

Abstract

This project contributes to the growing scholarly work that foregrounds water as a critical tool for, and object of analysis. I am interested in how creative writers and filmmakers employ water and water spirits in forms such as novels and films from Southern Africa. While I refer to the beings as water spirits in this thesis, they are also known as water gods or deities. In this project, I explore how water spirits are used as innovative literary devices in different texts as they are re-imagined in line with changing historical contexts and authorial visions. Water is both life-giving and mortally dangerous, and water spirits often manifest similar dualities. To create a conceptual framework for this thesis, I benefitted from several theories that include water mythologies, magical realism, and post-colonial ecocriticism. I argue that while the histories of the nation have been intricately tied to the land, a watery turn reveals fresh insights into our understandings of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial conversations. Watery spaces are complex and contested sites like land territories. The complexity of watery spaces invites my exploration of the materiality of water and the representation of water spirits in the selected texts in a decolonial frame. The way the selected texts represent the entanglements between the human and non-human, land, and water, the natural and the supernatural, speaks to the many ways of being in the world.