

A genealogical study of South African literature teaching at South African universities: Towards a reconstruction of the curriculum.

by

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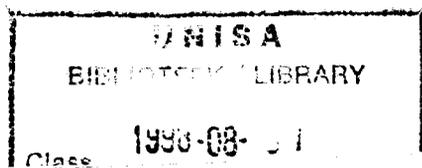
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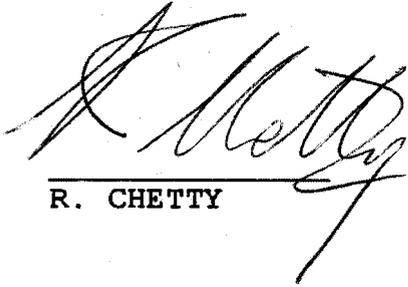
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DECLARATION

I declare that 'A genealogical study of South African literature teaching at South African universities: Towards a reconstruction of the curriculum' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



R. CHETTY

30/01/1998  
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ABSTRACT

The colonial history of South Africa and its legacy of cultural and linguistic domination have resulted in a situation where the literatures of the majority of South Africans were relegated to the margins of institutional, social and cultural life. Exclusion (of local writings) was the principal mode by which power was exercised within university English departments. It is within this context that this study posits lacunae and challenges for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum.

Although various approaches have been used by English departments during this decade to include South African literature in the curriculum (pluralism, inter-disciplinary studies, alternate canon formation, canon rejection, eclecticism, elective programmes, etc.), the curriculum continues to repeat the established norms and values of colonial/apartheid society, it avoids confronting the ideological construction of traditional English literature and is a revamping or upgrading of the programmes offered during the colonial/apartheid era.

The genealogical study uncovers the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements, decentres discourse, and reveals how discourse is secondary to systems of power. Chapter Four explores both theoretical and methodological underpinnings for the reconstruction of the South African

literature curriculum deriving from the critical educational approaches of Freire, Giroux and Apple, the discursive approach of Foucault and the post colonial reading strategies of Zavarzadeh and Morton.

The teaching of South African literature would best be served by working within a critical paradigm, having as its objective the goals of critical educational studies. Chapter Four also includes a review of the curriculum in local practice through a curriculum impact study using empirical research based on the 1996 English literature syllabi of South African universities as well as the findings of the surveys conducted by Malan and Bosman in 1986 and Lindfors in 1992.

Chapter Five posits recommendations for curriculum reconstruction with the main focus on the intervention of radical strategies that would lead to a new conflictual reading list. The objective is to put the canon under erasure by problematising the concept of literariness. Such an approach also reveals the power/knowledge relations of culture, ideologies that dominate the discipline and the institutional arrangements of knowledge.

KEY TERMS:

South African literature; literature teaching; curriculum reconstruction; genealogy; canon; discursive formations; Foucauldian approach; critical educational studies; curriculum impact study; post colonial reading strategies.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study surveys the teaching of South African literature in English Departments at South African universities by means of Michel Foucault's genealogical approach. The objective is to explore the theoretical and methodological underpinnings required for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum.

The assumptions that will be made in the study are:

- South African literature has been marginalised since English was first constituted as a university discipline in the country right up to the advent of democracy in the 1990s. Exclusion was therefore the principal mode by which power was exercised within university English departments.
  
- Although various approaches have been used by English departments during this decade to include South African literature in the curricula (pluralism, inter-disciplinary studies, alternate canon formation, canon rejection, eclecticism, elective programmes, etc.),

the curricula continues to repeat the established norms and values of colonial/apartheid society, and they avoid confronting the ideological construction of traditional English literature and is a revamping or upgrading of the programmes offered during the colonial/ apartheid era.

The first part of this introductory chapter outlines the content of the thesis while the second section focuses on the key concepts that constitute the topic: *curriculum*, *genealogy* and *South African literature* followed by a brief overview of the current curriculum debate.

**Chapter 2** explores a theoretical framework for discourse analysis developed by Foucault with emphasis on the Foucauldian concept of *objects* as a basis for reconstruction. Literary discourse was trapped within the colonial and apartheid paradigm since it largely reflected rather than challenged thinking in which people were categorised and separated. South African literature is characterised by the tradition of compartmentalising in terms of concepts such as *language*, *period*, *author*, *book*, *genre*, and *influence* which has contributed to discourse becoming alienated. The limitation of these unities was responsible for the exclusion of indigenous literatures like the folktales and the izibongo, and other essential components of South African literature like the political songs, oral performances, poetry published in

newsletters and magazines, and the pictographic script of the rock paintings.

An appropriate definition of literature required for reconstructing the curriculum would therefore take into cognisance the dispersion of objects, all the factors that separate them, the distances that reign between them, their discontinuities and divisions (Foucault 1977a:33). Foucault's radical analysis of discourse forces us to view the relationship between forms of knowledge and power differently and he does not acknowledge our categories of literature and transcends it by bringing together literature, history and politics. Exilic writings, suburbia, the border war, township strife, sexuality and gender, language, the counter-hegemonic commitment of black poets, the 'aesthetics' debate and censorship are some of the objects which can be addressed using this approach.

The Foucauldian archaeological model with its genealogical approach to history, theory of power and discourses, and notion of discursive space is invaluable in a study of literature, especially in post-colonial contexts faced with the dichotomy between the centralised canon of traditional English literature and the marginalised local writings. It provides a framework to trace the different definitions of literature by various institutions and interest groups.

The paradigm shift from the margin to the centre is appropriate since objects fundamental to South African literature can be addressed in terms of the different enunciative modalities, subject and ideological positions using the archaeological perspective. A genealogical study, on the other hand, uncovers the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements, decentres discourse and, as is evident in South Africa, reveals how discourse is secondary to systems of power.

**Chapter 3** consists of a genealogical survey of the teaching of South African literature at South African universities. Foucault views genealogies not merely as pieces of historical research but, more importantly, as strategic interventions in current struggles. A genealogy can, in a particular manner, render a problem intelligible in terms of the conditions of emergence of discursive and non-discursive practices which indicate how the problem arises in the first place (Cousins and Hussain 1990:264). In so doing it can cast an entirely different light on the problems of exclusion, traditional pedagogy that ignores critical thinking and the lack of a connection between literature and crucial social understandings like resistance, transformation and ideology.

A pertinent issue uncovered by this genealogical study is the exclusion of black writing, prompting the inevitable question:

how does one promote English literature in a land where literature is racially segmented, where the Eurocentric approach in the teaching of English is dominant and where academics still speak of a 'high culture' and the canon of South African writing - represented largely by the writings of Athol Fugard, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Alan Paton (Lindfors 1996)? Responses to this question include the following: Should the approach be pluralist or reductionist? Is the demolition of the old guard simply a process of replacing one set of texts with another? When and how should the classics re-enter the curriculum? How can content be liberating and empowering? Conferences also noted that the pluralist approach may recreate the horrors of the past and shift the emphasis to a concern with the social sciences. However, the ideology underpinning the construction of the curriculum, the process of selection of texts and the pedagogy of domination were rarely interrogated.

The unfortunate South African legacy with regards to literature teaching cannot be ignored in the process of reconstruction: literature has been viewed as an inert body of knowledge composed of facts that students must memorise, certain dominant literary theories and authorities reign over institutions and the Verwoerdian model of over-emphasis on content concomitant with the absence of a cognitive approach was common. Literary merit was influenced by lecturers' preferences while the 'safe classics' (Reid 1982:42) or 'great literature' (Chapman 1990:17)

offered a kind of security in the lecture halls.

**Chapter 4** explores both theoretical and methodological underpinnings for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum deriving from the critical educational studies of Freire, Giroux and Apple, the discursive approach of Foucault and the post-colonial reading strategies of Zavarzadeh and Morton.

The chapter proposes that the teaching of South African literature would best be served by working within a critical paradigm, having as its objective the goals of critical educational studies. A critical approach requires activities that encourage meaning construction, an understanding of the process whereby meanings are made, an analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power, and the active promotion of critical thinking skills in literary studies.

**Chapter 4** concludes with a review of the curriculum in local practice through a curriculum impact study using empirical research based on the 1996 English literature syllabi of South African universities as well as the findings of the surveys conducted by Malan and Bosman in 1986 and Lindfors in 1992.

**Chapter 5** posits recommendations for curriculum reconstruction with the main focus on the intervention of radical strategies

that would lead to a new conflictual reading list. The study acknowledges that the power relations in South Africa have been radically altered since 1994 leading to the demise of the dominant colonial/apartheid hegemony. However, the objective is to put the canon under erasure by problematising the concept of literariness. Such an approach also reveals the power/knowledge relations of culture, the discourses of ideology that dominate the discipline and the institutional arrangements of knowledge.

An examination of the strategies currently implemented in literature teaching has revealed that *interdisciplinarity* and *pluralism* are enjoying great support by the academe. The proponents of these two approaches failed to see them as a political strategy used by institutions to conceal the dominant power - by positing the various sites of power as equal. Pluralism and interdisciplinarity are also compatible with the existing teaching methods (the transmission/lecture modes) since they banish from the curriculum modes of reading and writing that are subversive to the dominant culture. They do not challenge the hegemony of the dominant ideology or the dominant social codes like racism and sexism; Zavarzadeh and Morton (1994) view them as merely modes of eclecticism that accumulate knowledge without confronting the ideology of the production of knowledge.

Reconstruction will only be effective if it undermines the traditional notion of the English literature 'canon' by providing

alternatives to the current dichotomies of major authors and minor authors, black and white, Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, etc. Neither the replacement of a high culture author with a popular (democratic) author, nor the mode of a heterogeneous reading list which consists of the canon of traditional English literature and texts from the discourses deriving from the diverse cultural sites means the displacement of the canon.

A reconstructionist model will provide for genuine interrogation of textuality, for the production of new subject positions for the reader and opportunities for questioning the political and epistemological status of a text. Change will only result when innovative writing intervenes in the discursive practices of culture and demonstrates that the curriculum is a product of particular dominant ideologies.

An appropriate intervention in literature teaching is *transdisciplinarity*. Through its self-reflexivity it attempts not simply to accumulate knowledge but to ask what constitutes knowledge, why and how, and by whose authority, certain modes of understanding are certified as knowledge and others as nonknowledge (Zavarzadeh and Morton 1994:66). Unlike *interdisciplinarity*, it is a transgressive form of redrawing the map of learning in a fashion that opens up new space for emergent *radical* and *revolutionary* subjectivities. These subjectivities are desirable because they consist of knowledge with priorities, and

they critique continuities, closures, arbitrary historical periodisations, dominant traditions and influences.

**Chapter 5** also offers lacunae and challenges for the future and concludes that the process of curriculum reconstruction requires a new set of questions about the subject (the student and lecturer as a structure of cultural and economic codings and practices that have political implications and consequences), reading lists (the established canon of acceptable texts) and the act of reading itself. Fundamental to the process is also a rethinking of essential pedagogical issues - objectives for literature teaching, the role of literature in the curriculum and guidelines for choosing the literature we teach.

The literature lesson is no neutral place where insights are developed or ideas freely exchanged (Apple 1990:1). It is a site, especially in the South African context, of fiercely contested ideologies. In our choice and treatment of literature we are making and communicating assumptions and judgements. Whatever we do, we represent, implicitly or explicitly, beliefs and values which may be social, cultural or political. Every text we choose to teach involves the transmission of some value or belief and implies the power we have over choices or judgements.

Reading lists therefore make a range of unspoken statements as

to its suitability in terms of form and content, the issues we intend raising which we believe are important and the arbitrary concept of literary merit and what Apple (1990:6) refers to as the *selective tradition*. The bias towards traditional English literature reduces the possibility of exploring the multiplicity of objects that characterises South African literature. When we ignore (South)African and other post-colonial writings we are sidetracking the issue of anti-racism. When we are indifferent to relevance and contemporary issues, we isolate cultural products and fail to direct literature to the South African student, with whose situation we should be centrally occupied.

### 1.1 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

Different aspects or notions of the curriculum will be discussed to outline its origins and development. The word *curriculum* derives from the Latin word *currere*, which means to run, and refers to the Roman races, sometimes undertaken with horses and chariots, and often in dangerous and life-threatening conditions. This notion, according to Eisner (1994:25) implies a track, a set of obstacles or tasks that an individual is to overcome, something that has a beginning and an end, something that one intends to complete. Curriculum has therefore historically been defined as a course to be followed or presented.

The concept curriculum developed further to include four distinct elements. Firstly an assumption of the *aims* of one's education, of the kind of adults one is trying to produce. Secondly, the content of what the students are to learn and experience and the amount of choice they will have with the content. Thirdly, it contains a statement of the *method/s* that are most likely to achieve these aims, and lastly, a statement of how the work of the institution is to be *evaluated*.

We detect in the work of Stenhouse (1975:4) valuable insights into democratic ways of thinking about the curriculum. Stenhouse's framework provides a basis for planning a course, studying it empirically and considering the grounds of its justification (a process to be undertaken by both the designers of the curriculum and the students for whom it is planned). This approach stands in contrast with the content, additive product model of the apartheid era where curricula are handed down for implementation without consultation with the stakeholders. The current more democratic process model as advocated by policy developers like COTEP (Committee for Teacher Education Policy) allows institutions to devise their own curricula taking account of broad fields of study and practice as well as aims and competences. Stenhouse's model is valuable not only because it encourages innovative and creative curriculum development, but because of the stress on accountability, the need to be able to justify the choices. This accountability must also be extended

to the students - the reasons for decisions on the curriculum and the selection of specific texts should be revealed to students thus countering or exposing any hidden curriculum programme.

The *hidden curriculum*, according to King and Van Den Berg (1991:5) operates in the service of the dominant forces within society with the following impact on students: compliance, obedience, passivity, unequal power relations, believing textbooks as 'the truth', etc. Apple (1990) also acknowledges this hidden agenda dimension as a by-product of the organisation of the curriculum and the institution. Universities are particularly important as distributors of cultural capital and they play a critical role in giving legitimacy to certain categories and forms of knowledge only. They teach a hidden curriculum that seems uniquely suited to maintain the ideological hegemony of the most powerful classes in that society (Apple 1990:43-45).

Eisner (1994:34) transcends the notion of the hidden curriculum to include the *null curriculum* in his tripartite approach to the curriculum. The *null curriculum* is what we do not teach, the content that is ignored, the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about and the concepts and skills that are not a part of their intellectual repertoire. It stands in contrast with the *intended curriculum* which is planned in advance and is designed to help students learn some content,

acquire some skills, develop some beliefs, or have some valued type of experience. The *operational* curriculum, on the other hand, includes those activities that occur in the lecture hall, taking into consideration the materials, content, and events in which students are engaged.

Zavarzadeh and Morton (1994:55) situate the meaning of the individual in culture as the nucleus of the traditionalist curriculum:

The traditional humanities curriculum is based on the idea that the individual is the cause and not the effect of social meanings: he is the origin of signification. The goal is to educate (the) 'free' 'man'. 'Free' and 'man' are in the traditionalist theories, timeless essences on which the humanities curriculum is founded.

The objective of the dominant curriculum is an ideological operation - to put together the subject (the postmodern term for individual) in such a way that it can easily take its place within the establishment. Coward and Ellis (1980:68) comment that this operation maintains the existing social order by producing subjects who will not only see it as acceptable, but perceive it precisely as the way things are, ought to be, and will be. The students were taught to understand, not to question or intervene and there was little scope for intellectual inquiry. Many South African teachers, in the fundamental pedagogics mould, saw the cardinal aim of their teaching to guide students to take their place in society. The fact that many working class, black communities found little of their own culture and language in the curriculum was ignored. This unfortunately is an outgrowth of

the specific South African historical conditions.

Michel Foucault views the subject as a dynamic entity that varies according to the *discursive practices* that are current at a given historical moment. The subject (both the teacher and the student) can therefore be described as a product of historical and political discourse. The curriculum, also a product of discursive practices, is not stable and transhistorical. Curriculum varies from one epistemic community to another because each community produces knowledge, truth, objects and statements differently. Communities need different discursive practices in order to represent their version of the curriculum. Foucault emphasises this dynamic nature of the subject in The Archaeology of Knowledge:

The research of psychoanalysis, linguistics, and ethnology have decentred the subject in relation to the laws of his desire, the forms of his language, the rules of his actions, or the games of his mythical or fabulous discourse.

(1972:13)

Foucault maintains that the curriculum, like the student, does not have a timeless essence, but rather is produced by the historical and political practices or as an effect of these discourses. The effective curriculum must allow for a critique of these discursive practices. While much of the traditional curriculum teaches the proper mode of situating oneself in regard to authority and meaning, the new curriculum should demystify authority, power (that of the institution, author, the text, etc.) and meaning.

Apple (1990:45) also investigates **meaning construction** in the curriculum with the question 'Whose meanings are collected and distributed through the overt and hidden curricula?'. The curriculum responds to and represents ideological and cultural resources that come from somewhere. It is therefore logical that not all groups' visions are represented and not all groups' meanings are responded to.

Literature is not inherently meaningful (as the traditionalist curriculum implies), but rather meaning is 'excavated' through a process, as a mode of cultural and political behaviour. It is in the discursive spaces and the discontinuities that the student reads and understands the events in the text, a mode of producing meanings. The Foucauldian approach to an understanding of curriculum is that it is essentially an intellectual activity that focuses attention to the interrogation of textuality.

## 1.2 GENEALOGY

Foucault, in the essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History', sees the genealogical method as:

grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times...Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material. In short (it) demands relentless erudition. (1977a:139).

Genealogy opposes itself to traditional historical methods; its

aim is to 'record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality' (Foucault 1977a:139). For the genealogist there are no fixed essences, no underlying laws, no metaphysical finalities. In the process of seeking out discontinuities and finding recurrences, genealogy avoids the search for depth. Instead, it seeks the surfaces of events, small details, minor shifts, and subtle contours (Dreyfus and Rabinov 1986:106).

The objective of a genealogical approach is to open up areas of investigation, posit objects of analysis forgotten, ignored, or excluded and to challenge the existing canon and dominant ideas of literature and society.

Integral to the genealogical approach are *discursive formations* - disciplines set up their fields of study through their own discursive practices, in a process that is neither neutral nor value-free. Foucault does not view the search for 'descent' as the erecting of foundations. On the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself (1977a:147).

South African universities were a reflection of the different South African voices and forces during the apartheid era (it is acknowledged that currently there is a heterogeneity at work, a fragmentation of some kind). This was indicated crudely in the manner in which they were categorised during the apartheid era:

## a. The 'Bush Colleges' :

The universities created for specific ethnic groups by the Extension of University Act of 1959 which effectively prevented black students from registering at the white universities. The 'bush colleges' included Western Cape ('Coloureds'), Durban-Westville (Indians), Zululand (Zulus), Transkei (Xhosas), Venda (Vendas), Bophuthatswana (Tswanas), etc. With the exception of the University of Durban-Westville and the University of the Western Cape which were built in urban areas, all the other 'bush colleges' were also referred to as 'homeland/bantustan/tribal' universities.

## b. The English Liberal Universities - Cape Town, Natal, Witwatersrand and Rhodes. The Afrikaner Universities - Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Orange Free State, Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaans University and the distance education university, UNISA (which admitted black students).

These categories not only reflect the different power relations in South African society, but also emphasise the role of the university as a pivotal institution within the broader disciplinary society that controls discourse in the interest of these power relations.

It is evident that English departments, both at the previously white and black South African universities, are historically constituted products. Therefore, the basic ideology of the institution and its genealogy continues to influence the English literature curriculum. It will be revealed in the genealogical survey how the works of postmodern philosophers, intellectual historians, contemporary politicians, anthropologists, literary critics, etc. have been introduced, but the literature curriculum continues to repeat the established norms and values. Doherty (1989:i) also notes that English studies were historically constituted, and its mode of institutional existence, poses an intrinsic obstacle to the study and teaching of indigenous writing.

A genealogical inquiry into the reception and teaching of South African literature will reveal the hidden power relations that operated in the universities. The Foucauldian concept of exclusion is relevant to this genealogical approach because the study reveals a conspiracy by the universities to exclude and marginalise South African writings, especially the works of black writers.

An important value of a genealogical study is that it forces us to look anew at features of present day society in the light of the frequently unappreciated origins. Such an approach will also feed into the reconstruction of the literature curriculum.

Rajchman (1985:58), in his comments on Foucault's genealogical inquiry asserts that the history of the past is inextricably interwoven with the history of the present and that writing about the past is a way of criticising the present under the assumption that the past still informs the present in ways and with consequences that are not easily recognised. Apple (1990:65) also believes that any serious attempt at understanding the curriculum must be, by its very nature, historical. It must begin by seeing current arguments about curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional control as outgrowths of specific historical conditions. History explains the selective tradition and the incorporation function of specific knowledge in the curriculum. It also enables one to provide reasons why certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis and why others are neglected, excluded, diluted or reinterpreted (Apple 1990:82).

### 1.3 SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

John Purves in his article 'South African Literature' in the *Cape Times* on the day that the Union of South Africa was commemorated (31-05-1910) and Manfred Nathan in his seminal text South African Literature: A General Survey (1925) held the notion that a literature was characterised by the birthplace of its authors or its subject matter. Ironically, Nathan uses 'African'

and 'South African' as synonymous, although he deals only with English and Afrikaans literature written by whites. It is evident that very early in the literary history of South Africa, there was the silencing and marginalising of the other voice: the black voice.

John Greig disagrees with Purves and Nathan - he finds the concept 'South African literature' unacceptable:

Such a notion, which is not at all uncommon in this country, ...distributes the emphasis on the wrong place, and betrays a serious misconception of the method and purpose of literature. Literature is the memorable expression of human experience, not the record, description or delineation of 'subjects' considered in abstraction. (1959:270)

Greig maintains that a South African literature existed only in Afrikaans since the only sure criterion by which we may distinguish one literature from another is the language it is written in; and the country it is written in is largely irrelevant (1959:270). He felt strongly that South African writing in English should be regarded as part of English literature and that there should be no such concept as 'South African literature' or 'British literature'.

Ndebele (1990:12) states that internationally, white South African literature in English has been generally accorded a status of being representative of South African literature. The image of South African literature in the world today has been fashioned to a very large extent by names like Alan Paton, Nadine

Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee. Ndebele outlines further that it is understandable, because such literature and its writers may be seen as representative of Western culture in Africa, as well as being beneficiaries of an international language.

Gray (1982:13), in comparison with Ndebele, includes both black and white writers as representatives of South African literature in the world at large. He feels that South African literature internationally means primarily the works about the apartheid society - Peter Abrahams' Mine Boy (1946), Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country (1948), Ezekiel Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue (1959), the novels of Nadine Gordimer, the plays of Athol Fugard and the writings from André Brink.

An important component of the term *South African Literature* is the relationship of the writers to the land (birth, exile, lived in, visited, etc.). This can be extended to include works about South Africa by authors who never lived in or visited South Africa, as well as the texts by South African-born authors who have left South Africa (for the African states, Europe, the United States of America, etc.) and wrote about non-South African topics. The works of writers with a South African connection may be excluded unless the term 'South African literature' is broadened and cognisance is taken of the discursive history of the subcontinent (examples are Doris Lessing who lived in the then Rhodesia and Bessie Head who lived in exile in Botswana).

It is acknowledged that a more accurate description of South African literature would include writings in all eleven official languages of South Africa and writings by all South Africans regardless of race or ethnic divisions. The reconceptualisation of South Africa as a nation-state present us with a new challenge to define South African literature in line with this new inclusive nationalism and to reflect this wholeness and move away from the divisions of colonialism and apartheid. Such a project will have to be a team effort since it requires persons that are sufficiently proficient in all eleven official languages to produce a unified body of knowledge. For practical reasons, this study is limited to South African writings in English and all references to African literature in this study is also limited to writings by Africans in English and does not include literature written in African languages.

Ndebele attempts an answer to the questions that are pertinent to the approach taken by this study: Are writers in English not privileged? Are writings in African languages not marginalised? The reasons he outlines for the exclusion of African writings in African languages are that:

Most of the people who dominate the field of criticism in South Africa, particularly criticism of black South African literature, are scholars in white, most probably English speaking, universities. The most influential academic journals and literary magazines that black writers have written for have been those in English, the language of power. The medium of instruction in the schools is part of that influence. (1990:13)

He feels that the chief reason for all the attention on English literature is that it feeds off the status of English as the language of empowerment.

South African literature itself is a discursive construct and, to use Foucault's terminology, is a heterogeneous and diverse object that does not have a stable definition. It is defined differently in the various South African languages, classes of people, institutions and historical periods. To define South African literature would be to define the dispersion of a multiplicity of objects that constitute it, to grasp all the interstices that reign between them - in other words, to formulate their law of division (Foucault 1977a:33).

#### 1.4 THE CURRENT CURRICULUM DEBATE

It was only during the *interregnum* (1970 - 1995) that South African academics and scholars have experienced the intensity of conflict focused on the curriculum in educational institutions. However, there has always been resistance to the ideological dimensions of the curriculum, the bias towards the Afrikaner Nationalist perspectives and the 'history by denial' (Bundy 1988:101). The watershed in the curriculum debate is undoubtedly the 1976 Soweto crisis. The basic argument of the students was the rejection of apartheid education (notably the use of

Afrikaans as medium of instruction) and the need for a relevant curriculum that will stimulate creativity and critical thinking to equip students for the future.

Issues raised in the 1980s by the People's Education campaign were contestation around who produces curriculum, the process employed, whose knowledge is legitimised, marginalised or ignored, and the mode of transmission. The decade saw an increase of alternative educational projects initiated by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This was a response to the need for curriculum materials outside of the influence of the state dominated education system and to the increased protest activity focused around democratization and participation in the society as a whole. Examples that come to mind are the ASECA curriculum of the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) and the curricula developed by the Teachers' Opportunities Scheme (TOPS), the Science Education Project (SEP) and the English Language Educational Trust (ELET).

The 1990s saw the advent of a new phenomenon in South Africa: Curriculum Policy. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) on behalf of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) produced 13 education policy monographs and this initiated the curriculum policy debate and a hive of activity by curriculum construction committees throughout the country. The 13th monograph contained options for a new curriculum with the key

principles being non-racism, non-sexism, a unitary system, democracy and redress (1992:3).

This outburst of curricular activity is also reflected in the Education Faculties of universities creating Departments of Curriculum Studies, the number of books which have begun to appear on the theory of curriculum development and in the vast amount of material produced by the many curriculum developmental projects.

The current curricular discourse as characterised in both the National Commission for Higher Education Report, 1996, and the *Curriculum 2005* document, released by the Department of National Education in March 1997, emphasises an outcomes-based approach to education with its aims described in terms of knowledge, skills and values, presenting the competences in a 'head-hands-heart' paradigm. In the COTEP (Committee for Teacher Education Policy) document, for example, competences give expression to the aims in the form of discrete units, are equivalent to behavioural objectives and its evaluation requires interpretation. The overarching goal of all the competences, attitudes and values is to produce transformed teachers who are in turn capable of transforming both learners and context.

The NCHE framework for transformation posited the outcomes-based model as opposed to the closed-system disciplinary approach that

has led to inadequately conceptualised teaching and research. The report claims that the content of the knowledge produced and disseminated is insufficiently responsive to the problems and needs of the southern African region. Teaching strategies and modes of delivery, integral aspects of the curriculum, have not been adapted to meet the needs of larger student intakes and the diversity of lifelong learners.

Recommendations for curricular reform from the NCHE include communication competences, the eradication of ethnic, racial and gender divisions and the adoption of a critical pedagogy with a culture of tolerance, democracy and accommodation of differences and competing interests. The commission envisages the curriculum to contribute to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with internationally observed standards of academic quality, and with sensitivity to the diverse problems and demands of the local, national and (southern)African contexts.

Undoubtedly, the crucial question for curriculum theorists and practitioners at the present time is: how does South Africa move beyond theories of reproduction and resistance to grapple with the issue of producing knowledge for a more appropriate future?

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter a theoretical framework based on Foucault's The Archaeology of Knowledge (1972) is articulated to focus upon discursive practices (in literature) in an effort to move beyond the traditional modes of literature reception and teaching and to serve as a model (Discursive Formations) for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum. An archaeological approach to literature teaching will be used to focus on the multiplicity of objects that constitute South African literature and on the heterogeneity of styles that characterise this literature.

The later genealogical approach as formulated in Discipline and Punish (1977b) and The History of Sexuality (1981), although contradictory to the archaeological approach where Foucault sought to find regularities, is also appropriate since the emphasis is on the limits of history, especially the margins of society, marginal groups and marginal experiences. As Foucault outlines in an interview: 'It seems to me interesting to try to understand our society and civilization in terms of its system of exclusion, of rejection ... its limits' (1971a:193). The study will argue for the inclusion of South African texts previously excluded by drawing on 'forgotten' or 'hidden' bibliographical, literary, historical and other relevant information, and in the process of such argumentation, show why

the inclusion of such texts will be educationally beneficial.

## 2.1 FOUCAULT'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

This study is underpinned by a critical analysis of a fundamental premise in The Archaeology of Knowledge (1972): the prioritisation of discontinuity as against continuities.

What we have is a radical approach to literature study: an analysis of opinions rather than of knowledge, of errors rather than of truth, of types of mentality, social customs or behaviours, unrecorded information and practices. It is a discipline of interferences - what underlines the text, how do the texts relate to each other and a practice of a different history of what is recorded or said.

Foucault differentiates between discourse as *document* and as *monument* in his articulation of a definition of *archaeology*:

Archaeology tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules. It does not treat discourse as *document*, as a sign of something else. It is concerned with discourse in its own volume as a *monument*. It is not an interpretative discipline: it does not seek another, better hidden discourse. (1972:138)

Archaeology works in the opposite direction to history - it seeks rather to untie all those knots that historians have patiently tied, it discontinues the continuities of history. It increases differences and blurs the lines of communication and tries to

make it more difficult to pass from one thing to another (Foucault 1972:170). The 'archive' is a machine generating social - as opposed to linguistic - meaning. It is, to use Foucault's famous words, a 'historical a priori'. The archaeologist is an archivist whose basic task is the analysis of discourses made up of event-statements.

Merquior (1985:81) defines an archivist succinctly - as someone who does not busy himself with personalities, just with documents and their classifications. Foucault in an appropriately entitled essay 'What is an author' (1977a:113) makes it clear that the habit of looking for an author's authority is futile. The research should show instead how the power of discourse constrains both author and his/her utterances. The archaeologist's aim is therefore to elicit discursive regularities and conditions of existence from the discourse.

The first major theoretical insight in The Archaeology of Knowledge is a constitutive view of discourse. Discourse is seen as actively constituting or constructing society on various dimensions. It constitutes the objects of knowledge, social subjects and forms of 'self', social relationships and conceptual frameworks (Fairclough 1992:39). Allied to this is the interdependency of the discourse practices of a society or institution. Texts always draw upon and transform other contemporary and historically prior texts - a process of

intertextuality.

Foucault's archaeological perspective stands in stark contrast to an ideological critique of literary study. Attention is given to discursive situations and the framework used transcends that of the traditional critique. The very concept of the archive enables an historical investigation and forces us to radically review our interpretation, analysis and criticism of texts.

Hayden White (1978:50) views Foucault's archaeological perspective as a significant reorientation of historical enquiry. The conventional historian is concerned to refamiliarise his readers with the past. But, Foucault strives to render the past unfamiliar. There is a move away from the customary and ideological historiography. Foucault aims to reveal fundamental differences between historical cultures instead of stressing their common traits (Merquior 1985:72). White argues further that Foucault's archaeology generates an 'alienating effect: it stages an intrinsically foreign and bizarre past' (1978:52). Alienating history therefore works as a main prop of the Foucauldian purpose: the critical grasp of modernity as a mode of existence (Merquior 1985:72).

It is important to acknowledge that it was Karl Marx and not Foucault who first attacked a history of uninterrupted continuities, a history based on the founding function of the

subject, of human consciousness. Marx's analysis of economic, social, and political relations shows that man's activities are in the final analysis determined outside the consciousness of the individual subject (Sheridan 1980:92).

## 2.2 CONCEPTS THAT EXPRESS THE THEME OF CONTINUITY

Sheridan (1980:93) summarises The Archaeology of Knowledge as a study of the theoretical problems posed by the use of such concepts as *discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series* and *transformation* in the history of ideas. Before embarking on the project of discontinuity, Foucault firstly examines a number of concepts that express the theme of continuity: *tradition, influence, development (period), spirit, genre, book* and *oeuvre*.

2.2.1 Tradition refers basically to the body of thought and practices belonging to a particular institution over a relatively long period - an obvious example is the canon of traditional English literature. The notion of tradition allows one to reduce the differences between items to its beginning. The new, in this case South African and 'other' writings, is therefore placed and compared against a background of permanence. The concept of categorisation into genre,

the rules for analysis of texts and the theories of criticism are further examples of the concept tradition.

Michael Chapman (1990:17) in his overview of the teaching of literature in South African universities revealed the tradition that was prevalent as late as the nineties. The dominant paradigm is still derived from Arnold's touchstones of excellence and high seriousness, Saintsbury's good manners, Leavis's moral substance, concrete experience and formal coherence and the New Critics' complex artefacts, which are paradoxical, ironic, subtle and a-historical. Chapman notes further that the wide-spread assumption is that English departments are concerned with 'great Literature, which begins around Chaucer - or increasingly, around Shakespeare - and tails off after the 1920s. Modern poetry is restricted to romantic-symbolist approaches of Yeats and Eliot'.

Even the didactics is strongly reminiscent of the medieval universities and does not reflect critical pedagogy which should have been the prevailing paradigm at universities during the late eighties. According to Chapman (1990:18), standard examination questions, reflective of English middle-class

hegemony, required the analysis of a poem or a passage from a novel or play, where students were invited to comment on theme, character or formal impact. The old adage that the Afrikaans speaking universities are solidly traditional in comparison to the English liberal universities was refuted when Chapman, in his 1988 survey of syllabi, acknowledged that Potchefstroom University had a free-ranging syllabus, yet Witwatersrand University (a liberal university) adhered overwhelmingly to the British 'Great Tradition' (1990:18).

It was traditional for the European theories to dominate the theory courses. Students are exposed to Aristotle, Leavis, Richards and Derrida, but they do not hear of Driver, Watts, Barnett, Senghor, Cesaire, Bhabha or Said. Feminism too is restricted to the Anglo-American theories with little regard for the African, Asian and South African writings which are more relevant to the context of racial oppression.

To simplify in the extreme, the tradition in South African English departments generally consists of the canon of elite, metropolitan Great Tradition of predominantly white, male, British writers with Practical Criticism as the dominant methodology.

Students would have encountered Chinua Achebe, Athol Fugard, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and a few black poets as an alternate reading of the canon or a variation to the tradition if their lecturer/s decided it was necessary. The graphic representation of the syllabi of undergraduate and honours courses in English at South African universities in 1986 (see **Table 2, Chapter 4**) reveals clearly the dominance of the metropolitan great tradition even during the last years of the interregnum. The table also reveals a very strong genre-orientated approach with a clear delineation into the categories poetry, novels and drama or a periodisation approach to the genres (16th century to 20th century). Mhambi and Mphahlele (1996) also note that the curriculum at the University of Vista during the eighties was Eurocentric in orientation, (South)African literature constituted less than a quarter of the entire course and there was a preponderance of aesthetic-oriented concerns.

2.2.2 A common explanation of the notion of **influence** is the effect or power of one person or thing on another. It provides a support for the facts of transmission and communication. The dominant literary theories at the time of writing, the power situation that the writer

writes in and the social, political, economic milieu of the writing exerts a profound influence on all the components of the production process. Two characteristic phenomena of the notion of influence are *resemblance* and *repetition*. Influence links individuals, theories and texts and groups them together under a simple organising principle.

Perhaps, the greatest influence on literature reception and teaching in South Africa was the apartheid discourse. Racially and linguistically categorised universities reflected their peculiarities and uniqueness in their curriculum. The University of Transkei's English I syllabus in 1988 would be used to illustrate the influence of African humanism on the selection of their reading list: Abraham's Mine Boy; Achebe's Things Fall Apart; Dikobe's The Marabi Dance; To Kill a Man's Pride (short stories); Jordan's The Wrath of the Ancestors; Laye's The African Child; Matshikiza's Chocolates for my Wife; Ngugi's The River Between; Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country; and Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel.

2.2.3 The notion of spirit makes it possible to establish between the phenomena of a given period a common,

coherent body of beliefs, thus allowing the emergence of the collective consciousness as principle of unity and explanation. Examples within the ambit of South African literature are colonial writing, protest, black consciousness, Afrikaner nationalism, Soweto Poetry and apartheid.

The irony of this continuity is reflected in the separation at the University of Vista between 'African Literature' and 'The Novel of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries'. The novels of Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Ngugi wa Thiongo, although written in the nineteenth/twentieth century, did not qualify to be treated in the same breath as George Eliot's Middlemarch, Charles Dickens' Great Expectations, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, E.M Forster's A Passage to India and D.H. Lawrence's The Rainbow (Mhambi and Mphahlele 1996:6). This is a classic case of the marginalisation of (South)African literature which, although written in English, was viewed as an entity outside of English literature.

2.2.4 Foucault views the concepts **oeuvre** and **book** as the most contentious of the categories of continuities. The material support of a book - the individual volume - is not the book itself. Even the volume is not a

simple unity: it forms part of an edition (Sheridan 1980:94). It may be an anthology - the works of many authors, but the creation of another, the editor - or part of a greater work in several volumes.

The frontiers of a book are not clearly defined. Books are caught up in a system of reference to other books, texts, other sentences. It is a mode within a network of metanarratives. The unity of a book cannot be regarded as identical in different cases: its unity is variable and relative. According to Foucault, as soon as one questions that unity it loses its self-evidence, it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse (1972:23).

The concept *book*, a fundamental base of conventional literary historiography, is problematic in the South African context with its rich heritage of oral genres. Folklore is the main source of these oral traditions, it has continued in parallel fashion to the written records, and it has often intermingled with them. Folklore forms which correspond to the criterion of traditional material orally transmitted include myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, curses, oaths, insults, etc. Poetry in oral traditional literature

that has been excluded because of the concept book in South African literature include the *imilolozelo* (lullabies), the *amahubo* poetry accompanied by song - love songs, elegiac songs, political songs and war songs - and the *izibongo* ('praise' poetry).

Characteristic of the oral tradition was the visual dimension (performance) and the audial dimension (recitation) as compared with the written dimension of the book. This brings oral literature closer to dance, music and drama which rely on audience participation and performance than to fixed written forms of literature. The chief difference between the modern written literature and the traditional forms is to be found in the way they are composed (oral versus written), the characters and setting. An area of contemporary research and interest is the transcription and the interface between the oral and the written.

An oeuvre may be defined as a collection of texts appearing under a single proper name. The name of the author on a book published under her own name, under a pseudonym, an unfinished draft, a notebook, or an autobiography cannot carry the same weight. Foucault maintains that the oeuvre can be regarded neither as

an immediate unity, nor as a certain unity, nor as a homogenous unity (1972:24). The oeuvre of an author is arbitrarily interpreted as a unity; a unity which expresses 'the thought, the experience, the imagination, or the unconscious of the author, or, indeed, of the historical determinations that operated upon him' (Foucault 1972:24).

2.2.5 The various texts of an author are not necessarily the same - Nadine Gordimer wrote her first novel, The Lying Days (1953), a few years after the Nationalist government with their policy of racial segregation took office. Her most recent work, None To Accompany Me was published in 1994, the year Nelson Mandela was inaugurated president of a democratic state. There has undoubtedly been development in Gordimer's writing, with her early disaffection with colonial culture, her opposition to apartheid, her role as spokesperson of white people, the censorship of her writings, her liberal sympathy for Black Consciousness, her emotional and philosophical development, the award of the Nobel Prize for literature and her status as writer in a free state, a democracy.

The traditional notion of the author and the author's

intentions is polemic when one considers the development of new codes in black autobiography within the social, literary and political situation in South Africa. Autobiographical texts like Ezekiel Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue (1959), Bloke Modisane's Blame me on History (1963), Can Themba's The will to Die (1972) and Ellen Kuzwayo's Call me Woman (1985) focus on the communal experiences of the community. The autobiographer becomes a spokesperson and representative of the people. A central focus is the people's demand for liberation and there is little emphasis on the cult of the author or the author as source and origin. The autobiographical genre was adapted to the needs of the writers' - where the urge to protest was interwoven with the urge towards self-discovery. There was a reconstruction of the people's identity (black consciousness) rather than an individualistic consciousness.

Reviewing these concepts of unity, Foucault concludes that the apparent unity on which such large groups of statements as medicine, economics, or general grammar were based was in fact illusory. He found a series of gaps, intertwined with one another, intertextuality and metanarratives, and interplays of differences. The types of statements found were composed of unrelated or differing parts and they thus cannot be linked

together in a single figure.

It led to the emergence of his description of *discontinuities* or *dispersion*. Foucault nevertheless sought to find regularities - 'an order in their successive appearance, correlation in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations'. Such an analysis would describe systems of dispersion. When such a system is seen at work in a group of statements, Foucault proposes to use the term *discursive formation*, preferring this neutral term to such older terms as 'science', 'discipline', 'theory', etc. The conditions to which the elements of this formation are subjected are called the rules of formation.

### 2.2.3 DEFINITION OF DISCOURSE

At the very centre of archaeology lies the notion of the *statement*, the basic element of knowledge. When joined together and ordered, statements form *discourse*.

Any discursive event (ie. any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice. For Foucault discourse consists in: 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (1972:45). The object of a discourse is not to be confused with what linguists call the

referent, the actual thing referred to by a verbal sign. Discourse is not about objects, rather, discourse constitutes them.

The relations of discourse are the relations of all types of social institutions and practices - 'these relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification and modes of characterisation' (1972:46). Foucault maintains that these relations constitute discourse itself as a practice and that it is always on the level of materiality that discourse takes effect, that it is effect (1972:59).

Sign production and its meanings are real as practice, as event, as relation, all of which manifest the materiality of discourse. The 'text' dimension of Foucault's definition of discourse refers to language analysis of texts. The 'discursive practice' dimension specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example, which types of discourse are drawn upon and how they are combined. The 'social practice' dimension refers to issues of concern in social analysis such as the institutional and organisational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice.

The major insights into discourse that are identified in Foucault's work and that are significant to this study of the teaching of South African literature can be summarised as follows. In the earlier archaeological work (Foucault 1972), the conceptions of discourse are:

- \* the constitutive nature of discourse - discourse constitutes the social, including 'objects' and social subjects;
- \* the primacy of interdiscursivity and intertextuality - any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways.

In Foucault's later genealogical works (1977 and 1981), the status of discourse changes:

- \* the discursive nature of power - the practices and techniques of modern 'biopower' (e.g. examination and confession) are to a significant degree discursive;
- \* the political nature of discourse - power struggle occurs both in and over discourse;
- \* the discursive nature of social change - changing discursive practices are an important element in social change.

