

### Anette Horn & Peter Horn

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“It is much more complicated and much more fluid than mere linearity”  
Female genealogies in André Brink’s  
*Imaginings of Sand*

### Female genealogies in André Brink’s *Imaginings of Sand*

One of the subversive strategies of Brink in *Imaginings of Sand* (1996) is his rewriting of male history as a female genealogy. Genealogy is the instrument which confers legitimacy and controls the transfer of authority and property through various judicial processes. In this way he extends the boundaries of what it means to be ‘male’ by adopting a female persona, although one might argue that his male gaze nevertheless shows in his ‘female’ narratives. This raises the vexed question whether a man is ‘allowed’ to adopt, what is often perceived as an appropriation of, a female voice. We are formed by the texts and discourse surrounding and determining us, but we also become the authors of our own stories, at least if we are not prepared to accept the existing norms and conventions. But in South Africa, where the ‘real’ story has been obliterated by the years of apartheid and exile, transmitted traditional stories need to be questioned radically. Brink’s postmodern novel, like his ‘Bird House’ is one of those spaces over which the narrative has lost control, but precisely by exploring an “other-than-themselves” which has been “coded as feminine, as woman” it attempts to re-question “the major topics of that philosophy: Man, the Subject, Truth, History, Meaning”. **Key words:** André Brink, *Imaginings of Sand*, female genealogy, male gaze.

The house with the patriarchal name of ‘Sinai’ that alludes to Moses and the ten commandments is dubbed ‘The Bird Place’ by Kristien and her cousins, because it has been appropriated by a flock of birds that seem to follow Ouma Kristina wherever she goes – even the hospital is covered in birds who are following Ouma there (21) – as they do some of the other women in her genealogy, most notably Kamma/Maria, to whom the matriarch traces back her female lineage. Kriestien remembers that “Years ago Ouma said, ‘Birds are the spirits of dead women.’” When Kriestien interjects sceptically: “Then what happens when a bird dies?”, Ouma answers in her typical fashion: “It becomes something else again” (239). In her imaginary universe there is no finality – everything constantly transforms into something else. Ellen Moers refers to the bird symbol and its relation to women and souls: “Of all creatures birds alone can fly all the way to heaven – yet they are caged. Birds alone can sing more beautifully than human voices – yet they are unheeded, or silenced” (in Eagleton, 1996: 293f). Jung points out that

birds are an ancient archetypal symbol, and that “the tree of Sapiencia is surrounded by many fluttering birds”, as can be seen in the Pandora of 1588 (Jung, 1954: 360). Analysing the function of bird symbols in relation to women Ellen Moers asks: “Is the bird merely a species of the littleness metaphor? Or are birds chosen because they are tortured, as little girls are tortured, by boys like John Reed, who ‘twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little peachicks?’”<sup>1</sup> The birds that have appropriated the house as their nesting-place, however, also blur the distinction between nature and culture. The story itself is embedded in the hieroglyphics of the landscape of South Africa, human history and natural signs intertwined in the unfolding story: “And we, too, become part of this ancient writing, a story whispered among the others in the wind” (20). This is significant for a female discourse which defies the hierarchical binary oppositions of the phallogocentric discourse which, despite the endlessly gliding signifier, ultimately refers to the transcendental signified of the phallus.

In the house, other oppositions merge as well, such as life and death when the house is compared first to an ark and then to a wreck, and as the place where the dead remain living through the birds. Night and day also converge and change their conventional meanings. Because night time is associated with ‘feminine’ emotion and daytime with ‘masculine’ rationality, this inversion and subversion of the dominant discourse questions the rigidity of the most fundamental binary opposition in culture: the split between male and female. The house, “from a mail-order catalogue”, resembling a “palace only the Queen of Sheba or the builder of the Taj Mahal could dream up” finally gets built despite the fact that the “original plan had somehow been lost in transit” (6). This does raise the question, whether the ‘Bird House’ is not one of those spaces over which the narrative has lost control, an “other-than-themselves” which has been “coded as feminine, as woman.” In this way the novel attempts to re-question “the major topics of that philosophy: Man, the Subject, Truth, History, Meaning” (Jardine in Eagleton, 1996: 260f).

