



Feminismes en Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes / Feminisms and South African literatures

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Hierdie temanommer van *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* ondersoek die verskynsel van feminismes in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes. Die idee vir die uitgawe spruit uit navorsingsprojekte aan die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland se Fakulteit Lettere en Geesteswetenskappe wat gesentreer is rondom swart feministiese Afrikaanse skryfwerk en vergelykende studies oor Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes. Die oproep vir artikels het moontlike onderwerpe vir artikels uitgewys soos vergelykende studies oor feministiese Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes, die invloed van feministiese baanbrekers in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes, Suid-Afrikaanse feministiese stemme vanuit 'n transnasionale perspektief, ekofeminisme in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes, feminismes in verskillende genres (met die fokus steeds op Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes), queer feminismes in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes en swart, interseksionele, postkoloniale stemme in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes. Bydraes oor die meeste van hierdie temas is dan ook ingesluit met feminismes in Afrikaanse, Engelse en Xhosa Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes wat onder meer saamgevat is.

Ses van die bydraes is in Afrikaans en ondersoek op die een of ander wyse feminismes in die Afrikaanse letterkunde. Dit is besonder, aangesien feministiese letterkunde, soos aangedui in die oproep vir artikels vir hierdie temanommer, nie histories 'n gevestigde tradisie in Afrikaans is nie. Die swart feministiese tradisie in Afrikaanse letterkunde is veral onderbelig gegewe die lang geskiedenis van die marginalisering van veral swart Afrikaanse vrouestemme in die literêre veld. Drie van die Afrikaanse bydraes ontgin spesifiek die werk van swart Afrikaanse vroueskrywers met Bettina Wyngaard se misdaadfiksie en die poësie van die digter Lynthia Julius wat onder die loop geneem word.


Die uitgawe sluit ook vier Engelse artikels in. Swart en wit Engelse Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers se werk word ondersoek asook Xhosapoësie waarin 'n feministiese posisionering na vore kom. Die blik wat só gebied word op die wisselwerkings en gesprekke in en tussen verskillende Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes is fassinerend. Deur die vermelding van transnasionale stemme en vertalings asook feministiese skryfwerk deur Suid-Afrikaanse vroue van verskillende groepe, word dit duidelik dat daar tans 'n lewendige gesprek in ons letterkundes gevoer word oor wat dit beteken om 'n Suid-Afrikaanse vrou te wees.

Die huidige oplewing in feministiese studies is myns insiens waarskynlik die resultaat van die geweldige hoë syfers van geweldmisdad teen vroue in Suid-Afrika asook die impak van onlangse sosiale mediaveldtogte soos #MeToo, #Time'sUp en #AmInext wat wêreldwyd vroue verenig het in hulle reaksie op die verskrikking van gendergeweld en seksuele teistering. Soos Nel in haar bydrae betoog, is hierdie sogenaamde 'hutsmerkfeminisme' 'n eietydse verskynsel en tipies van die derde- en vierde feministiese golwe waar individuele, interseksionele narratiewe die voorkeur geniet. Ander bydraers in hierdie uitgawe van *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* illustreer voorts dat hierdie onlangse feministiese golwe ouer voorgangers het en dat eerste- en tweedegolffeminisme ook 'n merk op die Suid-Afrikaanse literêre landskap gelaat het.

Die eerste bydrae in hierdie temanommer is dan ook deur Marian Human-Nel wat skryf oor twee historiese baanbrekersfeministe in die Engelse en Afrikaanse Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes, naamlik Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) en Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (M. E. R.) (1875–1975). Human-Nel wys op die uiteenlopende tipes feministiese stemme wat hierdie twee vroue in hulle prosa asook in hul algemene handel en wandel openbaar het, maar beklemtoon dat beide 'n sterk teen-patriargale geluid al in die laat 1800's/vroeg 1900's in Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde verteenwoordig.

