The Gold Standard in English Literary Discourse: Some Functions of the Academic Article in Peer-Reviewed Journals in South Africa

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Summary

This article is based on a completed research project in which the discipline of English studies, as manifested in the discourse of published, peer-reviewed academic articles over the period 1958-2004 – what we call the "gold standard" of academic literary discourse – forms the object of analysis. The focus of the article is to delineate and describe three major functions of the discipline as manifested by its gold standard, namely career formation, knowledge formation, and canon formation. Our general aim is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the functions of peer-reviewed journals, to reveal the presence of rules governing discursive production, and to lay bare historical shifts in approach and choice of disciplinary objects.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel is gebaseer op 'n voltooide navorsingsprojek waarin die studie-dissipline Engels, soos gemanifesteer in die diskoers van gepubliseerde, portuur-beoordeelde akademiese artikels oor die tydperk 1958-2004 (wat vir ons die "goudstandaard" van akademiese literêre diskoers is), die objek van analise uitmaak. Die fokuspunt van die artikel is die omskrywing en beskrywing van drie hooffunksies van die dissipline soos gemanifesteer deur die goudstandaard daarvan, naamlik loopbaanvorming, kennisvorming, en kanonvorming. Ons algemene oogmerk is om 'n omvattender begrip van die funksies van portuurbeoordeelde tydskrifte te verwerf en om historiese verskuiwings in benadering en keuse van dissiplinêre doelstellings bloot te lê.

> It does not matter that discourse appears to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power.
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> (Foucault 1971: 52)

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If the academic article in the peer-reviewed journal is the gold standard of intellectual achievement, and the index of intellectual output in a discipline, then it is to these journals, first and foremost, that one should turn to take the discipline's measure, and to delineate its major functions, which is the focus of this article, with specific reference to English academic literary discourse. Since the launch of the journal *English Studies in Africa* by the Department of English at the University of Witwatersrand in 1958, there has been steady growth in peer-reviewed journal articles in the field of English academic literary discourse as a mode of discursive output. A considerable number of journals have been launched since, though several have been discontinued. This article is based on a completed doctoral research project in which the discipline of English studies, as manifested in the discourse published in academic journals over the period 1958-2004, forms the object of analysis.[1] Although the ultimate focus of this article is to delineate and describe three major functions of the discipline as manifested by the gold standard of its output, namely career formation, knowledge formation, and canon formation, we start off by providing a summary of the project and its findings in general. In addition, we find it necessary to elaborate in some detail on the field of discourse covered by the research undertaking as a precursor to discussing what we believe to be the primary functions of academic discourse in the peer-reviewed journal. We recount the history of the journals very briefly in order, inter alia, to profile their relationship to the discipline of English studies. Also, we make discriminations about the nature of *academic* literary discourse, as against other forms of such discourse, so as to delimit our topic precisely – as will be seen, much depends on delimitation.

In our view, the academic discourse represented by the peer-reviewed journal differs in *function*¸ if not always in form or content, from its apparent correlate, the literary journal or so-called "little magazine". Moreover, the functions of academic discourse are derivative of another stream of related discourse: imaginative literary works, or what we refer to as *primary* literary discourse (as opposed to the *secondary* discourse, that is, discourse which is both temporally separated from its object, as well as derivative in the sense that its statements are based on interpretations of the primary work). By setting off *academic* literary discourse from other types of related literary discourse in this manner, we hope to throw into sharper relief its boundaries and purview. In addition, also as a necessary precursor

1. "English Academic Literary Discourse in South Africa 1958-2004: A Review of 11 Academic Journals", unpublished DLitt et Phil thesis, 2006, UNISA, by Derek Barker, written under the supervision of the co-author of this article.

to discussions on the possible functions of academic literary discourse, we feel it necessary to touch briefly on the immensely complicated issue of the status of the statements made in these journals. Hence, by this necessarily circuitous route, the article then arrives at its area of focus: the functions of literary-academic discourse as embodied in peer-reviewed journals.

