

text, *Beertjie en sy Boytjies* (from 1992) is more convincing.

Lettie Viljoen won the M-Net prize for her *Karolina Ferreira*. It is unusual in the way it links up with the experimental and intellectual prose tradition represented by Etienne Leroux and John Miles. The novel centres on the pool room of a hotel in the Free State town, Voorspoed, and its archetypal and dreamlike visitors. The attorney, Pol, the farmer, Tonnie de Melck and the policeman, Kelieman, all link up on a deep psychological level with the entomologist and main character, Karolina Ferreira. The primal forces, the sexuality and violence embedded in the small town intrigues, seem to liberate Karolina from her urban background with its civilising repression. As in a dream, the reasons for things happening are not important. Instead the focus is on the revitalising effect that they have on Karolina. The destruction of the hotel itself becomes part of the therapeutic effect of the dream. This destruction leads to a further week-long dreaming by the main character.

Satanism and the occult, the abduction and sacrifice of children are explored in Francois Bloemhof's allegorical suspense story *Die Duiwel se Tuin*. Although situated in the suburban Durbanville, the story happens in a political vacuum. Not one reference is made to either Africans or the South African political situation.

In the early sixties, Berta Smit wrote one of the most expressive surrealist allegories in Afrikaans: *Die Vrou en die Bees*. In *Juffrou Sophia Vlug Vorentoe* various elements of this earlier text recur: but the earlier text's theme of the absurdity of faith becomes explicit moralising in *Juffrou Sophia Vlug Vorentoe*. It deals with potentially very interesting material: the aged Juffrou Sophia, being discharged from hospital, is confined to the four walls of her flat. Her only links with the world outside are her television and the domestic servant, Mavis. She tries to reach out to Mavis, who becomes central to her existence. The novel falls flat, however, when Smit introduces the allegorical and experimental elements that marked her earlier style. Juffrou Sophia's story-writing attempts, interwoven with the main storyline as meta-narrative, is not really functional and inhibits the full exploration of the theme of helplessness and old age.

Bushman and Afrikaner: Cultural Interaction¹

Koms van die Hyreën

deur Dolf Van Niekerk

Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1994, 70 pp.

ISBN 0 624 03293 0.

Die Spoorsnyer

deur Piet van Rooyen

Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1994, 117 pp.

ISBN 0 624 03289 2.

1. This review article is a reworked and translated version of a review that first appeared in the Afrikaans Durban weekly, *Tempo* (3 March 1995:2) as 'Boesman en Afrikaner: Interkulturele Wisselwerking'.

T'sats van die Kalahari
 deur Willem D Kotzé
 Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1994, 116 pp.
 ISBN 0 624 03224 8.

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During 1994, Tafelberg published three Afrikaans novels in which the authors try in different ways to reconstruct the world of the now practically extinct Bushmen and their interaction with Afrikaans communities.

The novella by Dolf van Niekerk (established author of amongst others the psychological novel *Die Son Struikel*), *Die Koms van die Hyreën* (The Coming of the He Rain) is masterful, understated but finely nuanced, written in strikingly sober Afrikaans prose. It is a modern farm novel in which drought and Kousop's claim against Johannes du Plessis, an Afrikaans farmer, for the right to land form the central plot. The text is complicated further by the court case in which Jackson, a black attorney from Soweto, has to defend Kousop's challenge of possession of land. 'The Boere will laugh at us'² Jackson says when Kousop wants to base his demand for land rights over Du Plessis's farm on traditional oral word of mouth. The rituals and beliefs of the San/Bushmen and of the Western world are juxtaposed sharply in this novella. It is an extremely well-written, evocative text which keeps the reader's attention to the end.

In Piet van Rooyen's *Die Spoorsnyer* the focus is also on Afrikaans farmers and their Bushman farmworkers, but the central story of the tracking journey grows into a metaphysical discovery of the nature of *homo sapiens*.

With all the turnings that one takes, with all the paths that move through under one's feet, is there ever a place where one can say: 'From here, from this place, my footprints will never be blown away'³ (Van Rooyen 1994:52).