Brink extends the boundaries of what it means to be ‘male’ by adopting a female persona, although one might argue that his male gaze nevertheless shows in his ‘female’ narratives. This raises the vexed question whether a man is ‘allowed’ to adopt, what is often perceived as an appropriation of, a female voice, (cf. Horn, 1994) even though Brink acknowledges his wife Marésa’s assistance and advice in the author’s note, yet hesitates to name her as co-author. One could read *Imaginings*

of *Sand* as an attempt to insert into his-story the elided *elles*; but one can read the novel also as an attempt by a male reader to insert his *il* surreptitiously into imagined female stories. Grandmother Kristina's attempts to "foretell the past the way prophets foretell the future" (175) could be read as an attempt by a male writer to foretell his past and thus occupy what he sees (mistakenly) as pristine "uninscribed plains" (190). When her granddaughter Kristien says: "I have written it all down, I've appropriated it, claimed it as my own" (126), one wonders who is really appropriating what and whom here. Brink knows "a woman's word doesn't count" (36) and he does acknowledge that Kamma/Maria "didn't speak. She couldn't. Her tongue had been cut out" (191). The question is: can he make her speak? Or do "masculine fantasies and fears support the spectacle of woman as guarantor of both the Image and the systems that create it" (Benstock, 1991: 3). Kristien (and indirectly Brink) claim a communion of spirits which is not dependent on sound, voice or words. It is, as if the story writes itself: "Yet I have the impression that our communication is not dependent on something as extraneous as a voice. There is a more immediate insinuation of what she says into my consciousness; she articulates my writing hand" (97). The question, which arises out of this, is: "Can a man write as a woman? Can he allow the feminine that traverses his subjectivity to emerge without creating a fiction of it? That is, can he write at the limits of his own genre?" (Benstock, 1991: xxii). Yet again, why should he not "create a fiction of it"?

Some feminists have argued that "To advocate a woman's language, and a means of expression that would be specifically feminine seems to us equally illusory" (Editorial Collective in Eagleton, 1996: 338).<sup>2</sup> The problem of the *écriture féminine* comes into focus when Wittig (1983: 63) asserts "there is no 'feminine writing'". Language as such and in itself has the power to subordinate and exclude women. Nevertheless it can be radically transformed, because it is an institution maintained by the choices of individuals (cf. Butler, 1999: 15). And for Irigaray the feminine is neither an "Other" nor a "lack", it can never be the mark of a subject, it is essentially "multiple", "not one" (Butler, 1999: 15). And Benstock admits: "I have no theoretical or practical solution to these questions, which await us at every turn in literary studies and which, by their very natures, cannot be directly addressed" (Benstock, 1991: xxii).

Trying to save something specific for feminine writing, Kristeva (in Eagleton, 1996: 302) argues that among "the themes to be found in texts by women", is an invitation "to see, touch and smell a body made of

organs, whether they are exhibited with satisfaction or horror." If that is so, then the experience of a female body represents a particular difficulty for a male writer, since it raises the question whether the female body should be regarded as nature or culture. As Simone de Beauvoir (1987: 265) put it: A woman is not born but made. Judith Butler (1999: 164) points out that there is a political shape to "woman", and that it is the sexed female body that is the site of that cultural inscription. The "sexed body" is "the firm foundation on which gender and systems of compulsory sexuality operate." While it is indisputable that feminine traits are inscribed on the body in a number of body projects, as Frigga Haug (1987) argues in her book on female sexualisation, it would be equally absurd to deny the physiological differences between women and men, even if one accepts the variations sexual organs and pleasure can take. Again there has been much debate whether such forms of sexuality as female and male homosexuality are genetically or culturally determined.

If women experience sexuality differently from men, how is it then possible for a man to speak from a woman's perspective? He can of course refer to women's descriptions of their own sexuality or ask them how they experience bodily pleasure. It seems that one of the differences between male and female sexuality is that men are aroused through the gaze and that their pleasure is genital (excepting gays, of course), whereas women's experience of pleasure is more tactile and distributed over the whole body. Thus Kristien is sensually aroused by the night-breeze as she goes out into the garden. Pregnancy is also experienced as a source of pleasure, as in Ouma Kristina's fantasy of milk running from her breasts, covering her whole body and attracting an army of ants which crawl all over her.

