

https://dspace.org/

Writing b(l)ack: the ab(use) of the English language in texts by two post-94 black South African authors

Phalafala, Portia Mahlodi

2012-08-13
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11748

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

Abstract

With the advent of the relatively new democracy, there is a plethora of contemporary black fiction in South Africa, where black authors take the English language and recontexualise it to suit their narratives. This is done mostly for the purposes of shaping identities; it is an assertion of self in relation to the history of the country, where that self is linked to the culture and heritage that has weathered the apartheid storms. Therefore in the two texts chosen for this dissertation, the trope of silence and violence, and the resistance against those two factors are prevalent. As a result, the texts carry the burden of the past and the pursuit of a new voice through a new language in a new country. This burden has been called a 'crisis of representation' by Lewis Nkosi, where contexts overwhelm texts. The writers in my dissertation use English as their medium of creativity but feel profound ambivalence towards this language, and further feel that it is unable to carry the experience of a black South African. This gives them great creative challenges where they have to take that language and fuse it with local terms in order to indigenise and localise it. It is the dissertation's aim to view the various forms of strategies used to superimpose context over text, at any cost. Language in postcolonialism is at the centre of my research although the discipline of sociolinguistics also has much to offer. My main questions are: what happens when context overwhelms text? What happens when writers who write in English feel profound ambivalence towards that language? To what extent have their pens been freed and how do they use that freedom in their art? And finally, although the era of protest literature has come to an end, how come these writers are still writing in and of a combative style?