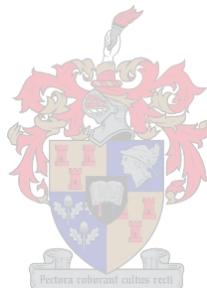


Translating Karel Schoeman's *Hierdie lewe*: Strategies, Decisions and Process

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to produce an English translation of the first part of Karel Schoeman's novel *Hierdie lewe*, translated as *This Life*. The thought processes of the translator are illustrated by means of descriptive annotations.

The choice of source text is motivated and the specifications of the target text are formulated. The problem is stated that relatively few of Schoeman's fictional works have been translated into English or other languages and it is suggested that this might be because Schoeman's work is difficult to translate, or even untranslatable. A possible reason for this may be Schoeman's distinctive style: rhythmic, lyrical and rich in imagery. The source culture may also be too specific and the cultural gap too wide.

A hypothesis is formulated that translation is possible if the translational problems are identified. Certain strategies are devised and solutions suggested. A hermeneutic interpretation of the source text and an overall strategy of resistancy are advocated, resulting in a target text with a marked source-text inscription. However, a measure of domestication is unavoidable in the light of the final goal to create an equivalent text which is still readable and will not alienate its addressees.

A discussion of relevant concepts from translation studies theory substantiates and motivates the choice of translation strategies and solutions. A thorough reading analysis of the source text supplies the context for an interpretation. Descriptive annotations focus on the translator's methodology. Conclusions are drawn about the effectiveness of the chosen strategies and suggestions are made for further study.

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie is die produksie van 'n vertaling in Engels van die eerste deel van Karel Schoeman se roman *Hierdie lewe*, vertaal as *This Life*. Daarby word deur middel van beskrywende annotasies verslag gedoen oor die denkprosesse van die vertaler tydens die vertaalproses.

Die keuse van bronteks word gemotiveer en die vereistes vir die doeltteks word geformuleer. Die probleem word gestel dat relatief min van Schoeman se fiksie reeds in Engels en ander tale vertaal is, moontlik as gevolg van 'n persepsie dat Schoeman se werk moeilik vertaalbaar, of selfs onvertaalbaar is. Een rede hiervoor is 'n besondere beeldryke, liriese, ritmiese skryfwyse, kenmerkend van Schoeman. Dat die bronkultuur te spesifiek en die kulturele gaping te groot is, kan ook 'n rol speel.

'n Hipotese word gestel dat vertaling wel moontlik is mits die vertaalprobleme geïdentifiseer word en strategieë om die probleme op te los, bedink word. 'n Hermeneutiese interpretasie van die bronteks word aanbeveel en 'n oorhoofse weerstandstrategie word voorgestel, met die bronteks-inskripsie duidelik in die doeltteks waarneembaar. Sekere toegewings aan die brontekskultuur (*domestication*) is egter onvermydelik in die lig van die einddoel om 'n ekwivalente teks te skep wat tog ook leesbaar is en nie die teikenlesers sal vervreem nie.

'n Bespreking van relevante konsepte uit die vertaalteorie ondersteun en motiveer die keuse van vertaalstrategieë en -oplossings. 'n Deeglike analise van die bronteks verskaf die konteks vir 'n interpretasie. Beskrywende annotasies bevat inligting oor die werkwyse van die vertaler en afleidings word gemaak oor die doeltreffendheid van die gekose strategieë. Die moontlikheid van verdere studie word aangedui.

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Source text – *Hierdie lewe* by Karel Schoeman

1. Introduction

The author Karel Schoeman is widely published in Afrikaans and highly acclaimed in South Africa, but very few of his literary texts have been translated into English or other languages. Accordingly, he remains largely unknown to readers in other cultures and there has long been the feeling that he has not attained the fame he deserves.

This study aims to refute an apparent perception that Schoeman's texts are largely untranslatable. A practical translation (Chapter 4) of the first part of his novel *Hierdie lewe* (pp 5-48) gives rise to an identification of the problems encountered and a description of the strategies elected to solve such problems, as well as a reflection on the processes that took place during translation (3.2). These aspects are also addressed in a representative selection of annotated examples from the text (Chapter 5).

In support of the claims made in the study, various theoretical concepts are analysed (2.2). Among these are the question of the translatability of texts (2.2.1), translation as 'hermeneutic motion' (2.2.2), foreignisation as translation method (2.2.3) and the case for naturalisation (2.2.4).

This first chapter begins with an analysis of the assignment (1.1) supplying both the motivation for selecting the novel *Hierdie lewe* as source text (1.1.1) and the specifications of the target text (1.1.2). The research plan (1.2), incorporates the research question, the hypothesis, as well as the research goal and methodology.

The research question (1.2.1) focuses on the problems a translator of Schoeman's fictional work is likely to encounter, resulting in the perception that his work is relatively untranslatable. Translators are confronted with the difficulties of whether it is feasible to sustain the emotional force of the original in the translation; whether it is possible to emulate Schoeman's very particular

signature style; whether his works are 'too Afrikaans', creating too wide a cultural gap between source-text readers and target-text readers to make a translation realisable in the target culture.

A hypothesis (1.2.2) is formulated that Schoeman's novels are not untranslatable and are therefore not inaccessible to target-culture readers. A hermeneutic approach, as favoured by Steiner, is advocated, and it is suggested that foreignisation, as postulated by Venuti, should be the central approach of the translator of Schoeman's work, although a degree of domestication, or naturalisation, is called for to supply the fluency required for the translated text to be acceptable to its target readers. In this way the source culture will be introduced to the target reader in a way that will leave the most significant source-culture features intact.

The research goal (1.2.3) is to substantiate the above claim by identifying and defining particular problem areas in the source text, considering strategies, and describing, by means of annotation, the translation process. The translator's decision to follow specific problem-solving procedures should result in the desired end product, namely an adequate translation that fulfils the same functions in the target culture as the original did in the source culture.

Although conceptual analysis occurs in Chapter 2 where relevant theories by scholars in the field of translation studies are reviewed (2.2), the research method (1.2.3) is focused on the production of a practical translation (Chapter 4), followed by an annotation of selected text examples (Chapter 5).

Chapter 1 concludes with a description of the arrangement of the remaining chapters (2 to 5) in this study and a brief exposition of the focus of each chapter (1.3).

1.1 Assignment analysis

1.1.1 Source-text selection

There is general consensus that Schoeman is one of the greatest and most prolific living authors in South Africa today. He has published numerous works, fictional as well as non-fictional, and is classed by J.D.F. Jones in a review in *The Financial Times*, together with Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Christopher Hope 'in the front rank of South African writers' (Britte prys Schoeman ... , 1991:5).

However, remarkably few of Schoeman's novels, novellas and fictionalised biographies (22 in total, according to Burger and Van Vuuren, 2002:354-365) have seen publication in other languages. *Promised Land*, Marion Friedmann's translation of the 1972 novel *Na die geliefde land*, saw its American début in 1978 (New York: Summit Books) with a reprint in 1987, and was the first of Schoeman's novels he 'allowed to be translated' (Karel's English version ... , 1985:19). Also in 1978, a Russian translation (*V radnuju stranu*, translator A.K. Slavinska) was published in Moscow. In 1979 *Promised Land* was published in London by Futura Publications and in Johannesburg by Jonathan Ball. South African script-writer and director Jason Xenopoulos produced a film version of the novel in 2003 which was screened at the Toronto International Film Festival and won an award for best script at the Tokyo International Film Festival (Sonnekus, 2003:1).

'n Ander land (1984) was translated by David Schalkwyk as *Another Country* and appeared in London (Sinclair-Stevenson and Picador) in 1991. A Dutch translation (*Een ander land*, translated by Riet de Jong-Goossens) became available in 1992 (Amsterdam: Contact) and 1993 saw the publication of both a German and a French translation (*In einem fremden Land*, translator G. Stege, Munich: Albrecht Knauss; and *En étrange pays*, translator J. Guiloineau, Paris: Robert Laffont Pavillons). The German version was reissued in 1995 (Munich: Goldman).

In 1992, the author himself translated *Afskeid en vertrek* (1990) and titled it *Take Leave and Go*. It was published in the same year by Sinclair-Stevenson in London, and by Jonathan Ball in Cape Town. (All information on translations, translators and publishers from Burger and Van Vuuren, 2002:354-368).

That Schoeman's works deserve a wider audience is not merely a personal opinion. Van Vuuren (2002:53) admits that a comparison between Schoeman's works and 'the magisterial oeuvre of *the other* great South African author, J.M. Coetzee' (own translation and italics) has become clichéd, but states that, until *Hierdie lewe*, *Uur van die engel* and *Verkenning* have been translated into English and/or Dutch, Schoeman will probably hover for ever in the shadows of the marginality of Afrikaans. That Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2003 should add impetus to the movement calling for the translation of Schoeman's work into so-called international languages.

Among the variety of Schoeman's texts available, *Hierdie lewe* was this translator's personal choice. This stemmed, firstly, from an instinctive recognition that the text has certain inherent qualities that would make its translation meaningful. Steiner (1975:296), describing the 'hermeneutic motion' essential to the process of translation, claims that the translator recognises in the first place that there is 'something there to be understood' at the initial reading of a text. Accordingly, '[a]ll understanding, and the demonstrative statement of understanding which is translation, starts with an act of trust.' Despite the censure of critics like Lefevere (2001:247) of a 'Romanticism-based approach to literature', it was such an act of trust that Schoeman's novel inspired.

There are further considerations for selecting *Hierdie lewe* as source text, such as the outstanding literary qualities of the writing. The reader is transported by the sweeping, lyrical style and rhythms of the text, its carefully crafted, complex, layered structure, the haunting images of light and shadow, sunlight and shade, the depiction of a harsh, unyielding, overpowering

landscape against which the human actors in the drama appear dwarfed and insignificant. Under the subdued, understated narrative, in which very little seems to happen, simmers a tale of love and of lust, of sin and of retribution on a grand scale. Moreover, the novel is a powerful comment on the fate of women in a patriarchal society.

The overwhelmingly positive response of critics when *Hierdie lewe* was published in 1993 supports these claims. The novel was hailed as 'an overpowering, moving, lyrical and sorrowful book, one of Schoeman's best' (Olivier, 1993:43, own translation). Van Zyl (1993:9) sees it as a remarkable interpretation of a region and adds that he cannot remember ever having read anywhere a more moving formulation of the fall into oblivion. Müller (1994:95-97) calls *Hierdie lewe* Schoeman's most resonant novel and states that, if anything like a *roman pur*, a transparent novel, exists in Afrikaans, it can be found in *Hierdie lewe*.

In addition to its literary qualities, there is another dimension to the novel that makes it worthy of exposure to a wider audience. Not only a great novelist, Schoeman is also a meticulous historiographer. Kannemeyer (1993:18, quoting Schoeman himself in *Die wêreld van die digter*) describes *Hierdie lewe* as a record of a lifestyle and an entire culture, established and maintained for more than two hundred years by Afrikaans-speaking people in rural South Africa, which, in the meantime, has been irrevocably lost. Commenting to Olivier (2002:34) on his motivation for writing *Merksteen*, a record of the lives of his Dutch grandparents, the author states:

*If I had not written down my grandparents' recollections, nobody would know.
If I had not recorded what the voices were telling me, nobody would know any
more how it used to be...* (own translation)

Thus the reader of the English text that has resulted from this study (which comprises only the first 43 pages of the novel) will find a remarkably accurate and vivid account of cultural and historical details reflecting, among other aspects, the lifestyle, customs, clothing, architecture, flora and fauna and farming methods of the settlers in the stark and near-uninhabitable South

African interior of the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Van Zyl (1993:9) sees in the novel

the hand of an author who has made an in-depth study of the cultural history of the Roggeveld. This includes the way the pioneer farmers took possession of the land, the architectural developments on a family farm, the articles of daily use acquired from time to time, the establishment of a congregation, the early political developments in a region, the economic progress. (own translation)

More details about various cultural and historical aspects that feature in the novel may be found in the literature review (2.1).

The very act of selecting a specific text for translation promotes the survival of that text. Steiner (1975:300-301) contends that 'class[ing] a source-text as worth translating is to dignify it immediately'. Through translation Steiner believes that the original is 'enhanced', its stature enlarged, it 'is left more prestigious'. (2.2.2 sheds more light on Steiner's views.) Thus, at least one of the motives for selecting this particular text was a desire to be instrumental in contributing to what Benjamin (2001:17) refers to as the 'afterlife' of the novel. 'Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter,' Benjamin asserts, 'come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame'.

Lefevere (2001:234) concurs that it is through 'refraction' that a text becomes famous in both source and target cultures, and he proposes the incorporation of all 'rewritings' or 'refractions' into the literary system so that they may be described, analysed and evaluated. Thus translations have an important role to play. In the source-language literary system author and work may attain canonised status, while the target-culture literary system is enriched and expanded.

1.1.2 Target-text specification

A literary text, and more specifically a novel, belongs to the text-type Reiss (2001:163) classifies as 'expressive', as it focuses on the communication of

'artistically organized content'. In the case of *Hierdie lewe*, however, there is also a strong informative element, for the novel is a mine of social, historical and cultural information. The translated text aims to fulfil the same functions as the source text in the target culture and may therefore be seen as equi-functional.

Potential readers of the target text are, in the first place, English-speaking South Africans who will have been excluded from reading the original text through a lack of proficiency in Afrikaans, or an unwillingness to read Afrikaans. In spite of a great many similarities in the backgrounds of these target readers and the original source-culture readers, there are also major differences. Although they inhabit the same geographical region, their political and historical perspectives and their social and economic positions may differ completely. Nevertheless, these target-text readers will be familiar with many of the cultural concepts and should not have difficulty with the distinctive Afrikaans 'inscription' evident in the target text (Venuti, 2001:471).

The English translation of *Hierdie lewe* will ideally, however, aim for a much wider audience that includes the entire English-speaking community worldwide. Such readers will be unfamiliar with concepts and terminology used freely in the text, such as *Nagmaal* and *voorhuis*. (See 3.2.5 for a discussion of loanwords in the target text.) Nevertheless, it is hoped that the target text may be received in the target culture with the same acclaim that the source text originally enjoyed in the source culture and that, in its translated form, Schoeman's novel may still be recognised as able to take up its position among the ranks of the world's great literary works.

1.2 Research plan

1.2.1 Research question

This study will focus mainly on the question of why relatively few of the novels of Karel Schoeman, generally regarded as one of the greatest South African authors, have been translated into other languages. One suggested answer to

this question is that Schoeman's work is regarded by some as untranslatable. In this section an attempt will be made to identify some aspects of Schoeman's prose that may possibly create obstacles for readers and translators alike.

Berman (2001:287-88) contends that 'literary prose collects, reassembles, and intermingles the polylingual space of a community'. Accordingly, 'the masterworks of prose are characterized by a kind of "bad writing", a certain "lack of control" in their texture':

Prose, in its multiplicity and rhythmic flow, can never be entirely mastered. And this "bad writing" is rich. This is the consequence of polylingualism.

He then argues against rationalisation, quoting Chapiro, the French translator of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* who said that it was impossible to reproduce the 'bushy undergrowth' of Dostoevsky's sentences. This 'bushy undergrowth', Berman avers, is the essence of prose.

Jane Rosenthal (1994:41) writes of *Hierdie lewe* in an article in *Mail & Guardian*: 'Whoever translates this into English will find it a challenge to sustain the emotional force of [Schoeman's] prose'. Such 'emotional force' may be assumed to reside mainly in the qualities of Schoeman's very distinct signature style: a style exemplifying what Berman referred to as 'bad writing', by exhibiting a great deal of 'bushy undergrowth'.

One of the first decisions the translator faces is how closely he/she wishes to emulate the style of the author. The possibility exists that, should the translator elect to echo Schoeman's style, the result may be extremely 'un-English'. Translators who favour a direct, simple style of writing may balk at the result.

Venuti (1995:5-6) points out that "'plain styles" in English-language writing' is a modern cultural trend. He quotes Bernstein, who describes this form of domestication (see 2.2.3 for an explanation of the concept) as 'the historical

movement toward uniform spelling and grammar, with an ideology that emphasizes nonidiosyncratic, smooth transition, elimination of awkwardness, &c. – anything that might concentrate attention on the language itself'. Venuti supports Cohen who fears that there is a risk 'of reducing individual authors' styles and national tricks of speech to plain prose uniformity'. Followers of this plain prose trend may well be reluctant to attempt a translation of Schoeman's work.

Xiaoshu and Dongming (2003:2-3) quote de Buffon's statement that 'style is the man'. They point out that opposite viewpoints exist regarding the reproduction of literary style:

Among translators, there are still many who consider the original literary style untranslatable although many think that it should be reproduced and that it is possible to reproduce it.

Agreeing that it is 'a hard task to accomplish', they suggest that literary translation be approached as 'a kind of art created in language':

Such a translation is not purely a technical change in language, but it requires that the translator duplicate the author's process of artistic creation, grasp the spirit of the original, find the most appropriate expression of his own thought, feeling and experience, and reproduce fully and correctly the content and form of the original in a literary language comparable to the original style.

(Elements of Schoeman's style that may present difficulty to translators are discussed in greater detail in 3.2.)

In Schoeman's texts the recurrence of certain images (such as the quill pen, the candlestick on the bedside table, the falling chair) leads the reader to a recognition of their iconic value. Patterns are laid down carefully for the reader to unravel and interpret. Prose, and poetry, says Berman (2001:291) 'produce, in their own peculiar ways, what can be called *surfaces of iconicity*'. He also points out 'a certain proliferation of signifiers and signifying chains' present in every work of prose, and claims that '[g]reat novelistic prose is "abundant"'.

One of the translator's problems when dealing with a Schoeman text is certainly whether it is at all possible to reproduce the abundance, the textures and layers, the 'surfaces of iconicity' prevalent in the original. (See 3.2.2 for a further exploration of recurring images in Schoeman's prose.)

Some objects and events that feature in the novel, and even the motivation behind the thoughts and behaviour of certain characters, carry a heavy cultural load that may not always be intelligible to the target-culture reader. (The various customs and ceremonies surrounding religion and the church come to mind, as do education, modes of transport, and the relationship between master and servants in a 19th century farming environment.) The translator must consider whether it is possible for him/her to infuse the target text with sufficient information so that the significance of these events, objects and characterisations does not remain obscure. (See 5.2.1 for annotated examples of this aspect.)

With reference to *Promised Land*, Barry (1978:15) offers the opinion that, although the book may 'make an impact in literary circles overseas, ... [it] is unlikely to be popularly read ...' This, he feels, is because 'the characters and their thoughts are too, too South African for easy comprehension by readers not part of our world.' Keyser (1999:8) shares this view when he wonders why more of Schoeman's works have not been translated into Dutch, and he asks whether the author is, perhaps, 'too Afrikaans'. These critics seem to be of the opinion that it is all but impossible to bridge the cultural gap in a translation of Schoeman's work.

The use of loanwords in the target text may add to a feeling of alienation among target-culture readers. The translator must decide whether such a choice is meaningful, and whether it will enrich the target text with an Afrikaans inscription, or whether it will create yet another obstacle for the reader. A further consideration is whether to agree with Venuti and others about emphasising the visibility of the translator by making use of a foreignising translation method (see 2.2.3). The alternative is to domesticate the target text by opting for an end product that reads as fluently as possible,

thus making few demands on the target readers to grapple with thoughts and concepts unfamiliar to their culture.

If foreignisation is the chosen method, then a glossary of foreign words, and/or footnotes/end notes may be called for, but in a thoroughly domesticated text, these may be considered intrusive. (A discussion about the desirability of including a glossary can be found in 3.2.6.)

1.2.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis put forward in this study is that Karel Schoeman's work is not inaccessible to target-language readers, and is therefore not untranslatable. Central to the feasibility of the task, is a thorough understanding of the text in its entirety, coupled with the translator's interpretation thereof. Steiner's view of translation as a 'hermeneutic motion' (see 2.2.2) is pertinent. It is suggested that a target text with equivalent effect is entirely possible. In order to create such a target text, it is proposed that the translator align himself/herself with Venuti's foreignising method by which the target-culture readers are moved closer to the source text (see 2.2.3). In the interest of fluency, however, a certain measure of domestication is desirable so as to avoid a target text reflecting a kind of 'translator's English' (Nida, 2001:133). The study also accommodates the theories of scholars such as Berman, Vermeer, Nida and Appiah (see 2.2).

1.2.3 Research goal and methodology

Chesterman (1998:201) identifies a number of recent trends in the field of translation studies. 'One is a broadening of interest from *translational* studies (focusing on translations themselves) to *translatorial* studies (focusing on translators and their decisions).' However, the most important trend, according to Chesterman, has been the 'shift from philosophical conceptual analysis towards empirical research' with the focus on 'translations as phenomena that have both causes and effects'.

Although this study is mainly empirical in nature, it is underpinned by thorough conceptual research and analysis. The study covers both the translational

aspect, with the focus on a practical translation of a section of Karel Schoeman's *Hierdie lewe* (1993:5-48), and the translatorial aspect, with the emphasis on a description of the translator's behaviour, mainly in annotative form. Problems in effecting the translation are identified and considered and the elected translation strategies described. An attempt has been made to provide a measure of insight into the process that is translation. Initial choices and decisions do not necessarily retain their validity, for example, and translators often find themselves returning to a particular word or passage to make changes. The thought processes behind such changes have been examined.

1.3 Arrangement of chapters

The next chapter (2) consists of a literature review. Background research pertinent to socio-cultural matters arising from the source text (for instance clothing, transport, entertainment) is described (2.1). Key concepts in the field of translation studies theory are also addressed (2.2). These include translation as a hermeneutic process (Steiner), domestication and foreignisation (Venuti), dynamic equivalence and naturalisation (Nida), and skopos (Vermeer), among others.

Chapter 3 focuses on the characteristics of the source text. It is introduced by a reading analysis (3.1) that places the practical translation (Chapter 4) in context and supplies the background information required by the readers to render the target text meaningful to them. Section 3.2 is dedicated to the identification of problem areas and the strategies elected to address these problems. Particular aspects of Schoeman's style are addressed, namely rhythm (3.2.1), imagery (3.2.2), rhetorical devices (3.2.3) and register (3.2.4). The merits of retaining source-culture features (3.2.5) are discussed. Consideration is also given to whether a glossary should be included (3.2.6) as well as to the readers' ideological expectations of the text (3.2.7).

A short preview (3.3) introduces the next chapter (4), which contains the translated text, *This Life*.

Chapter 5 takes the form of an annotative report. Problems are categorised into pragmatic (5.1), intercultural (5.2), interlingual (5.3) and text-specific (5.4) translation problems and then discussed. Examples from the translated text serve as illustration of the processes that have taken place during translation.

Chapter 6 summarises the progression of the study (6.1) and evaluates the success with which problems have been identified and resolved by using the methods described (6.2). The hypothesis (1.2.2) is tested against these findings. Further research options are suggested (6.3).

A reference list of the research material used in the course of this study is attached, followed by Addendum A, which contains the source text, Karel Schoeman's *Hierdie lewe* (1993:5-48).

2. Literature review

This chapter provides details of the literature reviewed in the course of the study. Section 2.1 focuses on the research that provided the translator with the necessary background knowledge to arrive at an understanding of the novel. This research covers such diverse subjects as information about Sutherland and the surrounding Roggeveld district (the setting for *Hierdie lewe*), the lives and lifestyles of the early farming settlers and the plant and animal species featured in the source text.

Section 2.2 deals with key concepts in the field of translation studies theory that are relevant to this study. Especially Steiner's translation ethics and Venuti's thoughts on the visibility of the translator as well as his preference for a foreignising method of translation come into sharp focus, but several other concepts mentioned in this particular discourse receive attention.

2.1 Background research

Nabokov (2001:78), referring to the translation of Pushkin's *Onegin* in English, claims that '[o]ne of the main troubles with would-be translators is their ignorance'. He asserts that '[a]nyone who wishes to attempt a translation of *Onegin* should acquire exact information in regard to a number of relevant subjects'. To illustrate his point, he names such diverse topics as 'the Fables of Krilov, ... banking games, Russian songs ..., the difference between cranberry and lingenberry, the rules of the English pistol duel as used in Russia ...'.

Thus, even when the source text to be translated is a novel, or any other literary text, translators should do as much research as possible about the various subject domains present in the text, so that they may acquire the

necessary background knowledge to be able to choose appropriate equivalents in the translation.

Nida (2001:138) defines an anachronism as the use of 'contemporary words which falsify life at historically different periods'. *Hierdie lewe* is a novel filled with accurate historical detail. Its characters inhabit the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. The translator should guard against anachronisms and make certain that his/her chosen vocabulary is apt for the time.

The translator is therefore called upon to read extensively about the way of life and customs of the early farming settlers. Works by Lye (1975), Burrows (1988), Venter (1985), De Bosdari (1971), Hattersley (1969) and Botha (1970) supplied useful information about the lives of the early farmers, their furniture, architecture, education, clothing and general lifestyle.

There is, for example, a reference to 'slagtersknegte' in the source text (A:7):

Eenkeer het Vader ook vertel hoe die slagtersknegte vroeër uit die Kaap gestuur is om te kom skaap koop, en dit is seker hoe Oupa sy geld gemaak het ...

