

Exploring Female Identity in Selected Poems by Antjie Krog With Reference to Downing and Roush's Model of Feminist Identity Development Theory

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Abstract: In 1985, Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush proposed a model of Feminist Development Theory in their article, "From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development." This model builds on the idea that women in contemporary world must accommodate their feelings about the prejudice and the discrimination they encounter as females in patriarchal societies. Women then have to wrestle with and continually deal with these feelings to be able to achieve authentic and positive feminist identity. The proposed five - level model of Feminist Identity Development Theory starts with 'passive acceptance' of conventional gender roles and ends with 'active commitment' to feminist ideals in an egalitarian society. It includes the following stages; passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness - emanation, synthesis, and active commitment. Antjie Krog (Born 1952) is an acclaimed prominent intellectual figure in contemporary South African literary canon and is definitely one of the most celebrated poets. Krog's poetry emphasises her struggles with traditional conventions and social expectations both as a woman and as a writer. In her poetry, Krog undertakes to often portray the different aspects of the female life with all the struggles entailed. She aims to examine her female identity within the traditional roles she plays as a woman, wife, mother, and/or poet. In doing so, Krog creates in her poems a space for herself to explore, negotiate and establish her female authentic positive identity as a woman writer against all odds. By employing Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory, this research paper aims to scrutinize selected poems by Antjie Krog to investigate the multiple female identities she assumes in life as part of her relentless attempts to establish her authentic positive female identity as a woman writer.

Keywords: Identity, Female Identity Development Theory, Downing and Roush's model of Female Identity Development, Women writers, Antjie Krog, Poetry

1. Introduction

Identity development is commonly defined as a multifaceted process by which humans develop a vibrant and unique understanding of themselves and/or of their identities against their social and cultural background. (Boisnier 210) The concept of identity development generally denotes individuals who raise questions that challenge their original insight of who they are, questions like "Who am I?" Different factors help constitute an individual's identity, including a sense of endurance, a sense of distinctiveness from others, and a sense of association based on their affiliation to numerous entities like family, ethnicity, and/or occupation. The identities of these entities demonstrate the human need for association or for people to define themselves in relation to others and/or to themselves. Identity, therefore, is defined as the salient "ascribed, achieved, and adopted roles" in a person's life. (211) Identity is often depicted as finite and involving separate and different entities such as family, cultural, personal, and/or professional. Identity is further moulded on several levels. The micro - level is self - definition, relations with individuals, and things as seen from an individual or a person viewpoint. The meso - level relates to how personalities are seen, moulded, and tested by communities and/or families. The macro - level are the relations among people and issues from a national viewpoint. The global level which joins people, issues, and bunches at a around the world level. (212 - 215)

The study of female identity in particular has been central for much contemporary cultural and literary studies. The complexities of female identity formation and development have always fostered many arguments and much discussion. In its own definition, the word 'identity' bears contradiction referring to both 'sameness' and 'distinctiveness' in the same time. When applied to women, the word 'identity' proliferates even more contradictions and evokes more challenges when identifying the 'female identity' in terms of the many roles women commonly assume in life.

In 1985, Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush published their model of feminist identity development theory in their article, "From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women." Downing and Roush propose that women are persistently doomed to struggle with and sort out the diverse emotions they experience as a result of the prejudice and discrimination encountered in their patriarchal societies. In developing their model of feminist identity development theory, Downing & Roush examine the substantial impacts of such prejudice and discrimination on women's lives and provide a model that validates these women's experiences and help them contextualize their emotions in order to establish an "authentic and positive feminist identity". (697 - 698) In doing so, Downing and Roush set forth to portray women's emotions, depict the discriminations and oppressions in social structures that dominate their life

experiences, and endorse a positive feminist identity. In other words, Downing and Roush aim “to create a model that accurately describes a developmental model of feminist identity”; to delineate implications for women, psychotherapy, and society; and to address the dearth of research about women’s development, especially from a feminist viewpoint. (698 - 699)

