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Giving Voice: Narrating Silence, History and Memory in André Brink's *The Other Side of Silence* and *Before I Forget*

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This essay examines André Brink's two most recent novels, *The Other Side of Silence* (2002) and *Before I Forget* (2004), in terms of their voicing of silence and the rewriting of history and memory. Each has a theme familiar to Brink's readers – an historical story of colonial violence and violation avenged; and the recounting by an older writer of his "last love", respectively – and each is mediated by a male narrator. Both narrators, though, draw attention to the problems associated with this reconstructive and potentially appropriative storytelling. These texts thereby enact, in a more complex way than many of Brink's previous novels, the intersections of narrative, history and memory. **Key words:** André Brink, *The Other Side of Silence*, *Before I Forget*, silence, history memory.

"I have always been interested in looking over my own shoulder when I write" – *André Brink* (Wroe, 2004: 15).

André Brink has always been a transgressive writer. From his very early novels to his most recent ones, his work has been concerned with articulating silences and voicing violations. The two "thou shalt nots" that were excised from the Afrikaans literature of the 1960s and 1970s by government censorship – that is, sex and politics – pervade Brink's work. Transgressing the strict social, religious and political taboos of a Calvinist, apartheid South Africa by shocking and outraging his readers (and the Nationalist Government) with sexual explicitness, scenes of colonial violence, anti-apartheid rhetoric and even sex between "black" and "white", Brink's work was at odds with the strict parameters for literature available in apartheid South Africa. He was personally subjected to censorship and surveillance, and regarded by some as a traitor to Afrikanerdom. It is not surprising, then, that the notions of speaking the unsayable and exposing violations of personal and national freedoms have become cornerstones of Brink's body of work. It is also not surprising that, given the riskiness of continuing to foreground sexuality and violence in a post-apartheid nation, his more

recent work has continued to provoke controversy, not least because he has increasingly expressed an interest in taking on a “feminine voice” and reconstituting female voices silenced by history. Brink’s most recently published texts, *The Other Side of Silence* (2002) and *Before I Forget* (2004), each engages with these issues of narrating silence, history and memory. The first novel reconstructs the story of a German woman forgotten by history; the second records the relationship between an ageing writer and a younger woman, and each is mediated by a male narrator. This article explores these novels as paradoxically both critiquing and embodying the processes involved in the voicing of silence and the inscription of sexuality and violence. There are dangers in both these projects: of making his women characters the objects of yet another master-narrative (his own) despite his stated intention of retrieving them from silence; of spectacularising and reprising through narrative the violent acts that have accompanied the history of Southern Africa over time; and of reifying a masculinist perspective on sexuality. Both these novels, I suggest, run the risk of being read in this way and yet, at the same time, show a greater awareness than some of his previous novels of their own potential complicity.

There are two woman figures who have haunted Brink’s more recent work – Joan of Arc (or Jeanne d’Arc, as Brink calls her) and Scheherazade. Each of these women represents an important aspect of Brink’s own writerly credo: firstly, Joan, the outspoken rebel who refuses to be consigned to the dustbin of history and who transgresses all boundaries set to limit the behaviour of women as “the gentle sex”; and secondly, Scheherazade, the storyteller from the *Thousand and One Nights* who defers death by entrancing the king with her stories which must so engage his interest that he is forced into allowing her another day of life.¹ It has been suggested that the stories from the *Thousand and One Nights* evolved “as a response or reaction to a rigid social and spiritual structure” of the time, expressing a carnivalesque subversion of moral strictures (Sallis, 1999: 1), and Brink’s work can also be read in this way. Brink himself, as a rebellious Afrikaner, risked a kind of excommunication from his “tribe” by writing as he did and has emphasised, in a number of his critical pieces, the importance of storytelling as a way of making sense of the world. He has called this impulse “the recognition of the *need to storify*” (following Brian Wicker’s notion of a story-shaped world and Russell Hoban’s statement that “we make fiction because we *are* fiction”) (Brink, 1996: 243). These two impulses, the telling of stories and the reinsertion of a woman’s voice into the master

narrative to reassert her agency, are evoked in these two women – Jeanne and Scheherazade. It has usefully been suggested that Brink’s allusion to Scheherazade in his fiction has “a dual function: it conjures up stories as a technique of survival (both for the narrator and the reader in the postcolonial context) and inverts the stereotypical role of the woman as victim to become the subject of her own story” (Wenzel, 2004: 75).

