Tribute to Archie Mafeje

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We are all here because we loved and admired Professor Mafeje. I for one have always been intimidated by him and infatuated by his work.

In one obituary written in his honour the author politely alluded to Archie' s intolerance of mediocrity reminding us that he was ' (L)ess tolerant of scholars not sure footed in their scholarship' . I think he was referring to me!

Archie could indeed be much less than tolerant. But his writing and scholarship were kind and conscious of the limitations of others. *He wrote to convert* practitioners and researchers from objects to agents for the liberation of African social science. He was aware of how insurmountable the walls of ' colonial anthropology' were and blamed that project and its complexity for the ' defeat' of African anthropology. To liberate the latter, anthropologists need to master, apprehend, surround, expose and vanquish the former. This quintessential decon-struction, deconstruction for transformation, is a tolerant project that makes explicit his awareness of and acceptance of the limitations of much current scholarship.

His vitriolic attacks on postmodernism are known to most of you. So are his attempts to deracialize Anthropology and to decimate its central concept of alterity. But while he speculated on the end of Anthropology he seduced his students into that very same discipline. Archie commented on a rather awful paper that I once wrote for him saying, ' Perhaps you can read but you certainly can' t write!' Perhaps I still can' t but it is thanks to him that I continue to try.

There are three gifts that he has left his students and readers:

1- The importance of cognitive value as distinct from empirical stock;

2- Clarity and rigour in writing as an alternative to writing postmodernist circles in an opaque but likeable language;

3- Courage to find a peer group and recognize when established criteria of worth are fickle and faddish.

Thank you, Archie, on behalf of the ' not so brilliant' who you helped challenge and shape. Thank you for your brilliance, cheek, audacity and very loving self.