This translator was unfamiliar with the term *slagterskneg* and at a loss how to translate it (*butcher's boy* and *butcher's assistant* were possibilities), until the following detailed explanation was discovered in Smuts and Alberts (1988:50) which also offered a suitable translation of the term:

The farm of Pieter Jacobs, being employed only for the rearing of cattle, was visited at this time by a 'slagter's knegt' (butcher's man), for the purpose of purchasing a large number of sheep. A slagter's knegt is a person commissioned by a butcher in Cape Town to travel into the grazing districts, and buy up the number of sheep or oxen he may require; for which the man pays the grazier, not in money, but in small notes of hand, called 'Slagter's brief', previously signed by his employer, and the validity of which is certified at the Fiscal's office. These are considered as good as cash, into which they are convertible whenever the grazier takes them to town; or they are sometimes negotiated in payment with his neighbours ...

While Baraitser & Obholzer (1986) and Kench (1987) were consulted for information about contemporary furniture, De Bosdari (1971) was a source of valuable background information about the architecture of the time, notably the construction of a *brandsolder*, the way casement windows, sash windows and shutters were fitted, the smearing of the clay floor with cow-dung or ox-blood and the *muurkas*, or wall-cupboard, built into the wall to hold china or glass.

In search of the common English names of plants such as *spekbos*, *renosterbos* and *geelbos*, not only an Afrikaans-English dictionary (Bosman, Van der Merwe & Hiemstra, 1986) was consulted but also Van der Spuy's publication (1971) on South African shrubs and trees.

In 1986 Schoeman published *Die wêreld van die digter*, a book about Sutherland and the Roggeveld, in honour of the Afrikaans poet N.P. van Wyk Louw, who grew up in the region. This detailed work can be regarded as a preparatory study for the novel *Hierdie lewe*. Schoeman's striking depiction of the landscape, and even some of the characters, are straight from the pages of *Die wêreld van die digter*. It could therefore be considered compulsory reading for anyone wishing to reach an in-depth understanding of the novel.

Finally, it is impossible to do justice to the translation of a literary work unless the translator engages extensively with the source text itself. A single, superficial reading will not suffice, as the translator should be able to pick up on every subtle nuance and understand every obscure reference in the text. An example (discussed more fully in 5.4.3) is the mention in the source text (A:12) of everything the narrator's mother deemed important: the money and the land, the town house, Maans's education and his stylish young wife, her own status as the widow of a respected man, and then, finally 'die skitterende git'. Unintelligible at first, the meaning of this reference becomes clear later (*Hierdie lewe*, p 156) when there is a description of an elegant cloak embroidered with glittering jet that the narrator's mother orders from Worcester and wears to church.

2.2 Translation studies research

2.2.1 Translatability

The matter under consideration in this study is the apparent untranslatability of Schoeman's fictional works, or the possible unwillingness of translators to grapple with his texts. While it may be true that not all texts can be successfully translated, this translator contends that translators are generally too easily deterred by a so-called difficult text. (Walter Benjamin seems unwilling to admit defeat but he does declare that there are texts that will be translated only 'after us' – Steiner, 1975:297.)

The ideal of an easy fluency and the notion that the receptor text should bear no sign of being a translation (so forcefully denounced by Venuti) seem to play a role in readers' seeming resistance to translations of the more 'difficult' kind. Venuti (1995:17) alleges that translators take part in 'an insidious domestication of foreign texts' by '[selecting] precisely those foreign texts amenable to fluent translating'.

Perhaps the most scathing criticism of the idea that a translation should always be smooth and fluent, and the translator invisible, comes from Nabokov (1975:ix) in the foreword to his translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*:

I have always been amused by the stereotyped compliment that a reviewer pays the author of a "new translation." He says: "It reads smoothly." In other words, the hack who has never read the original, and does not know its language, praises an imitation as readable because easy platitudes have replaced in it the intricacies of which he is unaware.

The Bible translator Nida (2001:133), an advocate, on the other hand, of 'a completely natural translation', admits that it is not easy to produce such a translation,

especially if the original writing is good literature, precisely because truly good writing intimately reflects and effectively exploits the total idiomatic capacities and special genius of the language in which the writing is done.

O'Brien agrees with Guérin (Nida, 2001:133) that

the most convincing criterion of the quality of a work is the fact that it can only be translated with difficulty, for if it passes readily into another language without losing its essence, then it must have no particular essence or at least not one of the rarest.

On the topic of the translatability of the rarest of texts such as poetry, Berman (2001:285) quotes Alain:

I have this idea that one can always translate a poet ... exactly word for word, without adding anything, preserving the very order of the words, until at last you find the meter, even the rhymes. ... [I]t takes time, I mean, a few months, plus uncommon patience. The first draft resembles a mosaic of barbarisms; the bits are badly joined; they are cemented together, but not in harmony. A forcefulness, a flash, a certain violence remains, no doubt more than necessary.

(Berman's comment on this type of translation is that '[t]hanks to such translation, the language of the original shakes with all its liberated might the translating language'.)

2.2.2 Translation as hermeneutic action

If an assumption is thus made that very few literary texts are untranslatable, what then is the proposed strategy whereby a so-called difficult text, like a Schoeman novel, should be tackled? This researcher supports Steiner (1975:296), who regards translation as a 'hermeneutic motion'. In short, translation is viewed as a forceful, even violent action, whereby the translator moves in upon the source text, extracts the meaning, interprets it and transforms it into a target text in fulfilment of certain criteria determined in advance.

Steiner identifies four steps in the hermeneutic approach to translation:

- Initially there is trust – a belief (based on the translator's personal experience) that the text contains something worth transferring. This trust manifests during the first reading of the text as an instant recognition of its

intrinsic value. It remains a risky exercise, however, in which the translator 'must gamble on the coherence, on the symbolic plenitude of the world' .

- The second step involves aggression. It makes use of an incursive, extractive method. The focus is on 'understanding as an act' (a concept borrowed from Heidegger). The 'thing there' that the translator recognised during the first reading, 'comes into authentic being when it is comprehended, i.e. translated'. According to Steiner (1975:298), '[i]n the event of interlingual translation this manoeuvre of comprehension is explicitly invasive and exhaustive'.
- The third step is the incorporative movement. Having 'caught' the meaning of the text, it is 'brought home captive by the translator'. The translated text is assimilated into the native culture or literary system. This process is not without danger, for, Steiner says, 'the dialectic of embodiment entails that we may be consumed' (1975:299). Translation does not occur in a vacuum, therefore the danger exists that a complete domestication may ensue, or, on the other hand, the translated text may be experienced for ever as 'strange and marginal' by its target readers.
- The final step sees 'the enactment of reciprocity in order to restore balance'. Steiner views this as 'the crux of the metier and morals of translation' (1975:300). Though the source text has undergone loss and 'breakage' during the process of translation, it has also been left enhanced, its stature enlarged. Steiner sees the original text as having '[gained] from the orders of diverse relationship and distance established between itself and the translations'. Even when the translation is only partially successful, Steiner postulates, the source text still profits, for '[t]he failings of the translator ... localize, they project as on to a screen, the resistant vitalities, the opaque centres of specific genius in the original'.

In the interest of a balanced view, it must be mentioned that not all scholars endorse Steiner's beliefs, especially regarding the translator's initial response

of belief and trust. Lefevere (2001:234) is sceptical about what he calls the 'poetics of Romanticism ... which is still very much with us'. He questions the assumption of the genius and originality of the author and of the belief that works of literature should be judged on their intrinsic merit. He champions the systems theory and argues that all 'refractions' of works of literature, such as translations, films and critical reviews, should be integrated into the literary system of a culture so that they may be studied and assessed. Refractions, he argues, keep a literary system going.

Schäffner (1997:8), discussing current 'postmodernist ... , or deconstructionist approaches' cites Arrojo's 'radical distrust of the possibility of any intrinsically stable meaning that could be fully present in texts...!'

However, though they may not have used his terminology, eminent translation studies theorists have endorsed some of Steiner's views. Venuti (1995:18) agrees that 'violence resides in the very purpose and activity of translation'. He sees translation as 'the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target-language reader'.

Venuti (1995:24) also refers to Lewis's notion of 'abusive fidelity' that results in a 'translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own'.

At the heart of Venuti's definition of translation is the extraction of meaning 'on the strength of an interpretation'. A similar view is held by Berman (2001:296), who contends that there are 'universals of deformation inherent in translating' and therefore '[a]ll translation is, and must be, the restitution of meaning'.

Appiah (2001:426) also theorises about the issues of understanding and interpretation. He considers the adequacy of a translation to be directly related to 'the adequacy of the understanding displayed in the process we now call "reading"'. The reading of a text, however, depends on many factors

because 'the text exists as linguistic, as historical, as commercial, as political event'. A 'literary reading', he concludes in the words of Gallie, is an 'essentially contested concept'. The responsibility remains with the translator, for '[t]o understand what a reading is, is to understand that what counts as a reading is always up for grabs'.

According to Vermeer (1998:44), 'a translator translates his/her interpretation', while Nida (2001:126) concurs that 'one must not imagine that the process of translation can avoid a certain degree of interpretation by the translator'. He quotes Rossetti's opinion that '[a] translation remains perhaps the most direct form of commentary'.

Translators who have doubts about the translatability of a specific text, may assist themselves by having a very clearly-defined goal, or *skopos*, in mind. Vermeer (2001:221) defines 'skopos' as 'a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation' and bases his functional *skopos* theory on the premise that translation is an action. Every action has an aim, or purpose – even a work of art such as a literary text. A legitimate *skopos* for translating a text like *Hierdie lewe* would be 'a maximally faithful imitation of the original' (2001:228), as well as 'to preserve the breadth of interpretation of the source text (2001:227).

'To know what the point of a translation is, to be conscious of the action – that is the goal of the *skopos* theory', according to Vermeer (2001:231). His 'ethos of the translator' is built around the concept of *skopos*. It 'expands the possibilities of translation, increases the range of possible translation strategies, and ... incorporates and enlarges the accountability of the translator, in that his translation must function in such a way that the given goal is attained'.

To summarise, Steiner's hermeneutic motion, endorsed by this translator, forces the translator-as-reader to grapple with the source text, to engage actively in a reading and to reach an interpretation. The ultimate result is the production of a translated text according to chosen strategies and methods for

which the translator remains accountable. In short, the translator has no place to hide.

2.2.3 Foreignisation

Translators who have made their incursions into the source text and extracted the meaning according to their own interpretation, need to determine a method whereby to produce their target text. This translator advocates Venuti's foreignising method for the translation of a text like *Hierdie lewe*. Venuti's views are shared by many other scholars, some of whose theories are discussed below.

Venuti (1995:19) quotes Schleiermacher who, as early as 1813, claimed that there are only two methods of translation:

Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.

Venuti then explains that Schleiermacher

allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.

Foreignisation (Venuti, 1995:20) was Schleiermacher's preferred method and it is strongly endorsed by Venuti and others. In fact, Venuti claims, 'this led the French translator and translation theorist Antoine Berman to treat Schleiermacher's argument as an ethics of translation'.

Venuti (1995:15) argues strongly against the 'fluent domestication' practised by foreign publishers, who have actively supported 'the international expansion of Anglo-American culture' at the expense of their own. 'By routinely translating large numbers of the most varied English-language books', Anglo-American cultural values have been imposed 'on a vast foreign

readership'. (Venuti advocates a strategy of resistancy against 'the global drift towards American political and economic hegemony in the postwar period'.)

Publishers in the United Kingdom and the United States, whose cultures are aggressively monolingual and unreceptive to the foreign, rarely buy the rights to English-language translations of foreign texts, as these are regarded as 'financially risky books' (Venuti, 1995:14). In the rare event that a foreign text is translated into English, these translations are thoroughly domesticated by always being eminently readable and therefore consumable on the book market.

Venuti also opposes the invisibility of the translator, for he sees it as contributing to the disempowerment of members of the profession.

Berman supports Venuti's appeal for a foreignising translation method in which the translator is eminently visible, and in which the source-culture values are imposed on the receptor text. He borrows the term 'trial of the foreign' from Heidegger (Berman, 2001:284) because he considers the aim of translation to be to 'open up the foreign work in its utter foreignness'. The 'most singular power of the translating act', he maintains, is 'to reveal the foreign work's most original kernel'. He quotes Hölderlin, who contends that 'translating first and foremost means ... accentuating [the] strangeness' of the source text.

He opposes rationality, the tendency to attenuate or neutralise the foreignness of the source text during the translation process, resulting in 'ethnocentric, annexationist translations' (2001:286). What Berman (2001:285) favours, is the kind of translation described by Foucault as

translations that hurl one language against another [...] taking the original text for a projectile and treating the translating language like a target. Their task is not to lead a meaning back to itself or anywhere else; but to use the translated language to derail the translating language.

Newmark (1998:96) uses the term, 'transference', which he proposes as a method for giving 'local colour' by retaining cultural names and concepts. However, James (2002:5) comments on Newmark's reservations that, though meaningful to initiated readers, this method may cause problems for the general readership and limit their comprehension of certain aspects.

2.2.4 *The case for naturalisation*

Naturalisation is the term Nida (2001:129) uses for what Venuti and others call domestication. Although Nida agrees that 'formal equivalence' is sometimes called for when an effort is made to 'reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original' (2001:134), he is a strong proponent of 'dynamic equivalence', where the aim is 'complete naturalness of expression' and where an attempt is made to 'relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture' (2001:129). Nida (2001:136) upholds that '[s]uch an adjustment to the receptor language and culture must result in a translation that bears no obvious trace of foreign origin'.

Nida is supported by the opinions of many like-minded theorists. Referring to the difficulties encountered with the translation of Goethe's poems, Cooper (Nida, 2001:131) argues that 'if the language of the original employs word formations that give rise to insurmountable difficulties of direct translation, and figures of speech wholly foreign ... it is better to cling to the spirit of the poem and clothe it in language and figures entirely free from awkwardness of speech and obscurity of picture'.

Nida quotes Orr (2001:132), who equates translating with painting and states that

'the painter does not reproduce every detail of the landscape' – he selects what seems best to him. Likewise for the translator, 'It is the spirit, not only the letter, that he seeks to embody in his own version'.

Edwards (Nida, 2001:132) agrees that

the characters, the situations, the reflections must come to us as they were in the author's mind and heart, not necessarily precisely as he had them on his lips.

Nida is a staunch supporter of the idea that the translator should be as invisible as possible. To support this view, he quotes Beerbohm (Nida, 2001:132) who considers it the cardinal fault of many who translate into English that they fail to be natural in expression. They make the reader 'acutely conscious that the work is a translation'. According to Phillips (Nida, 2001:133) '[t]he test of a real translation is that it should not read like translation at all'.

2.3 Concluding remarks

Although this translator has not aligned her methods with Nida's views on dynamic equivalence and naturalisation, opting rather for a foreignising approach, it is nonetheless Nida who supplied her with a credo for translating Schoeman's *Hierdie lewe*. The following quotation (Nida, 2001:134) contains what this translator considers the most workable method for producing the kind of target text desired for this project:

Adherence to content, without consideration of form, usually results in a flat mediocrity, with nothing of the sparkle and charm of the original. On the other hand, sacrifice of meaning for the sake of reproducing the style may produce only an impression, and fail to communicate the message. ... [C]orrespondence in meaning must have priority over correspondence in style. However, this assigning of priorities must never be done in a purely mechanical fashion, for what is ultimately required ... is a 're-creation, not a reproduction'.

3. Source-text characterisation

This chapter focuses on the source text. It offers a reading analysis (3.1) that explores the main themes of the novel, introduces the main characters, sketches the course of events and provides the context for an interpretation by the translator. A thorough, interpretative reading of the source text enables the translator to identify possible areas of difficulty. In 3.2 an overview is given of problems that may be encountered, and strategies and solutions are considered. The final section of the chapter (3.3) serves as a preview of the chapter to follow, containing the translated text, *This Life*.

3.1 Reading analysis

Hierdie lewe was first published in 1993 as part of a trilogy the author named *Stemme* (Voices). Though it was the first of the three titles to be published, *Hierdie lewe* was placed second in the trilogy chronologically and is thus known as *Stemme 2. Verliesfontein* (*Stemme 1*) was published in 1998 and *Die uur van die engel* (*Stemme 3*) in 1995.

The 'action' spans a single night in which the main character, an old woman, lies sleepless in the room she had occupied during her childhood and most of her life. She is unable to speak or move, having suffered a stroke. At the same time the action also spans a lifetime for, while waiting for death, she reviews her entire life. It is the seemingly uneventful life of an outsider-figure, marginalised by society; yet a tale unfolds of high drama, lust, passion, greed and even possible murder. The old woman cannot speak, yet her thoughts communicate with the reader in a powerful voice. Though unwilling to revisit the past, she has a strong compulsion to remember it all, and in doing so, to find answers to the questions that have haunted her all her life, to find acceptance and a capacity to forgive.

The narrator herself was never a direct participant in the dramatic events that unfold, neither was she ever given any information, but through a life of effacing herself, watching, rendering herself almost invisible while listening to the conversations of others, she now finds that she has carefully collected a great store of accumulated knowledge. Lying motionless in her bed, she calls upon the voices from the past, she remembers those scraps of conversation, and she pieces together the events of her life.

It is significant that the reader is never told her name. In her discussion of 'non-verbal markers of power relations', Pinto (2000:139) uses Ervin-Tripp's terms 'no-naming' or 'zero form' to identify one such example of power imbalance. Voiceless on her deathbed, as mostly also during the course of her life, the old woman remains nameless and, to a large degree, faceless.

She grew up without a mirror in her home, so that, in her early childhood, she did not know what she looked like. Later, after a fall during a dramatic, headlong flight through a landscape suddenly threatening and dangerous, she retains a scar on her forehead. Her fall precedes a long illness from which she very nearly does not recover. (A coffin was made for her which she saw being taken from the loft years later.) She is thus physically marked as strange and different, while symbolically the scar distinguishes Schoeman's narrator as a fated figure. She also has a speech defect (mention is made of her 'slow tongue'). From the beginning, therefore, she is a strange, silent, outcast figure.

We learn that, mostly because of her relationship with her mother, there is never really a definite role for her to play in the family in whose midst she grows up on an isolated farm in the stark, barren landscape of the Roggeveld. The mother is depicted as a hard, unfeeling person who single-mindedly pursues her goal in life: the acquisition of land and wealth and finally a position in society where she is respected and looked up to. This stems from her own youth as a child in a family of desperately poor migrants who trekked around the countryside with their meagre flocks, dependent upon the charity shown them by farming people.

The mother's efforts at accumulating wealth, property and social standing centre around the eldest son and heir, Jakob and, after his death, around her grandson Maans. Through the dramatic events that unfold during the course of the narrative, the second son, Pieter, is all but removed from the scene. Because she is a girl, the narrator is not seen as having any importance at all. She is

the unnoticed girl, the unmarried daughter, the spinster aunt, always somewhere in the corner of someone else's home or at the fringe of the company where she did not belong, at the fringe of other people's lives in which she played no part, busy watching and listening, busy observing, busy remembering. (p 64)

As such, she has no freedom of choice. As soon as she is old enough, she has to pull her weight in the household, where she works in silence side by side with her mother and Dulsie, an old woman who came to the farm as her grandmother's slave and remained there. Old Dulsie is prone to muttering in front of the fire, and is thus one source of the scant information the narrator gathers during the course of her life by listening to conversations and piecing together what she has learned in that way.

The arrival on the farm of Sofie, Jakob's young bride, introduces a brief period of intense happiness for the narrator, at the time still a young child. Sofie is beautiful and full of energy, albeit unhappy in the sombre atmosphere of the isolated farm. Some of the most poetic and haunting passages in the book deal with the time Sofie spent on the farm. The reader is swept along by the lyrical descriptions of Sofie's beauty, of the veld covered with flowers in spring, of a New Year's dance during which Sofie, decked out in her wedding finery, dances the night away with Jakob's younger brother Pieter.

The advent of Sofie also brings an intensification of the tension and strife between the members of this closed community. Eventually Jakob meets with an accident while the young men are out hunting, and falls to his death. Sofie and Pieter disappear from the farm and, although an attempt is made to find

them, they do not return. Years later Pieter comes back to the farm, a broken and damaged man.

Amid all these dramatic events, none of which are ever discussed with or explained to the narrator, life goes on. Her mother continues her quest for the accumulation of land and wealth and shifts her focus to her grandchild Maans, Sofie's son. Eventually she possesses a house in the village where visiting ministers do her the honour of staying over, and she secures a seat in the front row at church. The narrator does her mother's bidding without ever daring to express any wish for personal freedom. There is one marriage proposal, though the suitor does not ever discuss it with her, approaching her mother instead, only to be met with such a furious reaction that he beats a hasty retreat.

The narrator reaps the benefits of an excellent education, but not for her own sake. Her first tutor is Meester, assigned to prepare Pieter for his confirmation in the church. He fills his spare time by teaching the little girl to read and write. A wonderful friendship, most poignantly described, develops between the child, starved for affection and attention, and the lonely Dutchman far from home, who finds that he is neither welcomed as one of the family nor accepted as one of the servants. Later, Miss Le Roux, a governess from the Boland, is hired and remains on the farm for two years. Many years later the narrator realises that her parents had paid for her education for the sole purpose that she should later tutor Maans.

After nursing her mother until she dies of a protracted illness, the narrator has a brief period of solitude in the town house, although she feels that her movements are restricted by the neighbours and townspeople's eyes on her. Only when, during a heavy snowfall, she is trapped inside the house and wanders from window to window, bathed in brilliant white light, free from all obligations and totally cut off from the outside world, does she experience complete freedom.

Her education, completely unheard of for a woman of her time, gains her a certain respect, so that she is often requested to read and interpret documents and to draft letters. Later, back on the farm, she spends her time roaming through the veld and thus becomes widely known and respected among the local people as a natural healer. They erroneously presume she has a knowledge of herbal remedies and bring her their sick whom she does her best to help.

As, on her deathbed, she struggles through the long and sleepless night, sorting through her memories in an attempt to make sense of the events of her life, the old woman carries the reader along in her quest. Together they follow the clues and unravel the mystery.

Another insight presents itself to the reader, namely that of the plight of women, largely disempowered by society at the time. The narrator is excluded from the 'normal', and therefore desirable, life a woman could expect – an early marriage, giving birth to children, many of whom would not survive, raising a family and labouring side by side with her husband to eke out an existence for the family amid harsh surroundings.

At the end of her life, though alone and marked as strange, the old woman has earned the respect of people for her intellectual abilities and her so-called healing powers. To this reader it seems, however, that the most valuable thing she has, is the freedom of being completely unattached, with no one to make claims on her and no one to answer to. Olivier (1993:43) refers to the spiritual freedom gained by the narrator in spite of a restricted and diminished existence. Her fate seems at the very least preferable to that of the other female characters in the novel.

Her mother, who grew up desperately poor, spends her entire life striving for wealth and status. In the process she alienates everyone, including her closest relatives, with her harsh, intolerant, uncharitable behaviour. Though fear prevents people from openly rejecting her, she is sneered at behind her back. Maans's wife, Stienie, who seems to have a similar acquisitive streak

and possesses the status so coveted by his grandmother, becomes a hopeless, unhappy neurotic.

Miss Le Roux, the governess from the Boland, has lost both parents and is forced to accept the teaching post the minister helps arrange for her. She is clearly desperate to win the favours of the few young men of the district during their rare visits to the farm, mostly to deliver messages. Finding a man whom she can marry and who will then provide for her, seems the only possible option for her, and the narrator makes a vow never to be so dependent on the mercy of others.

Annie, a widow left with no means to support herself and her young daughter, is forced to enter into a marriage with Pieter, thereby securing a roof over their heads and also fulfilling the purpose of taking care of Pieter.

The narrator's rejected suitor marries a woman who dies shortly afterwards during childbirth.

Then, of course, there is the beautiful Sofie, who opts for love and romance instead of being dutiful and remaining in a loveless marriage. Sofie's final fate remains unknown but, ostracised by society, it is likely that she dies miserable and penniless, somewhere on the road, probably of the same disease that leaves Pieter brain-damaged and incapacitated.

The narrative details above merely scratch the surface of Schoeman's richly-textured novel. Much more than a love story and a careful historical record, *Hierdie lewe* is also an example of what Smuts (1996:125) calls the new literature of remembrance ('herinneringsliteratuur') in Afrikaans, and Aucamp (1993:5) names it 'a study in remembering ... by candlelight' (own translation).

The old woman lies awake in the night, trying to remember, to understand, to forgive. Her attention is focused on small details, a word overheard here, a glance intercepted there; she is trying to piece together from the fragments a larger pattern. Yet the quality of her memories lends a panoramic view to her

life and the lives of others who shared her lot on the remote farm and in the small village in the Roggeveld district. The old woman's persistent probing leads to the discovery of more and more information so that, bit by bit, the picture is filled in. The literary invention that is Schoeman's style in this novel follows the same pattern. The imperative mode, the panoramic view of the landscape, the repetitive motifs result in a piecemeal penetration of the events that continue to taunt the reader, always just out of reach, always unresolved and incomplete. The rhetoric of memory echoing through the text describes not only a way of living, but illustrates also a style of dying.

