

1.14 Place and Displacement: the Theme of Home and Belonging in Post-Colonial Literature.

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ABSTRACT

The preoccupation with the concept of home and belonging is a familiar aspect of literature produced by writers of former colonies. It is considered to be a result of the alienation experienced by the colonized as they are made to appropriate and integrate into the culture of the colonizer. The obvious “gap” in experience and the inadequacy of the language of the colonizer is thought to result in the creation of the “new Englishes” such as Indian English, Sri Lankan English, and Australian English and so on.

This study aims to explore the aspects of home and belonging in fiction by writers of two different cultures; that of Sri Lanka and New Zealand. The primary texts concerned are “Turtle Nest” by Chandani Lokuge, a Sri Lankan migrant writer, and “Hummingbird” by James George, a Maori writer. The paper analyses the concept of home as created by the writers in their texts as a reaction to “dislocation” and “cultural denigration”. A close study of the specific imagery used by the writers to evoke their unique cultures and experiences will be considered in order to explore these concepts. Further, the research pays attention to the language of the texts, keeping in mind the use of language by post-colonial writers as a tool of subversion against colonial cultural formations.

Furthermore, this research attempts to explore how the writers have used the genre of fiction as a means of exploring the concepts of “dislocation” as a result of migration as in the case of Lokuge and “cultural denigration” in terms of the conscious and unconscious suppression of the indigenous cultural identity by the imposition of the dominant cultural model of the colonizer as in the case of George. In so doing the analysis raises the following questions: Are the writers successful in subverting and questioning the structures of the language of the colonizers and thereby energizing their own “English”? Have they been able to bridge the “gap” between experience and language in a positive and creative way? The research aims to find answers to the above queries and explore the impact of such texts on the local and international readership.