Exploring Power Dynamics: Postcolonial Narratives in Contemporary Anglophone Literature

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article explores the intricate power dynamics within contemporary Anglophone literature through the lens of postcolonial narratives. The objective is to analyze how colonial legacies continue to shape power structures in literature and how contemporary writers navigate and challenge these dynamics. **Methods:** Drawing upon postcolonial theory and literary analysis, this study examines a selection of Anglophone literary works from various regions and contexts. By employing close reading and critical analysis techniques, the study investigates themes, characters, and narrative strategies employed by authors to depict power relations. **Results:** The analysis reveals the multifaceted ways in which power operates within postcolonial narratives. It uncovers the persistence of colonial hierarchies, the complexities of identity formation in the aftermath of colonialism, and the strategies of resistance and subversion employed by marginalized voices. Additionally, the study highlights the role of language, globalization, and intersectionality in shaping power dynamics in contemporary literature. **Conclusion:** Through an exploration of postcolonial narratives in contemporary Anglophone literature, this study illuminates the ongoing relevance of colonial histories and their impact on power relations. It underscores the importance of literature as a site for interrogating and contesting dominant power structures. By acknowledging the diverse voices and perspectives within postcolonial literature, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of power dynamics and their implications for society.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Power dynamics, Anglophone literature, Resistance, Identity

Introduction

The exploration of power dynamics within postcolonial narratives is a central and compelling theme in contemporary Anglophone literature. These narratives delve into the intricate relationships between colonizers and colonized peoples, shedding light on the enduring effects of colonialism and imperialism on societies and individuals. Through various literary forms and techniques, authors navigate the complexities of power, resistance, identity, and cultural hybridity, offering nuanced perspectives on the aftermath of colonial rule. In this exploration, we will embark on a journey through the rich tapestry of postcolonial literature, examining how authors from diverse cultural backgrounds articulate and negotiate power dynamics in their works. By delving into seminal texts and analyzing the thematic preoccupations and narrative strategies employed by these writers, we aim to deepen our understanding of the complexities inherent in postcolonial discourse.

Contextualizing Postcolonial Literature

To comprehend the significance of postcolonial narratives, it is imperative to contextualize them within the broader historical and socio-political framework of colonialism. Colonization, characterized by the domination and exploitation of indigenous peoples and lands by foreign powers, has left indelible marks on the landscapes

it once occupied. The legacies of colonialism reverberate across generations, shaping social structures, cultural identities, and power dynamics in former colonies. Postcolonial literature emerges as a response to this historical legacy, offering a platform for marginalized voices to articulate their experiences and contest dominant narratives. As Homi K. Bhabha contends, postcolonial discourse is characterized by its "hybridity," representing a space of cultural negotiation and resistance where identities are both contested and constructed. Through literature, authors interrogate the complexities of identity formation, belonging, and agency in the aftermath of colonial rule.

Themes of Power and Resistance

At the heart of postcolonial narratives lies the exploration of power dynamics – the unequal distribution of power between colonizers and colonized, and the resistance strategies employed by the latter to subvert hegemonic control. Through a myriad of characters, settings, and plotlines, authors navigate the intricacies of power relations, exposing the mechanisms of oppression and the struggles for liberation.

Chinua Achebe's seminal novel, "Things Fall Apart," offers a poignant portrayal of power dynamics in colonial Nigeria. Set in the late 19th century, the novel chronicles the impact of British colonialism on Igbo society and the ensuing clash of cultures. Achebe foregrounds the resilience of indigenous traditions in the face of colonial encroachment, while also highlighting the vulnerabilities and contradictions within Igbo social structures. Through the character of Okonkwo, Achebe illuminates the complexities of masculinity and power in a rapidly changing world, ultimately underscoring the tragic consequences of colonial disruption. Similarly, in Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children," the theme of power assumes multifaceted dimensions against the backdrop of post-independence India. Rushdie intricately weaves together history, myth, and magical realism to interrogate the complexities of national identity and political authority. Through the protagonist Saleem Sinai, who is born at the exact moment of India's independence, Rushdie explores the entwined destinies of individuals and nations, highlighting the enduring legacies of colonialism and the challenges of self-governance. The novel becomes a metaphorical exploration of power and its discontents, where personal narratives intersect with collective histories in a tumultuous era of nation-building.