Genealogy is concerned with change. Foucault's inclination is to look for answers in the relations of thought and discourse to factors that lie outside

them. An example is the increased interest currently in 'South African literature' within university English departments - this can be attributed to the reconceptualisation of South Africa as a democracy, and in keeping with this new spirit of the 'rainbow nation', departments have adjusted their curricula to include or co-opt local writings. Others have changed their mission statements or have adopted a policy of affirmative action with regards to appointments in the literature departments (which can also be construed as a change from a bias towards specialists in western literature to an affirmation of the need for lecturers in African and/or non western literatures).

#### 2.4 DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

A discursive practice is a collection of events. It is made up of statements which live 'in a provisional grouping' and as a 'population of events' (1970:31). Foucault is against the concept of continuous time but stresses the notion of irruptive, intersecting events despite an inclination towards identifying stable structures underneath a discursive surface (Merquior 1985:77).

Apartheid is an example of a discontinuous discourse. It is a discursive construct that consists of a population of

intersecting events: a reactionary, pro-apartheid discourse (which will include the repressive laws) and an oppositional discourse, Afrikaner nationalism in the literature as well as an opposition to Afrikaner nationalism in Afrikaans writing (will include writers like Andre Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, Ingrid Jonker, Adam Small, etc.), an African nationalist discourse, a Black Consciousness discourse and a Pan-Africanist discourse, liberal writings (Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, etc.) as well as radical works by white writers (like Albie Sachs and Jeremy Cronin). These and other examples show that the discontinuity within apartheid as a discursive formation can be explored endlessly. Apartheid as an object of South African literature does not have a stable structure but consists of different discursive practices that form a heterogeneity of categories.

Insofar as they are composed of statements, discursive practices are sets of anonymous and historical rules, always specific as to time and place, and which, for a given period and within a social, economic, geographic and linguistic zone, define the framework within which the enunciative functions are exercised (Foucault 1972:153). By *enunciation*, Foucault means the act whereby words are spoken or written - 'linked to the gesture of writing or to the articulation of speech' (1972:28). The statement as event, articulated in the form of speech, is relevant to South African literature since it creates the possibility to include the oral traditions and popular literature

which were excluded from the dominant definitions of literature.

Foucault stresses that the statement is part of a network of statements, a relationship between statements is formed:

Relations between statements (even if the author is unaware of them; even if the statements do not have the same author; even if the authors were unaware of each other's existence); relations between groups of statements thus established (even if these groups do not concern the same or even adjacent fields; even if they do not possess the same formal level; even if they are not the locus of assignable exchanges); relations between statements and groups of statements and even of a quite different kind (technical, economic, political). (1972:29)

It is this dispersal and heterogeneity of statements which characterises South African literature. The emphasis on the relations between statements makes it possible to compare writings in terms of thematic and historical experiences - an example is the autobiographical writings of Nelson Mandela (No Easy Walk to Freedom, 1995), Steve Biko (I Write What I Like, 1978), Alan Paton (Journey Continued, 1988), Sindiwe Magona (To My Children's Children, 1991), Helen Suzman (Memoirs, 1992), Albie Sachs (The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter, 1990), Don Mattera (Memory is my weapon, 1987), Jay Naidoo (Coolie Location, 1990), etc. The relationships between the different ideological subject positions of the autobiographers can be analysed: African nationalism, Afrikaner nationalism, liberalism, socialism, feminism, revolutionary activism, etc.

## 2.5 DISCURSIVE INTER-RELATIONS

For Foucault, the basic unit to be studied in discourse analysis is the organisation of the field of utterances, where they occur and circulate and the configurations of the enunciative field (1970:71). Discursive inter-relations refer to the relations between various discursive practices. Bakhtin (1977:27) also views discourse as an inter-relational procedure as well as a pragmatic practice.

Discursive inter-relations entails viewing discourse in relation to its social contextualised configurations. In every society the production of discourse is controlled, selected and organised according to certain procedures. Such procedures comprehend external controls, internal rules and the regulation of access to knowledge. This view sees the university as an institution within a broader disciplinary society that controls discourse in the interests of the dominant ideology and power relations in that society. The dominance of the canon of traditional English literature and the marginalisation/exclusion of 'other' writings during the apartheid era (as reflected in **Table 2, Chapter 4**) is an example of the power to control discourse within universities.

One of the most interesting discursive relationships posited by Foucault in his genealogical studies is between forms of knowledge and power. This relationship is very useful in amalgamating literature, history and power. The power-knowledge

relationship can also be seen as a catalyst in decentring literary criticism and displacing the traditional views of the text (an important point of departure of this thesis).

## 2.6 DISCURSIVE FORMATION

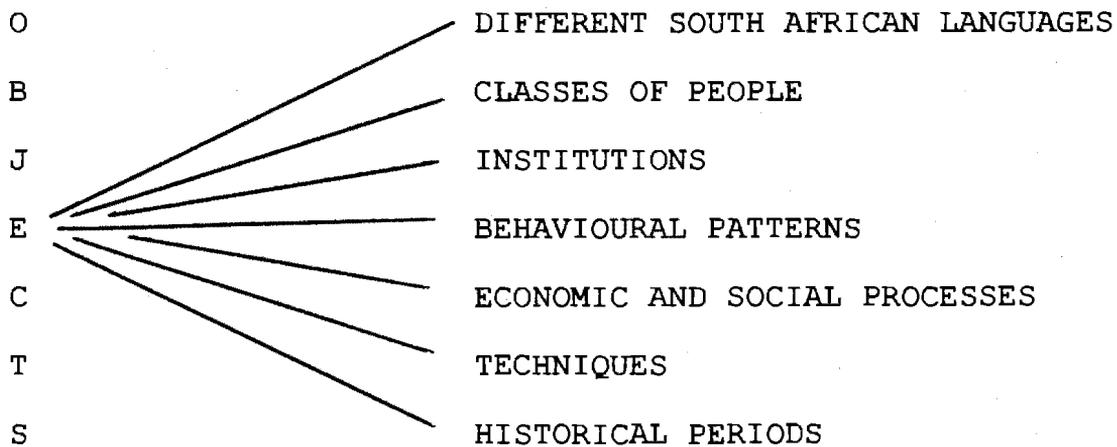
Foucault sees discourse analysis as concerned with analysing statements. A discursive formation consists of 'rules of formation' for the particular statements which belong to it. It is a group of statements marked by relations of co-existence and succession. The emphasis is on the relativity of statements based on *objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies*. An important characteristic of these categories is its heterogeneity, as an example one can consider the multiplicity of objects within South African literature.

### 2.6.1 THE FORMATION OF OBJECTS

The objects of discourse are constituted and transformed in discourse according to the rules of some particular discursive formation. By *objects*, Foucault means objects of knowledge the entities which particular disciplines recognise within their fields of interest, and which they take as targets for investigation.

Objects are not stable, but are subject to continuous transformation both between discursive formations and within a given discursive formation. The dynamic nature of madness is cited by Foucault as an example (1972:32). This means that a discursive formation needs to be defined in such a way as to allow for the transformation of its objects, and Foucault suggests that 'the unity of a discourse is based not so much on the permanence and uniqueness of an object as on the space in which various objects emerge and are continually transformed' (1972:32).

South African literature was defined differently in the various South African languages, classes of people, institutions, historical periods, etc. South African literature as an object therefore does not have a stable definition and is not a fixed entity. One can safely conclude that there are a multiplicity of objects within this literature which can be represented as follows (albeit incomplete in view of the aim being to describe the formation of the objects of a discourse, and the relations that characterise a discursive practice. It does not purport to be a lexical organisation of the dispersion of all the objects within a history of South African literature):



#### A. DIFFERENT SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGES

The main languages are: English; Afrikaans; four major indigenous language groups Nguni, Sotho, Tsonga and Venda with the Nguni group divided into four main sections of isiZulu, isiXhosa, siNdebele (of Zimbabwe) and siSwati (of Swaziland); and Sotho divided into sePedi (northern Sotho), seSotho (southern Sotho) and seTswana (Tswana or western Sotho).

An important component of this object should also be literature in translation.

#### B. CLASSES OF PEOPLE

Industrialists, mine owners, farmers, etc. (Owners of the means of production; During the apartheid period it was predominantly members of the white group who owned the

business houses, mines, publishing houses, etc.)

Professionals, doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. (The educated elite, the different professions - this group includes people from all the racial groups).

The workers, unemployed, etc. ( The oppressed, disenfranchised black masses that made up 70% of the population and occupied 13 % of the land during the decades of racial discrimination).

C. HISTORICAL PERIOD (eg. Apartheid 1948 - 1994)

- 1948 Nationalist Party Rule
- 1950s Black Resistance to apartheid laws (include Group Areas Act, Immorality Act, Population Registration Act and Suppression of Communism Act)
- 1953 Bantu Education Act
- 1955 Freedom Charter adopted at Congress of the People  
Sophiatown removals
- 1956 Treason Trial  
Women's March
- 1958 Extension of Universities Act (separate 'non-white' universities)
- 1960 Sharpeville and the armed struggle
- 1961 Republic of South Africa (white mandate)
- 1963 Rivonia Trial of Umkhonto we Sizwe leaders  
Publications and Entertainment Act (censorship)
- 1966 District Six removals

- 1969 South African Students' Organisation (SASO) with Biko as first president espouses Black Consciousness
- 1970 Bantustan policy
- 1972 Black People's Convention
- 1975 Inkatha founded by Buthelezi
- Angola War and the Border conflicts
- 1976 Soweto Riots; hundreds killed as protests against socio-political repression spread across SA
- 1983 Tricameral parliament
- 1984 United Democratic Front
- 1985 State of Emergency
- Congress Of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
- 1986 Repeal of several apartheid laws (including Immorality Act, Mixed Marriages Act, Pass Laws)
- 1990 Mandela released. Liberation movements unbanned.
- 1994 Government of National unity with Mandela as president

#### D. INSTITUTIONS

Universities, Publishers, Press, State.

Liberation Organisations: ANC, PAC, SACP, AZAPO.

Students' Organisations: SASO, NUSAS, AZASO, PASO.

Worker Unions, Homelands, Reactionary Organisations (IFP, Tricameral Parliament Parties), etc.

Prison, Critics, Poets, Artists, Censorship, Conferences.

**E. BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS**

Racial Prejudice, Oppression, Bureaucracy, Credentialism, Liberalism, Trance Dances, Ceremonies, Rituals, Conflicts, Religion and Magic, Hunting prayers, Shamanism, Beliefs and customs, Ubuntu, Protest, Orality, Gender bias, Suicide, Exile, Homosexuality, etc.

**F. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROCESSES**

Apartheid and oppression, Mining, Agriculture, Capitalism, Workers, Industrialisation, Publishing houses, Intellectuals, Hunter Gatherers, Pastoralists, Township life, European occupation, Social strata, Christianity, Geographic orientation, Independence of African States, etc.

**G. TYPES OF CLASSIFICATIONS**

Genre, Discipline, Fiction/non-fiction, Period, Tradition, Influence, Oeuvre, Book, Author, Protest, Afrikaner nationalism, Colonial texts, Black Afrikaans writing, South African Asian writing, Worker poetry, Women's writing, Gay writing, etc.

**H. TECHNIQUES**

Oral, Pictographic, Alphabetic Script, Printed, Rock paintings, Texts from Newspapers, Rituals, Hand written manuscripts, Pamphlets, Newsletters, Graffiti, etc.

Objects of South African literature that were ignored, marginalised or even 'unknown' in the past and that are now becoming part of the body of knowledge include oral lore, Bushmen literary studies, the Isibongo, folktales, the imilolozelo, the amahubo, the political songs, oral performances, pamphlets, poetry published in magazines and newsletters and the pictographic script of the rock paintings.

#### 2.6.2 THE FORMATION OF ENUNCIATIVE MODALITIES

By *enunciation*, Foucault means not the words spoken or written, but the act of speaking or writing them, the context in which they are uttered and the status or position of their author. Sheridan simplifies enunciative modalities as the laws operating behind the formation of things (1980:99). The different statuses, sites and positions of discourse manifest dispersion and does not unify a subject.

Enunciative modalities are types of discursive activity such as describing, forming hypotheses, formulating regulations, teaching, etc., each of which has its own associated subject positions. The social subject (the author) that produces a statement is not an entity which exists independently of and outside of discourse. The author is a function of the statement

itself. Foucault (1972:95) explains clearly that statements position subjects - those who produce them, but also those they are addressed to - in particular ways.

To describe a statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what s/he says (or wanted to say, or said unintentionally); but in determining what positions can and must be occupied by any individual if s/he is to be the subject of it.

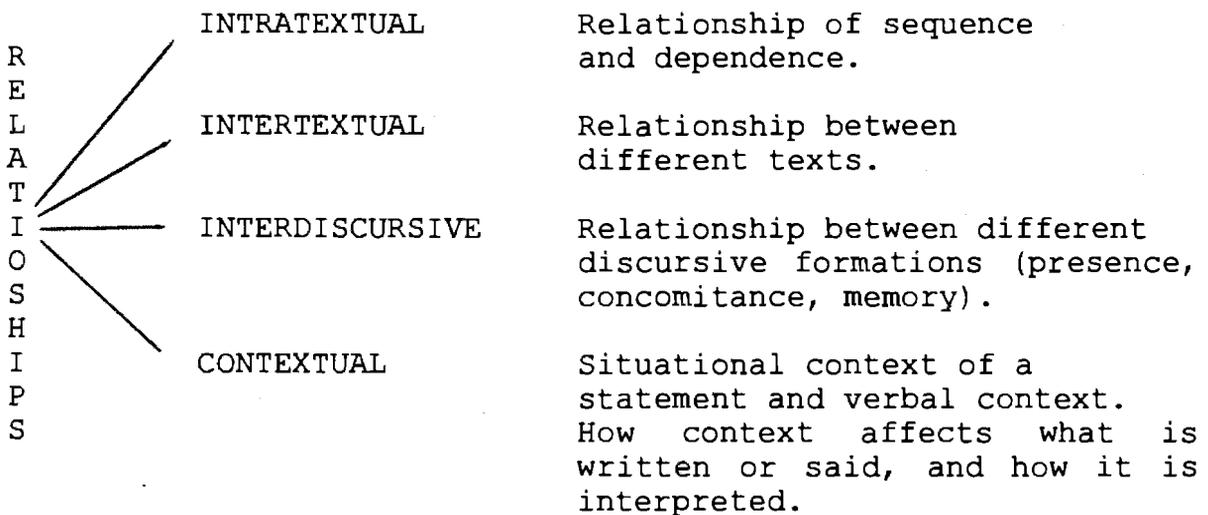
In a study of South African literature the different enunciative modalities should relate the subject firstly to the status of the author, the literary critic, the researcher and the student. Secondly, institutional sites that should be considered are the universities, literary societies, cultural and student organisations, publishers, government and the press. Thirdly, the position of the reader, writer, critic, academic, philosopher, and cultural worker in relation to various domains should be taken into cognisance.

### 2.6.3 THE FORMATION OF CONCEPTS

The notion of *concepts* within a study of South African literature is valuable in view of its disparate nature. A discursive formation does not define a unitary set of stable concepts in well-defined relations to each other. The picture is rather one

of shifting configurations, of changing concepts (Fairclough 1992:45). Foucault's approach in The Archaeology of Knowledge to the formation of concepts within a discursive formation is through a description of how the field of statements associated with it, in which its concepts appeared and circulated, is organised. Fairclough notes accurately that this is helpful in the development of an intertextual and interdiscursive perspective (1992:46).

There are various dimensions of relationships within the 'field of statements'. Relationships can be diagrammatically represented as follows:



Foucault sums up this perspective in the claim that 'there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualise others' (1972:98). This treatment of relations between

statements is synonymous with the concept of intertextuality which forms an integral part of the postmodern discourse.

Finally, the procedures for regulating the articulation of discourse can be categorised as:

1. Those that are accepted as correct, exact and truthful. The great tradition, factors that contribute to 'high culture' and the canon of traditional English literature will form the basis of this group.
2. Those that are criticised and judged. Examples that come to mind are Soweto Poetry, Black Autobiography, Colonial writing, the novels of race, Black Afrikaans 'sonbessie' Poetry and Insurgent Poetry.
3. Those that are rejected and excluded. This category will include the early black writings in English, writings in African languages, orality, township poetry, worker poetry, memoirs, journals, pictographic script and folk lore.

## 2.7 FROM ARCHAEOLOGY TO GENEALOGY

The status of discourse changes in Foucault's later genealogical works. The emphasis shifted to relationships between knowledge and power and this has implications for Foucault's conception of

discourse. This, in turn, enables Foucault to raise the genealogical questions: How are these discourses used? What role do they play in society?

Genealogy opposes itself to the traditional historical methods. Its chief objective is to record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality (Foucault 1977a:139). The genealogist does not work within fixed essences, underlying laws or metaphysical finalities - the search is for discontinuities where others found continuous finalities. It seeks for small details, minor shifts and situations within which events take place.

What is the relationship then between archaeology and genealogy?

Foucault provides an explanation in the following quote:

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. (Rabinow 1984:74)

The first sentence refers to archaeology where Foucault sees discourse analysis as concerned with analysing 'statements'. The second shows the influence of genealogy upon archaeology: it induces and extends power. The shift to genealogy represents a decentring of discourse. In the Archaeology of Knowledge (1972) knowledge and truth were attributed to discourse. In the major genealogical study Discipline and Punish (1977), discourse is

secondary to systems of power. Discourse is now placed at the heart of social practices and processes. Power is inherent in almost every social practice. Power dominates people both positively and negatively, it incorporates people, it shapes and influences people to fit in with its needs. Power is not only imposed from above, it also develops from below.

Analysing institutions and organisations in terms of power will simultaneously lead to an understanding and analysing of their discursive practices. Foucault uses the examples of *interviews*, *counselling* and *examinations* (both medical and educational) as practices and techniques of power. In Foucault's study The Use of Pleasure : The History of Sexuality where socially controlled discourse practices are explored, he notes:

In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable, materiality. (1984:109)

An important procedure that Foucault examines is the formation of the *canonical* - how is the status of canon attributed? In South Africa the canonical traditions have been created by university academics who were almost always white males who imposed standards, controlled publishing, dominated reviews of texts in the media and rejected works that went against their school of thought. Foucault also questions the boundaries between disciplines and the social constraints to access to certain discursive practices. He acknowledges that any system

of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, along with the knowledge and powers which they carry' (1984:123).

The genealogical studies also highlight the political nature of discourse: power struggles occur both in and over discourse. The role of discourse in social change is another important concept in genealogy - changing discursive practices are an important element in social change. Foucault insists that power necessarily entails resistance, but he also gives the impression that resistance is generally contained by power and sometimes poses no threat to power if the same techniques and practices of power are used to counter it. The 'reverse discourse' of homosexuality is used as an example by Foucault - homosexuality began to use the same categories and vocabulary by which it was medically disqualified (1981:101).

A similar parallel to homosexuality can be drawn with the resistance to the canon. The rejection of the Great Tradition/ the canon of British High Culture has resulted in an alternate canon in some institutions - the attribution of canonical status to certain texts. In Bernth Lindfor's survey of the syllabi of English Departments using the 'Better Ultimate Rating Plan' (see **Table 3, Chapter 4**), the top of the teaching canon is occupied by Fugard and Gordimer, followed closely by J.M. Coetzee. 'After the Big Three the numbers taper off quite sharply, with only

Paton, Mphahlele, Head, Schreiner and Serote scoring in the thirties and Abrahams, La Guma, Plaatje and Ndebele in the twenties' (1996:7).

Questions that students and lecturers should ask with regards to the new South African teaching canon are: What procedures were used in the selection? Who attributed the new status to the texts and on what occasion? What were the constraints employed to exclude certain texts of the canon or discursive practices? What one identifies in resistance discourse is that often it does not go outside the parameters of the discourse formation that it is resisting. It can only effectively interrogate the discourse formations if there is an understanding of the power/knowledge hegemony that underpins the discourse.

The main interest for Foucault is the power structure itself. In the process of the search into the origins, one would examine a host of dusty old works in literature, and question why they were relegated to the dust heap and consequently one will deny the dominant figures their usual privilege by questioning the process that led to them towering over other texts. This unconventional approach will enable the student to cast a fresh look at the lost text, to rethink the buried connection and to unearth new knowledge.

However, the danger of a genealogical study is that it may serve

to legitimate the claim to authority by certain historical events and statements - what we may get is a justification of the existing historical situation. Rajchman counters this problem when he explains the aim of a genealogical study:

neither to explain the past nor to learn moral lessons from it (...) On the contrary, he (Foucault) tries to make our situation seem less 'necessitated' by history, and more peculiar, unique or arbitrary. (1985:58)

What we have then is a study of the past to reconceptualise the present situation, the aim being not only to provide an alternative to the present but to critically analyse the process of production of the alternative, examine what forces are involved in its production and to question the interests of the stakeholders in the production of the new knowledge.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

Archaeology opens up an important new dimension for understanding our past, developing new historical perspectives and to counter the hidden mechanisms of domination in society. An archaeology will show how the object 'South African literature' is produced by the concepts of particular discourses which seek to present their definitions of this object as normative.

A genealogy, on the other hand, reveals the circumstances which prevailed at the time of the particular discourse, for example,

the ethnic division of South African literature coincides or emerges at a particular historical juncture while the inclusive conception, at another time. The value of a genealogical approach is the way it suggests how texts of all kinds can be enlisted to provide a more detailed perspective on particular areas and moments where marginalisation and silencing occurred. Such a reconstructive mode also serves to identify the discursive and historical conditions that led to the marginalisation and disappearance as well as the reappearance of particular texts.

### CHAPTER 3

#### A GENEALOGICAL SURVEY OF THE TEACHING OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

The aim of this survey is to understand the forces that have shaped the teaching of South African literature, forces that include South African history, socio-political relations, economic processes, literary highlights, responses by academic literary criticism to South African literature, the production and objectives of literary magazines, journals and the press, and conferences, polemics and debates on literary issues. What the survey hopes to achieve is not just a reflection on the ideological positions of the various players in the power game, but an understanding of the discursive situations that characterise the conflicts between the contending discourses.

Central to the Foucauldian genealogical study is the relationship between power and knowledge and the mutual relations between systems of truth and modalities of power. Literary studies cannot and should not be separated from the broader power relationships within the institution and society. This genealogical survey reveals a long history of conflict around South African literature that was not only affected by colonialism, racism and apartheid versus the protest, Black Consciousness and African humanist debate, but also by the supporters of the canon versus the canon 'busters', liberals versus Marxists, British great tradition of high culture versus

the local, 'smaller' tradition, English liberal universities versus bush colleges and Afrikaans universities, English colonialism versus Afrikaner and African nationalism, etc. Power, as is evident in this genealogical study, has developed from a segregationist logic:

- the white, liberal, English project;
- meritocracy, credentialism and the examination;
- boundaries, categorisations and disciplines;
- traditional pedagogy, authoritarianism;
- attribution of canonical status to certain texts; and
- social and political constraints on access to certain discursive practices.

Foucault brings together history, politics and literature to decentre literary criticism, to displace the text and the primary material from its authoritative position at the heart of the syllabus. A genealogy of the South African literature discourse empowers the student to question the curriculum, to link legitimated knowledge with institutional power and to seek explanations for what has been excluded.

Foucault, aware of the fact that great historical events may conceal more than they reveal, advocates the deconstruction of events, texts and images that make up the past as a process towards historical understanding. History, like literature, has no essence, its meaning is to be found not only in what is

included in establishment explanations but also in what is excluded. What this type of historical explanation suggests is that the present gives rise to the past, a notion derived from a reading of the radical discontinuities in history (Giroux 1986:126).

It is in the internal tensions, the raptures and the margins of history that one finds answers, explanations, reasons and the details of events. It is the apparent insignificance of the plenary discussions of major conferences or the 'taken-for-granted' trivial features of institutional life like staff complement, student intake and reading lists that one has to read in order to find something that may discover the *episteme*, a particular ideology or view of life of the institution. The fundamental basis of this approach is therefore one of **displacing, dislodging and discontinuity.**

What is to be read closely is not only the text but official reports, syllabi, polemics and debates, conferences and seminars, academic groupings and counter-groupings, surveys, publications, journals and the press, government laws and funding mechanisms, literary prizes, protest movements, prison records and all other discursive displays of institutional power. These discursive formations were conveniently ignored for the sake of continuity, to maintain institutional power relations or because it was a soft-option for South African academics to only emphasise

continuities like genre and period, the skill of close reading and Practical Criticism so as to prevent any discussion of the South African quagmire of colonial history and oppressive politics.

Closely allied with the institution's power of control is the power to exclude. It is basically the exclusion of South African literature and its co-option during the late 1980s into the curriculum that prompted this study into the power positions within the universities. Why was there such a strenuous opposition to South African literature and what was the nature of this academic exclusiveness? Spivak (1988), similar to Aronowitz, Mouffe and Laclau, posits the post-Marxist theory of the centralised excluding the marginalised/'other'. The radical segmentation of South African literature by the discourses of colonialism and apartheid has made it possible for the construction of the dominant ethnic discourses of Anglo-colonial liberalism and Afrikaans nationalism with the consequent exclusion of black writings.

This genealogical study also attempts to outline the process of demolition of the dominant literary paradigms, the intensification of interest in South African writing and the shift towards an inclusive literary history. This approach will help to expose the rationale behind the exclusion of 'other' voices, the dynamic relationship between literary culture and

political life within the fiercely contested histories of English colonialism, Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism and Pan-Africanism.

A documentary model will be used in this chapter because of the confusing and entangling nature of the information uncovered especially in view of South Africa's black-white dichotomy in terms of recording of information. Another pitfall to avoid is the inherent inclination towards fragmentation and categorisation according to linguistic, ethnic, regional, political, gender, economic, class and other differences. Literary histories of the past were characteristic of the linguistic or racial differentiation. While Rob Antonissen (1955) and J.C. Kannemeyer (1978) excluded writings by blacks in their Afrikaans literary surveys, distinctions were made between 'writing black' (Richard Rive, 1990) and 'white writing' (J.M. Coetzee, 1988) by attempts to map out the English literary culture in South Africa.

A chronological arrangement is used not only because it charts the historical outline very clearly but it provides an opportunity to highlight important data essential to the genealogy. A purely historical standpoint is avoided because the aim is not to merely document the past, to explain the past, or to usurp the historian's role. The objectives of this survey are to foster a better understanding of the polarised context of literature teaching and reception and to reconstruct the

literature curriculum by exposing the struggles, uncertainties and power relations of the past so as to see how they have influenced the present. This genealogy also blurs the separation between the text of the book and the text of the world because the historical events, the myths, the struggle for liberation, all require interpretation. Chapman (1996:6) maintains that in turning textual criticism to referential account, we could say that such events are themselves texts and cataclysmic events that he quotes are the great trek of Afrikanerdom, the national suicide of the Xhosa, and the actions in 1976 of the Soweto youth.

### 3.1 The colonial past

The beginnings of the institutionalised study of English literature in South Africa can be traced back to 1829 with the founding of the South African College, forerunner of the University of Cape Town, which took a leading role in the promotion of higher education in the Cape and in English studies in South Africa. Factors like English usage, entrance requirements and economic reasons excluded black students from enrolling at this and other early colleges. The aspects comprehended by the term *English* at the college grew from the teaching of grammar, parsing, and spelling by dictation to academic disciplines embracing specialised studies of a wide

range of subjects, including medieval literature, philology, phonetics, and the various aspects of literary criticism.

The genealogy of English studies in the early nineteenth century, both in Britain and the South African colony, reveals a strong opposition to English literature from disciplines like Classics and Philology. The established disciplines maintained their power within the university. In South Africa it took thirty years since inception for English to be considered an independent subject. The struggle for the establishment of English literature as a university discipline resembles the struggle of South African literature for acceptance within university English departments.

The teaching of English literature was established as a subject at the South African College in 1859 when it was separated from Classics. Professor Noble, who was already professor of Physical Science, was appointed to teach English. He perceived the need for a more enquiring approach to literary studies than had been encouraged by his predecessors:

It was never his object to impress a long string of facts on his pupils. What he taught his class was to apply the knowledge which they acquired. His object was to make them think. (Hofmeyr & Reitz 1913:33)

This early attempt at critical pedagogy did not take root - if it did, South African educational institutions could have forged a more enlightening didactical history, a more creative and prolific early literature would have resulted and the evils of

colonial conditioning on society and literature would have been exposed and hopefully countered. Unfortunately, English pedagogy was restricted to memorisation instead of critical analysis. The teaching methods were reinforced by examinations which were external and centrally controlled, vesting much power in the examiners. The disciplinary mechanism of the examination, which is integral to the procedure whereby relations of power constitute teachers and learners, was forged early in South African education. According to Foucault, the examination, supported by hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, subjects those perceived as objects and objectifies those who are subjected (1977a:185).

Professor James Cameron was one of the first persons to argue for a regional literature that reflected the local, social and political conditions and urged the English scholars to produce creative literature. He claimed in a lecture to the South African Library in 1860 that literature ought to be morally edifying and that the poet has a particular responsibility to society:

The literature of a people is related to the life of that people; how the spirit and often the forms of literature are determined or modified by the conditions of national or social life; and on the other hand, how the life of a people is affected by the general tone of its literature: so that each is to the other more or less of both cause and effect, ...the literature being the reflection and expression of intellectual, social, political conditions; and these in their turn reacted upon and powerfully influenced by the literature which they have assisted to create. (Cameron 1860:7)

However, it can also be argued that Cameron's comment should be placed within the context of the arrival of the British settlers in South Africa and perhaps Cameron was referring to the *homeland* and making a patriotic case for the British tradition and not necessarily for a South African literature. Local writings that Cameron could have considered in 1860 (but did not because of the dominance of the London university model) would include the travel writings by British, French and other European administrators and visitors, Letters of Lady Anne Barnard to Henry Dundas from Cape (1793 - 1803), settler chronicles and diaries, Barrow's Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa (1822), Pringle's African poems that appeared in the *South African Journal* (1824), writings in *The Cape Literary Gazette* (1830) and *The Graham's Town Journal* (1831), Pringle's African Sketches (1834), Soga's *Journal* (1857) and Livingstone's Missionary Travels and Research in Southern Africa (1857).

Cameron's recommendation for a consideration of local literature was in conflict with the strong adherence to the examples of London by the first university established in 1873, the University of the Cape of Good Hope. A survey by Penrith (1972:58) of the University Calendars and of the examiners in English during the period 1873 - 1902 indicates an imitation of the London University, in the selection of texts, the methods of examining and in the careers of the examiners. Thus it can be seen that from the beginning, the English departments consciously

mirrored their British counterparts, although the mentor's example in terms of methodology, teaching practices and evaluation was not the best to emulate.

The University of the Cape of Good Hope was purely an examining body and provided no teaching. Since the priority was examining, it relied heavily on a strong factual approach with emphasis on historical and biographical aspects of English literature. All the teaching was done by the University Colleges which included the South African College, the Diocesan College (Rondebosch), Victoria College (Stellenbosch), and the Huguenot Seminary (Wellington). These were independent colleges with no official links with each other or with the university. The more powerful institution (in this case the examining university) determined educational policies, curriculum content, examination regulations and other control measures. This power relationship continues to characterise the South African university as is evident in the inequitable distribution of access and opportunities for students and staff along axes of race, gender, class and geographic discrimination, imbalances in the ratios of black and female staff compared to whites and males, disparities between historically black and historically white institutions in terms of facilities and capacities for teaching and research (National Commission on Higher Education Report 1996:1).

The teaching colleges had no say in the syllabi they had to teach

and the examiners were prohibited from preparing students for the examinations. Prescriptive attitudes and factual questions predominate the early examination papers. The BA Paper for 1874 consists chiefly of historical and biographical questions that demand an ability to memorise, example:

1. Mention the names of the most eminent English writers who were living at the close of the 16th century; and give as complete a list as you can of the works of any one of them.
2. Sketch the original plan of the Faery Queen. How much of the entire work has come down to us?

The limited range of questions seems to imply a deliberate avoidance of methods of descriptive criticism. Doherty (1989:86) notes that the system of external examinations was only partially disrupted by the creation of the two teaching universities (Cape Town and Stellenbosch) in 1916 and it was only in the 1940s that English departments gained control over their own pedagogic practice and curriculum design. Even with the limited autonomy granted in 1916, English departments did not seize the opportunity to incorporate the literary works of the African continent or to take a critical stance towards the British model of traditional high culture.

An important objective of the early South African university was to maintain European standards. In 1879 Dr Langham Dale, vice-chancellor of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, advocated the essential purpose of the 'prestigious English race' university in 'savage' Africa:

... whilst we labour to elevate the degraded savage and to put schooling and all its incidental advantages within his reach, we are bound to maintain the prestige of our race, by seeing that our own boys and girls are kept up to the educational level of their peers in Europe. (1880:62)

It was the same Eurocentric 'higher standards' conditioning that was responsible for the curriculum being a mirror reflection of London with the concomitant exclusion of the content (South African literature) that characterised 'the savage land'.

Both the methodology as well as the examination system of the early South African university received criticism. In his remarks made to the South African Public Library meeting on 9 May 1885, F.C.Kolbe, professor of English at the University of the Cape of Good Hope, criticised the University's inordinate faith in examinations:

I am convinced that the true view of education, is the artistic view, and not the theoristic: it should be a definite development of the faculties, not a mere aimless filling of a capacity. I am therefore convinced that much of our teaching power is being thrown away. Our examinations show it, and our results show it. What do our examinations test? Little more, I fear, than the power of cram. (1885:13)

What can be identified very early in the university English literature curriculum is an over-emphasis on content, which is treated as a product, a commodity to be dispensed to the unquestioning students and a pre-occupation with the development of memory capacities. Paulo Freire (1971b) referred to this a century later as 'banking education' - the depositing and retrieving of information without any thinking and cognition.

The milieu for the development of South African literature at the end of the nineteenth century was very encouraging. The efforts of Roderick Noble to inspire local writing and creativity is well documented. Noble, the first professor of English and a council member of the University of the Cape of Good Hope when it was founded in 1874, was for many years the sole editor of The Cape Monthly Magazine, which actively promoted South African writing (Gray 1982:5). There was a steady development of new writings, especially writings linked to the oral tradition, which included Casalis's The Basutos which contained examples of oral literature, Bleek's Hottentot Fables and Tales, Digger broadsheets and pamphlets, Callaway's Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus (a substantial collection of oral literature with English translations), Chalmers's biography of Tiyo Soga and numerous written contributions by Sothos on customs, proverbs and allegorical stories including dramatised animal satires by Moteame and Sekese. Other texts written during this period that the university curricula excluded at that time were Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm (1883) and Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland (1897), Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1885), Couper's Mixed Humanity: A Story of Camp Life in South Africa (1892) and Blackburn's Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp: A Tale of Transvaal Officialdom (1899). The early history of South African literature may have taken a different and more positive route if some attention was focused on local writings

by the early university and colleges.

Historical periodisation dominated the curriculum and it was only with the appointment of John Clark of St Andrews (Scotland) in 1903 as the first professor of English literature at the University of Cape Town, that the practical method of close reading was introduced:

Vest-pocket generalisations, which save a reader the trouble of reading the poets he desires to know, and which enable him to talk round, but not about, the persons discussed, are out of place in such an endeavour as mine, whose object is to make one read, think and judge for oneself. (1921:10)

It is interesting to note that the call for critical thinking and cognitive development as opposed to the soft option of memorisation was made repeatedly very early in South African education. The reasons why the method did not take root are varied and complicated: stress on content and historical periodisation, racist conditioning, London university ideals, credentialism, meritocracy, etc. Historical periodisation remains an integral component of South African curricula as revealed in the following percentages of South African universities which offered a periodisation component in their 1986 syllabi: First year - 60%, Second year - 17%, Third year - 59% and at the Honours level - 94% (see Chapter 4, Table 2).

The first question on the topic of South African literature appeared in the University of Cape Town examination paper as early as 1909. The question required the students to comment on

'The bearing of economic conditions on the rise of a National Literature.' The question had to be discussed with reference to South Africa and also to the history of any European nation. The link between literature and history is a reflection of the tradition that dominated at the British institutions at that time. The consistent comparison with the British universities also ensured that similar standards, curricula and approaches were maintained.

There was an equivocal attitude to writing about South Africa at the turn of the century. Pauline Smith noted in her journal on 2 May 1905, during an address on South African literature, that there was a lack of a supportive literary tradition for local writing: 'I did not know there was any,' she commented, and then recounted how the opening meeting of the Oudtshoorn Literary and Debating Society put decorum aside to vituperate The Story of an African Farm and 'that woman', its author (Driver 1983:105). Ridge (1992:124) comments further that the incident suggests most of the cultural and personal circumstances which Pauline Smith had to take account of as she wrote: an anti-feminist climate hostile to a woman's perspective and willing at best to tolerate woman writers.

The deliberate exclusion of women from the literary scene, the unwillingness to publish and the deliberate ignoring of works by women by the early anthologies and literary critics reflect the

masculine ideals of the South African patriarchal society. Social constraints prevented women from voicing their anger at the androcentric establishment similar to the political constraints that prevented Africans from being assertive and aggressive and to express their resistance to oppression. It is evident that both the early and most of the later South African universities, the so-called custodians of free speech and thought, did not recognise the social limitations and the conflicts of colonial or apartheid society and did not open their curriculum to the voices silenced by the race, class or gender divide of society.

### 3.2 Union 1910 and Segregation

Professor John Purves, of the Transvaal University College in Pretoria, wrote an article on South African literature in the *Cape Times*, on the day the Union of South Africa was commemorated, 31 May 1910. Technically, this is the day that the term 'South African literature' came into being:

The literature of South Africa has not yet attained, like that of Canada and Australia, to the dignity of a formal history. The number of books published yearly in the four Provinces of the Union form a paltry and inconsiderable total compared with the records of the other Dominions, and South Africa cannot as yet be said to have developed a literary consciousness. Yet the books that have come out of South Africa and the books South Africa has inspired are neither few nor wholly insignificant, while the literary associations of the sub-continent are probably richer than those of any other of the great Colonial territories.

(1910:21)

Purves made no distinction between Afrikaans, English and indigenous writings and considered them all in the category 'South African literature'. It is Manfred Nathan who took the initial step towards a definition of works that qualified for consideration as South African literature:

It must reproduce the local colour and atmosphere of the country and have been written by one who was either born in South Africa or has lived there long enough to become identified with the country as an inhabitant. (1907)

Both Nathan's and Purves's vision of an all-inclusive South African literature challenges the post-apartheid South Africa in its striving towards a national literature free from the divisive language, racial and gender cleavages that have militated against it during the past era.

Van Wyk (1990:2), unlike Nathan, defines South African literature by the relationship of the authors to the land. It implies the authors were born in, lived in or visited the country. There are, nevertheless, important texts about the region by authors who never lived in or visited South Africa. Van Wyk includes as illustration The Lusiads (1571), and authors who have never been to South Africa and who have produced literature on the Anglo-Boer War in Europe, Australia and Canada eg. A.M. Buckton's The Burden of Engela: A Ballad Epic (1904). Chapman (1996:9), like Van Wyk, broadens the definition when he acknowledges that since the literature continues to be marked by a to-and-fro between Africa and Europe not only in terms of language, literary

conventions and critical debate but in that some of the most penetrating insights have been offered by sojourners or commentators from abroad, a writer of southern Africa would seem to have less to do with birth, nationality or race than with intimate knowledge of and close identification with the life of the region.

The nearest that any university came to South African literature was in 1915 when Professor Purves's text, The South African Book of English Verse was recommended. This book has had an interesting part in English studies in South Africa, not only as the first of its kind, but also as the most explicit statement of the weaknesses of the teaching of English in South Africa.

Purves' text is the first anthology intended specifically for the South African reading public, and includes poems composed in Britain, the United States of America and South Africa, that he thought were relevant to the conditions in South Africa. In his introduction he discusses some contemporary issues: his view of the importance of the development of literary taste, with particular reference to this country; the South African attitude to English literature; the effect of the distance between Britain and South Africa on the study of English here; and the difference between the teaching of English in the Cape and at the Transvaal University College (1915:v-xiv).

Purves commented on the harmful state of affairs of English teaching in South Africa as a result of the dogmatic attitudes of teachers and condemned their methods of teaching. One of the culprits, he maintains, is the University of the Cape of Good Hope, and in censuring its practices he seems to anticipate Leavis's view of the moral value of good literature. Purves writes:

Strange as it may seem, his (the South African student's) acquired leanings are all for convention - the unreal and second-hand conventions of 'literary' poetry. It is the same in prose. He regards style too often as rhetoric and decoration ... And their formulae, impressed with a tedious iteration upon young South African minds, often to the exclusion of simpler and more natural models with a more immediately inspiring subject matter, have had a sterilising effect upon literary taste.

Purves's main objective was the development of literary taste and he found South Africa backward in this respect. Earlier, in 1909, Kidd of Rhodes University also shared Purves's sentiments in his article 'The English Language and Literature in South Africa' where he estimates the South African student and the university system to be lacking when compared to the Homeland. Kidd describes the South African students, with their colonial minds 'as not particularly imaginative and cannot realise the conditions of life in the homeland, which have produced our literature.' It was not only the students that were considered backward but also the literature that originated in South Africa that lacked literary value and merit, even more so the literature that emanated from black people, both oral and written genres.

Integral to a study of South African literature is therefore, the development of the lost black voices, both the oral and the written genres, in keeping with Foucault's definition of genealogy as an 'insurrection of subjugated knowledge' (1980: 81). Foucault is not only concerned with the retrieval of the buried texts that history has silenced, but he also emphasises the methods that previous historical procedures ignore. An example of a local voice that literary history has silenced is the Bushman (San) songs and stories. There is also little interest in the inclusion in curricula of the pioneering works by Bleek and Lloyd to recover the mood songs and the !Kaha of the Kalahari, creation myths, folk-tales, testimonies as reflected in //Kabbo's story and the Bushmen projects, the Khoi projects and Draghoenders Lament. Bleek and Lloyd's Specimens of Bushmen Folklore (1911) is considered a seminal text on the oral tradition of the /Xam, a Northern Cape linguistic group of the Bushmen. Their extensive work in recording and studying the /Xam language and literature around the turn of the century and the /Xam's transcribed oral texts, narratives, songs and poems could be used profitably as a basis to retrieve knowledge and information about San literature.