It is indeed the linking of these figures, Joan of Arc and Sheherazade respectively, with Brink’s own narration that emerges in his most recently published novels, *The Other Side of Silence* and *Before I Forget*. In each, the urgency of the telling of stories is foregrounded – Hanna X’s story in *The Other Side of Silence* must be told to “set the record straight” (a phrase that recurs in Brink’s fiction) and the narrator of *Before I Forget*, Chris Minnaar, is recording in his narrative the “women who have shared my bed and the history of my time” (Brink, 2004: 153) before he forgets and they are forgotten. In addition to this sense of urgency that permeates Brink’s narration, the orality of the storytelling event is emphasised, with the male narrator in *The Other Side of Silence* taking on and articulating the silenced voice of Hanna X in his text, and Minnaar writing as a “commemoration” (Brink, 2004: 8) to Rachel immediately after her death. Each text, then, presents and perhaps also problematises the potentially appropriative activity of a male authorial voice either by reinstating a woman’s silenced voice (turning history into her-story, as Brink suggests) as in *The Other Side of Silence* or by potentially objectifying women through the explicit textual recounting, from a male perspective (albeit by a self-confessed Don Juan figure), of the narrator’s sexual encounters as in *Before I Forget*. Each of the narrators of these texts emphasises his own masculinity. In *The Other Side of Silence*, for example, the otherwise unnamed narrator identifies himself as a “male spectator” (Brink, 2003: 7) and is even more explicit about his project to reconstruct the life of his protagonist, Hanna X, by giving her a voice, when he writes: “I believe more and more that as a man I owe it to her at least to *try* to understand what makes her a person, an individual, what defines her as a woman” (Brink, 2003: 153). Brink has admitted that his own readings in feminism and the influence of his feminist wife have made him “only too aware of treading on very dangerous territory” in his figuring of the “feminine” in his recent novels (Huggins, 1999: 14). The questions each of these novels respectively invites are: does this articulating of the story of Hanna X in *The Other Side of Silence* avoid the narrational violence and violation of its subject that its retelling seeks to effect? And, in reading *Before I Forget*, are we as readers

being provoked into questioning the protestations of the narrator – that he is not simply listing his sexual conquests to illustrate his sexual prowess – in order to override his perspective (Brink has talked about enticing the reader into the book “with certain expectations which I would then start to subvert” – Wroe, 2004: 14) or are we being made complicit in his Don Juan-like adventures? Perhaps the very fact that these questions are so obviously raised by the texts suggests that they are being drawn to our attention as potential problems of reading.

An important aspect of the debate about the appropriation of voice is the problematic notion of inscribing or articulating silence. Benita Parry, in her influential analysis of the uses of speech and silence in the work of J.M. Coetzee, writes of the difficulty of “writing the silence attributed to the subjugated” (Parry, 1996: 39) without “suppressing or erasing difference, without pretending to simulate another’s authentic voice or speaking on another’s behalf, and without imprinting an ontological dissimilarity which simultaneously offers an explanation of, and excuse for, oppression” (Parry, 1996: 43). She is particularly critical of Coetzee’s “feigning” of a woman’s voice via his women narrators, and her criticism could equally be applied to Brink’s perhaps more earnest project of enabling women’s voices that have been suppressed by history to be heard.²

The stubborn refusal to be silent that is attributed to both Joan of Arc and Scheherazade is a characteristic not only of his own narrational activity, as already suggested, but also one that Brink has given to many of his fictional characters. Even those characters whose voices are deliberately silenced by history are reinstated in Brink’s novels and Hanna X is a recent example. *The Other Side of Silence* (Brink, 2003) tells the story of Hanna, a German orphan, who, having experienced various incidents of physical and psychological abuse in an orphanage in Bremen and in domestic service, is among the shiploads of women – “flotsam from the fatherland” (Brink, 2003: 12) – transported to the German colony of South-West Africa (now Namibia) to provide wives for the settler men in the early twentieth century. She is silenced in two violent ways: firstly, by her excision from the historical record (as a woman and as a rebel – this process underlined by the loss of her surname to be replaced by the letter X); and, secondly, by the excision of her tongue in a violent attack as punishment for her refusal to submit quietly to rape. That Hanna’s story is one that must be retrieved from oblivion (from the “threadbare facts of history” – Brink, 2003: 148) is underlined by her own fascination with the story of Jeanne d’Arc. Indeed, an account of