The research project analyses the discipline of English studies in South Africa through a review of articles published in 11 academic journals over the period 1958-2004. The general aims of the research were to gain a comprehensive and more empirically based understanding of the functions of peer-reviewed journals, to reveal the presence of rules governing discursive production, and to lay bare historical shifts in approach and choice of disciplinary objects. A Foucauldian typology of procedures determining discursive production, that is, exclusionary, internal and restrictive procedures, was used to establish whether the discipline of English studies could be seen to have embedded such procedures in the very tissues of its output. Each journal was reviewed individually and comparatively. Static and chronological statistical analyses were undertaken on the articles in the 11 journals in order to measure empirical evidence against the contention that the discipline is unruly and its choice of objects random (Ryan 1998). The cumulative results of this analysis were used to describe major shifts primarily in ranges of disciplinary objects, but also in meta-discursive and thematic preoccupations. Each of the journals was characterised in relation to what the overall analysis revealed about mainstream developments. Three major findings (not specifically dealt with in this article, but worth noting here) were that, first, during the period under review, the eschewing of focus on South African imaginative written artefacts was as much a result of a methodological fixation as it was the consequence of a political and ideological choice, namely to spurn the "local" in favour of the "universal", validating the supposedly superior metropolitan artefact above the colonially marked local muck, with all the well-known postures attendant to such a conception of literary virtue. The research found that the methodological fixation with "close reading", derived from the Cambridge revolution started by I.A. Richards and others – rather than the "wide-reading" approach of the older "Hist. of Lit." school associated with Oxford – meant that the purview of objects examined within the discipline in South Africa became so narrow as to keep the door firmly closed on South African literature (Barker 2006: 47-56; 176-177); second, the shift towards South African literary objects beginning in earnest in the late 1960s and into the 1970s broadly coincided with a return to a pre-Practical Criticism conception of what constitutes the "literary" (pp. 178-215); one that was again broadly inclusive of a variety of types of artefact in addition to imaginative writing, such as autobiography, letters, journals and orature. Further, the research finds that though this move towards a plurality of "wide reading" is discernible – halcyon days for South African literature

(1970s and early 1980s) – it was not sustained for very long, for it was quite quickly (relatively speaking) threatened by the belated rise of "theory" in South Africa in the same period (the posts in particular), the consequence of which was, once more, to return to the Practical Criticism focus on a narrow range of objects with the important difference, at least in the first decade or so, of pushing the imaginative artefact back in favour of methodological primacy. Naturally, such processes are uneven and hardly clear-cut – wide reading or literary historiographical analyses of South African works continued even as metatheoretical interest made headway, the two streams also coinciding at certain points, particularly in the pronounced focus on J.M. Coetzee, emblematised perhaps by a symposium on *Foe* held at UNISA in 1989, papers of which appeared in volume 5(2) of the *Journal of Literary Studies/Tydskrif vir literatuurwetenskap* in the same year, where "theory" and "SA literature" suddenly coalesced. (Of course, some critics at the time bemoaned the "hijacking" of SA literature studies by a theoretical – as opposed to materialist – obsession with the work of one author among so many, namely Coetzee.) Finally, the project finds that the theoretical wave seems now to be receding somewhat: on the evidence of peer-reviewed articles in the past 10 years or so, there appears to be a return to greater textual primacy as the application of theory recedes and/or becomes more eclectic (Barker 2006: 240 and 248-249; Barker & de Kock 2007).

Both the discipline of English studies and research in the field predate the period under review in the research project. However, primarily for practical and pragmatic reasons, the overall project – which this article serves to explicate only partially – confined itself to academic journals. More specifically, the English-language articles published in the following 11 academic journals were analysed: *English Studies in Africa* (47 volumes, University of Witwatersrand, 1958-2004); *Unisa English Studies: Journal of the Department of English* (33 volumes, UNISA, 1963-1995); *UCT Studies in English* (15 issues, University of Cape Town, 1970-1986); *English in Africa* (31 volumes, ISEA, 1974-2004); *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies* (25 volumes, PUvCHO/North-West University, 1980-2004); *English Academy Review* (24 volumes, English Academy of Southern Africa, 1980-2004); *Journal of Literary Studies/Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* (20 volumes, SAVAL, 1985-2004); *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (16 volumes, University of Natal/University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1989-2004); *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* (12 volumes, University of Cape Town, 1989-2003); *Alternation* (11 volumes, CSSALL, 1994-2004); and *scrutiny2: issues in english studies in southern africa* (nine volumes, UNISA, 1996-2004). These were reviewed in the project with the aim of characterising both the discourse and the discipline in South Africa.