Downing and Roush present a five - level developmental model of feminist identity that stages women’s development from ‘passive acceptance’ of conventional gender roles, commonly ascribed by patriarchal societies, towards an ‘active commitment’ to the newly developed female ideals in a much more egalitarian society. (701) The first stage, Passive Acceptance, manifests an absolute acceptance of the dominant patriarchal social structures (702). During this stage, women are either unaware of the existing sexual discrimination and/or patriarchal oppression or they vigorously embrace the traditional gender roles promoting the illusion that such roles are advantageous for women and thereby endorsing the superiority of men. At the end of this stage and before moving on to the next stage, woman experience a period of readiness to change attitudes to acquire new ideas as well as an inclination to risk experiencing life in a new way. Downing and Roush assert that this is an ‘important element’ and a crucial transitional point to the following stage. It boosts self - esteem by helping women to learn to treasure those parts of themselves that do not commonly conform to the traditional gender role and thus plays an eminent role in the positive development of the female identity.

Stage two, which is known as Revelation, starts with women experiencing one misfortune or more resulting from the demands ascribed by the gender roles and/or the claims of women’s advantageous position in the patriarchal society which are contradictory to their own views of reality and can no longer be overlooked. In this stage, women cultivate feelings of anger as an outcome of feeling ‘misled’, ‘duped’, and ‘betrayed’ by society. (Downing and Roush 704) This anger further leads women to feel guilty about formally sustaining the patriarchal practices and urges them to perceive most men in a negative light. According to Downing and Roush, women in stage two are often applauded by other women as having an evolved female identity. However, the complete positive female identity development is only achieved through the remaining stages.

Stage three involves two phases: Embeddedness and Emanation. In the Embeddedness phase, women seek to ‘embed’ themselves in women’s culture. In this phase, women pursue affirmation through connection with other women to strengthen their developing female identity. They withdraw to comfort zones established within support groups of women who share similar ideologies. According to Downing and Roush, this stage entails a particular difficulty for women who wish to challengingly detach themselves intellectually and emotionally from the dominant culture and identify with the evolving so - called “female subculture”. (706) The Emanation phase of this stage then denotes the realization that women’s total withdrawal from the dominant culture may have little impact. Women in this phase form a better understanding of “the limited influence

of individual rage and the consequences of adopting a rigid belief system” and they therefore “emerge ...with healthier, multidimensional, and adaptive perspective” (706 - 707) Emanation further fosters the fact that women have to embrace new strategies that allow them to deal with the obnoxious realities of a patriarchal society while maintaining their female identity. Women interact cautiously with men in stage three and rely highly on emotional connections and relationships with other women to support women’s developing female identities.

In Downing and Roush’s model, stages four and five, known as Synthesis and Active Commitment, embody the optimum stages of feminist identity development. The fourth stage is Synthesis. This stage witnesses the refurbishment of women’s identity by allowing the re - emergence and interaction of the female unique individualistic characteristics in a way corresponding with the newly established understanding of patriarchal oppression. This stage further denotes women recognition of the positive aspects of being female, while developing an authentic positive feminist identity. Rather than reacting impulsively, a woman in this stage would probably make decisions thoughtfully based on her newly developed value system which incorporates both the positive and the negative values and attributes found in the dominant discriminating social structure. The last stage is Active Commitment which represents the top stage of feminist identity development model and which, Downing and Roush argue, few women actually reach. This stage portrays the achievement of a positive female identity and is marked by a willingness to righting social wrongs and a dedication to engage in meaningful action toward an egalitarian non - sexist world.