Jeanne's life and death is said to be a "book that will mark Hanna for the rest of her life" (Brink, 2003: 64) and she is a figure with whom Hanna believes she has had an "intensely personal relationship" (Brink, 2003: 107). Hanna's teacher, Fräulein Braunschweig, suggests that Jeanne's historical significance is that "she did what no one had thought possible" and that she "remained true to herself all the way" (Brink, 2003: 66). In this way, Jeanne inspires Hanna with her "pride and resolution" and her ability to make people think and question. As her teacher suggests to Hanna, Jeanne "uncovers the dark places into which we may fear to look" (Brink, 2003: 66). It is the figure of Jeanne whom Hanna imagines hovering behind her, spurring her on to "attempt new strategies which will convert previous defeats into victory" (Brink, 2003: 121) during her chess games with Herr Ludwig, and later, during the revenge campaign Hanna wages against the German soldiers, she *becomes* Jeanne, a woman warrior taking charge of her own destiny and her own story.

There is a clear connection between this novel's exploration of silence and speech and an essay of Brink's published in 1998 entitled "Interrogating Silence: New possibilities faced by South African Literature" (Brink, 1998). In both pieces, the imaginative writing in the novel and the critical commentary of the essay, the trope of silence is employed. In his essay, Brink identifies the "specific silences imposed by certain historical conjunctions" (Brink, 1998: 14) which ensured that certain experiences and areas of knowledge were, in his words, "out of bounds to *probing in words*" (Brink, 1998: 15, my italics). In post-apartheid South Africa, he suggests, such oppressive silences will be filled by writers who will refuse the closing off of possibilities enforced in apartheid writing and accepted by writers, whether consciously or unconsciously. This new writing would, Brink writes, "address two silences simultaneously: that created by the marginalization of women, and that effected by a (white-dominated) master-narrative of history" (Brink, 1998: 24). Linking this new approach to the methodology of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Brink suggests that South Africa will not be able to move on without this crucial "attempt to grasp, with the creative imagination, the past and its silences" (Brink, 1998: 25). For Brink, then, both during the apartheid and now in the post-apartheid years, the writing process is inevitably linked with an uncovering of repressed memories (by nations and political regimes as well as by individuals) by a writer who is fearless in exposing the dark side of history and expressing that which has been suppressed.

This novel, then, seems to be his own creative expression or articulation of this critical approach, a revisiting of the past in order to reinstate marginalized women like Hanna and to reimagine the male-dominated version of history that has effected their silencing. As Brink suggests in his essay: "History provides one of the most fertile silences to be revisited by South African writers (...) because the dominant discourse of white historiography (...) has inevitably silenced, for so long, so many other possibilities" (Brink 1998: 22). This is a familiar theme in Brink's *oeuvre*, despite his claim to its post-apartheid renewal, and there is much in *The Other Side of Silence* that would be familiar to Brink's readers. The act of narration itself is mediated by a male narrator speaking on behalf of a woman who has been rendered speechless by having had her tongue cut out. But the narrator is aware of his reconstructing of her history "reimagined as herstory" (Brink, 1998: 23) and, in drawing attention to his own narrational practices, he attempts to escape the accusation that his retelling of Hanna X's story could be just another "master narrative". The text thus becomes a releasing of an oppressed and silenced voice and, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself, this release of untold stories seeks to perform part of an act of healing, both national and personal.

In attributing the silencing of women to the "master-narrative of history", Brink also draws attention to another ongoing theme in his fiction, that of the gendered nature of colonial violence and its link with the violation of women. Estienne Barbier, the narrator of Brink's earlier novel, *On the Contrary* (1993), articulates the colonial process of male domination of the land as one of possession but also of self-inscription born of anxiety:

Violence our language. A land hostile, empty, strange: it does not talk back, remains inaccessible. Which forces this violence from us, its motive achingly pure. On and on we move through the ever more arid landscape, sowing destruction as we go (...) An orgy of blood (...) with the single purpose of leaving on that virgin barren place the scrawl of our progress. *We were here* ... To acquire, to conquer, to have, to possess: I have therefore I am. Land, you are woman. Woman, you are mine (Brink 1993: 235–6).