Narrative Strategies and Cultural Hybridity

In addition to thematic concerns, postcolonial literature is characterized by its innovative narrative strategies and linguistic experimentation, reflecting the diverse cultural landscapes from which it emerges. Authors often employ a range of stylistic devices, including code-switching, vernacular language, and oral storytelling traditions, to evoke the multiplicities of experience and perspective within postcolonial societies.

Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" exemplifies the interplay between language, power, and cultural hybridity in postcolonial fiction. Set in Kerala, India, against the backdrop of caste discrimination and political upheaval, the novel intricately interweaves English and Malayalam languages to evoke the sensory richness of the South Indian landscape. Through the unconventional narrative structure and lyrical prose, Roy subverts linguistic hierarchies and challenges Eurocentric norms of storytelling, offering a subaltern perspective on history and memory. Similarly, in Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions," the use of Shona language alongside English serves as a potent tool for challenging colonial hegemony and asserting indigenous modes of expression. Set in colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the novel follows the protagonist Tambudzai as she navigates the intersecting oppressions of patriarchy, colonialism, and class stratification. Dangarembga's narrative deftly captures the complexities of identity formation and cultural resistance in a society grappling with the legacies of colonial violence. The exploration of power dynamics within postcolonial narratives is a multifaceted endeavor that encompasses themes of resistance, identity, and cultural hybridity. Through the lens of literature, authors confront the enduring legacies of colonialism and imperialism, offering alternative narratives that challenge dominant discourses and amplify marginalized voices. By delving into the works of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Tsitsi Dangarembga, we gain insight into the complexities of postcolonial experience and the enduring struggle for self-determination and agency. Through this exploration, we endeavor to engage critically with postcolonial literature, recognizing its capacity to illuminate the interconnectedness of power and resistance in a world shaped by colonial histories. By interrogating the narratives that emerge from the margins, we open up new avenues for understanding and solidarity, fostering a more inclusive and equitable discourse on the legacies of colonialism in contemporary society.

Objective of the study

1. Analyze the Representation of Power Dynamics: Investigate how power structures are depicted in postcolonial narratives.
2. Examine Narrative Strategies Employed: Explore the techniques authors use to convey power dynamics in their works.
3. Explore the Implications for Postcolonial Discourse: Assess the broader impact of postcolonial literature on contemporary discourse and cultural understanding.

Materials and Methods

Selection of Materials

Literary Works: A diverse range of postcolonial novels and texts from contemporary Anglophone literature were selected for analysis. These include seminal works by authors such as Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Tsitsi Dangarembga, among others. The selection criteria prioritize texts that are widely recognized for their exploration of power dynamics, resistance, and cultural hybridity within postcolonial contexts.

Secondary Sources: A comprehensive review of scholarly articles, critical essays, and theoretical texts on postcolonial literature was conducted to inform the analytical framework of the study. Secondary sources provide theoretical insights and critical perspectives that enhance the interpretation of primary texts.

Data Collection

Close Reading: The primary method of data collection involves close textual analysis of selected literary works. Each text is examined systematically to identify themes, motifs, narrative techniques, and character dynamics related to power relations and resistance. Close reading allows for a nuanced understanding of how power dynamics are represented and negotiated within the narrative.

Note-taking: Detailed notes are taken during the reading process to document significant passages, quotes, and observations relevant to the research objectives. These notes serve as the basis for further analysis and interpretation of the texts.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to power dynamics, resistance strategies, and cultural representation within the literary texts. Themes such as colonial hegemony, cultural hybridity, identity formation, and agency are examined in relation to the broader socio-political contexts of colonialism and imperialism.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative analysis is used to juxtapose different literary works and explore similarities and differences in their representation of power dynamics and resistance. By comparing narratives across diverse cultural and geographical contexts, this approach illuminates the complexities of postcolonial experience and the multiplicity of voices within the genre.

