



## TO BE BLACK, FEMALE AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Book Title: *And Wrote My Story Anyway: Black South African Women's Novels as Feminism*  
 Author: Barbara Boswell  
 Publisher: Wits Press (2020)



Reviewer: Christabel Pinkerton

Published in 2020 by Wits Press, *And Wrote My Story Anyway*, written by Barbara Boswell, is a compelling and powerful body of work analysing the novels of 10 prominent female writers, namely, Miriam Tlali, Lauretta Ngcobo, Farida Karodia, Agnes Sam, Sindiwe Magona, Zoë Wicomb, Rayda Jacobs, Yvette Christiansë, Kagiso Lesego Molepe and Zukiswa Wanner.

Boswell brings to the fore ways in which Black women's fiction writing were (and still are) a vessel in the fight against the apartheid and post-apartheid systems that sought to silence, dehumanise and stifle Black women's progress and existence. Inspired by Bessie Head, Boswell states the ways in which Head's previously banned writing, and way of storytelling, opened up a new world for her.

In truth, this is a difficult body of work to simply delve into if you have not yet considered Boswell's position that "Black women's fiction could and should be read as a subversive site of knowledge production". Her argument highlights the tendency to separate the experience of the characters from that of the female writers. The book, in fact, exposes the multiple ways in which text can be read from racist, patriarchal and exclusionary space.

One can neither be ignorant of the fact that there are schools of feminism which have previously (and some currently) not acknowledged Black women, let alone their intersectionality in being female, Black and existing in a society where patriarchy (mostly White male-dominated) had placed her at the very bottom, not foundationally, but to suppress and erase. This

amplifies even more so the necessity to acknowledge Black female writers' work as vehicles of activism, and necessary contributions to historical and feminist theory. They are prime illustrations of very real, lived experiences and insights of the oppressive systems from which they were born and inspired.

Boswell goes on to say that "Black South African women historically wrote fiction as a way of fighting the gross inhumanity of the apartheid system, creating a canon that, as its preoccupation, interrogated power in its most brute forms. It is within this tradition that post-apartheid Black women's writing situates itself". She goes on to build and offer proofs of the multiple ways in which Black women writers created their works and themselves within the space of the aforementioned intersectional conditions in South Africa.

*And Wrote My Story Anyway* is a brilliant act of academic and historical literary resistance. Boswell bravely and eloquently calls to dismantle and fight the structures that exclude and erase Black women's creative and intellectual contributions to the country, society, and feminism. It is an important and necessary tool to grow and stimulate young minds to think more deeply and inspire the creation of a more inclusive, accessible space where Black women writers and creators are considered worthy contributors to historical, academic and feminist theories.



*Christabel Pinkerton is a thirty-year-old strategic media planner, with a deep passion for poetry and writing, and hopes to one day be published in a poetry anthology.*