An interesting analogy presents itself between the author's style of sporadic foraging for the uncovering of details (alternated with the panoramic view, the wider perspective), the narrator's mode of piecemeal and progressive recollection, and the translational action, with the reader-translator forging ahead in the 'bushy undergrowth' of Schoeman's novel, attempting to extract an interpretation. The rhetoric of memory developed by the author also engages the narrator in search of an interpretation of her life. The reader-translator is likewise involved in the concerted forward movement of meaning being recovered through repetition, addition and assembly of the remembered fragments into a coherent story. The narrator never uncovers the whole truth; the reader is left in the dark, and the translator can only approximate closure in the translation of the suggestive, but never entirely transparent, narrative turns and the tentative voice of memory.

Central to the events of the novel, with a powerful presence that cannot be ignored or denied, is Schoeman's description of an unyielding, unforgiving, barren landscape, imbued with a stark beauty of its own. The characters toil and scheme under the harsh, blinding glare of the sun, yet sporadically nature relents, and the light softens into moments of lush colour and unexpected beauty and joy.

Van Niekerk (1996:7) mentions Schoeman's breathtaking depiction of the landscape of rural South Africa – virtually on the wide screen, and refers to what she calls its crushing expanse. Van Zyl (1993:9) calls Schoeman the

best landscape artist on the Afrikaans literary scene and describes the novel as the glistening exploration of a region.

To Müller (1994:95) it is an extraordinary impressionistic novel with enormous force, and she notes that Schoeman has created a world of dense, almost musical modalities, while Jansen (1994:90) reflects on the rich atmospheric cadence of undulating sentences.

However, doing justice to these very stylistic qualities that have been praised by academics and critics often presents the translator with his/her greatest challenge. Section 3.2 highlights some of the problems encountered and suggests strategies to arrive at an adequate translation without losing too much of the author's characteristic style.

3.2 *Problems and strategies*

3.2.1 Rhythm

It is the contention of this translator that the poetic, lyrical quality of Schoeman's prose stems largely from its rhythm or cadence. The rhythm, in turn, is largely dependent on the very long sentences he employs, strung together by means of dashes, commas, colons and semi-colons. The translator must consider the possibility that, should a similar method be employed in the translation, the result may be a text that strikes readers as strange and unusual.

About rhythm, Berman (2001:292) asserts that '[t]he novel is not less rhythmic than poetry. It even comprises a multiplicity of rhythms'. He argues against 'a deforming translation [which] can considerably affect the rhythm – for example, through an arbitrary revision of the punctuation'.

The decision by this translator to opt for an equivalent style and to echo Schoeman's long sentences and punctuation methods in the translated version, resulted from a desire to recreate the sweeping rhythms of the

original. Such a style seems suited to the rambling reminiscences of an old woman lying in bed, recalling the events of her life, 'with no hand to guide [her] along, no whispering voice in [her] ear' (p 49). Van Coller (1995:203) describes the novel as a compelling account with an almost musical tonality in which the lofty, powerful prose seems to bear down inexorably upon an inevitable ending. It is Schoeman himself (2002:221), however, quoting Virginia Woolf (herself well known for her marathon sentences), who prompted the final decision:

Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm. Once you get that, you can't use the wrong words. (...) Now this is very profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes the words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it.

The following are two possible translations of part of a sentence from the source text (A:6). **A** was this translator's choice for the target text (p 51). **B** represents another possibility that opts for a terser style, with shorter, crisper sentences. A comparison of the two substantiates this translator's claim that a translation adhering to the original, preserving the author's punctuation and emulating his mellifluous, undulating style (**A**) is superior to the alternative presented by **B**. The ongoing, rambling movement of the old woman's thoughts, the momentum of her imagined journey, is lost in **B**, which presents one with a fragmented text in which the compelling rhythm of the original has been lost.

A *Beneath me lie the mountain ranges, cliffs, chasms and plains of the Karoo, one mountain range after another ranked to the horizon; beneath me lie the warm lowlands filled with the herbal scent of shrubs, and one last time I survey it all; but then I turn back to the low inclines of the plateau where the wind blows so piercingly, back to the land where I was born, the bitter land, the beloved land, and slowly in the starlight, over shrubs and coarse clumps of grass, past the ridges where the jackal hides, through the dry streams with their stony beds and fissures where water has not flowed for many years, I walk back.*

B Beneath me lie the mountain ranges, cliffs, chasms and plains of the Karoo, one mountain range after another ranked to the horizon. Beneath me lie the warm lowlands filled with the herbal scent of shrubs. One last time I survey it all. Then I turn back to the low inclines of the plateau where the wind blows so piercingly, back to the land where I was born, the bitter land, the beloved land. Slowly in the starlight, over shrubs and coarse clumps of grass, past the ridges where the jackal hides, through the dry streams with their stony beds and fissures where water has not flowed for many years I walk back.

3.2.2 Imagery

Aucamp (1993:5) refers to images that act like motifs and become a refrain in *Hierdie lewe*. Images of light and darkness, of the flickering flame, the uncertain light, the dark that envelops all, the bright sunlight suffusing the veld and the people encapsuled inside the sombre house occur right through the novel. Müller (1994:96) refers to something extra, a kind of silvery glow like a layer of living moonlight that suffuses many of the passages.

The almost obsessive repetition of words that describe light, or qualities of light, is intimately interwoven with the theme of transience, impermanence, of the search for truth that emanates from the dark only in momentary flashes, unstable, uncertain, wavering, like the flickering flame of a candle that sputters and dies. That elusive truth that in the end becomes history cannot be fabricated or surmised; it can only be founded on concrete moments of certainty, on something seen, or heard, which then, still, is subject to interpretation. Those moments are few and far between and frustrating in their sparseness. The candleflame lights up a face, before a curtain of dark hair shrouds the image; the moonlight spills out over the floor, before the shutters are closed; the sunlight glitters on the water in the dams, but inside it is dark and gloomy.

Certain objects and moments are mentioned repeatedly: the candlestick on the bedside table, the quill pen, the falling chair, the window opening silently and the moonlight spilling over the floor, Sofie rising up from the folds of her

gown like a swimmer from a dam, and she and Pieter vanishing like two swimmers in a flood. Botha (1995:219) points to the evocation of images, scenes, meetings that function like a refrain, revealing richer connotations and new contexts every time.

The recurrence of these images leads the reader to a recognition of their iconic value. In 1.2.1 reference was made to Berman's belief that prose and poetry produce 'surfaces of iconicity' (2001:291) and his claim that '[g]reat novelistic prose is "abundant"'. Ortega y Gasset (1968:97-98) echoes this thought, proclaiming that a novelist should 'produce *ex abundantia*', adding that '[t]he novel is not a lithe, agile, winged form. It is not for nothing that all the great novels ... are a bit heavy'.

This abundance, or heaviness, is certainly apparent in Schoeman's work. Layer upon layer of textured description characterises the novel. In the central position there is the landscape – at the same time barren, craggy, inhospitable, and glowing, vivid, scenic. There are billowing mists and treacherous ravines, and always the reader remains aware of the precarious position of these insignificant humans living on the edge of the great escarpment.

To lay down the patterns that the reader must follow in order to unravel the thread of the narrative, Schoeman chooses his words carefully and specifically. One such 'iconic term' (a word that creates an image, according to Berman, 2001:291), is *skitter*, translated, where possible, with *glitter* in an attempt to transfer the sense as well as the hard, ringing sound of the original. It is used repeatedly in connection with the dams in the sunlight and the moon in the mirror. Other words like *gloei*, *glinster*, *glans* and *skyn* add to the carefully-fashioned play between light and darkness in the novel.

Schogt (1988:41), referring to 'sound-expressivity' as a factor to be considered during translation, maintains that '[t]he range goes from straight onomatopoeia to subtle associations, but in all cases there seems to be a link between sound and meaning that refutes the idea of arbitrariness ...'

The translator must be aware of these markers in Schoeman's style and guard against what Berman (2001:291) calls 'qualitative impoverishment', where the 'terms, expressions and figures of the original' are replaced with 'terms, expressions and figures that lack their sonorous richness or, correspondingly, their signifying or "iconic" richness'.

Berman (2001:292) warns against 'the destruction of underlying networks of signification':

The literary work contains a hidden dimension, an 'underlying' text, where certain signifiers correspond and link up, forming all sorts of networks beneath the 'surface' of the text itself – the manifest text, presented for reading. It is this subtext that carries the network of word-obsessions. These underlying chains constitute one aspect of the rhythm and signifying process of the text.

Finally, the importance of attempting to recreate the patterns of the past laid down by the author, is echoed in the words of Kieck (2002:89):

Few novels rival the cogent mantra-like incantatory power of this novel as the threads of the past are spun and re-spun to reveal its patterns.

3.2.3 Rhetorical devices

Part of Schoeman's signature style is the frequent use of speech acts such as rhetorical questions, admonition, apostrophe, the subjunctive mood and the imperative mode. All of these are featured as the narrator goads and coaxes herself to extricate those elusive memories she is pursuing. The following examples from the source text, together with the translations from the target text, serve as illustration that every effort was made in the translation to remain true to the source-text style:

- *Waar is ek? (A:1) Where am I? (p 46)*
- *Hoe ver terug moet ek gaan? (A:3) How far should I go back? (p 48)*
- *Maar nee. Nee. (A:1) But no. No. (p 46)*
- *Maar nee, ek is nie meer 'n kind nie ... (A:1) But no, I am no longer a child ... (p 46)*
- *... en as ek sou opstaan, sou ek my pad nog blindelings kan vind ... (A:1)*

- ... and if I were to get up, I would still be able to find my way blindly ... (p 46)
- *Waar is julle in hierdie groot donker, en kan julle my hoor? (A2) Where are you in this vast darkness, and can you hear me? (p 47)*
 - *Ek sou nog een maal so deur die slapende huis wil uitbeweeg ... (A:5)*
I should like to move out through the sleeping house once more ... (p 49)
 - *Staan op en gaan, staan op en loop deur daardie donker; trek die deur oop en gaan uit uit die slapende huis ... (A:5)*
Get up and go, get up and walk through that darkness; pull open the door and leave the sleeping house ... (p 50)

It was the intention of this translator to preserve, as far as possible, these modes of address and to integrate in the prose patterns of the target text speech modes and sentence structures which correspond as exactly as possible with those in the original text. More detail is supplied in Chapter 5 that deals with annotations of the translated text.

3.2.4 Register

One of the problems facing the translator when dealing with the English text is the degree of formality suitable for the target text. Should contractions, for example, be used during the old woman's rambling reminiscences? In the light of the author's proclivity for using old-fashioned, and often archaic words in which the Dutch influence is clearly visible, thereby lending a certain heightened formality to the text (for example, *jukbeendere*, A:37, instead of *wangbene*; *verskole*, A:35, instead of *verskuil*), the decision was made to forego all contractions, except in dialogue, thereby choosing to create a more suitable, more formal register. Nabokov (1975:x) explains his choice of register when translating *Eugene Onegin* as follows: 'Terms that are stilted or antiquated in Russian have been fondly rendered in stilted or antiquated English ...'

The following examples serve as illustration. **A**, from the target text (pp 46-47), contains no contractions, while **B** offers an alternative where contractions are used to create a more informal register. It is the contention of this translator that the more informal, colloquial style of **B** constitutes a lapse in

style, introducing an element of dissonance that disturbs the harmony of the text.

A *But no, I am no longer a child and Dulsie is long dead and Sofie too; it is Annie's daughter who is watching over me here and who has fallen asleep because she is young and tired out from the day's work, and because a dying old woman in a bed means nothing to her – why should she feel anything for me, who is no relation of hers, and why should she be grateful for the generosity Maans has shown them? She is asleep and it does not matter, for what more can I possibly need now and what cause would I have to call her? Annie's daughter – her name I cannot remember, but that is no longer important either.*

B *But no, I'm no longer a child and Dulsie's long dead and Sofie too; it's Annie's daughter who's watching over me here and who's fallen asleep because she's young and tired out from the day's work, and because a dying old woman in a bed means nothing to her – why should she feel anything for me, who's no relation of hers, and why should she be grateful for the generosity Maans has shown them? She's asleep and it doesn't matter, for what more can I possibly need now and what cause would I have to call her? Annie's daughter – her name I can't remember, but that's no longer important either.*

3.2.5 Retention of source-culture features

Translation studies scholars have differing opinions about the use of loanwords in the target text. Vinay and Darbelnet (2001:85) endorse 'the decision to borrow a source-language word or expression for introducing an element of local colour' or 'in order to introduce the flavour of the source language into a translation'. Where the emphasis is on the invisibility of the translator, however, this practice is frowned upon. Nida (2001:136) quotes Frere's admonition that '[a]ll importations from foreign languages ... are ... to be avoided'.

Lefevere (2001:236-7) points out that 'language reflects culture' and that this presents the translator with the problem of how much to 'naturalize' so as to make the translation 'conform more to what the reader of the translation is used to'. A term like *werf*, for example, presents the translator with a problem,

for the *werf* in the context of a South African farm is really an extension of the home and its activities, much more than can ever be conveyed by the English word *yard*, or *farmyard*. According to De Bosdari (1971:31) the *werf* comprises 'the whole of [the] inner area of the farm'. Nevertheless, an intuitive choice was made for the domesticating English *yard*, though it is obvious that something has been lost in the transfer. More examples will be given in the chapter dealing with the annotation of the translated text (Chapter 5).

How should the translator approach, however, the many words and concepts for which there are no real cultural equivalents in the target culture? A word like *Nagmaal* may be translated as *communion* but it cannot possibly convey the spirit of an event which played such a central role in the lives of the early farmers. Hattersley (1969:120-21) describes it as follows:

The sacrament was administered once a quarter and, in the country, might be the one occasion when scattered members of the congregation would come together, usually for a long week-end, since the opportunity to bring produce to market and procure in exchange the household necessities could not be neglected. The Church was practically the only institution that could give a focus to social energies and cultivate a feeling of common responsibility.

Likewise, the *voorhuis* could be considered the hub of the farmhouse. *Front room* is too general a term, *living-room* has too modern a sound and the genteel English term *parlour* is not an adequate translation either.

Following Schäffner's advice (2001:33) that '[b]ased on the translation skopos, translators will have to decide whether a loanword alone will be sufficient (which may be the case if the brief requires the target text to reflect a local, historical, or exotic flavour)', this translator decided to foreignise the text by retaining the above-mentioned and other Afrikaans words unchanged in the translation. This is an endorsement of the opinion of Ortega y Gasset (2001:63), who, commenting on the successful translation of his work from Spanish into German, commends the translator for '[forcing] the grammatical tolerance of the German language to its limits in order to carry over precisely

what is not German in [his] way of speaking. In this way, the reader effortlessly makes mental turns that are Spanish'.

This translator also agrees with Berman (2001:294) who argues for the preservation of 'vernacular networks', stating that 'prose often aims explicitly to recapture the orality of vernacular'. Translators should guard against suppressing 'the deep vernacular roots of the work' and consequently producing a text that is completely homogeneous. In a successful translation, the original language should 'resonate'.

A choice was therefore made in favour of a close literal translation of the novel, what Berman (2001:297) calls 'labor on the letter'. This, he claims, will '[restore] the particular signifying process of works (which is more than their meaning) and, ... [transform] the translating language'. Nabokov (1975:viii), a firm believer in literal translation, describes it as 'rendering, as closely as the associative and syntactical capacities of another language allows, the exact contextual meaning of the original'. He adds that '[o]nly this is true translation'.

By retaining many source-language terms in the target text, this translator attempted to minimise the inevitable cultural and historical loss that takes place when a text like this one is translated. Venuti (2001:475) comments on Ward's 1988 translation of Camus's *L'étranger* (1942) and contrasts it with Gilbert's 1946 version. Ward, Venuti claims,

... translated closely. He reproduced the lexical and syntactical peculiarities of the French ... adhering to Camus's brief, precise sentences.

This results in what Venuti (2001:473) calls 'an inscription of the foreign context in which the text first emerged'.

It is hoped that the translation of *Hierdie lewe* may incorporate the kind of Afrikaans 'inscription' that will enrich the English text.

3.2.6 Glossary

The retention of many of the original source-language terms calls upon the translator to make another important decision: whether to include a glossary

that explains these terms in the target language and whether to isolate these words typographically in the text (for instance, by means of italics) to indicate their 'difference'. This decision depends on one's attitude towards the visibility of the translator in the final product.

Scholars have different opinions about this issue. Nabokov (2001:83) advocates 'translations with copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity. I want such footnotes and the absolute literal sense ...'.

Berman (2001:294) states that '[t]he traditional method of preserving vernaculars is to exoticize them. One common form of exoticism is 'a typographical procedure (italics) ... used to isolate what does not exist in the original'.

Appiah (2001:427) calls for 'translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context.' He calls this 'thick translation'.

In an effort to further the understanding of the target reader by supplying some of the 'cultural and linguistic context', this translator has chosen to compile a glossary of all Afrikaans terms that occur in the translated text, including some that have become integrated in English, at least in South Africa – words like *veld*, *kraal* and *trek*. Words like *sjambok* (from the Afrikaans *sambok*) and *kaross* (Afrikaans spelling: *karos*) have been assimilated into English but may not be known outside South Africa and are likewise included in the glossary (p 87). All the words appearing in the glossary are marked in the translated text by means of italics.

For the sake of less 'interference' and a more seamless final product, a more domesticated/fluent text may, however, be preferred by some translators. Such a text may well include some source-text terms, but will draw no

particular attention to them, leaving the target readers to make their own deductions as to the meaning of these words.

3.2.7 *Ideological expectations*

Appiah (2001:426-27) emphasises the existence of a text as 'linguistic, as historical, as commercial, as political event'. Different readings may therefore be made of a text and a reader comes to the text with certain expectations. Appiah criticises the modern atmosphere of 'relativism' and 'easy tolerance' and calls for 'a thick description of the context of literary production'. With regards to African texts, Appiah feels that they should be taught in 'the American academy' with a specific purpose in mind: 'the urge to continue the repudiation of racism' and 'the need to extend the American imagination ... beyond the narrow scope of the United States'.

Likewise, some critics have missed in Schoeman's texts a kind of ideological penance for the political wrongs of the South African past. Translators may ask themselves, therefore, whether they feel called upon to introduce in some way in the target text Appiah's 'thick description of the context' in an attempt to correct what may be perceived as an ideological imbalance. (End notes are probably the most suitable vehicle for such an endeavour.)

Packer (1993:37) criticises Schoeman's translation *Take Leave and Go* (1992) for depicting a South Africa that 'is simply assumed'. He predicts the disappointment of '[t]hose readers ... who expect some token of protest or guilt':

...; perhaps even protest and guilt are assumed. Adriaan and his friends aren't ignorant, nor are they apologists. ... they neither approve nor disapprove.

Packer seems unfamiliar with Schoeman's well-known uncommitted stance in his novels. The author tends to take up a peripheral position, as does the narrator in *Hierdie lewe*, who watches and listens, but does not comment, except through the questions she asks and the secrets she is trying to unravel. With regard to the Jan Baster-saga, the narrator says: 'I never had an

opinion or passed judgment, neither did the word injustice ever occur to me. There was just an old man in a suit made of skins, and a fountain where our flocks were sent to graze all the ensuing years.' (p 68)

Although the novel may not conform to the critic's view of so-called protest literature, it does not necessarily follow that a stamp of approval has been given to the practices and events described in the narrative. Jooste (1994:6) states that the novel gives a dispassionate view of the colonisation of Southern Africa by white Afrikaans people but, at the same time, he reads into it a sharp criticism of the way the Afrikaner settlers established themselves in the interior:

It is an existence where love does not count and the weak are simply driven from their land. This is the way, 'Hierdie lewe' wants to say to the Afrikaans reader, this is the way your ancestors staked their claim to this piece of Africa. ... This reveals a cynical and even pessimistic view of the Afrikaans people. Human kindness and sensitivity ... were lacking. (own translation)

Renders (2001:74) agrees:

In ... 'Hierdie lewe' ... Schoeman dissects the past of the Afrikaner people. This scrutiny exposes mercilessly the weaknesses of the Afrikaner. In 'Hierdie lewe' the story of a dying old woman becomes a powerful indictment against the selfish and unchristianlike disposition of the Afrikaner: his narrow-mindedness and mercilessness, his pursuit of prestige, status and acquisition, his hypocrisy, his righteousness, his lack of compassion for the hardships of the black man. The criticism of the Afrikaner mentality is devastating. (own translation)

3.3 Target text prologue

The next chapter consists of a translation of pages 5-48 of Karel Schoeman's novel, *Hierdie lewe*, with the English title *This Life*. The text consists of the introductory (unnumbered) section of the novel, in which most of the recurring themes are introduced, Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2. The translated text is followed by a glossary of source-text terms that have been retained in the

target text. The translation supplies the basis for a descriptive annotation (Chapter 5), dealing with problems encountered by this translator (see 3.2) and their proposed solutions.

4. Translated text

Karel Schoeman: *This Life*

The night-light flickers and goes out; I lie awake in the dark, listening to the regular breathing of the girl asleep on the cot at the foot of my bed. It does not matter, nothing matters now, for to wait is all that remains, and light or darkness no longer matters. I know this room where I slept as a child, this old house on the ridge with Maans's new house some distance below, the *kraals*, the dams, and the low hills of the flat, faded land. I do not even have to close my eyes: wide-eyed in the dark I see the house where I was born, the farm where I grew up and, if I were to get up, I would still be able to find my way blindly over the dung floor of the bedroom and Stienie's new wooden floor in the *voorhuis*. I would feel my way to the bolt on the front door, without hesitation I would pull open the heavy old door, careful not to let the hinges creak, and step out into the yard. There is no moon, but I do not need moonlight to recognise the farm of my youth or to find the footpath. I feel no pain as I step barefoot over the stones, past the outbuildings and the kraal, and over the ridge to the graveyard, to stand there, my hand resting on the stacked stones of the wall. And then? What then? I am no longer certain what I have come to look for here. The silver glow of the night becomes shrouded, the greyish landscape grows dim before my eyes, and I no longer know where I am.

But no. No.

Where am I? I lie trapped in the dark, listening to someone breathing near me in the dark. Is it Dulsie who has stayed to sleep on the skin-rug in front of my bed, watching over me on my sickbed; is it Sofie who has fallen asleep, waiting for the knock on the shutter? But no, I am no longer a child and Dulsie is long dead and Sofie too; it is Annie's daughter who is watching over me here and who has fallen asleep because she is young and tired out from the day's work, and because a dying old woman in a bed means nothing to her – why should she feel anything for me, who is no relation of hers, and why should she be grateful for the generosity Maans has shown them? She is

asleep and it does not matter, for what more can I possibly need now and what cause would I have to call her? Annie's daughter – her name I cannot remember, but that is no longer important either.

It is my own room, now I know it again, the room where I slept as a child: there is the door to the voorhuis and there the small window with its inner shutter, set deep in the wall, with its view over the yard and the shed and the outbuildings. Why do I not see it? Through the chink between shutter and sash the moon would shine into the room to show where the window was, through the small chink the narrow beam of moonlight would fall into the room to flash in the mirror. If I wait I shall see once more that dark square outlined by the moonlight, the shutter opening soundlessly and the moonlight spilling over the floor, and my brother Pieter outside, placing his hands on the window-sill and hoisting himself up to land inside.

But no, no more; no, I remember now, and in the darkness certainty comes to my bewildered thoughts and memories. In later years the windows were fitted with glass panes: how would Pieter hoist himself through the window if he should come now? And the shed and the outside room where he used to sleep fell into ruins, so that Maans had them demolished and Pieter himself is dead and rests under the chiselled stone I ordered from *Oom Appie* and paid for myself.

There is no reason to get up now, even if I could still move; there is nothing more I could do and no one I could search for, for over the years everyone has gone, one after the other. Where are you in this vast darkness, and can you hear me? Speak to me if you are near, here where I lie alone in the night, unable to sleep, trapped with my bewildered thoughts and memories at the end of my life; speak to me, you who know more than I do, and explain to me what I cannot understand. But there is nothing, no voice in the dark or even the swish of a dress, black in the depth of the shadows: I am alone here where I lie, speechless and paralysed, with the thoughts I am powerless to control and the memories I can no longer evade, the relentless knowledge I would rather avoid.

I remember too much, for during my entire life I had too much occasion to look and listen, to see and hear, and to remember. I sat with them and helped pour the coffee, handed round the plates, took away the tray; I

heard them talk, about the marriages and the deaths, the consistorial meetings and the auction sales, the shiny black horse-drawn cart and the white marble stone, everything they considered important, and now that they are dead, I still remember it all. I sat with them and heard the silences between the words, the hesitation before the answer, the scarcely perceptible evasion; I saw the look in the eyes or the quick movement of the hands that the others missed because their minds were on more important affairs, and I still remember it. I did not gather this information intentionally, nor did I ask to retain it, but here at the end of my life, reflecting on all this accumulated wisdom, I suddenly realise that it is not meaningless, like the incidental swelling of the soil that indicates the hidden paths where the mole has tunnelled. All that is left is this knowledge; all that remains to me of this life is this collected wisdom.