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In die volgende bydrae ondersoek Edgar Nabutanyi 'n prosateks van drie dekades gelede wat 'n impak gehad het op die Afrikaanse sowel as Engelse Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes, naamlik Mark Behr se *Die reuk van appels* (1993) wat in 1995 as *The Smell of Apples* vertaal is. Nabutanyi wys op die feit dat die roman vernaamlik gelees word as 'n teks wat fel kritiek lewer op die apartheidregime. Hy argumenteer egter dat die teks ook 'n feministiese agenda het wat Behr via innoverende narratiewe strategieë op die voorgrond plaas. Deur te fokus op die feit dat Behr dit spesifiek het oor die gemarginaliseerde posisie van wit, gegoeide vroue tydens apartheid, bied Nabutanyi 'n ander perspektief op hierdie bekende roman.

Ook Courtneigh Ess se bydrae ondersoek die evolusie van feminisme in Suid-Afrikaanse feministiese letterkunde met spesifieke fokus op swart Afrikaanse skryfwerk. Sy fokus op die werk van die misdaadfiksieskrywer en feministiese aktivis, Bettina Wyngaard. Ess illustreer hoe Wyngaard se bydrae tot die feministiese diskoers in swart Afrikaanse letterkunde 'n ander invalshoek het as in die geval van bekende swart Afrikaanse feministiese digters soos Ronelda Kamfer, Lynthia Julius en Veronique Jephthas. Ess wys op die gevare verbonde aan essensialiserende nosies rondom wat feminisme is, en bied soos Human-Nel en Nabutanyi nuwe insigte op die ontwikkeling van feministiese Suid-Afrikaanse literatuur.

Lieselot Tuytens, 'n Vlaamse navorser, skryf oor Miriam Tlali se roman *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1975). Soos Tuytens illustreer, is Tlali 'n pionierstem binne die Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde ten opsigte van die swart feminisme. In 'n tyd toe swart vroue op grond van geslag en ras min agentskap binne die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing toegelaat is, het Tlali onafhanklike, selfversekerde swart vrouekarakters in 'n roman soos *Muriel at Metropolitan* geskets. Tuytens ondersoek die voorstelling van die swart vrouekarakter se burgerskap en sosiale status in hierdie roman deur interseksionaliteitsteorie as invalshoek te gebruik. Soos reeds genoem, geniet hierdie invalshoek tans veral aandag in feministiese studies. In die volgende twee bydraes word daar voorts sterk gesteun op interseksionaliteitsteorie.

Die eerste van hierdie twee bydraes waarin interseksionele feminisme en Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde sentraal staan, is Hennely Nel se artikel oor die digter Lynthia Julius. Nel skryf oor Julius se digdebuut, *Uit die kroes* (2020). Nel beskryf die digter as 'drievoudig gemarginaliseerd' op grond van geslag, ras en taal. Julius skryf naamlik vanuit die posisie van 'n vrou binne die raamwerk van swart Afrikaanse skryfwerk en ook in 'n ander variëteit as Standaardafrikaans. Haar bundel, waarvan die inslag sterk feministies is soos Ess ook in haar bydrae uitwys, is dus in alle opsigte vernuwend in die Afrikaanse letterkunde en voorts 'n stem wat verskeie interseksionele uitdagings oorkom het om 'n impak op die Afrikaanse literêre landskap te maak

In my eie bydrae steun ek ook op interseksionaliteitsteorie soos Tuytens en Nel, en nes Nel fokus ek op onder meer die poësie van Lynthia Julius. Ek poog om die interseksies van feminisme, tuisheid (om te behoort), identiteit en godsdiens in drie uiteenlopende vrouedigters se werk te ondersoek. Naas Julius se debuut, kom die debuut van Corné Coetzee (*nou, hier*, 2017) en die Nederlandse Radna Fabias (*Habitus*, 2018) ook ter sprake. Deur die werk van Fabias te betrek, wat 'n Nederlandssprekende vrou van Curaçao is, onderneem ek dus 'n transnasionale studie.

