

Representations of Australian Indigenous People in Children's Books in France and Australia – a comparative study

Alice Duncan

Abstract:

This comparative study explores the impact of French children's literature on the representation of Indigenous Australian people and culture, specifically addressing the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. It recognises the influential role of children's literature in shaping future generations' worldviews and investigates how these narratives construct Indigenous culture as "other," contributing to the enduring effects of colonialism.

By considering the historical context of colonialism and its ongoing implications for Indigenous cultures, this study highlights the contradiction between the perpetuation of colonial attitudes and France's espoused value of equality. It emphasises the significance of studying children's literature as a means of perpetuating colonial ideologies across generations and shaping beliefs and attitudes that uphold social inequalities. The research draws on a comparative analysis of contemporary children's books from France and Australia, providing insights into the portrayal of Australian Indigenous people and focusing on postcolonial issues and the transmission of cultural heritage.

The findings of this research hold significant implications for fostering cultural understanding and equality between European nations and Australia, as well as for highlighting the perpetuation of social inequalities. The goal is to facilitate ongoing and meaningful dialogues about the social and political constructs that influence our perception, with a particular focus on the representation of Australian Indigenous culture in narrative-based literature.

This research draws on the extensive collections of French children's books from the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Sorbonne Paris Nord University library. It is supported in Australia and France by RMIT University and the Sorbonne Paris Nord University.

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Alice Duncan is an artist and writer based in Naarm, Melbourne Australia. She is undertaking a PhD in Fine Art at RMIT University on *Photography, Australian Cultural Identity, National Identity and Nationalism*. She gained a Master of Fine Art (Photography) in 2019 from RMIT University for her research *Love It Or Leave It: Representations of Australian Landscape*. In 2022, Alice was the recipient of the Nicolas Baudin Scholarship and undertook a six-month research residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. She has recently published a photographic editorial with accompanying essay exploring Marcia Langton's theory of colonial anxiety in the central Australian desert in HAPAX Magazine 2, 2022; and *Colonial Myths and Contemporary Portrayals*, 2020, an essay exploring the ongoing legacy of colonial portrayals of Indigenous people and culture and its effects on contemporary society.