It is this very conflation of land and woman's body that enables the German soldiers in *The Other Side of Silence* to impose their will on the women they encounter. But, like all colonisers, Brink suggests, they are motivated by a fear that lies behind the violence. As Hanna suggests:

“How curious, this urge they have, all of them, to leave their mark on a woman’s body. As if despair lies behind it, and fear, (...) In each the need, the terrifying urge, to scar and leave his mark. And only her body available for their inscription (Brink, 2003: 148). The words “the scrawl of our progress” and “inscription” make the crucial link between the writing process and mapmaking, a link that Brink has made previously in his critical essays.³ The disproportionate and violent nature of this inscription, figured here as a rape, is attributed to a sense of male inferiority that can only be assuaged through violation. The desire to penetrate to the interior of both Africa and the woman’s body is a desire not just for possession and destruction but also a need to be acknowledged and to belong – “I have therefore I am”.

Yet these violent colonial incursions and their counterpart in the master-narrative of history only serve to further emphasise the partial and incomplete nature of such accounts and to further disempower those who attempt to assert their identity through such violations. A crucial aspect of the act of healing is the finding of a voice that can speak of and to Africa outside of the dominant discourses that Brink identifies as having silenced marginalised voices and as having attempted to assert their identity on the land. The link between storytelling and the healing process is explicitly made in *The Other Side of Silence* when Hanna’s mutilated body (defiled and defaced by a German army officer on a train to Windhoek) is brought back to life not just by the Nama people’s medicinal knowledge but also by their stories:

Even during the days and nights when she was dazed and only half awake the stories must have insinuated themselves into her torn and bruised body like draughts and ointments with healing powers beyond all explanation. (“There is no pain and no badness,” she still hears the dry voice of old Taras in her ear, “that a story cannot cure.”) (Brink, 2003: 94.)

These healing powers “beyond all explanation” reside not just within the “magic” of the Nama’s traditional healing practices based on their detailed knowledge of curative desert plants but also within their oral culture and their language, which itself has brought the landscape into being. Thus, for Hanna, listening to the Nama speak in their own language rather than the halting German they use to communicate with her, the violent loss of her tongue is not the only impediment to conversing with them. It is that their language *is* the landscape, that

which has created “the things of this place, this space, in words not yet contaminated by other, or by other places” (Brink, 2003: 56). The close link between the place itself and the stories told about the land and its features ensure that when she walks, she believes that it is not the earth that she “feels under her soles but stories, live and hidden beings, natural and supernatural in turn, or at the same time” (Brink, 2003: 56). By feeling herself in touch with the African landscape by means of the Nama’s stories, Hanna can ease the pain in both her mind or memory and her body. As Taras tells her, “That is what stories are for” (Brink, 2003: 55).

That Brink, too, believes that stories can heal is made clear in his assertion in “Interrogating Silence” that “Africa has a brand of magic realism, peculiarly its own, to offer the world” in which “easy intercourse between living and dead form an integral part” (Brink, 1998: 26) and that: “[t]hrough perceiving the world as a story to be told and endlessly reshaped, I would argue, the reader is actually encouraged to act upon the world (...) literature becomes more, not less, potent” (Brink, 1998: 19).

By drawing on two traditions of oral storytelling that, for him, exist both in “black orature” and in early Afrikaans ghost stories (Brink, 1998: 26), and by infusing his own post-apartheid writing with this blend of African and Afrikaans oral traditions that may previously have been seen as contestatory, Brink is suggesting that national healing can be effected at the level of narration itself. Indeed, in his article on interrogating silence, Brink makes a specific reference to the healing process embodied in the functioning of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which, he suggests, was: “based on the assumption that societies, like individuals, cannot grow and mature unless they come to terms with the dark places – the silences – in themselves” (Brink, 1998: 24).

One of the “dark places” that is explored in Brink’s most recent novel, *Before I Forget* (Brink, 2004), is that of sexuality. In this novel, Brink’s explicit linking of the notions of probing for the truth, narration and sexual activity clearly evokes the imagery of women as muses for the male writer. His protagonist, Chris Minnaar, an ageing South African writer who is writing so as not to forget the details of his relationship with a younger woman who has just died, recalls in explicit detail all his sexual encounters from his childhood to the present-day and links them with the socio-political events that provided the backdrop to these encounters. By transcribing his sexual diary (or notes, as he calls them), Minnaar inadvertently overcomes the writer’s block

that has been obstructing the flow of his pen for years, producing the manuscript that is this book. Thus, "probing" becomes a physical, emotional and political journey inward to the point of pain and also provides the therapy of healing. "Not forgetting" is important both personally and nationally, then, to avoid all memory being lost, a way of "holding on (...) to life itself" (Brink, 2004: 281).