Nog twee bydraes oor Suid-Afrikaanse poësie volg. Die eerste is 'n artikel oor swart queer feministiese Suid-Afrikaanse poësie deur Tsosheletso Chidi, Nompumelelo Zondi en Gabi Mkhize. Hulle wys daarop dat dit 'n onderwerp is wat nog min akademiese ondersoek ontlok het en gaan dan voort om 'n Xhosa-bundel genaamd *Unam wena* (2021) deur Mthunzikazi Mbungwana en 'n Engelse bundel getitel *Red Cotton* (2018) deur Vangile Gantsho te vergelyk. Uit hul studie blyk dit dat daar vergelykbare radikale swart queer feministiese stellingname in die betrokke verse plaasvind.

Niyi Akingbe betrek die poësie van Gabeba Baderoon. Sy invalshoek is die ekofeminisme en hy betrek konsepte soos 'ekokritiek', 'akwapoësie' en 'ekologiese geesteswetenskappe'. Soos Nabutanyi verbande lê tussen Behr se kritiek op apartheid en sy feministiese stellingname, wys Akingbe daarop dat Baderoon se gedigte oor apartheid en swart armoede terselfdertyd ekofeministiese temas aanroer.

Laastens word twee artikels ingesluit waar daar meer populêre genres binne die Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde vanuit 'n feministiese hoek benader word. Amanda Marais ontleed eerstens 'n wydgelese en vertaalde Christelike selfhelpboek van Marabel Morgan—oorspronklik gepubliseer as *Total Woman* in 1973 in die Verenigde State van Amerika en later in 1976 as *Volkome vrou* in Afrikaans—wat sy as antifeministiese agent(e) bestempel. Marais illustreer hoe die Christelike geloofsraamwerk in hierdie boek(e) ingespan word om 'n propatriargale boodskap te versprei wat skakel met die agenda van bepaalde hedendaagse sosiale media-groepe en selfhelpboeke wat, in skrilte kontras met die vermelde eietydse hutsmerkfeminisme, poog om vroue te oortuig om altyd onderdanig aan die patriarg en gebonde aan die huislike sfeer te bly.

In die laaste bydrae in hierdie uitgawe ondersoek Mariette van Graan die voorstelling van die vrou (die sogenaamde 'femme fatale') in 'n bekende Afrikaanse spook storie uit 1924 van C. J. Langenhoven genaamd "Die bouval op Wilgerdal" asook die verwerking van hierdie verhaal in die 2019-televisiereeks *Die spreus*. Van Graan gebruik die gotiese genre as vertrekpunt en ondersoek die voorstelling van die vrou en geslagsgebaseerde geweld in die oorspronklike spookverhaal sowel as die onlangse herinterpretasie van die verhaalgegewe. Sy illustreer hoe laasgenoemde die vrouekarakter meer sentraliseer as in die oorspronklike verhaal, maar haar steeds min agentskap gee te midde van die talle uitdagings wat sy in die gesig staar.

Veral die laaste twee bydraes deur Marais en Van Graan beklemtoon dat daar steeds vele uitdagings is met betrekking tot die uitbeelding van en stemgewing aan vroue in die Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde. Hoewel 'n al sterker en gevarieerde feministiese tradisie gevestig word, is daar steeds diskoerse, ook in literatuur, wat bepaalde stereotipes met betrekking tot die posisie van die Suid-Afrikaanse vrou voorhou. Uit die diverse bydraes in hierdie temanommer van *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* blyk die interessante geleenthede vir vergelykende en transnasionale navorsing oor hierdie onderwerp binne die breë Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde egter duidelik.

Hiermee ten slotte my dank aan die redakteur, prof. Jacomien van Niekerk (UP) vir haar kundige hulp met die samestelling van die uitgawe en prof. Duncan Brown (UWK) vir die uitnodiging om gasredakteur te wees.