How far should I go back? As far as I can remember, to the day we took out the honey, Jakob and Pieter and Gert, and they carried me back on their shoulders because I was so young that I was tired out and could not walk home, that long *trek* home with the young men laughing and jesting about the achievements of the day, with the harsh, faded landscape aglow for a moment in the light of the setting sun and the dams glittering in the distance? Or further still, to a time that has come to seem just as real to me through anecdotes and tales and inference, to the ramshackle cart and the small herd of scabby sheep, to the pleated caps and the embroidered apron and the bright red and blue of the bowls displayed in the wall-cupboard? I do not know: I am tired and I want to rest but sleep will not come, and there is no sign that the night will end; only the thoughts and memories remain, and avoiding them is no longer possible.

The darkness before my eyes, the helpless body, and this banked mass of memories through which I have to feel my way blindly. Words and images of more than seventy years, fragments of conversation, an incidental remark from servants gossiping in the kitchen, a few words spoken by a shepherd in the *veld*, anecdotes and tales, verses, rhymes, and the psalms sung around the table in the *voorhuis* of an evening, or later in the little village church, flashes I no longer know where to place, the house and yard in the moonlight, the moonlight glittering in the mirror and the distant glitter as the

water in the dams catches the daylight, the *spekbush* clear-white on the ridges in springtime, the luminous silver of the *renoster-bush* in the diffused sunlight of the late afternoon, and the dead lamb, its eyes pecked out by crows, the *reebok* slung sideways across the saddle, dried blood around its jaws; the quill pen, the pocket knife, the candlestick on the bedside table; the coolness of the pane against my fingers and the coolness of the stone, the hard, straight edge of the splashboard under my hand as I stand beside the Cape cart. This is what I have left, and all that remains for me, awake here in the dark, is to sift through it, alone, with no hand to guide me along, no whispering voice in my ear. I was a quiet, timid child, whose presence went unnoticed by all, an inquisitive child with alert, attentive eyes, who observed and remembered, and my memory and mind are no less clear now, even though they are the only faculties I have retained. To sift through and arrange the bits and pebbles and chips, the patches and threads and ribbons and notes, and finally to piece together from these the story in which I have figured over all these years, silent and vigilant in the corner or at the edge of the conversation, and perhaps also to understand, and even to forgive, to have all the unspoken anxieties, reproaches and sorrows eliminated, the last scores settled. To remember.

I must get up and journey back into the past, through the dark, alone across the years. I must move through the darkness of the sleeping house, soundlessly so no one will hear me, and pull open the front door; I must cross the threshold and venture outside.

The moon has not yet risen, but in the faded, diffused glow of the stars I can recognise the world of my youth, the wide landscape of my life, the bleak, faded land of shrub and stone, the harsh land of frost, snow and drought. Bitter land where I was born, meagre shaly soil where they will dig my grave inside the stone walls of the graveyard. I should like to move out through the sleeping house once more, to take leave of my life; I should like to go out one last time and behold the land, in sunlight and starlight, and follow the narrow path to the graveyard beyond the ridge, my hand groping among the stacked stones of the encircling wall. Never again. Only in my memories, sleepless in the dark, shall I still tread the old paths; only in my thoughts shall

I still move soundlessly through the familiar darkness of the house, back across all the years.

Get up and go, get up and walk through that darkness; pull open the door and leave the sleeping house, cross the threshold to the yard where the land stretches out in starlight. Again and again I follow that familiar path, unnoticed in the dark, again and again I waver at that door, waver on the threshold, only then reaching for the bolt and pulling open the door, only then venturing out into the night.

Meagre land, bitter land, beloved land. How did I come to spend my entire life here yet never really notice you, or notice you so rarely, even then sparing you barely a glance, that even now I remain unfulfilled, always yearning to see you again? Meagre land, sparse land, harsh land of shrub and stone, dry springs and fountains of brackish water; our fountains were the only ones never to run dry and our dams the only ones to glitter in the light. Land without mercy where the wild cat savages the sheep and the eagle swoops down on the lamb, where the shepherd is found dead in his shelter, covered with the fine, sifting snow, and the hunter loses his footing on the rock; unforgiving land, where brother is set against brother and servant against master, where the trespass remains unforgiven and the written word perpetuates the lie, the chiselled inscription is rendered untrue.

I must carry on, barefoot in the half-light of the night, step by step, on the trail of every memory; every remembered word I must examine, and every half-forgotten one attempt to recall; along the rocky ridges, in the dry crevices and hollows of this arid land, borne from one disclosure to the next. I must search for the rare fountain, the dripping of water and the moisture of soil that may have retained a footprint.

Bright land, gleaming silver-grey land drifting away from me in the night, where I marvel at the way every branch of the resin bush sparkles as its dense, whorled leaves reflect the glimmer of the light, and every rock glows dimly on the ridges. The porcupine disappears into the shadows between the shrubs, the yellow cobra slithers past my feet, and jackal trot along the stony ridges, paying no heed to the grazing sheep. I have nothing more to fear, walking barefoot and alone through the veld and over the stones in my flapping nightgown until I reach the edge of the escarpment where the vertical

rockface falls away, the sheer drop invisible in the depth of the shadows as if it were not there, barefoot on the rocky ledge at the edge of the world, the stone cold under my feet and the piercing wind blowing straight at me, yet I do not freeze or falter. Beneath me lie the mountain ranges, cliffs, chasms and plains of the Karoo, one mountain range after another ranked to the horizon; beneath me lie the warm lowlands filled with the herbal scent of shrubs, and one last time I survey it all; but then I turn back to the low inclines of the plateau where the wind blows so piercingly, back to the land where I was born, the bitter land, the beloved land, and slowly in the starlight, over shrubs and coarse clumps of grass, past the ridges where the jackal hides, through the dry streams with their stony beds and fissures where water has not flowed for many years, I walk back. At last I see in the distance once again the glitter of the dams and the dark shape of the house with its high thatched roof set against the ridge, the kraal and the shed and the outbuildings in the background, the radiant pear trees covered with blossoms in spring; and past the orchard the footpath leading to the graveyard with its few stone mounds and headstones in the shelter of the encircling wall of stacked stones.

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The farm was granted to Father's grandfather when the first white people toiled up the passes of the Roggeveld Mountains to find grazing for their sheep flocks here along the edge of the escarpment. It must have been he or his son who had built the old stone house with its walls of stacked flat stones and its big hearth that still formed part of the outbuildings during my childhood; the thatched roof had already begun to collapse over the rafters when I got to know it, and later Maans had it demolished as well when the outbuildings were resited. It was not such a big farm, but it was favourably situated here on the edge of the escarpment and it was one of the best sheep farms in the district, with good grazing and dams fed by springs that ran dry only during the harshest droughts.

Of my great-grandfather and his wife I know nothing more, and not much more about my grandparents either, because they all died before I was born, and Father was a rather reserved man who was never very keen to speak of the past. Mother never spoke of the past, nor did she, even in passing, refer to anything that had happened earlier. I only know that as children we sometimes picked up arrowheads in the veld and I recall Father mentioning how, when he was a boy, they had to flee to the Karoo because they were attacked by Bushmen; men making a furrow or digging in a field would come upon beads of polished ostrich egg-shells or a bracelet, and sometimes upon a grave with skulls and bones. Once Father also told of the butchers' men that were sent from the Cape in earlier days to buy sheep, and that is probably how *Oupa* made his money, for apparently he was a wealthy man for these parts at the time of his death. He had married a wife from the Bokkeveld, and it was he who had built the large homestead; but no, I remember Father telling us that she herself had overseen the builders while they were working, for *Oupa* was probably a gentle and meek man, much like Father, and so she had taken the lead. The old people moved over to the new homestead, and when Father and Mother were married, they lived in the old

house – both Jakob and Pieter were born there. Only after Oupa's death did Father and Mother come to live in the new house, and that is where I was born then, in the house where I shall also die. Father added two more rooms, and after that no further changes were made to the house.

It was not a particularly large house, neither could it be called grand – Stienie always found it dark, poky and old-fashioned, and she did not rest before she had built her own home – but it was situated in a poor and remote region where most farmers had to move about constantly to find water and grazing, across the Riet River to the Nuweveld or down to the Karoo in winter, and among the simpler makeshift homes of the Roggeveld it appeared solid and impressive, and even grand through my childish eyes. Thick walls, almost two feet wide, a *brandsolder* resting on beams, under a high thatched roof, small windows with wooden shutters on the inside, and clay floors – I was a young girl when it was decided to fit glass panes; no, it was just before Maans married Stienie, and I was a grown woman by then. Nevertheless, the house was never good enough for Stienie, though she kept her complaints to herself while Mother was still alive, and I suppose it must have been cold and dark and inconvenient, but we lived like that all the years without knowing any better, Father who died there, and Mother, we children who grew up there, Sofie during her brief stay with us and Maans who was born there – yes, and Stienie too for all those years until Maans had the new stone house built for her on the plain towards the road. After that they did not make much effort to keep up the old homestead, because only Pieter lived there, and during these past years Annie and her daughter, and what did they actually mean to Maans that he should put himself out for them? The house began to fall in disrepair, but essentially it is still as I knew it in my childhood, sixty and seventy years ago, with the long, dark voorhuis where you enter, and two small rooms on either side: Father and Mother slept in the front room on the right, the one on the left was later Jakob and Sofie's room, and behind Father and Mother's room was mine, with the window overlooking the yard and the outbuildings, until the shutters were closed and latched against the moonlight. It is to this room that they carried me, this room to which I was carried back, to lie awake in the dark, awaiting my death.

Against the furthest wall of the voorhuis as you enter, you would probably expect a hearth in this cold region, but our fire was made in the kitchen, and when a visitor had once remarked on it, Father had shrugged and answered, "No, but that is the way my late mother had wanted it", as if that explained everything. Did *Ouma* want to keep the cooking and the servants out of her voorhuis, and was it her way of establishing her own way of life in the house that had been built under her own eyes and hands? In the furthest wall, where you would expect the hearth, two small wall-cupboards with glazed doors had been built in, the only glass panes to be found in the Roggeveld in my childhood years, and in those cupboards *Ouma's* china was kept, cups and saucers and bowls patterned in red and white and blue with a touch of gold here and there in between. Mother never used them or even took them out of the cupboards, and as a child I sometimes stood there on a Sunday afternoon, gazing for hours through the glass panes at the red and blue and gold of the patterns on the china, the only brightness in our sombre home or in the faded, flat region where I grew up. Now *Stienie* probably has it all, though I cannot remember ever having seen it; once people from the Boland, who were interested in such things, called on us in our town house, and *Stienie* mentioned a bit disdainfully that she still had some of *Great-ouma's* old china, but where she kept it I do not know and she never used it, because they were old-fashioned pieces and not to her taste at all. That is all I know of *Ouma*, the fact that she came from the Bokkeveld and had a house built with recessed wall-cupboards to display her china. *Oupa* lies buried here in the graveyard behind the ridge, with a stone on which someone had chiselled his name and dates carefully, for he died first and she saw to it that a headstone was made for him, but when she herself died, no one took the trouble, so she rests anonymously under one of the overgrown stone mounds next to him. Father had probably still known which grave was hers, but today no one would be able to point it out.

The brightly-coloured china in the wall-cupboards drew my attention as a child, but, even so, there was more that *Oupa* and *Ouma* had left us. When I was a child we seldom left the farm except when we moved down to the Karoo in winter, but as I grew older and we rode over to neighbouring farms more often for weddings and funerals, I came to appreciate better the modest

and unobtrusive wealth that we had inherited from them: not merely the brightly-coloured china that had drawn the attention of a child, but the solid homestead with its strong walls and the few heavy, plain pieces of furniture that had not been made locally but had been brought over the mountain passes of the Boland by wagon: Father and Mother's four-poster bed, the cots, the large table in the *voorhuis* with its *riempie* chairs arranged along the walls, and the *kists* in which our clothes and linen were stored. This house and this furniture which we had inherited from my grandparents seemed to set us apart from our neighbours in the Roggeveld, and as I came to realise that fact, I experienced – yes, I too – something of the pride and deadly vanity that pervaded our family, intensified and reinforced from generation to generation. The ambition I was spared, however, for it was not my task to strive and to strain ahead desperately, but to see, to hear and to remember, as I understand at last, here at the end of my life.

When you approach the farm, whether from the Karoo by way of the old road over Vloksberg Pass or from the village, the new house is the first thing you see, its shiny roof reflecting the light from a distance long before you arrive, and I am the only one who, almost instinctively, still leans forward in the cart every time we return, to look at the old house with its outbuildings against the ridge, waiting to welcome me. When I picture the arrival on the farm here before me in the dark, it appears to me as it was during all those years before the new house was built, for no matter which road you chose, from the direction of Groenfontein or Oorlogskloof – the village did not exist in those days – following the ruts of the wheels across the low hills and rocky ledges, or along the pass up the mountainside past Klipfontein, when you reached that wide, open, rolling land of the escarpment, you saw from a great distance, across the waving shrubs and grass and the glitter of the dams, the house with its high, thatched roof against the ridge, the house with the shed and stables and other outbuildings some distance behind, the orchard with its wind-swept pear trees, and the graveyard with its irregular wall of stacked stones. It was the world of my youth, and the surrounding farms formed its borders, except when we moved down to the Karoo in winter.

“Not that he started out with much,” I heard Oom Herklaas Vlok remark after Father's funeral, “only the two farms and a handful of sheep”, but by the

time he died the land and the flocks of sheep had increased, and there was a measure of disapproval in Oom Herklaas's voice. Though envy may have existed in the district, I do not believe there was ever malice, not to mention enmity, for Father was never one to make enemies, a placid, silent man who stroked his beard and thought long before he voiced an opinion or answered a question, and whose words people were prepared to heed. So thorough could his deliberation be and so slow was he to decide one way or another, that it was often Mother who made the decisions, and sometimes, impetuous as she was, she became so impatient with his indecisiveness that she took the lead herself while he was still considering his course of action. She thrashed the boys with the horsewhip or *sjambok* even when they were all but grown-up, and sometimes it was also she who gave the shepherds a thrashing, because Father seldom and reluctantly raised his hand against anyone. Most probably it was also she who had encouraged him over the years of their marriage to purchase those flocks of sheep and that land.

As the only daughter I grew up in the house with Mother and she died before my eyes, for almost fifty years she and I lived close together, day in, day out, here on the farm or in the town house where she died, but what can I say about her now, when I must review my memories and try to explain, to understand? A slender, dark, quick woman with a fierce temper and a sharp tongue – though this much all the servants and the neighbours also knew, and all the people of my generation still remember her so today and tell stories of her explosive temper and her stubborn pride when they do not know that I am close enough to hear; and I, her own daughter, after being with her for nearly fifty years cannot really find anything to add to that, for more than that she did not reveal even to me. But how could such a thing be possible? Something there must be among all the incidental words and gestures, shards and tiny splinters, that one can scrape together and arrange, to be able to understand and explain, to try and understand, to try and forgive.

From my childhood days I remember only what other people remember as well, though I may have had more occasion to observe it all: the diligence, the drive and the passion, the persistence that could so easily become stubbornness, the sudden attacks of blind and uncontrollable fury that scared us anew every time with their violence; drive and passion, yes, and I would

almost say obsession, as if she were being swept towards some distant and scarcely perceptible goal by powers invisible to everyone but her, and unfathomable even to her. Does it sound strange when I try to explain it like this? Perhaps I exaggerate now, but I am only trying to find words to describe something of that relentless woman in whose shadow I grew up and at whose bedside I kept vigil during her long, painful, wordless death. That is all I can still do, try, for no one has remained who can do more than that.

Passion and obsession – these probably remain the best words. And later, so many years later, when she was old and dying? In her old age the strain or tension remained, for over the years it had become part of her and it was too late for her to change, even if she had deemed it necessary, but then, right at the end of her life, that obsessiveness disappeared, as if that distant goal had been attained and all that she had striven for had been fulfilled. Was that then what she had desired all those years, without ever knowing it clearly herself: the money and the farms and the town house, Maans's education and his stylish young wife, her own status in the small community as Father's widow, the seat in the front row at church, the cape embroidered with glittering jet? Had it all been for that then, the unyielding ambition over the years, and the pride to the bitter silent end?

Does this say something more about Mother?

There are two more things I know of her, two things from the time before I knew her myself, from a past about which she herself never mentioned a word. After her funeral, when the mourners came to our town house for coffee, I heard one of the young men in conversation with Oom Koos van Wyk ask whether she had also been from these parts. "No," Oom Koos replied, "her people trekked around in the Karoo." He said it in passing, like something of no importance or interest to anyone, unaware that I was listening, and he added nothing further to the remark, unaware that I was waiting, transfixed, to hear more, and now he is long dead, he and all his contemporaries who might have had similar information; and so it is all I have left, that single sentence and the almost contemptuous manner in which it was uttered; that, and a fragment from my own childhood memories, an image which has survived in spite of my being unable to place it in context, so that it must remain standing, uncertain and unclear as I remember it.

It was one winter when we were down in the Karoo, and I was quite young, though I am unable to say how old I was; I do not even remember whether Maans had been born yet and whether Jakob and Pieter were still with us. Only this solitary image has remained: how a *trekboer* company arrived at our winter quarters one day with a rickety cart, a few thin dogs and a flock of scabby sheep, and we were told it was Oom Ruben, Mother's brother. Where he and his family had come from, where they were going, how they had found us and what the reason was for their visit, of that I know nothing, and all I have retained is the image of the forlorn little group of trekkers in the sunshine of the winter's day, the woman gazing out from under the tented hood as if she were not expecting any welcome, the shy, neglected children, and the man with the wild, black beard and Mother's dark, flashing eyes, deep in their sockets like hers; but, above all, it is Mother herself I recall, how she and this strange man greeted each other without any display of affection or even recognition, as if these were strangers who had arrived here at our stand, and how they surveyed each other warily and suspiciously from a distance, as if they knew and understood each other too well to put any trust in the other. I do not think it was a long visit or that there was much conversation: the visitor got whatever it was he had come for – money, I suppose – and then the whole strange, bedraggled company turned around and disappeared among the *geelbos* and thorn trees as they had come, and never was there a single mention of them or their visit, nor did I ever hear of them again.

Is this, therefore, the world Mother came from? I wonder now, looking back and remembering: the daughter of a family who moved with their stock from fountain to fountain and from farm to farm in search of a temporary stand, tolerated by the white people, despised by the coloured people, a half-wild group of drifters and hunters as still existed in the interior in those days, trekking around in the Karoo, as Oom Koos had said where he sat having coffee in our town house after her funeral. Oom Ruben and Oupa Adam – yes, where do those memories spring from, all of a sudden, like echoes from the bottom of a well, things I did not even know I remembered any more? Father laboriously writing up Maans's date of birth in our family Bible with the scratchy, messy quill pen, and Sofie standing behind his chair, watching, and

asking whether Pieter had also received his grandfather's name. "No," Father had replied, "his grandfather's name was Adam, but we did not feel it was a proper name for a child." He was referring to Mother's father, the grandfather after whom Pieter, as the second son, should have been named. Adam and Ruben – Biblical names – who was it that had decided against it? Perhaps Mother herself, who had rather wanted to forget the names and the world from which they came, or perhaps Ouma, who had still been alive then, Ouma from the Bokkeveld with her wall-cupboards and her china? But if this were all so, how did it happen then that Father had married Mother and brought her here, and how had they lived here together all those years, with Father and Mother in the first house and Oupa and Ouma in the new homestead? Dulsie would have known, but she is dead too, and the little information she had ever revealed had been so sketchy and confused that I would not have been able to compose any answer from what I remembered of it. Now I would never know; never would I be able to come closer to the truth than with that single memory of Oom Ruben and his shy, withdrawn family with their wary eyes who had slunk out of our lives like scraggy wolves to some distant and unknown destination; Oupa Adam and Oom Ruben with their rickety wagons and their old rifles, silent men with deepset black eyes.

At the time my earliest memories of Mother begin, she must have been around forty: her date of birth can be seen in the family Bible in Maans's house and on the big white stone in the village graveyard that had been erected for her by Maans, and for now one would still be able to look it up if it were important. I do not remember these things any more. At the time, she had already been married for more than twenty years and whatever objections or misgivings there might once have existed concerning her marriage had been removed by the deaths of Oupa and Ouma; she and Father had moved across to the new house with its wall-cupboards and its four-poster bed and had had it extended for their family, and there was no one to contest or threaten her possession of it.

Though Father may not have inherited much, as Oom Herklaas maintained, it must have been sufficient, and over time his wealth had increased; though he was not a rich man, we might have been described as

well-off. We never knew any real hardship, not even in times of drought or in years when the migrant herds of antelope, the locusts or the frost caused severe damage: there was always enough food – mutton or venison, with samp or rice, fruit, fresh or dried, if the frost had not ruined the blossoms, milk and butter in summer, and sometimes even bread, for we had a field where Father could sow some wheat. There were enough clothes, enough candles; there were skin-blankets and down quilts against the cold, and firewood that had been brought from the Karoo by wagon; the solid house with its thatched roof and its shutters provided shelter. Even so, though there may always have been enough, in those years there was hardly ever much more than barely enough: with unwearied attention Mother kept the keys and locked and unlocked, measured and weighed the supplies, and patched, altered and remade our clothes: no candle was ever lit unnecessarily or allowed to burn too long and not an extra log or branch was put on the fire.

We children accepted it like that, for we were not used to anything else, and where we lived in such isolation in a bare and harsh world it was necessary to be cautious, but looking back now, I have to wonder whether she had not exaggerated her caution with that same stubbornness. Why else do I remember so few visitors from my childhood and did I get the feeling later that people from our district avoided our house; why did they have to be lured with such difficulty to attend the dance when Jakob was married and again, years later, the dance when Maans came of age? The Roggeveld was sparsely populated and the roads were bad, so that not many people paid social visits, but travellers between the Karoo and the Roggeveld, the Karoo and the Hantam, over Vloksberg, passed quite close to us; why did so few of them stop there in those years unless they were forced to come and fill their water barrels? Did they notice that the hospitality shown them were duty-bound and guarded, and that every morsel they ate and every bit of candle that had to be lit for them were noted and every barrel of water was conceded with ill-concealed reluctance? – by Mother, I have to add, not by Father; never by Father. When neighbours rode over for advice or help, they were likewise not encouraged to stay, and I cannot remember the wives often accompanying their husbands to call on Mother: they too would soon have discovered that their arrival was greeted without warmth and that no effort

was made to delay their departure; they too would have felt the reserve and lack of cordiality with which Mother usually treated outsiders, and in the increasingly uncomfortable silence around the big table in the voorhuis they would have realised that every spoonful of tea was being measured out unwillingly and every lump of sugar they used was resented. For as much as the people of our district called on each other, we had no part in their social interaction, and the gatherings on neighbouring farms were seldom attended by us. Only later did things start to change, when Maans came of age and got married, when the town house was built, and when Mother took her seat among the wives of the elders in the front row at church, to hold it until her death. All that, though, was much later.

It was because of Mother, always Mother, never Father. He was not a greedy or closefisted person, but always willing to help. He liked company, even though he never said much himself, and over a glass of brandy he could even become jovial in his unassuming way; but his path was mapped out for him like everybody else's, and usually he followed it resignedly. Only once or twice did I see him turn pale with suppressed anger and Mother yield to him without his having to raise his voice or even say much. She was the one who struggled to make ends meet and who saved so doggedly – do I exaggerate when I say anxiously, as if she were trying desperately to protect us from some danger only she was aware of, and no effort were too great to ward off the lurking danger? Perhaps this is an exaggeration, but not entirely. Perhaps it was the memory of a bitter and hungry youth that drove her to try and establish for herself safety and security, and fear was indeed interwoven with that memory. I do not know, I can only try, and cannot even say whether my efforts make sense – Oom Koos's incidental remark after her funeral and Oom Ruben's unexpected visit and that anxious scrimping and saving, these are the only means at my disposal. As a child on the farm I often played on my own near the old graveyard beyond the ridge where the old people had thrown out everything they had no further need of, and among the stones I gathered shards of pottery and china or bits of blue or purplish glass. Sometimes, however, there were larger pieces among the fragments, just large enough to be able to make out something of the form or pattern of the original cup or bowl from the round shape or the ornamentation; and just so I

have only the fragments of my memories from which I now have to try and recover the form and pattern of the past.

It was a lonely youth, even though I was never aware of it myself, and, moreover, I was the youngest child and only daughter. Between Jakob and Pieter, and again between Pieter and myself, there had been other children who had died, and only the inscriptions in the family Bible and the nameless stone mounds in the graveyard bore testimony to them, and only the three of us had survived. Jakob was the eldest son who always had to take responsibility and he was favoured slightly by Mother, as far as she ever showed any sign of favour or affection, so that there was a distance between him and me, irrespective of that caused by the age difference and, besides, Jakob was a reserved and uncommunicative person. I was only a child when he died, and thus he remains scarcely more than a dark, silent figure on the fringe of my childhood world. "*Blink Jakob*" they called him, I remember now, and long after his death people who had known him sometimes still spoke of "Blink Jakob". Contemptuously or admiringly, or perhaps both? I cannot say, neither do I know the origin of the nickname, but later they referred to him as a handsome man, and in her old age, on several occasions when Mother spoke of him to strangers, she also mentioned with a certain smugness that he had been a handsome man. Do I remember more, or is it only the memory of the nickname that conjures up further images: can I really remember something about a sleek horse, a gleaming black stallion I had feared as a child? That could have been the horse on which he used to ride through the *kloof* in the evenings, to Oom Wessel's farm in the Karoo; or perhaps it is only my imagination. I was only a child when he died, ten or twelve years old.

