

Writing the 'Rainbow Nation'? Examining 20 Years of Post-Apartheid Literature



International Conference

4. & 5. April 2014

University of Regensburg (Germany)

In his controversial essay "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" (1989), Albie Sachs warned against seeing literature (and culture more generally) as merely a form of propaganda for 'the struggle,' arguing instead for texts that display "ambiguity and contradiction". What road did South African literature take after this critique of 'struggle literature'?

Almost 25 years after the release of Nelson Mandela (February 1990) and exactly 20 years after the first democratic elections (April 1994) that ended white minority rule in South Africa, it seems appropriate to host a conference focussing exclusively on 'post-apartheid literature'. The conference will bring together specialists on South African literature for two days of analysing and discussing contemporary South African writing, looking at 'new voices' that started their literary careers in the last twenty years, and at established authors who continued writing. What topics are taking centre stage, and which methods are used to address them creatively? Is the "reimagination of history" of particular interest, as André Brink speculated in 1993? Or are most writers concerned with questions of "delivery", a topic Michael Green identified as the central area of contestation on all levels of South African (party) politics in 2007? How are issues like urbanisation, migration, immigration/emigration, masculinity/femininity or disease (HIV/AIDS) reflected in contemporary writing? Have new genres been established during the last twenty years? What theories can be fruitfully applied to post-apartheid writing? These are among the questions to be addressed at this conference.

The convenors will try to interest an international publishing house in bringing out an essay collection based on the conference.

Papers are invited on all aspects of post-apartheid literature. The focus will be on South African literature in English, but papers dealing with writing in any other official South African language are also welcome (all papers to be held in English). If you are interested in presenting a paper (30 min. presentation plus discussion time), please send a proposal of 200-300 words to jochen.petzold@sprachlit.uni-regensburg.de; please include a brief bio-sketch with your proposal. The call for papers closes on 31 July 2013. (Notification of acceptance: 15 October 2013)

For more information, visit the conference website:

www.uni-regensburg.de/sprache-literatur-kultur/anglistik/staff/petzold/rainbow-nation