Antjie Krog (B1952) is a South African accomplished writer and poet. Krog published her first volume of poetry, *Dogter van Jefta (Daughter of Jephthah)*, in 1970 at the age of 17. Since then, she published thirteen volumes of poetry and received prestigious prizes and awards. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, Krog published her most successful volumes of poetry including: *Dogter van Jefta [Daughter of Jephthah]* (1970); *Januarie - suite [January Suite]* (1972); *Bemind Antarktika [Beloved Antarctica]* (1975); *Mannin [Wo - man]* (1975); *Otters in Bronslaaie [Otters in Watercress Salad]* (1981); *Jerusalemgoers [Jerusalem - goers]* (1985); *Lady Anne* (1989); *Gedigte 1989 - 1995 [Poems 1989 - 1995]* (1995); *Kleurkonnoot alleennie [Colour never comes alone]* (2000); and *Verweerskrif [Body Bereft]* (2006). In addition, Krog published three collections of children’s poetry, some drama and prose works. In 1998, she published *Country of My Skull*, her prose account of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a radio reporter for the South African Broadcasting Commission which brought her much prominence. She then published her two prominent non - fiction books: *A Change of Tongue* (2003) and *Begging to BeBlack* (2009).

In 2000, a collection from her Afrikaans poetry, self - translated into English, was published in her volume of poetry entitled *Down to My Last Skin*. It is noteworthy to mention that despite all the limitations that she places on the translation of her Afrikaans poetry into English, Krog

decided to make her poetry available in English through her self - translation. She thus puts it: "I wanted to be read in English ... the existence of my poetry, in English, became important enough for me to translate it myself." (Christiansë 18) In her self - translations, Krog wanted to incorporate the culturally specific and gendered body of the "Afrikaner woman" back into prominence after the inadequacies and distortions in the content and style made by her translators. She sought "to sound Afrikaans, but in English." (19)

Antjie Krog has prominent presence in the contemporary literary scene. Although her poetry is mostly political and rhetorically crafted, Krog is particularly preoccupied with the theme of exploring her female identity as a woman and a writer. She often writes about female topics throughout the different phases of life, which other writers might appreciate or frown at, to investigate her female identity within the traditional female roles and expectations ascribed by the dominant social structure. In her poems, Krog often struggles with the complexity of 'becoming' – a woman, a poet, a mother, a wife, a daughter – and she seeks to figure out ways that can enable her the possibility to 'become.' (Scott 105) In both *Down to My Last Skin* and *Body Bereft*, Krog depicts the exploration of her female identity and the pressures involved in assuming many roles. Marriage, motherhood and poetry - writing are not idealised in her poetry, but rather scrutinized and renegotiated as means to establish a positive female identity for herself.

This research paper aims to employ Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory to scrutinize selected poems by Antjie Krog to investigate the multiple female identities she assumes in life as part of her attempts to establish her authentic positive female identity as a woman poet.

2. Discussion

In Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's five - level model of Feminist Identity Development Theory, the first stage is known as Passive Acceptance. In this stage, women are commonly either unaware of the sexual discrimination promoted by the dominant patriarchal culture or are actively willing to embrace the traditional gender roles and the superiority of men they endorse. In her poetry, Krog depicts this passive acceptance of her role as a wife and a mother. She writes in a celebratory note about being a mother and seems to ignore all the tension and dissonance it brings to her life as a writer and a poet. In her "First Sign of Life," Krog marvels miraculously about the unborn child who "moved in [her] today." She describes her experience of pregnancy, being the first step to motherhood, as one that defies depiction:

I wanted to hold you in words
How you look
How you sound
How I am going to utter you
But you drifted wordlessly in placenta (8 - 12)

Similarly, in her "Birth," Krog depicts the joy of her new motherhood experience and presents a delightful portrayal of childbirth wherein her baby:

Tumbled, no slipped out besmeared into my arms yelling
birth Yelling pain yelling strength oh I throb throbrob
about my Boychild my onlyest my loveliest my most
superlative (3 - 5)

The words 'tumbled', 'besmeared', 'yelling', 'pain', and 'throb' depict the painful and chaotic physical aspects of the female task of giving birth and the repetition of the word 'throb' refers to both the corporal pain of giving birth as well as to the profound love she feels for her new - born boy. The line "my onlyest my loveliest my smallest my most superlative" further endorses the joy of her new role as a mother. Regardless of all the pain entailed in giving birth, Krog only sees the marvellous experience in giving birth and being a mother. At this point motherhood seems as a crucial part of her female identity and so far, bears no conflicts with her personal needs to become a writer. She takes joyfully her female responsibilities as a mother and meets the social expectations without re - evaluating or renegotiating her roles as a mother and/or a woman. In her "For My Son", Krog further depicts her feelings for her son stating: "I love him/ way/way beyond heart" (19 - 21).