Theoretical Framework: The analysis is informed by a theoretical framework drawn from postcolonial theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, and other relevant disciplines. Theoretical concepts such as hybridity, subalternity, mimicry, and colonial discourse are applied to interpret the data and elucidate the underlying power dynamics at play in the literary texts.

Ethical Considerations

Respect for Authorial Intent: The analysis respects the authorial intent and artistic integrity of the literary works under examination. Interpretations are grounded in the text and supported by evidence, avoiding speculative or unfounded claims.

Acknowledgment of Marginalized Voices: The study prioritizes the amplification of marginalized voices within postcolonial literature, including those of indigenous peoples, women, and ethnic minorities. Ethical considerations include sensitivity to issues of representation, cultural authenticity, and power imbalances inherent in the research process.

Limitations

Scope: The study focuses primarily on postcolonial narratives in the English language, limiting the scope to a specific linguistic and cultural context. While Anglophone literature offers valuable insights into power dynamics and resistance, other linguistic traditions and cultural perspectives may offer alternative insights not covered in this research.

Subjectivity: The interpretation of literary texts is inherently subjective and influenced by the researcher's perspective and biases. Efforts are made to mitigate subjectivity through rigorous analysis, peer review, and engagement with diverse critical perspectives.

Overall, the materials and methods employed in this study are designed to facilitate a rigorous and nuanced analysis of postcolonial narratives in contemporary Anglophone literature, shedding light on the complexities of power dynamics, resistance strategies, and their implications for broader discourse on colonialism, identity, and cultural representation.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Power Dynamics in Postcolonial Literature

Literary Work	Themes Identified
Things Fall Apart	Colonial Hegemony, Cultural Hybridity, Identity Formation, Resistance Strategies
Midnight's Children	Post-independence Challenges, National Identity, Political Power, Colonial Legacies
The God of Small Things	Caste Discrimination, Cultural Hybridity, Language as Power, Colonial Violence
Nervous Conditions	Patriarchy, Colonial Education, Identity Formation, Resistance Movements

The table presents a thematic analysis of four key literary works within the realm of postcolonial literature: "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe, "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie, "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy, and "Nervous Conditions" by Tsitsi Dangarembga. Each work is associated with distinct thematic elements that encapsulate the complex dynamics of power, identity, and resistance in postcolonial contexts.

"Things Fall Apart," Chinua Achebe's seminal novel, portrays the impact of colonial hegemony on Igbo society in Nigeria. The theme of colonial hegemony underscores the disruptive influence of British imperialism on traditional Igbo culture and social structures. Achebe explores the collision between indigenous customs and colonial forces, highlighting the erosion of cultural autonomy and the disintegration of traditional values. Alongside colonial hegemony, the novel delves into themes of cultural hybridity, illustrating the interplay between indigenous traditions and external influences. Identity formation emerges as a central concern, particularly in the protagonist Okonkwo's struggle to reconcile his personal aspirations with societal expectations. Additionally, the narrative foregrounds resistance strategies employed by the Igbo community to preserve their cultural heritage in the face of colonial encroachment.

In "Midnight's Children," Salman Rushdie explores the complexities of post-independence India through the lens of protagonist Saleem Sinai. The novel navigates postcolonial challenges such as national identity formation, political power struggles, and the enduring legacies of colonialism. Post-independence challenges encompass the tumultuous period of nation-building and the quest for self-determination amid socio-political upheaval. National identity emerges as a contested terrain, shaped by diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic identities. Rushdie also interrogates the lingering impact of colonial legacies on contemporary India, highlighting the complex interplay between historical memory and present realities.

Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" exposes the intersection of caste discrimination, cultural hybridity, and colonial violence in Kerala, India. The novel critiques the hierarchical caste system that perpetuates social inequalities and stifles individual agency. Cultural hybridity is portrayed through the juxtaposition of indigenous traditions with Western influences, illustrating the tensions between tradition and modernity. Language emerges as a tool of power and oppression, reflecting broader dynamics of colonial domination and cultural hegemony.

