

Family Secret

Stephan Sanders

Stephan Sanders is a writer and columnist on the Amsterdam daily *De Volkskrant* whose publications often deal with sensitive or controversial subjects such as the Rushdie affair, the position of intellectuals in the Western world, the narcissism of the gay movement, the ambiguous status of minorities in the Netherlands, etc. If you think there is nothing left to be said on the subject of "identities," read this essay.

I am a person of colour.

Personally, I find this an exceptionally improbable observation: a remark from a book which has rightly fallen into oblivion and must have been written around the time of *Roots* (I mean, of course, the time dealt with in the television series; the time when slavery existed but t.v., walkmans and airplanes didn't; that's the pre-history I mean).

I imagine that book as one long lament from a man driven by such good intentions that by page eight or nine you've already begun to hate the guy.

Things just aren't going his way.

People misunderstand him and ill-treat him; the white woman who smiles at him in the street turns out to be a bitch who is only interested in setting him up.

As a reader you've just settled comfortably into the story when the woman's

