

Reshaping narratives, revitalising languages

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How to cite this article:

Van Schalkwyk, P., 2024,
'Reshaping narratives,
revitalising languages',
Literator 45(1), a2127.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v45i1.2127>

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The rich crop of article contributions in 2024 showcases the vitality of the fields of literature and linguistics in responding to contemporary concerns and longstanding questions.

Several of the literary contributions this year aim to challenge established readings and colonial vestiges through employing alternative lenses. There is a focus on myth, tradition (including the oral and the canonical) and narrative, particularly how these elements are invoked and reshaped within specific cultural contexts. Environmental themes have also received attention, in particular the relationship between people and landscapes, which is viewed also in terms of literary valency. Discussions of identity and marginalisation are central to several literary contributions. This includes an exploration of the capacity of literature to challenge traditional modes of storytelling and to move to the narrative centre those voices that have often been sidelined. Gender is an important theme, notably in discussions that focus on African women's writing. By examining characters and literary figures that challenge patriarchal systems, the evolving discourse on gender roles and the empowerment of women is traced. The emphasis on education as a transformative force is particularly striking, shedding light on the sociopolitical significance of formal education in breaking down gendered barriers within postcolonial African societies.

Turning to linguistics, the focus is largely on the role of language in education, identity and cultural preservation. Articles highlight the ongoing challenges and opportunities related to the use of indigenous languages in South Africa, with discussions around the status and vitality of these languages in multilingual settings. Scholars bring attention to the perceptions of speakers of minority languages, who, despite pressures to shift towards more dominant languages, continue to assert the value and relevance of their linguistic heritage. This resilience is explored not just through sociolinguistic theory but also through practical strategies aimed at fostering the intellectualisation of these languages for use in academic and scientific contexts. Within the language education sphere, contributors explore reading challenges in academic and language acquisition settings, as well as the vital role of technology in the preservation, development and teaching of indigenous languages.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our reviewers and section editors for the indispensable role they play in maintaining and improving the quality of *Literator*.

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