Finally, Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions" explores themes of patriarchy, colonial education, identity formation, and resistance in colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The narrative exposes the patriarchal structures that constrain women's lives and perpetuate gender inequality. Colonial education serves as a site of indoctrination and assimilation, erasing indigenous knowledge and perpetuating colonial ideologies. Identity formation becomes a site of contention as the protagonist navigates the complexities of cultural assimilation and resistance to colonial oppression. The thematic analysis of these literary works illuminates the multifaceted nature of power dynamics, identity construction, and resistance strategies within postcolonial contexts. Each text offers unique insights into the enduring legacies of colonialism and the complexities of navigating cultural hybridity and social change in the aftermath of colonization.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Power Representation in Selected Literary Works

Literary Works Compared	Similarities	Differences
Things Fall Apart vs. Midnight's Children	Examination of Colonial Hegemony Exploration of Cultural Hybridity Themes of Identity Formation	Representations of Colonial Violence Political Contexts Narrative Structures
The God of Small Things vs. Nervous Conditions	Themes of Cultural Hybridity Critique of Colonial Violence Resistance Strategies	Treatment of Language as Power Gender Dynamics

The table compares key thematic similarities and differences between pairs of literary works within the realm of postcolonial literature: "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe and "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie, and "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy and "Nervous Conditions" by Tsitsi Dangarembga.

In comparing "Things Fall Apart" with "Midnight's Children," both novels share common thematic threads despite differing narrative settings and contexts. Both texts engage in an examination of colonial hegemony, albeit from distinct perspectives. Achebe's novel delves deeply into the impact of colonial hegemony on Igbo society in Nigeria, highlighting the erosion of traditional values and cultural autonomy. Similarly, Rushdie's work explores the repercussions of colonialism in post-independence India, particularly in terms of the lingering influence of British rule on Indian society. Additionally, both texts address themes of cultural hybridity, reflecting the complex interplay between indigenous traditions and external influences. However, while "Things Fall Apart" primarily focuses on examining colonial hegemony, "Midnight's Children" delves more extensively into political contexts, portraying the complexities of nation-building and postcolonial governance. Furthermore, "Midnight's Children" features intricate narrative structures, including magical realism and nonlinear storytelling, which differ from the more straightforward narrative style of "Things Fall Apart."

Similarly, "The God of Small Things" and "Nervous Conditions" share thematic similarities while also presenting notable differences. Both texts explore themes of cultural hybridity, illustrating the tensions between tradition and modernity in postcolonial societies. Roy's novel critiques the hierarchical caste system in India and the impact of colonial violence on individual lives, while Dangarembga's work interrogates colonialism's legacy in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), particularly through the lens of gender dynamics and resistance strategies. Both texts also examine the treatment of language as a tool of power, though in different ways. "The God of Small Things" portrays language as a means of cultural preservation and resistance, while "Nervous Conditions" explores the colonial imposition of English and its effects on identity formation. Moreover, "Nervous Conditions" delves deeper into gender dynamics and the critique of colonial violence, foregrounding the experiences of women within patriarchal and colonial structures. While the paired literary works share thematic similarities such as an exploration of cultural hybridity and resistance strategies, they also diverge in their treatment of specific themes and narrative techniques. Through these comparative analyses, readers gain insight into the diverse ways in which postcolonial literature engages with and critiques the legacies of colonialism, highlighting the complexities of identity, power, and resistance in a postcolonial world.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Narrative Structures and Thematic Focuses in Postcolonial Literature

Literary Works Compared	Narrative Structures	Thematic Focuses
Things Fall Apart vs. Midnight's Children	Linear narrative with episodic structure Nonlinear narrative with magical realism	Colonial Hegemony, Cultural Hybridity, Identity Cultural Hybridity, Identity Formation, Political Contexts
The God of Small Things vs. Nervous Conditions	Nonlinear narrative with fragmented structure Linear narrative with introspective narration	Cultural Hybridity, Language as Power, Colonial Violence Patriarchy, Colonial Violence, Identity Formation

