
HONORARY DEGREE

Zoë Wicomb

DLitt (honoris causa)

Wicomb, an academic and novelist, is also among the most significant and widely-read literary interpreters of South Africa. There are over a hundred critical studies that engage with each of her first two works, *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) and *David's Story* (2000), a comparable scholarly impact to the work of Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer. JM Coetzee describes *David's Story* as “a tremendous achievement and a huge step in the remaking of the South Africa novel”.

Wicomb writes from the political subject position of black womanhood. Yet, while her fictional and critical oeuvre pricks holes in the pretensions of patriarchy and intervenes in structures of racialisation, it simultaneously refuses to retreat into identity politics, resisting in turn the complacencies or violence such politics can spawn.

Wicomb was the inaugural winner of Windham Campbell Literature Prize for Fiction in 2013 – a prestigious global writer's prize for an *oeuvre* rather than single work, and now one of the largest literary prizes in the world. She has further had the unusual distinction for a living South African writer of her fiction being the sole focus of three international conferences each of 2-3 days in duration and hosted, respectively, by the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London; the University of Stellenbosch; and York University.

Besides her fiction, she is the author of a number of incisive critical articles on South African and southern African literature and art, including the highly influential essays “Shame and identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa” (1998) and “To Hear the Variety of Discourses” (1990; rpt. 1996), and “Five Afrikaner Texts and the Rehabilitation of Whiteness” (1998).

Wicomb is sought after as a reader and speaker at international literary events, and has held a number of fellowships and writer residencies, including at the University of Cape Town, the University of Macau and (forthcoming) at STIAS. She is the 2015 Chair of Judges of the Caine Prize for African Fiction (the most prestigious and influential Africa-wide literary prize), and has been selected as one of two South African writers to participate in the “Literatures of the South” programme that was launched in Buenos Aires in September 2015. She is Emeritus Professor at the University of Strathclyde, where she was previously a professor of postcolonial literature and creative writing.