

https://dspace.org/

Laughter in darkness: humour in selected contemporary Zimbabwean short stories

Joseph, Confidence

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/26349

Joseph, Confidence Mshakarara (2018) Laughter in darkness:Humour in selected contemporary Zimbabwean short stories, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/26349>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

Amidst the ongoing socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe, it has long been dangerous to publicly criticize or condemn the situation in ways that put the government in a bad light. However, humorous stories have provided a platform through which such issues may be engaged outside the censoring regime. In this research report I use humour theory and James Scott's concepts of 'hidden transcripts' and 'everyday forms of resistance' to unpack how writers engage with the political and socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe through the genre of the short story. The research paper shows that humour has been deployed as both a conscious strategy of subversion and an emancipatory tool at the same time. In the course of this endeavour, the research report also sheds light on how humour is coded as a coping mechanism in stressful or overwhelming situations allowing some respite amidst life challenges. The primary texts examined in the paper are *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) by Petina Gappah and *Laughing Now: Short Stories from Zimbabwe* (2007) edited by Irene Staunton. The study comes to the conclusion that in as much as protest literature does not necessarily send people out in the streets in protest, the use of humour in these stories allows for certain modes of thinking and being which resist official narratives and other manifestations of power.