This 'passive acceptance' of her identity as a mother - with all that it entails - is similarly portrayed in her depiction of her relationship with her husband as a wife. In her "Ode to a Perfect Match," Krog declares her love for her husband despite all the dissonance she encounters between her domestic obligations and writing urges. In this poem, Krog chooses to ignore her burdening domestic tasks "to write [her husband] an ode." (12) While Krog is aware of the issues involved in marriage life such as "our fights our children our stuttering household," she still asserts her love for her husband: "I love you is an understatement" and that "[they] are a miraculously perfect match" (23). Similarly, in her "Marital Psalm", Krog describes her husband as the man "who makes [her] possible" (5) and pronounces their marital bond as "an undivided indestructible pact". In this poem, Krog echoes the patriarchal ideology which promotes the superiority of the man giving him the power and authority over women's life.

In her "I will always remember", Krog further embraces her husband's economic power and authority. She agreeably portrays her husband's arrival from work, while she has stayed home to look after their children. She writes:

Then you held me as always
... I smelled
On you the perfume of power
Bent down to greet every child something
Authoritarian stayed with your body as of one
Who always lies on top your hands moved
With the orders of a boss.

In this stage, Krog, thus, unconsciously echoes passively the patriarchal thought which accommodates the superiority of the man as advantageous to women.

Krog then progresses to the second stage of Downing and Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory when she becomes aware of the gravity of the domestication entailed in her ascribed roles as a mother and a wife. In her

search for her female identity as a writer and a poet, Krog reaches 'Revelation'. In this stage, Downing and Roush emphasize, women become aware of the gender issues entailed in their roles as mothers and wives after experiencing several threatening and/or awareness - raising events that cannot be overlooked any longer and that urge an outburst of anger towards men and the social structure they represent. The sheer declaration of love for her husband, the man "who makes [her] possible," develops at this stage, Revelation, to an obnoxious depiction of their relationship wherein she describes him as the man who: "...persecutes me/ fucks me day and night/ violates every millimetre of my private space" (11 - 13) Krog further denotes her husband's supremacy in the family as part of the dominant wider patriarchal social structures, being the bread winner. She realizes that: "this morning I bring/ breakfast - on the bedside table you put my monthly allowance - / and I see how the word finance also breathes the word violence."

In her *Down to My Last Skin*, Krog writes several poems that coincide with the second stage in Downing and Roush's model of Female Identity Development Theory, Revelation. In these poems, Krog portrays her awareness of the complete discord between her domestic life obligations as a wife and a mother and her aspirations to 'become' both a woman and a poet. In her "How and With What?", Krog describes herself as a woman overawed by her domestic obligations. In this poem, Krog vents her anger about all she has to deal with in life as a wife and a mother. The poem starts thus:

I dig rennets from the sink sieve
Oats and rinds burp into the drain outside the window
The nappy liners are being stunk out into the toilet
The dirty nappies sunlight soaped

The one cries with hunger
The other with anger (1 - 7)

In this poem, Krog presents a messy depiction of a wife and a mother who is striving to handle her domestic chores. The description of the exasperating details of the domestic tasks and demanding children are highlighted through such images as the description of the food remains in the 'sieve' and the rotten smell of 'nappy liners'. The depiction of the desperate children 'with hunger/ with anger' further adds to the hysterical image in the poem. The anger of the woman depicted accelerates when she gets neither attention nor help from her husband who: "closes the door against us all/ and turns up the Mozart piano concerto" (10 - 11)

In the following line, Krog stresses the woman's utmost feelings of absolute anger in having to deal with the overwhelming domestic tasks by herself by declaring: "and I go crazy". The following lines further depict the woman's complete outburst in the most appalling ways as follows:

