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UCT PhD explores Olga Kirsh's works from the psychoanalytical sofa

Thomas Minnaar's Afrikaans thesis *'n Herwaardering van Olga Kirsch se oeuvre: identiteit, moederskap en ballingskap aan die hand van die psigoanalitiese teorieë van onder andere Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan en Julia Kristeva*, investigates the works of Jewish Afrikaans poet Olga Kirsch, who was only the second published female poet in Afrikaans (1944) and one of the first to defy the National Party's racist agenda. Kirsch depicts in the poem "Die Blokhuis" (in *Mure van die Hart*, 1948) how the Nationalists were blocking themselves off from non-white South Africans, with their inevitable downfall looming.

Minnaar uses psychoanalytical theories to glean insight from Kirsch's poetry (stretching from the 1940s to the 1980s) – especially in terms of her identity. He reveals her problematic relationships with her mother and daughters, and explores the drives behind her writings: her flight from the phallic mother, her loss of the paternal love object, her longing for wholeness, and her self-actualisation through the creative process.

In her youth Kirsh wrote mainly about love, war, the inhumanity of racism (also directed at the Jewish people) and of her longing for Zion. Her later poems were about life in Israel, her family and growing older. Many of her English poems have not yet been published, like the ones dedicated to her husband, the mathematician Joseph Gillis. She also wrote an Afrikaans volume of poetry about the death of her mother (*Afskeide*, 1982) and another one with English poems (*The Book of Sitrya*), which she published herself in 1990. It was dedicated to her beloved granddaughter, who died at nine years of age of a mysterious disease.

Whereas Sigmund Freud's basic tenets and their further development by Jacques Lacan provide the underlying structure of his thesis, Minnaar employs extensive insights from the theoretician Julia Kristeva to counterpoint the masculine views of the former two psychoanalysts. His thesis includes some of Kirsch's rediscovered poems and comments by her family members.

With a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications and another one in Languages, as well as an Honours and a Master's degree in Afrikaans from the University of Johannesburg, Minnaar has been studying at UCT in the School of Languages and Literatures since 2009. He chose UCT specifically to have the celebrated Afrikaans poet and accomplished academic Professor Joan Hambidge as his supervisor. Minnaar will receive his PhD in Afrikaans at the Faculty of Humanities graduation ceremony at 15h00 on 12 December at Jameson Hall, UCT.

ENDS

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