It is the connection between such phallic narrative probing and a contemporary crisis of masculinity that has, according to Minnaar, led to American involvement in the latest war on Iraq and this link between war and masculinity alerts the reader to a potentially transgressive reading against the narrator. Brink juxtaposes Minnaar's compulsive narrating of his sexual history with images that he sees on the television when, sleepless, he watches in horrified fascination the spectacle of violence that has characterised the war in Iraq. The text makes an explicit link between the war and a "macho America" which has been crushed by "women's liberation" and the destruction on 9/11 of the "two phallic towers that embodied the national male ego" (Brink, 2004: 105). Thus, the war is imaged as "Bush's big wet dream, his passage into his own warped notion of manhood" (Brink, 2004: 121). Maleness is defined "in terms of our ability to conquer and to destroy" (121). While this version of male assertion of power and that already discussed as part of the colonial incursion into South West Africa imaged in *The Other Side of Silence* as rape and terror are widely separated in time, they are both part of the same pattern of violence. Therefore, when the narrator makes the parallel between these images of war and his own relationships with women, the reader is invited to see Minnaar's own complicity in such violations:

I have to remind myself why I am watching these nightly shows: to help me sleep, to find perspective on love, and on my women. The ubiquitous image of us, men, fucking up the world – counterbalanced by women who must keep it going, to safeguard sanity. All my life I have been surrounded by violence of one kind or another, it has framed every relationship I have ever had. And when it seemed (...) that we had finally outpaced the nightmares of apartheid, new forms of violence irrupted into my relations with women (Brink, 2004: 219).

By implicating himself in the machismo ("us, men"), Minnaar is somehow a more acceptable narrator, aligned as a "compulsive seducer" (Brink, 2004: 42) with Don Giovanni, but one who is trying to understand his own narrational motivations. He refutes the idea that he is merely writing "a record of victories and conquests, not that at all. God

forbid" hoping instead that his narration can be seen as "a kind of harmless adventure in its own right, as I stumble along" (Brink, 2004: 8). Instead he suggests: "Perhaps it is a kind of homage. In praise of women. What would I have been – how could I have been *me* – without each and every one of them? (Brink, 2004: 10.)

Yet even the proprietorial phrase "my women" and his sense that women have "made" him what he is retain a manipulative edge. Indeed, the assertion that the narrative could be viewed as "a collection of moon-cloths garnered along the way, and taken with me to wherever the journey may take me" (Brink, 2004: 9) – a moon-cloth being a cloth stained with their woman's menstrual blood that men were said to keep with them as totems – is potentially dangerous in terms of gender politics. So Brink draws attention to the contradictory impulses in the narration – humility and boastfulness at the same time – as Minnaar remembers the "women who have shared my bed and the history of my time" (Brink, 2004: 153) thereby emphasising the potential for undermining the narrator's viewpoint.

One of the aspects of the text that is potentially alienating is the detailed description of Minnaar's sexual exploits. Yet even this is justified by the narrator of the text, not only by the references to Don Giovanni throughout, but also by the underlying references to the figure of Scheherazade and her stories which, according to the narrator, become "a gigantic, multifarious, astounding allegory of love and love-making" (Brink, 2004: 174). In describing the details of his relationship with Anna, Minnaar suggests that she was his Scheherazade and ponders on the significance of the *Thousand and One Nights*:

Through them [the love between Shahriyar and Scheherazade], love-making and narrative become interchangeable. For is not lovemaking a form of storytelling? – our bodies telling each other the most intimate stories about themselves. Each of the individual nocturnal tales can be read as a commentary, even as a manual, on the unfolding relationship between this man and this woman; and what they learn about love is all rooted in the wisdom she – a young virgin to start with! – imparts through her stories (Brink, 2004: 174-5).