On the other hand, while admitting that there is "a different socialization of the body", some feminists have argued against such a link between feminist writing and the body, and the belief "that woman's language is closer to the body, to sexual pleasure, to direct sensations", saying that that would mean "that the body could express itself directly without social mediation and that, moreover, this closeness to the body and to nature would be subversive." Against such an essentialist view they have argued that "there is no such thing as a direct relation to the body. To advocate a direct relation to the body is therefore not subversive because it is equivalent to denying the reality and the strength of social mediations, the very same ones that oppress us in our bodies." Searching for a true and eternal nature "takes us away

from the most effective struggle against the socio-historical contexts in which human beings are and will always be trapped" (Editorial Collective in Eagleton, 1996: 338). And Butler attempts to undermine this discourse by questioning its very terminology – sex and identity: "The more insidious and effective strategy it seems is a thoroughgoing appropriation and redeployment of the categories of identity themselves, not only to contest 'sex,' but to articulate the convergence of multiple sexual discourses at the site of 'identity' in order to render that category, in whatever form, permanently problematic" (Butler, 1999: 163).

One of the subversive strategies of Brink is his rewriting of male history as a female genealogy. Genealogy is the instrument which confers legitimacy and controls the transfer of authority and property through various judicial processes. Kristien's father, who desperately wants a son and heir, "retreated in disgust and pretended I hadn't happened" (3); when he realizes, that his wife has borne him another daughter. It is the male heir who will carry the name, while the female offspring has to adopt the name of her husband. "It is widely recognized that legitimacy is part of that judicial domain which, historically, has determined the right to govern, the succession of kings, the link between father and son, the necessary paternal fiction, the ability to decide who is the father – in patriarchal culture" (Jardine in Eagleton, 1996: 260). Ouma Kristina is very decisive, when it comes to the question of who "begat" whom: it is not the men, who have any kind of certain claim to the lineage:

"What have the Müllers got to do with it?" she asks, irritated. "Let's keep the men out of this. They came with verse and chapter. Our story is different, it doesn't run in a straight line, as you should know by now. You and Anna come from Louisa, your mother; she from me. And I've already told you something about the ones who came before me."

"Rachel. Petronella Wepener. Wilhelmina – what was her surname?"

"The surnames are of no importance. Those have all been added on, you can't rely on them. Every time a man becomes a father he's all too eager to get his surname into the picture. But how can he be sure that what he put in is the same as what comes out? We're the only ones who can tell for certain, and sometimes we prefer to keep it secret. It's us I'm talking about. The womenfolk. I told you it's my testament. And now that I'm getting close to death this is all that really matters" (174).

In the same way the father of Rachel remains unknown, even if Petronella “met [her husband’s] wildest accusations with a serene smile and the simple response that if the child wasn’t his (and whose else could it conceivably be, since he knew all too well how loathsome she found sexual congress) it could only have been the outcome of an immaculate conception” (105). Expanding on the notion of an immaculate conception she finally insists “that the miraculous nature of the event had been announced beforehand by none other than God Almighty himself during one of his nightly visitations. Furthermore, it had been corroborated subsequently by the encyclopedia” (105). Such doubts and uncertainties undermine the male genealogy, and in the end, the self-image of the male which depends on his sexual prowess and his forever uncertain paternity. Stories like those genealogical catalogues of the Old Testament are grounded on the certainty of who “begat” whom (cf. Zenger, 1998: 206). But that certainty has always been a myth. “The crises experienced by the major Western narratives have not, therefore, been gender-neutral. They are crises in the narratives invented by men” (Jardine in Eagleton, 1996: 260).

In this sense, had Kriestien, the narrator, been born as a boy, even her name would have pronounced the male genealogy: “I would have been in honour of an array of his ancestors, Ludwig Maximilian Joseph Heinrich Schwarzenau an der Glon” (3). Brink does, however, not simply replace a male genealogy by a female one. Linda R. Williams (in Eagleton, 1996: 52ff) has criticised the notion that “authentic female communication takes place through matriarchal and matrilineal networks, networks which are purified from the distortions of the symbolic “as miming the traditional father/son, master/disciple model”. In any case, not only is paternity a fiction, maternity can be too. It is more helpful to see “woman as a writing-effect instead of an origin” (Jacobus in Eagleton, 1996: 300).

Even if Kamma/Maria is not “the Origin”, because there are always others before the origin – “No one knows where we began. We go back to the shadows. I think we’ve always been around” (174) – her inclusion in the female lineage of Kriestien is not only an appropriation of a genuine “African” beginning for the lineage; she is also a figure with all the attributes of myth. Before her the story is lost in the shadows of even more remote myths of Africa:

There are some old stories about a woman deep in the heart of Africa who came from a lake with a child on her back driving a black cow before her. Or from a river, the snake-woman with the jewel on

her forehead. Or from the sea. One day a small wave broke on the beach and left behind its foam and in the sun it turned into a woman. But that we don't know for sure and I prefer to talk only about the things I know (174).