Oh yes, and that he had inherited Mother's impetuous nature and her fierce temper, that I still remember. Could that be why people smiled to themselves at the thought of "Blink Jakob"? He would lose his temper in a flash and was a hard master to the farm hands, so that he was not well-loved by any of them. Perhaps he took after Mother's people, and that might have been why she was sometimes partial to him and understood him best.

And Pieter – yes, Pieter was a different kind of person. Actually I never got to know Pieter much better than Jakob, for I lost both my brothers at an early age, when I was still a child, but between Pieter and me there was not

such an age difference, and he had more time for his little sister than could be expected of an older brother. Sometimes he made me little toys and even played with me when he was not being put to work on the farm. Pieter was more like Father's people, smaller and slimmer than Jakob, with fair hair and blue eyes, and he was also more cheerful, had a quicker tongue and a livelier imagination, and was inclined to joke and tease: Pieter singing to himself while he worked, Pieter playing an old violin, or laughing on the dance floor in a haze of candlelight and fine, powdery dust. Why do I remember this now after all the years, why does that image present itself so unexpectedly? "Oh, but he could dance well!" Hesther Vlok, by then a middle-aged woman, once sighed, and it must have been her own memories that caused her to smile like that, for she was older than me and she might have been one of his dance partners. Pieter nimble and lean on the dance floor – it must have been at New Year, the dance I remember, when Sofie came to us as a bride and there was dancing. Pieter with his slim white body gripping the sheaves on the wagon, Pieter's face at the window in the moonlight, Pieter's face by the flickering light of a candle, Pieter running through the veld, laughing, running through fields of flowers in spring, stopping, his hair blowing in the wind. Later he never laughed or even smiled any more, irrevocably withdrawn in his silence, so that no one could still say what he was thinking or remembering.

Jakob and Pieter and I, but what can I say about myself? When I was a child, we had no mirror, and so I never knew what I looked like: a thin, shy, silent child I must have been, just as later I became a thin, shy, silent girl. We had all inherited Mother's passionate nature and her temper, but while the boys never learned to control their tempers or hide their feelings, I was taught at an early age to keep quiet, to obey and to accept, and the feelings I was never allowed to express must have been buried inside and continued to simmer deep under the surface. A thin, shy child on a seat in the corner, hemming a cloth or knitting a stocking, that no one took any notice of and whose presence was forgotten almost instantly, so that they said things in front of me that otherwise would probably have remained secret, or showed feelings they would probably have tried to conceal if they had realised I was there to observe them. Mother's face, suddenly pale, Father's trembling hands, the hatred flaming from Sofie's eyes for a moment – all this I saw and

more, more than they could ever guess, and I stowed much of it away, to rummage among accumulated splinters and fragments now, at the end of my life, trying to understand the meaning of it all. I bent my head over my work, however, and tried not to make any sound or movement to draw attention to my presence; I learned, one might say, to pretend and dissemble where I remained seated in the corner all the years of my life, the unnoticed girl, the unmarried daughter, the spinster aunt, always somewhere in a corner of someone else's home or at the fringe of the company where she did not belong, at the fringe of other people's lives in which she played no part, busy watching and listening, busy observing, busy remembering.

So that was our family; but then there was also old Dulsie, whom I almost forgot, as one is inclined to forget about the servants, though she was with us for as long as I can remember. She came with Ouma from the Bokkeveld as a slave when Ouma got married, for her parents had given her the child as a wedding present, and years later when the slaves were freed, she stayed with us and helped to raise me. Dulsie always looked down on our other workers because she was the *Ounooi's* own slave, as she said herself, and she slept in the house, in front of Ouma's bed and later in front of the hearth in the kitchen, while they, the *knegte* and shepherds, Hottentots and *Basters*, had to find a sleeping-place in the outbuildings at night, or build shelters in the veld. She must have been quite old already when I got to know her; no, she must certainly have been old, because she had also helped raise Father, but, together with Mother, she still did most of the housework. Father always treated her with a certain respect, probably for Ouma's sake; but Mother knew no respect, and when Father was not there Dulsie bore the brunt of her rage as much as anyone else.

Ouma with the gilded china teacups and bowls, Ouma who had brought along her own slave from the Bokkeveld – the only other thing I can remember is that Dulsie often spoke to me about the Ounooi, and that there was a plaintive note in her voice when she mentioned the old days. Why had I never listened to what she told me? She described how she had to iron the pleats in the Ounooi's caps with a goffering-iron and how fastidious the Ounooi always used to be about her caps. And one evening when we were sitting together at the hearth in the kitchen, she took from some hiding-place

where she kept her possessions a small bundle and unfolded it for me by the glow of the fire, a worn silk apron, embroidered with flowers, that the Ounooi used to wear for smart occasions and had later given to her when she could no longer use it. Why am I reflecting on these things only now; why did I never ask Dulsie about Ouma? She would have been able to remember Father and Mother's wedding and where Mother had come from, she would have overheard what Oupa and Ouma had discussed in private without taking notice of the presence of the slave girl, and she would have known about the tension that existed between Mother and Ouma without their realising she was aware of it; like the silent child in the corner she would have had the opportunity to observe, and she had no special loyalty to Mother to prevent her from talking. So much of what I want to know to help me understand I would have been able to find out from the servants. But now it is too late, for Dulsie is dead and lies under one of those unmarked stone mounds beyond the encircling wall of the graveyard, and Gert and Jacomyn also left and are probably long dead like her, far beyond my reach, with all the knowledge they possessed. All I can do, is try and remember their voices and listen across the years to what they can still tell me where they talk among themselves, by the kraal wall, in the yard or in front of the hearth in the kitchen, without taking notice of the white child who is listening. I have forgotten about them; I have forgotten about their knowledge.

So the servants were also there, in and around the house and in the yard, that constant presence to which I can hardly attach names or faces any more, only an occasional voice, or a few words from a half-forgotten conversation, a gibe or a curse, a song or a rhyme. Gert's name and face I can still remember, of course, for, like Dulsie, he was always there: he was a Baster, or so he had always called himself, and he had come to us when he was a young child, so young that in later years he no longer even knew where he had come from or who his parents had been. They had just found him, Father once remarked smilingly, and so he grew up around the house and on the outskirts of our family, slept somewhere in the outbuildings, received food to eat from our table and old clothes to wear from Father or the boys. He was the boys' playmate, for they were more or less the same age, but between Jakob and him there was always a barely concealed animosity. "Jakob has

still not forgiven Gert for the thrashing he got that day at the fountain," Pieter said one day when he was taunting Jakob, that I can remember; and how, another time, Gert grew pale and rigid with anger, a knife in his hand – "Just lay a hand on me, white man, then you know what will happen to you." Was it the same occasion, and who was he talking to? To Jakob, my memory tells me, but I do not know where that certainty comes from, only that I was a frightened onlooker in the corner of the kraal – the smell of the kraal dung I can remember, and the rough stones against my back, and my fear.

Dulsie in the house and Gert somewhere in the yard with the boys, working or fooling around, or playing – that is how I remember my childhood years. Jacomyn came only later, with Sofie, and then they left together and everything changed; but that was later. Of the shepherds, however, I remember nothing. The men were in the veld with the sheep and built themselves shelters there, the women came to do our washing and smear our floors, and sometimes I played with the children, so that they stand out best in my memory though I cannot remember any one individual; barefoot children with ulcerous legs, in a skimpy dress or short trousers made of dressed skins or an old *kaross*. Later Mother did not want them near the house any longer, but later I myself had no further need of their company, later, when everything had changed; I only know that they were always around somewhere, behind the pear orchard or beyond the kraal wall, so that one accepted their constant presence without paying any further attention to them. The men were sometimes thrashed for drunkenness or losing sheep, they were given notice or came to say they wanted to leave, and sometimes they simply disappeared during the night with their bundles, and only the black mark of their fireplace still showed where their shelters had stood.

In my childhood years we possessed only two farms, the one in the Roggeveld and our winter quarters in the Karoo, but an effort was already underway to extend our boundaries, and I know there was constant conflict with neighbours about disputed landownership or beacons that had reputedly been moved, and one of my earliest memories is how Jan Baster was chased from his dwelling-place near the boundary of our land. I never learned the details of this either, but I can remember an elderly coloured man at our door,

hat in hand, trembling and stammering with dismay at the injustice he had come to complain to Father about; I must have been young still, for I know I had become upset too without realising why. Father stood on the threshold, silently, with Mother close behind him, and I remember her giving him a little nudge in the back; "Tell the *Hotnot* to go away!" she hissed. How well I remember it, Mother's black dress and her words and that small, impatient gesture with which she had urged him on. At some time or other it was discovered or decided that the land on which Jan Baster lived was part of our farm and he was told to leave, while, from his point of view, he maintained the land had belonged to him and his people for many years and his father had lived there at the fountain before him; and then Jakob and Gert had ridden over one evening, or they had been sent, and they had burnt down the few small buildings at the fountain. Jakob and Gert were enemies, but in the isolation that was our shared lifestyle, none of us could afford to surrender to our feelings of animosity or affection: Jakob and Gert struggling together to bring the ox under the yoke or to pry the rock loose with the crowbar where they were stacking the kraal wall, their heads close together; Jakob and Gert riding over to Bastersfontein together to set fire to the dry thatch of the *hartbeeshuisies*.

How did I know this? It was probably mentioned at the dinner-table or it was eagerly discussed in the kitchen. Yes, and one evening, much later, old Dulsie snarled at Gert: "Jan Baster's curse on you, both you and Jakob!" and Gert's face clouded with anger in the dim firelight. "Old woman, just say another word ..." His voice fades away in my ears, his face vanishes in the wavering shadow of the firelight, and I do not remember any more. But Jan Baster left, for what resistance could he offer after all, and where could he turn for help? And he and his family crossed the Groot River to Griqualand, I later heard the servants tell. Can I really remember it, that small procession with the rickety cart struggling down the road in the distance, drifting and bobbing over the waving shrubs of the veld with us watching them from the farm, and a voice telling me, "That's Jan Baster and his people"? After that our flocks were often sent to graze at Bastersfontein and our shepherds erected their own dwellings there, and no one gave Jan Baster another thought, trembling with outrage before our door in his shabby suit of dressed

skins. Who still knows today how the fountain got its name except me, lying awake here and suddenly remembering him? I never had an opinion or passed judgment, neither did the word injustice ever occur to me. There was just an old man in a suit made of skins, and a fountain where our flocks were sent to graze all the ensuing years.

This must have been the way our landownership expanded initially and our claim to it was secured, by disputes with the neighbours and threats or acts of violence against those who were weaker than us. Bastersfontein was the first acquisition I can remember and after that Kliprug; later there were the purchases and later still, when Maans was a young man, the inheritances, but it started off modestly, yet persistently, and when I reflect on it now, I realise that my earliest childhood years were actually filled with the ongoing blurred arguments about the boundary fences and beacons of Kliprug, where Oom Barend Swanepoel's shepherds were reputedly trespassing on our land and had to be driven off forcefully by Jakob and Gert. And once more there is such a sudden, unpleasant recollection of violence, old Oom Swanepoel with his reddish beard, slamming down his fist on the big table in the voorhuis, Mother in her black dress, leaning across the table towards him, both hands leaning on the table top, shouting at him shrilly, the way she shouted at the farm hands in the kitchen, and Father sitting between them, helpless or powerless, not trying to intervene in their heated argument while Mother drove the old man from the house with her words as if she were wielding a sjambok. "I won't be driven away from here like Jan Baster!" the old man shouted over his shoulder in parting, neither could they do it, for he was a white man and they could not simply burn down his house and evict his family, yet in the end he was forced to leave, how, I do not know. "Your grandfather drove to Worcester to get that piece of land," old Oom Kasper Vlok told Maans at the wedding at Gunsfontein years later, "and I don't suppose you're sorry today, are you?" They were discussing Maans's sheep that were grazing on the land that had been part of Kliprug in the old days, though nobody remembers the name today, and how good the grazing was there; I sat across the table from them and heard the old man's words, and then I remembered the name Kliprug and suddenly old Oom Swanepoel appeared before me again. I know they had conferred by candlelight, Father, Mother and Jakob, and that there

had been documents on the table that *Meester* had to come and read to them, so it must have been before Jakob's wedding, when Meester was still with us. Perhaps they had consulted an attorney or the magistrate, or Father might even have had his horse saddled and ridden all the way to Worcester as Oom Kasper had said, for the Vloks lived just beyond Kliprug in those days and he would probably have known. But however it may have been, the Swanepoels had likewise disappeared, soundlessly and without repercussion they had disappeared, and Kliprug was added to our land as if the disputed boundary fence had never existed.

Mother in her black dress – at the time I did not think about what I had seen or heard, but as I watched her become prouder and more headstrong over the years, I realised how important land and property were to her, and what a high price she was prepared to pay for what she desired, acre by acre, morgen by morgen, and farm by farm. What fired this acquisitiveness that was daunted by nothing and no one, and saw all methods as legitimate? Perhaps that old insecurity and poverty, the bitter youth, the shabby wagon, the worn skin-blankets, the small handful of tin knives and spoons? Could it be that land meant more to her than merely a specific ridge or piece of shrubland or so many fountains, and grazing for so many sheep, and did she see it as a means to everything that had once seemed unattainably distant to her, the power and the status which she finally did achieve, the town house where she hosted visiting ministers, and the seat in the front row at church? I can only try to determine and recognise the pattern; with no hope of understanding it any more.

Thus, since the beginning there must have been a goal, no matter how vague it may have been at first, and a plan, even though initially it was carried out rather blindly. At the time I am actually talking about – my childhood years, when I began to take notice of what was happening around me and could remember – it gradually began to take shape, however, around Jakob as the eldest son at first, and later around Maans, his heir; but a goal there had always been, and we children were employed to help achieve it too.

Father could sign his name and read to us from the Bible painstakingly but not much more than that; at the time I can remember, it was mostly Meester who had to read a sermon to us from a Dutch book on Sundays, and

later the task fell to one of the boys, for Meester said the letters hurt his eyes. I never saw Mother with a pen in her hand, neither do I recall her signature anywhere, nor that I ever saw her read, or write even a note. In those years and in those parts there were no schools, and there were few educated people among us; Father and Mother's contemporaries probably achieved little more than they, and the same went for their children. However, we had to be educated, and when Jakob and Pieter were still young, every effort was made to find schoolmasters for them. Where did Father find these people and how did he retain their services? There was a succession of these tutors, none of whom remained long, and in fits and starts the boys received some kind of education over the years, so that both of them could read and write and do arithmetic; Jakob did not like the studying, but Pieter actually had a few old books in which I sometimes saw him read. As I remember, it was always Jakob who was summoned to consult with Father and Mother, yet when a letter had to be written, it was Pieter who had to come, while they sat watching him, dictating what they wanted him to write.

I cannot remember any of these tutors, only the last one that I still knew as Meester. By then Jakob had been confirmed and had stopped taking lessons, but Meester still taught Pieter, and, as he had ample time and no other way of passing it, he taught me a few things here and there in between, though it was not considered one of his duties. I doubt whether Mother really liked it much, but in the end I would have had to get a little education somehow in order to be confirmed, and I cannot remember her ever expressing outright disapproval.

Meester was a Dutchman, and I think that was all we ever found out about him. Dulsie once told us that Father had found him in the Karoo, barefoot in the road with his tin trunk on his shoulder, and had given him a ride out of sympathy and had brought him home to teach the boys, but Dulsie did not think much of Meester and this was not necessarily true, though he did indeed possess a tin trunk. He took his meals with us and before supper in the evenings his feet were washed with ours; yes, and as I have said, on Sundays he read the sermon to us, and I remember how I admired the enthusiasm he brought to the task, even though I did not understand the words in High Dutch. That, however, was as far as he was accepted by the

family, for he lived in one of the outside rooms and Dulsie and Gert looked down on him as if they felt he should not be regarded as one of the white people.

The past is another country: where is the road leading there? You can but follow the track blindly where it stretches before your feet, unable to choose the direction in which you want to go. Why am I reminded now of the outside room with its meagre furniture where Meester stayed, and how as a little girl I would sometimes visit him there, and how formally he would welcome me then, as if it were a grown-up who had come to pay him a visit? Of course it was only a game, but to me it meant a lot, and for all I know to him too, for he must have been lonely on that isolated farm among strangers, far from his own country. What we spoke about I no longer remember, though I believe it was probably mostly he who did the talking while I sat listening, wonder-struck and uncomprehending, the way I listened to the sermons he read aloud on Sundays. Sometimes he showed me his books, and I remember some of them had pictures that I found pretty, for in our home there were few books, and pictures were unfamiliar to me. And once he unlocked his tin trunk and brought out a silk handkerchief and showed me what was wrapped inside, and it was something I had never seen before, a black and silver cross so tiny it could fit into the palm of my hand. It is the cross our Lord hung on, Meester told me, and then he wrapped it up again quickly and told me not to mention to Father or Mother that he had showed it to me. What it meant, I did not understand, as little as I understood the secrecy, but the shared confidence was like a bond between us and afterwards, when I visited him in his room, I sometimes asked to see the little cross once more and to hold it in my hand. In our home there were no pictures and no ornaments, and all I had in my youth was Ouma's brightly-coloured china in the wall-cupboards, the pictures in Meester's old books, and that tiny cross that I dared not mention, that I could not understand and about which I dared not ask questions. It must have been something Meester had brought with him from abroad that had value or significance to him in his loneliness with us on the farm.

Meester stayed with us long enough to teach me to read and write, that I know for sure, for I remember how, later, we had written each other notes

that we hid in a hollow between two stones in the wall encircling the graveyard; Meester tore blank pages out of his books and tore these into narrow strips which we then rolled, and on the back of each other's notes or between the lines we wrote our replies. It was a game, nothing more, a token of affection or trust, and what we wrote to each other was unimportant. How few were the people who ever showed even just a liking for me, not to mention love; as few as I ever loved myself. Father, Meester, Pieter; Sofie, and later Maans – were these all? Yes, there was no one else and, except for Maans, they are all long dead.

Meester left us when Pieter was confirmed: he went down to Worcester with us for *Nagmaal*, as usual, and then he was suddenly gone. He had probably been dismissed, or possibly he realised his services would no longer be required, and to the others his disappearance was so unremarkable that they found it unnecessary to give me an explanation or even to mention it; but I had expected from him at least a word of farewell, and for days I searched for him among the *Nagmaal*-goers in the village and among the assembled faces in the streets and in church, but in vain. So, when we returned home I went straight to the graveyard to search for a message from him in the hollow between the stones and, groping into the narrow opening among the stones, my fingers found something, a piece of paper torn from a book, wrapped around the little cross he had left for me as a parting gift because he had known he would not be returning to the farm himself. I put it back between the stones, for I realised it was a secret nobody else should know about, and later I found a remnant of cloth somewhere to fold around it and a piece of sheepskin to wrap it up more securely, and so I treasured it for years without understanding the nature of the gift I had received.

2

That was when Jakob got married and Sofie came to us. Meester had left, and Pieter had been confirmed and had to pull his weight on the farm, so that he no longer had as much time for me; by then I was older and had more and more responsibilities around the house, where I spent most of my time with the two women, Mother and Dulsie. And then Sofie came; and I still remember how she stepped into our silent circle as we stood outside the house to welcome her and how, suddenly, she knelt down before me to hug me, and exclaimed, "Now you're my little sister!" She could not have been very much older than me, despite being a married woman: her date of birth is inscribed in the Bible along with the date of her death, and one might look it up, but if the one were a lie, the other might just as well be false, so it makes no sense to take the trouble. Seventeen or eighteen I would guess now, or perhaps even younger, for girls married young in those days, and how glad she must have been to discover in that small, secluded world and in that silent circle a child in whose company she could still be a child herself.

How can I say what Sofie was like in those years; how can I even say how she appeared to me or how beautiful she was to my childish eyes, how do I know where to begin? Sofie's face in the glow of the candlelight, yes, indeed, let me start there, for when I mention her name or think of her, that is the image rising relentlessly before my eyes in the dark, Sofie bending over the candle, her long, dark hair like a veil across her face, like a shade before the light, and then the darkness blotting out all as if it did not exist. No, not that, not that, that was not what I had wanted to remember, it was something else. Sofie with the candle in her hand, Sofie raising the candlestick slightly above her head, floating through the dark, Sofie as I saw her for the very first time; let me start there.

Every winter we, like everyone from the Roggeveld, moved down to our outspan in the Karoo with the sheep and all our household effects. Usually early winter had already set in here on the escarpment, and sometimes the first sparse snowflakes were already whirling over the ridges as we toiled down Vloksberg Pass with the loaded wagon, driving the sheep ahead of us,

and from the faded grey world of renoster-bush and resin bush, slowly we toiled down the steep slopes of the mountainside, bouncing and jolting over the rocky ledges, to the mild air and herbaceous scents of the Karoo, to the veld where the geelbos glowed in the sun and thorn-tree and *karee* provided shade against the heat of the day. On that particular day I am thinking of, it happened once again, as often did, that something broke along the way and had to be fixed, and so we reached the far end of the kloof with the sun already setting, still a long way from our destination; yet, with that peculiar stubbornness that sometimes took hold of Father, he decided that we should push on, even if it meant we would arrive only at midnight, and, as usual when that happened, Mother did not protest. Thus we were still on the road at dusk, and so I climbed into the wagon and, leaning against Dulsie, fell asleep, only vaguely conscious of the jolting motion of the wagon over the uneven ground and the scent of crushed vegetation under the wheels. I woke up to the sound of dogs barking, and Father shouting at the oxen to halt, and, still half asleep, I knelt and looked back from under the tented hood, vaguely aware of people and voices and the trampling of horses in the dark; and somewhere I saw a light, a flickering light bobbing through the dark, and a woman's face appeared for a moment in the distance beyond the darkness as she raised the candle in her hand, before vanishing once more in the dark among the bewildering noise of voices and horses' hoofs, while I remained kneeling there, dazed and awe-struck, and in the end I probably fell asleep again. The oval of her face and the symmetry of her eyebrows and her dark eyes, visible for just a moment; but stamped into my memory for ever.

We had got lost in the dark and arrived on the farm where Sofie's people were camping that winter, on the near side of the kloof from our own outspan, and we must have spent the night there and taken the long way around the mountain to our own land the next morning, that was all that had happened. But that way, as I had seen her there with the candle in her hand, Jakob must also have seen her that evening, and Pieter must have seen her in the darkness for the first time, for the two of them had been on horseback, driving the sheep, and it must have been they who had been circling the wagon, invisible in the dark. Thus they, too, had seen her face as I had: did they also remember it till the end like me, did Jakob see it before him when he

slipped and fell, his face against the rock; did Pieter carry it with him through the silence?

That is all I remember of that winter that distinguished it from other Karoo winters of my youth. As far as I know, we had never met Sofie's people before, for her father was a wealthy man who owned several farms in the Karoo and the Bokkeveld, and it was the first time they had camped there for the winter, but they were practically our next-door neighbours, just around the mountain from us. Could it be that Jakob had ridden over to the neighbours? I suppose so, for it was only an hour on horseback by way of the shortcut through the kloof, and in winter people used to call on each other and entertain all the time: why would he not have called on her? Oom Wessel may have been a respected man but likewise we were well-to-do people in the Roggeveld, and Jakob was the eldest son and heir and an attractive young man to boot, despite being a bit surly and temperamental, but handsome to look at, with his dark eyes. On his gleaming black horse through the kloof in the moonlight to call on Sofie, the mild air sweet with the scent of shrubs – is this something I am imagining now, or could it be a distant recollection somewhere from the depths of my memory? It must also have been that very winter that he decided to marry her, or perhaps it was decided for him that this rich man's daughter would be a suitable bride, for, as with everything that happened in our home, that too would have been considered and discussed, albeit not openly, and Jakob would not have acted without Mother's approval, that much I do know. Was that how it happened? I am merely guessing now; more than half of what I know is speculation and assumption, and from stepping stone to stepping stone I traverse the past, uncertain of every footstep. Much different, however, it could not have been. "You're the one who wanted it like that," Father said to Mother without raising his eyes, and his voice was flat, but his hands were trembling as he picked up the Bible, and that was the only time I ever heard him reproach her and she grew suddenly pale and turned aside and made no reply. So, it must have been like that.