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The theme of this issue of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* examines the phenomenon of feminisms in South African literatures. The idea for the issue comes from research projects at the University of the Western Cape's Faculty of Arts and Humanities which are centred around black feminist Afrikaans writing and comparative studies on South African literature. The call for articles pointed out possible topics for articles such as comparative studies on feminist South African literature; the influence of feminist pioneers in South African literature; South African feminist voices from a transnational perspective; ecofeminism in South African literatures; feminisms in different genres (with the focus still on South African literature); queer feminisms in South African literatures; and black, intersectional, postcolonial voices in South African literatures. Contributions on most of these themes are therefore included with feminisms in Afrikaans, English, and Xhosa South African literatures being summarised, among others.

Six of the contributions are in Afrikaans and investigate feminisms in Afrikaans literatures in one way or another. This is noteworthy, as feminist literature, as indicated in the call for articles for this issue, is not historically an established tradition in Afrikaans. The black feminist tradition in Afrikaans literature is particularly underexposed given the long history of marginalisation, especially of black Afrikaans women's voices in the literary field. Three of the Afrikaans contributions specifically explore the work of black Afrikaans women writers such as Bettina Wyngaard's crime fiction and the work of poet Lynthia Julius.

The issue also includes four English articles. Black and white English-speaking South African authors' work are examined as well as Xhosa poetry in which a feminist positioning emerges. The insight provided into the interactions and conversations within and between different South African literary genres is fascinating. By mentioning transnational voices and translations as well as feminist writing by South African women of different groups, it becomes clear that a lively conversation is currently taking place in our literature around what it means to be a South African woman.

In my opinion, the current surge in feminist studies is probably the result of the immensely high figures of violent crime against women in South Africa as well as the impact of recent social media campaigns such as #MeToo, #Time'sUp, and #AmInext which united women worldwide in their response to the horror of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. As Nel argues in her contribution, this so-called 'hashtag feminism' is a contemporary phenomenon and typical of the third and fourth waves of feminism which favour individual, intersectional narratives. Other contributors in this issue of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* illustrate that these recent feminist waves have older predecessors and that first and second wave feminism also left a mark on the South African literary landscape.

The first contribution in this issue is by Marian Human-Nel who writes about two historical pioneering feminists in English and Afrikaans South African literatures, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) and Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (M. E. R.) (1875–1975). Human-Nel points to the diverse types of feminist voices that these two women

revealed in their prose and in their general doings and dealings. She emphasises in her article that both authors represent a strong counter-patriarchal voice in South African literatures as early as the late 1800s/early 1900s.

In the next contribution, Edgar Nabutanyi examines a prose text from three decades ago that had an impact on both Afrikaans and English South African literature, namely Mark Behr's *Die reuk van appels* (1993) which was translated as *The Smell of Apples* in 1995. Nabutanyi points to the fact that the novel is read mainly as a text that delivers fierce criticism of the apartheid regime, but he also argues that the text has a feminist agenda that Behr foregrounds via innovative narrative strategies. By focusing on the fact that Behr specifically writes about the marginalised position of white, affluent women during apartheid, Nabutanyi offers a different perspective on this famous novel.

Courtneigh Ess's contribution explores the evolution of feminism in South African feminist literature with specific focus on black Afrikaans writing. She focuses on the work of crime fiction writer and feminist activist Bettina Wyngaard. Ess illustrates how Wyngaard's contribution to the feminist discourse in black Afrikaans literature has a different angle than in the case of famous black Afrikaans feminist poets such as Ronelda Kamfer, Lynthia Julius, and Veronique Jephthas. Ess points to the dangers of essentialising notions of what feminism is and, like Human-Nel and Nabutanyi, offers new insights on the development of feminist South African literature.

Lieselot Tuytens, a Flemish researcher, writes about Miriam Tlali's novel *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1975). As Tuytens illustrates, Tlali is a pioneering voice within South African literature in terms of black feminism. At a time when black women were allowed little agency within South African society on the basis of gender and race, Tlali sketched independent, confident black women characters in a novel like *Muriel at Metropolitan*. Tuytens examines the representation of the black female character's citizenship and social status in this novel using intersectionality theory as an angle. As previously mentioned, this angle is currently receiving particular attention in feminist studies. The following two contributions strongly rely on intersectionality theory.