Another kind of uncertainty is introduced into the trace of the family tree by the denial of true parentage and the lie that Ouma Kristina is the daughter of Petronella, to evade the "shame" of an illegitimate and possibly mixed race offspring of a revenge rape. The story, as Ouma Kristina tells it, is: "Hermanus Johannes Wepener had tried to seduce Salie's daughter Lida who was then a mere child of twelve or thirteen. Tried to bribe her with beads, with a gold sovereign, even a ring with bright stones. She refused. She was terrified. He paid no attention. He had the *droit de seigneur*. So he raped her" (112).

But this act of power has unforeseen consequences: "There was nothing Salie could do. Not directly. The only revenge he could think of taking was to do the same to Hermanus Wepener's daughter. That was Rachel" (113). Ouma Kristina admits that she cannot be "sure that was what Petronella meant when she spoke to you and Lizzie? (...) No one will ever know for sure. Perhaps in her own mind it was no more than a befuddled wish or a lingering suspicion" (113). Petronella brought her up. "They told everybody she was my mother. How could they otherwise bear the disgrace? But she really was my grandmother. My mother was Rachel" (88). To cover up Rachel's "madness" people "were given to understand that Rachel had run away" (88). So the house becomes a prison, and Kristina's mother was locked up in the cellar, like many of those who were called "little idiots" of the Little Karoo, products of intermarriage among a small circle of very rich farmers, "the shame of the great families, never allowed outside in God's sun" (88). Rachel is not an "idiot" in the normal sense of the word, because, as Ouma Kristina says, "an idiot needn't necessarily be retarded or a waterhead. It's anyone who deviates from the norm. Anyone who dares to be different" (88).

Rachel and her (possibly mixed race) child Kristina introduces the theme of the *Skaamfamilie* (cf. Etienne van Heerden's *Ancestral Voices* and Horn, 1995). Rachel, like the "little idiots" is "kept locked up in the cellar, looked after by orphan girls from the cities. (...) Except for one hour a week, from two to three on Sundays, when everybody would be asleep, stupefied by the huge Sunday dinner. The hour of the idiots, they called it" (87).

But the house is interesting in other ways as well: With its style or lack thereof, the house is compared to an alinear story: The turrets, Dutch gables and Arabesques that were added on as the builder's, Petronella's, fancy took her and which Kubla Khan and Ludwig of Bavaria would have approved of, as the narrator assures his readers, represent a pastiche of all styles in the manner of a postmodern novel or architecture. Just as a story, it reveals new aspects on every visit with its secret passages, rooms and basement, which exactly mimics the floor-plan of the house above and could be seen as the subconscious memory of the house, which does not easily reveal its secrets. It is read and rewritten on every visit by Kristien and her relatives, just as a story is reinterpreted with each reading. It is also the place of the family's shameful secrets, as the obscene paintings of the madwoman, Rachel, demonstrate. Kriestien, who had always been fascinated by the fragmentary, but obviously pornographic paintings in the basement, wants to know whether "she was the one who made the paintings in the basement?" but she does not get a denial or confirmation. This secret, however, is revealed to Kristien by her grandmother only at a much later stage. Before that it remains a puzzle and a source of wonder and speculation for the children. In this way the house becomes a metaphor for how memory and narrative are intertwined in the formation of identity. This is based on the premise that identity is always multiple and only gains coherence when it becomes a story. It is therefore fictitious but in an essential way because it offers a model for 'explaining' and acting in the world: Kriestien's question about the "Truth" of the stories, whether they are "Stories or history?" is rejected by Kristina: "Not much difference, is there? When you were a child you thought they were stories. But one way or another they all fit in" (88).

