

Twenty years of *Ons komvandaan*: Reflections on the Legacy of Diana Ferrus

In February 2025 a group of academics, poets, translators, friends and mentees of Diana Ferrus convened at the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study (Stias) to celebrate the twenty-year anniversary of her debut poetry collection, *Ons komvandaan* (2006, Diana Ferrus Uitgewers). After this meeting we started work on an edited collection consisting of academic, creative and translation contributions to the workshop.

Early in 2026 when poet, activist and community builder Diana Ferrus passed away the organisers had to rethink the project. While still celebrating the achievement that is *Ons komvandaan*, we have realised the need to also honor and commemorate other aspects of Diana's rich life, career and legacy. To this end, we have reopened submissions for contributions to this book project. Proposed chapters can be in any language and take the form of creative writing (poems, short stories or other texts), personal reflective essays, academic studies or translations of her poems (three to six poems, with an accompanying reflective or academic essay on the translation process).

Proposals will be considered which complement the chapters we already have, which include academic chapters on Diana's influence on other Afrikaans women poets, her writing on her father in *Die vrede kom later* (2019), and her exploration of cultural 'komvandaan' and non-familial kinship. Dutch, English, isiXhosa and isiZulu translations of poems from *Ons komvandaan* have already been received. Translations into other languages, or of other poems, are welcomed.

While *Ons komvandaan*, its depiction of identity and South Africa's history of slavery (see Chaudhari 2013), its influence on Afrikaans feminist literature (Bonthuys 2020 and Xaba 2019), pedagogic potential (Linde & Kirsten 2023) and Ferrus's role in portraying Sara Baartman and in repatriating her remains (Boswell 2016, Gqola 2010 and Wicomb & Lewis 2021), amongst other topics, has received significant and meaningful scholarly attention, there are still many aspects of Diana's work that deserves further consideration. These include, but are not limited to,

- *Ons komvandaan* as the historiography of not only the descendents of indigenous and enslaved South Africans in general, but also of a specific family
- The mother-daughter relationship in Ferrus's poetry
- The representation of domestic and gender-based violence
- The inclusion of visual elements (photos, copies of baptism certificates and of an identity document, handwritten notes by ancestors)
- Ferrus's practice of self-translation and the relationship between her Afrikaans and English writing
- The depiction of landscape, plants and embodiment in various poems
- Self-publishing - Makhosozana Xaba (2019:44, 46, 49 & 51) refers to Ferrus's self-publishing in relation to that of other black women poets, but building on and updating the work of Neil Chochrane (2008:31-51), this aspect could also be further explored with reference to the Afrikaans literary system more broadly and in terms of other examples of self-publication within the Swart Afrikaanse Skrywers-movement (see the role of Petersen as an inspirational poet-publisher)
- Diana Ferrus as community builder and mentor, and her influence on different literary systems and individual poets
- In addition to or in comparison with the ode to Sara Baartman, the representation of other iconic black women such as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Brenda Fassie
- The influence of music on Ferrus's poetry
- Ferrus's performance of her poetry
- The representation of Afrikaans as language and socio-cultural phenomenon (building on the work of Linde & Kirsten 2023)
- Love, the erotic and breakup poems

Please send a proposal of maximum 300 words to bibi.burger@uct.ac.za and athambile.masola@uct.ac.za by **30 November 2026**. Final versions of accepted chapters are to be submitted by **12 February 2027**.

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