Until 1958, there was no English academic journal focusing exclusively on language and literature. This is not to say there were no regular forums in

South Africa for publishing formal or academic work in English on such matters. A.C. Partridge, co-founder and first editor of *English Studies in Africa*, mentions three other important forums at the time, *Theoria*, *Standpunte* and *Contrast* (1964: 139). *Theoria*, which began its life as an academic journal of the Faculty of Arts of the then University of Natal, was launched in 1947. *Standpunte* and *Contrast* were literary journals not directed at an academic audience in the narrow sense, and mainly carried creative writing (particularly *Contrast*), though they also published critical reviews authored by both writers and academics (often, writer-academics). Another very interesting quarterly periodical, *Trek*, saw contributions from major literary academics of the time.

Special focus journals, such as *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* and *SA Theatre Journal* were not considered primarily due to the aim of describing *general* trends within the discourse. The 11 journals selected cover prose, poetry and theatre as well as cultural artefacts, rendering them relatively more representative of *general* academic production. Nevertheless, the very representativity of peer-reviewed journals in respect of the discipline could very well be questioned. There are academics, such as Stephen Gray, who have published widely, even (it could be argued) indiscriminately, as articles of academic register by this particular academic have appeared in peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journals alike. Furthermore, academics in English studies in South Africa often publish abroad. Though the opposite is perhaps less common (that is, non-South African academics publishing articles in South Africa), there are a great many journals in other countries dealing with similar topics and, particularly over the last two decades, on postcolonial literature in Southern Africa. It must be admitted, too, that the 11 journals selected for analysis have not always been subject to systematic "peer-reviewing" as practised today, as is required in the case of accredited journals.

Not all the journals selected for review were officially accredited by the Ministry of Education for research grant purposes or had enjoyed such status throughout their existence until the end of the review period (2004). Such accreditation officially marks out a journal as a research journal, at which point there can be no confusing it with its distant relative, the literary magazine. However, the accreditation award (a notoriously complicated and cumbersome process) is primarily a mechanism for government funding of universities applying the SAPSE subsidy formula. It does not follow that journals which have not been accredited are not "academic". For the purposes of the research project, the basis for designation of the journals as "academic" was not the accreditation status, nor whether the journal had always been peer-reviewed or not. It was the *academic* origin, that is, the fact that the journal was launched and maintained from within academia and was by and large dominated by academics in terms of contributors, that was used as the criterion for selection.

Literary magazines were excluded not because their content is not "academic" in the sense of not being intellectual, but because it was assumed that their basis outside of academia and the structure of their audience (the literary public per se as opposed to academics), rendered their content non-representative of the discipline of English studies as practised in the academy. For these reasons, we refer to the 11 journals as "academic" journals rather than "peer-reviewed" or "accredited" journals.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the editors of all the 11 journals applied vetting procedures involving peers in the selection of articles. In addition, the use of "academic" is not here meant to connote "intellectual" in contrast to non-intellectual discourse outside the academy. Rather, the term "academic discourse" for the purposes of the project was defined as the academic articles written by academics and meant for consumption by other academics and published within the dedicated forums designated to such ends.

The current of discourse on literary matters is torrential. This analysis focuses only on a narrow stream of that discourse: the academic stream. In addition to the already-mentioned non-peer-reviewed or public literary magazines as well as content published in other forums such as the Internet and newspapers, there are monographs, anthologies, conference papers and lectures. In addition to other forms of secondary discourse, "literary discourse" includes primary discourse, that is, imaginative literature itself in all its manifestations, be it oral literature, fictional prose, theatre, poetry and so on, written or unwritten. Hence, the objection could be raised that the selected part of the discourse is too narrow, and hardly representative of the discourse at all, never mind the discipline.

These objections are valid and cannot be entirely dismissed, nor would we attempt to do so. Our focus on the above-mentioned journals does not derive from an unshakeable conviction that they indeed represent the discipline of English studies, or that they constitute the highest and most rarefied form of discussion within larger debates on imaginative output – far from it. Nor, more narrowly, would we contend that the said journals represent English academic literary discourse per se. We do claim, however, that academic journals are a major forum of *academic* literary practice. Though a transparency of language is assumed (that is, speech uttered by addressors is taken *literally* and not *figuratively*), no comprehensively mimetic relationship between English academic discourse and the discipline of English studies in South Africa is assumed: what objects academics feel compelled to analyse, the repertoire of tools used in analysis, and what topics become current at any one moment, all come to characterise *part* of the *practice* of the discipline at that time.

