

# Editorial: *AlterNation* Open Issue #02

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Within the interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary thematic research fields in the Arts and Humanities, *Alternation* has initially, mainly concentrated on the classical Arts subjects, viz. Religion, Language, Literature, and History – not least the history of southern African Literature and Languages –, and over the last twenty-odd years on Culture Studies, Development Studies, Anthropology, Intercultural Communication Studies, Cognitive Studies, Translation Studies, a number of the various branches of Education, and the African Digital Humanities, to name but a few. Since fifteen years ago, and even though it has been factored into *Alternation* research from its beginnings, we have embarked on cross-college research, involving Information Technology, and Information Sciences, as well as Management Studies and Governance. Social epistemologies have also been addressed, not least in the areas of human ecology, migration studies and decolonial epistemologies, all within a broad-based social transformation paradigm. This paradigm has been benchmarked against, and integrated epistemological values that furthered non-racialism, non-sexism and non-sectarianism, within a broader moral framework of social responsibility and responsiveness to a wide variety of socio-cultural challenges and conundrums we face in Africa. In the wake of the demise of colonisation, and as part of a strong continentwide, upward trajectory of human capability, social, and capital development the still young epistemologies need to be nurtured with care and compassion, not least as these are grounded within indigenous knowledge systems and knowledge-power ecologies.

After 25 years of publishing thematic issues in the Arts and Humanities, a more recent initiative, within the ambit of this broad knowledge

production field, was to publish our first open issue in 2018 – *Alternation* Open Issue #01. The main rationale is that there has been a rising tide of scholars who wanted to collaborate with *Alternation*, but not only via the *Alternation* thematic research groups, but also wished to contribute to the developing *Alternation* discursive formation from their other research interests and collegial research networks. A related matter, is that our moving towards fully using the OJS online management system as from 2021, opens up many more opportunities for the submission of diverse research project outcomes in the field of the Arts and Humanities.

This current issue is then our second open issue, and we hope to publish at least one more before the year is out. We also hope that this series will go from strength to strength, similar to the research groups' thematic issues, and focuses continue their knowledge production capacities and outputs in the quest to produce cutting-edge contextually-relevant scholarly and socially transformative knowledge impacts on our continent.

Finally *Alternation* Open Issue #02, contains a sample of the research thrusts in these inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary fields. And, in this Editorial, we let the authors again speak in their own words, as to what they have aimed to achieve, in their special research focuses and outputs.



In their 'Information Systems in a Transdisciplinary Perspective: Leaping to a Larger Stage', **Jan H. Kroeze**, **Bob Travica** and **Izak van Zyl** argue that a transdisciplinary approach can advance the field of Information Systems (IS). By taking a transdisciplinary approach, researchers reach beyond the bounds of their disciplinary ontology and epistemology in order to address complex phenomena. Such a high level of synthesis is not possible with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. While these approaches have been deployed in the IS field, transdisciplinarity is still lacking. The article reviews the literature that indicates the relationship between transdisciplinarity and complexity, and posits that the former is a response to the latter. Following a conceptual research approach, it is demonstrated that mainstream IS research is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary rather than transdisciplinary. Finally, it is argued that the IS field is a promising candidate for ascending up the transdisciplinary path that, in turn, can improve its development prospects.

**Oscar Koopman** addresses the questions, ‘Is the Decolonization of the South African University Curriculum Possible in a Neoliberal Culture?’, within his theorising of the current paradigm of neoliberalism. The ascendancy of neoliberalism in South Africa not only permeated the rhythms of every aspect of human life – political, economic, social and cultural – but also powerfully affected the landscape of higher education. Consequently, the higher education sector has become interwoven with complex neoliberal ideals and core principles that favour the subjectivity of a global entrepreneurial class. Given the immense impact of these ideals on the university landscape –the curriculum in particular – this paper is an attempt to show, 1) what is the relationship between neoliberalism and decolonization? And, 2) how this super complex relationship (between neoliberalism and decolonization) shapes/influences the decolonization project. To this end the paper first provides a brief explanation of what is meant by the term ‘decolonisation’ of the university curriculum. Secondly, a brief explanation of the core ideals and principles of neoliberalism is provided. Thirdly, the paper discusses how these core ideals and principles, as a system of power, permeates the South African university curricula promoting a Westernised academic culture. Finally, the paper explains why decolonisation is important and offers some ideas on how to decolonise the curriculum landscape, despite the vice of neoliberal ideals.