There are two essentially relevant passages that contain 'indigenous literary theory' in Bleek and Lloyd's text: metatextual comments about the role of letters, or books and stories in /Xam society. Under the heading 'Customs and

superstitions', Kabbo explains the notion of 'Bushmen Presentiments':

The Bushmen's letters are in their bodies. They (the letters) speak, they move, they make their (the Bushmen's) bodies move. They (the Bushmen) order the others to be silent; a man is altogether still, when he feels that ( ) his body is tapping (inside). A dream speaks falsely, it is (a thing) which deceives. (1911:331)

Ruth Finnigan has argued that elements recognisable in written literature are also recognisable in oral forms: the communication is expressive not merely instrumental, aestheticised not simply factual (Chapman 1996:24). Writers like Van der Post (1958; 1961) and more lately Stephen Watson (1991) along with critics like Van Vuuren (1994b) and Chapman (1996) and artists like Pippa Skotnes (1996) inspire students to take seriously the literary culture of the people who bore the brunt of colonial oppression and genocide.

The year 1916 may be considered as a turning point in the history of South African university education since it was the year when English departments had autonomy over their curriculum, the right to select the texts they considered appropriate and the power to conduct their own examinations and to appoint their own examiners. The autonomy was granted to the new universities (Stellenbosch and Cape Town) by the University Act of 1916. That year also saw the inauguration of the first College for African students, the South African Native College (later Fort Hare).

The new autonomy enabled Professor John Clark of the University of Cape Town to give thorough attention to South African writing in English. He believed that national literature did not vary from one age to the next, and applied this idea to South African writing. He outlined the requirements for a South African national literature in his study of Pringle:

And when we once get South African youth ...indoctrinated with the story and legend of South Africa, fed on, instructed and inspired by the great literature of the past and present; when we once definitely have stable and settled citizens in a stable and settled country, I, for one, think that those big things of heroic and dramatic import, which captious and earnest persons legitimately and patriotically desire, are likely to be produced.

...the occupants of literature chairs ought to devote some time to the study of the literature of the country.

(1921:10)

Clark identified the need to re-examine and question existing practices and suggested the inclusion of South African literature in the university curriculum, in other words, an approach towards the expansion of the canon. The call was made within the context of an increased production of South African English texts - the publications during the first two decades of the century include Blackburn's A Burger Quixote (1903) and Leaven: A Black and White Story (1908), FitzPatrick's Jock of the Bushveld (1907), Black's Love and the Hyphen (1908) and Helena's Hope, Ltd. (1910), Jacottet's Treasury of Ba-Suto Lore (1908), Bleek and Lloyd's Specimens of Bushmen Folklore (1911), Bokwe's biography of Ntsikana and Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa (1916).

Clark was one of the few scholars who examined on South African literature fairly thoroughly. South African poetry formed a component of the English examination for students doing the B.Ed Degree and the Secondary Teacher's Certificate at Cape Town University in 1926. The questions included:

1. a. Examine four representative poems of Pringle - with special attention to poetic thought, metrical form, expressional form.
- b. An argument for the study of the poetry of South Africa.
2. a. Examine from several points of view (with quotations or definite reference), 'The Karoo', and two other of the more ambitious poems of Slater.

Clark also practiced a method of close reading, a form of practical criticism and replaced historical periodisation with the documentary method - the objective was to encourage individual thinking and interpretation. The tutorial system was introduced by Clark whereby small group discussions were held on prescribed texts and on the formal lectures. This form of teaching continues to be emphasised at university English departments.

The first pioneering work on South African literary historiography written in English was Manfred Nathan's text, South African Literature: A General Survey (1925). An interesting observation is Nathan's limited inclusivity, there was no division between English and Afrikaans/Dutch works:

To classify authors according to the medium in which they wrote appears to be an arbitrary mode of treatment, more

particularly when the influence of the great events or movements upon literature has to be taken into account... Consequently, writers are treated indiscriminately without regard to their origin or language. Such a mode of treatment appears to be inevitable in a bi-lingual country, like South Africa. (1925:14)

The voices of blacks were marginalised/silenced in this seminal study of the history of South African literature. Nathan uses 'African' and 'South African' as synonymous, although he deals only with English and Afrikaans literature. 'South African' to Nathan means **white** (Van Vuuren 1994a:9). Later historiographers abandoned the Afrikaans/English inclusivity for a linguistic divide characteristic of the apartheid society - Dekker (1947), Kannemeyer (1978), Coetzee (1988), Rive (1990), etc. It was only Chapman (1996) who took into cognisance the fiercely contested histories, the dynamic relationship between literary culture and political life and the literatures of the South African community across linguistic and racial barriers.

In spite of the factors that militated against it, black writing survived and developed according to its own codes and values. An example is Plaatje's autobiography, Native Life in South Africa (1916), that was adapted to suit the communalistic nature of African people as opposed to the individualistic Western codes. Although the missionary endeavour formed the nucleus of African intellectual life and the publication of literary works, writers like Thomos Mofolo broke with his religious dependency with the publication of Chaka (1926).

Even though Mofolo's bias is Christian, he was also subjected to missionary censorship, so that the Christian characters of his fiction are strictly programmed to avoid offence to the white reader. He portrays Shaka as a larger than life-size man, a tragic figure. He brings together here forces in conflict - his own conception of Christian morality and the lust for power. Completed in 1910, it was only published sixteen years later. The missionary houses initially opposed this venture as being far too secular and smacking of a nascent black nationalism because he invested his hero with human qualities denied him by white historians, missionaries and administrators, who saw in Shaka only the unmitigated savagery of a beast (Rive 1990 and Mphahlele 1992).

Daniel P. Kunene also demonstrates the alienating influence that the missionary institutions had on writers like Dhlomo, Tiyo Soga, D.T. Jabavu, John Dube and Thomas Mofolo:

The African intellectual who came out of the missionary school was not only literate, but also he was a changed being. He looked about himself and saw nothing but evil. He saw his 'heathen' brothers singing and dancing and drinking and loving in pursuit, as they thought, of the Good Life, and he shook his head in pity. For suddenly these things had become ugly and sinful...The process of alienation had begun, complex and divisive - Christian and non-Christian drifted; worse than that, they began to hate each other. (1968:20)

Stephen Gray also comments on the overtly Christian framework of Dhlomo's An African Tragedy (1928) and the publishing policy of the Lovedale Press. He feels that the hidden objective of the mission was to stop the decline of Native life in large cities

and towns in the face of liquor, gambling, whoring and thievery and the intention of the printing press was the general propaganda of the Christian message (1979:173). One wonders whether the availability of secular publishing houses for African writing would have seen the production of a wide range of work from the storytelling of Bushmen, African creation myths, folktales, praise poetry, and a literature that would have encompassed traditional, popular and elite writing and not only religious writing. It is also unfortunate that only the religious writings by Africans gets mentioned in a minority of literary surveys.

Early African literature did not form an homogenous whole but was characterised by discontinuities and differences of approaches. In 1939 Dhlomo differed radically with Benedict Vilakazi, an academic and poet, when Vilakazi declared that Zulu poetry needed to adopt western techniques, such as rhyme and rhythm (metre), while using the African experience for its content. Vilakazi researched the area in his Master of Arts study 'The conception and development of poetry in Zulu' and he clearly saw a literary piece in which there was a distinction between 'form' and 'spirit'. In contrast, Dhlomo viewed a traditional literary piece as an esoteric item that defied academic analysis; which was for that matter a distorted form of the original 'primitive, tribal, dramatic pieces' (Mphahlele 1992:49). Dhlomo maintained, like Senghor and Césaire, that African poetry had nothing to

learn from European rhyme and rhythm and that poetry and dance in African society were inseparable.

The fact that there was a sharp break with the earlier Christian didactic emphasis and the emergence of writers of the calibre of Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele received little attention, if any, from the academe. In spite of the silencing of the black voice, urban black literature was firmly established in English in the 1940s. Peter Abrahams was influenced by the Marxist class analysis theory as well as the Afro-American writing of the Harlem Renaissance. His earliest work, A Black man speaks of Freedom (1940) was followed by a collection of short stories, Dark Testament (1942), a short novel Song of the City (1945) and Mine Boy (1946) which followed the direction of protest literature. He went into exile in England and produced three novels, Path of Thunder (1948), Wild Conquest (1950) and A Wreath for Udomo (1956), and two autobiographical works, Return to Goli (1953) and Tell Freedom (1954). Ezekiel Mphahlele launched his literary career in 1947 with a collection of short stories called Man Must Live.

In spite of its steady development, John Greig disputed the notion of South African literature in an article published in the 1938 edition of the Jaarboek van die Afrikaanse Skrywerskring wherein he rejected the view held by Nathan and Purves that a literature was characterised by the birthplace of its authors or

its subject matter. The unprecedented growth in the literary culture of South African society during the twenties and thirties made little impact on academics like Greig. Texts published during the twenties and thirties that Greig ignored include Jabavu's Bantu Literature (1921); Campbell's The Flaming Terrapin (1924) and Adamastor (1930); Millin's God's Stepchildren (1924); Plomer's Turbott Wolfe (1925), I speak of Africa (1927) and Notes for Poems (1927); Slater's Centenary Book of South African Verse (1925), Drought: An African Parable (1929) and Dark Folk (1935); Smith's The Little Karoo (1925) and The Beadle (1926); Plaatje's Mhudi (1930); Van der Post's In a Province (1934); Cloete's Turning Wheels (1937); R.Dhlomo's Ushaka (1937). The period also saw the launch of literary magazines like *Bantu Studies* (1921), *South African Outlook* (1922), *Voorslag* (1926), *The Outspan* (1927), *The Sjambok* (1929), *The South African Forum* (1938) and *Trek* (1939).

In direct contrast with Greig, Campbell and Plomer appealed for a frank and rigorous critical approach to South African literature in English, in their first edition of the *Voorslag* magazine. They identified a need for it to be regarded comparatively with the best modern overseas writing, thus avoiding provincialism. They maintained that critics should also expect South African authors to face squarely the opportunities and challenges provided by their own environment.

However, Greig argued very strongly that South African writing in English should be regarded as part of English literature. Greig did not take into cognisance the African writers, who unlike their white settler counterparts, owe no allegiance to England. Adherents of Practical Criticism, like Greig, insisted on close-attention to the canon of traditional English literature and in the process relegated local writings (and more especially writings by Africans) to the margins of university attention. Although the practical critics stimulated the first serious attention to teaching practices in South African English departments, very little attention was focused on the content taught or the positive development in the writings of black South Africans.

It is within this context of growth and development of new writings that Greig continues his tirade against the notion of South African literature:

I am tempted to cut the knot by roundly declaring that there is no such thing as South African literature in English; and I believe that much could be said for that view. (1959:270)

Greig explains the reasons for the assessment as follows:

There is...literature written in South Africa in English. But this, because it is written in English, should be regarded as part of English literature. (The same is true of so-called American, Canadian, Australian and West-Indian literature.) In short, the only sure criterion by which we may distinguish one literature from another is the language it is written in; and the country it is written in is largely irrelevant. (1959:271)

Greig maintains that there are only two writers worthy of being

included in the canon of English literature : Roy Campbell and Olive Schreiner. However, he concludes that neither of these two stand unquestionably in the front rank. Greig compares local writings with the canon of British literature and finds South African literature not meeting the requirements or expectations of the academe.

Geoffrey Durrant, Professor of English at Natal University, was also hostile towards the concept of a South African literature. In his review of The Living Tradition, 1947, an anthology compiled by T. Tyfield and K.R. Nicol, he expressed strong disapproval of earlier anthologies which did not expose children to the British tradition or as he claims, 'the first order'. Durrant refers to South African poetry as 'an exhibition of false heartiness or of sentimentality about nature' (1947a:17).

Ironically, in the same review, Durrant acknowledges that poetry must be alive and should be of contemporary relevance since 'nothing does more harm to poetry than the view of it as a fine art meant for decoration, and with no roots in our common earth' (1947a:17). This was an excellent motivation for the study of South African literature. However, it was the literary value of literature that was questioned and the recognition of only a narrow canon of texts stifled the incorporation of South African literature into the curriculum of English departments.

In Durrant's 'Notes on the Teaching of Literature' in Theoria (1947b), he puts forward a case for close reading and Practical Criticism when he favours, like Clark and Greig, the small group tutorial classes. He believes that we should read through texts with students to help them to achieve as complete a reading as they are capable of, and that we should test in examinations not so much knowledge of the apparatus of criticism, as the critical ability of a student when faced with passages that s/he has not previously met (1947b:7). It is evident that Practical Criticism could have been used as an effective pedagogical tool if there was also consideration of the broader political issues of society and attention to contemporary South African literature.

### 3.3 Apartheid

Apartheid had a negative effect upon the campaign for the recognition of South African literature. Initially, many liberal academics viewed support for the teaching and reception of local literature as tacit support for the Afrikaner nationalist movement and its abhorrent discriminatory policies. They felt that patriotism to the Afrikaner state was concomitant to support of South African literature.

The anti-South African literature lobby was very powerful and during the first two decades of apartheid it was only a few.

academics like Butler and Howarth who attempted to counter this force. In his seminar paper 'The Difficulties of Teaching a Non-Indigenous Literature' delivered in 1949 at the University of the Witwatersrand English Department, Butler argued that the opportunity to expose the students to their own culture and to give significance and value to local writing must not be lost. However, his case (albeit weak) for the teaching of South African literature was based on the *mass-civilization - minority culture* debate. Butler outlined further a recurring argument in the literature debate of the remoteness of the references in the English tradition to South African students, especially in the poetry. The timing of the argument was appropriate since it was the first time since Olive Schreiner that South African literature was projected onto the world stage with Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country (1948). The text also provided literary scholars an opportunity (that they did not seize) for a comparative study on the 'Jim goes to Jo'burg' theme by drawing on the writings of Abrahams, Blackburn, Plomer, Scully, R. Dhlomo and Van der Post.

Unfortunately, Butler did not want to alienate his colleagues with a radical view, and with a quite contradictory stance, he acknowledged the high culture and superiority of the canon of English literature. With a rather weak plea, he argued for the inclusion of South African writing in the curriculum without any strong motivation than the need to remedy the imaginative

short-comings of South African students (1949:17). He felt that South African students were backward with regards to the comprehension of traditional English literature and a remedial response to the situation was a study of local writings. In other words, only the canon is appropriate for a truly academic discourse for students with the required literary skills; for all other contexts, the 'other' (in this case South African writing) will suffice.

Butler and other academics who supported the introduction of South African literature in the curriculum were not very successful because they did not challenge the established literary conventions at the university with regards to artistic and aesthetic evaluations, and the dichotomy between the canon and local writing. Perhaps, the status-quo of the university as an institution had to be upheld and its role in social effectiveness had to be protected - reflections of Foucault's strategy of the institution and social control, and in this case the practice of pedagogy with which an institution establishes itself (1971a:11).

Another reason cited for the exclusion of South African writing was the subjective aesthetic evaluation of its quality - it was viewed as inferior to the canon. This view was articulated most strongly by Prof. R.E. Davies in his paper 'Problems of Research in South Africa' at the Second Conference on English Literature

held at the University of Natal in 1949. Nevertheless, he supported the need for research in local writings and urged his colleagues to change their attitude and help develop this literature by adopting a new approach towards it. An important comment was the wealth of original material in South African literature and the surprising amount of material available for research. The contradictions in Davies's comments are blatant. Firstly, he states that South African literature is of an inferior quality for the undergraduate programme but of much value for the research (post-graduate) programme. Secondly, he does not specify whether the research should be part of post-graduate studies or will the lecturers conduct the research for the benefit of the university teaching programme? Thirdly, he ignores the fact that the researchers of South African literature will eventually teach it, and most probably as part of the undergraduate syllabus. It is clear that Davies, like Butler earlier, did not want a shift from the Practical Criticism hegemony that dominated literature teaching at universities. By limiting South African literature for research purposes only, the undergraduate syllabus is assured of the dominance of the canon.

Professors and chairs of University English departments like Butler, Davies and Partridge acknowledged that local writings are relevant and valuable but little attempt was made towards curriculum changes to accommodate their thinking on local writings. Another example of rhetoric without action is

Partridge's general feelings towards South African literature in an article in *Standpunte* entitled 'The Conditions of South African English Literature':

What is important is the creative activity of a people, in whatever language, that they should draw from the experience about them and reshape it in images of beauty, that they should influence thought and, in collaboration with the whole movement of civilisation, mould their own intellectual history. (1950:46)

Partridge had an excellent opportunity to implement his suggestions when he edited the journal *English Studies in Africa* in 1958. However, he did not encourage this local creativity - there was a total absence of articles specifically concerned with South African literature in the first few editions. Ironically, Partridge stressed the importance of the great British tradition and metropolitan literature in his first editorial:

A great tradition in the hands of a minority group, as the English-speaking people happen to be in Africa, must give tangible evidence of the will of the group to survive... there is a danger, now, that rival English-speaking cultures, evolved in different continents, may press their claims to recognition at the expense of the parent tradition itself. (1958:1)

It is very interesting and rather contradictory to note that it was not the liberal universities but an Afrikaner University that initiated a serious study of South African literature in the undergraduate syllabus. The University of the Orange Free State offered an English 1 Special Course in 1955 with a literature section that was devoted exclusively to South African texts. Texts included Lawrence Green, Bosman's Mafeking Road, Pauline Smith's Little Karoo, the F.C. Slater anthology, and a selection

of South African prose edited by R.E. Davies (University Calendar, 1955).

Since Practical Criticism was the dominant approach in most literature departments, it was inevitable that only the limited canon of English classics received attention. The practical critics did not hesitate to openly counter any move by the few academics, like Howarth from the University of Cape Town, to include an alternative perspective to the curriculum. Durrant, like Greig earlier, consolidated the process of marginalising South African writing as irrelevant and asserted: 'We should concentrate upon making students familiar, through the most intensive study, with the really good works in English' (1957a:19). It was also the powerful force of the practical critics and their great numbers at the universities that resulted in the adoption of the negative policy on South African literature at a conference of writers, publishers, editors and university teachers of English in 1956:

This literature, if it was literature, was not of sufficient 'quality' to merit the close scrutiny of traditional literary practices.

Robert Howarth, in the face of fierce and powerful opposition, introduced a serious consideration of South African literature at this conference. His paper 'Indigenous Literature and its place in University English Studies' outlined his projected syllabus for a one year course in South African literature and included the following proposals:

- Works ranging chronologically from Thomas Pringle to Nadine Gordimer.
- Examples of various literary kinds (poetry, drama, fiction, general prose)
- Read comparatively with British, other Commonwealth, and American Literature.
- Comparisons with Afrikaans writing to outline similarity of backgrounds and experiences with the English works.
- The Pestalozzian principle of proceeding from the known to the unknown - introduction to South African literature will form the basis for reference and principles for further studies in English literature.

It is clear that Howarth was not part of the Practical Criticism adherents and, according to Penrith (1972:142), he expected his students to read widely and there was no dominance of close attention to specific texts of the canon. On a didactic level, this ensures that students do not memorise, spot or rely on 'banking education'.

Howarth's assertion of the importance of wide reading over close reading as required by Practical Criticism and his unusual treatment of regional literatures was not supported by most of the academics at the conference. Butler, chairman of the session, recalls the negative attitude towards Howarth's proposal and the treatment he received was one of '...blistering irony -

a display of academic bad manners such as I hope never to witness again' (1977:7).

William Plomer, an honoured guest at the conference, acknowledged the development and success of South African literature in the English language and noted that it is in such a flourishing state that there is no need any more to keep bending over to see if it is growing (Haresnape 1988:41). It is ironical that it was Plomer, a visitor to the conference, and not someone from the academe who concluded that South African literature was worthy of serious attention. The conference adopted a resolution to establish a South African Journal of English Studies with the objective of providing a medium for general literary studies with *some* reference to South African literature.

In spite of the conference recommendation for a journal to promote local writing, the opposition to South African literature from the stronger opponents remained unabated. Durrant referred to the category 'South African literature' as a misnomer and refused to accept its existence in his keynote address to the Annual Conference of the South African Library Association in September 1956:

One of the most difficult questions to be answered by those who teach a 'literature'... is to know what exactly a literature is, where its boundaries are to be drawn, and what is to be included within its territory. (1957b:121)

He does not apply the same criteria of selection of literature

to the canon since the canon is viewed unquestionably as a body of literature of excellence. He reveals this when he repeats his notion of the classics and the higher order of the British tradition as compared to writing produced elsewhere in the English Language and is pessimistic of the merits of South African writing:

...it is reasonable to suppose that any literary work, to be thought worthy of study, must be able to assert its value in the whole context of books written in English everywhere. In other words, it will have to be very good indeed to merit attention at all. (1957b:121).

Durrant comments arrogantly that it was to the South African artists' advantage to speak of South African literature in view of their limited talent and the need for a market for their works, and further, a regional characteristic will help create a patriotic desire for their works. He claims categorically that all the stakeholders in South African literature used the strategy of substituting nationalism/ patriotism for literary talent.

Davis (1956) supports Durrant in his unpublished Master of Arts study on Roy Campbell where he dismisses the call for a study of South African literature as a futile exercise. The question of priorities arises, because there is little enough time to spend on first class literary achievements in an already overcrowded curriculum, let alone those that are at all doubtful. South African writing in English has usually been excluded at other universities for this reason, since even the most eminent poet

(Roy Campbell) even at his best, is obviously not of the first rank, with Elliot or Yeats (Davis 1956:113). This view of 'an already overcrowded curriculum' still persists at South African universities. Pertinent questions that academics who hold this view do not ask are: What has overloaded the curriculum? Who is responsible for overloading the curriculum? Why should the overloaded curriculum not be changed?

The problems associated with curricular reform, especially with regards to a rethink on regional literatures, was further exacerbated by the Extension of Universities Act of 1958 which advocated separate 'homeland universities'/'bush colleges' for black students. Black students were kept out of white universities and even the so called liberal white universities promoted ethnicity - for example, in 1936 the university of Natal established a 'Non-European' section at a local high school for black students (and only on a part-time basis).

Academic standards, syllabi and curricula, criteria for the appointment of academics and entrance requirements for students differed drastically from university to university. There was a cycle of exclusion of South African literature since the under-resourced institutions emulated the 'standards' and curriculum design of the white liberal universities which relied heavily on the canon of traditional English literature. Another factor that compounded the situation was that most senior appointments in the

black universities came from Afrikaans academics with strong apartheid links (Van Wyk 1994:2). The paternalism of the white academics at the black universities was most evident in their teaching methods, which tended to simplify the curricula for the students, to discourage students from reading and doing research, to emphasise the memorisation of class notes and to ignore topics relevant to the South African situation (Van Wyk 1994:3).

The advent of separate universities and increased control over English departments by state sanctioned appointments of professors and departmental chairs (Mphahlele 1984:5) also militated against a more relevant curriculum and the promotion of local writings (which was largely anti-establishment, especially works by black writers, given the context of resistance to apartheid, the treason trials, Sharpeville and emergency). It is therefore not strange that research into South African literature during the 1960s received considerable stimulus as an effect of the increasing emphasis on post-graduate studies in overseas universities and not South African universities. Stephen Gray, who was involved in a research programme abroad, summarised the situation:

The researchers of the last decade who have taken to the field have, almost without exception, been trained overseas, in the United Kingdom or the United States most usually.

Still today, no South African further degree in that area is as prestigious or as geared to appropriate methodologies or research techniques. (1982:9)

The emphasis on post-graduate research programmes in the area of

South African literature was forged early by the university for two possible reasons: Firstly, the researchers themselves or promoters of the studies were trained overseas and secondly, it ensures that the undergraduate curriculum can safely exclude South African writing as it was not considered suitable teaching material but could form an important field for research.

The wealth of writings from the beginning of apartheid (1948) to Sharpeville (1960) which the academe marginalised would include Roux's Time Longer than Rope: The Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, (1948); Bosman's Cold Stone Jug, (1949) Lessing's The Grass is Singing (1950) and This was the Old Chief's Country (1951), Campbell's Light on a Dark Horse (1951), Rooke's Mittee, Butler's The Dam and Stranger to Europe (1952), Paton's Too Late The Phalarope (1952), Gordimer's The Lying Days (1952) and A World of Strangers (1958), Mopeli-Paulus' Blanket Boy (1953), H. Dhlomo's Dingana (1954), Nyembezi's collection of Zulu proverbs (1954), Huddleston's Naught for your Comfort (1956), Jacobson's A Dance in the Sun (1956), Van der Post's The Lost World of the Kalahari (1958), Delius' The Last Division (1959), the drama King Kong (1959), Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue (1959) and Cope's The Tame Ox (1960).

Journals and magazines launched during this period include *Drum* (1951), *African Parade* (1953), *Africa South* and *The Purple Renoster* (1956), *English Studies in Africa* (1958) and *Contrast* (1961). Of all the magazines of the fifties, *Drum* did the most

to publish works by black writers, especially short stories, during the period when Mphahlele was the fiction editor. Along with the Johannesburg newspaper, *The Rand Daily Mail*, *Drum* took a bold investigative approach to apartheid.

Mphahlele recalls that before *Drum* and the lesser picture magazines that shot up in the fifties like *Zonk!*, *Afrika* and *Bona*, blacks could not publish in papers meant for a predominantly white readership. The only white (and Afrikaans) journal that published any of Mphahlele's fiction was *Standpunte* - the story entitled 'The Woman' (Mphahlele 1992:51). However, *Drum* was able to retain its literary endeavours for less than a decade since the owner of the magazine decided in 1957 that fiction was not a good selling product and the journalists were instructed to write exclusively on crime, sex, heartbreak stories, sport and chit-chat features on the social and political scenes. This new direction of *Drum* was one of the factors that led to its editor, Mphahlele, leaving the country on voluntary exile.

It was not only the journals but also the press who published and wrote chiefly with the apartheid paradigm in mind. Most of the English-speaking newspapers (*Cape Argus*, *The Star*, *The Diamond Field Advertiser*, *The Pretoria News*, *The Natal Mercury*, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Sunday Post*, *The Friend*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Express*) were group owned, heavily

capitalised by overseas as well as South African funds, and linked to, though not dominated by the big mining corporations. The Afrikaans press (*Die Burger, Die Volksblad, Die Transvaler, Die Vaderland, Die Oosterlig*), in contrast, were a people's press, springing originally out of the same drive for self-expression as did Hertzog's National Party and financed solely by local Afrikaans capital, much of it contributed by small shareholders. The English papers placed a heavy emphasis on news, and normally restricted their views to the editorial columns. In contrast, the Afrikaans dailies, with the exception of the Cape Town based *Die Burger*, were opinion journals more than newspapers; all of them were strong propagandists for National Party attitudes and policies.

The black press included *Illanga lase Natal, The World, Umteteli* and the weekly *Drum* which was launched by European financial backing and openly tackled African grievances. Most intensely political and communally-orientated of all the black papers are those that belonged to the Indian press (*The Indian Opinion, The Leader, The Graphic*) which were independent of European capital. The black press was handicapped by the illiteracy of a large part of its constituents; and the lack of capital and of the facilities which were enjoyed by white publications. They could not make use of the services of the Central News Agency either for publishing or for distribution. Black journalists could not access material from the South African Press Association news

service, were denied library facilities and were not able to report on parliamentary sessions.

Like the black press, the development of literature in the African languages was also marginalised as is outlined in Nyembesi's seminal lecture and publication on the '*Review of Zulu Literature*' in 1961. The difficulties encountered by the African writers included the fact that there was no incentive to write because there was no African reading public, the production of books in African languages was not an economic proposition, publishers who were quite happy to produce books for schools were reluctant to touch anything that was not likely to be prescribed for school use.

The publishing houses were all owned by whites and coupled with the apartheid conditioning, they saw books in the black languages of little use and feared that they would not sell. This made it difficult to produce books for an adult readership. The emphasis on producing books suitable for school use acted as a limiting factor on black writers; it tended to cramp their style as they had to keep in mind all the time the children who were likely to be the main readers of those books. Writers who wished to cater for more mature minds found themselves handicapped. Books cost money and the poverty of the people discouraged them from using money to buy books instead of buying the bare necessities of life. Besides a lack of money, the conditions conducive to the

development of a habit such as reading were unfavourable (small crowded homes, poor lighting, etc.). There was strict apartheid in libraries and there was a lack of library support facilities for black people.

A few positive factors which tended to stimulate writing included a general political awakening of the people after the resistance of the fifties with its spirit of African nationalism and the literary competitions by the black press which encouraged fictional writing.

However, this optimism in terms of a development of local writing was not able to take root with the declaration of a state of emergency after Sharpeville 1960 which was accompanied by censorship, the harassment of writers and control over books prescribed for educational purposes. The state of emergency saw 2000 political detainees and 18 000 other detentions in 1960 alone. The onslaught on the black writer left an indelible impression on South African literature.

Peter Abrahams, Bessie Head, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Arthur Nortje went into voluntary exile. Alf Hutchinson, Todd Matshikiza, Alex la Guma, Bloke Modisane, Dennis Brutus and Lewis Nkosi were forced into exile while Can Themba and Arthur Maimane left on exit visas. All writings by Alex la Guma and Dennis Brutus were proscribed since they were banned persons. Mphahlele and Rive

had their works banned. Of all the black writers, only James Matthews, Casey Motsisi and Richard Rive were left behind. The white academy was silent with regards to the onslaught on the black writer while others, like Butler, wanted to protect English from the nascent resistance of African nationalism as reflected in his contribution to the Union half-century celebrations where he cautioned the English of their minority status.

Butler's paper 'The Language of the Land' warned English speakers of the contending nationalisms, African and Afrikaner, and the need for the creation of a uniquely South African English to prevent a situation where the English would become objects in the Afrikaner and African nationalism struggle. He also hailed the vision and success of white English writers who were committed to their land and cited Pringle, Schreiner, Moffatt, Livingstone, Sir George Grey, Plomer and Campbell as examples of writers who have contributed greatly to the English Literature.

Elaine Williams views Butler's cultural theory and notion of a South African literature as limited:

What Butler means by the Africanisation of English is never made explicitly clear, but where this is discussed it seems to imply the domestication of the 'ethos' and 'tradition' which Butler has named as tied to the language. Africanisation then comes to mean the successful introduction of English, along with a few anglicised South African words into an environment where the purity of the English language is potentially threatened. (1989:51)

The incorporation of a few Africanised texts into the dominant European heritage as a compromise gesture and a political

imperative, if that was what Butler advocated, was a perpetuation of the division in literature and had no significance for South African students struggling against colonialism and apartheid.

The reaction to Butler's paper was generally negative and the dichotomy between the great tradition and local writing surfaced once again. Poets who used the local idiom in their poetry were considered to be evasive and lacked comparison with the imaginative works of writers of the canon. Philip Birkinshaw, a lecturer at the University of Cape Town, defended the dominance of the canon and rejected Butler's proposal of greater priority and research into South African literature. Birkenshaw (1961:1) dismissed South Africanism as 'the tool of a regime which has lost the sympathy of the world' and commended the teaching of solely British texts as politically courageous and refused to adhere to the nationalist calls for a South African literature because it is limited and he viewed it as a cog in the machinery of the totalitarian state.

The English and the liberal opposition saw their power being diminished by the apartheid state especially during the early years of the sixties. It is within this milieu that the English academics, like Butler, acknowledged the need for a greater cultural self-consciousness:

There was a time when we English were in the ascendancy here, when we borrowed whenever we needed a word. We must, I believe, start borrowing again if we want our language to stay here at all. (Couzens 1977:45)

According to Doherty (1989:143), Butler was now arguing for an English South African poetry as a political imperative. The English, like the African nationalists, also had a battle to fight against the Afrikaner regime and the English academe did not see their struggle as overlapping with that of black people - the political struggle that Butler speaks of is reminiscent of the Anglo-Boer war.

Within the context of the post-Sharpeville educational and isolationist politics of the Nationalist government which served to promote the Afrikaans language at the expense of English, the English Academy of South Africa was founded. The objectives of the Academy were to maintain and propagate in South Africa the best standards of English reading, writing and speech, by endeavouring to stimulate interest generally in the English language and its literature; encourage the maintenance of good standards of English in universities; strive for the attainment of widespread literacy in English; institute examinations of proficiency in English; co-operate with other cultural or educational organisations and foster co-operation between school and university teachers of English; make awards in recognition of achievement in English writing, speech and drama; defend the democratic rights of free speech and publication; oppose trends and policies inimical to a full and free education in English and a full and free use of English as an official language of South Africa. No mention was made of the promotion of South African

literature amongst the objectives of the academy.

While the English Academy failed to encourage and solicit South African writing, the *Classic*, launched in 1963 under the editorship of Nathaniel Nakasa and funded by the Fairfield Foundation, New York, was able to seek and publish African writing of merit. The aim, as outlined in the editorial of the first edition, was to make an effort to publish South African writing; particularly welcome was the work of 'those writers with causes to fight for, writers who look at human situations and see tragedy and love, bigotry and commonsense, for what they are' (1963:1). The first edition published 'The efficacy of prayer' and 'A Very Important Appointment' by Casey Motsisi, 'The Suit' and 'Dear God' by Can Themba, 'He and the Cat' by Ezekiel Mphahlele, 'The Promise' by Lewis Nkosi, 'Writing in South Africa' by Nat Nakasa and 'The Party' by Richard Rive.

The fourth edition of the *Classic* saw Barney Simon and Casey Motsisi taking over the editorship after Nakasa left South Africa on an exit permit following the state repression of writers. The editorial describes the context within which the *Classic* had to survive during its short lifespan before it was outlawed by the state:

These have been terrible times, insane times, when the simplest human values have been confused, labelled and belittled, and many of those who have sought to propagate them banned and imprisoned.

These are tired days, wounded days, but those initial values, which presume for all men the freedom to love, live,

search, aspire, must not be neglected; and it is of them, to the best of its ability, that *Classic* will attempt to speak. (1964:1)

The Suppression of Communism Act of 1965 was another factor that militated against the promotion and development of local writing in English. The Minister of Justice banned South Africans, including those in exile, on 1 April 1966 - the list included all but one or two of the twenty or so black writers who had emerged during the *Drum* decade. A flourishing black South African literary movement was silenced with this act. However, there was also silence and no trace of protest against this measure emanating from university departments of literature or white academic circles and journals (like *Contrast*, *New Coin*, etc.).

Many of the literary texts suffered a double censure - both by the state and the universities which relegated these texts to the margins of its curricula. Among the texts published during the 1960s and that could have formed the corpus of the curricula were Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (1961), *Hello and Goodbye* (1966) and *Boesman and Lena* (1969); Van der Post's *The Heart of the Hunter* (1961); La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1962); Luthuli's *Let my People Go* (1962); Mphahlele's *The African Image* (1962); Kente's *Manana, the Jazz Prophet* (1963); Modisane's *Blame me on History* (1963); Livingstone's *Sjambok, and Other Poems from Africa* (1964); Paton's *Hofmeyr* (1964); First's *117 Days*; Mandela's *No Easy Walk to Freedom* (1965); Nkosi's *Home and Exile* (1965);

Clouts's One Life (1966); Gordimer's The Late Bourgeois World (1966); Mutwa's Indaba, My Children (1966); Omer-Cooper's The Zulu Aftermath (1966); Sachs's Jail Diary (1966); Brutus's Letters to Martha and Other Poems from a South African Prison (1968); Cope's Izibongo; Zulu Praise-Poems (1968) and The Dawn Comes Twice (1969); and Miller's Selected Poems (1968).

New literary magazines which refused to toe the establishment line or remain silent of the political situation were launched by radical academics - *Wurm* published contributions in English and Afrikaans from 1966 to 1970 and *Ophir*, published in Johannesburg from 1967 to 1976, was printed by Ravan Press. *Kol*, was launched in 1968 and survived for only one year. Just like its predecessor, *Sestiger*, *Kol* served as an avenue for new and radical writing in the Afrikaans literature. However, it was with the launching of *Izwe* that the Afrikaans literature obtained for the first time a real avant-garde magazine. It was published from 1971 to 1974 and writers who were involved in its production included Phil du Plessis, Casper Schmidt, Jeanne Goosen, Wilma Stockenstrom, and Wopko Jensma. The magazine contained creative articles as well as short views that dealt especially with the censorship laws. *Donga*, which was launched in 1976, published new works in Afrikaans and English. Two editions of the magazine were banned in 1977 and the magazine was banned for publication in 1988 after the eighth edition.

Undoubtedly, it was *Staffrider* that served as an effective avenue for alternate black writing in view of the limited publishing capacity for black artists. It did not conform to the conventional editorial policies and elicited active participation from township cultural groups:

We define a literary artist simply: a producer of literary works. And we believe that a producer has a basic right of access to potential readers - in the immediate community in which he or she lives and beyond. (1978:1)

*Staffrider* rejected an elitist view of art which cannot comprehend the new artistic energies released in the tumult of 1976 and after:

Standards are not golden or quintessential: they are made according to the demands different societies make on writers, and according to the responses writers make to those demands. (1978:1)

Although *Staffrider* had initially devoted much space to group contributions, after the third number of Volume 3, in 1980, the magazine stopped bringing out group contributions. During the self-editing phase the magazine acted as an outlet for the many cultural groups which sprang up all over the country in the late seventies. Gradually this emphasis was replaced by a more rigorous selection process, coupled with criticism and workshop discussion to improve the overall quality of the work. *Staffrider* also strove to recover and re-insert the writings of earlier generations, and this went a considerable way towards restoring a suppressed tradition of resistance literature in South Africa.

There is a selective inclusivity evident in literary magazines like *Wurm*, *Ophir* and *Donga* in terms of language - only articles in Afrikaans and English were published, the African languages were excluded. Apart from *Classic* and *Staffrider*, all the other literary magazines had mostly whites on the editorial boards and the contributors were largely white academics.

A more inclusive text that took into consideration the early oral history of the indigenous people as well as Afrikaans writing was the poetry anthology, The Penguin Book of South African Verse (1968) edited by Jack Cope and Uys Krige. The introduction acknowledges that the earliest known peoples, Bushmen and Hottentots, were adept at expressing their longings, their prayers and observations of life and nature in poetic forms of which unfortunately very few examples have been recorded. The African migrants moving slowly into the area from Central Africa brought a well developed oral literature in which features of their historical past, their collective wisdom and folklore were preserved. Included is a collection of Afrikaans poems translated into English and a small selection of translations from the African languages.

An excellent opportunity for the academe to have deliberated on the literature curriculum and the context in which it is to be implemented availed itself at the conference on 'South African Writing in English and its Place in School and University' held

in 1969 at Rhodes University. The hegemony of the adherents to the canon of traditional English literature were once more able to assert its power since the pro-South African literature lobby was not able to provide an alternative to the traditional curriculum or convince the dominant Practical Criticism group of its standpoint. Butler, the chief proponent, weakened his case once again by admitting the superiority of the canon of British literature and by constantly acknowledging its higher literary value as compared to South African writing.

A political perspective to the study of South African English literature was also once again posited by Butler in his opening address:

The predicament of many English-speaking South Africans is acute. They feel a lack of purpose of direction; they want to feel they belong; and they are afraid of belonging: they don't know what they belong to. (1970:11)

Pertinent points raised in his paper were the importance of community/group identity (white and English) and writing as a form of identification with place - political purposes of South African writing. Philip Segal rejected Butler's plea for political expediency and local interest. He argued the literary worth of South African writing and appealed to the academics of their moral responsibility to teach only the greatest texts in an already overcrowded undergraduate syllabus. However, Segal like Davies and Durrant in the 1950s, did recommend the study of South African writing at post-graduate level:

In the Honours year we could certainly offer a course which

covers all or most of our field because at this stage literary problems can be handled with a certain sophistication and complexity, and there is space for personal choice, and for beginning research which could lead to a MA; or even a PhD. (1970:178)

The contradiction concerning literary values and the teaching/research dichotomy identified in similar proposals to exclude South African literature from the undergraduate programme is also evident in Segal's paper.

A strong case was put forward by Raymond Sands of Natal University who indicated that he thought the subject was worthy of serious consideration in his paper 'The South African Novel: Some Observations'. He stressed the unwillingness of the educationalists of the day to engage with works too close to them in terms of both time and place. Sands could have aided in a rethink of the literature curriculum by providing a concrete framework for curricular revision which indicates how local writing articulates into the existing programme.

The essential factor lacking in the pro-South African literature lobby was that particular theoretical perspectives were not clearly spelt out in their argument for the inclusion of local writing in the curriculum. A justification of their theoretical underpinnings in designing a more relevant curriculum for South African students would have strengthened their cause and made their case more convincing. Both the practical critics and the proponents of South African literature concentrated on content,

content reduction and content replacement instead of concentrating on critical pedagogical skills in literature teaching, the production of literature and a relevant literature curriculum.

#### 3.4 South African literature in the interregnum, 1970-1995

A valid approach to the various branches of South African literature seems more and more to require a view of them not so much as parts of generalised international traditions but as forming a multi-lingual product arising primarily out of the needs and compulsions of this country and its many people (Cope 1970:11). In Cope's introduction to Seismograph: Best South African Writing from Contrast (1970) he states clearly that South African writers have their own authentic identity - they have their own necessity, they seek their own forms and often, through a combination of simplicity and daring, by directness and an unembarrassed handling of feeling, achieve artistic effects of insight and profound disturbance.

Cope argued that however inclusive one may wish to make a collection of this kind, there remains a raw gap. Nadine Gordimer, acknowledging the historical context of local writings, also noted that one cannot really speak of literature in South Africa but only of some work by some writers. Cope's concept of

inclusivity, like Besselaar (1914) and Nathan (1925), is limited to white writings and writings in Afrikaans and English only. The writings by Africans or translations of works in African languages did not seem to play a role in South African literature inclusivity.

The onus was on black writers to carve their own literary path through a myriad of obstacles: state harassment, academic hegemony over literature, resource constraints, western literary codes, prejudice of critics, racism, etc. In spite of these militating factors, Oswald Mtshali aided in the resurrection of black writing with his poetry collection Sounds of a Cowhide Drum in 1971. Among the other prominent poets who emerged in the late sixties when the South African Students' Organisation became active were Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Mafika Gwala and Njabulo Ndebele. Between 1971 and 1976 no fewer than eleven collections of poetry by black writers made their appearance.

The genre favoured now changed from the short story to poetry. Why poetry? Perhaps, it was shorter and quicker to write. It was a more cautious medium and thus more difficult for the authorities to understand and therefore to ban or control. Because it was less explicit and more covert, it was the safest genre from the authorities.

Another avenue that was successfully explored was the recital of

poetry, poetry and drama workshops, and theatrical performances. The lack of resources for publication and the added impetus of the oral tradition of African society ensured the success of this venture. The commercialism and escapism of black musicals like *Ipi Tombi* and *King Kong* gradually gave way to a committed theatre which was described as 'theatre at the grass roots'. Topical issues like cultural assertion, black consciousness, protest and black solidarity were some of its themes. Between 1973 and 1974, the Serpent Players (Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona) produced plays such as *The Blood Knot*, *Boesman and Lena* and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* while Workshop '71 produced Credo Mutwa's *uNosilimela*.

The state clampdown on productions, the imprisonment of the players and the banning of texts is evidence of the effectiveness of radical drama of the 1970s as quoted in the Attorney-General's report and charge sheet:

(*Shanti*) was considered significant enough to be used as one of the major documentary exhibits in the so-called 'Treason Trial' of 1975. The People's Experimental Theatre was listed as a subversive organisation, the leading practitioners of that theatre group were charged under the Terrorism Act, and one of the charges stated that the accused conspired...to make, produce, publish, or distribute subversive and anti-white utterances, writings, plays and dramas.