The provided table offers a comparative analysis of the narrative structures and thematic focuses of the literary works: "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe and "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie, as well as "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy and "Nervous Conditions" by Tsitsi Dangarembga. In examining the narrative structures, "Things Fall Apart" and "Nervous Conditions" adopt a linear narrative approach, presenting events in a chronological order. Achebe's novel follows a linear trajectory, depicting the life of Okonkwo and the gradual unraveling of Igbo society under colonial influence. Similarly, Dangarembga employs a linear narrative style to trace the protagonist's journey of self-discovery amidst colonial Rhodesia. This narrative structure facilitates a clear progression of events and character development, enabling readers to engage with the unfolding story in a systematic manner.

In contrast, "Midnight's Children" and "The God of Small Things" depart from traditional linear narratives, opting for more complex and non-linear storytelling techniques. Rushdie's novel employs magical realism and a fragmented narrative structure to weave together disparate events and characters, reflecting the chaotic and multifaceted nature of post-independence India. Similarly, Roy's novel features a nonlinear narrative with fragmented storytelling, shifting between past and present and interweaving multiple perspectives to construct a layered and intricate narrative tapestry. These non-linear narrative structures challenge conventional storytelling conventions, inviting readers to navigate through a mosaic of interconnected narratives and thematic layers.

Regarding thematic focuses, "Things Fall Apart" and "Midnight's Children" both explore themes of cultural hybridity and identity formation within the context of colonialism. Achebe's novel delves into the clash between indigenous Igbo traditions and colonial influences, highlighting the complexities of cultural assimilation and resistance. Similarly, Rushdie's work interrogates the formation of national identity and the legacy of colonialism in post-independence India, portraying the diverse cultural and religious landscapes that shape the Indian identity.

On the other hand, "The God of Small Things" and "Nervous Conditions" examine themes such as patriarchy, colonial violence, and identity formation through different narrative lenses. Roy's novel critiques the hierarchical caste system and colonial violence in India, while also exploring the impact of language as a tool of power. Dangarembga's work foregrounds the experiences of women within patriarchal and colonial structures, offering a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics and resistance strategies in colonial Rhodesia. The comparative analysis of narrative structures and thematic focuses provides insight into the diverse approaches adopted by these literary works in exploring the complexities of postcolonial experience. Each text employs narrative techniques that reflect its thematic concerns, offering readers multiple entry points into the rich tapestry of postcolonial literature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of contemporary Anglophone literature through the lens of postcolonial narratives unveils the intricate power dynamics deeply rooted in colonial legacies and their enduring impact on societal structures. Through a rigorous analysis drawing upon postcolonial theory and literary critique, this study elucidates the complexities of power relations embedded within these narratives. The findings reveal the persistent influence of colonial hierarchies on identity formation, illustrating how historical power imbalances continue to shape characters' lives and interactions. Moreover, the study uncovers the nuanced strategies of resistance and subversion employed by marginalized voices, shedding light on the agency and resilience of individuals and communities in challenging oppressive systems. Furthermore, the role of language, globalization, and intersectionality emerges as crucial factors shaping power dynamics in contemporary literature. Language serves as both a tool of domination and a site of resistance, reflecting the complexities of cultural identity and linguistic imperialism. Globalization amplifies interconnectedness while simultaneously perpetuating disparities and inequalities, further complicating power relations within literary narratives. Intersectionality underscores the interplay of various social identities, such as race, gender, and class, in shaping experiences of power and privilege. In essence, this study underscores the ongoing relevance of postcolonial narratives in interrogating dominant power structures and advocating for social justice. By amplifying marginalized voices and challenging hegemonic discourses, contemporary Anglophone literature serves as a powerful tool for fostering empathy, understanding, and critical engagement with the legacies of colonialism. Through this exploration, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of power dynamics and their implications for society, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping narratives of resistance and transformation. In conclusion, the analysis of postcolonial narratives in contemporary Anglophone literature highlights the enduring legacy of colonialism and the imperative of literature as a catalyst for social change and justice.

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