At the end of the winter we returned to the Roggeveld, and I suppose Jakob came with us to help with the trek, but he must have gone back shortly afterwards to fetch Sofie. They probably got married in Worcester, but none of us was there, though I know of no reason for it, only that they were already

married when they came to us and that he led her into our circle as his wife. Anyway, it was still spring when she came, that bleak, treacherous spring with its changeable winds and its constant threat of cold and frost, the veld fleetingly bejewelled with colour and the dams glittering like lakes and marshes in the sun. We must have been expecting them earlier, for I remember that to me as a child it had seemed an endlessly long wait, and when the dogs began to bark and we heard the horses outside, it was already dark, so that Dulsie stooped to pick up a burning branch from the hearth when we went outside to welcome them. That is how I saw her for the second time, just as she had appeared to me the first time, the oval of her face lit up for a moment by the flickering of a flame, before Jakob lifted her off the wagon-chest: that is how Sofie came to us.

A rich man's daughter – who had said that? It was at a wedding or a funeral, as usual, where the voices flowed together as I moved among the people without anyone noticing me or realising that I overheard their words, gathering information and collecting splinters to piece together a pattern. Father's funeral, and the men discussing Maans – whose voice had it been? I can no longer identify it, nor put a face to it, it is only the words that I still remember: "But after all, she was also a rich man's daughter"; for by that time both Maans's grandfathers were dead, and he had inherited from them both. Yes, it must have been true, for it was clear that in the house where she had grown up, there had not been that painstaking effort to make ends meet that we were used to, and that everything she had needed had been supplied readily and generously, and in her conduct there was also a certain delicacy and refinement rarely found among people in our part of the world. Perhaps these things would not have been immediately apparent, but to us who shared a home with her they became clear enough, and I remember Mother, when she was annoyed, commenting to Father on the new daughter-in-law's dainty little manners and whims. More money, more servants, more comforts, the few months she had spent at a boarding-school in Worcester and the satin dress and ruby necklace she had brought along in her trunk when she got married, all these things distinguished Sofie's world from ours.

Was that why Mother, no matter how annoyed she sometimes became, still hesitated before Sofie, withdrawing at last in sullen silence without even

trying to take her on. If there had to be conflict between the two of them, it seemed inevitable that Mother would be victorious, and since when had she ever shown reluctance to impose her will and have her orders obeyed? Why then did she, otherwise so passionate, so forceful, so domineering, hesitate before this girl and grant Sofie a measure of freedom never bestowed on her own children? It was not out of affection or respect, for Mother was fond of no one except Jakob; nor was it out of love, for Maans was the only one towards whom Mother had ever felt love. At best Sofie was tolerated in our household, never accepted or even looked on with approval – no, it is not my imagination, even though I can offer no proof of my opinion; I know I was no more than a child, but how could I not have been aware of such things in that house where our family lived together in five rooms and we women worked side by side day after day while the men were out? Why she had this almost privileged position among us, that I do not know, however, and only hesitantly can I try to explain it. Groping through the past, step by step along the invisible road, I remember the house in the Karoo where we arrived that evening and Sofie on the threshold, the candle in her hand, Sofie in her satin dress on the dance floor, Sofie who had gone to school in Worcester and could read and write, and I remember Oom Ruben with his wretched wife and half-wild children and their strange submissiveness and animosity even towards those who were their kin. I struggle to form the thought, I find it difficult to say the words, and how could one ever associate a word like fear with Mother, she who remained fearless right up until that bitter and silent deathbed? But once again I wonder if this had not been what had remained concealed behind all Mother's passion and ambition after all, and if this might not also have been the reason for her inexplicable indulgence towards Sofie, the sudden fear and uncertainty of a barefoot girl from a squatter family in the presence of the wealthy boer people whose goodwill and mercy she and her family had depended on all their lives? No one will ever know.

What am I saying? Words keep running through my mind, and alone in the dark I am stringing together words I was not even aware I knew, and running off sentences in a way my slow tongue could never have managed before. But to what end, to what end?

Words are no longer of any use now, and the past is beyond redemption; if the girl on the cot at my feet should wake, she would distinguish no sound in the dark nor hear any movement, if she should get up to set the night-light burning once again, she would see nothing in the dim glow but the familiar room and the old woman in the bed, motionless against the stacked pillows, wide-eyed and awake. She sleeps unhindered, however, her breathing regular, and the darkness is on fire as Sofie dances before my eyes, flickering like a flame, radiant in her satin dress, black on black, veiled by the golden haze of the candlelight and the powdery dust, to the beat of violin and accordion, to the rhythm of stamping feet on the clay floor, like a relentless, insistent pulse. Sofie slender and straight in her black dress, and Pieter, my brother, facing her in the candlelight in the dark, the two of them together, flickering shadows black on black in the dark. The girl on the cot remains motionless.

We never entertained and we seldom visited the neighbouring farms when I was a child, but that New Year after Jakob's wedding, my parents held a dance on our farm, for with his marriage many things began to change even though the transformation did not last long; it was only many years later, when Maans came of age, that there was dancing on our farm again. When Jakob got married, however, a dance was given to celebrate the wedding and to welcome the new daughter-in-law and, I suppose, also to show the neighbours, look, this we have, so far have we come by scrimping and saving and planning, silently and resolutely, and now we can breathe more easily at last and look up, without having to defer to anyone, without having to rely on anyone, and inferior to no one; come and see. Am I doing you wrong, Mother? But you never said anything yourself, you were never prepared to explain, nor did you ever acknowledge the least obligation to explain or justify. Now it is too late and only I have remained to piece my bits and fragments together to discover for myself the pattern that emerges.

Thus at New Year there was dancing on our farm, as I have said, and for days, for weeks, our house was filled with activity and something I might even describe as exhilaration, though perhaps I am thinking mostly of Sofie when I say this, for she was as exuberant as a child at the thought of liveliness and people and music after the first months of isolation and silence

she had experienced with us, laughing and gay in the dark house where we lived beside each other in silence, dancing through that darkness like a flame, so that, in spite of my own shyness and reserve, I too was touched by her happiness. The musicians had already arrived and were exchanging banter with the servants in the kitchen, and now and again one of them played a quick tune, a fragment of a waltz or *seties* on the violin or accordion, that echoed through the shadowy house provocatively and defiantly; outside Pieter called out that the first guests were arriving. The sun had not yet gone down, but inside the bedroom a candle had to be lit, and Sofie turned to me from the small mirror over which she had stooped to pin up her hair; out of the gloom, out of the shadows, out of the dark she rose up towards me like a swimmer from the dark waters of a pool, entangled in the heavy, gleaming folds of her black satin gown, her wedding gown, that she was wearing here with us for the first time tonight, and she reached out towards me with both hands. “*Sussie*, you have to help me,” she whispered, her eyes shining with excitement, as if she wanted to share a secret with me, but she only wanted me to fasten the beads around her neck, beads as black as her dress, unexpectedly radiating faint colours when I held them up to the candlelight. “These are rubies,” she told me, still whispering as if it were a secret we were sharing, and my hands were trembling so much that I struggled to fasten the tiny hook. Silently I touched the dark, shiny gemstones and the dark, smooth fabric of her gown, for such things I had never seen before, and I looked at the rest of her finery, the narrow gold bracelet and the little gold ring with the heart. Sofie’s dark head bent over the candle-flame, and the pulsing of the restless music through the house and Gert calling outside and Pieter who came running across the yard, laughing with excitement, and the vast, open land out there, widespread, basking in the last rays of the sun, though here inside the house it had long been dark, the rolling veld with the shrubs and rocky ridges aflame in the late light and in the distance the dust of the vehicles on their way here.

We did not have many neighbours we could invite, here along the edge of the plateau in the sparsely populated Roggeveld with its scattered homesteads, but neighbourliness was neighbourliness, and those who were able to ride over, did so, amazed, uncertain and inquisitive about this sudden

hospitality on our side; from Kanolfontein and Driefontein and Jakkalsfontein and Gunsfontein the people came, and their carts stood outspanned against the kraal wall. The house was filled with people and noise and activity, the golden glow of candlelight filled it; the women with their tiny glasses of sweet wine took their places on chairs against the walls of the voorhuis and outside in the dark one could hear the laughter of the men where they gathered around the brandy cask.

I remember Mother that evening, with shining eyes and a rare blush on her cheek-bones, rigid, tense and watchful, as if the arrival of the strangers posed a threat to her, and this rare show of friendship exposed her to danger, but nevertheless also proud of her home and the hospitality it could offer, so proud that, with all her strenuous efforts to be gracious and friendly, she was almost defiant towards her guests. I remember Mother, and Sofie in her glistening black gown, the focal point of that entire gathering, obscured for a moment as the candle-flames flickered in the draught or people moved past the light, but then glowing before my eyes once more in the diffused light. I noticed the mistrustful neighbours lined up against the wall studying her, and the jealousy of the country girls, huddling together shyly in their Sunday clothes; I saw the eyes of the men weighing her, though I did not recognise or understand that expression, and no matter how incomprehensible it has remained to me after all the years, I have seen it often enough since to know the words people use to describe it: wonder, admiration, lust and desire.

Jakob could not or would not dance, Blink Jakob, thickset, muscular and awkward – his thick neck I remember, and the broadcloth jacket stretched tight across his shoulders. Thus Jakob quickly disappeared among the men around the brandy cask in the dark, and the young fellows were free to compete with each other for Sofie's favour: the bashful, reticent farm lads, ill at ease in their Sunday best, the swaggering young men in their stiff collars and embroidered waistcoats, the unassuming and the bolder ones, the confident and the hesitant ones of our small world were crowding around her in the voorhuis. I sat on the floor in a corner, outside the circle of the candlelight, among the guests' children in whom I took no interest and who, after their initial efforts to make friends had proved fruitless, had soon forgotten all about me. Gradually they became weary, however, and fell over

where they were sitting or lying, but I stayed awake and observed, sleepless in the shadows, and heard the remarks the married women along the wall made amongst each other when Mother was not near, and the whispers of the girls crowding around the mirror in the bedroom by candlelight.

Without taking the least notice of Jakob's absence, apparently even unaware of it, Sofie danced away the night, and as the other dancers grew tired and dropped out or went outside to where the brandy was, more and more often it was my brother Pieter who was her dancing partner, just as tireless as she was. I believe the farm lads of our district never really knew what to make of Pieter, but he was popular among the girls, with his quick tongue and nimble feet, his teasing manner, his agility and grace. Where, among us, had he ever got the opportunity to learn how to dance, I wonder now; but he could certainly dance, and well too, and all night long you saw his slender body moving among the dancers as if he could find no rest; later he took off his jacket and danced in his shirtsleeves, and more and more often it was Sofie that he chose as his partner. And why not? After all, they were the best dancers there. Pieter in his shirtsleeves and Sofie in her glistening gown of black satin, together in the fine haze of the dust stirred up by the feet of the dancers on the dung floor, in the golden glow of the wax candles that lit up the room hazily, together, as in a dream, with the child in the corner watching and remembering, listening and remembering: the envy, the disapproval, the resentment, the spite, the desire that surrounded them, and the two young people together, as in a dream.

In the end I too fell asleep among the other children on the floor, and someone must have picked me up there and carried me to my room, for when I awoke I was lying on the little cot underneath the window, covered with a patchwork quilt, and strange children were sleeping in my own bed. It was the noise of gunshots that had awakened me, for it was dawn and outside the young men were welcoming the new year: I knelt on the cot, resting my elbows on the high window-sill, and looked out at the silver-grey morning, chilly and still as a pool. The shouting and shooting were distant and came from somewhere at the front of the house, but inside it had become silent, only the sound of a single violin lingered somewhere, persistent, languid and melancholy, as if the fiddler no longer knew how to finish the tune, and so just

kept on playing in the dim light of dawn. He must have been sitting at the hearth in the kitchen with the servants, seeking out a little warmth against the chill of the morning; and in the empty yard Gert and Jacomyn were dancing together in the silver daylight to the rhythm of the thin, dreamy waltz.

Jacomyn – yes, I have not mentioned Jacomyn at all; but she came to us from the Karoo with Sofie; she followed Sofie as she climbed from the wagon when Jakob brought her to us as his bride, and Mother told Dulsie to take her to the kitchen. She was no more than a girl, only a few years older than Sofie herself, and her mother had been a slave in Sofie's family in the old days, for Oom Wessel and his family were wealthy people, as I have said, who owned slaves just like Ouma's people in the Bokkeveld; Jacomyn herself had still been born into slavery, and when the slaves were set free, she became Sofie's personal maid and she came with her to the Roggeveld voluntarily when Sofie got married. She slept in the kitchen with old Dulsie, or sometimes on the rug before Sofie's bed, and Mother kept her distance from her, just as she did from Sofie herself, while she, on the other hand, treated us with aloofness and was usually withdrawn and sullen in our company. Only towards Gert did she show a certain ambiguity, and after her arrival he hung around the kitchen far more often, so that Mother had to chase him away and even Father had to admonish him on occasion. With Jacomyn, a further element of division of which I became increasingly aware during that time was introduced into our already divided little world, for Dulsie reacted to the intruder with immediate animosity, complained endlessly to Mother about her doings, referred to her scornfully as a *Slamaaiermeid* and maintained she practised magic, while Jacomyn berated her as a Hotnot, and treated her with insolent indifference.

What was the cause of the division in our family, in our home, on our farm – brother against brother, parent against child, master against servant and servants among themselves; whence came the animosity, dissension and spite? We lived together in the same house, shared the same yard, worked together on the same land, met with the same predicaments and faced the same threats and dangers, inescapably dependent upon each other on those barren heights, inextricably connected in our isolation, and nonetheless

irrevocably divided, with no hope that the rift would ever be healed. Nine people in the same house and on the same farm, bending over the same task, working together shoulder to shoulder, and yet we never really got to know each other, or made any real effort to get closer, but just brushed past each other in our daily lives, and gradually the abrasions developed into festering wounds. Only in the evenings during family worship did we all come together to unite in the apparent solidarity of a common activity; or at least we gathered in the same room, family members around the large table in the voorhuis and servants to one side in the corner by the kitchen door while Father read aloud from the Bible and led us in prayer. Together – yes, only apparently so, for were we united even within the walls of that single room? How much did Father understand of that text he followed with his finger, word for word, head inclined towards the candle-flame, those words of admonition or judgment, of love or absolution, trivialised into a mere low-pitched monotone; how much of it did any of us hear, understand, take in? While he was praying I studied the people around me from behind my entwined fingers, my own family around the table in the uncertain light of the candle, Father, Mother, Jakob, Pieter and Sofie, and in the floating, fluid shadows along the wall the vaguer outlines of the servants, Dulsie, Jacomyn and Gert.

Who followed the prayer and submitted to it, except, perhaps, Father himself in his devotion? Wide-eyed I watched them at that moment when they thought they were unobserved, all busy with their own troubles, dreams or ambitions, eyes shut, heads bowed, hands raised, frozen in the routine gestures of supplication and worship, yet with their thoughts far away. From behind the protection of my folded hands I saw the glance wandering absently, the eyes filled with desire, tenderness or malice that for a single unguarded moment rested on another, eyes searching out eyes and for a single unguarded moment finding each other over the bowed heads of the others. What I saw there, I could not name or recognise at the time either, yet I was already aware of something stirring and changing, like the veld when the clouds sweep past swiftly and the landscape of stone and shrub loses its starkness for a moment to drift away in changing patterns of shadow and light. It was just a moment, in the uncertain circle of the candlelight, and then the prayer was over, the chairs scraped across the floor, the candles were lit and

we withdrew for the night: the family to their rooms, Dulsie and Jacomyn to their beds on the kitchen floor, Pieter to the outside bedroom where he had been sleeping since Jakob's marriage, and Gert to his sleeping-place in the shed or behind the kraal. The circle of our worship had been broken once more, each got up and turned away from the others, and if you woke during the night, you would hear in the great silence of the house only the heavy breathing of the sleepers. Perhaps someone would cry out in his sleep, groan or sigh, an unintelligible sound in the darkness which you might interpret as you wished if you heard it, and then there would be silence once more, sleeper separated from sleeper in the palpable silence and darkness.

Did winter come early that year, or had our customary departure for the Karoo been delayed for some reason? We left home in cold and billowing mist that cloaked the escarpment, and we descended down Vloksberg Pass into depths we could not see. Our small procession of wagons, riders and sheep flocks descended almost blindly, following the rocky track along the edge of the cliffs, as if we were disappearing into the churning white waters of a drift, never to reappear again. How do I know it was that winter, the winter after Jakob's marriage; what gives me the right to be so certain? It could just as well have been any other winter of my youth, with the straggling trek moving down the pass to the Karoo while I stayed behind for a moment, my shawl wrapped tightly around me against the cold and wind, watching for a sign that the mist might be opening somewhere, that in our descent we had moved far enough down the mountain to catch a glimpse through an opening in the mist of the Karoo landscape in the golden sunlight down below. The last lagging sheep had already been chased ahead, the last shepherd had disappeared ahead of me down the road, the last sound, that otherwise would have echoed so clearly here in the cliffs, had been muffled by the billowing clouds: for a moment I was alone, and suddenly I was fearful, aware of the baboons on the cliffs and the wild cats in the crevices, aware of every other invisible threat that might be lurking in the fog, and I turned around. My foot caught on a stone and I heard it roll away and dislodge other stones until the rattle of falling rocks was absorbed by the muffling fog; and I fled, stumbling over the loose stones and rocky ledges down the slope, following the direction in which the wagons had disappeared, blindly through the fog along the edge

of the invisible abyss, until the rear end of our trek became dimly visible ahead of me, the wagons slowly feeling their way through the mist. I can remember no other anxiety from my childhood quite like that unexpected moment during our trek to the Karoo, the first winter after Sofie had come to us as a bride.

In the little school that Sofie had attended at Worcester, she had learnt different kinds of needlework and embroidery, and I think Mother expected her to teach me now as well, but Sofie was not really interested, nor did she have the patience, and even Mother had to acknowledge my awkwardness with the needle, so that nothing ever came of the plan. She had also had some piano instruction, but who had a piano in those parts, and so that too was of no use, though sometimes when she was busy on her own she sang some of the songs she had learned at school.

Thus all that remained of her education was the few books she had brought along in her trunk and sometimes took out to read, seated against the wall near the window because of the poor light. When she saw I was interested in her books and could even read from them a little, she laughed and asked who had taught me: "Pieter," I answered timidly, for even to Sofie I did not want to speak of Meester, and in a way it was true, after all, for Pieter had helped me too. After that, Sofie began to read with me from her books and, though Mother regarded the books with suspicion and did not approve of Sofie's reading, so that she was quick to interrupt it with some instruction or other, she did however realise that it was useful, and so my occasional lessons with Sofie began. In usefulness I myself was not interested, but to be involved with her in this activity, shoulder to shoulder and heads bowed together over the pages in the feeble light, that was good for me and, anyway, the books she had brought along were story books that I could understand better and enjoy more than those I had read with Meester. Later she also gave me writing lessons: there must have been a lot she did not know, though she did know a little Dutch and a little English, but nevertheless her knowledge was greater than mine and she helped me as far as she could. In the monotony and isolation of her life with us, the lessons must have seemed a welcome respite to her, even almost like a little game with a girl only a few

years her junior: I can remember that there was sometimes a great deal of laughter where we sat together with our heads bowed over the pages. It often happened then that Pieter would be attracted by our exuberance too and, in spite of his duties on the farm, he would manage to be somewhere in the vicinity when I had my lessons and he would be drawn in until Mother discovered him inside the house.

It was after we had returned from the Karoo that these lessons in the dimly-lit voorhuis began, during Sofie's first spring with us: the slate-grey land had regained some colour in the warmth of the sun, the dams in the marshlands glittered in the sunlight and the rocky ridges were fleetingly suffused with the brightness of flowers. The remoteness, the distance, the sunlight and the glittering of the water beckoned to us all day where we were busy inside the house, visible in fragments through the small windows set deep in the walls, and sometimes when Mother was not near to see it and forbid it, Sofie would call Jacomyn and pull me along by the hand, and then we would leave the books or the sewing and slip out into the sunshine of the day. Far off in the distance I can still see us in the wideness of that spring landscape, the two women, the glitter of the water behind them, and Sofie unbuttoning her bodice in the heat, laughing and breathless, and Jacomyn, her headscarf tied around the wild flowers we had picked, her dark hair gleaming in the sun. Sofie and I together at one end of the table in the voorhuis where I was busy with my writing exercises, the front door left ajar to let the light in and the brightness of the landscape outside, with Pieter facing us, sprawled lazily, elbows on the table, teasing, or trying to distract us, cutting a quill pen and passing it to Sofie across the table. The water glitters in the sun, and for a moment my eyes, accustomed to the dark house, are dazzled. Never had I experienced a spring as beautiful as that one, I must admit here at the end of my life, that spring before Maans was born.

GLOSSARY

Baster	person of mixed race; half-breed (sometimes derogatory)
Bastersfontein	a place name, meaning fountain where the Basters live
'Blink Jakob'	Shiny (Sleek, Glossy) Jakob
brandsolder	fireproof loft
geelbos	yellow bush (lit.); <i>Leucadendron salignum</i>
hartbeeshuisie	mud-and-daub house, also known as wattle-and-daub hut
Hotnot	coloured person (derogatory), from <i>Hottentot</i> , member of the Khoi tribe
karee	<i>Rhus lancea</i> , also known as Karoo tree, or bastard willow
kaross	blanket or mantle made of skins with the hair left on
kist	box, chest
kloof	ravine, gorge
kneg	farm labourer with slightly higher status; overseer, foreman
kraal	enclosure for sheep or cattle, of branches or stacked stones
Meester	Master (title given to schoolmaster)
Nagmaal	Holy Communion
Oom	Uncle
Ouma	Grandmother
Ounooi	old mistress (title of address used by servants/slaves)
Oupa	Grandfather
reebok	a small South African antelope with sharp horns
renoster bush	rhinoceros-bush, <i>Elytropappus rhinocerotis</i>
riempie	leather thong (used for making riempie-seat chairs)
seties	dance, also known as scottische, or Scottish polka
sjambok	short, heavy whip, originally of rhinoceros-hide
Slamaaiermeid	Malay woman (derogatory)
spekbush	<i>Zygophyllum</i> species
Sussie	Little Sister
trek	long, arduous journey, especially on foot; can also refer to travel by ox-wagon
trekboer, trekker	migrant farmer
veld	open country, uncultivated land with indigenous vegetation
voorhuis	front room, living-room, parlour

5. Annotation

This chapter consists of selected samples from the source text (ST) that represent the types of problems experienced by this translator during the course of the translation. A series of descriptive annotations attempt to show what strategies were employed to arrive at the translation ultimately appearing in the target text (TT).

For the purpose of this study, Nord's classification of four main types of translation problems is used, namely pragmatic, intercultural, interlingual (or linguistic) and text-specific (Nord, 1997:58). However, as categories often overlap, it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between them.

5.1 *Pragmatic translation problems*

What Nord (1997:59) refers to as a pragmatic translation problem occurs when the communicative situation of the TT differs from that of the ST. Examples from this category focus mainly on names. Consideration is given to source-language (SL) names and nicknames of individual persons, as well as titles indicating kinship (*oom, oupa*) or position (*Meester*). The translation of plant, animal and geographical names also warrants discussion.

5.1.1 *Names and titles of individual persons*

It is common practice for proper names not to undergo change during the transfer from ST to TT, except that 'spelling variation often applies with reference to names from languages which use different writing systems' (Schäffner, 2001:34). This translator was thus faced with the decision whether to domesticate the spelling of names where that option exists, for instance *Dulcie, Sophie, Jacob* and *Peter*, instead of *Dulsie, Sofie, Jakob* and *Pieter*. (Other names, like *Gert* and *Jacomyn*, do not have English alternatives.) A decision was made in favour of foreignisation and, for the sake of authenticity, the original Afrikaans spelling of all names was retained.

A decision also had to be taken whether to domesticate words that establish the kinship between characters. It would be perfectly possible to use *Grandfather/Grandpa* or *Grandmother/Grandma* instead of *Oupa* and *Ouma*, especially since *Father* and *Mother* were used, instead of the original *Vader* and *Moeder*. In the latter case, because they recur so frequently, foreignising by retaining the original terms was considered too disturbing. *Ouma* and *Oupa*, however, were retained in the TT, for the sake of the required authenticity. When confronted with *Oumagrootjie* (A:9), this translator opted for *Great-ouma* (54), from a reluctance to introduce yet another loanword, depending instead on the combination of *Great* with the already familiar *Ouma*. In this case a compromise between foreignisation and domestication was reached.

With *oom*, as used in the ST (*oom Appie*, *oom Barend Vlok*, *ou oom Swanepoel*) the translator faces the problem that, in the source culture (SC), it is a title of respect and, while it *may* indicate kinship, it does not necessarily do so. Translating it with *Uncle* would therefore be inaccurate, so the choice was made to foreignise by retaining the SL term in the TT, but to domesticate the spelling by using a capital letter (*Oom Appie*), in accordance with the target language (TL) spelling rules.

Meester was a familiar appellation for the (usually Dutch) itinerant schoolmasters found on farms at the time. The title also conveys a measure of respect. Translating it with *Master* would not ring true, therefore the original SL title was retained.