This intimacy that links both sexuality and storytelling also emphasises the agency of Scheherazade, imaged here not as a helpless captive to the king but as the wiser partner, in control both of the narrative and their relationship. It is she who holds the power to release him "from the trap of narrow or absolute definitions about life and love, about

right and wrong, about transgression and punishment and revenge and forgiveness. Her stories – her love – teach him how to be wise” (Brink, 2004: 175). The phrase “embedded journalists” takes on an ironic twist as it connects the unfolding spectacle of the Iraq war with Minnaar’s sexual history. Acknowledging that there was a “time when embedding was a literary conceit” (Brink, 2004: 19), the narrator draws attention to the “narrative invention” (19) that makes up the nightly news events (“We cannot be sure of anything we see with our own eyes” – 19), reminding his readers that “[t]he Middle East is the home of Scheherazade”, who is “the patron saint of us writers” (19). Thus, the narrator draws attention to the unreliable and “risky business” of storytelling (19) which, like lovemaking, draws narrator and reader into an intimate relationship which can, of course, be staged. As George, the documentary photographer warns: “I don’t mistrust feeling (...) Only false feeling, ersatz feeling, cheap emotions (...) The kind of feelings Don Giovanni professes to have for all his women, only until he has bedded them. Then it all goes out of the window” (Brink, 2004: 187).

The potential for manipulating both feelings and events, the private and the public, is emphasised throughout the text in the tension between witnessing events and turning them into a spectacle. George’s photographs taken in Palestine, with their extraordinary “eye for the small human facts of everyday life” (Brink, 2004: 269), contrast with the “good show” that America put on with the television spectacle of the toppling of Saddam’s statue in Baghdad (Brink, 2004: 252). The notion of bad faith and deception is ever-present, making all representation suspect, and the unreliability of memory itself is foregrounded in Minnaar’s dying mother’s Alzheimer’s disease.

But the entire narrative itself, like one of the tales from the *Thousand and One Nights*, can also be read as a tale of deferment. It is not until the last few pages that we read the full account of the violent events leading to Rachel’s death that have been foreshadowed from the text’s first words – “You died at seventeen minutes to ten this morning”. As the narrator admits that he cannot postpone the end of the narrative any longer, he comes to the realisation through the deaths of his mother and Rachel, his “last love”, that: “We do not write to hold on, but to let go. I am learning, I hope, to loosen my grip, to set memory free, to let myself be (...) There is only the last moment and then I can leave it all. No need to write again (...) The rest is silence” (Brink, 2004: 306).

Early in the text, he had suggested that his writing was a memorial to Rachel – “To remember you (...) to recall you, like Eurydice, from the

dead" (Brink, 2004: 7). In asking what one writes for, he concludes that "there is one thing above all (...) To hold on. To have and to hold. Before it slips away. Before I forget" (7). By the time Rachel dies and the text comes to an end, though, the narrator has realised that this letting go is a measure of his love.

In an interview conducted before the official end of apartheid, Brink stated that his role as a novelist in South Africa was "to speak the silence that the system enforces and so to circumvent its repressive intent" (Hassall, 1991: 183). In contrast to this model of the writer as a resistant rebel against an oppressive authoritarian regime, in these two post-apartheid novels the writer figure, who narrates each of the texts, has taken into account and acknowledged a more complex interaction between subjectivity and state as he engages with the possibility of his own appropriating narrational activity. These less declamatory and more ambivalent texts engage the reader in a more challenging and multi-dimensional way with what Brink himself has called the "new possibilities" opening up to South African writers in a post-apartheid South Africa of expressing both "its voices and its silences" (Brink, 1998: 14). By implicating his own narrators (who are never far removed from himself in time, place or identity) in the paradoxes of articulating silence and remembering a past that risks being forgotten, Brink could indeed be said to be looking over his own shoulder while he writes, however uncomfortable a position this may be.

Notes

1. Jeanne d'Arc most notably appears in Brink's *On the Contrary* (1993) and in his acknowledgements in *The Other Side of Silence*, he describes her as "a luminous shadow in my memory" (Brink, 2003: 309).
2. For the problematics of this project in his novel, *Imaginations of Sand*, see Kossew, 1997.
3. See, in particular, the essay entitled "Mapmakers" in his collection of the same name. In this essay, Brink writes of a Danish explorer whose maps of the interior had to be kept secret as he risked imprisonment if he published them. Despite this, the explorer continues to draw his maps in secret. Brink relates this cartographic activity to that of the writer "slaving away in his ceaseless attempt to draw the map of his vision of truth, risking his liberty in order to offer to the world a view of itself" (Brink, 1983: 167).

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