(Steadman 1984:22)

It was not only persistent state interference or the lack of resources for the promotion of local literature that had a negative effect on black writers, it was also academics who arrogantly posited a distorted conception of what literature is,

how value should be appropriated and, more specifically, what constitutes South African writing. Jeff Opland in the special 1971 issue of *English Studies in Africa* argued that the field of research into Anglo-Saxon was necessarily limited for South African scholars by the absence of primary materials. He saw the object of research into local materials as that of simply footnoting existing metropolitan themes and fields of interest. He urges the researchers not to abandon this area and suggested that an investigation of the African oral tradition can cast light on the Anglo-Saxon oral tradition (1971:161).

Opland's Eurocentric notions of literature were rejected by Tim Couzens in the same issue. Couzens's article on Sol Plaatje's Mhudi, which he claims was the first novel written in English by a black South African, was an attempt at the rewriting of African history. According to Doherty (1990:55), Couzens drew explicitly on the Africanist trend in historiography, using John Omer-Cooper's The Zulu Aftermath to interpret Mhudi as a historical document. Couzens was of the opinion that art should instruct, enlighten and liberate.

The increased interest and research in local writings boded well for South African literature and it was gradually co-opted into university curricula. Rhodes University took the lead by developing an 'English in Africa course' in 1972. The course offered African and South African literature as an equally-

weighted option to more traditional courses. Interest in this field is also evident at the conference on 'The Teaching of English in African Schools' in 1973 at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, where Bernth Lindfors reiterated the need for both research into and teaching of South African writing both as a political and liberatory imperative. Although the role of English texts as compared to texts in the African languages was discussed, no resolutions were passed due to the vested interest in English writings by the organisers and speakers.

The call for a programme of committed writing and art for liberation continued at the Poetry 1974 conference in Cape Town in Mike Kirkwood's paper 'The Coloniser: a critique of the English South African culture theory'. He moved for a paradigm shift from literary standards to the promotion of a programme of liberatory writing. This programme will demand a self-transcendence in the colonizer writer, just as it will in the colonized writer (Kirkwood 1976:132). Kirkwood also disputed Butler's earlier request that South African literature should serve as a means of asserting a white English-speaking group identity. A more thorough critique of the coloniser's role, based on a class analysis, was argued by Kirkwood.

Two decades later, many South African English Departments are still ideologically divided into two opposing factions. The one

group, which is still in the majority, asserts that traditional western critical methodology is inappropriate to the study of much South African writing. Such academics maintain that standards are immanent and absolute, and that social and political commitment/considerations are contingent and transitory, an excuse for the admission of the inferior texts.

The other faction which included scholars like Stephen Gray, Tim Couzens, Kelwyn Sole, Isabel Hofmeyr, David Maughan Brown and more lately, academics like Michael Chapman, Helize van Vuuren, Ampie Coetzee, and Johan van Wyk are engaged in testing alternative methods and perspectives and opening up new ones, discovering fertile areas of investigation traditionally spurned by normative criticism, such as the oral tradition, the white mining novel, early writing by blacks when journalism was the privileged mode of expression, etc. The greatest challenge that they faced was how to counter the dominant discourses of colonialism and apartheid that underpinned the South African literary historiography.

Professor Gerard added support to this challenge in his paper to the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language studies in Liege, Belgium, entitled 'Towards a history of South African Literature' where he outlined how the racial discourse led to the radical segmentation of South African literature and literary studies. In the first historical surveys written in a period

marked by the construction of an inclusive settler nationalism, the focus is on what J.M. Coetzee has called 'white writing', with the consequent exclusion (Nathan) or marginalisation (Besselaar) of black writings. Gerard (1975) drew attention to the developing white-black segregationist logic that institutionalised the separation of the various languages and literatures of the region, dissolving that earlier rapprochement between Afrikaner and English and reinforcing the marginalisation of the literatures and languages of the black majority.

The political, economic and social marginalisation and exclusion of black people from most spheres of South African society did not go unchallenged. The growth and development of the committed artists led to a vibrant resistance and liberatory programme that exposed the atrocities of the regime and ensured the reconstruction and defence of black people's identity through the evolution of a new consciousness: black consciousness. It was within the context of the happenings of 1976 that a surge of Black Consciousness poetry was produced following in the wake of Black Consciousness ideology as expounded by Steven Biko, the South African Students' Organisation and the Black Peoples' Convention. The swing was away from an essentially white readership towards a black one, analysing the black experience for the benefit of other blacks. This introspection, according to Rive (1990), implied a rediscovery and reassessment of the black identity but different from the Negritude of Senghor or the

Black Consciousness of Marcus Garvey. The initiative was more political than cultural. Serote outlines the context and inspiration for the poetry of that period:

When I started writing, it was as if there had never been writers before in my country. By the time I learned to write, many people - Zeke, Kgotsitsile, Mazisi Kunene, Dennis Brutus - had left the country and were living in exile. We could not read what they had written, so it was as if we were starting straight from the beginning. From around 1969 to 1974 a whole new group of people started writing; the newspapers described us as 'a New Wave of Poetry', whatever that means. At the head of this group was James Matthews, who set the standards of how we were going to deal with the things around us. There was also a group of students - SASO - which was very influential in determining what people were going to write about. At that time many writers were responding to literary criticism in the newspapers; their writing was being influenced by the standards created by white newspapers. Then SASO, BPC, BCM and other black organisations came out with their own magazines, through which we could speak directly to the black community. (1976:25)

The literature of the Black Consciousness Movement was overtly political. It focused on the 'black experience' (a term used by Couzens and Patel 1984). The writers are political activists whose objective is consciousness raising. James Matthews outlines their position:

I wrote. It was not prose. Critics hyena-howled. It was not poetry, they exclaimed. I never said it was. I was writing expressions of feelings. I would find it extremely difficult to write poems of love or praise of nature.

Neither would I produce lines so finely polished or use metaphors and metre - art for art's sake. I would feel like a pimp using words as decoration for my whoring...I am not a poet, neither am I a 'writer' in the academic sense.

(1984:73)

The divide between socially committed black writing and the aesthetic western values of white writing was being clearly defined and further compounded by their contested histories,

definitions of literature and ideologies.

In spite of the volatile political situation, the increased attention and emphasis on South African writings and the state opposition to black writing in particular, the silence of the academe and its continued exclusion of black writing belies the commitment of the privileged white universities to the dominant ethnic discourses of Afrikaner nationalism, Anglo-colonial liberalism and hegemonic ideologies. An example of this reaction was at the founding meeting of AUETSA (Association of University English Teachers) in 1978 where only three out of the 18 papers presented at the Conference were devoted to South African literature. It was Mike Kirkwood and Kelwyn Sole who posited a new framework for the study of South African literature while Haresnape's paper can best be described as conciliatory and appeasing to the dominant practical criticism mode of many English departments.

Haresnape outlined how the South African tradition could be easily accommodated within the existing teaching practices of university departments of English. He identified Pauline Smith's Desolation as a worthwhile literary text for university syllabi and demonstrated its suitability for tutorial group teaching. According to Doherty (1989:54), Haresnape's approach directed at what, for the orthodoxy, was the all-important question of pedagogical goals. Given the emphasis on tutorials as the heart

of the teaching project, Haresnape was able to justify the inclusion of one South African text in terms acceptable to English Departments:

Few people, one thinks, would be likely to object to the inclusion of a literary artifact of this quality even in a standard course designed to teach undergraduates literary appreciation. (1977:102)

The academe was either ignorant of or refused to acknowledge the wealth of contemporary writings published during that decade - literature which include Ruth Finnegan's important text within the oral literature debate, Oral literature in Africa (1970); Mazisi Kunene's Zulu Poems (1970) which also contained a seminal introduction to the Zulu oral tradition and Emperor Shaka the Great (1979); Livingstone's Eyes Closed Against the Sun (1970); Jensa's Sing for our Execution (1971); Kgotsitsile's My name is Afrika (1971); Klima's South African Prose in English (1971); Daniel Kunene's Heroic poetry of the Basotho (1971); McClure's The Steam Pig (1971); Pieterse's anthology of poetry by political exiles Seven South African Poets (1971); Biko's I write what I like (1972); Fugard's Sizwe Bansi is Dead (1972), The Island (1973), Statements after an arrest under the Immorality Act (1974) and A Lesson From Aloes (1978); Jordan's Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa (1972); Matthews's and Thomas's Cry Rage! (1972); Serote's Yakhal'inkomo (1972), No Baby Must Weep (1975) and Behold Mama, Flowers (1978); Themba's The Will to Die (1972); Brutus's A Simple Lust: Collected Poems (1973); Currey's The Afrika we Knew (1973); Dikobe's The Marabi Dance (1973); Gordimer's The Black

Interpreters (1973), The Conservationist (1974), Selected Stories (1975), No Place Like This (1978) and Burger's Daughter (1979); Nortje's Dead Roots (1973); Royston's anthology of new black poetry in South Africa To Whom It May Concern (1973); Coetzee's Dusklands (1974) and In the Heart of the Country (1976); Feinberg's anthology Poets to the People (1974); Head's A Question of Power (1974) and The Collector of Treasures (1977); Lewin's Bandiet: Seven Years in a South African Prison (1974); Simon's Joburg, Sis! (1974); Nakasa's The World of Nat Nakasa (1975); Sepamla's Hurry up to it! (1975), The Blues is You in Me (1976), A Ride on the Whirlwind (1976), The Soweto I Love (1977) and The Root is One (1979); Tlali's Muriel at Metropolitan (1975); Vilakazi's Zulu Horizons (1975); Gray's anthology A World of their Own: Southern African Poets of the Seventies (1976) and Southern African Literature, An Introduction (1979); Govender's The Lahnee's Pleasure (1977); Gwala's Jol'iinkomo (1977); Mann's First Poems (1977); Matthews's Pass me a Meatball, Jones (1977); Brink's Rumours of Rain (1978); Cullinan's Today is Not Different (1978); Essop's The Hajji and Other Stories (1978); Jacobson's Through the Wilderness: Selected Stories (1978); Marquard's anthology A Century of South African Short Stories (1978); Motsisi's Casey and Co.: Selected Writings (1978); Uys's Paradise is Closing Down (1978); Smith's Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War (1978); Van Wyk's It is time to go Home (1978); La Guma's Time of the Butcherbird (1979); Johennesse's The Rainmaker (1979); Madingoane's afrika my beginning (1979);

Manaka's Egoli, City of Gold (1979); Matshoba's Call me not a Man (1979); Mda's We shall sing for the Fatherland (1979) and Poland's The Mantis and the Moon: Stories for the Children of Africa (1979).

The new generation of white South African academics like Sole, Kirkwood, Couzens and Hofmeyr urged the traditionalists to reconceptualise the literature curriculum by taking into cognisance local contemporary writings. They openly acknowledged the exclusion of black writing from the university curriculum and were sensitive to the academe's unwitting utilisation of racist categories. They proposed a model of South African literature as a cultural totality that overrode the divisions between language groups, emphasising class antagonisms as the real line of difference. Sole reconceptualised the criticism of black writing and foregrounded the question of evaluation. He felt that the academe (dominated by white practical critics who favoured traditional English literature) did not take into account the class dynamics of black society and the link between evaluation and political aspirations. He strongly rejected the criticism of black writing as aesthetically mediocre:

An enormous list of reasons were drawn up for the mediocrity and thin quality of South African writing, none of which are sufficient explanation in themselves...The problem is that very few of the literary critics pay attention either to the position of these writers in their society or the history of South African black literature, its dislocations and continuity...Nowhere in the criticism is there a precise searching of this very predicament, the individual's place in the social formation as a member of a class. (1977:19-20)

A conceptual framework was now being provided in terms of which South African literature can be studied. The challenge posited by the Marxist historians led in the next decade to a growing interest in black writing, oral traditions and women's writing.

An important influence in the teaching and reception of South African literature was the increased attention focused on literary theory in university English departments during the 1980s. It can be argued that literary theory aided in foregrounding the moral dimension as the defining characteristic of South African literature as well as the development of the 'little canon' of South African writing. Stories with the racial theme, especially the master-servant relationship were considered significant leading to the more serious works of Schreiner, Plomer, Campbell, Van der Post, Abrahams, Paton, Gordimer, Jacobson, Fugard and Cope dominating in curricula. Academics schooled in the 'Great Tradition' of Leavis began to put together a South African version of the canon, a tradition that is distinguished by a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness of before life, and a marked moral intensity' (Leavis 1948:9).

The development and presentation of a South African tradition fell easily into the existing theoretical framework within the departments of English. Doherty (1989:164) argues that the moral emphasis was thoroughly congruent with Leavisite principles; in

addition works of South African literature could be analysed in tutorial groups under the usual categories of theme, image, and symbol.

Academics teaching more radical literary theories encouraged a research-based approach to literary studies which in turn created pressure for the study of local writings. This also led to the interpretation of South African literature in the light of its relation to apartheid. Although the research based approach lent itself to the development of a South African literature, close reading remained the primary pedagogic method.

The radical challenge of the 1980s had its roots in Marxist historical theories and in African history specifically. Marxist literary theories substantiated the new shift in historical methodology and permitted the possibility of contributing to political change through literary discourse and research that championed the working class culture and worker poets/writers. They obviously stressed class antagonisms as a model of South African literature that transcended the dichotomy between high and low culture. The discourses of, amongst others, sociology, theology, education, media and culture were included in literary studies. Although the close reading approach continued, it had a political relevance. Academics like Couzens called for a deviation from Practical Criticism because of its ideology, its amateurism and lack of specialised knowledge:

There is a general belief that once trained in the literary appreciation of the 'greats' one can automatically judge anything. No special knowledge is required: simply read the book and judge. One lecturer recently said to me that he 'doesn't know anything about African literature but would like to teach it'. I wonder what reaction I would get if I suggested tomorrow to Medical School that 'I don't know anything about gynaecology but I'd like to teach it'. Professionalism does not seem to play a strong role in our 'discipline'. (1976:15)

Practical Criticism was so firmly entrenched in South African universities that it was able to accommodate the dissenting voices and radical theories without any threat to its hegemony. However, it gave way slowly to a sociology of literature generally and Marxist literary criticism in particular.

Although most departments during the 1980s recognised that theory informed all practice, they found it strategically necessary to develop separate courses on theory. Chapman acknowledges that in most theory courses the debates were European and included Barthes and Derrida but excluded Senghor, Césaire, Irele, Mphahlele or Ngugi - 'We hear of Anglo-American empirical feminism and French psycho-analytical feminism, but relatively little about feminism in the context of South African racial oppression (1991:19).

An alternative line of research to the Marxist historian grouping (Kirkwood, Sole, Hofmeyr, Couzens, etc.), directed towards the mapping of a South African literature that included black writing as part of a larger whole, was posited by Gray. He made a strong case for a comparative literature study that transcended the

boundaries separating different language groups. He argued that the assumption of a single, unified English-speaking literary tradition was problematic. The customary Pringle, Slater, Campbell lineage was superseded by one that ran from Camoens via the Englishman John Wheatly before reaching Campbell (Gray 1978:6). Gray's view of discontinuities and gaps within the South African literature discourse and the absence of unity in terms of period or tradition is an appropriate approach and synonymous with the Foucauldian notion of discourse formation.

Unfortunately, Gray's research-based approach did not engage with the existing practices of literary education at the universities. He insisted that the English departments continue to perform their basic language and literature (the traditional English canon) teaching, but visualised them falling under the control of a South African Studies Programme staffed by a team of linguistic polymaths, historians, archivists and bibliographers (1978:4). What Gray is condoning is the separation of English studies from South African literature and this is simply a continuation of the ideological divide of the separationist logic which is basically the excommunication of the 'other' from the central. Gray's recommendation of the categorisation of literature into compartments is not much different from the colonial discourse that has already fragmented literature into the false continuities of genre, period, tradition, author, spirit, etc.

The establishment at the University of Durban-Westville of a Centre for Southern African Literatures and Languages in 1994 as autonomous from the department of English is an example of what Gray envisaged. The pertinent conflict here is why the Department of English could not (or would not) promote an interdisciplinary study of the great variety of South African literatures instead of the traditional 'canon' of high culture? A similar argument can be posited for the Witwatersrand University's Department of African Literature. It was developed outside the Department of English, was an autonomous department and provided an alternative to the programmes provided by the English department.

Gray pleaded for a comprehensive approach to the study of South African writing, a shift from his earlier segmentation of literary studies, in his text South African Literature: An Introduction. Although it is a commendable step as compared to his predecessors, this text itself focuses mainly on English South African literature and is not inclusive. In fact it is a contradiction of Gray's earlier proposal of a comparative approach and the text reinforces the marginalisation of the indigenous literatures of the land.

A pertinent issue with regards to the inclusion of black writings or writings about black people by white writers was their (the white writers) role as spokespersons of black people, especially

within the milieu of apartheid where a liberal, patronising and patriarchal attitude was common. A typical conflict of perspective is evident in the polemic between Mazisi Kunene and Gray. In Kunene's (1980) review of Gray's pamphlet *Sources of the First Black South African Novel in English: Solomon Plaatje's use of Shakespeare and Bunyan in Mhudi (Research in African Literatures, Summer 1980)*, he dismisses Gray's brand of scholarship as some sort of colonial relic:

The missionary pundits of Britannica are alive and well and have chosen the Rand as their new base. Strangely enough, these bright intellectuals from the Rand do not mean any harm. They actually want to illustrate the 'intellectual potential' of Africans and the 'fusion of cultures'. They are, however, as naive as the old missionaries and as archaic in their approaches as the dead dodo.

Kunene urges those championing Mhudi as a pioneer work to 'Stop it! Begin now learning about the great African literary classics'. What one identifies in this conflict is the distance between the traditional western writing-bound criticism and post-colonial African socio-aesthetics. Kunene's argument is that African art has become subordinated to a literate, western culture, a culture based materially within the written word. He correctly refuses to subject the indigenous African culture to a subordinate position to the dominant European cultural perspective.

Undercurrents of this type of racial discourse surfaced often in conferences, journals and the press. In an editorial to *The Bloody Horse* Patrick Cullinan responds defensively to views

expressed by Chapman, Mutloatse and Kirkwood who were interviewed by Oswald Mtshali (*The Star*, 4:7:1980) on the role of white writers like Gordimer, Fugard, Paton and Brink as spokespersons of the black community in voicing its aspirations. Kirkwood's reply was that whites in the South African situation could not really know or feel the black man's suffering from the inside, and that he sometimes thought that 'the most productive course for white writing to follow is to base imaginative work on the study of ...South African history'.

Mutloatse commented that very few white writers admit that they are limited in their knowledge of the Black Experience:

Literature by white writers might appear good technically and academically but it is empty of all emotions and the true feelings of the people.

Cullinan took umbrage to these comments in his editorial in the second issue of *The Bloody Horse* (Dec. 1980), a reaction that initiated a major debate among South African writers:

I don't need sociologists or politicians or ideologues to tell me what good writing is. Indeed I reject absolutely their intrusion into writing because it is dangerous to it. It is dangerous to tell a man because he has a black skin he can automatically become a writer if he perseveres and just as dangerous, if not bloody impertinent, to tell writers with white skins to get lost in the archives. And to what a terrible, impoverished world these writers would confine us. The reality of apartheid is nauseous enough but if this trinity had their way we'd all be sitting in little black or white compartments writing about Vasco da Gama or endlessly churning out protest poems because history was suitable for one lot, the black experience for the other.

Cullinan's vain attempt to separate literature from its historical and cultural context and to differentiate between

literary signs and political events is not convincing. He ignores the socio-political context, for example in a single year, 1977, historical events include the murder of Biko in police detention, the banning of seventeen Black Consciousness organisations including MEDUPE (the black writers' association), the closure of *The World*, a Johannesburg newspaper and the imprisonment of its editor and the Cassinga massacre where the South African defence force attacked a civilian base killing mainly women and children.

However, it must be acknowledged that there should be no prescriptions for writers (both white and black) and the whole concept of value needs to be interrogated. Both the pro-black writing lobby and the white writers obsessed with high culture and aesthetics needed to seek a rationale for literature studies and both did not transcend the apartheid discourse with its fixation of artistic standards or exclusivity.

The dichotomy between white artistic standards and black resistance ideology as well as the state's increased force against black artists continued to militate against the reception and teaching of South African literature and the curricular reform of English departments in the 1980s. Haresnape, editor of *Contrast*, affirms the academe's creed of artistic independence and high artistic standards in the Winter 1980 edition and rejects the thinking which subordinates the artistic conscience

to ideology. It is rather unfortunate that Haresnape ignores the pervasive force of ideology on the South African discourse. Foucault anticipated that however disinterested and apolitical the form and substance of our language appears on the surface, it is nevertheless thoroughly ideological, that is, imbued with assumptions, biases, constraints, and variable judgements of a specific intellectual community composed of people with their own social and political allegiances. The discourse we write in our disciplines and the discourse we teach our students and expect them to replicate is thereby always ideologically situated in a community already in existence, already value laden (Clifford 1992:219). The very fact that *Contrast* ignored black writing during the prolific period of the 1960s, the onslaught on the black writer by the Afrikaner regime or the renaissance of black poetry of the Black Consciousness period is evidence of an ideological standpoint.

Chapman (1980), in contrast to Haresnape, argues that the gap in South Africa between art and relevance has to be bridged and that there is a need to recognise and define what is significant in the contemporary South African literary sensibility. He emphasises that the new literary magazine, *The Bloody Horse*, should be different from *Staffrider* in his letter to the inaugural issue of *The Bloody Horse*:

Whereas *Staffrider* legitimately elevates the sociological above the literary, *The Bloody Horse* can offer its own valid perspective on the South African scene by reversing this hierarchy of values. It should not ignore

sociological pressures, but should merge sociological and literary concerns, thus extending and enriching understanding and appreciation of the existing variety of South African artistic achievement. Both *Contrast* and *Staffrider*, in their respective ways, are guilty (perhaps necessarily so in the latter's case) of a narrowing of literary perspectives. The charges of racial ideological sectarianism should not be able to be directed at *The Bloody Horse*. (Chapman 1980)

Chapman advised the new magazine not to fall into the sophistication and high-brow stuffiness that had characterised *Contrast*. His comment on the narrowing of literary perspectives by *Staffrider* needed elaboration in terms of the different aesthetic systems and the judging of literary and artistic merit or else it may be dismissed as having no real foundation. It is however regrettable that Chapman did not address the then current social formation in South Africa that forced *Contrast*, *Bolt*, *The Bloody Horse* and *Upstream* to be predominantly white and *Staffrider*, *Wietie*, *The Kwanza Journal*, and the *Medu Newsletter* to be predominantly black. The distinction that existed between white writing characterised by 'standards' and a sophisticated and conscious use of language, and black writing where content took precedence over form has to be acknowledged and questioned.

The demands of Africanism and the Eurocentric dominance in matters of selection and taste led to the disbandment of the literary organisation PEN in 1981 by dissenting black members who refused to separate between art and politics. Similar circumstances led to the establishment in 1985 of a black independent publishing company, Skotaville, by artists who could

not tolerate the 'amorphous exercise' of decision-making at Ravan and the fact that whites were behind the formation and control of Ravan.

Some effort was made to counter this exclusivist strategy as is evident in Matshoba's defence of non-racialism in his reaction to the disbandment of PEN in *Staffrider* (4, 1 April/May 1981). He states that racialism cannot be overcome with racialistic utterances like 'we come from different communities and our prior loyalties lie with the communities from which we come' (quoting Mutloatse). Cullinan, a key person responsible for the revamped PEN in 1977, reacted to the disbandment with typical liberal thinking:

That the roots of black/white alienation lie in our history cannot be denied, we are all the children of apartheid - a divisiveness going back centuries - and yet when we know that this is an evil, must we perpetuate it because the directly oppressed, the blacks are, in desperation, using it as a weapon against the same evil?

Gordimer's reaction was radical; she appreciated the position of the black dissenters in PEN and their struggle for cultural and political liberation and consequently agreed to the temporary need for a black exclusivist position (*Sunday Tribune*, 1:3:1981). While Gordimer noted the strategic purpose of the black artists, Lionel Abrahams refused to compromise white standards or the principle of non-racialism (within a racist society where only the white artists had the vote).

Dikobe wa Mogale's article 'Art is Not Neutral: Whom does it serve?' in *Staffrider* (1981) supports Gordimer's appreciation of the urge amongst black writers to produce 'committed' work. He presents the Marxist-materialist view that art cannot be politically neutral because it is impossible for any product of human labour to be detached from its conditions of production and reception. He comments that the black artist that ignores the social context is in fact making a politically reactionary statement:

To refrain from this artistic duty becomes more and more clearly a political act; an act of self-censorship and cowardice.

Dikobe wa Mogale suggests that committed art is in fact community art, art for the immediate community's benefit, as opposed to the commodity art of modern industrial capitalism: committed art is thus authentically African art, he argues.

The role of literature as a stimulus for the struggle for black power is also evident in the anthology of protest poems in Chapman's Soweto Poetry (1982). In the introduction to the text, Chapman describes it as the single most important socio-literary phenomenon of the seventies in South Africa. This kind of poetry was originally intended as a protest against a white liberal readership, however, Black Consciousness thinking transformed it into a dynamic poetry of protest in which traditional oral techniques of the African languages were reconciled with western epic forms. A new approach to local poetry was being advocated.

This optimism towards South African literature received much support during a seminar organised by the Centre for South African Literature (CENSAL). A survey revealed that research into oeuvres and genres was still regarded as the most important type of research. Investigations into the teaching of literature, the systems whereby literary works are prescribed and the publishing and distribution systems for literary work, were regarded as areas of priority. It was within this context that an annual survey of literary production and events was published by CENSAL, under the initial editorship of Charles Malan. CENSAL was also one of the first organisations that had undertaken literature research across language barriers.

Evidence of the great interest in South African literature abroad was the Conference on 'Literature and the Community in South Africa' which was held in September 1981 at the University of York. Ian Glenn questioned the role of South African English critics and university departments:

The last twenty years have seen our departments withdrawn into an official stance of political neutralism ('Academic Freedom'), separated officially from the metropolitan centre (London-Oxbridge), itself losing or having lost its central role to New York or Paris, reduced to a ritualization of past practice.

English literature departments came under criticism from Glenn for trying to award and transfer symbolic value to literary works, while such value was in fact established through the process of struggling for a dominant position in the literary field. It is interesting to note that Glenn defended the

Leavisian methodology and commented that South African academics concentrated on certain functional aspects only, and ignored Leavis's deep commitment to the study of literature in relation to society. There was a narrow adherence to his 'Great Tradition' of texts and the marginalising with contempt all else. This has resulted in a facile misrepresentation and the construction of an easy target for antagonists of practical or 'colonial' criticism.

The rethinking on the canon of traditional literature versus local writings led to the introduction of South African and African literature into the university syllabi. Its increased co-option onto the curriculum also signalled the gradual demise of Practical Criticism in South Africa. In N.W. Visser's 1982 AUETSA paper, 'The Situation of Criticism in South Africa', he commented that Practical Criticism prepared students to read only a drastically circumscribed set of texts and 'leaves them mute before all else'. Visser felt that a new critical orientation had to be found to engage meaningfully and fruitfully with the new course content which included local writings. He attacked the liberal thinking that underlined the Practical Criticism approach as incapable of generating a reordering of South African society and of making that society explicable:

In a country in which problems and issues increasingly present themselves in broad social and economic terms, Practical Criticism is unable to posit conceptions of a higher order than the individual in either the production or reception of literature: the individual author, the individual text, the individual reader. (Visser 1982)

Visser concluded that the newer critical mode that appeared in quantity and quality of published research seemed to be the most productive since it comprised sociology of literature generally and Marxist literary criticism in particular. However, four years later, Practical Criticism remained the dominant approach at South African universities as revealed in a CENSAL survey: 94% of South African universities adhered to Practical Criticism as a mode of literature study in 1986 in the honours level (see Table 2, Chapter 4). It is evidence that the liberal-humanist thinking maintained its stronghold over the university literature curriculum.

The dubious role between liberal-humanism and political/cultural liberation was gradually unmasked in the 1980s. One of the first critics to attack universalist aestheticism - the idea that value is inherent in a text rather than produced by readers' appropriations of it - and the concomitant panoply of liberalist ideology was Michael Vaughan. Vaughan (1982), like Visser was informed by the analytical strategies of historical materialism. This ideology, according to Vaughan, is responsible for the traditional approach that shackles literary studies in South African universities. Vaughan's major concern was summarised in his concluding question: 'In what way can our academic concern with literature in English best support the objective of the cultural liberation of South Africa?'

The literature debate was now taken into the socio-cultural arena. The academe came to a realisation that it cannot continue to ignore the dynamic relationship between literary culture and South African political life with its fiercely contested histories. Ryan (1982), with reference to Vaughan's argument, pointed out that the tendency to organise South African critical acts around New Critical and socio-historical poles was a reductive over-simplification. He cautioned that critical pluralism can never itself become a methodology, but can only be a state of affairs. He posited two directions for critical research:

- a. The post-structuralist direct attack on traditional theories of meaning (deconstruction, etc.), and
- b. The variety of theories (speech act, reader response, etc.) which all insist that the circumstances, conventions and psycho-social mechanisms which constitute the act of reading also determine textual meaning.

(Ryan 1982)

The academe also acknowledged that attention to a limited collection of texts, as prescribed by Practical Criticism, that formed part of the colonial heritage of South African literary criticism produced a methodology which was mainly textual, emphasising close reading, and dependent on traditional secondary material. This approach not only relegated the wealth of South African writing to the margins of literary culture, but it also led to many texts being 'lost' in the process of exclusion.

Couzens commented on the new challenge facing the student of the

1980s in a special literary number of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (1982):

What is needed is the recuperation for study of 'lost' texts and a great deal more research into the conditions governing the production and reception of literary texts in South Africa over the years.

Gray, similar to Couzens and Visser, challenged university English departments to adopt the African priority in projects to recover the lost voices. He admitted that they will find a good few hundred novels that don't fit the original formula of the tradition yet they will constitute some of the most precious literature and documentation we have (1984a:20). Gray's far reaching proposition was the need to cut across the ethnic and language barriers that were so deeply entrenched by both political structures and the vested interests of subject disciplines in the academic establishment:

I'm suggesting that, for a while, in literary circles, we stop defining and asserting differences, and put the stress on similarities. (1984a:18)

A critique of the dominant liberal ideology of English departments was given added impetus by scholars who were engaged in the expose of literature studies in South Africa. Most obnoxious of the liberal academics was their paternalism towards writings that they considered as 'other', writings that did not fit into the narrow mould of traditional English literature. It was liberalism that was responsible for the conferring of power on the canon and the status of powerlessness on local writings. In his essay 'The Fate of Liberalism in South Africa' (in Dieter

Riemenschneider, The History and Historiography of Commonwealth Literature, 1983), Stephen Watson argued that the liberal ideology was inappropriate in the South African context and spelled its doom as a political force. Watson's (1983a:118-133) reasons were that it presupposed and created guilt, equivocation and humiliation; its existence was marginal as a minority tradition, its rejection of violence and commitment to negotiation (a project condemned to failure in the absence of an effective powerbase), its importance on the individual as the site of value and instrument for change despite the demonstrated necessity for group action and its inability to relinquish an analysis of South African society in terms of race rather than class.

Watson commented on the disastrous influence which the liberal imagination, via the English-speaking subculture in South Africa, has had on the language its poets characteristically employ:

The culture which has produced poets like Guy Butler, Chris Mann, Stephen Gray and Christopher Hope is bourgeois, rational, prosaic, narrow, and ultimately banal; this banality is faithfully reflected in the curious linguistic deadness and flatness of their verse. (1983b:13)

The negative criticism of white English South African poems by Watson as little more than 'situation reports' adds a new perspective to a poetry that was shielded by the screen of 'high culture' and 'standards' when compared to black poetry by critics using the apartheid discourse. Watson continued his attack that it is virtually impossible for poets then to continue using the

vulgate of white English South Africa and to write poems which are any more resonant than its dumbfounded culture.

Liberal paternalism was further exposed when a literary dispute surfaced between Njabulo Ndebele and the editors of Ravan Press, the radical publishing house which launched *Staffrider* and much black protest literature. Ndebele refused permission for his poem to appear in an anthology of black South African poetry to be entitled *Ask any Black Man*. He outlines the reasons for his decision in a letter to Ravan Press:

The suggested title really represents no conceptual advance on *To Whom It May Concern*, a title published by Donker in 1973. So we are talking of an interval of almost ten years! Surely much has happened in South Africa during this interval. At that time, when *To Whom It May Concern* was published, we were being revealed to White South Africa. ...The onus was on us to prove our humanity...to show that there was something behind the statistic. The liberal publisher was really bringing us out to dance... Who should ask any black man? Surely not another African. We know and have known for centuries the agony of oppression. In any case, that pain, that agony has been explained enough. Logic points out therefore that it's the white man who has to ask any black man. So we have yet another book appealing to the conscience of those who have been proven not to have any. Nothing in South Africa is neutral. None of my poems have been written for people who wanted to hear me complain. They have been written in order to share serious insights, to share perceptions, and to alter perceptions in a most profound manner. I have gone far beyond begging to be heard. (1983:44-5)

Ndebele's response is evidence that the struggle of black writers to escape the yoke of liberalism was not yet over in the 1980s. The anthology was retitled *The Return of the Amasi Bird* (1982), an allusion to a poem by D.P. Kunene which prophesies the inevitable return of the symbolic amasi bird to its home and the

dawn of freedom from oppression. The polarisation of interest between the white liberals and African writers was far from reconciliation.

In a bid to bridge the dichotomy between the ideologies of liberalism and resistance, Mphahlele expressed the hope that 'somewhere along the line' African writers as well as white will be able to respond to the 'interplay in our consciousness between literature as historical process - recording, commenting on, replaying life - and literature as a transcendental force capable of shaping the human spirit in ways we can never articulate or define in precise terms' (1983:161-164). Mphahlele's spirit of reconciliation rekindled the debate on the neutrality of literature, especially within the political morality of the period of P.W. Botha's reign.

Lewis Nkosi disagrees with Mphahlele and outlines once again the right of literature to independence from party political imperatives:

Ironically enough, in South Africa, while black writers, and to some extent writers of the left, vie with one another to utter the most banal political cliches in feeble and extremely unmemorable language, the so-called white "bourgeois" writers, perhaps enjoying the support and prestige which even in South Africa are conferred on the profession of letters, have sometimes succeeded in providing us with the most powerful images of what it means to be a member of a decaying class, while black writers have been unable to make us experience what it feels like to be a member of a class on the ascendancy. (1983: 161)

Nkosi attacks black writers for their lack of an aesthetic thrust

in their writings and their failure to transcend the political discourse to a literary discourse. Nkosi's critique, reminiscent of white liberal thinking, does not take into consideration the role and value of art in a political time. However, Nkosi's challenge to the black writer to balance the commitment to the troubled society as well as the aesthetics of writing is valid. What Nkosi ignores is the distinction between poetry written for performance with that written for publication and the fact that each form has of necessity to shape itself according to its context. Written poetry makes use of subtle literary artifice interpretable by the contemplative reader, performance poetry has to build in repetition, bodily gesture, incantation and metalinguistic utterance as structural features vital to the communicative event (Cronin 1993:69). Cronin outlines the social and political role of contemporary black poetry (an important issue ignored by Nkosi):

The future South Africa is going to depend on what is happening now, and into this situation, writers and artists have a duty to speak and to probe... Criticism and poetry need to be more enabling - to assist people in their daily tasks and their daily duties, to provide moral, political and social direction and guidance. (1985c)

Cronin took into consideration the social milieu of mass insurrection, political mobilisation and social crisis of the 1980s together with the pressure it placed on black artists.

Sole, with his Marxist perceptions, offered illuminating insights into democratising practices in the South African literary context. He did not sneer at Black Consciousness poets, the

tactic of Watson, but broadened the concept of literature in his contribution to the debate on the role of literature in the liberation struggle:

The viewpoint that artists should not write about sunsets while people are starving seems as destructive to creativity and individual expression as the view that art should have nothing to do with politics. It reflects a lack of comprehension about the limitations and contradictions inherent in the role of being primarily an artist or writer. Art is powerful precisely because it is not just propaganda or the same as a political pamphlet: it allows elements of sympathy, of play, of estrangement, or irrealism; as well as bringing in social, personal and physical dimensions.

(1983:37)

Sole's objective is to establish a secure materialist grounding for the aesthetics and criticism of African writing in South Africa. He concludes that there is no organic unity of African society and culture nor is there the universality of the 'black experience'. There is also divisions of class and interest in African society and African culture is also determined by social and economic forces. Sole's view alludes to Foucault's (1972:65) concept of discursive formations which are not necessarily unified; they may include statements which contradict each other or point in different directions, and it is at these points of incompatibility that statements can be explained. African culture could best be understood in its discontinuity, its relationships within the context of history and power and in the displacement of traditional views of literature, especially that of the text.

Like Sole, Ndebele called for a fresh approach to the issue of

a black aesthetic in his review of Yashar Kemal's Anatolian Tales. He argued that the urban situation has been dominant in the imagination of the average African worker. Workers in the cities, it was felt, will play the decisive role in determining South Africa's future. This has resulted in a concern almost solely with political writing. South African literature, Ndebele noted, has been impoverished by this view - that a work of fiction should 'strike a blow for freedom':

The point of the matter is that the average African writer, working under an information ethos which for him has not habituated a tradition of rigorous analysis and interpretation, produces an art of anticipated surfaces rather than one of processes...He produces an art that is grounded in the negation of social debasement, where scenes of social violence and a host of examples of general social oppression become ends in themselves. As a result very little transformation in reader consciousness is to be expected since the only reader faculty engaged is the faculty of recognition. (1984a)

Ndebele acknowledged that the ideology of liberalism has forced literature into a tradition of almost mechanistic surface representation. He outlined further that a social or historical perspective would more easily dispose writers towards an explanatory approach to fiction.

Ndebele (1984b:81) engaged with writers like Tlali, Sepamla and Mutloatse who privilege overtly political writing and reject critics who quibble about literary quality. He argued for 'storytelling' instead of 'case making' and mentioned Modikwe Dikobe, C.S. Nyembezi, A.C. Jordan, Dugmore Boetie, Es'kia Mphahlele, Joel Matlou and Bheki Maseko as writers who gave

African readers the opportunity to experience themselves as makers of culture. He signalled a departure from the Black Consciousness Movement.

Jeremy Cronin, on the other hand, called for a more intensified study of the Black Consciousness literature at the 1985 AUETSA conference. He argued that the poetry of the 1970s was mostly ignored - 'a deafening silence'. Where the response has been verbalised, three principal antinomies can be identified in the attack by critics of the new black poetry:

- a. its stress on content at the expense of form,
- b. its concern with the particular rather than the universal, and
- c. its valorisation of the public sphere at the expense of the private domain. (Cronin 1985b)

The other extreme represents the apologists of black poetry who have defended the emphasis on content, on the particular and on the public. These two positions have tended to fall into antinomic, mutually ideological standpoints.

Cronin argued that both the critics and the apologists have drawn uncritically on what constitutes 'literature'. The critics have launched their attack on the tenets of an 'aesthetic ideology', while the apologists, have tacitly accepted that the new black poetry would not stand up to scrutiny on traditional aesthetic principles, and have therefore rallied to its defence by employing socio-political criteria.

Cronin made a strong case for black orality when he contended that not every age has enjoyed writing and subsequently rejected Douglas Livingstone's assertion that poetry is that which can be measured on the printed page. He concluded that black poetry has its own history comprising of folktales, riddles, magical incantations, proverbs, war chants, work songs, etc. There was therefore the need to radically re-evaluate the criteria employed by English departments in South African universities when defining key concepts regarding what is to be considered 'literature' and 'poetry' (Cronin 1985b).

Chapman (1984) supported Cronin's call for the re-evaluation of literary studies at universities in South Africa. He argued for an increased awareness of the implications of discursive practices among teachers of literature. Two major challenges to the literary status quo were identified by Chapman: new theoretical approaches (chiefly post-structuralism and Marxism) and an assertion of a new regional and literary identity (a South Africanness) in the humanities.

The debate about aesthetic worth dominated during the 1980s and it was largely dictated by the different ideological preferences of critics. Watson (1983) noted correctly that South African literature, in the process of a cultural coming of age, was in need of a more constructive critical rigour, without which the reader would continue to be dished up products of cultural

entrepreneurship rather than criticism. While Gray claimed with the publication of his anthology Modern South African Poetry (1984b) that it was committed to making accessible a substantial amount of work that might otherwise have been hard to trace, Watson asserted that it represented all that was bad in South African English poetry.

We also see the surfacing of ideological preferences in the debate between Cronin's Marxist predispositions and Lionel Abrahams's liberal-humanism over the review of Black Mamba Rising: South African Worker Poets in Struggle, Alfred Temba Qabula, Mi S'Dumo Hlatswayo and Nise Malange (1986), edited by Ari Sitas. Abraham charged that Cronin had given patronisingly high praise to passages of very minor achievement. Cronin (1987) reacted to what he claimed are the limitations of Abrahams's 'bourgeois aesthetics':

The principal reason for his misunderstanding lies in his assumption that aesthetics, as opposed to political ideology, is a neutral field of timeless values. The main business of poetry (Abraham writes) is to pursue the 'high or deep'. But whose high? The high of the crane operator, or the mystical dreamer? And whose deep? That of the exploited miner, or that of the obscurantist melancholic?

Abrahams, like Nkosi earlier, wanted to rescue art from being reduced to the sloganeering of a political programme. He was emotionally attached to defending his versions of standards (Chapman 1996:424). However, the imposition of a master-narrative by critics like Abrahams perpetuates injustice because it constitutes a denial of the imagination, a denial of the right

to respond, to invert, to deviate from the norm - the right to little narratives that are rooted in differences rather than in the identity established by the grand narrative (Lyotard 1984:159).

The Cronin/ Abrahams, Gray/Watson, Gray/Kunene, Ndebele/ Mutloatse polemics sounded the rancour of the binary oppositions, embattled positions and fiercely contested ideologies within South African literature. It was the poets of contemplation who took umbrage to the cultural workers' and activists' innovative definition of literature. While the former were accused of being Eurocentric, elitist, conservative and liberal the latter were accused of authoritarianism within communities of activism as opposed to a community of art and of not being able to separate politics from art. The cultural activists broadened the concept literature to include all the discourses of South Africa, not only the genre based written discourse but also the oral discourse, discourse in newspapers, archives, magazines, pamphlets, the texts of social relationships like the funeral orations, political songs, chants and slogans, etc. This was a direct challenge to the canon of traditional English literature and the defence of 'bourgeois aesthetics' by the community of art.