For this to happen, already existing stories are adapted by giving them a new twist. "At times I even surprise myself. I can remember things that never happened" (4). So we are formed by the texts and discourse surrounding and determining us, but we also become the authors of our own stories, at least if we are not prepared to accept the existing norms and conventions. This is underlined in a tragic way by the case of Anna who conforms to the role of wife, housewife and mother that is prescribed by her culture. She can only conceive of breaking out of the prison of her marriage by acting out her rebellion in a self-destructive manner. The carnage of the family-murder thus becomes her language or way of telling the world of her desperation and unhappiness, since her tongue has symbolically been cut out. There is no

creative outlet for her anger in contrast to Kristien who has learnt to lead her life on her own terms. The woman who has no story to tell is without a tongue, silent. "The 'feminine,' in this scheme, is to be located in the gaps, the absences, the unsayable or unrepresentable of discourse and representation" (Jacobus in Eagleton, 1996: 300) Ouma Kristina says: "You see, when we try to do it on our own we can shout our heads off but no one pays attention. Not because we don't speak, but because no one will listen." Tillie Olsen points to the tradition of "Silences" (in Eagleton, 1996: 80ff): "Let the woman learn in silence and in all subjection (...) Silence in holy places, seated apart, or not permitted entrance at all (...) Shut up, you're only a girl." Ouma Kristina says that women are "not permitted to lead a worthwhile life on our own. So we put up a front. As long as we can derive our worth, our authority from someone else, from a man, we are accepted" (115). Accepting the name of Mrs. Cornelis Basson "was like cancelling myself." But only "With that name I could face the world. It would do for a safeguard and a passport, even for a widow, later, or at a push, for a divorced woman. But one is not free to go it alone" (115). Butler (1999: 96) discusses, how "desire is manufactured and forbidden as a ritual symbolic gesture whereby the juridical model exercises and consolidates its own power."

Kristien has not suppressed the child in herself which is marked by her ability to imagine other possibilities for her own story. Because of this she is also the one chosen by her grandmother to record the family's stories and pass them on: "It's like my childhood days again, sitting here with her in the night: "For as long as I can remember Ouma Kristina has claimed to have recognised 'something' in me that marked me as the one chosen to receive all her accumulated stories. There always must be one, she used to explain, to hand them on, to prevent their getting lost along the way" (86ff). As Ouma Kristina reminds her: I do not ask you to believe me but to listen. It is not the real story that matters but the one that shows the freedom to imagine other lives or other endings to the one that actually happened. "It takes a lot of believing,' I remark cautiously. 'Yes,' she says. 'That's what it is all about'" (220). Thus one's own life is shown to be an alinear and multi-layered story with detours, feedback-loops, jumps, cuts and silences. Story-telling therefore becomes an existential endeavour instead of something to entertain children. It can, however, also be a burden, to be the chosen one:

I never took it very seriously, although I was proud, of course, of being the chosen one. But beyond the sheer enjoyment I derived from them I must confess I never saw any special significance in her jumble of stories. And being chosen came at a price too: sometimes when she was unable to sleep she'd suddenly appear in her long nightgown, carrying a paraffin lamp (even though the flick of a switch could turn on the electricity), to haul me from the wall-to-wall bed shared by all the children and instruct me to listen. She would either take me into her bed or lead me to the kitchen where we'd seat ourselves at the long scrubbed table, with mugs of milk or lemon syrup, and she would start telling stories and I would listen until I dropped off (86ff).

Contrary to popular belief which regards storytelling as a foolish and childish pastime, responsibility comes with storytelling, not only because it develops the ability to enter the thoughts and feelings of another character but also to reflect on one's own actions. This empathy and self-reflection is the foundation of a democratic and civil society because it prevents one from privileging and setting as absolute one's own position over everyone else's. But this also requires a different way of telling stories: not a totalising narrative as exemplified by the 19th century novel with its omniscient narrator but a polyphonous story in which a character is able to surprise the author and the reader alike and where the narrator approaches his or her character(s) from different angles. Fiction is also an "erotic struggle to create new categories from ruins of the old" (Butler, 1999: 162).

Storytelling is not scientific. There are gaps, uncertainties, contradictions. Various versions of the same story are woven into one which can be changed again: "Sometimes her voice fades away altogether. I cannot even be sure that what she says is what I write. And what I hear her whisper merges with what I remember, or seem to remember, from earlier times when she told similar stories" (97). It is only by telling and re-telling, and by the assent which storyteller and listener gives to the story that it proves its value: "This is where you will find out about what lasts and what the wind will blow away." (20).

Tracing the present back to an 'origin' is not so much a matter of cause and effect, not one of genetics, but one of a genealogy, which does not involve the genes as much as the stories which have been constructed around the family trees; family trees are constructs of stories rather than of biology: attempts to explain events not in terms of

natural causality but in terms of individuals, their actions and the imaginary causes in their souls (Horn, 1995). Kristien even reminds herself, that she has heard it said, that the universe is not made up of particles, but of stories (325).

