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Constructions of place in Aziz Hassim's fiction

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Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to analyse the constructions of place in Aziz Hassim's fiction in order to demonstrate the close relationship between postcolonial writers and place. By analysing Hassim's three novels, this dissertation engages in a comparative study on the construction of place through different methods of remembering and through different sub-genres of historical fiction. I shall adopt a shifting perspective on the construction of both the urban and rural spaces in Hassim's fiction, looking at place in both its oppressive and liberatory form. I draw on Foucault's theorization of the Panopticon and the oppressive power of place. Theorist Michel de Certeau is used as a counterpoint to Foucault when engaging with place in its more liberating form. Hassim uses fiction as a method by which to reclaim history. He engages in the postcolonial act of recalling the history of once-marginalized people and places. It is the feeling, experiences and perspectives on social life of the city's inhabitants which come to define the city. Hassim also shows place as conducive to the remaking of culture, resulting in the creation of multiple identities, histories and cultures. Even under the oppressive nature of the Apartheid laws, place is still shown as a site of multiracialism and multiculturalism. Fiction becomes a method by which place is viewed in de Certeau terms.