My voice yells a mixer pulpershreddermincer
My nose leaks like a fridge
My eyes quake like eggs in boiling water
My ears are post boxes pouting with calendars and junk mail
My children assault me with their rowdiness
Selfishness
Cheekiness

Destructiveness

Their fears complexes insecurities threats needs
Beat my "image as mother" into soft steak on the wooden floor
I smell of vomit and shit and sweat (13 - 23)

In this stage, Revelation, Krog realizes through experience the illusion about the patriarchal society being advantageous to women. She realizes that her identity is being reduced to the horrendous domestic tasks ascribed to her by the society. She further feels overwhelmed by the demands of her children and perceives the reality of motherhood as tiring and consuming. For Krog in this poem, being a wife and/or a mother makes her horrible, it makes her 'smell of vomit and shit'. This distasteful image of herself as a wife and/or a mother is further enforced at the end of the poem by the description of her legs as "veined like blue soap" and her hands as "drier and older than yesterday's toast". Feeling totally exhausted, angry, furious and completely despicable, Krog outbursts in despair wondering "how and with what does one survive this?" Krog now speculates about survival strategies to escape from the domestic choir.

In the same way, in her *Body Bereft*, Krog expresses her anger as well as her sadness towards the social attitude concerning the aging female body and emphasises the associated psychological harm that women suffer from as they grow old. In her "Leave Me a Lonely Began", Krog depicts the invisibility of an old woman. The poem shows how a man overlooks her presence in a coffee shop. The invisibility of the old woman who has lost her bodily beauty in the eyes of the patriarchal society is thus described:

He did not see her, or perchance look
Past - he looked right through her. she's
Vanished without temper or trauma (10 - 12)

In the poem, the woman is further depicted as less appealing than a "table - leg or chair", the thing, which, Krog asserts, undeniably diminishes her self - esteem and urges feelings of isolation and alienation. These feelings are also addressed by Krog in her "Softsift of the Hourglass" where she depicts the woman's sense of splitting between the remembered body and the current aging one:

Half of her is somebody else
As if somebody else
Is standing next to her in her like (1 - 3)

The woman feels desperate. She feels a revulsion in herself and wonders, "why has my body forsaken me so?" In her "When Tight is Loose", Krog further emphasises the overwhelming emotions of the woman regarding her aging body which she describes as 'grotesque' and 'uncooperative' as "her thumbs crumble away" and her knees shrink like "prunes in a bowl". Krog says: "it must have happened gradually, but/ she feels overcome - suddenly her body/ is simply loose ..." (1 - 3)

In this stage, Krog further laments the society's failure in embracing the changes woman face through time. Moreover, in her "Manifesta of a Grandma", Krog asks in anger, "So how does it feel to be a grandma?" She describes how

women suffer from being old - aged and the sexlessness that is related to it by the dominant patriarchal social structure. The image of an aging woman, Krog asserts, is one of a "misshapen old woman" and this infuriates her even further and inspires more the revelation in her journey towards a positive female identity of the self. According to C. Scott, Krog endeavours in her poetry to find means through which a woman can fight and contest the undermining of identity that aging seems to bring, and means through which a woman can claim the process of ageing and renegotiate her identity so as to open up possibilities rather than closing options. (110 - 111)

This, however, was not an easy task for a woman writer. In her poems, Krog further highlights the challenges she meets as a writer amidst this domestic chaos. "Two Years This Month" is one of the poems wherein Krog depicts the difficulties of writing poetry being trapped in her role as a wife and a mother: "I split my ears inward/ Tap against the inner sides to intercept tremors/ Desperately I flog every wound" (16 - 18)

Krog is aware that writing is a self - reflexive activity that necessitates some quite uninterrupted time which she can hardly ever encounter. Krog is almost always disturbed by the noise of a 'slamming door' and 'footsteps' coming down her way. In this poem, the disruption, the children, the demands of her domestic life impede her poem writing. She thus describes her writing attempt:

I grab the opening – please even a spurt will do
Urgently cradle the closing muscle
But death starts at my feet
Standing before a closed slippery inside
Carefully the child enters the room/ mom are you busy? (27 - 31)

Similarly, in her "Ma Will Be Late", Krog depicts a woman who attempts juggling the obligations of domestic life with the demands of her writing career. After a long journey, the poet returns home and "shuffle [s] in with suitcases/hurriedly bought presents" to her family. She depicts the home as a place of demands which renders her: "neither poet nor human/ in the ambush of breath/ I die into woman" (19 - 21).