Such an analysis remains partial because, while the discourse in academic journals can be said to embody important enunciations of the discipline, the record remains incomplete. Not all discourse within the discipline is mani-

fested in articles, and some articles are not published. Moreover, in looking at such research outputs, we might arrive at a more or less accurate characterisation of one facet of the discipline. While this might tell us part of the story of the discipline, it will certainly miss other facets, such as other discipline-related activities undertaken by practitioners (teaching, mentoring, literary competitions, non-academic literary forums, community work). Hence, any claims to the completeness or unmediated representativity would be entirely unsupportable. Any conclusions drawn must be tentative: it will never be possible to cover all the output of any discursive practice in pursuit of defining it. Setting aside the question of the desirability of such an undertaking, its *Sisyphean* dimensions are immediately apparent. Nevertheless, we maintain that it is a plausible supposition that the 11 selected journals are significantly emblematic of a very important facet of the discipline, and that it is not only possible to derive meaningful insights about the discourse and the discipline through analysis of the content of the selected journals, but that it is also possible to make valid claims as to their nature.

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Academic literary discourse differs substantially from other forms of literary discourse in terms of its *functions.* Even where the content of the academic stream of the discourse bears similarities with content of other streams, its specificity and significance derives to a considerable degree from specific functions which set it apart from those other streams. In what follows, we venture several speculations on the identity and nature of these functions. Certain functions specific to academic journals, we believe, set the enunciations published in them apart from the same or similar enunciations in other forums, thus justifying their isolation for analytical purposes from the wider literary discourse. On our reading, there are three main discernible objective functions specific to academic journals, which for present purposes are summarised under the following broad headings, namely: (1) career formation; (2) knowledge formation; and (3) canon formation. We deal briefly with each of these below.

Among other forms of academic output, the academic journal arguably plays its most important role in the formation and development of academic careers. While the "publish or perish" axiom may not in reality always apply de facto in the corridors of academic departments, the imperative, within the logic of the university and the discipline, to undertake and publish research output is ineluctable: it is generally not an option, academics must publish. There may well be exceptions where academics who have gained a reputation as excellent lecturers will be awarded professorships in spite of low levels of academic output or output of an

indifferent quality. However, the exception proves the rule: academic careers are based primarily on research records.

The academic journal is not the only forum for such research outputs. Indeed, in addition to academic articles, there are monographs, anthologies, conference papers and full-length books recognised by peers as academic in nature (as opposed to popular), which may all be recognised by peers as research outputs. Nevertheless, in terms of volume, the journal article is the most common, and moreover, ideas or propositions for monographs, anthologies and books are often first mooted or first versions of the texts appear in journal articles. While we recognise that this may not always be the case, it appears reasonable to assume that one can profile with a degree of accuracy the general developments in research undertaken in a discipline by tracing the trends in academic journals.

Related to the function of career formation, the publication of research on the objects of the discipline constitutes the formation of knowledge within the discipline. Over time, a body of knowledge on the objects falling within the purview of the discipline is thus built up. In all activities of the practising academic, whether in developing curricula or course content, lecturing or undertaking research, it is to this body of knowledge that one turns as the main resource. It may reasonably be objected that the literary academic turns to many sources, not merely peer-reviewed output (whether in the form of the academic article, monograph and so on). Among other sources, there is primary literary discourse as such, that is, the imaginative output which constitutes (for the most part) the primary object of the discipline. Naturally, these objects play a major role; however, in terms of the discipline as such, the objects of the discipline do not constitute the knowledge within the discipline: they do not constitute speech emanating from the academy. Without extant secondary discourse, it is all but impossible to construct curricula, develop course content or write a lecture.

Of course, in research, the academic gaze often falls on new objects never before scrutinised, and thus the process of knowledge formation begins. Another source (or set of sources) is non-academic secondary discourse, that is, reviews in newspapers or review articles, analyses, even in-depth research, published in non-peer-reviewed forums, such as literary magazines or the Internet. While popular reviews are less frequently cited in peer-reviewed articles, the status of what might be considered more serious work published in non-peer-reviewed forums is difficult to assess. Suffice it to say that, as a general rule, academics resort to such sources less often to support arguments made in academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Such a practice points to sensitivity to the status or authority of such speech; in instances where this general rule is not applied, it is due to the status of a particular academic. Where someone with an impeccable reputation as an academic publishes an article on, say, the Internet, the citation-value, if you will, remains high. Nevertheless, it is still the peer-

reviewed forums which establish academic reputations in the first instance. Hence, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the peer-reviewed journal plays a major role, perhaps *the* major role, in knowledge-formation within the discipline.