The debate on the responsibility of poetry and criticism in South Africa was renewed in the late 1980s with Watson's negative

review of Andries Oliphant's book of poems, At The End of the Day, as 'another voice added to the chorus of those writers who have described, protested and defied those human outrages perpetrated by the apartheid state' (*Weekly Mail*, 14:04:89). Watson, described by Chapman as 'the *enfant terrible* of South African literary criticism' (*Weekly Mail* 12:05:89), missed the point on the role of imaginative writing in struggles for human dignity and social justice. His concept of poetry borders on the narrow, colonial standards of excellence.

In the same review, Watson dismissed the poetry of Mongane Serote, Chris van Wyk and the entire tradition of literary resistance in South Africa by means of his favoured phrase 'no worse, if no better'. According to Sole, Watson implied that socially committed poets are significantly similar to each other in style and content, that they write a static and since disregarded form of poetry; that they show no grasp of various modes of South African English and have not added to their expressive range in any way (*Weekly Mail*, 28:04:89). Patrick Cullinan comes to the defence of the 'ogreising' of Watson by commenting that 'black' and 'protest' verse that is badly written or 'banal' should not be patronised. Cullinan (*Weekly Mail* 14:05:89) concludes that those who care for poetry understand that 'antique ideology or weary jargon' is not poetry; 'those who have other agendas, don't'. Watson's and Cullinan's attempts at literary criticism is yet another example of the arrogant refusal

to accord legitimacy to the socially committed 'other' agenda of black poets or to understand the context of culture in a repressive South Africa.

A similar aesthetic argument surfaced in the very next issue of the *Weekly Mail* with Oliphant's and Watson's review of SA in Poetry/SA in Poësie, an anthology by Johan van Wyk, Pieter Conradie and Nik Constandaras. Oliphant hailed the text as the first attempt at a comprehensive multi-lingual anthology which draws on pre-colonial San and Khoi lyrics and encompasses over three centuries of poetry written in Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Dutch, English, Afrikaans and the *flaaitaal* spoken in the urban ghettos of South Africa. The compilers have spurned the aesthetics of traditional anthologies - 'the point of departure is no longer aesthetic, that is, not geared to the best or most beautiful poems that have been written in a language, but to poems that give an insight into ideological formations as these stand in history'.

Watson dismissed the compilers' rejection of conventional aesthetics as 'aesthetic illiteracy'. Van Wyk et al have used the Foucauldian archaeological approach to foreground poetry which had been neglected, suppressed or relegated to the margins of traditional anthologies. Watson missed the point by accusing the compilers of 'ducking' value judgements and by labelling the discoveries as dismal. Oliphant, in sharp contrast to Watson,

appreciated the multi-lingual approach as well as the unique intertextual relations brought into play in the anthology. However, Oliphant correctly cautioned that a reduction of poetry to ideology does not facilitate a radical transformation of the understanding of the textual processes and symbolic mediations specific to poetry (*Weekly Mail*, 05:05:1989). Watson noted that the text signalled the closure of what he termed aesthetic-literacy. He revealed, once again a refusal to accept that there is no one fixed 'aesthetic' in any culture (including South African poetry); there are many and all have to be learned, and shared.

Startling issues with regards to the politics of anthologies in South Africa were raised subsequent to the reviews of Stephen Gray's edition of The Penguin Book of South African Verse, 1989, by Michael Chapman (*South African Review of Books*, October 1989), Peter Strauss (*New Contrast*, 68), Andries Oliphant (*Weekly Mail*, 29:09:89) and Stephen Watson (*Times Literary Supplement*, 18:05:90).

The anthology included poetry from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Swaziland and South Africa. It drew on over four centuries of South African poetry in English, Afrikaans, San, Khoi Khoi, Nguni and Sotho. Oliphant acknowledged the series of cross-references between contemporaneous poets from the subcontinent that the anthology establishes. From this a vast

comparative network emerged between poetic voices speaking from a common, unfolding subcontinental context, riven by conflicts and ruptures.

While Oliphant argued that the proximities and barriers operative in the poetry of the subcontinent can now be read through Gray's literary inclusivity, Chapman, Strauss and Watson shared a strongly proprietorial claim on South African English poetry. The reviews by the latter critics devoted more space to what poetry was not included and should have been included than to the poems in the anthology. All three dismissed Gray's edition as inadequate and unrepresentative - and further, Strauss viewed it as criminally fraudulent. Gray's lengthy response to the critics, which was published in the *South African Review of Books* (August 1990) and *Staffrider* (9:3, 1991), revealed Chapman, Strauss and Watson as hardly disinterested bystanders.

Chapman felt that Gray's text was not necessary, the poets that he had included were crass, racist and sexist, that he had ignored several contemporary white poets, and that the influence of Afrikaans poetry was minimised. Gray responded that Chapman was a rival anthologiser who prevented and tried to delay (through his publisher Ad Donker) Penguin getting a foothold in what he felt was 'his market'. Chapman also released the Paperback of South African English Poetry before Gray's text. According to Gray, Chapman was up 'to his neck in the dirty

politics of an open market economy vis-a-vis anthology making'. While Watson and Strauss rejected the work for its exclusions, they nevertheless would have been content for samples of their poetry to have been included, according to Gray. The anthologiser argued that their poetry was irrelevant to his specific project, could serve no function in the text and were characteristic of the 'aesthetic school'. Gray exposed the so-called white aesthetes who were dedicated to standards of formal excellence yet they had resorted to blackmail, harassment, espionage, boycott and defamation. The 'dirty tricks' of Jack Cope was labouriously revealed by Gray and it unashamedly enlightens South Africa on the biases of anthology making amongst white South African academics whose chief aim, Gray claimed, was to keep white poetry on top. This claim was clearly reflected in Watson's review where he remarked on the long upheld notion of aesthetic value of white South African subcultures, with their technically sophisticated poems as compared to incompetent poems (by black poets), and in his comparison of 'political doggerel' with the 'distinguished poems of Breyten Breytenbach'.

The opposition between textually based, aesthetic values and contextually based political ideology as illustrated in the above debates implied an apparent opposition between theory and practice - traditional literary theory versus social intervention and commitment. Raymond Cohen's paper 'Political Movements and Revision of Literary Theory' reflected the South African

situation in terms of theory responding to a historically urgent situation. Cohen redefined theory by relating it to the socio-political context beyond the text. He argued that feminist and black theorists' main aim was to change the social and political attitudes of readers by making them self conscious of the ideology that writing imposes upon them by using the theories that trace and describe class conflict and exploitation (Cohen 1989:ix).

The use of contemporary cultural theories at universities led to the revision of curricula and didactic approaches. It has brought about the interdisciplinary thinking of postmodernity, as opposed to the partitioning (apartheid) mentality of modernity. Interdisciplinary thinking and exploration will have to rescue departments from the irrelevance of a theoretical practice which rests on false presuppositions, for example, 'of a uniform language and an homogeneous culture' (MacCabe 1987:6). Cultural studies have also brought about a comparative practice in some English departments.

The concern with aesthetics did not abate after the interregnum. Watson's review of The Heart in Exile, 1996, which appeared in the *Mail and Guardian* (17:05:96), reiterates the debates of 1987 and 1989 around Black Mamba Rising by Ari Sitas, the anthology SA in Poetry/SA in Poësie by Van Wyk et al, At The End of the Day by Andries Oliphant and The Penguin Book of South African English

Poetry by Stephen Gray. The discussion then, as outlined in Gray's letter 'The Politics of Anthologies', was not concerned only with aesthetics, but more importantly with who should and should not be included in anthologies.

Watson claimed that Tromp's and De Kock's criteria for the inclusion of poems in The Heart in Exile were not primarily aesthetic (Watson was not represented in the anthology). Watson argued that the advent of a new democracy requires a new working paradigm for anthologising and dismisses most of the poetry as mediocre - '75% of the contents are no more than a sort of low-grade verbal compost'. He attacked the works of socially committed poets as 'poems whose sell-by date has clearly passed' and concluded that mediocre poetry was 'intolerable.'

Rod Mackenzie responded that The Heart in Exile has a sense of *ubuntu*, camaraderie and poems that do say something about the collective experience of being South African in the current times. Sachs Rumer correctly acknowledged that Watson had commendably borne the tattered banner of standards in South African poetry, however, his reviews had not been constructive but were 'homicidal impulses of hilarious severity' and that he had reached the status of South Africa's most negative and hated literary critic (*Mail and Guardian*, 05:07:96).

It is ironic that six years earlier, in July 1989, the debate

between white aesthetics and socially committed writings, the call for the study of South African literature and the integral relationship between politics and arts were some of the issues discussed at the meeting between the African National Congress and South African writers at the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe Communique. A resolution of the communique stated:

We commit ourselves to the dream of realising a truly representative South African literature. This national literature will be the embodiment of a shared South African cultural identity, unique in the richness of its sources, expression and diversity of language.

and

We encourage the creation of national literature departments at universities. (Coetzee & Polly 1990:205)

An attempt was made to redress the legacy of inequality, marginalisation and exclusion that has marked the struggle for a post-apartheid people's culture. The challenge to the writers was to participate in reconstruction and development of a South African literature that will reflect the common values and destiny as well as the cultural diversity of all South Africans. The essential and necessary role of the university literature departments was recognised by the communique.

The contemplative artists as well as reactionary critics felt that their criticism over the years was appropriate and they had been vindicated of their position on the politicisation of art by the liberation movement itself when Sachs's (1990) paper, 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom', called for a moratorium on 'culture as a weapon of the struggle' (the cultural worker's

cry). Sachs hoped to suggest that the unbanned African National Congress is different from the image that the regime portrayed of it, especially during the previous four decades, and that it was open to a multicultural society with a common humanity. Cultural workers took umbrage to Sachs's comments and felt betrayed by the ANC. Watson dismissed Sachs's 'puerility' and with much sarcasm invited the white artists to continue writing on love or painting brightly coloured pictures.

Gordimer viewed Sachs's argument as a motivation for a culture that is both politically directed and aesthetically advanced. In her comment, she quotes Brecht's line 'to speak of trees is treason' and said:

We owe a great deal to the changing times. Now we can speak of trees, we can speak of human beings and all their faults, we can write about the totality of human nature. That is what Albie Sachs is calling for and that is what we all want. So many stories are untold, the fullness of life is untold. (1993:23)

Oliphant transcended the simplistic polarisation of literature in his recommendations for the way forward for the post apartheid democratic culture:

We must tolerate the scribbler alongside the craftsman. We must cultivate a culture where all streams of South African culture, including settler and indigenous, are freed from the fetters of dominance and arrogance. (1993:23)

He urged delegates to the Zabalaza Festival to be mindful that the history of dominance and subordination will not disappear under the new dispensation and the struggle for democracy must continue. Oliphant posited two creative approaches to South

African literature that has largely been ignored: the exploration of the internal conditions of apartheid and how it has settled in the consciousness and the need to develop a comic literature.

The South African academe began to present fresh perspectives on the teaching and reception of local writings and the construction of an innovative literary history of the region in the light of the post-apartheid context. A colloquium on the re-thinking of South African literary history hosted by the University of Durban-Westville in 1995 debated issues such as the damaging historical segregation of literary studies into ethno-linguistic ghettos, the marginalisation of African languages and literatures and women's writings, the dangers of constructing totalizing hegemonic national models, and the value of intercultural comparativist studies. Scholars touched on the reality of the shifting political ideology on the national agenda and the challenge to construct a nationhood through an evolving South African literature, a challenge exacerbated by the conditions of transition from an authoritarian, racist, white patriarchy to an unknown national democratic base.

These and other suggestions for the reconstruction phase of the new South Africa is reminiscent of the curriculum reconstruction theories of Giroux (1986) and Apple (1990), the excavation and bringing to light that which has been buried by colonialism and apartheid:

..the past, even the near past, should not be consigned to the dustbins of history, but would need to be continually recovered and re-interpreted as usable, in the search for new canonisations derived from African challenges and demands. (Chapman 1996:427)

## CONCLUSION

This genealogical survey of the production, teaching and reception of South African literature has uncovered the fundamental processes that are intrinsic to the workings of the university as an institution of power - the processes of exclusion and division. It provides a starting point for academics to examine their own histories, that is, their connections to the past and to particular social formations, cultures and sedimented experiences, that defines who they are and how they receive and teach literature and what ideologies moulded or influenced them.

Foucault maintains that the institution itself is not in a position to liberate knowledge from its discursive nature due to the irreducibly discursive character of knowledge. This explains why the radical critique of the seventies, with its ideology of commitment, was not able to counter the dominant ideology. They were in the minority at the liberal universities, did not offer a new paradigm and were unable to distance themselves from the power knowledge hegemony of the institution. The central

interest, therefore, has to be discourses themselves, their conditions and interactions.

The total exclusion of South African writing at the beginning of this century was gradually revised to include a few acceptable texts which in turn formed the sub-tradition. The emphasis on 'periodisation' led to the concept of 'field coverage' where representatives of the different fields were incorporated to give the curriculum a nuance of locality. When the canon-margin debate forced institutions to rethink their curricula, the elective course of study became common place in institutions - the dominant ideology was maintained while an elective like (South)African literature was offered to appease the demands of the constituencies.

The following chapter, based on surveys and empirical data, outlines the paradigm shift in the English literature curriculum over the last decade. Recommendations for the reconstruction of the curriculum within an institutional framework that has a history of isolating black cultural products as well as the black reading populace will be posited in Chapter five. Inherent to the models of reconstruction is an alternative pedagogy that will challenge the dominant discourse, promote its self-examination, allow for student interpretations that differ from academic and published 'truths' and encourage conflict and discontinuity.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL STUDIES AND CURRICULUM ANALYSIS**

This chapter explores both theoretical and methodological underpinnings for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum deriving from the critical educational studies of Freire, Giroux and Apple, the discursive approach of Foucault and the post-colonial reading strategies of Zavarzadeh and Morton. The chapter concludes with a review of the curriculum in local practice through a curriculum impact study using empirical research on the 1996 English literature syllabi of South African universities by the researcher as well as findings of the surveys conducted by Malan and Bosman in 1986 and Lindfors in 1992.

The South African literature curriculum needs far greater changes than simply altering a reading list or syllabus; it needs to be underpinned by radical and critical educational studies to ensure that it serves emancipatory interests and empowers the historically disadvantaged students who have been excluded from the benefits of a critical education through racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination. Critical education involves problem posing in which all involved are challenged to reconsider and recreate their prior knowledge and to extend their thinking (Shor 1987:180). Freire argues that the form and content of knowledge, as well as the social practices through which it is

appropriated, have to be seen as part of an ongoing struggle over what counts as legitimate culture and forms of empowerment (Aronowitz and Giroux 1986:156).

Zavarzadeh and Morton (1994:19) also posit a pedagogy of empowerment and enablement by raising questions that are missing from the traditional and new curriculum - what kind of student do these various programmes attempt to produce: a knowledgeable, enlightened, well-rounded person of experience or a critical subject who knows that knowledge is a social product with political consequences, who will be willing to intervene in the way knowledge is produced, not only in the lecture hall, but in all other sites of culture.

Freire insists that knowledge is neither static nor neutral. It is continually created and recreated as people reflect and act on the world:

Knowledge...necessitates the presence of subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality. It demands a constant searching...In the learning process the only person who really learns is s/he who ...re-invents that learning (Freire 1973:101)

The central categories of Giroux's (1981:114-116) formulation of the dialectic - totality, mediation, appropriation, and transcendence - detail the various dimensions of a Freirean critical knowledge of reality. Totality, according to Shor (1987:183) involves understanding any fact or situation in its historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context.

Therefore critical knowledge involves uncovering the limits and possibilities of our actions for transforming the world. We use our knowledge to reconstruct society so that it is free of alienating and oppressive social institutions and life forms (Giroux 1981:122). The dialectical of critical educational studies has much relevance to the current South African educational context since it points to the connection between critical knowledge and emancipatory social change.

#### 4.1 Critical educational studies

This chapter proposes that the teaching of South African literature would be best served by working within a critical paradigm, having as its objectives the goals of critical educational studies (Apple, 1996, contends that the term 'critical pedagogy' is limited). McLaren (1989:182) explains that critical educational studies supports a dialectical understanding of schooling that:

...enables the educational researcher to see the school not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialisation or a site of instruction, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes students' empowerment and self transformation.  
(1989:167)

The cardinal aim of critical educational studies is to conceive of education as an arena of contestation that examines how and why knowledge is the way it is, why some forms of knowledge appears more powerful than others and how the student's daily

experiences reflect certain constructions of knowledge. It requires activities that encourage meaning construction, to develop their understanding of the process whereby meanings are made, to interrogate the relationship between knowledge and power, and to actively promote critical thinking skills in literary studies. Within post-colonial contexts, critical educational studies is most relevant in examining how social, historical and political factors influence literary studies and how power relations in the institution and society influence meaning construction. McLaren (1989) notes the following questions that are relevant to literature teaching within the paradigm of critical educational studies:

- a. How do the selected texts construct knowledge?
- b. Do they promote stereotypical views that reinforce racist, sexist and patriarchal attitudes? And if so, how do they do it?
- c. How do we treat the knowledge that working-class students bring to the class?
- d. Do we unwittingly devalue such voices and marginalise these students?

Giroux (1992:73) maintains that by taking into consideration these issues, the teacher is empowered to actively promote a politics of *difference* instead of being trapped with the dominant 'appropriate knowledge' that the establishment sanctions. Such an approach is concordant with curriculum reconstruction that redefines the relationship between the margins and the centre - the dominant canon and excluded writings - and offers the opportunity for a politics of voice (Giroux 1992:73).

Critical educational studies provides a variety of useful modes

of analysis to challenge traditional educational ideology that considers educational institutions as transmitting agents of objective knowledge. This position is challenged by presenting theories of the hidden curriculum and theories of ideology that identify the interests underlying specific forms of dominant knowledge like the canon of traditional English literature.

Freire's critical approach enables the student to counter subjective knowledge. It is based on one basic assumption: the 'ontological vocation' of a person is to be a subject who is capable of acting upon and transforming the world:

...the conviction that every human being, no matter how ignorant or submerged in the culture of silence he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perceptions of that reality, and deal critically with it. (1971a:13)

The Freirean concept of *critical consciousness* involves the combination of coming to an awareness of contradictions expressed as 'limit situations' (serving the interests of some, limiting the actions of others) and understanding that these contradictions exist not so much as obstacles preventing action but challenges stimulating appropriate action - the oppressed then identify themselves as critically reflecting subjects *in* the world and *with* the world (Hill 1990:27). **Conscientisation** is more than awareness or reflection and envelops the following elements:

- a. A process, not a static moment.
- b. People as subjects, not as passive objects.
- c. An awareness of one's relationship to and position within society.
- d. An awareness that one is shaped and conditioned by the socio-cultural reality.
- e. A capacity for one to be critical - to perceive, reflect upon, and act against the socio-cultural contradictions in reality.

Two strands of Freire's philosophy of critical consciousness forms the basis of critical educational studies: **dialogue**, a vocation to become more fully human, and **praxis** (critical reflection and action upon the world). Since action cannot be separated from reflection, and critical education develops critical knowledge, Freire views education as vital in helping people to become subjects involved in liberatory social change (Shor 1987:184). Although Freire's works have direct reference to the oppressed in various Third World countries, his focus on problem-posing in contrast to problem-solving - together with his commitment to dialogical rather than 'banking' education - is also relevant for curriculum reconstruction in South Africa, especially in view of the need to counter the 'culture of silence' that was characteristic of apartheid education.

Critical theorists like Giroux and McLaren make extensive use of Freire's works in their discourse on curricular reconstruction. They maintain that critical educational studies as a form of cultural politics speaks to a form of curriculum theory and application that stresses the historical, cultural, and discursive in relation to classroom materials and teaching practices (Giroux and McLaren 1991:159). It enables teachers to examine, dismantle, analyse, deconstruct and reconstruct pedagogical practices. Teachers are empowered to ask how meaning is produced, and how power is constructed and reinforced in the lecture hall. Giroux and McLaren (1991:159) urge teachers to understand curriculum as an expression of struggle and to acknowledge that it constitutes a primary agent for introducing, preparing and legitimizing forms of social life. The notion of cultural politics must be considered by both legitimating and challenging the cultural experiences that make up the historical and social particulars that constitute the cultural forms and boundaries that give meaning to the lives of students (Aronowitz and Giroux 1986:156).

Freire and Macedo (1987:25) also place critical educational studies firmly within the context of cultural and social transformation. Synonymous with the Foucauldian genealogical approach to history, theory of power and discourse, Freire and Macedo (1987:32) maintain that a critical approach will rescue history, experience and vision from conventional discourse and

dominant social relations. It provides both a *narrative for agency* as well as a *referent of critique*. As a *narrative for agency*, it enables students to actively participate in reclaiming their voice and reconstructing society (concomitant with the autobiographical notion of curriculum espoused by theorists like Grumet [1981], and Pinar [1994]).

As a *referent of critique*, critical educational studies enables students to understand the socially constructed nature of their society and their experience. A critical educational approach succeeds in contextualising literature in its modes of production and consumption, in illuminating the relation between analysis in the classroom and critical thought and in illustrating that culture dominates from above without at the same time being available to everyone it dominates (Ketch 1992:9). Giroux and McLaren (1991: 154) also claim that critical educational studies commits itself to forms of learning and action that are undertaken in solidarity with subordinated and marginalised groups.

Critical educational studies is therefore linked to notions of self- and social empowerment since students learn how to read the world and their lives critically and relatedly thus leading to a deeper understanding of how knowledge gets produced, sustained and legitimated (Giroux 1986:132). It challenges both the

established curriculum and the cultural selection that it embodies and the patterns of advantage and privilege which that selection gives rise to and perpetuates (Ball 1990:34). It encourages students to question the content of their education and the ideology of the institution through the 'teaching' of and empowerment of a counter-hegemony.

The implementation of a critical educational approach will shift the focus from listening and reading to reading and creation. Students have for too long been taught to read and understand through New Criticism. Friend (1992:285) comments that this privileging of reading over writing limits the possibility that students will engage in 'praxis' - the ideal consummation of both *verbalism* (theorising without action) and *activism* (action without reflection or theory). Reading for the creation of texts has been ignored, perhaps because of its political implications. By focusing on passive learning instead of critical creativity, the South African establishment's need for literate but passive citizens has been served.

In developing a critical educational approach, teachers should consider both content and methods. Shor (1987:186) maintains that relevant content presented in a non liberatory way reduces critical insights to empty words that cannot challenge students' taken-for-granted reality and cannot inspire commitment to radical change. Humanistic methods without critical content

cannot help students become subjects capable of using critical knowledge to transform their world. Freire (1971a:28) suggests that content for critical consciousness must be developed by searching with the students for the ideas and experiences which give meaning to their lives and by exploring the nature and influence of literary, social and political conflicts. The dominant discourse could then be challenged and the competing discourses of contemporary philosophers would be allowed to confront the established power-knowledge hegemony leading eventually to a cultural revolution and change in education.

#### 4.1.1 Meaning construction

The experiences of students should be given pre-eminence in an emancipatory curriculum, therefore critical educators must learn how to understand, affirm and analyse such meaning (Freire 1985:xxi; Giroux & McLaren 1991:167). Freire emphasises that all knowing begins with experience, in his terminology 'knowledge made from experience' (1987:87). Critical educational studies would include the development of forms of knowledge and social practices that validate the experiences that students bring to the institutions. Such experiences should form the basis of the teaching programme thus ensuring that students have an active voice in the content taught instead of the traditional approach of silencing them by ignoring their cultural capital. Critical

teaching creates a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorising about the experiences shared in the dialogue process (Freire and Macedo 1995:381). A reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum would therefore challenge the language forms, style of presentation, dispositions, styles of reasoning and cultural expressions that form part of and give meaning to the students' experiences.

Freire views the students' experiences as central to the construction of knowledge since they do not arrive at the classroom empty, 'they bring with them opinions about the world, and about life' (1991:57). Education starts from the experiences of students, and either reinforces or challenges the existing social forces that keep them passive. Students' experiences or 'hidden voices' (Wallerstein 1987:35) are essential to uncover, as they have the power to block learning. The blocks can be emotional (eg. low self esteem), structural (eg. lack of contact with English speakers), or socio-economic (eg. prejudice). The emotional power behind these experiences can also inspire learning. By helping students articulate their concerns in the classroom, teachers help them understand the blocks and move beyond them.

An appropriate curriculum will therefore be based on and derive from the needs of the culture of the students to be educated. When the culture of the oppressor is imposed on the oppressed

(both the students and teachers), it invalidates their own culture and leads to self-depreciation resulting from their internalisation of the opinion the oppressors hold of them (Freire 1971b:122). Reid (1982:14) found that the uncritical acceptance of African teachers of the educational system accords with Freire's diagnosis: they were unwilling to consider reform of the system, were least interested in changing the curriculum and the examination system and were strongly favourable to some of its more traditional and inappropriate aspects. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped (Freire 1971b:22).

Critical interpretation presupposes involvement and experience. Rosenblatt (1985), within the Freirean discourse, insists on student involvement in the literary event and the treatment of the text more as an experience than a lesson or object to be studied. She identifies two stances that readers can take during literary study - an *efferent* stance that focuses a reader's attention on information to be retained after reading and an *aesthetic* stance that occurs when the reader's attention is on the lived-through experience of the story and thoughts, feelings, images, and associations which are evoked as the story is read. The latter fosters the development of a reader's understanding of a work's personal significance. An *efferent* approach, on the

other hand, assumes that students' personal opinions are not valued and that there exists a correct answer which they are expected to reach. An aesthetic stance will ensure that students truly live the literary experience and are not encouraged to distance themselves from the text.

The *efferent* approach has been exacerbated by the undue stress on New Criticism and Formalism, theories which encouraged an authoritarian academic environment and canonical cultural expressions. This paternalism made students spectators in the academic conversation rather than players and it reinforced the passivity, indifference and top-down authority of apartheid education. The task of the teacher was one of 'filling' students with 'hollow, alienated verbosity' while the student mechanically recorded, memorised and repeated the imposed content (Hill 1990:38).

Freire counters this situation by insisting that there be a determined effort by the lecturer to relinquish the role of expert in the lecture hall and to provide the critical and reconstructive space for students to sort out their contradictions and conflicts, confirm themselves and gain understanding about the richness of other cultures and other voices. The teacher's direction of education should include helping learners get involved in planning education, helping them create the critical capacity to consider and participate in the

direction and dreams of education, rather than following blindly (Freire and Macedo 1995:379). This paradigm increases awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings as well as creating a critical community in the lectures, empowering students to rethink their world and to interpret their experiences. Factors such as social convention, class, historical positioning, gender and individual experience results in a multiplicity of readings and meaning construction. There cannot be one 'real' meaning because a variety of interpretations would place emphases differently during the reading process.

Unfortunately, within the South African context, there was a tacit inculcation of the belief in the value of literary craftsmanship and liberal culture of the arts resulting in the lecturers, as custodians of knowledge, interpreting the texts for the students. Any student's response to literary texts is naturally conditioned to a certain extent by the student's own reading experience, cultural background and biases, the more impersonal factors of culture and society, and certain levels of literary competence. The lecturer's attempt at constructing the meaning of a text would naturally be influenced by subjective bias as well. It is therefore logical that all interpretations of meaning and all meaning construction in literature, because of the subjective method of the exercise, will result in an indefiniteness of meaning since subjective bias and cultural

conditioning denies objective truth.

The notion of experience and meaning are integral to South African writers and students since the construction of new meaning based on the experiences of the oppressed was more a social and political task than an aesthetic one. Coupled with this was a growing determination not to be hampered by the literary conventions or the critical and aesthetic demands of the establishment. Many African poets realised how irrelevant western literary language was to their experiences. They therefore reflected the experiences of the townships with its mixture of African grammar, local idiom and jazz rhythm and their works were forged from incorporating words from Afrikaans, English and African languages. These 'generative words' are keys to areas of marginalised knowledge or life that the poet wants to open up (Finlay & Faith 1987:30) - they reflect a phonetic richness and contain social, political, economic or cultural implications. This enabled the township reader to identify with the poetry. As a Black Consciousness strategy, it overtly alienated the conservative academe and by that very alienation was often able to shock readers into a new awareness of the poet's message.

Perhaps, therein lies a reason for its marginalisation from the curriculum. This writing conflicts with the individualistic production model and the capitalist distribution model of the

western tradition. What is oral and is directed at and participated in by the African community is the 'other' and does not fit into the literary 'high culture' tradition. The reconstruction process must now therefore be guarded against simply replacing 'high culture' content with local content. More appropriately, it should include the need to critically engage the experiences that students bring to the lectures. This means that such experiences in their varied cultural forms have to be interrogated critically so as to recover their strengths and weaknesses (Aronowitz and Giroux 1986:156). Students need to be provided with the skills and knowledge they will need in order to transform the world according to their own vision. A major precondition for such an exercise is that students will have to learn how to critically appropriate the codes and vocabularies of different cultural experiences.

Provision for critical educational studies in curriculum reconstruction enables the students to see that his or her understanding of all of culture's texts (from philosophical treatises to popular television shows) is a result of his or her situatedness in a complex network of gender, class, and race relations that provide the subject with certain concepts (Zavarzadeh and Morton 1994:19). Students will take into cognisance that reading and meaning will change depending on different factors (working class or upper class, white or black, etc.) and subjectivities (different access to knowledge,

different economic limits, etc.).

No culture is neutral (Apple 1990:1) and both Freire and Foucault remind educators of their task to unmask the assumed neutrality of cultural institutions. The interaction of teacher and student does not take place in a vacuum - education starts from the experiences of people, and either reinforces or challenges the existing social forces that keep them passive (Wallerstein 1987:33). Similarly, literature is political and serves somebody's interests since it is 'someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge, one that in the process of enfranchising one group's cultural capital disenfranchises another's (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991:4). The separation of art from the base of society, as was evident by the universities which did not acknowledge African writings, was a deliberate attempt not to use the artwork because of its social and political commitment and not so much because of the constraints of traditional forms and literary conventions.

As a form of social redress, meaning construction enhances the quality of readership of students while critical dialogue and cognition will help reconceptualise the functions of literary studies and didactics. Most importantly, it will be in keeping with the aim of the curriculum reconstruction programme for the teaching of literature - a liberation of the creative and critical potential of students.

#### 4.1.2 Cognitive development

Ennis (1987:10) defines critical thinking as a practical reflective activity that has reasonable belief or action as its goal - *It is reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do.* The definition does not exclude creative thinking. Cognitive skills that help transform the classroom into a community of inquiry include reasoning skills, inquiry skills, concept-analysis skills and translation skills (Lipman 1987:154). Cognitive process instruction is more than a shift of emphasis towards basic skills; it implies a radical change in our current conception of learning and the fact that students can only learn when they are actively involved in piecing together their own ideas, when they get the total picture, when they have a will to doubt and when their interpretation is respected.

The origins of the cognitive approach are quite old; Galileo once said, 'You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to find it within himself' (Lockhead 1979:2). Young (1992:23) maintains that if new knowledge is learned in a shallow way, it is difficult for the knowledge to be made the students' own, a part of their reality. Habermas (1984:220) also contends that genuine conceptual learning occurs only when learners make their own sense of knowledge:

...the curricula of schools are other people's knowledge, imposed on the student. Not surprisingly,

some students do not bother to make personal sense of this knowledge but merely play the school 'game' of rote learning and reproducing the curriculum knowledge.

A cognitive approach emphasises the role of the student as active participant and not as Habermas warned, a passive recipient.

Giroux (1991:171), in outlining the cognitive approach, distinguishes between knowledge about, on the *digital dimension* of learning (univocality, precision, logic) experienced in school as opposed to knowledge of, or the *analogic dimension* (equivocation, ambiguity, description) experienced by students in the street. If knowledge is given, it is of a linear or relatively unproblematic nature, and therefore does not engage student experience within critical educational studies and is characteristic of *transmission education*.

The teaching of literature using the traditional didactical approach of transmission education was described by Freire as *banking education* where the authoritarian teachers 'deposit' knowledge in the students' minds - a process that 'anaesthetises and inhibits creative power'. *Banking education* assumes that students' viewpoints and voices are of secondary importance to the authoritative knowledge passed on by the teacher (Freire 1971b:58).

The paternalism of this approach is essential to the maintenance

of an oppressive political and social order as it ensures that students who complete the courses remain passive and unquestioning. However, according to Hill (1990:70), banking education may be beneficial for the student in particular situations, for example, when motivated learners wish to obtain specific bodies of knowledge within a paradigm with which they are already familiar and knowledgeable. A negative result of banking education is what Freire refers to as *marginalisation* - by promoting myths about reality and maintaining the dominant ideology of the institution, the educators force the students to be marginalised; to be on the fringe of, or outside reality.

Universities were also guilty of the conspiracy with apartheid by engaging in the processes of marginalisation, exclusion and transmission education. Perhaps, the use of a critical educational studies approach would have led to serious discussions of political principles thus countering the hidden curriculum of universities which endeavoured to halt the relationship of thinking to political life. Academics feared that the university structure, the curriculum and their positions will be at risk unless the status quo is maintained. The National Commission for Higher Education (1996:2) reiterates that the historically black universities were considered teaching universities and not research universities like their white counterparts. Thinking was therefore considered irrelevant to their curriculum since their primary role was to impart knowledge

to the unenlightened who came from disadvantaged schools and communities.

This lack of both a critical awareness and an outlet to challenge the dominant ideology is a tacit perpetuation of the social and political marginalisation of disadvantaged students. The use of South African literature to confront the ideology of the canon is a possible approach in the use of Freire's (1971b:12) fundamentally different pedagogy with its dual thrust: *critical reflection* that must lead to *revolutionary action*. Freire leads us to further understand the dynamics of this intellectual process:

In the learning process the only person who really learns is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby reinvents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriate learning to concrete existential situations. On the other hand, the person who is filled by another with 'content' whose meaning s/he is not aware of, which contradicts his or her way of being in the world, cannot learn because s/he is not challenged (1973:101)

Literature teaching using only critical awareness will continue to encourage the culture of silence - integral to the process is *praxis/action*. The ability to perceive contradictions and discontinuities along with the interrogation of texts, leads to discourse awareness. Focusing on South African literature will help students critique ideas and practices that are part of their environment and their experiences and a confrontation with the canon will question the ideology that underpins its constitution. But, this is reflection without action, and thought only has

meaning when it is generated by action upon the world (Freire 1971b:64). The problems and conflicts discussed must therefore be relevant to the students' lives and they must be challenged to respond to issues that form part of their experiences. A cognitive model would encourage intense dialogue and advanced writing. When teachers and students are partners in dialogue, a different conception of the process of knowledge acquisition emerges:

The cognitive dimensions of the literacy process must include the relationships of men with their world. These relationships are the source of the dialectic between the products men achieve in transforming the words and the conditioning which these products in turn exercise on men (Freire 1971b:12)

Short-term improvement in literacy skills can be achieved by motivating students and by reinforcing their written work. But, as Elsasser & John-Steiner (1987:45) maintain, only programmes that build upon cognitive processes can help individuals meet the long-term objective of using their literacy as a tool of personal growth and social transformation.

A cognitive approach ensures that we succeed in presenting literature as a potentially emancipatory force in students' lives. The relation between analysis in the classroom and critical thought in general has to be illuminated so that they leave the institution with minds of their own and a critical awareness that might generate social change. When we develop in students some expertise in decoding structures of signification, we equip them intellectually to read our own practices, our

institutions and the world as a text. When this happens, any authoritarian, hierarchical and exclusionary qualities that we reflect in our choice of texts, courses and reading lists, our relations to students and our teaching strategies can be identified. Such a goal demands curriculum restructuring that encourages students to see connections between the text and the world, increase their perceptions concerning the link between power and truth and expose them to the excluded images of otherness.

Teachers using a cognitive approach will encourage conscientisation in the classroom. Behardien (1989:ii) views conscientisation as a process of re-interpreting dominant perceptions and denouncing those which do not adequately explain society. Conscientisation has to do with the development of a new mode of expression - a critical discourse. Students are guided through a dialogical exploration and interpretation of issues discussed. The process, similar to Dewey's (1940) problem solving approach, involves critical questioning, forming opinions, testing hypotheses, and making decisions. Students are encouraged to see reality clearly and critically, resulting in a positive teaching and learning environment, a sincere appreciation for the value of learning and a development of cognitive skills to solve practical problems.

Griffith, a critic of Freire's theories, argues that Freire's

impassioned preaching on critical pedagogy and cognition and the notions about the necessity for making the student an active, questioning, thinking participant in the formal education process are neither new nor revolutionary (1972:67). For Griffith, Freire simply repeats the philosophy of education proposed by Dewey. Freire acknowledges his indebtedness to Dewey (Collins 1977:84), however he develops Dewey's ideas on human experience and proposed that knowledge, as with experience, is historically founded but continuously changing. This concept of knowledge as dynamic and influenced by power relations is important in the curriculum reconstruction process.

South African education should embrace a cognitive approach since it is conducive to the development of autonomous, rational beings. The *Curriculum 2005* document, which heralds a new era in education - though contentious in some academic circles that feel that outcomes based education is doomed to fail (Jansen 1997:1), correctly shifts priorities in education from learning to thinking and requires a redefinition of the function of the classroom. Alternative curriculum strategies are necessary to counter the pedagogy of oppression and to ensure the intervention of critical educational studies.

To facilitate such a process, Beyer and Apple (1988:5) provide a valuable framework that requires us to think about education critically and cognitively by asking a range of questions:

1. **Epistemological.** What should count as knowledge? As knowing? Should we take a behavioural position, and one that divides knowledge and knowing into cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor areas, or do we need a less reductive and more integrated picture of knowledge and the mind, one that stresses knowledge as process?
2. **Political.** Who shall control the selection and distribution of knowledge? Through what institutions?
3. **Economic.** How is the control of knowledge linked to the existing unequal distribution of power, goods, and services in society?
4. **Ideological.** What knowledge is of most worth? Whose knowledge is it?
5. **Technical.** How shall curricular knowledge be made accessible to students?
6. **Aesthetic.** How do we link the curriculum knowledge to the biography and personal meanings of the student? How do we act 'artfully' as curriculum designers and teachers in doing this?
7. **Ethical.** How shall we treat others responsibly and justly in education? What ideas of moral conduct and community serve as the underpinnings of the ways students and teachers are treated?
8. **Historical.** What traditions in the field already exist to help us answer these questions? What other

resources do we need to go further?

By taking these questions into consideration in the process of curriculum reconstruction, we will be creating an educative environment in which cognitive development is central and we will understand the reconstruction process as an inherently political and moral one (Apple: 1979:111).

#### 4.1.3 A confrontational approach

A central theme which Apple (1990) suggests for inclusion in the curriculum is the nature of conflict. He theorises that a significant block to transforming massified consciousness into critical consciousness is the ideology that in the pluralistic society the interests of all groups are the same, and that policy and institutions are formed by consensus. Apple (1990:87) sees conflict, contradiction and resistance as the basic 'driving forces' in society.

A theory of resistance is therefore central to the development of critical educational studies. It helps bring into focus those social practices whose ultimate aim is the control of both the learning process and the capacity for critical thought and action. Such an approach points to the ideology underlying the hegemonic curriculum, to its hierarchically organised bodies of

knowledge (the canon) and to the way the curriculum marginalises or disqualifies working class knowledge and knowledge about women and minorities (Giroux 1986:108).

Psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism have brought about a shift in pedagogical theory, a shift which suggests new models of teaching precisely by challenging the traditional assumptions of canonical knowledge and pedagogic authority as well as the classroom opposition of 'knowledge' and 'ignorance'. Traditional pedagogics conferred upon the teacher the status of expert, mentor, champion of the subject and master of the text who will transmit knowledge to the 'ignorant' student who desires to know. Psychoanalysis views ignorance as an active form of resistance to knowledge. Marxists and feminists, on the other hand, have reconceptualised the whole concept of knowledge as an integral factor in the reproduction of the dominant ideology. They have called for an oppositional pedagogy which will resist the demand for an education system that moulds students to take their place within a capitalist and androcentric society.

What is advocated is a rethinking of the concepts 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' leading to a radically unconventional manner of teaching. A confrontational attitude towards students, instead of paternalism, with a critical stance towards the literary texts is mooted. When conflict is not ignored or suppressed, it forms a discursive site in which knowledge is produced. In order to

move away from *banking education*, the teacher must acknowledge the conflict present in the classroom and consequently encourage debate and questioning of existing paradigms of knowledge. If knowledge is viewed as an entity that is static and fixed and absolute, no true teaching can take place because the knowledge is not open to dialogue and conversation and the role of the student is to merely master the knowledge.

Freire points out that the stifling of conflict in the classroom is integral to repressive education as it ensures that the fundamentally narrative character of the teacher-student relationship is maintained:

This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narrating sickness.

(1971b:64)

*Narrating* is synonymous with the traditional pattern of pedagogy where the teacher talks about the literary texts while students listen as the unknowing subjects. If narration continues to go unchallenged, students learn nothing new. They would only be adding to, reinscribing and reaffirming what they already know, the 'truths' of the dominant ideology of our society (Strickland 1990:292).

The whole notion of the silent/ignorant student has to be rethought. Is it the student's desire to ignore the knowledge

of the lecturer? Is it the refusal to acknowledge the dominant ideology of the institution and society? Is it the student's refusal to acknowledge his or her implication in ideology as outlined by Louis Althusser (1971:70)? Or is it a soft option for the student to enjoy the benefits of remaining unknowing so that it makes the obtaining of the qualification quicker and easier?

Credentialism exacerbated the situation since students were eager to tailor their answers to suit the lecturer's interpretations in order to obtain their certificates without any obstacles. Many students took advantage of this situation and did not see the need to confront the agenda of the institution. Transmission education was therefore more easier and expected minimum effort while confrontation with the lecturer's interpretation and dominant ideologies demanded taking a critical position. The goal of consuming knowledge therefore took precedence over that of production or of fostering individualism.

Alternate reading strategies and approaches to textual analysis are needed to promote creativity and improve student skills.

Strickland (1990:296) advocated *strong reading* as a deliberate violation of the presumed authority of the text and asserts the reader's discursive subject position against the position of the reader proffered by the text in its social and institutional context. Foucault also identifies this break between the reader

and the text as the space of the rapture, the gap where knowledge can be produced.

The literature lesson is an excellent avenue to confront cultural hegemony and its ideological constructions in the institution. An example would be the ideological critique of the university to apartheid. Apartheid was rarely confronted in the past because the assumptions of traditional literary criticism demanded a purely literary study of the canon. The inclusion of a South African literature perspective in the curriculum would have provided an ideal context for contestations against the immorality of apartheid and the hegemony of canonical high culture.