**Hermien Johannes** and **Simon Goldstone** argue that the #FeesMustFall disruptions at South African Universities have resulted in the application of a new approach to controlling the e-Assessment environment for formal summative assessments. In their ‘#FeesMustFall: Changing the Landscape of e-Assessment to Accelerate Connective Assessment Design for Sustainable e-Assessment in Higher Education’, they address the question: Do we have to control the environment? If yes, what if we can’t do it in a traditional way? We argue that high-stakes assessments could be effectively controlled by purposeful design, and that the dynamic Connective Assessment Design (ConAD) model for e-Assessment in higher education could provide structure and direction, not only for formative, but also for high-stake summative e-Assessment in higher education. This paper describes the conceptualisation, design and implementation processes, as well as examples of the application of the ConAD model for e-Assessment in higher education.

Pointing out that the most recent student protests have yet again echoed calls for ‘decolonisation’, **Nuraan Davids’** ‘Love in the Time of

Decoloniality', also addresses this important issue. Much has been offered by way of responses in terms of decolonising curricula, knowledge, and spaces. Now that the proverbial dust has settled (somewhat), it is necessary to cast some much needed attention on what exactly is understood by decolonisation, and indeed, whether the bull has actually been taken by its horns. The concern of this article is twofold. In the first instance, it troubles commonly accepted conceptions of decolonisation, and makes an argument for decoloniality instead. In the second instance, by reconsidering understandings of decoloniality, I make a case for a decoloniality of love, as a form of rupturing.

For her, 'Language Attitudes and Communication in the Public Space: A Rural Case Study in South Africa', **Chrismi-Rinda Loth**, works with a constructionist perspective, as it considers attitudes to be interactionally emergent and contextually-situated communicative events, instead of pre-existing stable entities. As such, there is usually some degree of discrepancy between professed attitudes and actual behaviour, she argues. The article explores the linguistic reactions to three different types of communicative events, namely evaluative reactions (elicited language attitudes), spoken communication, and language choices made on public signage (i.e. the linguistic landscape) in the Kopanong Local Municipality in the southern Free State province. At first there appears to be significant deviation between the linguistic reactions in the three contexts. However, upon closer inspection these 'deviations' are in fact congruent with the local linguistic culture, thereby revealing the social consensus underlying linguistic interaction in this area. This revelation confirms the importance of studying social phenomena in context and proves the value of comparative studies in sociolinguistic research.

In his 'Ecocentrism in Practice: A Search for Nodes on Humanity's Immune System', **David Anthony Pittaway** takes the ecological crisis and the physical anthropogenic causes of it as axiomatic. With this crisis and its physical causes as backdrops, the issue of attitudinal causes of the crisis will preliminarily be focused on. Lyn White Junour's take on the issue will be considered briefly, as will Pierre Hadot's descriptions of the Promethean and Orphic attitudes. The central question of this paper will then be asked: what do ecocentric attitudes entail? A broad literature review is offered in order to illustrate aspects of eligible attitudinal components: older cultures; the unnamed movement traced by Hawken in *Blessed Unrest*; the Occupy Movement, Eisenstein's model of a sacred economy, and some aspects of Deep Ecology. These examples of ecologically sensitive, ecocentric attitudes can be

looked at as points on humanity's immune system, a system that may become increasingly important as the systems historically dominating humanity buckle under the pressure of ailing ecosystems and economies.

**Lee-Shae S. Scharnick-Udemans's** 'Regulating Religion: The Mediatisation of Islam on Public Broadcast Television in South Africa', objectifies broadcasting policy, and approaches Islam, as portrayed in the public broadcast television series, 'An Nur', and 'The Light', as a product of modern nationalism. Following Talal Asad's theory of the multiple formations of the secular, the republicisation of religion and the mediatisation of Islam along with its strategic value for the nation-building endeavours of the state in the post-apartheid South Africa, will be analysed in light of the preconditions set forth for religion within the parameters of the modern constitutional state and the institutional logic of the public broadcasting landscape. It will be argued that, as demonstrated by the case study of An Nur, The Light, the processes of mediatisation together with the nation-building endeavours of the constitutional state, play a pertinent role in facilitating the regulation of religious content on the public broadcast television.

In their article, 'Liberation Theology and Decolonization? Contemporary Perspectives for Systematic Theology', **Felipe Gustavo Koch Buttelli** and **Clint le Bruyns** seek to offer some thoughts on a decolonial theology. It reaffirms some of the basic methodological and epistemological aspects of liberation theology, arguing that what is understood as decolonial critique has some continuities and some discontinuities with the liberation theological discourse. A characterization of the "decolonial turn" and a critical understanding of the regime of coloniality as counter face of modernity follows. It is argued with some authors of the field that the regime of coloniality forms a matrix of power that includes the coloniality of power, of being, and of knowledge, and that modern and colonial theology is an heir of this model for society, imposed over non-western peoples. The article ends up reflecting on how this decolonial critique can be received by systematic theology, suggesting some implications for a decolonial theology.