It might be objected that the model of knowledge which sees each successive publication within the discipline as the advancement of knowledge, increasing the stock of know-how incrementally over time, refining and improving it, constantly moving the frontiers further and further back, expanding the horizon of the discipline, is hopelessly *outmoded*, seemingly oblivious of Kuhn ([1962]1996) and Feyerabend (1988). We are not endorsing such a model of knowledge. What we are saying, though, is that in practice, it is the model which is applied. For example, some may take the view that the very considerable volume of academic articles, monographs and conference papers on Olive Schreiner, as opposed to most other South African authors, does not therefore constitute a greater, more precise and profounder exposition of this author than discourse on any other author. (Much the same can be said about J.M. Coetzee.) Setting aside the question of the quality of research output (that is, more does not always mean better), some would take issue with the very concept of "knowledge" implied in such a view. Cornwell describes an alternative model of knowledge:

> In the epistemology of postmodernism "knowledge" and the "truth" which it purports to reveal are viewed as historically contingent .... The radicalism of this challenge to the authority of rational or "empirical" discourse is nowhere more apparent than in the domain of the natural sciences, where "new discoveries" in science are seen to be the product of new discourses, of metaphoric redescriptions of the world, rather than of new insights into the intrinsic nature of the world. The history of science becomes a history of symbolisation patterned by the shifting requirements of hegemonic ideology.
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> (Cornwell 1980: 3)

The natural sciences operate in the empirical context of natural phenomena, while the humanities operate in the non-empirical context of cultural phenomena. ("Empirical" is being used here to describe knowledge based on observation and experiment and which can be made subject to independent and repeatable verification.) Taking Cornwell seriously, new inventions in natural science, such as a new drug, could be regarded as the product of a new discourse, a metaphoric re-description. Such a conclusion appears counter-intuitive, even absurd. In the humanities, however, the fact that one works through the medium of language, such an "epistemology of postmodernism" (if that's what it is), cannot be summarily dismissed. It would indeed seem as though the history of literary studies at times is little more than the history of metaphoric re-descriptions (see also de Kock 2005: 1-15).

Be that as it may, for all intents and purposes, it would seem to us that the literary academic works on a "realist" or "pragmatic" model of knowledge. That is, not realism or pragmatism in a philosophical sense, but a colloquial, unproblematised or even naïve sense – not for reasons of lack of sophistication, but for practical reasons. This is because the workaday business of literary discourse, consisting in substantial part of descriptive and evaluative statements on cultural artefacts, is forced to rest on a set of assumptions about the status of such statements, to wit: the representational capacity of language, and the very possibility of making valid judgements on cultural artefacts based on direct experience of them. As a general matter of course, the literary academic does not routinely question the nature of "knowledge" or "truth", but works on the assumption that, more or less, language and the analytic tools at his or her disposal, can be used to describe cultural phenomena *as he or she perceives them*. Academic articles contain many statements, which are made confidently and presented (implicitly or explicitly) as reasonably held. If there is any one thread which runs through (almost) all the articles, it is the implicit assumption that it is possible and meaningful to make knowledge or truth claims on the objects under purview. To hold the opposite view must be to lapse into silence.

This is not to suggest that literary academics are philosophically naïve. It is the rare academic that presents a claim as irrefutable. On the other hand, ideas are not routinely presented as either entirely contingent or permanently disputable. (It is often ironic to observe literary academics making statements about the non-foundational contingency of statements in general in a manner redolent of breathtaking confidence in their own statement-making abilities.) What we are saying, then, is that the implicit model of knowledge used in practice encapsulates a belief in the potential to build up a body of verifiable, or at least useful and useable, knowledge and a stock of truth claims which, while subject to deferral and revision, are valuable in themselves, and can be regarded as "in the true" (to borrow a phrase from Foucault) in terms of the discipline. Claims are usually relativised as either more valid, more to the point, better argued, more relevant, and so on. As a general rule, academics do not explicitly or implicitly claim a privileged vantage point or insights which are unavailable, or potentially unavailable, to others.

In the academy, the term "true" has some use, whether we are postmodernists or not, and if we are, regardless of what sort of postmodernists we are. We accept that there are reasonable generalisations which may be supported by evidence. The statements we or any other academics make about this or that object are of course the result of particular claims and what are, hopefully, particular insights. Such claims and insights should be defended on a case-by-case basis against plausible alternative or rival claims. There can be no claim to infallibility but neither are claims based on

nothing, or that in every case, the opposite claim is just as valid or consistent with the non-controversial evidence.