Gerald Graff (1991:57-73), in his moral approach to pedagogy, links the concept of conflict with critical thinking. He maintains that mainstream pedagogy is fundamentally immoral because it does not expose the conflicts that are involved in the actual constitution of knowledge. Graff acknowledges that the best pedagogy is ethical: it rends the veil of all that is hidden and exposes the student to the presence of conflicts. What Graff hopes to achieve with the pedagogy of honesty is a solution to the current crisis of the capitalist knowledge industry. Instead of separating the different discourses, or even worse, ignoring a conflicting discourse, a 'conversation' between the oppositional discourses will hopefully diffuse the conflicts.

The basis of Graff's counter-revolutionary pedagogy is therefore neopluralism.

Zavarzadeh and Morton (1994:27) are highly sceptical of a moral/ethical approach to pedagogy and sees it as a way of deferring reaching a conclusion about the political economy of knowledge. By structuring the curriculum as a series of conflicting practices, the literature department will thereby avoid the reduction of those conflicts into a new answer. The university English departments are polarised by conflicts, as evident in the genealogical survey of the previous chapter, so it is important to interrogate the conflicts and expose the ideologies inherent in them.

A relevant conflict to address is the canon/margin dichotomy. The views of both sides of the debate must be considered in the curriculum to prevent two extreme forces derailing the task of English departments by creating an impasse. This canon/margin opposition could be put to good use. Graff outlines that a pedagogy in which we turn this impasse into a defining tension 'by teaching the conflicts' will give our curriculum structure and relevance (1990:51). Graff argues from a theoretical and global perspective that places educational disagreements in the framework of larger problems in academic culture.

Bacon (1993:501), within the ambit of the conflict model,

identifies four factors that contribute to the canon controversy in institutions:

- \* The **tension** between tradition and commonality on the one hand, and multiculturalism and individual difference on the other.
- \* The **conflict** between theory-oriented teaching and spontaneous enjoyment of texts.
- \* The **disagreement** over the terminology and criteria we should use in the classroom to evaluate literature.
- \* The **discord** over whether we should use or reject disciplinary and institutional frameworks when teaching literature.

Instead of viewing the existing canon/margin situation at institutions as an impasse, it should be seen as an interaction, an exercise in conflict management, a healthy dialectical interchange between the established and the emergent.

Both sides of the debate insist that a choice on the matter should be made by the institution. Either the common beliefs of the traditional canon should be inculcated or the accent should be placed on the differences among beliefs through the works that have been excluded by the canon. Since literature teaching concerns the discourse on texts, choices must be made regarding the texts to be used. The liberal academics exploited this loophole by simply adding texts to the canon to solve the impasse. Their explanation was that they were bringing

innovative works into the canon. They should have exposed the conflict that led to the addition to the canon, discoursed on the reasons for the conflict and the students' interpretation of the debate over the canonised/ marginalised texts, and not succumb to a one-sided, paternalistic solution (especially where it concerns black writing and women's writing) to the conflict.

The conservative claim that a text's greatness has been certified by certain 'universal' values should also be reviewed. Students should question teachers on their preferences and favourites since all judgement on values are subjective. However, students and lecturers should not abandon the critique of texts based on values, because herein lies the conflict which should become central in the discourse on the values of canonical texts and other/excluded literatures.

It is generally the excluded texts that react to the social and political problems surrounding students' lives. The great texts of the canon transcend the contemporary and takes us far beyond the specific current issues to universal issues. This could be exploited as yet another tension - the world view of the canon versus the social context of the 'other'. Students are encouraged to critically evaluate the notions of history that underpin the canonical and the alternate perspectives of history as represented by the 'other'. The role of the teacher within such dialogical conversations would change to that of facilitator

(Freire and Macedo 1995:378) towards an interpretation of the texts and no more as the transmitter of the values of the canonical works.

#### 4.1.4 Foucault and critical educational studies

Michel Foucault's interest in the relationship between forms of knowledge and power is a fruitful stimulus for the kind of radical analysis of classroom content and practice demanded by critical educational studies. His research provides a useful basis for rethinking the relationship between literary studies and broader power relationships as well as the social and institutional forces acting upon literary practices.

Concordant with critical educational studies, Foucault urges students to struggle against the forms of power that relegate them to objects and instruments in the sphere of 'knowledge', 'truth', 'consciousness', and 'discourse'. A possible instrument for such a struggle is the use of an archaeological and/or genealogical approach to fields of knowledge. Through a thorough understanding of the genealogy of the respective institution and academic departments, students will be able to recognise the dominant interests and socialising ideologies, providing them with a language to articulate their critical findings (Ketch 1992:11). In the essay 'Intellectuals and Power' in Language, Counter-Memory and Practice, Foucault states that only if there

is an understanding of the forces of domination will students be able to struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious (1977a:208).

Foucault, in a discourse on power, cautioned against the aphorism 'where there is power, there is resistance' (1981:95). Resistance is never opposed to power, rather, power produces multiple points of resistance against itself, and inadvertently generates opposition. What Foucault is advocating is not a *resistance* to the canon, but rather a *refusal* of the canon. This can only be done when we are aware how the canon has been constituted and what are the dynamics of power and knowledge inherent in its formation. Only then will it be able to invent or imagine what new kinds of knowledge can take its place.

The total *refusal* of the dominant structure of knowledge - a radical approach to literature teaching - can therefore be considered as a more appropriate intervention for curricular reconstruction. A revolutionary way of dealing with the curriculum will not simply sanction the replacement of high culture by popular culture or the formation of a marginal canon to parallel the central canon or the introduction of eclectic pluralism by providing new discourses along with the dominant discourse. The greatest danger of the pluralistic discourse (which is common in the post-apartheid South Africa) is that it

inherently maintains domination of the central ideology, and accommodates the marginalised writings without questioning the prevailing ideology.

The Foucauldian approach will pose ethical and political questions on why and how discourses are produced, asking radical questions on the legitimacy of the discourse, questioning the inclusion of the discourse in the structure and a cognitive inquiry into the nature of the relationship between power and knowledge inherent in the discourse. Marginalised writings will not automatically move to the centre by virtue of its marginalised status, rather, an interrogation concerning its inclusion will include its role in the pedagogy of enablement, critical literacy and cognition. The traditional curriculum was used to enlighten the student - critical educational studies must not enlighten the student in a new or different way to the traditionalists. It should enquire into what is missing from the traditional and the revised curriculum (post-modern curriculum).

Foucault (1989:113) asks how is it possible, given the mass of things that are spoken, given the set of discourses actually held, a certain number of these discourses are sacralized and given a particular function? Among all these narratives, what is it that sacralizes a certain number and makes them begin to function as 'literature'? How is it possible for certain literature to be elevated to the status of the canon while others

are not, how is it possible that certain narratives are economically viable and considered popular while others are silenced or ignored by the public? There are therefore two distinct voices that the student has to investigate and interrogate: the canonical discourse and the oppositional discourse. It is only through a critical analysis of the different literary discourses that the power relations, struggles between the dominant centre and the marginalised other, the differing and competing vested interests, resources and influence will be exposed.

According to Foucault, the task is not to overthrow or transcend the existing canon but to *subvert* and *displace* the relations of power which invest modern education, contesting them by problematising inequalities between lecturers and students, expanding the realm of fiction and contingency in curricula, experimenting with alternative forms of educational provision and governance and most importantly, promoting new forms of subjectivity (Deacon & Parker 1994:11). Basically, the act of refusal of the canon is a creation of a new identity. Resistance is self defeating. One can draw a parallel between the struggle against apartheid and the resistance towards the canon. When one looks back at the liberation struggle, one must acknowledge that the resistance of apartheid was in effect a confirmation of apartheid because resistance reproduces a dialectical process. The refusal model, on the contrary, actively promotes an

alternative to the situation.

*Discourse formation*, concomitant with the refusal of the view of literature as a coherent and unified discursive strategy, is an alternative that Foucault posits. He views literature as discontinuous and interdisciplinary - it is a field that draws from a range of knowledge conventionally separated into disciplines: sociology, historical materialism, conventional historiography, modes of discourse analysis, etc. This approach reads texts from high and popular traditions alongside each other, within the same theoretical framework. By treating literary and officially non-literary texts within the same theoretical paradigm, Foucault deconstructs literature, and leads to a concern not with literary theory, but with a different kind of discourse - culture, signifying practices and objects (Easthope 1991:38).

Foucault advises that the oppositional ideology asserts itself in discontinuities, gaps and fissures in the text, in other words, all the marginalised phenomena of the text. To subvert the canon will therefore not mean a negation of the dominant ideologies that support patriarchy and racial domination. Subversion consists not in the negation of the hegemony of the canon and the power of the institution, but simply in the interrogation of the hegemony. Such a process prevents the 'melting pot' exercise of simply co-opting representative texts

onto the existing canon - giving females and minority writers representation in anthologies and course syllabi. This process reflects the myth of American democratic pluralism. In reality, the dominant ideology is strengthened, the marginalised voices are still marginalised and the power-knowledge hegemony of the institution remains intact and unquestioned.

The challenge therefore is to confront established notions of the teaching of literature. An example in literature teaching is the concept 'author'. The traditional liberal humanist individualism is maintained through the emphasis on the great works of the canon with the accent on authorial genius. Foucault problematised this concept of author and the notion of the author's intention:

...this totality is treated in such a way that one tries to rediscover beyond the statements themselves the intention of the speaking subject, his conscious activity, what he meant, or, again, the unconscious activity that took place, despite himself (1977b:27)

The development of new codes in black autobiography within the social, literary and political situation in South Africa can be used to confront the traditional notion of the author. Texts like Ezekiel Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue (1959), Bloke Modisane's Blame me on History (1963), Can Themba's The Will to Die (1972) and Ellen Kuzwayo's Call me Woman (1985) focus on the communal experiences of the community.

The autobiographer becomes a spokesperson and representative of

the oppressed people and transcends the individualistic code of author. Ibe Nwoga describes the role of the black writer as a key participant in the struggle for liberation:

Events of a traumatic nature to the whole community have taken place and are taking place. There are concerns felt, not so much by the individual in his personal capacity, but shared by the generality of the people. There is a sense of participation. (1976:13)

By representing individual genius as the essence of literature and by granting literature a privileged role as the prime repository of human experience, the traditional curriculum represents liberal humanist individualism as the natural and universal mode of human subjectivity (Strickland 1990:293). This construction of society, writers and individuals is an ideological construct and a product of a specific socio-historic framework. The study of English literature therefore remains seriously implicated in the maintaining of liberal humanist individualism.

The communalistic 'ubuntu' approach to literature by black writers was negatively received by an establishment which had limited notions of literature. The literary canon and the curriculum are also constructions of the dominant literary theories (in this case New Criticism) and pedagogical apparatuses.

Using the Foucauldian archaeological approach, a confrontational pedagogy can be implemented by shifting the teacher's role as the

authoritative dispenser of knowledge to one of the *archivist*. The teacher then avoids the situation where the students view him/her as an objective person upon whom the institution has conferred special autonomy and power. By working as *archivist*, the teacher gets to the foundation of the curriculum, the core structure, the list of readings, etc. and investigates how, by whom and why they were constructed, what objectives do they have and what is the ideological underpinning of their construction.

The teacher then facilitates the obtaining of extensive bibliographies on the issues discussed in the lectures so that students are exposed to a variety of interpretations on the topic. Through an inter-textual and critical thinking process, the students will gain access to the socio-political and institutional discourse of the literary texts. A critique of the students' and lecturer's interpretation and written responses produces alternate centres of meaning in the lecture hall. The authorised content of the course, the canon, becomes decentred and the production of new knowledge is emphasised instead of the reproduction of the existing knowledge. The attention is also deflected, more importantly, from the teacher to the discourse.

The teacher takes on the roles of facilitator and convenor by adopting a confrontational and critical stance towards the students and not by pretending to be the mentor whom the students follow slavishly and who interprets prescribed texts for

students. This ensures that the critical educator also has an active presence in educational practice and the approach is synonymous with Freire's notion of facilitating:

Educators should never allow their active and curious presence to transform the learner's presence into a shadow of the educator's presence. Nor can educators be a shadow of their learners. The educator who dares to teach has to stimulate learners to live a critically conscious presence in the pedagogical and historical process.  
(Freire & Macedo 1995:379)

Freire and Macedo believe that to renounce the task of teaching under the guise of facilitating is part and parcel of a paternalistic ideology.

Foucault also posits the notions of *discontinuity* and *difference* which afford lecturers a useful position from which to present literary texts. Using a Foucauldian premise, one can ask - why should students share a common frame of reference when they all have different educational and life experiences? Students must process the information from the literary text in their own way, subjectively. True learning results from the activity of each mind in processing new information or in reflecting upon or reprocessing already stored information. The variation in reading and interpretation is often eliminated by pure lecturing. Discussion classes, where students' interpretations are freely exchanged, help students clarify, compare, question, doubt, and consider a variety of possible hypotheses based on their own reading. Bacon (1993:504) correctly explains that reading is a contextual experience and that the communities to which we belong

and the knowledge we bring to a text must bear on our reception of it.

The examination, an example of institutional control, according to Foucault, should on the contrary, provide students with an opportunity to extrapolate the conflicts of the curriculum. Traditionally the teachers shared their expertise with students who were expected to learn what they were told to learn. Teachers then expected the information to reappear in the mind of the student, in the assignments and in the examination, a procedure called 'reappearance' by psychologists like Neisser (1967). A conflict approach stimulates students to interpret literary works differently from their lecturers. Given the non-didactic and artistic form of literary expression, all responses should differ since there is no one 'correct' objective response. Such an approach also creates environments where students can actively manipulate their perceptions of information given in lectures, and in the process question the role of the lecturer as transmitter and dispenser of information.

Literary studies, using the Foucauldian approach of discourse formation, would be able to focus on the power-knowledge relationships within institutions and the conflicts, disagreements and discontinuities in literature. Literature would therefore not be viewed as a single and static object, but rather as an object that is differently defined, delimited and

described by the different institutions, people and periods, to use Foucault's words 'to formulate their law of division' (1977a:33). The formation of different objects within literature and the rules of their formation within discourse should be investigated. The aesthetic principles of the canon would then be placed against the popular forms of contemporary writings to unravel the discursive shift in literature. The multiplicity of objects that emerge from this analysis of discourse, the knowledge about the changing power relations between institutions, the influence of social, economic and political processes on the discourse are all factors that extrapolate the conflicts and differences that characterise literature and is intrinsic to the systems according to which different kinds of literature are 'divided, contrasted, related, re-grouped, classified, derived from one another' (Foucault 1977a: 42).

#### **4.2 CURRICULUM ANALYSIS**

The aim of this curriculum analysis component is to unpack the English literature syllabi of South African universities in order to understand the rationale behind its constitution, to analyse the contents of the syllabi, and to formulate theories, principles, methods and assumptions that underpin the curriculum.

The principle reason is to make an assessment of the current situation with regards to literature teaching in order to

reconstruct the literature curriculum. A comparative study between data collected in 1996 and an analysis completed in 1986 will reveal whether there is a paradigm shift from the deliberate exclusion of a South African perspective of past curricula. One could also gauge from the empirical findings whether assumptions underlying the literature curriculum are valid and defensible. Using a Foucauldian approach, the blind spots, gaps, exclusions, biases and dominant/marginalised perspectives in the curriculum can be identified.

The instrument used to measure curriculum impact in this study is documents, specifically the syllabi as reflected in the 1986, 1992 and 1996 calendars of South African universities. The surveys conducted by Malan and Bosman (1986) and Lindfors (1992) as well as an empirical study of the 1996 syllabi forms the basis of this curriculum impact study. There is no single set of design principles against which to assess a curriculum. A study of the literature syllabi of the universities offers a particular perspective on the design of the literature curriculum. A design analysis determines the purpose of the curriculum. This places the investigation firmly within a historical context since each university has its curriculum ideology, guiding principles and values of the curriculum and different social, political, economic and cultural situations that it seeks to respond to.

#### 4.2.1 English literature syllabi at SA universities in 1986

A study of **Table 1** reveals the core perspectives of the English literature curriculum, the assumptions the curriculum makes and the silences evident in the curriculum. The survey reveals that only 3 English Departments among 17 universities had introductions to the literatures of Africa in their English 1 courses. At second year level four University English departments offered courses in African literature and only the University of the North and the University of Fort Hare presented a survey of South African English literature. At third year level two departments gave courses in African literature, and one offered courses in South African literature. At honours level four departments gave courses in African literature and three offered courses in South African literature.

It was concluded by the CENSAL report on the investigation into the 1986 syllabi that South African literature was marginalised and the recommendation was that it should take precedence and further, the compartmentalised study of literature should be avoided.

A graphic representation of the composition of English literature curricula at South African universities in

1986 (**Table 2**) reveals the following:

a. English 1

The largest component of the syllabi consisted of Genre based studies in all universities (100%); an Historical Periodisation approach was followed by 60% of the universities and Chaucer and Shakespeare were both offered by 25% of departments.

Only 5% of universities offered South African literature while 17% of universities offered African literature.

b. English 11

Syllabi for 1986 show a dramatic decrease in Historical Periodisation (17%), a slight increase (when compared to English 1) in the number of universities that offered Practical Criticism (48%) and studies in Shakespeare and Old/Middle English (41%).

There is an increase in the percentage of universities that offered South African literature (12%) and African literature (24%) as compared with the 5% and 17% offered in the first

year respectively.

c. English 111

While Genre based studies was most common to all the universities (82%), there is a dramatic increase in the number of universities that offered studies in Shakespeare (88%). Practical Criticism was offered by 35% of the universities, while Historical Periodisation continued to dominate in 59% of the universities.

Only one university offered South African literature in the third year. There is also a great decrease in African literature from 24% (second year) to 12% (third year).

d. English (honours)

The most remarkable statistic for the honours syllabi is the percentage universities that offered courses in Practical Criticism and Historical Periodisation - 94%.

The figures for South African literature (18%) and African literature (23%) show an increase in the honours level of these components as compared to the 12% of universities that

offered both in the third year.

- e. **Table 2**, a graphic representation of the 1986 syllabi, outlines very clearly the marginalisation of South African and African literature in the undergraduate and honours curricula of English departments in South African universities. The statistics of 5% (English 1), 12% (English 11) and 6% (English 111) is evidence that local writings were largely excluded from the curriculum which was dominated by traditional English literature. The higher figure for the honours level was not very favourable because it was an elective course offered by 18% of departments and the number of students that took the course was not reflected.

#### 4.2.2 AFRICAN LITERATURE TEACHING IN SA UNIVERSITY ENGLISH

##### DEPARTMENTS IN 1992

##### 4.2.2.1 INVENTORY OF TEXTS BY AFRICAN AUTHORS IN THE 1992

##### SYLLABI

Author	Titles	Courses	Grades	Institutions	Total
Fugard	12	36	4	17	69
Gordimer	11	39	5	13	68
Coetzee	6	37	5	15	63
Paton	3	17	5	13	38
Mphahlele	3	16	4	11	34
Head	5	15	4	9	33
Schreiner	1	13	4	12	30
Serote	2	14	4	10	30
Abrahams	4	11	5	8	28
La Guma	4	12	4	6	26
Plaatje	1	11	4	10	26
Ndebele	1	12	4	7	24
Ngugi	13	35	4	12	64
Achebe	6	31	4	15	56
Soyinka	11	17	4	11	43

- a. The table lists the SA and other African writers who scored more than twenty points in the survey. Point totals

were arrived at by adding scores in four categories: number of titles plus number of courses plus number of grade levels (1st year to Masters) plus number of institutions. For example, Nadine Gordimer earned 68 points because 11 of her books were assigned in 39 courses at 5 different levels in 13 South African universities.

- b. Other South African writers with significant scores were Dikobe (19), Smith (18), Bosman (17), Mda (16), and Plomer, Tlali, and Mtwana/Ngema/Simon (15). Authors who scored between 14 and 10 were Du Plessis, Essop, Matshoba, Modisane, Kuzwayo, Sepamla and Breytenbach.
- c. A total of 86 South African authors had their books taught in SA university English courses in 1992.
- d. One book each by writers like Brink, Brutus, Butler, Campbell, H. Dhlomo, Jacobson, Jordan, M. Kunene, Livingstone, Millin and Rive were taught in a single university English course in SA in 1992.
- e. Of African writers (non-South African) on the list, only three earned a qualifying score.

Source: Lindfors, Bernth. 1996.

4.2.2.2 INVENTORY OF TEXTS BY AFRICAN AUTHORS ASSIGNED MOST  
FREQUENTLY IN THE 1992 SYLLABI

<b>Titles</b>	<b>Courses</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Instit.</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Fugard, <u>Boesman and Lena</u>	14	4	11	29
Paton, <u>Cry the Beloved Country</u>	13	5	11	29
Schreiner, <u>The Story of an African Farm</u>	13	5	11	29
Mphahlele, <u>Down Second Avenue</u>	14	4	10	28
Plaatje, <u>Mhudi</u>	11	4	10	25
Serote, <u>To Every Birth its Blood</u>	12	4	9	25
Coetzee, <u>Waiting for the Barbarians</u>	11	4	9	24
Ndebele, <u>Fools and Other Stories</u>	12	4	7	23
Gordimer, <u>The Conservationist</u>	10	3	7	20
Abrahams, <u>Mine Boy</u>	7	4	7	18
Dikobe, <u>The Marabi Dance</u>	8	3	7	18
Coetzee, <u>The Life and Times of Michael K</u>	8	3	6	17
Gordimer, <u>July's People</u>	9	4	4	17
Achebe, <u>Things Fall Apart</u>	14	4	12	30
Ngugi, <u>A Grain of Wheat</u>	11	3	8	22
Achebe, <u>Anthills of the Savannah</u>	7	4	6	17
Ngugi, <u>Petals of Blood</u>	9	3	5	17
Armah, <u>The Beautiful Ones...</u>	6	3	6	15
Dangarembga, <u>Nervous Conditions</u>	7	3	5	15

- a. Amongst the South African texts assigned most frequently are Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country, Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm, and Fugard's Boesman and Lena.
- b. Mphahlele's Down Second Avenue, Plaatje's Mhudi, Serote's To Every Birth its Blood, Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians, and Ndebele's Fools and Other Stories also scored high enough to be ranked among South Africa's canonical texts.
- c. There is a marked absence of books by exiled and formerly banned writers like Head, Kunene, La Guma, Brutus, Nkosi, Modisane, Themba, Breytenbach, etc.
- d. Of the writers from elsewhere in Africa, only Achebe, Ngugi, Armah and Dangarembga are read with some regularity.
- e. Of the 35 non-South African African titles listed in Lindfors's 'Better Ultimate Rating Plan' (1996:11) as preferred texts in other Anglophone African nations, in 1992 in South Africa, only 5 were taught in 6 or more courses, 5 in 3 to 5 courses, 7 in only 1 or 2 courses, and 18 were not taught at all.

The Better Ultimate Rating Plan consisted of the following (South)African authors in order of teaching preference in African universities: Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Achebe, Armah, Clark-Bekederemo, Okot p'Bitek, **La Guma**, Sembene, **Fugard**, Senghor, Beti, **Abrahams**, **Brutus**, Okigbo, Aidoo, Rotimi, Okara, Awoonor, Oyono, Githae-Mugo, Laye, **Mphahlele**, Sutherland, Mwangi, Lessing, Ngugi wa Mirii, Osofisan, D.Diop, Al-Hakim, Amadi, Ba, Peters, Okpewho, **Head**, **Nkosi**, **Kunene**, **Mtshali**, Angira and Marechera. (South African writers are indicated in bold print).

- f. The following 18 African texts that form the major part of the corpus of the curriculum at African universities were not taught at all at South African universities:

Okigbo's Labyrinths, with Path of Thunder

Soyinka's Idanre and Other Poems, A Shuttle in the Crypt, and Madmen and Specialists.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's I Will Marry When I Want

Sutherland's The Marriage of Anansewa

Beti's The Poor Christ of Bomba and Mission to Kala

Armah's Fragments and Two Thousand Seasons

Sembene's Xala

Okara's The Fisherman's Invocation

Oyono's The Old Man and the Medal and Houseboy

Rotimi's The Gods Are Not to Blame

Achebe's Morning Yet on Creation Day

Clark-Bekederemo's Song of a Goat

Aidoo's Anowa

Source: Lindfors, Bernth. 1996

#### 4.3 Composition of the English literature syllabi at SA universities in 1996

Syllabi were not in all cases explicit enough to enable the researcher to deduce exactly which subsections were offered at each university. It was also not possible to obtain detailed descriptions from the prospectus of the English courses offered at Potchefstroom university.

The sample covered ninety percent of what was taught in English Departments in nearly one hundred percent of South African universities (see **Table 4**).

##### a. English 1

The major part of the curricula of universities consisted of Genre based studies (94%) and Literary Theory/Criticism (58%).

Seven universities offered courses in South African literature (37%) while five offered courses in African literature (26%).

No South African university offered Gender Studies in the first year syllabus. Two universities offered courses in Media Studies, while one university offered a course in Post Colonial Discourses.

b. English 11

Along with Genre based studies which forms the major component of the course in 94% of universities, 15 departments offered courses in Historical Periodisation which usually range from Medieval literature to Twentieth Century literature.

Five departments each offered courses in Post Colonial discourses while seven departments offered courses in the works of Shakespeare (with emphasis on drama).

58% of South African universities (11 departments) offered courses in South African literature while 53% (10 departments) offered courses in African literature.

A relatively new course, Gender Studies, was offered in 16% of South African universities (3 departments) while Media Studies was introduced in one university. Five university departments offered courses in Post Colonial Discourses.

c. English III

The major component of the curricula for South African universities continues to be Genre based studies (94%) and Historical Periodisation (79%) along with an increase in Shakespearean studies (53%).

Three departments (16%) each offered courses in Gender Studies, Post Colonial Discourses and Media Studies. *Gender Studies, Media Studies, Post Colonial literature, World literature, Pan African literature, Women's voices, History, Nation, Form (contemporary writings)* and *Socio-political Protest* were some of the new courses introduced in departments.

Only seven departments offered courses in South African English literature and African studies (37%).

d. English (honours)

Major components of the curriculum in the honours level include Literary Theory/Criticism (95%) and Historical Periodisation (100%). There is not much difference between the 1986 figure of 94% for both the courses.

Most of the universities surveyed offered courses in African literature (79%) while 74% of departments offered courses in South African English literature.

New courses offered in 1996 were Gender Studies (47%), Media Studies (26%) and Post Colonial Discourses (42%).

**4.4 A comparative study between the 1986 and 1996 syllabi with reference to the university departments that offered courses in South African literature.**

(The comparative study is reflected in **Table 6** )

English 1 - There is evidence of a marked increase in the 1996 university curricula that include South African literature - 5%

of universities offered courses in SA literature in 1986 as compared to 37% (7 departments) that offered it in 1996.

English 11 - The figure for 1986 is 12% for South African literature offered by two universities only. In 1996 58% of departments offered courses in local writings, representing a tremendous increase.

English 111 - In 1986 only one department offered South African literature as compared to seven departments in 1996. This represents an increase of 33%.

English (hon.) - There is evidence of an increase in the number of universities that offered South African literature in the honours level in 1996 (74%) as compared to the 18% of universities that offered it in 1986. Although it is an elective course, the increase in the number of universities (14) that offer it bodes well for the appreciation and study of

local writings at graduate level.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

The current situation with regards to the reception and teaching of South African literature has improved tremendously when compared to the teaching of local writings a decade ago. It is acknowledged that although South African literature is still marginalised by some departments when compared to traditional English literature, the curricula of South African universities generally reflect their South Africanness and Africanness and the dominance of traditional English literature is gradually being eroded. The emphasis is still on Historical Periodisation and conventional Genre Studies, but there is a definite shift from the Practical Criticism mode of close reading and interpretation of the canon as evident in Lindfors's survey of the most frequently prescribed (South)African texts in the 1992 English literature syllabi. The comparative study of the 1986 and 1996 curricula reveals a definite paradigm shift from the deliberate exclusion of a South African perspective of past curricula.

Chapter five will draw from both the genealogical study as

well as the empirical findings to recommend ways on the continuous reform or decolonisation of South African curricula, the need to appreciate (South)African literary heritage and not to ostracise but to interrogate the traditional English literature perspective of the curriculum. The formation of an alternate (South)African canon is self defeating. Some of the needs evident in the survey and that would be addressed in the next chapter are:

- a new critical pedagogy to question access of marginalised culture and not simply to accept inclusion/co-option of texts onto reading lists;
- to expose the dynamics of power and knowledge and challenge the dominant ideas of literature and culture; and
- to open up the literary curriculum to global as well as local voices.

**4.6 TABLES**

- Table 1** : Composition of the English literature syllabi at South African universities in **1986**
- Table 2** : Composition of the English literature syllabi at South African universities in **1986** (graphical representation)
- Table 3** : University prescriptions of (South)African literature in **1992**
- Table 4** : Composition of the English literature syllabi at South African universities in **1996**
- Table 5** : Composition of the English literature syllabi at South African universities in **1996** (graphical representation)
- Table 6** : Teaching of South African English literature in **1986** and **1996**

TABLE 1

## COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT SA UNIVERSITIES IN 1986

TABLE 1		COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT S.A. UNIVERSITIES IN 1986							
		Genre Studies	Shakes- peare	Lit. Theory/ Criticism	African literature	S.A. Eng literature	American/ Comm. Lit	Historical Period	Other
UCT	1	x	x						
	2							x	
	3							x	
	H	x	x	x				x	
UD-W	1	x			x		x	x	
	2	x	x		x		x	x	Indian literature
	3	x			x		x	x	Indian literature
	H	x	x	x	x		x	x	Indian and West Indian lit. in English
UFH	1	x	x						
	2	x	x		x	x		x	Survey of S.A. English literature
	3	x	x	x				x	Theoretical introduction to literature study
	H			x	x			x	
UN (D & PMB)	1	x	x	x(D)	x(D)	x	x	x	
	2	x	x	x(P)			x	x	
	3	x	x	x(P)	x(D)			x	
	H	x	x	x		x(D)		x	
U North	1	x	x	x					
	2	x	x	x		x			Survey of S.A. English literature
	3	x		x	x			x	
	H	x	x	x				x	
UOFS	1	x							
	2	x	x	x				x	
	3	x		x				x	
	H	x		x	x		x	x	
U Pretoria	1	x							
	2	x	x					x	
	3							x	
	H		x	x				x	
U Potch.	1	x		x					
	2	x		x				x	
	3	x		x				x	
	H	x		x					
RAU	1	x	x	x					
	2	x		x					
	3	x	x			x	x	x	
	H		x	x		x	x	x	
Rhodes	1	x							
	2	x							
	3	x						x	
	H			x			x	x	
UNISA	1	x							
	2	x		x		x		x	
	3	x	x	x				x	Comparative literature study
	H		x	x				x	Translate and interpret Latin, Italian, French or German texts
U Port Elizabeth	1	x		x					
	2	x	x	x				x	
	3							x	
	H			x				x	
Stellenbosch	1	x	x	x				x	
	2	x	x	x				x	
	3	x	x					x	
	H	x	x	x					
U Transke	1	x		x	x		x		
	2	x		x				x	
	3	x		x				x	
	H			x	x	x	x		
U Western Cape	1	x							
	2	x		x	x		x	x	
	3	x		x				x	
	H	x	x	x				x	
U Wits	1	x							
	2							x	
	3	x	x			x		x	
	H	x				x		x	
U Zululand	1	x							
	2	x			x			x	
	3	x						x	
	H	x	x	x					

COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT  
SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES IN 1986

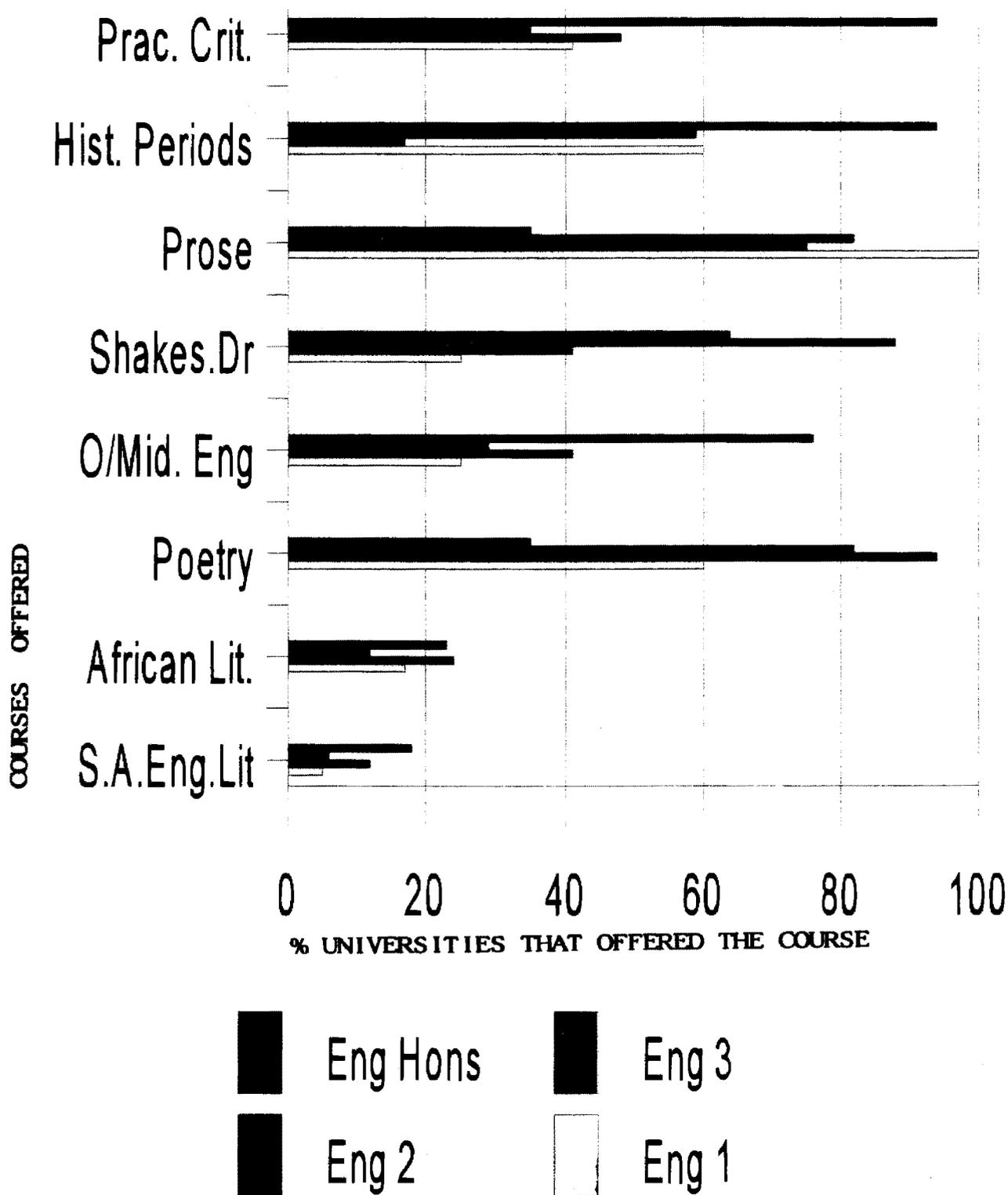


TABLE 3

UNIVERSITY PRESCRIPTION OF (SOUTH)AFRICAN  
LITERATURE IN 1992

TABLE 3	UNIVERSITY PRESCRIPTIONS OF (SOUTH) AFRICAN LITERATURE IN 1992											
	Fugard	Gordimer	Ngugi	Coetzee	Achebe	Soyinka	Paton	Mphahlele	Head	Schreiner	Serote	Abrahams
U Bop	*		*		*	*	*					
U C T	*	*	*	*		*					*	
U D-W			*		*						*	
U Fort H	*	*	*	*	*	*					*	
U Natal D	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
U Natal P		*	*	*	*						*	*
UN Qwaq	*				*		*		*	*	*	*
UN Turfloo	*		*	*	*	*	*	*				
UOFS	*			*						*		
U P E	*	*		*			*	*		*		*
U Potch	*			*			*					
U Pretoria	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
RA U	*	*		*			*		*	*		
U Rhodes		*	*	*	*	*					*	*
UNISA	*	*		*	*		*	*		*		*
U Stellenb	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
U Transkei			*		*	*	*	*				*
U Venda	*	*			*						*	
U Vista	*		*				*		*			
U W C		*		*	*				*	*		
U Wits	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	
U Zululand	*				*	*	*	*	*			*

NOTE: THE TABLE SHOWS WHERE WORKS BY THE TWELVE WRITERS DEEMED MOST IMPORTANT BY SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY TEACHERS WERE TAUGHT IN 1992.

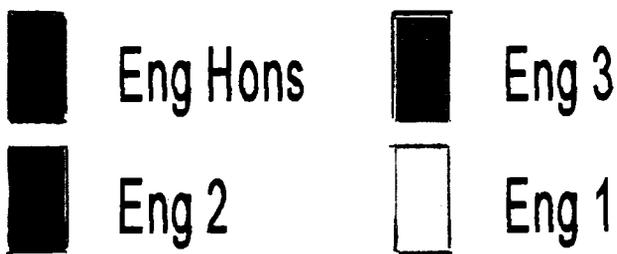
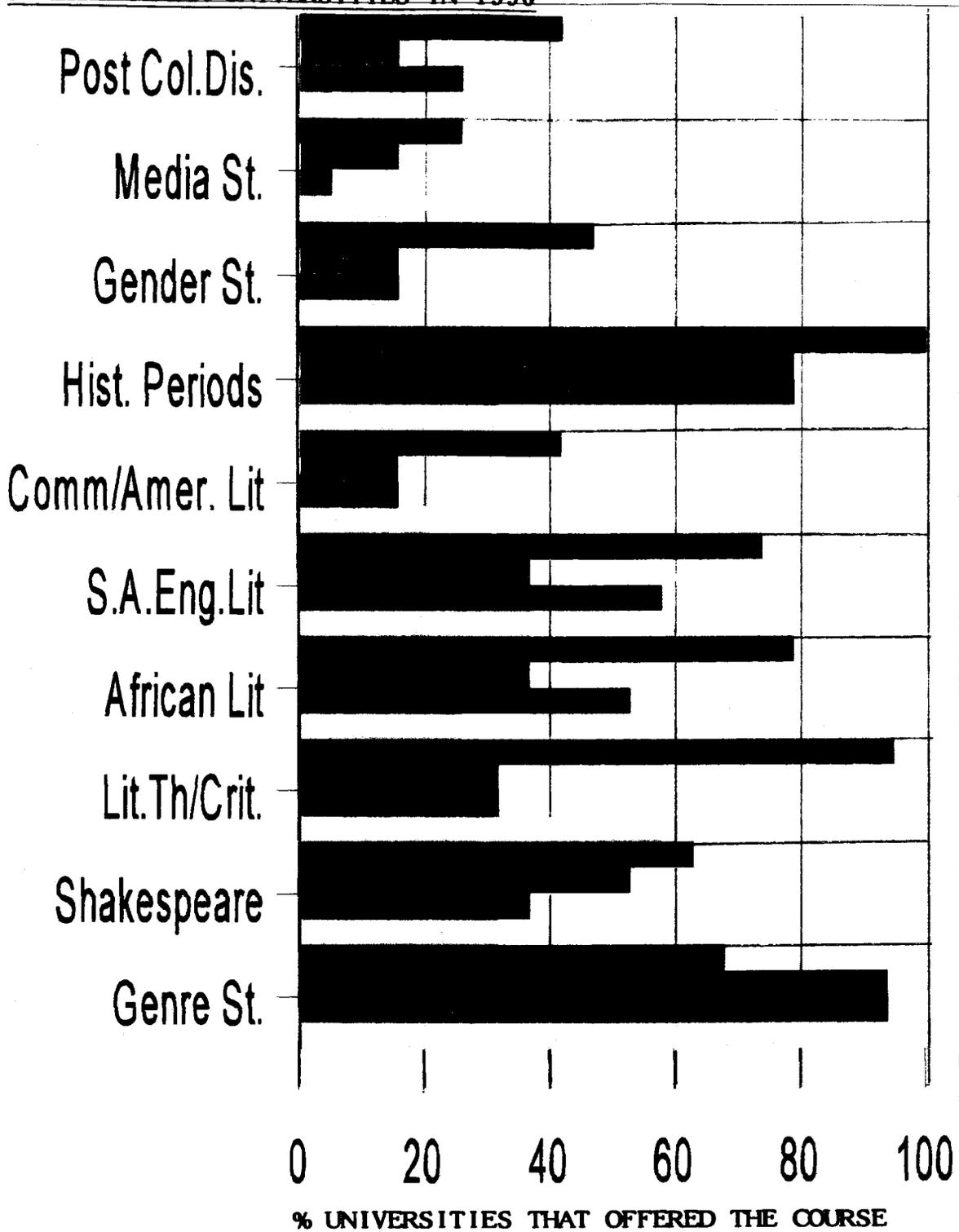
COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT SA UNIVERSITIES IN 1996

TABLE 4 COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT S.A. UNIVERSITIES IN 1996												
		Genre Studies	Shakespeare	Lit. Theory Criticism	African Literature	S.A. Eng. Literature	American/Comm.Lit	Historical Period.	Gender Studies	Media Studies	Post Col. Discourse	Other
UCT	1	x						x				
	2	x	x		x	x		x				
	3	x						x		x		
	H	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Racial and sexual representation in S.A. literature
UD-W	1	x	x	x	x	x						
	2	x		x	x	x		x	x			Discourses in Black Consciousness
	3	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		Discourse of the fantastic; Magic Realism.
	H	x	x	x	x	x		x				Indian and Caribbean literature
UFH	1	x		x	x		x					
	2	x			x		x	x				
	3	x			x	x	x	x				Latin American, Caribbean, Asian and Pacific Lit.
	H			x	x	x		x				The African diaspora; Orature.
UN (D)	1		x		x	x				x		Contemporary texts eg. New Constitution
	2	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	
	3	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			Modernism; Re-reading S.A. lit. after apartheid
	H		x	x	x			x			x	
UN (PMB)	1	x				x	x	x		x		
	2					x		x	x		x	
	3	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	
	H	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	Postmodern culture
U North	1	x		x				x				
	2	x			x	x		x				
	3	x	x			x		x				
	H	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	Stylistics; Sociolinguistics
JQFS	1	x										
	2	x	x					x				
	3	x	x					x				
	H	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		Broadcast; Gram; Film studies
J Pretoria	1	x		x	x							Computer-based courses
	2	x			x			x				
	3	x	x		x			x				
	H	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	War writing; Children's lit.; Violence in S.A. lit. fiction
T AU	1	x		x								
	2	x	x	x		x	x	x				
	3	x	x					x				
	H	x		x				x				
Rhodes	1	x		x								Reading and composition
	2	x						x			x	English in Africa - one year course for 2nd/
	3	x						x			x	3rd year students
	H		x	x	x	x		x	x		x	
NISA	1	x	x	x				x				
	2	x						x				Protest, satire and subversion
	3	x	x	x				x				
	H		x	x	x	x		x	x			
Stellenbosch	1	x		x						x		
	2	x	x	x	x	x		x				
	3	x	x	x		x		x				
	H	x		x				x				Choice of 4 periods or groups of authors
Transkei	1	x		x	x	x						
	2	x	x				x	x				
	3	x		x	x	x		x				West African fiction
	H	x		x	x	x	x	x				
Venda	1	x										
	2	x										
	3	x										
	H		x	x	x	x		x				
Vista	1	x		x								
	2	x				x			x			Writing the self; autobiographical studies
	3	x			x							Outside Africa; Telling Africa
	H	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
WC	1	x	x			x		x				
	2	x			x			x	x		x	Colonial discourse and oral traditions
	3			x	x	x		x		x		Cultural studies; Modernism and postmodernism
	H	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Slave narratives; Youth lit.; Rethinking Eng studies;
Wits	1	x	x			x	x	x			x	
	2	x		x		x		x			x	
	3	x						x				
	H					x		x		x		
Ukuluand	1	x										
	2	x			x	x						
	3	x										
	H	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			
Port Elizabeth	1	x	x	x		x						
	2	x	x	x		x						
	3	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	
	H	x		x		x	x	x				

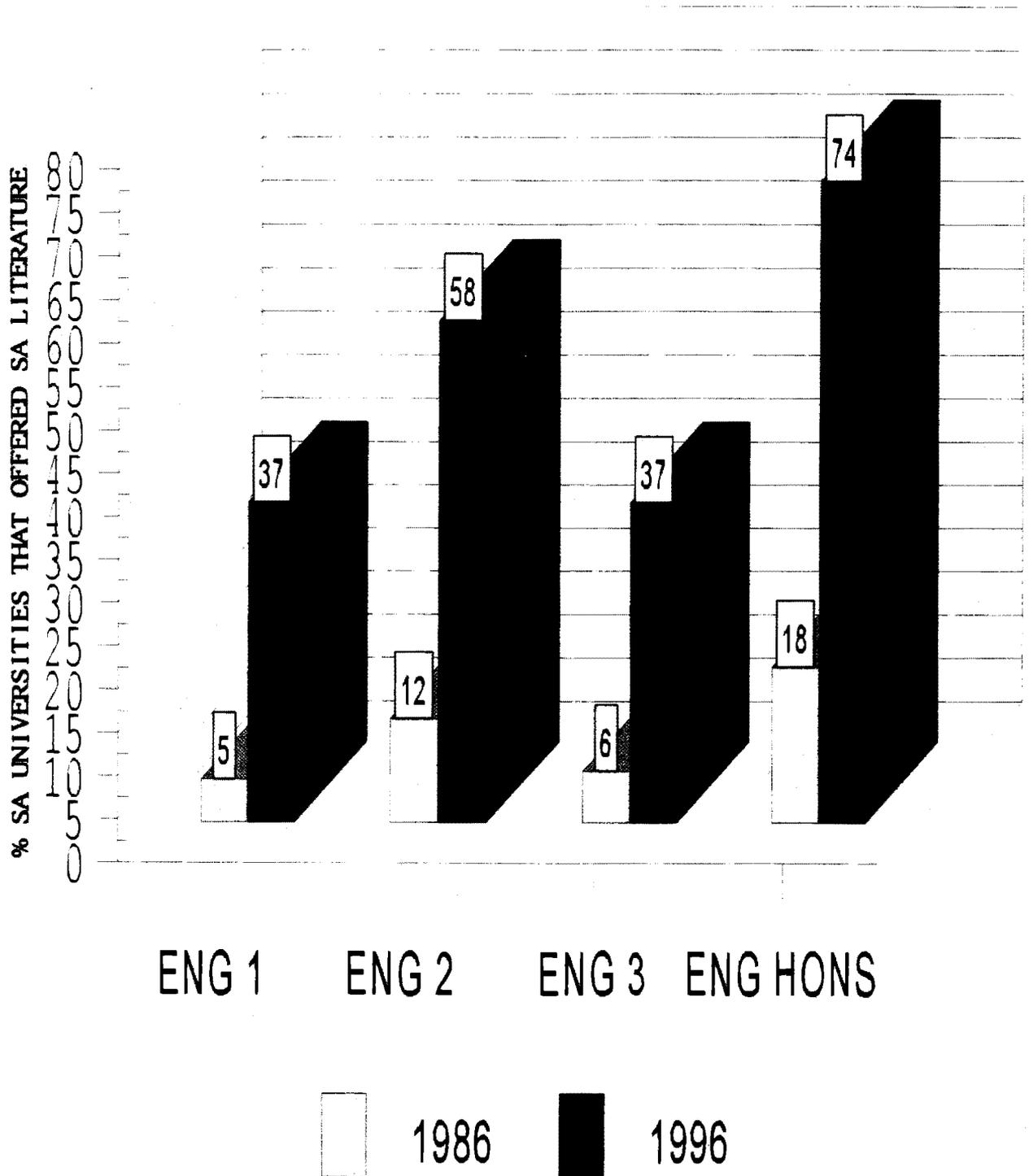
COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LITERATURE SYLLABI AT

SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES IN 1996

COURSES OFFERED



TEACHING OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE IN 1986 AND 1996



## CHAPTER 5

### Towards a Pedagogics of Reconstruction

Both the genealogical survey (chapter 3) and the curriculum impact study (chapter 4) reveal an elitist attitude during the colonial and apartheid period in the composition of the English literature curriculum (using Foucault's theory of institutions as disciplinary society that controls discourse in the interests of existing power relations), an indifference to indigenous writings, the failure to exploit the rich diversity of South African literatures, the tendency to fragment literature and exclusion as the principal mode by which power is exercised. It is within this context that this chapter posits recommendations for the reconstruction of the South African literature curriculum.

