

Abstract

This article is a reading of Sandra Braude's novel, *Mpho's Search* (1994), which is set in apartheid South Africa, in the context of race, nation and its status as a children's literature text. It argues that the trope of childhood and the trajectory of the life of the eponymous character in the text are entangled with the discourses of race, subjugation and national liberation and transformation. It explores how the narrative uses the journey motif, and appropriates and inverts the configured family trope of colonial and imperial discourses in order to imagine and re-configure the discourse of the nation in the search for emancipation and black majority rule in pre-1994 apartheid South Africa. The challenges of building the new nation from the ruins of the past are highlighted and the hope and optimism are embodied by the young characters in the text. In addition, the text's role in educating children about their past in general, and also conscientising them on the problems confronting street children are also highlighted. Equally important is its role in modelling young learners by helping them reconfigure old racially premised subjectivities and embrace new ones in line with the changed realities of the nation.