**Chammah J. Kaunda** and **Mutale M. Kaunda's** 'Brief Perspectives on the Church and Human Security in Zambia' advances an argument that the church's mission in Zambia should focus on a divine mission of social responsibility in the context of human security. In keeping with that argument, the article traces the contribution of the church to both human securities and insecurities in Zambia. It argues, from an African perspective, that African

religious imaginations affirm the indivisibility of the supernatural and natural reality without contradicting the humanistic function of church in its social responsibility. It argues that the church has both adapted some values from the African religious past and introduced new ideals such as education, health and love that transcends ethnic solidarity to the embracing of all human beings as expression of the image of God. The article proposes a missio-ecclesial social praxis as appropriate for the church's search to promote human security in the nation.

Emanating from doctoral research examining the need for and the process required for indigenizing marital therapy so that it is more applicable to isiZulu culture, **C.M. Haselau** and **M. Kasiram**'s 'Guidelines for Marriage Counselling with Zulu Couples', recommends best practice guidelines for marriage counsellors, particularly those from a different culture, or those who have received training in western Eurocentric theory and practice. Four specific values of Zulu culture were indicated as being important when counselling Zulu people. These included basing the counsellor's epistemology on communality as occurs with Ubuntu (Nyaumwe & Mkabele 2007); needing to practice hlonipha or respect (Rudwick & Shange 2009) and assisting the couple to include hlonipha in their relations with one another; it is also recommended that the counsellor explores spirituality with the couple and examines the practices that enhance feelings of belonging. These four cultural elements can be incorporated into counselling services when working with Zulu people as outlined in this article.

The voice of the Religion Education teacher can either entrench religious discrimination or embrace religious diversity and promote intra- and inter-religious dialogue. Set against the background of political and curriculum change in South Africa, **Janet Jarvis**'s 'Reflections of a Teacher Educator of Religion Education: Informing and Transforming Practice' traces the trajectory that she has pursued as a teacher of Religion Education at secondary schools, at a former college of education and in her current position as a teacher educator at a university in South Africa. This personal history self-study provides an account of the paradigm shifts she has undergone from what she calls religious identity paralysis, to religious identity paradox, to religious identity flexibility, and finally to her current position of ongoing religious identity transformation. In doing so, she mirrors something of her journey from a mono-religious approach to teaching Religion Education to that of a multi-religious approach, and more recently, to the emergence of an empathetic-

reflective-dialogical approach. She uses the lens of the dialogical self and religious identity capital to interpret her story. The possibility exists that her understanding of how and why she made changes to her approach to Religion Education can inform her practice as she encourages her pre-service teachers to engage with their own religious identity paradigms. This has the potential to be empowering and transformative in religiously diverse classroom contexts and indeed, for the wider society.

**I.P. Saunderson, C. Roelofse and C. Gumbi**'s article is titled, 'Hate Speech Crimes in Cyberspace: A Criminological/ Communicological Investigation of Social Media in South Africa – Understanding the Cyber-mind'. It examines hate speech in cyberspace in South Africa from both a Criminological and Communication Studies perspective. From the field of Criminology, legislation and interpretation of unlawfulness, intent and incitement of hate speech are examined. From the field of Communication Studies conceptualisations surrounding fragmented identities, Goffman's dramaturgy and the Spiral of Silence theory are used to analyse hate speech in the cyberspace through a cross-disciplinary interpretation. A qualitative, thematically orientated methodology is employed which allows for, not only understanding of online communication and meta-theoretical conceptualisations of the cyber-mind, but classification in terms of legal aspects surrounding hate speech. Data were collected from social media postings nationally over the past year, utilising a convenience sample; and classified into two cohorts, (1) postings from the ordinary person; and (2) postings from politicians. Findings are interpreted against legal conceptualisations of hate speech whilst utilising the above communication theories for the provision of a meta-interdisciplinary-perspective. Findings highlight the difference between threats posted on social media by ordinary people and is compared to instruction posted by politicians. The ramifications of these two clearly distinguishable acts of communication are discussed first from a legal perspective and then contrasted against communication theoretical orientations of fragmented identities, Goffman's dramaturgy and the spiral of silence in an attempt to understand the cyber-mind.

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