The chapter transcends the parallel thrust to curricular reform that focuses on content (reading lists) and methodology (a critique on skills) only. The study is therefore not only restricted to academic changes (content and skills) for solutions. The world in which the institutions exist, the theory of knowing that informs the way we have organised knowledge and conceived of learning and teaching are also essential factors of curricular reconstruction.

### 5.1 Re-placing the canon

The term canon can be described as a set of shared cultural facts; an effort to develop a standard sequence of core knowledge. One of the crucial factors that has led to the larger debate over the literature curriculum in South Africa is how to adjust, dismantle or enlarge the established canon. The many conferences on new modes of reading and teaching literature also found this issue to be the dominating discourse.

Taubman (1993:47) outlines how the boundary imposed by the canonical discourse is undermined by various oppositional discourses during the last decade especially with regard to the construction of the canon and the pedagogical methods it implies. The multicultural movements and feminism have openly attacked the white male Eurocentrism of the canon. Marxism and new historicism have pointed out the sociopolitical and historical contexts of canon formation. The new theories in literary criticism have challenged the autonomy of the text, authorial intention, and the assumed subject-object split of the reader-text. More recently, psychoanalytical criticism has opened up a space within the text which can be continually articulated.

Hallberg (1984:1-2), in the text Canons, investigates three broad questions on the canon, the answers to which are relevant to the

South African context:

- how artists determine canons by selecting certain styles and masters to emulate;
- how poet-critics and academic critics, through the institutions of literary study, construct canons; and
- how institutionalised canons effectively govern literary study and instruction.

In an analysis of Hallberg's first enquiry, Dasenbrock (1990:199) acknowledges that the traditional canon of English literature is rather limiting and does not expose the student to the rich variety of global literature as well as local writing. Further, the traditional canon privileges work by men over that by women, by Anglos over ethnics, by the established over the lower classes, by literature emanating from England and America over that from around the world.

McGuire (1990:153) uses the poetry anthologies as an example to outline Dasenbrock's claims and feels that even when new voices are added to the old editions - among them significant numbers of women and ethnic minorities - they simply reflect the conservative values associated with the white male poets of the previous generations favoured by that anthology. It is evident that the canon has power. It allows expression to some voices, in this case white and male, while suppressing others. Outsiders can only enter the canon when they are prepared to match their writings to those already selected (as implied in Hallberg's

second enquiry on the canon). The vulnerable writer is easily coerced, radical impulses are constrained and writings that differ from the established norms are suppressed - these are just some of the manifestations of the power of the canon.

The concept of the centralised versus the marginalised, a recurring characteristic of the South African literature debate, was posited by the cultural-theorist Gayatri Spivak. Spivak (1988:107) maintains that in post-colonial literary discourses, the centre will welcome selective inhabitants of the margin in order to better exclude the margin. The scenario of tokenism for the marginalised texts is characteristic of the liberal universities - classic South African examples are black autobiography, Soweto poetry, the Drum Decade, 'Black Consciousness theatre', exilic texts and protest writings. All power over the knowledge, selection and value is held by the centre. Spivak explains further that it is only the centre that can offer the official explanations for the revision of the canon. The marginalised texts can only be acknowledged by the centre and the margins must forever struggle to be co-opted into the centre.

It is undoubted that to an extent, aesthetical evaluation of literature is influenced by prejudices such as racism and sexism. Hogan (1992:189) contends that there is a *spontaneous tendency* of white men to prefer works with white male protagonists - just

as there is a spontaneous tendency of black women to prefer works with black female protagonists. This bias, according to Hogan, renders the views of everyone suspect therefore canon revision is dynamic. The implementation of this 'spontaneous tendency' theory holds true for South African universities. The University of Durban-Westville, an apartheid institution established for Indian students, was the only university to include Indian literature, according to a survey by CENSAL in 1987 (see Table 1). The University of Transkei, a homeland university, had only black writing in their English One syllabus in 1988 (Chapman 1990). The South African literary discourse is therefore trapped within the apartheid paradigm. Lindfors provides further evidence of this tendency in the findings of his 1992 survey of (South)African prescriptions in the university English syllabi:

The Orange Free State taught only white (South African) writers, Rand Afrikaans University taught all the whites but only one of the blacks, the University of Durban-Westville taught only black writers, the University of Bophuthatswana taught only blacks except for Fugard, the University of Transkei taught only blacks except for Paton, and the University of the North at Qwaqwa taught only whites except for Achebe. (1996:13)

Some English departments remained 'lily white' (in terms of staffing) throughout the interregnum and beyond and one can therefore estimate the ethos and culture reflected in their curriculum, using the 'spontaneous tendency' theory.

### 5.1.1 A case for the canon

South African professors of English from the nineteenth century (Roderick Noble, John Purves) to the twentieth century (John Greig, Geoffrey Durrant, Guy Butler, Partridge and Segal) and right up to the dawn of the twenty-first century still maintain that English and British high culture are synonymous and a curriculum without 'the' canon is no curriculum. Empirical evidence is provided by Lindfors in his survey of the 1992 university English syllabi where he concludes that curricular reform has not gone far enough and that African literature on most campuses is still marginalised (1996:13).

The reason the academics have argued for the canon is not only because they believe that the canonised texts are unarguably the greatest of our cultural works but that those particular canonical works enshrine particular ways of experiencing the world. Horton (1992:146) feels that once the establishment values have been thoroughly inculcated, it can be ensured that all other cultural productions will remain excluded, because once inside a particular way of experiencing the world, all other ways will be perceived as 'marginal'. South Africa has to contend with more than the issue of the canon/marginalised texts - there are also canonised academic discourses and canonised ways of reading the canon.

The supporters of the canon view it as uncontroversial, time-hallowed and generally acceptable - the safe classics. All teachers, lecturers and parents have been taught the classics and to unquestioningly accept their great value which is confirmed by standard criticism. Lecturers are confident with the teaching of the classics and by virtue of teaching it so often, they are aware of the responses it will elicit from their students. When the students become teachers or lecturers, they will in turn approve the canon - ensuring that the cycle continues. The concept of 'literary merit' is also associated with the canon. All texts that had the honour of being prescribed as a set book automatically have the status of literary merit thrust upon them. This explains why Paton's Cry the Beloved Country (1948) with its clichéd 'Jim goes to Jo-burg' story has remained inert in curricula while the more relevant Too Late The Phalarope (1953) still fails to make it into the reading lists.

Many South African academics viewed the defence of the canon as a defence of academic standards. They argue that the tastes and interests of students and colleagues with socio-political leanings should not dictate the curriculum to their intellectual superiors. The aim is to lead the student 'to storm the heights of the great tradition'. Typical conservatism is displayed by J.M. Leighton (1970:185) when he protests against the campaign for relevance and suitability in the traditional syllabus with the concomitant modification or watering down of the canon:

Are our students so far removed from 'the best thoughts of the best minds' that they are incapable of assimilating them? Is the cultural heritage of England so foreign that it is impossible for South African pupils to read the literature of their mother tongue?

Leighton considered the texts by Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence and E. Hemingway a threat to the canon and a lowering of standards if they were to replace Cariolanus, Henry V, Pride and Prejudice and Far From the Madding Crowd. Although the example is dated, vestiges of Leighton's patriotic defence of the canon are still present at South African universities, as is evident in the University of Durban-Westville's 1996 English 111 reading list: Shakespeare's Hamlet, Anthony and Cleopatra and The Tempest, Conrad's Under Western Eyes, Joyce's Ulysses, Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five, Morrison's Tar Baby, The Complete Poems of Andrew Marvell (ed. Donno), Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Voinovich's Moscow 2042, Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Shelly's Frankenstein, Blake's The Poems, Allende's House of Spirits, Marquez's Chronicle of a Death Foretold, Puig's Kiss of the Spiderwoman, Bloom's Romantic Poetry and Prose, Walker's The Colour Purple, Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks, Fowles's The French Lieutenant's Woman and Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveller. Although Commonwealth writings and the post-colonial discourse is thinly represented in this reading list, the dominance of traditional English literature with the total exclusion of South(African) writing is evident.

The reason put forward by the liberal humanists for emphasis on the fixed canon of high culture is that it enables the masses to share in the 'classical heritage of mankind'. They maintain that a universal education would include the great texts of the past, knowledge of the past and must promote a distancing from oneself, one's own locality, and one's own narrow culture. The canon, Arnold claims, stimulates literary imagination because it is set in the past eras and serves both a civilising and cultural influence:

The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for ... carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of the time... to humanise it. (1896:70)

The view of the canon postulated by the traditionalists is that of a fixed and unalterable entity - literature teaching was thus regarded as the study of closed texts containing absolute meaning.

A beneficial approach would regard the canon as dynamic and with sufficient room for disagreement - Foucault's notion of discontinuity and interrogation. It is essentially an inherited bias to be romantic about the canon and it is this romantic link with the past and the classical heritage perspective that has so successfully excluded black and women's writings from the South African literature curriculum.

The defence of the canon is synonymous with the continuation of

traditional educational values which were seen to be under threat from progressivism. The use of modern literature and progressive methods were seen as essential factors in the decline of standards. Proponents of the canon also claimed that students' minds were sabotaged or blocked by lecturers with 'left wing' sympathies or sociological attitudes. The call was to teach literature, not life, as characterised by the move towards endogenous creativity and social relevance. Supporters of the canon of traditional literature maintain that the earlier concern for quality, the 'heritage' model, must be reinstated in the curriculum.

In defence of the canon, it was claimed that changes in relationships and the abdication from traditional roles of authority and power had resulted in violence and indiscipline in institutions. The works of critical pedagogues like Freire, Giroux and Illich refute this claim by presenting a vocal challenge to the authoritarianism and 'dead hand' approach of the traditionalists. Within the current South African educational crisis we witness an increased pressure from students for new teaching methods and a more relevant content giving dramatic impetus to riots and sit-ins. The progressives were blamed by the traditionalists for these and other crises at institutions - decline in standards, student literacy and quality of writing, vandalism, political activism, etc. By neglecting the works of great literature, lecturers were threatening social order,

national identity and normative consensus, they claimed. They therefore viewed with suspicion all attempts to achieve relevance in the lectures by drawing upon social issues affecting students.

### 5.1.2 Towards a relevant literature

There has been a significant tradition of black writing in English in South Africa which has been concordant with the struggle against colonialism and apartheid and the reconstruction and defence of African people's identity through the development of Black Consciousness. Students have been intentionally denied access to these writings in spite of its relevance to their history and life. Universities that did include South African writing before this decade limited it to a few poems or short stories or novels by white South African writers. This led to the formation of the 'little tradition' (Gray 1982:12) that was limited to works by writers like Athol Fugard, Olive Schreiner, Pauline Smith, Alan Paton, H.C. Bosman and Nadine Gordimer.

The works of black writers were conspicuous in their absence; the major reason being their political commitment (although the reasons cited by the academe were the negative criticism it received because of literary conventions). If the 'liberal' universities also shared the African predicament of oppression, why were they so complacent in the reception and teaching of

African committed writing? It is difficult to understand their indifference towards the literature of the country in which they live and work. A consequence of the exclusion or inaction was the rejection of much of the best writing that has come out of the country during the apartheid years.

What would a relevant literature have achieved in South Africa? Students would have read texts that depicted their experiences, and their true position within the South African context. They would have been able to construct a self-identity that was destroyed through apartheid. A study of the popular works would have resulted in further reading and the creation of a reading populace. Reid (1982:50) notes that works in the Heinemann African Writers Series were by far the most read works of fiction in the African universities. Students would have considered committed and campaigning writing also worthy of literary merit. They would have acknowledged that good literature is not only something that happens in England and America and that the lives and feelings of English people are not the only ones really worth writing about.

When a curriculum requires a course in Shakespeare but not a course in black literature in South African universities, what message does it give students and society about the cultural traditions that are valuable and those that are expendable?

The majority of South African students study English as their

second language and find Elizabethan English a great hurdle to clear. The direct consequence of this problem is a concentration on knowledge of the story, memorisation of facts and standard criticism, together with the exercise of line by line diction. Students respond to the lecturer's explanation and understanding of the text and not their own reading of it because of the language barrier. They then develop mechanisms to pass their examination and obtain their certificates since, integral to the tradition is that an intimate knowledge of a Shakespearean text is a test of competence in English. The necessity of passing the examination dictated the method of teaching these texts at many institutions.

The idea of cultural heritage dominates the poetry selection at almost all universities (see **Table 2**). Poems are selected on the basis of representation of the different periods in English literature - Elizabethan, Seventeenth Century, Eighteenth Century, Romantics, Victorian and Twentieth Century. The result is a diverse collection, many chosen for their historical significance rather than their intrinsic or artistic worth and message. No consideration is given to the relevance of the collection to the South African student. Would students not have responded more enthusiastically to poetic imagery which reflected the 'sights, sounds and smells' of their own country than to the poetic imagery rooted only in a foreign culture?

Proponents of the use of localised literature maintain that it:

- \* teaches the target culture;
- \* provides students with a rich linguistic storehouse to explore;
- \* facilitates content-based classes;
- \* encourages extensive reading; and
- \* provides a basis for student conversation, group work, writing, and problem-solving activities. (Brock 1990:22)

The canon of British and American literature is often linguistically complex and culturally foreign to the majority of South African students and this makes literature either irrelevant or unrelated to the students' experiences. Curricula, if they intend overcoming this disadvantage, are advised to also provide literary texts that correspond to their students' background knowledge, interests, and language proficiency.

Research examining the process of reading has found that effective reading depends more on the reader's background knowledge than on the use of so-called decoding skills (Brock 1990:22). For meaningful reading to occur the student should have some background knowledge with which to comprehend the unknown information in a text. South African literature not only reflects the students' experiences but also presupposes the background knowledge of the student. It has been found that reading comprehension is far more successful when students read

texts about culturally familiar topics. However, one is not advocating that texts with culturally foreign issues should be abandoned.

Strategies should be implemented to maintain the interest of the reader especially with the longer works of fiction and also to encourage reading. When the content is interesting and it motivates the student to continue reading, even if the language is difficult, the reading exercise is more successful. South African literature has a direct relevance to the students' lives and will therefore maintain greater attention than remote and unrelated content. Where an intrinsic motivation to read has been developed, students will read texts regardless of factors that will facilitate their reading comprehension. Unless the teaching of literature in schools is also revolutionised, many students will continue to be ill-equipped for tertiary literary studies.

It is obvious that South African literature contains content, cultural assumptions, character studies, language and history that are familiar to South African students. These factors coincides with some of the advantages of using relevant literature as summarised by Brock (1990:23):

- \* it provides materials with a local setting;
- \* it offers a balance between the reader's background knowledge and that presupposed by the text;

- \* it provides reading materials that are relevant and related to the reader's experience;
- \* it avoids many of the difficulties a reader encounters when faced with culturally foreign texts; and
- \* it offers opportunities for narrow reading.

English translation of African literature like the folktales, praise poetry, religious myths, and short stories would enrich the curriculum. English departments should break down artificial barriers and work closely with the plethora of departments created at the university - African languages, oral studies, gender studies, contemporary cultural studies, 'institutes for black research', creative writing centres, publishing houses, etc. - to encourage and facilitate the translation of contemporary writings. The confines of specific languages must be transcended to embrace, for example, the wealth of writing in the Indian languages and Afrikaans.

Students should investigate why the centre labelled the 'other' literature as 'defective' instead of viewing it as different and a manifestation of the dynamic nature of English literature. Why should African students study literature to understand the American or British culture only? African students learn English for instrumental purposes, not to assimilate foreign cultures or to integrate themselves into the Eurocentric society. Chinua Achebe, as a possible response to Hallberg's second enquiry,

explains succinctly that the African writers have no desire to write like the 'canon':

If you ask: "Can he ever learn to use it (English) like a native speaker?" I should say, "I hope not. It is neither necessary, nor desirable for him to be able to do so." I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.

(Kachru 1986:11)

Non-native English literature that has developed in countries like India, Nigeria, Kenya and the Caribbean will also provide South African students with culturally familiar texts. The conflict of ethnic strife in India (Mukherjee, 1971; Narasimhaiah and Srinath, 1984) and the colonial oppression in most of the African countries (JanMohamed, 1983 ; Ngugi, 1986) are situations that have parallel historical reference with South Africa. The bias against non-native English literature by the establishment should be questioned and the debate on aesthetic value and relevance can be included as part of the syllabus.

### 5.1.3 The comparativist model

Courses in comparative literature and international literatures would solve the dominance of the traditional canon of English literature. In South Africa we may also need courses in bilingual writers in the English curriculum to encourage the concept of 'category crossing' (Dasenbrock 1992:212). The

talented Afrikaans and African writers who write in both English and their mother tongue can be incorporated into the curriculum. By doing this we display that categories have disabled us in the past but now they can be used to enable us in our study of literature. Comparative literature can then take a prominent place in teaching. Dasenbrock (1990:212) maintains that the ideals of comparative literature are to study everything worth studying, to compare everything worth comparing, and not to ask writers to show their passports before we let them into our courses. This approach to literary texts is an innovative way of thinking out curricula based on difference, not geographic identity. Spivak (1991:228) maintains that the place where indeed all human beings are similar - is seen to be lodged in their being different. Evident in Spivak's statement is the need to celebrate diversity in literary studies.

Inter-cultural study falls into the realm of comparative literature, where the study of the non-western literary tradition is encouraged and promoted. In fact, it is intellectually crucial to any comparativist model of the literature curriculum and not only compensates for racist oppression and imperialism but is also politically correct (although this is not a criterion for selection). Institutions are generally suspicious of change and revision and will not easily incorporate content into their courses that is radically different or questions the ideology of the institution - a form of institutional conservatism. Inter-

cultural studies will ensure that the debate on 'the' canon will include discussion on the other canons - in fact there is an African canon, an Indian canon, a Chinese canon, etc. and not just one canon, the British canon. It is therefore a fallacy when the British canon of 'high culture' continues to be labelled as 'the' canon. Basically, European political and economic domination has led to the literature of the dominator being enshrined as 'the' canon.

The main reason a comparativist model was not implemented was the lack of knowledge of literatures outside 'the' canon, ie. non-western literature, and the undue emphasis on the 'classical heritage of mankind'. Ironically, the converse is largely true of the marginalised and the 'other' - it is almost impossible for non-native English students of literature not to be aware of the British 'great tradition'. In comparison, academics of western descent are sometimes entirely oblivious to even the bare facts of Indian or African arts. The unfortunate consequence of the ignorance of literature outside the canon, is the tacit assumption that culture is western culture. Closely associated with this view of culture is the dogmatism of the academics to consider the excluded works as inferior.

An effective approach to curriculum reconstruction would be towards a cross-cultural literary study. The excluded traditions, black writing, women's writing, and minority and non-

western literatures would then be incorporated into the curriculum. The challenge would be to create a comparative practice that escapes the binarism and hierarchy of the canon/margin debate in order to be truly multidimensional and multicultural. Such a comparativist approach would be desirable to both students and society and would measure up to the intellectual, aesthetic and ethical demands of curriculum reconstruction.

A comparative practice encourages greater awareness of cultural and ethnic presuppositions and biases. Its critical questioning of our methodological assumptions and critical praxis ensures that it constantly challenges the latest icons of theory and by comparing them to other possible strategies, comparative literature as a discipline is constantly forced to renew itself (Komar 1995:291). This model can therefore encompass post-structural theory, cultural studies, gender studies, new historical and context studies, contemporary media studies, etc. allowing for a multiplicity of approaches to literature and to cultural phenomena. An interrogation and comparison of various positions also allows for understanding and adaptation without necessitating the elimination of opposing views or the absolute privileging of one theoretical position. This is a challenge for South African comparatists who are now dealing with an extended historical, cultural and intellectual world than the one that existed before 1994.

## 5.2 Lacunae and challenges

### 5.2.1 Texts within context

South African literature should be studied in its historical and cultural context since there is an essential relationship between literary forms and their historical contexts. The literary and historical terrain must be considered as a semiotic whole - advancing the need for an interdisciplinary perspective to literature studies thus minimising the divisions between texts and historical/cultural events.

Bakhtin stresses the inherent relationship between text and context:

(There is) no word or form left that would be neutral or would belong to no one; all of language turns out to be scattered, permeated with intentions, accented... Every word gives off the scent of a profession, a genre, a current, a party, a particular work, a particular man, a generation, an era, a day, and an hour. Every word smells of context and context in which it has lived its intense social life. (1981:293)

Context is integral to the text, although traditional textual analysis separated them in an effort to keep texts 'sacred', 'pure' and independent of all external determinants of meaning. However, true textual analysis is only possible through the interrogation of the situatedness of both the text and the reader since both affect meaning and interpretation (Motheeram 1995:26).

Factors which enhance reading include the context in which the text is written and set, and the context in which the text is read.

Literary discussion on compelling public narratives whose origins lie firmly in political events such as exile, protest, Black Consciousness or 'emergency' cannot be separated from their social referent. The Foucauldian genealogical approach is valuable when situating texts in their historical contexts since it enables one to recover and reconstitute history in such a way that it serves a pragmatic purpose in giving significance and meaning to cultural/literary enquiry.

There is no clear demarcation between the literary signs and the historical/cultural event - Matshoba (1979) noted angrily that the content of Soweto and violent oppression produced the literary form that emerged amongst Black Consciousness artists. The discourse of liberation and social justice intersects the discourse of writing. In seeking a rationale for literature studies we need to look beyond the current fixation of standards and canons, we need to recover the texts that were perceived as 'low' art and re-interpret them within the context of academic power in segregated universities, white standards, high culture and aesthetics.

Effective curricular reconstruction should also take into

cognisance the context in which texts are read. It would lead to an interrogation of the relevance of European models within the current context of South African literary discourse. Giroux (1992:56) acknowledges that the hegemonic stranglehold that Eurocentric culture has exercised over most post-colonial societies, has resulted in a metanarrative that 'ruthlessly expunges stories, traditions and voices of those who by virtue of race, class and gender constitute the other'. In support of Giroux's statement, Ashworth and Prinsloo (1994:125-126) outline the contextual frame that continues to condition English teaching in South Africa:

- \* South African pedagogy is based on European models.
- \* The most prevalent teaching methodology has been the transmission mode.
- \* The prescribed texts are drawn from predominantly middle class, 'high culture' positions.
- \* Knowledge is assumed to be anchored in privileged, middle class social groups.
- \* Today's classrooms are characterised by a polarity between students who are privileged by possessing a 'cultural capital' that forms the dominant discourse and the non-mother-tongue speakers of English who are marginalised because their cultural capital is excluded.
- \* A culture of silence results from non-mother-tongue learners losing confidence.

Textual analysis should take into consideration this problematic learning and teaching context, hopefully leading to teachers questioning the nature of 'appropriate' knowledge as foregrounded by the high culture values of the canon. Such an approach will broaden the range of works studied and counter the marginalisation of popular and media-related texts. Literature teaching would therefore best be served by working within a critical paradigm that conceives the classroom as an arena of contestation, by questioning why some forms of knowledge appear more powerful than others, and most importantly, how contexts (of the writer, text and reader) reflect certain constructions of knowledge.

### 5.2.2 Discontinuities: issues and objects

A re-reading of South African literature requires that the traditional terms and concepts (factors referred to as continuities by Foucault in his text The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1972) that characterise this literature has to be critically analysed and re-interpreted. Continuities like, **genre, historical periods, canon, influence and tradition** are criteria and descriptions that have been derived from the metropolitan great traditions. Societies, like Africa, with an oral culture find it difficult to correspond with a book culture that has been recorded and transcribed into specific genres and

periods. Another problematic area is the transcription of orature - not only its accuracy or authenticity but also within which genre should the material be presented.

Texts from different disciplines (like history, politics, sociology, economics, philosophy, non-fiction) were all seen as belonging to the genre of South African literature making the traditional categorisation into drama, poetry and prose a false unity of metropolitan literature. Central to this process of re-reading is the critical interrogation of terms such as high/low culture, aesthetic and value, committed and contemplative and Eurocentric/Afrocentric.

Instead of offering only *genre, period, and author* courses, programmes could be structured around *issues* (thus moving towards an issue-oriented curriculum) or use the Foucauldian concept of *objects* (the multiplicity of objects that characterise South African literature is outlined in Chapter 2). Giroux supports the restructuring of courses around the issues of power, language, and history to transmit emancipatory knowledge in his appropriately entitled essay 'Teacher Education and the Politics of Engagement: The Case for Democratic Schooling' (1986). Ketch (1992:9) identifies four advantages of such a project, firstly, the discourse is centred on the vivid illustration of radically different and mutually incompatible notions of the issue. Secondly the stimulation of student thought about something that

may well be totally unproblematic to them and thirdly, the augmentation of their intellectual preparation for any course in any discipline. Lastly, the fostering of critical consciousness through a realisation that our perception of reality is mediated and shaped through, for example, language.

Issues like **authority**, **knowledge** and **truth** introduces to students conflicting ideologies and cultural processes. Within the South African context, it helps to counter the dangers of historical amnesia currently encouraged by processes like reconciliation and the notion of the 'rainbow-nation'. Foucault (1972:208) notes that it is the intellectual's role to struggle against the forms of power that transforms the individual into its object and instrument in the sphere of knowledge, truth, consciousness and discourse. He also regards theory as practice and a struggle against power, revealing and undermining power where it is most insidious and invisible.

The cardinal continuity in South African literary studies that has to be questioned is the traditional and western concept of **book**. Against the material unity of the book, Foucault makes a plea for a discursivity that is open-ended and heterogeneous (1972:23). The book cannot be the starting point for South African literary studies because the student is confronted not only with the printed word, but also with the oral performance, the handwritten manuscript, the pamphlet, the pictographic script

of the rock paintings, the songs and folklore, rituals and ceremonies, trance dances and dreams, etc. Chapman (1996:6) takes cognisance of a wider area when he defines literature in South Africa as speech and writing: generally as rhetorical activity, its purpose being to persuade an audience.

### 5.2.3 Re-reading literature

The concept **text** has to be broadened to include Africa's text of the world, to transcend the western text of the book and to embrace the various forms of literature, from non-traditional texts to traditionally constituted ones. It entails challenging traditional conceptions of what constitutes a text. The principal implication of such a challenge is that one cannot and should not confine literature to written material alone. The oral tradition, media texts and other forms of popular culture should feature in the literature curriculum. Reddy (1995:9) contends that this broader conception of textual studies would fill the gaps and silences surrounding race, gender and religion, with regard to the marginalisation of identifiable groups within society.

There is an urgent need for new and informed ways of reading literary works. The multi-faceted nature of post-colonial experience and writing does not correspond with the close reading

Leavisite traditions of Practical Criticism. The comparativist approach is beneficial since it enables an avoidance of ethnic, racial, linguistic categorisations as is evident in much existing literary studies. Traditionally South African literatures were studied separately. Colonial and western preconceptions of literature led to the exclusion of the oral traditions and the emerging black writings. Teachers need to bring a diversity of material together in the classroom. The thematic and formal links between Eugene Marais' Dwaalstories (1984) and Bleek's transcription, Specimens of Bushmen Folklore (1968), are stronger than the linguistic continuity between the poetry of Eugene Marais and his contemporaries, Totius and Cilliers. The subject-position, historical context and style of Ellen Kuzwayo's Call me Woman (1985) is closer to Sarah Raal's Met die Boere in die Veld (1900) than to the racial and gender continuity when compared to Winnie Mandela's Part of My Soul (1986) or Kesaveloo Goonum's Coolie Doctor (1991).

The whole process of literary redress, the construction of the booklists, courses and curricula should be examined. Central to the process would be a re-reading of authorities, a questioning of the positions of the academics and the academe, the reputation, dominant traditions and history of the institution and the influence of political and social forces on the power relationships within the institution (the political affiliations of the university, the ideologies of the major funders, etc.).

The traditional literary histories must be intersected to reveal the gaps and crevices hidden by the racist, sexist, class and linguistic continuities. Africa should be granted the importance of its own centrality instead of the west continuing as the central that marginalises everything else as the 'other'. We need to look at the west through an African perspective and in the process to construct a new definition of literature. Giroux (1992:27) encourages teachers to refuse their positions of privilege and power and to listen to other constituencies and to speak in ways that these constituencies can take seriously. An interpretation using an African perspective ensures that literary studies is more than the subjective impact of literary works, it takes into cognisance social responsibility, ethical commitment and the dialectical relationship between the literary work and society.

#### **5.2.4 Interrelatedness and difference**

Although distinct categories of literature were created within the colonial and apartheid context, they are also interrelated. A social theory in which forms of literature are linked to the historical events will reveal the great degree of relatedness concomitant with the richness of cultural heterogeneity. Social referents and artists that come to mind are: 1948 and the beginning of apartheid (Alan Paton, Peter Abrahams), Sharpeville

1960 (Ingrid Jonker, Albert Luthuli, Mphahlele, Van Wyk Louw), Emergency 1985 (Kelwyn Sole, Matsemela Manaka, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Christopher Hope, Richard Rive) and Democracy 1994 (Nelson Mandela, J.M. Coetzee, Karel Schoeman). In spite of the fiercely contested histories of African and Afrikaner nationalism, Pan-Africanism, colonialism, liberalism, etc., the dynamic relationship between literary culture and political life transcends the artificial continuities of traditional divisions.

The alternative or marginalised voice has to be re-positioned. This calls for new literary histories that will take into account not only the renowned figures (both black and white) but will also encompass the traditional writings, popular and elite works, literature in translation and contemporary South African issues (Van Vuuren, 1994a; Wade, 1994). The re-arranged post-apartheid relationships between the metropolitan and local writings should be addressed since these relationships are difficult to slot into the existing histories.

Chapman (1996:7) argues that instead of thinking of African booklists replacing western booklists on syllabi, we could ask how Othello, The Tempest, Pilgrim's Progress or Heart of Darkness - texts that have been associated with colonial-African dilemmas - might most fruitfully be taught in South Africa. He uses the case of Mofolo's epic Chaka where one could identify the influences not only of African oral sources and the politics of

the author's day, but the influence of Shakespeare's Macbeth which provides a prototype for character and plot. Welcome Msomi's 1996 stage production of Umabatha, the Zulu version of Macbeth, is an example of re-arranged relationships and intertextuality between the metropolitan and the popular text. The intrigues, plots and counter-plots were almost a carbon copy of the machinations which took place between the early tribes. The story of a Scottish thane's greed became the story of Mabatha, based on the barbaric greatness and terrible career of another great warrior statesman, Shaka Zulu.

Students need to be trained to understand, respect and celebrate difference, discontinuities and divisions. A true application of difference is closely linked with an understanding of how one's own world view has been shaped by implicit and powerful ideologies, which have deliberately devalued what was perceived as different. Foucault's vision, as rendered in Madness and Civilization (1973), of the classical culture as an institutionalised attempt to exclude what it deemed insane has parallels with the establishment's exclusion of the 'other'.

Cross-cultural encounters can only be facilitated by a study of culturally different literatures. The pedagogy of difference goes beyond mere inclusion. How these texts are used, what is their objective in the curriculum, how do students negotiate the differences, how does it inculcate critical thinking are more important factors to address.

A critical interaction between the canonical and the 'living' contemporary texts will ensure greater student participation, will lead to an appreciation of both the texts from the past as well as the newer texts. We would then witness an interrogation for example of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton and Austen using the writings of Kafka, Fanon, Alice Walker, Nadine Gordimer and Njabulo Ndebele. A comparativist approach will guard against the situation where the canon is merely excluded to include the 'other' as was evident in the 1988 curriculum of the University of Transkei or the total exclusion of (South)African literature as seen in the University of Durban-Westville's 1996 English 111 reading list. In fact, it ensures that the culture of the past and contemporary culture are presented and read with the same obeisance and not just to acquiesce only on the dead texts from the forgotten past. However, central to the alternate discourse and the comparativist mode must be the conscious refusal of the authoritarianism and dogmatism of the proponents of the Eurocentric literary canon.

#### 5.2.5 Gender

Weiler (1988:xiii) analyses the contradictions that arise when teachers ignore the voice of female students; points to the subtle ways in which language is used to regulate, silence, and structure expression and expressivity; and shows why such

language needs to be reconstructed within a pedagogy that links the production of knowledge and the act of learning to forms of production rooted in the histories, experiences, and meanings of teachers and students. Giroux and Freire, in the introduction to Women Teaching for Change, acknowledge Weiler's attempt to develop a critical pedagogy that authenticates female voices which challenge prevailing meanings, celebrate cultural and political diversity, fight against the voices of bigotry and violence, and at the same time work towards social relations that undermine the ideological, experienced relations of sexism, racism, and class discrimination (Weiler 1988:xiv).

In order to address the relationship of gender and schooling adequately, a synthesis of critical theory and feminist theory is needed. Literature studies should recognise sexism as a significant issue to be addressed and should consider ways in which gender has been produced and reproduced through texts and material practices as well as a recognition of educational institutions as sites of ongoing struggle over both knowledge and social relationships. Such studies would analyse the ways in which gendered subjects are shaped through the experience of schooling, and in which the complex interaction of conflicting subjectives and the power of gender, race, and class is made clear. The emphasis is on the need for both individual empowerment and social transformation - to develop critical consciousness in students as well as the need to change society

as it is presently arranged (Weiler 1988:6). This approach ensures that a focus on women and the oppression of sexism should not blind us to other forms of oppression.

Within the current context of literature teaching in South Africa, there is evidence of a critique of the sexist biases and patriarchal attitudes in curricula and classroom practices through a feminist discourse that addresses such questions as sex role stereotyping, the absence of women in history textbooks, the ways in which women have been portrayed in literature and the ways in which women have been led into certain areas of the curriculum (like the arts and humanitites) and away from others (like the sciences). Another impact of feminism has been the development of women's studies courses in the Universities of the Western Cape, Natal, Rhodes, Unisa, Zululand and Durban-Westville. There has also been a development of curricula addressing women within different university disciplines, especially the social sciences.

In spite of the increased referents of empowerment, Easthope (1991:39) maintains that the gender identity of literature, criticism and subsequently, the prescribed reading, remains largely masculine. The traditional approach tried to achieve identification between readers and authors, forcing all readers to see themselves as masculine. Foucault contests the authority of authorship and this makes it possible to problematise the

notion of gender and gender identity. The concepts masculine and feminine are constructed as effects of institutional, social and discursive regimes.

According to Lockett (1990:20), feminists are at that crucial stage where they are developing a body of feminist knowledge that is South African in its content. This knowledge is invaluable in 'breaking the silence' that has for so long surrounded women as writers and critics in South Africa. Fundamental to the reconstruction of the curriculum would therefore be the incorporation of this knowledge as well as reflection on its possibilities for critique and challenge in the classroom.

It would be significant in the current context to give students an opportunity to reflect on the lives of (South)African women who have struggled against patriarchy, racism, sexism and colonialism. Women's struggles are not a 'bit on the side' but, in character, plot, theme and symbolism, are central to the narrative of any society that espouses non-oppression (Chapman 1996:422). Texts that could form the corpus of feminist readings would not only include the autobiographical writings of, for example, Ellen Kuzwayo (Call me Woman, 1985), Emma Mashinini (Strikes have followed me all my life), Miriam Tlali (Footprints in the Quag), Helen Suzman (In no Uncertain Terms, 1993), Winnie Mandela (A Part of my Soul went with him, 1986), Ruth First (117 Days, 1965), etc. More appropriately, it should range from the

analyses of human rights documents to an investigation into the influential women's voices that comprise the editorials in the glossy magazines and the intelligent reading of 'popular' women's experiences (Chapman 1996:422). Critical attention to the mass-media presentation of sex roles will indicate the dominant values of commodity culture vis-a-vis women. This type of coding, according to Sullivan (1987:74) helps to name and clarify the oppressive structures of gender that saturate popular awareness and resist transformation.

The inclusion of feminist readings not only challenges sexism and oppression but also provides contexts to address the needs and demands of women in post-colonial societies. Ogunyemi, in her paper 'Womanism: The dynamics of the contemporary black female novel in English' argues that feminist texts go beyond feminist knowledge and related issues in the African context - it is inextricably linked to the struggle against racism and colonialism:

The feminist novel is a form of protest literature directed to both men and women protesting against sexism and the patriarchal power structure, it is unapologetically propagandist or strident or both. It demands that its readers, whether the male oppressors or the female oppressed, be aware of ideological issues in order that it may change their attitudes about patriarchy. (1985:64)

Feminist readings also encourage students to reflect upon their own lives and situations, and teaches them to confront practices of gender discrimination (Ralph 1995:11). There should not only

be a change in the choice of texts as this does not help to construct alternative critical readings. More significant are the teacher's approach to the feminist texts, a liberation of the individual learner beyond the possibility of the here-and-now and the use of the text to equip the student to shape a world (without discrimination) using creative and critical potential.

An important objective component in the reconstruction of the curriculum should also be a restructuring of the priorities of publishing houses to give greater attention to the artistic and critical writings by women. Fundamental to this objective must be an analysis of the values for which women stand for as well as the discrimination on the basis of race, class, religion and national identity and how it feeds into the pedagogical situation. When such differences are addressed and discussed, students become aware of social and other forces prevalent at institutions that marginalise 'other' writings. Students are enabled to question the social power that is used and the subjective criteria that is employed to decide on the values of different forms of literary discourse that do not conform to the 'principal' genres of poetry, prose and drama (eg. diaries, commonplace collections, notebooks, the article, the essay, the editorial, the report, the biography, media forms [radio, TV, film], journals, letters, memoirs, autobiographies, etc.). Areas of investigation open to the scholar will therefore include social implications of texts, the production of new meanings,

transformation of the existing discourses, and the relationship between subjective meaning and discourse.