The first of these two contributions in which intersectional feminism and South African literatures feature centrally is Hennely Nel's article about poet Lynthia Julius. Nel writes about Julius's poetry debut, *Uit die kroes* (2020), and describes the poet as 'triple marginalised' on the basis of gender, race, and language. Julius writes from the position of a woman within the framework of black Afrikaans writing and in a different variety than standard Afrikaans. Her collection, which is strongly feminist as Ess also points out in her contribution, is therefore innovative in all respects in Afrikaans literature and furthermore a voice that has overcome various intersectional challenges to make an impact on the Afrikaans literary landscape.

In my own contribution I also rely on intersectionality theory in the vein of Tuytens and Nel, and like Nel I focus on the poetry of Lynthia Julius, among others. I aim to explore the intersections of feminism, belonging, identity, and religion in the work of three different women poets. In addition to Julius's debut, Corné Coetzee's debut *nou, hier*, (2017) and Radna Fabias's *Habitus* (2018) also come into play. By involving the work of Fabias, a Dutch-speaking woman from Curaçao, I am undertaking a transnational study.

Two contributions about South African poetry follow. The first is an article about black queer feminist South African poetry by Tsosheletso Chidi, Nompumelelo Zondi, and Gabi Mkhize. They point out that this is a topic that has elicited little academic inquiry and then go on to compare a Xhosa volume titled *Unam wena* (2021) by Mthunzikazi Mbungwana and an English volume titled *Red Cotton* (2018) by Vangile Gantsho. From their study, it appears that there are comparable radical black queer feminist stances occurring in the verses in question.

Niyi Akingbe writes about Gabeba Baderoon's poetry. His approach is centred around ecofeminism, and he engages in concepts such as 'ecocriticism', 'aqua poetry', and 'ecological humanities'. In the way Nabutanyi links Behr's criticism of apartheid to his feminist stances, Akingbe points out that Baderoon's poems about apartheid and black poverty simultaneously touch on ecofeminist themes.

Finally, two articles are included that approach more popular genres within South African literatures from a feminist angle. Firstly, Amanda Marais analyses a widely read and translated Christian self-help book by Marabel Morgan—originally published as *Total Woman* in 1973 in the United States of America and later in 1976 as *Volkome vrou* in Afrikaans—which she labels as an anti-feminist agent(s). Marais illustrates how the Christian faith framework in this book(s) is used to spread a patriarchal message that ties in with the agenda of certain contemporary social media groups and self-help books that, in stark contrast to the aforementioned contemporary hashtag feminism, seek to convince women to remain submissive to the patriarch and bound to the domestic sphere.

In the final contribution in this issue, Mariette van Graan examines the representation of the woman (the so-called 'femme fatale') in a famous 1924 Afrikaans ghost story by C. J. Langenhoven called "Die bouval op Wilgerdal" as well as the adaptation of this story in the 2019 television series *Die spreekuis*. Using the Gothic genre as a starting point, Van Graan explores the representation of women and gender-based violence in the original ghost story as well as the recent reinterpretation of the narrative. She illustrates how the latter centralises the female character more than in the original story, but still gives her little agency amid the many challenges she faces.

The last two contributions by Marais and Van Graan in particular highlight that there are still many challenges regarding the portrayal and empowerment of women in South African literatures. Although an already stronger and varied feminist tradition has been established, there are still discourses, also in literature, that preserve certain stereotypes regarding the position of the South African woman. However, from the diverse contributions in this issue of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, the interesting opportunities for comparative and transnational research on this subject within the broader South African literature are clear.

In conclusion, I thank the editor of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, Prof. Jacomien van Niekerk (UP), for her expert help in compiling the issue and Prof. Duncan Brown (UWC) for the invitation to be guest editor.