

# Introduction

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Using material collected in 1992, Bernth Lindfors tabulates data of the teaching of anglophone African national literatures at South African universities according to his well-known Better Ultimate Rating Plan. This scheme serves to quantify qualitative discriminations made by teachers, to identify patterns in institutional data and to discover the extent to which the English curriculum at universities in postcolonial situations have been decolonised (or Africanised) since independence. Among others, his main finding is that African literature is still marginalised when compared to traditional EngLit. Pointing out that even though his measuring instrument may be crude and the data incomplete, his conclusions will remain. Addressing the issue of the teaching of South African anglophone literature inside South Africa and in other parts of Africa, he proposes a Pan-African syllabus. Such a syllabus should be based on the teaching preferences of both North and South, be a multicultural enterprise and reflect the remarkable racial, social, temporal and national heterogeneity of Africa itself.

In their response to Bernth Lindfors, Judith Coullie and Trish Gibbon state that they do not disagree on the necessity that the curricula of South African universities should reflect (and reflect on) their South Africanness and Africanness or that traditional EngLit be dethroned. However, they criticise his views related to processes of canonisation and his uncritical views concerning methodology. On the *former*, the notion of canon as such, value-judgements (or ideology) informing canonisation (also a Pan-African syllabus) and the relationship between institutional practice and field of study should be radically interrogated by both staff and students. Arguing that Lindfors's views on heterogeneity and diversity are incompatible with his advocacy of a critical consensus on a Pan-African syllabus, they state that traditional EngLit should not be utterly ostracised but rather serve to provide a basis on which students may interact with peers at European and American universities. Moreover, such knowledge will enable them to interrogate the

ideologies which fuelled dreams of Empire. On the *latter*, Coullie and Gibbon provide more accurate data concerning the 1992 course prescriptions at the UDW English department and criticise the logic and moral behind Lindfors's use and interpretation of data. In order to effectively participate in processes of transformation, they contend, the most important is to open a space of contestation that is a necessary part of democratic social life.

Concurring with Coullie and Gibbon on the continuous reform or (ideologically speaking) decolonisation of South African curricula, the need to familiarise pupils and students with their own national literary heritage and on not completely ostracising traditional English from South African syllabi, Lindfors explains why his measuring procedures should not be dismissed in terms of the labels attached to it by Coullie and Gibbon. Concerning the additional information of UDW's prescriptions in 1992, he puts forward a new interpretation of the data they provide and conclude that it does not change much of his original findings. Lindfors further contends that he does not impose an alternative African canon on English departments and criticises Coullie and Gibbon's radical approach or idiosyncratic enterprise to processes of canonisation. Since South African literature is a relatively new field for many a South African lecturer, decisions on text prescriptions should be a collective activity, continuously open to innovative change and guided by good communal judgement. Furthermore, it may be more important to prepare students to interact with peers in Africa in terms of African literature than with peers in the West. Lindfors concludes his argument by briefly proposing in what order—according to the dictum of a moving from the known to the lesser known—various literatures may be prescribed in South African English syllabi and how it may impact on South Africa's cultural identity.

Sikhumbuzo Mngadi confronts the politics of history as discourse. The justification of this focus is that colonialism and imperialism saw in history the most efficient vehicle through which to promote its agenda of total occupation of colonised spaces. Since colonised African communities have repoliticised history to reaffirm their place in world history through their anti-colonial historical interpretation, Mngadi attempts to show the manner in which African communities have proceeded to 'take on the coloniser'. He argues that there have been deliberate attempts to reintroduce the precolonial past as having been curtailed in the process of developing the project of a specifically African enlightenment. The counter-move to this characteristically nationalist-orientated historical contestation were attempts to negotiate the intricate middle space between collusion with imperial history and its reverse opposite. This latter mode of historical interpretation tended to evince a

sense of history betrayed, in that its apparent ‘lack of decisive political function’, as it were, was for those who favoured a more organicist historicism, vulnerable to cooption. On the contrary, it is precisely the continuous quest for the articulation of the middle-space which brings to the fore the complexities inherent in the spaces of contestation.

Focusing on Apartheid’s crisis in the 1980s, H.J. Vermeulen develops Lacan’s theorising to explore the so-called Afrikaner psyche as reflected in Pieter Fourie’s play, *Die koggelaar*. A brief sketch of symptoms of the crisis in racist Afrikanerdom and its representations in some Afrikaans plays is followed by a review of the content of the play, its reception and a justification of a Lacanian approach. Developing Lacan’s Schema L to allow for various articulations of psychoanalytic theory, Vermeulen uses these insights to explore the significance of the play in terms of the theory and his earlier situating of the play in its historical, social and familial context. Finally, the possible significance of reviews such as his own is questioned.

With particular reference to the re-worked play, *Medea* (directed by Mark Fleishman and Jenny Reznik, with the Jazzart dancers), Miki Flockemann’s contribution explores how theatre serves as an index of the processes of social and cultural transition, the interaction between directors/dramatists/performing artists and critics, and how this may be important in the teaching context. The central argument is that the adaptation of the Medea myth serves as an example of a work that shakes off the ghosts of the past even in the process of invoking them, and in so doing, makes space for something to grow. As such, it can be useful for discussing issues associated with multilingualism, working in culturally heterogeneous teaching contexts while simultaneously avoiding some of the pitfalls associated with multiculturalism in the South African context. A few views on what multiculturalism, identity formation and cross-cultural exchange in a multicultural (non-hierarchical teaching) context signify, as well as the role of theatre and more particularly the interactive role of audience and students with the performance of a play, are then provided. Finally, the production of the re-worked *Medea* and the responses of students on issues of knowledge, power, (en)gendered identity and culture as these relate to our phase of transition, are reviewed.

Richard Bartlett examines some of the paradoxical representations of South Africa in the literature of Mozambique. He treats a few poems, short stories and novels. These representations are arranged according to the divisions of the time of the *assimilado* elite, the rise of a nationalist ideology, the armed struggle as well as the era of independence and the civil war with Renamo. Alternating the argument between Mozambican relations with Portugal and

South Africa, Bartlett argues that despite South Africa's exploitative influence on Mozambique, it is rarely treated as such. In the context of migrant labour, it mainly functions as substitute centre but there is no evidence of writing back to it as there is of a writing back to Lisbon. He concludes that here, post-colonial theory needs to include in its theorising the interrogation of centre-periphery relationships in regional context.

In dealing with the recent spectre of the older Western censure of the existence of African philosophy, Mabogo P. More identifies Western man's valorisation of 'reason' as the primary determining factor for the return of this controversy. He consecutively addresses the articulation and hypostasising of Western man's self-image and how African people are perceived from within this construct. He argues that it is primarily this collusion which effects the racist and often veiled rejection of African philosophy and uses two recent South African publications to demonstrate the argument. Dislodging reason from its (male) Western moorings, More emphatically shows that since all human beings have the capacity for reason, it does not have to be demonstrated that they participate in rational (philosophical) activity.

The review article of Tsenay Serequeberhan's *African Philosophy. The Essential Readings* primarily focuses on the African philosophical agenda as it developed during the 1980s. Overviews are provided of the historical explanatory approach, first and second order philosophy and common features of African philosophy. This is followed by overviews and critical observations concerning the critical dialogue on ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, national-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy, hermeneutical-historical philosophy, dialogue on modernisation in Africa, African resistance to the myth of the European Civilising Mission and the deconstructive and reconstructive challenge in African philosophy.