The establishment meanings, values and practices that confer dominance on men, higher classes and white people is consequently questioned and challenged. Weedon (1991:49) suggests that in order to contest power relations we must denaturalise them, make them visible and understand how and in whose interests they work. This process will reveal how gender is socially constructed and reproduced in particular social relations to maintain power.

The Foucauldian approach to literature teaching allows students to interrogate and understand androcentric power relations through its insistence on the relationship between meaning and power and the importance of subjectivity. The selection of texts and the use of a canon should not be confined to just a matter of textuality and language; rather, it should be viewed as a question of power and knowledge. The use of both critical pedagogy and feminist theory is valuable in literary study since both share the underlying view that students are shaped by their experiences in schools to internalise or accept a subjectivity and a class position that leads to the reproduction of existing power relationships and social and economic structures.

### 5.2.6 Literature and Value

The concepts *literature* and *value* in South Africa was politicised - it was governed by crude and monolithic views of what literature and value should be. The political discourse cannot be separated from the concept value. A few key questions in the value debate are: Who appropriates the value? What ideology underpins the value system? What is the race, gender and economic class of the person who confers values?

Literature is a cultural artefact produced and consumed within a cultural hegemony and it can also be considered a bearer of a particular ideology that will either legitimate or undermine the status quo (Lockett 1993:2). Lockett contends that what is considered good literature or literature of value, like all other cultural artefacts in South Africa, had been defined within the apartheid paradigm and specifically created by white men making the race/gender question inevitable. One therefore rightly speaks of two norms and values: the dominant and the 'other'.

The literature acceptable to the dominant hegemonic discourse of the establishment conformed to the great English tradition. The marginalised on the other hand, challenged this value system with their own distinctive political agenda of Africanism, Communism, Black Consciousness, etc., their own social and economic forces (alternative publishing houses, magazines like *Staffrider*, poetry

recitals at mass meetings, funerals and protests) and their own codes of writing made famous by the Black Consciousness artists. Oliphant (1992:17) explained further this dichotomy in values in South Africa when he argued that the articulation of private, personal and subjective themes were complacently equated with excellence by the dominant conservatives and the exploration of historical and social themes by the radical poets was viewed as aesthetic impoverishment.

Lionel Abraham, an important figure of the English tradition, reacted quite negatively and irrationally to Jeremy Cronin's presentation 'Oral poetry at black political gatherings and their reception and relevance to the context' and his reaction was a typical example of the central hegemonic discourse prescribing its value to the 'other':

But to categorise it as poetry is to invite its divorce from that matrix, involve many irrelevant considerations and confuse the nature of its meaning and importance. (Cronin) is attacking the meaning and importance of poetry as traditionally understood. Poetry is to undergo radical redefinition to accommodate this urgent, but rarely poetic, material. (*Weekly Mail*, 3-9 April 1987)

The attack from the aesthetic domain is often the formlessness, excessive particularisation and public character of black writing - characteristic symptoms of the Eurocentric versus Afrocentric debate.

The values that Abraham enforced in his reaction to Cronin's paper were specifically British cultural and poetic traditions.

Characteristic of this overly colonial outlook was the institutionalisation of English as a discipline and the role of the university as the custodian of the literary heritage, making the cornerstone of their academic study the concept of Arnoldian 'touchstones'.

Cognisance was not taken of the other's literary history, the social and educational disadvantages suffered by marginalised writers prior to 1990. Eliot's criticism that 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from personality... The emotion of art is impersonal' was central to English literature, especially the poetic tradition. However, this inherent individualism was rejected not only by the black poetry renaissance of the 1970s as is commonly believed, but also earlier in the autobiographical writings during the resistance of the fifties and sixties as noted by Modisane:

The individual has been rendered unimportant, the attitudes of our society transcend the individual. The white man has laboured to deface the blacks, with the result that the black man has ceased to be an individual. (1963:242)

The western literary traditions, aesthetics and values were transformed to include conscientising and the communal experience, and protest and resistance became the cardinal principle. Rhetorical techniques of oral poetry surfaced significantly in the works of amongst others Serote, Sepamla, Mtshali and Gwala.

In contrast to the timeless and aesthetic quality of the dominant poetry discourse in South Africa, Serote argued for a strategic definition of black poetry: 'It justifies its existence by its strategic value for a specific audience at a specific time' (Chapman 1982:112). The total creative endeavour was stifled by the socio-political context to such an extent that free development of their artistry was ludicrous and an impossible ideal. Their content, their codes of writing and the objective of their writing was circumscribed by where they wrote. Even the writers in exile could not escape the 'tyranny of place' (to use Mphahlele's term).

Marxist criticism has recognised the close relationship between literary works and the social milieu. Eagleton (1983) and Apple (1990) maintain that no culture is neutral, all literature is political and serves somebody's interest. Art for art's sake simply underlines the capitalist trend of separating art from society. The black writers' aims of social and political liberation would not be hampered by the 'centralised' literary conventions or traditional views of poetry. The process of conferring value in literature must be interrogated to reveal how the dominant paradigm of racism, sexism and class consciousness influences value.

What criteria, apart from the canonical traditions, can one use then to differentiate between good and poor literature? English

departments must recognise their role in perpetuating value as inextricably linked to the canon. It is the interpretation of the reader that determines value - a subjective process where the individual's role cannot be compromised. The role of the lecturer is to facilitate the process of interpretation, and not to depreciate literature of other communities or to evaluate them using the canon as the yardstick. Lecturers need to be re-trained to be able to mediate among culturally diverse values since it cannot be expected of him/her who was educated within an apartheid paradigm, the canon of high culture and practical criticism of texts to reject the traditional baggage.

The content of the literature curriculum should not only reflect the diversity of South African society but it must also provide opportunities for debate and conflict on aspects such as tradition, value and culture. Lecturers who only taught the classics in the past should be confronted to outline what values were used to exclude many writers - male and female, European and non-European - whose works did not meet the rigid conceptions of the 'White European Male Literary Tradition'.

#### 5.2.7 The Academic and the Everyday

Anthony Easthope (1991:33) outlines succinctly that in taking the texts of everyday life as its object of study, literary studies can circumvent entirely the privileged transcendence of the

aesthetic. As a regime of knowledge, popular cultural forms exhibit a shift from the authority of the author towards a decentred account of social production:

If the founding notion of authorship is escaped, then a discursive practice begins to develop that can make no such claims to authority and power, Rather, its subject is relative, rather than transcendent, determined rather than sovereign. (Easthope 1991:37)

Evident in Easthope's radical view of literary studies is a replacement of the high canonical tradition with texts from the popular culture, from work songs and pop music to television programmes to daily journalism. The assumed evaluation of and distinction between the academic and the everyday, between authored works and collective texts, becomes problematised, as the high-cultural canon comes to be viewed from the side of its excluded other, the popular tradition (Easthope 1991:38)

The discursive operation of the institutional separation of 'academic texts' (which consist mostly of the canon of traditional English literature) and the 'non-academic popular cultural forms' should be challenged. The objects of the discourse of the everyday should also be subject to a theoretical and academic critique by students of literature. Television programmes, films, the media, advertisements, popular music, dance and art forms that constitute a part of the everyday life of people need to be extrapolated to become part of the academic analysis. Peim acknowledges that the popular cultural forms provide greater opportunities for a critical pedagogy and it

should be incorporated into the curriculum to transform literary studies:

Look at many popular cultural forms and the issue of femininity, the question of gender roles, ideas about masculinity, significant matters of identity, are often dynamically represented, often far more likely to engage the interest and critical attention of students, frequently in forms that are more interesting and more challenging than their high cultural counterparts from the realms of literature.

Cultural forms, such as rap music, tabloid newspapers and video films, constitute a significant portion of most people's cultural experiences, yet they don't figure in any form of systematic way in the official constitution nor in the widespread definition of the subject in practice.

(1993:185).

Peim insists that an exclusive emphasis on the academic texts is not advantageous to students. However, a comparativist perspective to the subject position of the academic and that of the everyday will reflect the ideological underpinning of the institution: political versus non-political, marginalised versus central, high culture versus everyday culture. It will also enable debates into the following: the passive of the academic versus the active of the everyday, the exposed ideology versus the conspiracy, prejudice and hidden ideology of the institution and the dispersed, relative and partisan identity of the everyday versus the imaginary unity of the institution.

The power of the institution to marginalise 'everyday' knowledge should be questioned. Foucault (1981:203) stresses power as a decentred and uneven effect, both coercing and enabling and it is this power over knowledge that coerces the subject to read the

texts as appropriated by the institution as a given. A critical pedagogical approach to literature teaching will investigate the discursive constructs of the institution and the ways that institutional power is used to ensure that students silently accept a curriculum that marginalises a large part of their everyday experiences.

Relevant literary studies assist students to expand their horizons by developing their awareness of the non-academic culture outside the classroom. Samuels contends that:

Any literature curriculum will need to reflect the diversity emerging from the varied cultural, linguistic, socio-historical political experiences of the South African community. (1995:10)

The mere representation of the 'everyday' cultural forms within the curriculum can become another pitfall of the pluralistic discourse. What is more significant is how this cultural richness and variety is critiqued, challenged and extended within the classroom.

An appropriate intervention is not to merely assimilate the immense diversity and variety of texts (both written and oral) into a dominant or national culture, but rather, as Reddy (1995:20) suggests, to educate students to respect and acknowledge the polyphonic nature of these differences - and their right to exist alongside each other in harmony. By encountering and discovering the diversity offered outside the

academic context, students learn to recognise the need to move beyond their own experiences, to embrace the spirit of democracy as well as to respect the culture of others that are not included in the academic programmes.

Within the context of a critical feminist pedagogy, Luke (1994:39) views the inclusion of everyday knowledge into the literature curriculum as an important step in curricular reconstruction and in helping to shift women's writings from the margin to the centre:

What this might mean for instance, is less reliance on academic texts and a greater inclusion of media and cultural texts which might better represent the cultural interests of and possible learning styles of the women in the classroom. (1994:39)

The cultural interests of students is not adequately served by the centrality of the canon, since it proceeds as far as possible into the past, the glorious years of colonialism. Popular cultural works, on the other hand, take the contemporary as its point of departure. It thus necessarily confronts the history of popular culture as always in process as construction, innovation, reconstruction (Easthope 1991:38).

One of the most important values of the intervention of popular cultural studies within the literature curriculum of post-apartheid South Africa is its enhancement of a critical pedagogical approach by confronting the conventional concept of literary studies, by its foregrounding of the students' everyday

experiences and its role in the production of new knowledge.

#### 5.2.8 Beyond multiculturalism

Curriculum reconstruction cannot be separated from the restructuring of educational institutions in South Africa, in view of the legacy of apartheid and the move towards multiculturalism. Institutions should aspire towards a situation where all students will acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse nation and world. The challenge facing curriculum reconstructionists is how to construct a nation from a divided society, a collective 'we' across local communities in the curriculum. Muller's (1993) approach to culture as a skill and less a set of semantic attributes where personal identities become negotiable, is beneficial. His approach does not mean tolerating or condoning differences, but learning how to deal with them.

Jansen (1995:2) acknowledges that it is a struggle to engage the challenge of diversity in multi-lingual and multi-ethnic institutions. The consequences, according to Jansen, are that black students encounter a hostile, anti-cultural environment in which assumptions are fixed about what constitutes good education and an appropriate language policy. In the process, the damage

inflicted on the self-esteem and confidence of students is inestimable. Jansen states further that students learn a powerful not-always-hidden curriculum ie. that English has status, Zulu not; that good teachers and role models are white; that appropriate history is European; and that failure is something that happens to non-whites (1995:2).

An appropriate intervention in transforming the education system would affirm the language and identity of previously marginalised students and would regard them as a resource to enrich the critical pedagogical situation in multi-cultural contexts. Jansen's interesting contribution to the debate on diversity is to **actively disclaim race** as a factor in education - teachers should see students, not colour. Critical pedagogy requires lecturers to transcend the apartheid paradigm which has shaped their experience of the 'other', to be sensitive to the hidden curriculum, to counter racial, class and gender stereotyping and bias, and to negotiate the content of the educational experiences of all students.

The Freirian (1971b) concept of meaning construction is fundamental to literary studies in multicultural classrooms that intend developing in students a sense of critical reading. Peim (1993:73) argues that texts do not stand on their own as bearers of their own self-defining meaning, but rather, there has to be an acknowledgement that reading practices are culturally bound

and that this affects interpretations and meanings. The traditional view of the authority of the text and the focus of literature teaching as the study of closed texts containing absolute meaning has to be questioned. The assumption that meanings are fixed within texts should be rejected if literature teaching is to be effective in multicultural contexts with its multiple readings and alternative interpretations and negotiated meanings. In the multicultural classroom that is informed by a post-structuralist 'ethos', students would be encouraged to interrogate each reading and to negotiate and debate its meaning and well-foundedness among themselves (Motheeram 1995:13).

The curriculum that intends taking cognisance of the multicultural nature of the populace must promote and strengthen respect for cultural diversity and social justice and it should prepare students to apply their education for the betterment of society. The curriculum is also considered an important indicator of an institution's commitment to prepare its students for the 'global society' of the future and this has implications for a balanced emphasis on world and local literature. The inclusive institution has to help students develop a genuine understanding of diversity in the world and in South Africa.

For an informed, active citizenship there has to be an understanding of those who are different from the students as

well as the ability to think critically about contemporary issues. A better understanding of the social and psychological processes leading to and maintaining prejudice and discrimination is achieved through examination of these processes within several contexts, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, rather than in any one of these contexts alone (Meacham 1993:305).

Giroux's (1991) criticism of conventional multiculturalism is relevant to the current South African approach that presents the plurality of cultures as simply different from each other without showing the relations of power or domination between them. Giroux asserts that the Western culture is dominant in the curriculum and that the power disparity is generated in the unequal social relations in the wider society and is imperfectly reproduced in the curriculum. Muller (1993), in his critique of mainstream multiculturalism (the normative ideal that the curriculum should set equal store by the cultural traditions within a society), acknowledges its noble ideal but also stresses that it cannot be realised because of the material and symbolic power differentials that keep the dominant culture dominant.

Apple (1990) also cautions against the process of replacing curricular content with positive examples but not going beyond the process of 'mentioning'. Ellsworth (1989) refers to this as a 'museum' attitude, a 'tourist' curriculum that incorporates the 'other' as an exotic and supplementary feature resulting in

little social or psychological affirmation of marginalised cultures.

Muller (1993:49) posits three alternative responses to counter conventional multiculturalism and the pluralistic discourse as critiqued by Giroux (1991), Apple (1990) and Ellsworth (1989):

a. Teaching for understanding

The presumption, deriving from the emancipatory intentions of critical theory, is that a firm intellectual grasp of underlying relations of domination and subordination explains to people the social reasons for their subordination and provides them with a context for understanding what to do about it. This critical variation of multiculturalism helps to strip away some of the mystique which enshrouds high-status knowledge. However, this approach is not clear why insight into the social reasons for disadvantage is in itself empowering.

b. Access

There is a need to democratise access to high-status knowledge and teaching. It is compatible with a pedagogy that produces a stance towards (dominant) knowledge that questions its absoluteness, and develops an understanding of the heterogeneous and relational nature of knowledge. What it is opposed to

is conventional multiculturalism, which tries to produce a curriculum content where multiple cultural particularities are catered for. This dilutes the knowledge, and becomes in the end another way by which students from marginalised groups are denied access to dominant knowledge.

c. Teaching from multiplicity

This approach derives from radical feminism (Spivak, 1990), post-foundationalist pragmatism (Rorty, 1991), the new cultural politics of difference (West, 1990; Critchelow, 1990) as well as on lessons from women's struggle (Ellsworth, 1990). The solution to problems of multiculturalism is to teach the social construction of identity and difference in order to denaturalise and de-essentialise it. In this way difference is radicalised and identity is understood as contingent and strategic. The approach aims to create a common platform on the basis of common experiences of oppression, exclusion and subordination. It acknowledges that there is no superdiscourse that can translate different traditions into a commensurable common language. Pedagogy would be on and for difference, in heterogeneous sites, and directed towards specific minority empowerment.

The challenge of the third alternative is relevant to the call

for the development of a common identity - a South Africanism. Spivak, like Foucault, cautions against unifying differences and striving towards a unity of discourse and contends that commonness can only be built on and out of difference:

...the place where indeed all human beings are similar - is seen to be lodged in their being different. (1991:228)

Jansen (1995:7) also supports the discourse of difference and diversity in the curriculum, but insists that 'managing diversity' should be a short-term intervention. A longer term goal is to create a climate in institutions such that diversity is celebrated, invited, encouraged and sustained in natural settings, free of coercion. Jansen claims correctly that a genuine test of whether this goal is being reached is the point at which students begin to see teachers and not colour and vice versa.

It should be noted that the issues of multiculturalism are too complex and too significant to be the exclusive domain of any one discipline. For example, an intelligent discussion of the gender bias in South African society should be grounded at least in history, biology, law, economics, political science, psychology, sociology and literature. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that the societal issues, courses and knowledge are not perceived as belonging to a single department but rather owned by, and the responsibility of, the entire university community

(Meacham 1993:303).

#### 5.2.9 Open the process of curriculum development

To avoid the controversy over ideology and the conspiracy with apartheid, the language departments must be open with regard to the planning, design and implementation of the literature courses. An initial step is to make the prescribed reading list and syllabi available to other disciplines for comment. Advertise lists timeously for all students of the institution to question the theories underpinning the selection. All lecturers in the department, regardless whether they teach the course or not should be invited to plan the curriculum (also as a step towards eradicating the colonial distinction between 'specialists in western literature' and 'specialists in non-western literature').

Evaluations of the curriculum should be done routinely to attempt to solve the problem areas and controversial issues. All evaluation reports should be available for constituents of the institution to study. Open meetings should be held where the students invite lecturers who have taught the course to respond to questions about the course. Other members of the university community can also express concerns that they have about the courses. At the University of Natal, for example, there are

committed artists and writers in such diverse departments as Sociology (Ari Sitas), the Institute for Black Research (Fathima Meer and Alfred Qubula), Department of Oral Studies (Nise Mhlanga), Department of Zulu (Mazise Kunene) and the Centre for Creative Writing (Breyten Breytenbach). It would be profitable for the English Department to invite all these members of the university community to reflect on its literature curriculum. If English teachers contend that they are the best qualified to choose and recommend books for their students, they must be prepared to defend their choices to the university community.

Objectionable features of texts should be opened for debate and questioning and should not simply be excluded because of subjective judgements of a part of the constituency (example the state censorship of radical writings). If the book in question has qualities that will provide for development (emotional, moral, conceptual) there is no reason why it should be marginalised for fear of criticism for its inclusion. Lecturer's judgements should always be questioned and since much literature is subversive, and undermines accepted norms and values, the process of selection and reasons underlining decisions should be included in the curriculum as well.

The power relations of the institution can be used in a helpful way instead of the repression and prohibition of exclusion tactics or the maintenance of a sovereignty over disciplines and

departments. In the process of opening up the curriculum reconstruction process to the whole constituency, we are in fact making the power relations in the institution positive, internal, dispersed, heterogeneous, productive and provocative (Deacon 1994:10).

### 5.3 Pedagogical issues

The process of curriculum reconstruction requires a new set of questions about the subject (the student as a structure of cultural and economic codings and practices that have political implications and consequences), reading lists (the established canon of acceptable texts) and the act of reading itself. Fundamental to the process is also a rethinking of essential pedagogical issues - objectives for literature teaching, the role of literature in the curriculum and guidelines for choosing the literature we teach.

Studying Nelson Mandela's Long Walk To Freedom (1995) will do little to combat racism, if it is the sole occasion when that issue is raised and if the underlying basis of all other work and the ethos of the literature lessons is the implicitly racist canon of 'high culture'. The objective of analysing the concepts of sexuality can never be fulfilled merely by choosing to read Koos Prinsloo, Virginia Woolf or Stephen Gray. Instead, the

principle and objective upon which all our practice should be rooted must be to challenge racist and sexist assumptions which exist in society. If it forms part of the philosophy underpinning our pedagogy, it will inform the texts we teach, reasons for teaching it and the methodology to be used.

### 5.3.1 Objectives for literature teaching

Objectives are a reflection of curriculum ideologies since they are a set of beliefs about what should be taught, for what ends, and for what reasons. Educational practice is concerned with the achievement of certain desired end-states, therefore it relies on objectives to map out the larger value matrix and to identify and justify the directions in which it moves (Eisner 1994: 47-53). The political, social, economic and other processes in democratic and pluralistic societies requires deliberation, debate and compromise on the objectives, since as the community and institution change, adjustments must be made to accommodate newly emerging conditions.

The following objectives can be achieved through literature study:

- The development of cognitive skills including logical, creative and critical thinking.
- The development of competence in writing through

exploration of alternative modes and forms of expression.

- The development of social skills and human relationships.
- The development of an awareness of the enriching aspects of cultural pluralism as well as mutual respect for the integrity of other people's life experiences.
- The development of self-concept, self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and inner discipline.
- The development of an intellectual awareness of the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion in South African society.
- The development of an aesthetic awareness through encounters with literature as artistic artifact.
- The formation of moral, ethical and value systems through exploration of moral attitudes and value systems represented in literature.

The goals that we establish for literature teaching should be modest. The amount of required reading could be reduced in favour of thorough analysis and discussion of what is read. There must be sufficient room for students to converse on their own experiences and responses to the texts, to confront the interpretations of other students and the lecturer and to see how different experiences stem from social structure and to be

allowed to be 'confused' as there are no simple answers to texts.

Literature study entails more than just teaching students to read and understand the meaning of texts for examination purposes. The focus should be on developing general competence in dealing with a wide register of literary texts. Non-canonical literature which appeals to students and matches their linguistic level could be used to develop students' self-confidence in their own interpretations and responses, their willingness to negotiate meaning and to supplement their reading list with texts that they would read more closely.

Rather than establishing a common body of literature, students should read works that help them define and understand their own values and experiences and those of others. Literature from the student's own cultures and regions, from the pluralistic southern African experience and from the world at large should be read. Literature must also be rescued from the diminished status as a body of subject matter that can be memorised for examinations and forgotten thereafter. It should be offered as a mode of personal life-experience and an intimate conversation with texts and personalities. All obstacles that hinder the readers' mature response to literature should be reviewed by both students and lecturers eg. an overloaded curriculum, complex goals to be achieved and any dominant ideologies of the institution that are reactionary to the students or lecturers e.g. liberalism,

Marxism, Africanism, etc.

The establishment of complex and sophisticated goals by institutions only antagonises students. The standard response to failure in education is to provide more education. Education has therefore become the remedy for its own ills. Deacon and Parker (1994:19) contend that instead of overcoming the problems of irrelevance, static curricula and high failure-rates, the institutions foster these anomalies by allowing them to continue unabated.

The curriculum must not be designed to fail or to produce needs in order to justify its own necessity. The subject of education (discourses, institutions and inmates) is like a 'layer of cake of superimposed texts, each text lettered by a different profession to define a separate set of needs that only that profession can meet' (Illich & Sanders 1989:xi). If we want literature teaching not to fall into the same pitfalls of the past, a revolutionary stance must be taken in terms of how we reconstruct the curriculum, what our goals are and what our notions of literature are.

### 5.3.2 The Role of Literature in the Curriculum

To make progress towards achieving the goals of literature requires a broad course content, sufficiently rich to make contact with students' own diverse experiences and motivate them to engage the course issues intellectually, as well as to provide them with compelling evidence and arguments to draw upon as they construct a deeper understanding of the issues (Meacham 1993:304)

In the light of Meacham's comment, the role of literature in the curriculum can be summarised as follows:

- It provides experiences through the medium of words.
- It develops the affective and cognitive dimensions of the student.
- It promotes interactive teaching and learning.
- It expands students' knowledge of the conventions, history and rhetorical strategies of texts.
- complexity and subtlety to literary and other texts.
- It encourages and develops the diversity that each reader brings to the text.
- It develops a commonality or unity through interpreting South African literature.
- It encourages diversity and tolerance through the study
  - It develops students' ability to respond with greater of African, Commonwealth and other literatures.

### 5.3.3 Choosing the Literature we Teach

When drawing up the prescribed reading list, lecturers should consider the contribution which the text may make to the education of the reader, its aesthetic value not only in comparison with the canon but also with contemporary and popular art, its honesty, its readability for and appeal to all the students. Lecturers must understand students' needs and conflicts and appreciate the students' social and personal backgrounds that would make certain books of the past or present particularly interesting and illuminating. In short it implies a knowledge not only of literature but of students as well.

The rationale for selecting books to be read by the student should include answers to these questions:

- a. For what course/year/module is this book especially appropriate?
- b. To what particular objectives (literary, psychological or pedagogical) does this book lend itself?
- c. In what ways will the book be used to meet those objectives?
- d. What range of personal responses does the lecturer anticipate from the reading?
- e. What problems of style, tone, or theme are possible grounds for student difficulty?
- f. How does the lecturer plan to address those problems?

- g. Assuming that the objectives are met, what provision has been made for students to read and interpret the book differently?
- h. What are some other appropriate books an individual student might need in place of this book?
- i. What reputable sources have recommended this book? How have critics received it?
- j. Have the views of the student and the university community been canvassed on the books?
- k. Have texts with controversial issues been excluded or has room been made for the interrogation of such texts?
- l. Has provision been made to respect the right of students to be selective in their own reading?

Cy Groves (quoted in Gambell 1986) articulates the misunderstandings that often arise in the selection of texts and offers the following suggestions to lecturers to defend their selection:

- a. *The use of 'rough language' in a book presupposes that the teacher and students use such language and condone its use. Much South African literature by black writers was excluded because 'the Queen's English' was not used and much black Afrikaans writing was marginalised as 'Kaaps', 'patois' and 'sonbessie poesie' because it differed from the standard language*

use. Language in literature belongs to the character using the language: in fact, the author cannot even be held responsible for the language used by a fictional character. Every word the student reads does not automatically become the student's property.

- b. *The English lecture hall is a sanctuary or sheltered environment apart from the actual world thus condoning the academic versus everyday dichotomy. Through a wide and varied selection process students will develop a process of discrimination which will involve some measure of judgement and taste. But students must do their own thinking, and arrive at their own judgements.*
  
- c. *There is a misunderstanding that literature is a mirror of all life. If English teachers restricted all literary selections in the classroom to those which reflected the 'good life', it would be a narrow and restrictive list indeed. Literature has always presented life over the widest spectrum.*

*Literary judgement and curricular principles are important areas of pedagogical concern in the selection of texts for literary study. Protherough (1983:167-8), in an effort to enable lecturers in the process of selection of literary texts, provides*

a series of questions which embrace these two areas of concern:

**Literary judgements:**

- a. What are the chief merits of this work that I hope students will discover for themselves, and how can I help them to this discovery without telling them directly?
- b. How important are the difficulties it presents, and how can these best be dealt with?
- c. Is the quality of the writing good enough to extend the students without being too demanding?
- d. Is there any information which members of the group must have if they are to appreciate the book and, if so, how can it best be conveyed?
- e. How vivid/original/dull/cliche-ridden are the situations/characters/dialogue/relationships?
- f. How can students' developing response to the text be assessed?

**Curricular Principles:**

- a. How far is it necessary to 'teach' this book, rather than just letting the students read it themselves?
- b. In what different ways might I teach it, and which seems most likely to be successful with specific groups of students?

- c. In what ways will it lead naturally into other activities without distortion?
- d. In what ways does it relate to the total English programme?
- e. How far will it fit into a developmental reading programme, enabling helpful comparisons to be made with other texts, and aiding literary learning?

Protherough's literary and curricular principles for the selection of texts also empowers the lecturer to be accountable to the university community for decisions and prepares the literature department for the questions that will arise during the democratic process of interrogation, analysis and evaluation of their selection procedure, reading lists and curricular ideologies.

Within a critical pedagogical paradigm, Newfield (1992:45-46) cautions lecturers to be vigilant in the selection process and to foreground the principles of reading against racism, gender and the exclusion of the 'other'. Newfield's questions on the discourses of texts encourages teachers not to merely fulfill prescribed curricular goals but to select texts that lead to an understanding of the broader social and cultural relations of society and that will enable them to teach towards a different version of the traditional curriculum:

- a. Who does the narrator represent?

- b. What are the assumptions about race and gender in the text?
- c. Whose interests are being served?
- d. Who is dominant and who is subordinate in the text?
- e. What are the silences of the text?
- f. Are the metaphors culturally loaded?
- g. Whose values are taken as natural?

These questions in the essay 'Reading against Racism in South Africa' ensures not only that teachers select texts that are relevant to the students, but also whether opportunities exist for critical reading and for interrogation of the hidden assumptions in the texts. Both teachers and students should become active questioners and commentators of texts leading to critical readers and learners. Reddy (1995:27) correctly asserts that this should make them more aware of their individual and collaborative agencies and shapers of knowledge and meaning.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

The primary focus in this chapter was on how theory could be the basis for curriculum reconstruction in literature departments. The provision of a list of recommended texts is futile and supports the false notion that literature is static or that it focuses primarily on the 'correct' content. The texts one teaches ought to be determined by the issues one hopes to raise

in a particular course. In fact, the very act of choosing texts is itself a theoretical project.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

A relevant literature curriculum within a post-colonial context has to take into cognisance not only the local cultural diversity but also the global store of knowledge that characterises the heterogeneity of our common humanity. Although it is imperative that the academe encourages and promotes an African perspective to English literature especially now with the advent of democracy and the reconceptualisation of literary value, it should also guard against the inherent danger that African Nationalism may inadvertently replicate in a different way the prejudice perpetrated by the proponents of the canon.

Edward Said notes accurately the predicament of a radical version of cultural nationalism:

To assume that the ends of education are best advanced by focusing principally on our own separateness, our own ethnic identity, culture, and traditions ironically places us where as subaltern, inferior, or lesser races we had been placed by nineteenth-century racial theory, unable to share in the general riches of human culture.

A single over-mastering identity at the core of the academic enterprise, whether that identity be Western, African, or Asian, is a confinement, a deprivation. (1991:17)

The search for relevant literatures should go beyond repudiating the west in favour of recovering and reconstructing Africa's cultural heritage. We need to draw from all sources based on merit, ensuring that a counter-productive reaction to colonial

racism and exploitation is avoided. Most importantly, South African students should be free to create their own identity, to read the books that will give them the identity they want and to negotiate their understanding of the concept 'relevance' with the curriculum designers. South African universities should also be alert to the power of the canon that is often concordant with the dominance of specialists in western literature, factors that may militate against a relevant curriculum.

Power is something that either works through the curriculum in a way that goes unquestioned specifically as it defines what counts as legitimate forms of knowledge, or is seen as a negative instance of social control that represses the possibilities for struggle and resistance (Giroux 1986:139). Undoubtedly, the real institutionalised power over the curriculum in South African departments of English literature has been held by the liberals who occupied the political centre. Zavarzadeh and Morton correctly describes the centre as a structured space of containment in bourgeois institutions; it is marked by a highly plastic formation:

Its plasticity enables it to assimilate the most advanced dissenting ideas and conserve established practices by rearticulating them in the new languages of the dissenters. The political role of the centre is thus superstructural; it obscures economic domination in constant ideological (rhetorical) adjustments. (1994:13)

The liberal academic will not refuse the basic principles of the canon. However, the very accommodating nature of the liberal thinker will make provision for the alternative voice by making

minor adjustments to the structure - a typical example of this was the 'Butlerism' of the 1960s where Butler posited a weak plea for local writings while simultaneously acknowledging the superiority of the canon to appease the academe (Butler 1949). This situation has been witnessed often in South African institutions as a tactic to ensure that the ethos of the British great tradition with the Practical Criticism approach still reigned.

The centre in South Africa has constantly reviewed its policies and rewritten the literature curriculum - a certain degree of change has taken place. However, despite the change in names, texts, modules and lecturers, the basic ideology that underpins the curriculum was not changed. Some of the cosmetic changes were the introduction of works by post-modern philosophers, contemporary politicians, anthropologists, historians and literary critics as well as the appointment of black and/or female staff. However, this does not mean that the curriculum was changed. The establishment norms and values, approaches to reading, examinations and teaching methodologies were all co-opted, especially in the 1980s, to continue working in the old manner within the new theories. The revision of the established programme was not sufficient.

Canon revision also means rediscovering and teaching works that, despite literary merit, have not previously received much

attention. Such 'rediscoveries of the ordinary' (to use Ndebele's phrase) often provoke valuable theoretical debates about standards and criteria. Opponents of the revisionist model are against the approach because it sanctions the existing canon as valuable and merely supplements 'other' texts to it. Ironically, it is often the new texts that give the curriculum a measure of relevancy and value, but it is not acknowledged because of the distorted system the establishment uses to confer value on texts.

In its extreme form, however, canon revision can mean drastically increasing the representation in the syllabus of minority, female and radical authors regardless of 'literary merit'. It's proponents justify its inclusion by asserting that the traditional English curriculum, like the social system, was ideologically designed to support the economic and political dominance of white men (Clausen 1988:52). An equally unacceptable approach was when the revisionists typically dismissed the whole notion of 'literary merit' as a rationalisation for existing social and political structures. The most important function of an English department, in their view, was to encourage drastic social change, and the books they preferred tend to be oriented towards current issues.

Integral to the curriculum reconstruction debates was therefore the argument about which texts should or should not be included

in the prescribed lists. Carby (1989:36) viewed these debates as a tactic to avoid the deeper power/knowledge problem synonymous with the notion of a canon and feels that the inclusion of radical texts does not solve the problem of inequality. She was cautious of the standpoints of both traditional and post-structuralist critical educational studies. The traditionalist critical pedagogy was satisfied with the debate between canonical exclusion and inclusion while the post-structuralist critical pedagogy was concerned with issues like **representation, texts and textuality**. Carby maintains that both the traditional and poststructural critical pedagogy approaches were not successful in their endeavour to reach significant levels of inquiry in pedagogical and curricular practices.

This means that the canon/margin debate was used by academics (even those who were adherents of critical educational studies) intentionally to prevent more socially and politically productive modes of analyses and were maintaining the status quo with regards to literature teaching and learning. One of the most interesting collaborations was that between the post-structuralists and the establishment - instead of their theories changing the academic practice of the canon, the academy has absorbed the theories into the establishment structure. A beneficial post-structuralist approach will interrogate the relationship between discourse and power and, consequently, the preferential value accorded to some texts over others.

Critical educational studies enables scholars to reveal the merely localising and reformist (not transformist) character both of traditional pedagogical practices and of post-structural pedagogical practice. The traditional pedagogical practice defends the concept of the autonomous and sovereign individual as its basic premise, sees signification as the effect of the individual, and conducts cultural politics as usual. The post-structural pedagogical practice, on the other hand, though it displaces the notion of the individual in favour of the concept of the subject and sees the individual as the effect of signification, nevertheless limits cultural politics by situating it as a purely textualist and signifactory activity. Zavarzadeh puts it very bluntly that what the academic practice should question is the access of the oppressed/marginalised peoples to their culture's bank of power, knowledge and resources and not simply fight for the inclusion of the texts they favour in the reading lists.

True scholarship should also embrace the full global range of literature in English rather than the parochial narrowness of British and American literature. What comes to mind within the South African context is Commonwealth writings, (Southern) African writing in translation, Asian-, Pacific- and West Indian writing. By ignoring literature outside the canon the student was intentionally impoverished and restricted. Muller (1993:49) argued that to deprive students the wisdom of the west's great

writers or to deny students access to 'dominant knowledge' because of race was equally limiting.

The contemporary world role of English must be problematised at institutions, more so in South Africa in view of the current language policy debates and the recognition of regional African languages. An exposure of the dynamics of empire and power as well as the role of English in imperialism will force us to rethink a good deal of South African literary history. Such a process would enable the South African student to appreciate better the excluded writings of both local and non-native English writers, and it will also rescue marginalised writings from the limbo of the 'other' that many institutions have relegated them to. In the process of breaking free of the canon based on nationalistic categories, it would allow a richer recognition of not only South African literature but also international literature.

Critics like Bhabha (1993), Ashcroft (1989) and Myrsiades (1990) have recognised the achievements of the canon-busting movement as an integral practice in challenging the existing canon and dominant ideas of literature and culture. The movement also critiques Eurocentric notions of literature and paves the way for democratic post-colonial societies, writings and culture.

The *refusal* of the dominant Eurocentric canon and the reconceptualisation of South African literature would

profoundly democratise literary study, since students would be required not only to read but also to understand and respect significant marginalised writers. Literary study should investigate which features of the marginalised texts were used to exclude them from the canon. It would then become evident the role that power and politics plays in the construction of knowledge and the curriculum. Such an exercise will also reveal the elitist politics that underpin traditional notions of aesthetic value.

The process of 'opening up' the literary curriculum to previously silenced voices should never be viewed as a threat to the dominant hegemony (Foley 1990:139). By simply embracing the excluded voices does not mean that we are moving towards a counter-discourse. It must be acknowledged that simply by virtue of their race or/and gender, the excluded writers do not automatically take on characteristics of aesthetics, oppositionality and politics. They are also not automatically intrinsically subversive of dominant power relations because they constitute the marginalised voice. The simplistic co-option of marginalised voices onto the curriculum, as advocated by some pluralists, is therefore opportunistic and is not synonymous with the concept of reconstruction.

If it is true that the function of universities within the culture we inhabit is crucial for the production and reproduction

of social relations and power, then the liberal universities, the bush colleges, the Afrikaner nationalistic universities and the English colonial universities of the past will not change their ideological discourse. Representation and inclusion in the canon will not be a viable mode of curriculum reconstruction in these institutions, but rather a manoeuvre to maintain the dominant literary tradition. Therefore, the inclusion of South African literature within the existing curriculum serves political and social relations of the dominant centre of the university and is not a process of reconceptualisation of the marginalised voices. If, on the other hand, South African literature is used by proponents of the oppositional discourse to form a counter canon, it runs the risk of becoming what it opposes.

Do we therefore supplement the canon or complement the canon by opening our study to more texts or more kinds of texts? This tantamounts to a co-option policy. True *refusal* of the canon should not mean a rejection of the canonical texts per se. But rather, it should be a process of installing a totally different view of texts in their relation to social life, a different view of the uses to which texts are, have been, or could be put (Smith 1990:69). This prevents the canonical texts from remaining privileged over the other texts. This also questions the ideological construct of literature and basically says that nothing should be taken for granted in literature teaching and reception.

When Taubman (1993:50) was asked the question why we shouldn't teach the canon - the best that has been thought and said, he replied: "The best that has been thought and said by, for, and to whom? When and where? For what immediate task? To what larger ends? Under what conditions?" Taubman urges lecturers to be sensitive to their students, but also to ask these questions of themselves in relation to the texts they choose. It is to uncover in both the teachers' and student' readings the idiosyncratic relationship they have to texts and reading. At the same time, it is to use texts for brief periods as the firm ground from which they can examine their lives and to use their own experience to examine that ground.

Instead of asking how do we fit the canonical texts into a reconstructed curriculum, we should ask how do we resist texts that inhabit us from giving privilege to any particular voice or groups or bearers of knowledge. Such a question enables us to return the text to the students' lives. The student's voice should become central in literature teaching, not the voice of the tradition or the voice of the canon. The role of the canonical text and the student's understanding of its role in the discursive systems of exploitation and domination should be investigated. The canonical texts will then be studied in an interactive way in relation to the culture that produced it.

A shortcoming in this study centres around the conceptualisation

of the term 'South African literature'. The thesis was only concerned with South African literature written in English. The literatures written in the ten other 'official' South African languages as well as their relationship to English did not receive consideration. Future research should move towards an inclusive study of all the South African literatures and languages; only then will the use of the term 'South African Literature' be dealt with consistently and historically. Such a study will be able to show how these literatures have been, and could in future be taught at South African universities.

It is also unfortunate that only the religious writings by Africans get mentioned in a minority of literary surveys. A challenge to future research is to excavate the entire alternate traditions that are not being identified because they do not fit into the formula, because their terms of reference are different, or which the researchers have ignored because of the language barriers or value judgements that are foreign to the black writer.

In the genealogical study (Chapter 3), I have attempted a contextualised presentation of South African literature in relation to some of the debates concerning the teaching of literature. I think it is important to list texts that have been excluded. More appropriately, Foucault would have used the excluded corpus of texts to posit new perspectives in relation

to what was included. Herein lies a shortcoming of the study. The great value of Foucault's theory is not so much the grand scheme it provides but the way it suggests how texts of all kinds can be enlisted to provide a more detailed perspective on particular areas and moments where marginalisation and silencing occurred. This calls for engagement with the specific texts and objects themselves. However, such an exercise, although vital, falls beyond the ambit of this study which focused specifically on curriculum reconstruction.

Pertinent issues to the curriculum impact study (Chapter 4) that future research needs to address are factors like the objectives of English literature programmes, who the curriculum is designed for, who was responsible for the design of the curriculum and the selection of the specific texts, what content areas does the texts focus on, who teaches the curriculum and how the curriculum will be evaluated. Individual literature departments should also routinely undertake a comparative study of syllabi prescribed at similar institutions in order to appraise their own curriculum in terms of its external impact, to question the relevancy and/or effectiveness of their programmes and to analyse the dominant perspectives and the weaknesses of their own and the other curricula. This exercise forms an integral part of curriculum development and design and is a safety-valve that will prevent the binarisms and dichotomy between the embarrassingly conservative departments on the one hand and the far left wing

departments whose political and sociological perspectives dominate the construction of the curriculum.

Finally, it should be noted that literature is also concerned with the aesthetic, creative and spiritual, and could help to develop the ability to participate sympathetically and constructively in society. This therefore involves political, social and ethical issues. By our response to and interpretation of literature, we create the world that we need to know about, we come to know ourselves and others, we discover how to learn and how to make choices or judgements.

Every text we choose to teach involves the transmission of some value or belief and implies the power we have over choices or judgements. The reading list makes a range of unspoken statements as to its suitability in terms of form and content, the issues we intend raising which we believe are important and the arbitrary concept of literary merit. The past bias towards the canon reduced the possibility of exploring the multiplicity of objects that characterises South African literature. When we ignore African and Asian writing we are sidetracking the issue of anti-racism. When we are indifferent to relevance and contemporary issues, we isolate (South)African cultural products. Our direction - within a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist postcoloniality - should be towards a re-reading of the South African literary history, a re-interpretation of the discourse

of nationalism, of what is 'other' to the nation, and a celebration of our common humanity. It will then enable us to successfully direct literature to the South African student, with whose situation we should be centrally occupied.

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.

Foucault

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