

Martina Vitáčková

*Back to the Roots?
Forming New Concepts of Women's Identity in Contemporary
Postcolonial Literature Written by Women in Dutch and Afrikaans*

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The dissertation *Back to the Roots? Forming New Concepts of Women's Identity in Contemporary Postcolonial Literature Written by Women in Dutch and Afrikaans* (2011) by Martina Vitáčková offers a theoretical background combining the insights of postcolonial theories and feminist (literary) theories, and applying them to the characters of a corpus of six contemporary postcolonial writings in Dutch and Afrikaans.

The epigraph: *My sisters, my daughters, my friends – find your voice* by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is indicative of an underlying theme that runs throughout the whole study: a woman's process of individuation and liberation within contemporary postcolonial 21st century women's literature.

Both South Africa and the Netherlands are multicultural societies dealing with a colonial past. Women's voices, their experiences, sexuality and motherhood were all marginalised in the discourse of a patriarchal/colonial system. *Back to the Roots?* explores new concepts of women's identities based on a literary corpus which covers various cultural backgrounds, ages, sexualities, beliefs, etc. By interdisciplinary and intersectional methods, Vitáčková looks at six different characters and how they deal with the altered system of binary oppositions on which our (Western) socio-cultural identity is formed, the basic binary: 'self' – 'the other' and whether the notion of identity and female subjectivity has changed in the course of time.

The South African component consists of E.K.M Dido's book: *'n Stringetjie Blou Krале* (2000 – *A String of Blue Beads*, 2000) with Nomsa/Nancy Hendriks as the I-narrator, Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2004 – *The Way of Women*, 2006) where Kamilla (Milla) de Wet is the protagonist and *Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat* (2006 – *The Book of Happenstance*, 2008) by Ingrid Winterbach, with Helena Verbloem as main character.