The novel is a strange mixture of anthropological facts and adventure story, along with an attempt to give the text a postmodernist turn. This attempt—which takes the form of self-consciously referring throughout to the 'writer' and his relationship with his editor: 'He can already hear the editor moaning and bitching ...' (Van Rooyen 1994:23)—is the least successful aspect of the novel. The central adventure and the imagery surrounding the tracking have as intertext the formidable work of Louis Liebenberg *The Art of Tracking. The Origins of Science* (David Philip 1990), of which parts are quoted directly in Afrikaans translation (see Van Rooyen 1994:33). It is this intermingling of the adventure of tracking, the anthropological and scientific factual elements, as well as the poignant description of the disempowered Bushmen-as-first-inhabitants-of-Africa, now being abused by farmers as

2. Die boere sal vir ons lag.

3. Met al die draaie wat die mens loop, al die paaie wat onder sy voete deurskuif, is daar ooit 'n plek waar hy kan sê: 'Hiervandaan, van hierdie plek af, is my spore onwegwaaibaar'.

farmhands in often inhumane conditions, which is the most moving aspect of the novel.

T'sats van die Kalahari (T'sats of the Kalahari) by Kotzé is in many ways reminiscent of PJ Schoeman's novels, especially *Trados, die Swerwer Boesman* (Trados the wandering Bushman - 1963). In this comparison, Schoeman's novel stands out as the more memorable. Despite the occasional 'slipping' of the narrator's voice in the direction of cosy sentimentality, anthropologically, Schoeman's novel is based on scientific knowledge. In Kotzé's novella there is evidence of lack of information about the community and lifestyle of the Bushmen despite the fact that this is the focus of most of the text.

The story of T'sats starts on the farm of a Karakul farmer in the Nossob region. Here he grows up as a lost Bushman child, found in the Kalahari. Later he is put to work as a shepherd, but eventually deserts the farm and returns to the Kalahari where he suspects that his people are. By implication, Kotzé's text evokes the myth of the 'uninhabited interior of Africa' and offers also a strange image of the Bushman as an instinctive and intuitive being, closely related to the animal kingdom. This aspect of the text, although probably well-intentioned, I find objectionable. When, for instance, describing T'sats's finely-tuned olfactory sense of imminent rain, the author writes, 'with the instincts of a wild animal his body senses it'⁴ (Kotzé 1994:10). The interpersonal relationship between T'sats and the farmer's wife is crude and has racist overtones (that this may be a realistic description of the relationship at the time, is another matter). After his desertion, she is made to say: 'Just when you have brought them up and made them useful, they put poison in your food or stab you in the back' (Kotzé 1994:14). Of the three texts of Van Niekerk, Van Rooyen and Kotzé, Kotzé's prose work is the least successful.

The question arises why so many Afrikaans writers feel the need, at the end of the twentieth century, to return to the cultural interaction between Afrikaans farmers and the almost extinct Bushman community. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, retribution commandos went out to kill these people after stockthefts by Bushmen took place. Retribution by Boer commandos was so successful that the prehistoric inhabitants of Africa have today practically disappeared in this country—except for the few remnants of their race still trying tenuously to survive in abysmal circumstances at Schmidtsdrift (near Kimberley). The fact that the Bushmen's hunting grounds were being encroached upon by the settlers and Boers, the wild game killed off in droves by Boer hunting safaris and that the Boers and settlers did not understand the Bushmen's tacit understanding of the possession of water holes and allocation of territory, all played a collective role in this tragic part of history.

In Kotzé's case, the re-exploitation of this material is probably mainly nostalgic in nature—it is the world of his childhood which he describes as a utopian, lost world. Somewhere, collective guilt about the genocide of the

4. ... met die instinkte van 'n wilde dier neem sy liggaam dit op.

Bushmen perhaps also plays a role. Eventually, however, all these fictive works are marked by a psychological venture into the domain of intercultural relationships in South Africa and the history of such relationships. In the past, literary texts exploring the relationship between Afrikaans and Bushmen societies (such as the works of Von Wielligh, the Hobson brothers, PJ Schoeman, JJ van der Post and Jan Rabie's early novels) were seen as peripheral literature, not belonging to the main stream of the Afrikaans canon. Yet, the exploration of this relationship in the three texts under discussion here as well as the fact of their simultaneous publication in 1994 are beginning to make it clear that such works are of central importance for a better understanding of the country, its people and the way in which they deal with each other.

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WPB Botha was originally we are told of the 'Afrikaner working class', left South Africa in 1975, and now teaches in London. *The Reluctant Playwright* is his first novel, and deals with Seamus Doyle, a world-weary Catholic