Krog then progresses to stage three of Downing and Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory, which is known as Embeddedness. In this phase of stage three, women tend to 'embed' themselves in a nation of women seeking affirmation from and connection with other women so as to strengthen their female identity. In the later phase of this stage, Emanation, women develop a rigid belief system and "a healthier, multidimensional, and adaptive perception of life." (Downing & Roush 705) In her seventh volume of poetry entitled *Lady Anne* (1989), Krog employs the voice of Lady Anne to state her aim in joining women writers and writing poetry: "I wanted to live a second life .../Show it is possible/ to hone the truth by pen/ to live an honourable life in an era of horror". (McGrane 2) In her *Lady Anne*, Krog investigates her own situation as a woman by using the historical figure Lady Anne Barnard as a 'guide' for her own life as a woman struggling to establish and develop her own

feminist identity. Lady Anne was a Scottish noblewoman who wrote about colonization in the late eighteenth century. The fact that Krog chooses a woman as subject of her poetry in this volume makes a statement about the importance of embedding with other notable women in the struggle for feminist identity development.

In her "Country of Grief and Grace," Krog depicts her endeavour to further establish connection with her women readers: "between you and me/ how desperately/ how it aches/ how desperately it aches between you and me". The poem depicts her pain as a member of a desperate nation of women and urges for connection by further inquiring: "how long does it take/ for a voice/ to reach another". Krog wishes to join a community of women writers and readers so as to be heard, acknowledged and reciprocated in her journey to establish and affirm her positive feminist identity.

In turning to poetry writing in this stage of Downing and Roush's model, Krog joins a whole new society of women writers who struggle to establish their female identities as writers. Although she is aware that writing is a difficult task for women, Krog seeks salvation in her writing and pursues strength in following other women writers' footsteps. In her "Writing Ode" Krog clearly emphasises her struggle to establish her feminist identity through poetry and clearly admits that it is only through poetry writing that she can go beyond the social borders that both confines and defines her as a woman and/or a writer. She writes: "to be able to write one has to enter the self/ by going beyond the limits imposed by the self".

In her "Poem Making", Krog further depicts the joy she encounters in poetry - writing: "joy at once upon me/ that falls loose - limbed/ about my desk (4 - 6)". Krog starts writing and affirms that, "nobody gets at me". While she "bathe [s] in the words", she is momentarily detached from her domestic life and indulged into the comfort zone of poetry writing. She gladly separates herself from her family and asserts, "their needs and dreams don't touch me" (22 - 23). Her involvement in poetry writing far and away from the domestic choir is a pleasant triumphant incident which she playfully describes as follows: "I play the game with words: / escape arrange / tie up jump free/ collude cheat and destroy/ for nothing/ a poem makes you free" (24 - 29) The ecstasy she feels about poetry writing is clearly seen in this stanza. Krog depicts the words as playfellows who offer her infinite happiness and an utter sense of freedom. Writing poetry is portrayed as an enchanted activity: "I stick my hand/ right into the haze/ that glows around me (30 - 32) "

Through these feelings of happiness and enjoyment, Krog reaches the fourth stage in Downing and Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory, known as Synthesis. Krog now acknowledges the positive aspects involved in her poetry writing and develops a positive feminist identity of who she is as a writer. In her "Paternoster", Krog presents a 'fearless' and 'liberated' feminist voice. She states: "I stand on a massive rock in the sea at Paternoster" where "the sea beats strips of light foam/ into the air". In this poem, Krog asserts her developed feminist identity "I am" by repeating it five times to declare who she is: "I am rock I am stone I am dune."