Without labouring the point, it would seem to us that literary academics share a common faith in a general model of knowledge which sees each successive publication within the discipline as a contribution to knowledge, increasing the stock of relatively authoritative statements incrementally over time, refining and improving that stock, constantly moving the frontiers further and further back, expanding the horizon and polemic textures of the discipline. To hold a contrary view and at the same time to participate in formation of new knowledge in the discipline is thinkable, though this would perforce involve a particularly cynical approach to the practice. Evidence of this is the investment which the discipline has in the maintenance of the divisions which separate this privileged discourse, this gold standard – discourse which carries a premium (in citation value, academic credential value, constitution of the map of the discipline), and which largely constitutes "knowledge" in the discipline – from the world of discourse outside the academy.

Finally, there is the function of canon formation. The literary canon has been defined as denoting "those authors whose works, by cumulative consensus of authoritative critics and scholars ... have come to be widely recognised as 'major'" (Abrams 1988: 20). While it is almost certain that literary academics in South Africa would not agree on the exact compilation of the list of "major" English-language southern African authors (not to speak of English authors) nor on their ranking in such a list, it would be conceded that, should such a list be drawn up, Olive Schreiner, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Athol Fugard, Bessie Head, Zakes Mda, and Douglas Livingstone, among others, would certainly find a place there. It will further be conceded that, though no such explicit list exists, it is a certain fact of academic life that the literary canon exists. It manifests itself in the formation of curricula, specifically in the drawing up of reading lists in undergraduate courses, both in terms of primary works and secondary discourse, and in the choice of research subjects. For it is a fact that, in the normal course of academic business, the inclusion of a primary author in the curriculum goes hand in hand with the existence of research material on the given author, in turn a function of the literary academy's assessment of the importance of an author. In the larger study from which this article is drawn, it is argued that, in looking at trends in the selection of work by primary authors for treatment in academic articles, popular genres have by and large been ignored, and that an ever-increasing number of South African authors have fallen under the academic gaze in the period under review (1958-2004). We are insisting on designating canon formation a "function" of the academic journal, as opposed to a mere effect: in the humanities, the research journal is fundamentally embroiled in the process of defining the purview of its gaze.

While it is true that the purview of objects has widened to include oral literature, and that proponents of cultural studies have written academic articles on non-literary subjects, and while it may be that the influence in academia of the literary canon is declining, it still holds true that the creation and maintenance of a literary canon, or scope of objects proper to the discipline, is a function of academic journals. This statement may be criticised as axiomatic since, as the literary canon is largely the province of the literary academic and has barely a presence outside of academia, it stands to reason that what literary academics believe to be "major" will, for their own purposes, be major. On the one hand, humble academics may feel that the sphere of influence of the English studies department hardly reaches beyond the bounds of the university facilities, in which case talk of a literary canon does not have much or any significance outside of the academy. On the other hand, in the past, both proponents and detractors of the English department have chosen to view the impact on society of literary works, the effects of the university curricula on students, and the purported conservatism of literary academics, as being of profound consequence.

We find neither of these versions compelling. While it may be true that the literary academic has precious little influence on what imaginative works the general public buy or consume, it is certainly true that *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner would not still be in print if it were not for the fact that literary academics have paid relentless attention to this author. The same can be said for many marginal authors, or genres for that matter, which survive because of their inclusion in the literary canon. Moreover, while it is not unthinkable, it is certainly very rare, for any literary prize to be awarded without consulting literary academics. The process of establishing literary reputations, the designation of an author as "serious" and deserving of laudation, appears to be a function of academic attention paid to an author (that is, among others, academic articles published on the author's work), as opposed to mere volume of sales.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to state that authors in particular, in learning their trade, whether they aspire to literary stardom or merely to have something, anything, published, will look to the literary canon for examples of good writing. In this and other ways, it can be assumed that academics do influence literary production through the mechanism of the literary canon. We will not attempt to show the importance or ineluctability of this process. Our point here is simply to establish that the academic journal, the forum for publishing serious secondary discourse on primary imaginative work, plays an important if not major role in canon formation.

Hence, the secondary discourse represented by the 11 academic journals, which constitute the main platform for publication of research in English studies in South Africa, is differentiated from non-academic literary discourse and primary literary discourse in its functions of career formation, knowledge formation, and canon formation. However, we would add that

this list of functions is not assumed to be exhaustive, though we would claim that they are fundamental to the discipline. All the same, the fault lines which separate academic literary discourse and other modes of literary discourse are certainly not unbridgeable, but they nevertheless run deep.

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