It is interesting to note the intricate narrative grammar of the novel. Rather than using the traditional terms of first or third-person narrator to refer to the narrator's point of view, it would be more productive to analyse the relationship between the narrator, focaliser and actor. The narrator is not identical to the author, André Brink, but changes between Kristien who narrates the framework which is situated in the run-up to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 and Ouma Kristina who tells her own stories as well as the stories of her female ancestors. Within each of these stories, the narrator is also the focaliser in the sense that the other characters are seen from her perspective and the actor in that she herself plays an important part in driving the plot. One might even say that within Ouma Kristina's stories the women are both focalisers and actors and in their turn narrators, as they pass their stories on to their daughters. Thus a Russian-doll effect is created which itself represents a female genealogy.

The distinction between narrator, focaliser and actor is based on the premise that the plot, rather than being invented prior to the narrative, is driven by a series of situations in which relations are established between the various characters. But the text also presupposes a relation between the narrator and the reader in which the reader is expected to imaginatively engage with the character's thoughts, desires and actions. In this way, reading itself constitutes a situation in which the reader functions as actor. It is not so much a question of reflecting the world 'out there' but of actively participating in a historically changing situation. Speech is not only about transmitting information but about acting on its implicit commands or questioning them. Thus the reader of *Imaginations of Sand* is asked to accept Ouma Kristina's skilful interweaving of myth and reality as her version of the 'truth' at the same time as seeing the historical changes that are sweeping across contemporary South Africa as a fraught but inevitable process. Kristien herself shifts her position from someone who has disavowed her Afrikaner 'roots' in favour of a British identity, and who intends to return to England as soon as her eccentric grandmother has been buried, to committing herself to the collective history of the people, no longer as an Afrikaner but as a South African, even though this remains a utopian vision in a country as racially divided as South Africa. Yet

this is the only viable alternative to Anna's family-murder which, as the novel implies, is the self-defeating result of a perpetuation of white supremacy.

It seems that it was Ouma Kristina's intention all along to reconcile Kristien to her Afrikaans identity through her magical stories, not from an exclusive patriarchal and racist point of view, but within the wider South African context which is seen to be non-racist and non-sexist. This retelling of history in which ordinary women and men of all races are inextricably bound up seems to be the precondition of a fully democratic South Africa. The stories stored in the memory of individuals and handed down from generation to generation, stay there forever as templates for how we see and act in the world: our identity is an intertext. But this intertext can contain "false", negative and destructive stories, stories which make us less capable of living in the real world. Thus, in South Africa, the "real" story has been obliterated by the years of apartheid and exile: "you have forgotten most of what you knew, you were away too long. I'll give you back your memory" (58).

Brink's novel in many ways elides the grand narrative, apartheid, which called itself "history". It is not the biography of Ludwig Müller, whose personal career as a magistrate and judge was interlinked with the "larger history of the country", "in terms of an elaborate system based on nuances of skin colour or the texture of human hair or the crescent on a thumb nail" (123). It attempts instead to be a story in which Wilhelmina's role in history is acknowledged, who "was not content to remain in the shadows and allow the men to make their habitual mess of things. She intervened" (271). If her-story is not to be a mere reversal of his-story, then it has to admit that it can not make the ontological claim to truth of a science. It has to reveal its own status as a story, rather than a "true" history. In attempting to give voice to the silences of history, it acknowledges its own status as a "possibility" rather than as the "reality". The question is not, what was true and what was not, who was right or who was wrong, but whether "We can learn to live like family" (170). In this way storytelling becomes an initiation into womanhood, but also into the complex world of today's South Africa, where as everywhere, identities are based on stories, are changeable, essentially "multiple", "not one" and thus permanently problematic.

## Notes

1. "Or because bird-victims can be ministered to by girl-victims (...) Or is it because birds are beautiful and exotic creatures, symbols of half-promised, half-forbidden sensual delights, (...) Because birds are soft and round and sensuous, because they palpitate and flutter when held in the hands, and especially because they sing, birds are universal emblems of love" (in Eagleton, 1996: 293).
2. "First, the so-called explored language extolled by some women writers seems to be linked, if not in its content at least by its style, to a trend propagated by literary schools governed by male masters. This language is therefore as academic and as 'masculine' as other languages" (Editorial Collective in Eagleton, 1996: 338).

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