In this stage, Krog starts to make choices that are based on her newly developed value system as a woman writer and is now able to incorporate both the positive and the negative values of the existing patriarchal social structure. When asked in an interview how she resolves the dissonance between her roles as a mother and a wife and being a poet and a writer, Krog affirms that attempting to separate life from writing is an absurdity and that having a full life that endorses and nurtures all the roles it offers can boost writing:

One has one life. It would be pathetic to try and keep it pure and bare in the hope of writing The Big Poem. . . Being embedded in a full - blooded life could enrich what one has to say; the feeding of your children could feed the writing ... if the feeding of the children destroys the writing, then one should also accept the possibility that one perhaps did not have enough to say anyway. (McGrane 3 - 5)

In the fourth stage of Downing and Roush's model, Krog evidently progresses to embrace both her female identities as a wife and a mother and her writing as a poet. She asserts that although these roles are both challenging, they are evidently complementary. When asked if "is it possible, or desirable, for a woman to have both [books and babies]?", Krog provides an affirmative answer and confirms that motherhood puts the woman writer in instantaneous and inevitable contact with the resources of life, death, and beauty. (Ostriker 130 - 131)

In stage five of Downing and Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory, known as Active Commitment, a woman with her newly developed positive feminist identity is seen as committed to endorsing a social change towards an egalitarian society. Krog protests against the thought that women should have to compromise by giving up one or more of their female roles in their struggle to reconcile being a woman with being a writer. She endeavours to change perceptions on the traditional dissonance between womanhood and writing and asserts that: Male Writers never had to choose between a family and writing – they turned their singularity into the only category. Why do we assume that to be a good writer we have to be like them? (McGrane 7)

Krog is, as a matter of fact, one of those women writers who have led the way to stress the fact that, in a woman's life, there is no choice involved between family roles and writing. She insists that the positive feminist identity is only developed through embracing the woman's female roles as a wife, a mother and a writer. For Krog, poetry writing by women about experiences of love, femininity, marriage and motherhood is endorsed as having a crucial role in impacting change in society. She thus puts it:

... not only can women re - evaluate their own roles, but that they can actively challenge the demands put on them by society, and thereby find new approaches in which they can be citizens, women, poets, mothers, partners and/or wives ... it is these moments of possibility that [I] attempt to reveal to readers, so that they in turn might be surprised and reassured by what is possible. (Scott 108)

3. Conclusion

This research paper aims to employ Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's model of Feminist Identity Development Theory to scrutinize selected poems by Antjie Krog to investigate the multiple female identities she assumes in life as part of her relentless attempts to establish her authentic positive female identity as a woman writer.

Developing a feminist identity has been always a major concern in literary studies. This feminist identity development is a continuous process that is affected by positive and negative life experiences within the dominant social structures. In 1985, Downing and Roush proposed a new model of the Feminist Identity Development Theory. They introduced a five - level developmental model to demonstrate the development of a feminist positive identity. The first stage of this model is known as Passive Acceptance. In this stage a woman's oppression is either accepted or denied and women's subservience to men is favoured. The second stage is known as Revelation. It develops after a misfortune event and/or an experience and is manifested by 'dichotomous thinking' (i. e., men are seen in negative light, women are seen in positive light). The third stage in this model is called Embeddedness - Emanation and is marked by a shared validation by the sub - culture of women. Stage four is known as Synthesis and is noted by an appreciation of all the positive female aspects. Active Commitment in the fifth stage which involves the combination of personal accomplishment and commitment to social change.

In applying this developmental theoretical model set forth by Downing and Roush model to selected poems by Antjie Krog, it has been concluded that through poetry writing, Krog was able to relentlessly re - examine her life as a wife, a mother, a woman and/or a writer. In doing so, Krog has re - examined her multiple female identities and has defied the contemporary world's obsession with the traditional gender roles prescribed by the dominant patriarchal social structures. She has further succeeded in developing her own unique positive feminist identity which treasures both her womanhood and writing.

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