Nicknames present another problem. *Jan Baster* is retained in the original and *baster* is explained in the glossary, where an explanation can also be found of the name *Bastersfontein*. *Blink Jakob* is more difficult, however. Attempts to domesticate by translating the nickname would have resulted in such unsatisfactory TL equivalents as *Smooth/Sleek/Shiny/Glossy Jakob* that would not have created the desired effect. *Blink* creates an impression of someone obsessed with outward appearance but with no moral substance

(the handsome young man on his sleek black stallion). This effect is lost in all of the suggested TL alternatives. The inclusion of a glossary enables the reader to understand the meaning of *Blink Jakob*. Should a decision be made not to include a glossary, however, the meaning would probably be lost to all non-South-African readers.

5.1.2 Names of plants

The ST contains a comprehensive survey of the vegetation, sparse as it may be, of the Roggeveld region. Flowering plants, especially, are vividly described and gain a near-iconic value as they shine like beacons in the barren landscape. Examples are:

- *die spekbos helderwit teen die rante in die lente, die gloeiende silwer van die renosterbos in die verstrooide sonlig van die laatmiddag* (A:4)
- *die liggende peerbome oortrek met bloeisels in die lente* (A:6)

In the translation of these terms an attempt was made to domesticate as much as possible by using the common English names. Even so, a strong source-language inscription is retained, as is explained below. There was thus no further need to foreignise plant names for the sake of authenticity and local colour. This translator was guided, also where spelling is concerned, by Van der Spuy (1971) and the bilingual dictionary of Bosman, Van der Merwe and Hiemstra (1986). In the glossary the botanical names of plants are supplied, where applicable.

It is not always possible to domesticate indigenous plant names fully. Although the common name for *harpuisbos* is *resin bush*, which presents no problem, *spekbos* becomes *spekbush*, and the first part of the name may remain incomprehensible to TL readers, especially those outside South Africa. The rules of logic do not always apply either, for, while *spekbos* is known as *spekbush*, *geelbos* remains *geelbos*, and does not become *geelbush*. It would also be quite possible to translate *renosterbos* with *rhinoceros bush*, but that is not how the plant is commonly known in the SC.

The following is a list of the plant species occurring in the ST, with their translations:

<i>spekbos</i>	<i>spekbush</i>
<i>renosterbos</i>	<i>renoster-bush</i>
<i>harpuisbos</i>	<i>resin bush</i>
<i>geelbos en doringbome</i>	<i>geelbos and thorn trees</i>
<i>kareebome</i>	<i>karee</i>

A problem was incurred with the translation of *bossies*: ...*harde land van bossies en klip* (A:5), which was translated with ... *harsh land of shrub and stone* (50). *Bossies*, specifically *Karoobossies*, cannot, however, generally be translated simply with *shrubs*, as the term represents a very specific genus of plants characteristic of the Karoo region. A similar example from the ST is: *onder my lê die warm laagland met die kruiegeur van sy bossies* (A:6), which I translated with: *beneath me lie the warm lowlands filled with the herbal scent of shrubs* (51). Oberholster (1972:186) refers to *Karoo bush and other shrubs*, but *Karoo bush* is not really an adequate substitute for *Karoobossies*. Substituting *bushes* for *shrubs* in the example above would not have resulted in a better translation, so the problem remains unsolved.

The ST paragraph (A) below serves as an example of the translation problems presented by plant names, while the TT equivalent (B) represents the solutions found by this translator:

A ... *en van die vaal grys wêreld van renosterbos en harpuisbos het ons stadig by die steiltes van die berghang af gesukkel, stampend en stotend oor die klipbanke, na die warm lug en kruierige bossiegeur van die Karoo, na die veld waar die geelbos gloei in die son en doring- en kareebome skadu bied teen die hitte van die dag.* (A:31)

B ... *and from the faded grey world of renoster-bush and resin bush, slowly we toiled down the steep slopes of the mountainside, bouncing and jolting over the rocky ledges, to the mild air and herbaceous scents of the Karoo, to the veld where the geelbos glowed in the sun and thorn-tree and karee provided shade against the heat of the day.* (74)

5.1.3 Names of animals

There is reference in the ST to a number of animals found in the wild, like *jakkalse*, *ystervark*, *bobbejane* and *wildekat*. These presented no problems in the translation.

However, translating *ribbok* (... *die ribbok dwarsoor die saal met die droë bloed om sy kake*, A:4) was more complicated. Initially *rhebuck* was used, as found in Bosman, Van der Merwe and Hiemstra (1986:438), with *rhebok* as alternative. Eksteen (1997:468) translates *ribbok* with *rhebok* in the Afrikaans section, but in the English section of the same dictionary only *rhebok* can be found. When English descriptive dictionaries were consulted, only *reebok* could be found in the *Cassell Pocket English Dictionary* (Kirkpatrick, 1995:689) while *The Oxford Modern English Dictionary* (Swannell, 1992:904) gives *reebok*, with *rhebok* as alternative. In keeping with the decision to foreignise where suitable, it was decided to use *reebok*, it being the term closest to the SL.

Generally speaking, the translator should have adequate knowledge of the fauna found in the target culture (TC), or be prepared to do the necessary research. So, for example, he or she must know that *geelslang* (... *die geelslang seil voor my voete weg*, A:6) does not refer to just any yellow snake, but is the name given to the *Cape cobra*, also known as the *yellow cobra*. The latter was chosen for the more melodious effect of ... *the yellow cobra slithers past my feet* (50) .

Mention is also made of *trekbokke* and *sprinkane*:

- *Daar was by ons nooit werklik gebrek nie, selfs in tye van droogte of in jare wanneer die trekbokke, die sprinkane of die ryp besondere skade aangerig het ...* (A:15)

We never knew any real hardship, not even in times of drought or in years when the migrant herds of antelope, the locusts or the frost caused damage ... (60)

Readers outside the SC, or even SC readers unfamiliar with farming practices, may not be familiar with these phenomena, which could also be considered culture-specific.

Sprinkane refers to the great swarms of locusts that would travel across the farming districts sporadically. Where the flying insects came down to sit, they would raze all vegetation to the ground. The wingless hoppers, following behind, would likewise eat every green sprig in sight, causing the farmers great damage.

Trekbokke refers to the great herds of migrant antelope (usually springbuck) which periodically moved across the Karoo plains in their hundreds and thousands – possibly even millions – in search of grazing. When these herds were on the move they were like an unstoppable flood, often confining people inside their homes, sometimes for days on end. The last recorded migration of springbuck was in 1896, when the trek stretched over a distance of 220 kilometres, with a width of 25 kilometres (Nicol, 1984:97). Because these are little-known facts today, a decision was made in favour of domestication and *trekbokke* was translated with *migrant herds of antelope*, as it was felt that a degree of explicitation was called for.

5.1.4 Geographical names

The names of regions have been left largely unchanged as they are generally known in South Africa by their SL names (examples: *Karoo*, *Hantam*, *Roggeveld*, *Bokkeveld*). Likewise, the names of farms (*Kliprug*, *Kanolfontein*, *Driefontein*, *Jakkalsfontein*, *Gunsfontein*) or other geographical landmarks (*Klipfontein*, *Oorlogskloof*) have not been altered.

As far as rivers, mountains and mountain passes, as well as certain other geographical regions are concerned, the generally accepted anglicised versions were used, thus *Roggeveld Mountains*, *Riet River*, *Vloksberg Pass*, *Groot River*, *Griqualand*. This choice represents an interesting compromise between foreignisation and domestication. Though it is possible to domesticate the entire name, for example *Great River*, *Reed River*, *Vloks*

Mountain Pass, TL convention (in South Africa) dictates that a degree of foreignisation prevails and that domestication happens only as far as the descriptive features in the name (river, pass, mountain) are concerned.

It is true that target readers outside South Africa would not understand the meaning of names such as *Klipfontein*, *Oorlogskloof* or *Riet River*, which would undermine their understanding of the text somewhat. Though it might be possible to explain these terms in a glossary, a choice was made not to do so, as it was considered too cumbersome. The SL inscription, therefore, remains firmly stamped on the landscape.

5.2 Intercultural translation problems

'Each culture has its own habits, norms and conventions of verbal and nonverbal behaviour', according to Nord (1997:59). 'Intercultural translation problems arise from the difference in conventions between the two cultures involved...'. In any discussion about TC readers of *This Life* it must be remembered that one cannot assume a shared cultural background for all these readers. The English language is spread across many cultures and the culture of local English-speakers, for example, is far removed from that of a TT reader in the United States or the United Kingdom.

This section continues the discussion of names initiated in 5.1, with the emphasis on names denoting race (often derogatory) and rank, class or social status (5.2.1). The setting for *Hierdie lewe* is a farm in an isolated rural area of South Africa. It therefore follows that certain conventional forms of address and appellatives will be used by both workers and land owners.

In 5.2.2 the focus is on events and traditions customary in the SC but possibly unfamiliar to TC readers. It is inevitable that loss will occur in the TT, especially where readers reside outside South Africa.

In the final section (5.2.3) the SC convention of using the historic present tense to relate events of the past, comes under scrutiny. This narrative strategy imbues the ST with a sense of dramatic immediacy. Strategies are suggested to create an equivalent effect in the TT.

5.2.1 Names denoting race/class

Farm workers and servants

Certain words that pertain to race in a South African context would not be perceived as such in other cultures. Thus terms like *plaasmense* and *werksmense* are understood in the SC to refer to coloured farm labourers. However, the racial connotation of the ST is lost in the translation:

- ... *en het hard met die plaasmense gewerk* (A:18)
- *Dulsie het altyd op ons ander werksmense neergesien* (A:20)
- ... *and was a hard master to the farm hands* (62)
- *Dulsie always looked down on our other workers* (64)

The same applies to *werkvolk*, where *volk* has a derogatory connotation:

- ...*soos sy skreeu op die werkvolk in die kombuis* (A:24)
- ... *the way she shouted at the farm hands in the kitchen* (68)

A choice was made to use *farm hands*, or *workers*, rather than *labourers*, because in South Africa today the words *labour* and *labourer* are associated with organised labour and therefore have connotations related to politics and trade unionism. Even though in time the novel is far removed from today's political scene, it was felt that such associations should rather be avoided. Nevertheless, terms associated with the subservient position of the worker with regard to the farmer or land owner are never neutral and will always reflect politics and power relations.

Other terms referring to the rank and position of workers on the farm require some explanation. There were *skaapwagters* who seemed to lead a nomadic life, had little security and were often victims of abuse:

Die mans is soms uitgelooi omdat hulle dronk was of skaap laat wegraak het, hulle is afgedank of hulle het kom sê dat hulle wil loop, ... (A:22)

For lack of a better term to describe these workers, the term *shepherds* was elected, which is not wholly satisfactory as the word has a European connotation. *Herdsmen* is a possible alternative, though that seems applicable to cattle, rather than sheep.

Gert is described as a *kneg*. The word stems from the early days of the free burghers at the Cape. Giliomee (2003:19) refers to 'knechten, or foremen' and provides the following information:

On the farms knechten addressed their employers as 'baas' ('boss') and lived in outbuildings. ... Slaves on occasion could be found drinking and playing cards with knechten, poor burghers and indigent soldiers or sailors.

Gert apparently had a more permanent position and higher status than the farm hands or shepherds, for he was present at family worship in the *voorhuis*, while the others were never allowed past the kitchen. He had been 'acquired' in some way when he was quite small. Father smilingly spoke of how he had just been picked up, like something that had been thrown away, with no indication of the trauma to a small child who had probably been forcibly removed, or willingly given away by parents who did not have the means to raise him. Even though he was raised by the family, the distance created by race and social standing remained, for Gert was not allowed to sleep in the house.

Initially *knegte* was translated with *labourers*. However, Bosman, Van der Merwe and Hiemstra (1986:257) translates *kneg* with *foreman*, or *manservant*. Neither of these seemed suitable in the ST context. Next, a choice was made for *hirelings*. Although the term serves as a useful alternative for other words denoting positions of servitude (*servants*, *workers*, *farm hands*), *hireling* is not an adequate reflection of Gert's position on the farm – taken in by the family, but kept out of the family circle, raised and supported by them, dependent on them, but banished to the outer perimeter, always on the outside, looking in. Eventually it was decided to retain the culture-specific ST term, *knegte*, and to add an explanation in the glossary.

Both Dulsie and Jacomyn had formerly been *slavinne* (slaves) and enjoyed a higher status than the other servants. While Gert was not allowed to sleep inside, Dulsie and Jacomyn slept in the kitchen or, occasionally, on the floor in front of their mistresses' beds. Jacomyn became Sofie's *lyfbediende* (A:39) when she got married. This was translated with *personal maid* (82) in the TT. Having the service of a personal maid clearly also put Sofie in a different class.

The TL terms do not necessarily always make the gender distinctions of the SL. The feminine *slavin* is translated with the neutral *slave*. (*Female slave* is considered too cumbersome.) *Knegte* is presumably always used in an exclusively male context.

The ST extract below (A) serves to illustrate the translation problems encountered with reference to names of servants and farm workers. B illustrates the solutions found in the TT:

A *Dulsie het altyd op ons ander werksmense neergesien omdat sy die Ounooi se eie **slavin** was, soos sy self gesê het, en in die huis geslaap het, ... terwyl hulle, die **knegte** en **skaapwagters**, **Hottentotte** en **Basters**, snags vir hulle slaapplek moes gaan soek in die buitegeboue of skerms bou in die veld.* (A:20)

B *Dulsie always looked down on our other **workers** because she was the Ounooi's own **slave**, as she said herself, and she slept in the house, ... while they, the **knegte** and **shepherds**, **Hottentots** and **Basters**, had to find a sleeping-place in the outbuildings at night, or build shelters in the veld.* (64)

Racial appellatives and pejoratives

The word *Baster* stems from the Dutch word *bastard* and at the Cape referred to the offspring of Europeans and slaves, or members of the Khoi tribe. During the early 1800s European women at the Cape had the backing of the law to have their marriages annulled if their husbands fathered *baster* children. Giliomee (2003:38) quotes the example of Clara Greyling who was

granted an order for the dissolution of her marriage as well as a property settlement. Gert may have been the result of such an illicit union and that may have been why he had been 'given away' as a child.

Gert refers to himself as a *Baster*, thereby implying pride in his ancestry. It is therefore more likely that he belonged to one of the 'small baster communities' Giliomee (2003:40) describes as having existed in areas like 'Namaqualand, the Cederberg, the Bokkeveld, the Hantam and the Roggeveld'. Eventually the Kok family, led by Adam Kok, and the Barend family established the Griqua community. They referred to themselves as 'swarthy Dutchmen', accepted Christianity and spoke Dutch and Afrikaans. Giliomee (2003:41) calls them a 'slightly rougher version of the Afrikaner frontiersmen', but they were 'seldom incorporated into burgher society' and they usually married into their own community.

The other *Baster* featuring in the ST is Jan Baster, driven from his land at Bastersfontein. Giliomee (2003:40) reports that members of these small *Baster* communities were 'increasingly squeezed out from the land they held', as 'on contested claims, burghers invariably had the stronger claim and better access to the field cornets'. Giliomee quotes Lichtenstein whose words describe aptly the fate of Jan Baster and his family:

The white children of the colonists did not hesitate to make use of the right of the strongest to drive their half-yellow relations out of the places where they had fixed abode. These bastard-Hottentots were obliged to seek an asylum in more remote parts.

Nevertheless, *Baster* often has a derogatory connotation, as illustrated by Dulsie's words in example **A** (97). Initially a choice was made for domestication by using *halfbreed*, but, because of the culture-specific significance of the word, it was later decided to retain the ST loanword, and to include an explanation in the glossary.

In the context of the ST, it is obvious that Dulsie also looked down upon *Hottentotte* (translated with *Hottentots*), a term referring to members of the

Khoi tribe, or their descendants. However, it is not such a derogatory term as its derivative *Hotnots* (see below), which is considered an invective in the SC.

Other racial pejoratives surface during dialogue, mostly as expressions of rage:

- *Sit net jou hand op my, **duusman**, dan weet jy wat met jou gebeur.* (A:21) *Just lay a hand on me, **white man**, then you know what will happen to you.* (66)

Duusman stems from *Dietsman*, which referred to a Dutch-speaking person. Here it refers to a white man, but the original meaning has been lost in the domestication.

- *Sê vir die **Hotnot** hy moet padgee!* (A:23) *Tell the **Hotnot** to go away!* (67)

The derogatory SL term, derived from *Hottentot*, a member of the Khoi tribe (see above), has been retained in the TT, with an explanation in the glossary.

- ***Ou meid**, praat nog net één keer ...* (A:23) ***Old woman**, just say another word ...* (67)

Domesticating *ou meid* into *old woman* has caused the translation to lose its racial slant and much of the force of the original.

- *Dulsie het met onmiddellike vyandigheid op die indringer gereageer, ... neerhalend van haar gepraat as 'n "**Slamaaiermeid**" ..., terwyl Jacomyn haar weer uitgeskel het as **Hotnot** en met beledigende onverskilligheid behandel het.* (A:40) *Dulsie reacted to the intruder with immediate animosity, ... referred to her scornfully as a **Slamaaiermeid** ..., while Jacomyn berated her as a **Hotnot** and treated her with insolent indifference.* (82)

It was probably Jacomyn's sleek, black hair, as well as her slave ancestry, that incited Dulsie to call her a *Slamaaier* (Malayan). Again, the choice was made to foreignise by means of loanwords in the TT, with an explanatory note in the glossary.

5.2.2 Source-culture specific events and traditions

Schäffner (2001:32-33) refers to 'phenomena (i.e. objects, situations, events, etc.) that exist only in one of the two cultures ... usually the source culture. The label *realia* is often used to denote such phenomena ...' One such an example is *Nagmaal* (discussed in 3.2.5). The decision was taken to foreignise by using the loanword rather than the TT equivalent *communion*.

There are many other examples of events or traditions where seemingly adequate domesticated translations may be supplied, yet readers in the TC will not have the same understanding of the event as SC readers. One example is *kerkraadsvergaderings en vendusies* (A:3), translated with *consistorial meetings and auction sales* (48).

At consistorial meetings in the context of the SC, far more than the affairs of the church were discussed. It was also where people's moral conduct was examined and censured. Of auction sales, Botha (1970:84) writes:

Both public and private sales were the occasions of congenial gatherings. Thus the people were noted for their passion for public auctions. In the country, particularly on a farm, the entertainment covered free meals and often lodging as well.

Sitting in the front row at church (*die voorste gestoelte*, A:25) was an indication of social status, which is why the narrator's mother attached so much importance to the attainment of that position and was adamant not to relinquish her seat after her husband's death, even if it meant being embroiled in a dispute. Botha (1970:65) explains:

Jealousy regarding the rights and privileges of rank within and without the Church prevailed in the country as it did in the capital. The men sat on one side and the women on the other side of the church and each lady's chair was placed nearer the pulpit the higher her social rank.

In the evenings Meester's feet were washed with the rest of the family's (70). Then *huisgodsdienst* took place (*family worship*). Botha (1970:83) describes these traditions as follows:

When everyone had come in a slave or Hottentot servant entered with a tub of water and set it down before the master who discarded his veldschoens and placed his feet in to be washed. This was repeated to each member, including the visitors, the servant going to each one according to seniority. Family worship was conducted before or after supper when the domestic servants came in and joined in the devotions.

There are many such traditions that TC readers will not necessarily be familiar with and may not fully understand when they come across them in the text. A final example is the custom of entering the dates of the births and deaths of family members in the family Bible, a custom central to the events of this narrative.

5.2.3 Grammar conventions

This category examines a convention exclusive, in this particular case, to the SL and considers alternatives to render equivalent effects in the TL. This matter could, however, just as well have been discussed in the next section (5.3), under the heading 'Interlingual translation problems'.

In Afrikaans the convention of using the historic present tense to relate past events is frequently used in novels, where English usually gives preference to the simple past tense. In the TT this translator resorts to the present tense on occasion to reflect, for instance, the musings of the old woman as they take place. This extract from the opening scene (46) serves as an example:

The night-light flickers and goes out; I lie awake in the dark, listening to the regular breathing of the girl asleep on the cot at the foot of my bed. It does not matter, nothing matters now, for to wait is all that remains, and light or darkness no longer matters.

The following passages relate to the acquisition of land issue. In the first passage, (A) dealing with the Jan Baster affair, the ST (A:23) makes use of both the passive voice past tense (*is ontdek; is aangesê*) and the historic present (*bly; beweer; behoort*). The passive voice indicates the hostile distance kept by the narrator's parents (especially the mother) in contrast with the immediacy of the active verbs indicating the emotion and distress of poor

Jan Baster, helpless and unable to fight back. In the TT (67) the passive voice past tense has been retained, creating the same effect, but the historic present has been replaced with the simple past and the past perfect tenses (thereby losing the immediacy and emotional intensity of the ST), as an equivalent convention does not exist in the TL.

- **A** *Daar is op een of ander tydstip ontdek of besluit dat die grond waar Jan Baster bly deel van ons plaas uitmaak en hy is aangesê om pad te gee, terwyl hy aan sy kant beweer dat dit al die jare aan hom en sy mense behoort en sy Vader voor hom daar by die fontein gebly het;*

At some time or other it was discovered or decided that the land on which Jan Baster lived was part of our farm and he was told to leave, while, from his point of view, he maintained that the land had belonged to him and his people for many years and his father had lived there at the fountain before him;

In the Kliprug tale cited below (B), the ST (A:24) uses historic present tense verbs exclusively. These active voice verbs (*slaan, leun, skreeu ...*), describing the heated conflict between *Moeder* and *oom Swanepoel*, are in sharp contrast with verbs pertaining to the role of *Vader*. Though still in the active voice, the verbs themselves reflect utter passivity (*sit, nie probeer inmeng nie*). In the TT (68) present participles (*slamming, leaning, pressing, shouting*) attempt to recreate the immediacy of the present tense verbs in the ST. It is not possible to do this consistently, however, and past tense verbs are introduced in the form of *shouted, drove* and *were wielding*.

- **B** *... ou oom Swanepoel met sy rooierige baard wat met sy vuus op die groot tafel in die voorhuis slaan, Moeder wat oorkant hom oor die tafel leun in haar swart rok terwyl sy met albei hande op die tafelblad leun en skel op hom skreeu soos sy skreeu op die werkvolk in die kombuis, en Vader wat hulpeloos of magteloos tussen hulle sit en hom nie met hul heftige woordewisseling probeer inmeng nie terwyl Moeder die ou man met haar woorde uit die huis uit verdrywe asof dit 'n sambok is wat sy hanteer.*

... old Oom Swanepoel with his reddish beard, **slamming** down his fist on the big table in the voorhuis, Mother in her black dress, **leaning** across the table towards him, both hands **leaning** on the table top, **shouting** at him shrilly, the way she **shouted** at the farm hands in the kitchen, and Father **sitting** between them, helpless or powerless, **not trying to intervene** in their heated argument while Mother **drove** the old man from the house with her words as if she **were wielding** a sjambok.

5.3 *Interlingual translation problems*

In this category similarities and differences between structural aspects such as syntax and vocabulary in the ST and TT are discussed. The repetitive use of grammatical modes and structures to create patterns is examined (5.3.1), as well as a tendency in Schoeman's style towards a loss of coherence in sentences that are especially lengthy (5.3.2) that creates a need for explicitation in the TT. The use of accent marks for emphasis in the ST also receives attention (5.3.3).

5.3.1 *Syntactic pattern*

Schoeman's sentences create patterns that sometimes sweep his readers along, and sometimes hold them mesmerised. Though often long and involved, his sentences are usually beautifully crafted and perfectly balanced. Berman (2001:293) warns against 'the destruction of linguistic patternings', asserting that '[t]he systematic nature of the text goes beyond the level of signifiers, metaphors, etc.; it extends to the type of sentences, the sentence constructions employed'.

The following example proves that it is possible for the translator to construct similar, if not identical, patterns in the TL. (Translators who lean towards domestication would probably have shortened, neatened and simplified Schoeman's sentences, resulting in the more fluent, plainer style, familiar to most TT readers.)

- Pieter was meer soos Vader se mense, fyner en skraler as Jakob, met ligte hare en blou oë, en hy was ook **opgeruimder van geaardheid, vinniger van tong en lewendiger van verbeelding**, geneig om te terg en skoor te soek: **Pieter wat** by homself sing waar hy werk, **Pieter wat** speel op 'n ou viool, of **laggend** op die dansvloer in 'n waas van kerslig en fyn poeieragtige stof. (A:18)*

*Pieter was more like Father's people, smaller and slimmer than Jakob, with fair hair and blue eyes, and he was also **more cheerful, had a quicker tongue and a livelier imagination**, and was inclined to joke and tease: **Pieter singing** to himself while he worked, **Pieter playing** an old violin, or **laughing** on the dance floor in a haze of candlelight and fine, powdery dust. (63)*

Although it would have been possible to duplicate the *vinniger van tong* construction in the TT (*quicker of tongue*), the accumulative impact would not have been as effective as in the ST. A choice was therefore made to domesticate by using a simpler combination of comparative adjective and noun ('a quicker tongue') thereby, however, losing much of the rhythmic effect in the translation.

Relative pronoun construction in ST

Especially in the more lyrical descriptive passages, Schoeman is fond of using the relative pronoun structure (*Pieter wat by homself sing waar hy werk*), with main clauses lacking. The overall effect is impressionistic and episodic. This translator has elected to use a present participle construction instead (*Pieter singing to himself while he worked*), in an attempt to achieve a similar effect.

The ST example below contains a typical descriptive sentence with an accumulation of relative pronouns, gerunds and present and past participles, and no main clause. In the TT an attempt is made to emulate the style of the ST closely, choosing once more the present participle construction to recreate the patterns of the ST.

There is, however, an exception. If *Pieter wat aangehardloop kom oor die werf* were to be translated with *Pieter running across the yard*, it would constitute a shift in meaning. The choice of *Pieter who came running across the yard* is closer to the meaning of the original, indicating that Pieter ran, not aimlessly across the yard, but purposefully, starting from a specific point and heading in the direction of the house. Style has been sacrificed for the sake of meaning, however, as the pattern has been broken and the rhythm of the ST sentence sacrificed.

- *Sofie se donker kop gebuk na die kersvlam, en die gepols van die ongedurige musiek deur die huis en Gert wat buite roep en Pieter wat aangehardloop kom oor die werf, laggend van opwinding, en die kaal wye land daarbuite uitgestrek in die koestering van sononder, al het dit hier in die huis reeds lankal donker geword, die deinende veld waar die bossies en klipprante brand in die laat lig en in die verte die stof van die rytuie op pad hierheen. (A:37)*

Sofie's dark head bent over the candle-flame, and the pulsing of the restless music through the house and Gert calling outside and Pieter who came running across the yard, laughing with excitement, and the vast, open land out there, widespread, basking in the last rays of the sun, though here inside the house it had long been dark, the rolling veld with the shrubs and rocky ridges aflame in the late light and in the distance the dust of the vehicles on their way here. (79)

Repetition of words, word classes, phrases

In the next example patterns are created by careful repetition of words, word classes and phrases. The success of the translation depends on whether the translator is able to recreate the patterns and atmosphere of the ST.

- *Die laaste talmende skaap is reeds voortgejaag, die laaste skaapwagter het voor my verdwyn langs die pad, die laaste geluid, wat anders so duidelik hier teen die kranse weerklink het, is in die waaiende wolke gesmoor: vir 'n oomblik was ek alleen, en skielik was ek bang, bewus van die bobbejane op die kranse en die wildekatte in die skeure, bewus van elke ander dreigement wat onsigbaar in die mis kon skuil, en ek het omgedraai. My voet het teen 'n klip gestamp, en ek het gehoor hoe dit wegrol en ander klippe losmaak tot ook die*

geratel van die rotsval deur die dempende mis opgeneem word; en ek het gevlug, struikelend oor die los klippe en rotsbanke langs die afdraande in die rigting waarin die waens verdwyn het, blindelings deur die mis langs die rand van die onsigbare afgrond, totdat die agterhoede van ons trek onduidelik voor my sigbaar word waar hulle stadig hul pad voor hulle uit voel deur die newel. (A:42)

The last lagging sheep had already been chased ahead, the last shepherd had disappeared ahead of me down the road, the last sound, that otherwise would have echoed so clearly here in the cliffs, had been muffled by the billowing clouds: for a moment I was alone, and suddenly I was fearful, aware of the baboons on the cliffs and the wild cats in the crevices, aware of every other invisible threat that might be lurking in the fog, and I turned around. My foot caught on a stone and I heard it roll away and dislodge other stones until the rattle of falling rocks was absorbed by the muffling fog; and I fled, stumbling over the loose stones and rocky ledges down the slope, following the direction in which the wagons had disappeared, blindly through the fog along the edge of the invisible abyss, until the rear end of our trek became dimly visible ahead of me, the wagons slowly feeling their way through the mist. (84-85)

Imperative mode and words denoting movement

The following passage challenges the translator to recognise the pattern established by the strength of the imperative mode, by the force and movement of the verbs and prepositions that carry the readers along, forcing them, as it were, to undertake the journey themselves. It is a step-by-step journey, from the inside moving outwards, from the confinement of the house to the wide landscape beyond; it is a metaphysical journey taking place in the imagination of narrator and readers, but there is a concreteness and physicality to the description that should not be lost in the translation. The repetition of *aarsel* and *drumpel* brings the movement to a halt for a moment, before *kan ... uitsteek* and *uitgaan* make the final exit possible.

- *Staan op en gaan, staan op en loop deur daardie donker; trek die deur oop en gaan uit uit die slapende huis, uit oor die drumpel op die werf waar die land in die sterlig uitstrek. Oor en oor volg ek daardie bekende pad, sonder dat iemand my in die donker kan hoor, oor en oor aarsel ek op die drumpel, en dan eers*

kan ek my hand uitsteek na die grendel en die deur ooptrek, dan eers kan ek na buite uitgaan in die nag. (A:5)

Get up and go, get up and walk through that darkness; pull open the door and leave the sleeping house, cross the threshold to the yard where the land stretches out in starlight. Again and again I follow that familiar path, unnoticed in the dark, again and again I waver at that door, waver on the threshold, only then reaching for the bolt and pulling open the door, only then venturing out into the darkness. (50)

The translation may have lost some of the immediacy of the original through the use of the participles in the latter part of the passage, although the repetition of the -ing construction creates further impetus and propels the reader forward.

The end product above is in sharp contrast with an initial attempt to translate this passage, when this translator was not yet aware of the care with which Schoeman's style should be transferred if equivalent effect is to be achieved. Even the force of the imperative mode had gone unnoticed:

- *I would get up and go, get up and walk through that dark; open the door and leave the sleeping house, cross the threshold to the yard where the land stretched out in starlight. Again and again I would follow that familiar path, unnoticed in the dark, again and again I would waver at that door, waver on the threshold, before I extended my hand to the bolt and pulled open the door, before I ventured out into the night.*

Antonymic construction

Another device Schoeman is fond of using, is what Schäffner (2001:130) refers to as antonymic constructions. [L]aat staan nog in the ST was translated with *not to mention* in the TT, except in the last example, where the use of *neither* afforded a more fluent result.

- *Hoe min mense was daar eintlik nie wat my ooit selfs geneentheid betoon het nie, laat staan nog liefde; net so min soos wat ek ooit self liefgehad het. (A:28)*

How few were the people who ever showed even just a liking for me, not to mention love; as few as I ever loved myself. (72)

- *Watter afguns daar in die distrik ook bestaan het, glo ek egter nie dat daar ooit nyd was nie, laat staan nog vyandigheid, want Vader was nie iemand wat vyande gemaak het nie, 'n rustige swygsame man wat oor sy baard stryk en lank nadink voordat hy 'n mening uitspreek of 'n vraag beantwoord ... (A:11)*

Though envy may have existed in the district, I do not believe there was ever malice, not to mention enmity, for father was never one to make enemies, a placid, silent man who stroked his beard and thought long before he voiced an opinion or answered a question ... (56)

- *Ek het nooit 'n mening gekoester of 'n oordeel gevel nie, laat staan nog dat 'n woord soos onreg by my opkom. (A:24)*

I never had an opinion or passed judgment, neither did the word injustice ever occur to me. (68)

5.3.2 *Loss of coherence*

At times Schoeman appears to lose his grip on the careful craftsmanship so apparent in his long, involved sentences, resulting in a loss of coherence towards the end of the sentence. The final clause or phrase often seems unrelated, mostly because of being placed too far from its antecedent. It appears, however, that the literary style of the SL allows for such a 'lapse'. The translator has a choice whether to translate closely and literally, thereby perpetuating the 'error', or to edit and 'improve' the original, always remembering that the TL may not be as accommodating as the SL.

The chosen method for circumventing these problems in the TT is explicitation. Vinay and Darbelnet (Klaudy, 1998:80) define explicitation as 'the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicitly in the source language, but which can be derived from the context of the situation'. Nida (Klaudy, 1998:81) speaks instead of 'additions, subtractions and alterations' required in the process of translation.

His reference to the technique of 'filling out elliptical expressions' and [the alterations] 'required because of grammatical restructuring' are of particular interest in a discussion of Schoeman's style.

Berman (2001:289), under the heading *Clarification*, comments on this phenomenon by stating that '[w]here the original has no problem moving in the *indefinite*, our literary language tends to impose the definite'. Regarding Dostoevsky, Berman cites Chapiro:

To render the suggestions of a Russian sentence, it is often necessary to complete it.

Though there is a school of thought that considers it the translator's task to domesticate by making the translation 'a little clearer than the original', Berman also reminds the translator that 'in a negative sense, explicitation aims to render "clear" what does not wish to be clear in the original'. It is once more the translator's call whether he/she wants to foreignise, by remaining close to the ST, or whether, in the name of fluency and 'easy reading', he/she wishes to domesticate and follow the current plain-style trend.

Grammatical restructuring

Examples **A** and **B** show how a slightly incoherent, more rambling ST has, for the sake of fluency, been 'clarified', and thus domesticated, in the TT:

- **A** *Ek moet verder gaan, kaalvoet in die halflig van die nag, stap vir stap en herinnering vir herinnering; elke woord wat ek kan onthou, moet ek nagaan, en elkeen wat my dalk ontgaan het, probeer herwin; langs die klipprante, in die droë skeure en holtes van die dorre land moet ek soek na die seldsame fontein, die gedrup van water en die vogtigheid van die aarde wat dalk 'n voetmerk bewaar het, **van ontdekking na ontdekking voortgedra.** (A:5-6)*

*I must carry on, barefoot in the half-light of the night, step by step, on the trail of every memory; every remembered word I must examine, and every half-forgotten one attempt to recall; along the rocky ridges, in the dry crevices and hollows of this arid land, **borne from one disclosure to the next**, I must search for the rare fountain, the dripping of water and the moisture of the soil that may have retained a footprint. (50)*

- **B** *Uit my kinderjare onthou ek maar net wat ander mense ewe goed onthou, al het ek dalk meer geleentheid gehad om dit waar te neem: die ywer, die dryfkrag en die drif, die onversetlikheid wat so maklik verbeterheid kon word, die skielike aanvalle van blinde en onbeheerbare woede wat ons elke keer opnuut verskrik het met hul geweld: dryfkrag en drif, ja, en amper sou ek wil sê gedréwenheid, asof sy na een of ander verre en skaars waarneembare doel aangedryf word deur **kragte** wat vir almal **onsigbaar** was behalwe vir haar en **selfs vir haar onbegryplik**. (A:12)*

*From my childhood days I remember only what other people remember as well, though I may have had more occasion to observe it all: the diligence, the drive and the passion, the persistence that could so easily become stubbornness, the sudden attacks of blind and uncontrollable fury that scared us anew every time with their violence; drive and passion, yes, and I would almost say obsession, as if she were being swept towards some distant and scarcely perceptible goal by **powers invisible** to everyone but her, and **unfathomable even to her**. (56-57)*

Filling out an elliptical expression

In the following example the author failed to insert a verb (*is*) at the end of the ST sentence, thereby leaving the adjective (*onwaar*) hanging. In the TT a verb (*is rendered*) has been inserted to 'complete' the sentence:

- *Land sonder genade waar die wildekat die skaap verskeur en die arend op die lammers neersak, waar die skaapwagter dood gevind word in sy skerm, bedek deur die fyn, siftende kapok, en die jagter se voet gly op die klip; land sonder vergifnis, waar broer teen broer gerig is en kneg teen meester, waar die oortreding onvergewe bly en die geskrewe woord die leuen bestendig, die uitgebeitelde woord **onwaar**. (A:5)*

*Land without mercy where the wild cat savages the sheep and the eagle swoops down on the lamb, where the shepherd is found dead in his shelter, covered with the fine, sifting snow, and the hunter loses his footing on the rock; unforgiving land, where brother is set against brother and servant against master, where the trespass remains unforgiven and the written word perpetuates the lie, the chiselled inscription **is rendered untrue**. (50)*

Most often, however, in spite of their length, Schoeman's sentences show the logical progression and balance so distinctive of his style. In contrast with the examples presented above, the following example shows how the positioning of the words within the subordinate clauses of the long, involved ST sentence supplies the momentum. It is possible for the translator to attain equivalent effect in the TT by means of careful emulation of the author's style:

- *Wanneer ek die aankoms op die plaas hier voor my sien in die donker, is dit vir my (main clause) soos dit al die jare was voordat die nuwe huis gebou is, want met watter pad jy ook aangekom het, van Groenfontein se kant of Oorlogskloof – die dorp het in daardie tyd nog nie bestaan nie – langs die spoor van die wiele tussen die lae heuwels en klipbanke, of met die pas teen die berghang op en by Klipfontein verby, wanneer jy uitkom op daardie wye, oop, golwende land van die eskarp, het jy oor 'n lang afstand reeds anderkant die deining van bossies en gras en die skittering van die damme die huis met sy hoë grasdak teen die rant gewaar, die huis met die skuur en stal en ander buitegeboue op 'n afstand daaragter, die vrugteboord met sy skeef gewaaide peerbome, en die begraafplaas met sy onreëlmatige muur van opgestapelde klippe. (A:10-11)*

When I picture the arrival on the farm here before me in the dark, it appears to me (main clause) as it was during all those years before the new house was built, for no matter which road you chose, from the direction of Groenkloof or Oorlogskloof – the village did not exist in those days – following the ruts of the wheels across the low hills and rocky ledges, or along the pass up the mountainside past Klipfontein, when you reached that wide, open, rolling land of the escarpment, you saw from a great distance, across the waving shrubs and grass and the glitter of the dams, the house with its high, thatched roof against the ridge, the house with the shed and stables and other outbuildings some distance behind, the orchard with its wind-swept pear trees, and the graveyard with its irregular wall of stacked stones. (55)

5.3.3 *Emphasis*

Schoeman makes abundant use of accent marks to place stress on syllables, thereby achieving a measured, weighty tone. This translator gave in to domestication and steered clear of this device, as it is not common practice in the TL. Should emphasis be indicated, it is usually done by means of italics. In this TT this option was not available, as italics already indicate loanwords that

appear in the glossary. In the example below, although the stresses indicated in the ST are not repeated in the TT, this translator does not feel that it represents a loss.

- *Arm land, skraal land, harde land van bossies en klip, droë spruite en fonteine van brak water; net óns fonteine het altyd geloop en net by óns het die damme geskitter in die lig. (A:5)*

Meagre land, sparse land, harsh land of shrub and stone, dry springs and fountains of brackish water; our fountains were the only ones never to run dry and our dams the only ones to glitter in the light. (50)

In the next example the first word of the TT (*Something*) is not emphasised by means of an accent mark, as is *léts* in the ST. By retaining its position at the beginning of the sentence, however, the emphasis remains intact in the translation:

- *léts moet daar tog wees tussen al die toevallige woorde en gebare, skerwe en splintertjies wat mens kan bymekaarsoek en saamlê ten einde te kan verstaan en verklaar, te probéér verstaan, te probéér vergewe. (A:12)*

Something there must be among all the incidental words and gestures, shards and tiny splinters, that one can scrape together and arrange, to be able to understand and explain, to try and understand, to try and forgive. (56)

There are many examples of how Schoeman manipulates word order to achieve emphasis. Though this method was emulated in the translation with some degree of success (**A**, below), it was often impossible (**B**):

- **A** *Net in my herinnering, slaaploos in die donker, sal ek die ou paaie nog betree; net in my gedagtes sal ek nog geluidloos deur die vertroude donker van die huis beweeg, terug oor al die jare. (A:5)*

Only in my memories, sleepless in the dark, shall I still tread the old paths; only in my thoughts shall I still move soundlessly through the familiar darkness, back across all the years. (49-50)

- **B** *Nooit het ons self onthaal nie en selde het ons toe ek 'n kind was die buurplase besoek, maar met Nuwejaar nadat Jakob getroud is, het my ouers by ons 'n dans gegee...* (A:35)

We never entertained and we seldom visited the neighbouring farms when I was a child but that New Year after Jakob's wedding, my parents held a dance on our farm ... (78)

5.4 Text-specific translation problems

Translation problems may be considered text-specific, according to Nord (1997:61) when they cannot be typically categorised, but arise during the translation of a specific text. In this section of the study the translation of the title is reviewed (5.4.1), as well as the transfer of figurative language from ST to TT (5.4.2).

The translation of words from specific lexical-semantic fields, such as clothing and housing, is also considered (5.4.3). This discussion may well have resorted under the heading *Intercultural translation problems* (5.2) and serves as an example of how difficult it can be to distinguish between categories.

5.4.1 Title

The title of the novel (*Hierdie lewe*) has been translated, quite literally, as *This Life*. This seemed the best possible option as no meaning is lost in the transfer. Müller (1994:95), commenting on the significance of the title, claims that it points to a continuous presence, an unfinished present tense that touches the reader almost fatally with the horror of incompleteness.

To this might be added that the choice of *This Life*, as opposed to, possibly, *My Life*, implies a kind of objectivity and inevitability. The novel deals with this life, and not any other life that may have been possible if certain things had or had not happened. This life under scrutiny is a *fait accompli*, it has to be considered and evaluated for what it is, nothing more, nothing less.

Hovering in the background, as it were, is also the knowledge that, implied in the title *This Life*, is another 'title', namely *This Death*, for this is not only the account of a life that has been lived, it is also the study of a death in progress. Confronted with her imminent death, the narrator presents us not with a glance of a life flashing past, but with a panoramic view, a long look, a final probing search for the missing details that will complete the bigger picture.

5.4.2 *Figurative language*

Where figurative language (simile, metaphor, alliteration and idiom) is concerned, this translator has tried to recreate the same images with the same vividness in the TT as in the ST. Examples **A** and **B** below demonstrate the translation of simile and metaphor, respectively.

- **A** *Nou sal ek nooit meer weet nie; nooit sal ek nader aan die waarheid kan kom nie as met daardie enkele herinnering aan oom Ruben en sy sku, afsydige gesin met hul waaksame oë wat **soos skraal wolwe uit ons lewens wegsluip** na een of ander verre en onbepaalde bestemming; oupa Adam en oom Ruben met hul mankolieke waens en hul ou roers, swygsame mans met diepliggende swart oë.* (A:14)

*Now I would never know; never would I be able to come closer to the truth than with that single memory of Oom Ruben and his shy, withdrawn family with their wary eyes who **had slunk out of our lives like scraggy wolves** to some distant and unknown destination; Oupa Adam and Oom Ruben with their rickety wagons and their old rifles, silent men with deepset black eyes. (59)*

- **B** *... hy het van geselskap gehou, al het hy nooit self baie gepraat nie, en oor 'n glasier brandewyn kon hy op sy ingetoë manier selfs plesierig raak; maar **sy pad is vir hom bepaal** soos ons almal s'n, en gewoonlik **het hy dit gelate gevolg**.* (A:16)

*He liked company, even though he never said much himself, and over a glass of brandy he could even become jovial in his unassuming way; but **his path was***

mapped out for him like everybody else's, and usually he followed it resignedly. (61)

SC-specific metaphors

The TL translation in the next example is far less effective than the original. Words like *kisklere* and *windmaker* defy translation, while *boereseuns* carries a cultural load not present in the TL rendering of *farm lads*. Using loanwords would have been too obstructive, though domestication here has not necessarily resulted in improvement.

- ... die skaam, woordkarige **boereseuns**, ongemaklik in hul **kisklere**, die **windmaker** jong mans met die stywe boordjies en geborduurde onderbaadjies ... (A:38)

... the bashful, reticent **farm lads**, ill at ease in their **Sunday best**, the **swaggering** young men in their stiff collars and embroidered waistcoats ... (80)

Alliterative effects are often difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce and in the example below, the entire effect of the hard, cold k-sounds has unfortunately been lost in the transfer:

- Daar is niks meer om te vrees nie, kaalvoet en alleen deur die veld en oor die klippe in my wapperende nagrok tot by die rand van die eskarp waar die kranse loodreg afstrek, die afgrond onsigbaar in die diepte van die skadu asof dit nie bestaan nie, kaalvoet op die klipbank aan die rant van die wêreld met die klip kil onder my voete en die wind wat skerp na my toe waai sonder dat ek koud kry of huiwer. (A:6)

I have nothing more to fear, walking barefoot and alone through the veld and over the stones in my flapping nightgown until I reach the edge of the escarpment where the vertical rockface falls away, the sheer drop invisible in the depth of the shadows as if it were not there, barefoot on the rocky ledge at the edge of the world, the stone cold under my feet and the piercing wind blowing straight at me, yet I do not freeze or falter. (50-51)

5.4.3 Lexical-semantic fields

Terminology from various lexical-semantic fields (Schäffner, 2001:42), for example agriculture, architecture, transport, housing, furniture and clothing abound in the ST. These words are laden with social and cultural significance and extreme care should be taken with the translation so that the transfer to the TC may be as accurate as possible. The translator should be alert when confronted with examples from the ST as cited below.

Reference is made in the ST to different kinds of housing. The narrator refers to *die ou kliphuis* (translated as *the old stone house*) which one presumes was of a rather primitive nature. Her grandparents then built *die groot opstal* (*the large homestead*) of which the architecture and layout are described in detail. (In 2.1 mention is made of the *brandsolder*, a fireproof loft usually constructed from reeds laid upon the ceiling, sometimes with bricks placed on top.) Maans built *die nuwe kliphuis* (*the new stone house*) for his wife Stienie.

Later, there was also the *dorpshuis* (*town house*) built for the narrator's parents so that they might attend church and stay in town for a while. The term *dorpshuis*, therefore, does not refer to any house situated in a town, but is specifically an additional dwelling that a well-to-do farmer erects in the village closest to his farm, so that he may attend church and transact his business in comfort and at his leisure. There is also the *legplek* or *winterlegplek* (*winter quarters, outspan*) in the Karoo. Other dwellings mentioned are *skerms* (*shelters*) built by the shepherds and a very particular kind of makeshift dwelling called a *hartbeeshuisie*, often described as a *wattle and daub hut*. Hattersley (1969:52) refers to 'graziers', also known as *trekboers*, who built 'a hartebeeshuis, using little beyond unprepared timber, mud and thatch-reeds'.

Clothing items such as Jakob's *lakense baadjie* and the *ploimussies* and *voorskootjie* that used to belong to Dulsie's Ounooi are mentioned. The *broadcloth jacket* was seemingly standard attire for occasions which called for dressing up. Hattersley (1969:106) describes the appearance of the farmer who has come to town in 'British broadcloth and boots of polished leather'. It

was considered whether the *voorskootjie* might have been a *pinafore* but the conclusion was that it had indeed been an embroidered *apron*.

A particular reference that is rather obscure in the ST is *die skitterende git* in:

Was dit dus wat sy al die jare begeer het, sonder om dit self ooit duidelik te weet: die geld en die plase en die huis op die dorp, Maans se geleerdheid en sy deftige jong vrou, haar eie aansien in die klein gemeenskap as Vader se weduwee, die stoel in die voorste ry in die kerk, die skitterende git? (A:12)

It is only much later (p 156 of the novel) that the meaning becomes clearer:

In daardie jare het sy vir haar van Worcester 'n manteltjie laat kom wat met skitterende git uitgewerk was, en wat onder die ander vroue in die gemeente heelwat opspraak en nyd veroorsaak het: sulke swierigheid het haar nie gestaan nie en sy was ook nie eintlik op haar gemak daarmee nie, maar jare lank het sy daardie geborduurde manteltjie elke Sondag kerk toe gedra, skitterend tussen die valer vroue.

Now armed with the knowledge that 'skitterende git' refers to some kind of embroidery, this translator was finally able to complete the picture on finding the following entry in the *Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal (HAT)*:

git: *Diepswart, glansende mineraal wat uit verkoolde naaldhout ontstaan het; gitsteen, swart agaasteen ... iets wat daarvan gemaak is, bv. 'n sieraad: Mantels met gitte versier. (Odendal & Gouws, 2000:300)*

It was deemed necessary, therefore, to explicitate as follows in the TT:

... the seat in the front row at church, the cape embroidered with glittering jet? (57).

Various modes of transport feature in the ST: *perdekar*, *kar*, *kapkar* and *wa*, which the translator should take pains to translate correctly. Hattersley (1969:110) distinguishes between the *paarde-wagen*, a large but relatively light horse-drawn wagon, the *Cape cart*, a buggy with a covered van's hood and the *ox-wagon*, still most frequently used for the transportation of goods as well as passengers.

At the New Year's dance the musicians play 'n fragment van wals of seties op die viool of trekklavier' (A:36). While *waltz* is sufficiently well known, translating *seties* with the more obscure *schottische* as found in Eksteen (1997:491) was problematic. A choice was therefore made to foreignise and retain the loanword in the TT.

It is possible to supply and discuss many further examples showing the importance of thorough research into the social and cultural concepts that appear in the ST so that their transfer may be as factually accurate as possible.

5.5 Concluding remarks

An annotated translation can also be referred to as 'a translation with commentary'. Williams and Chesterman (2002:7) call it 'a form of introspective and retrospective research' where the translator writes a commentary on his/her own translation process.

As far as a meticulous examination of actual translation practice is concerned, a much more detailed analysis is certainly possible. Many other examples from the ST might be selected, scrutinised, translated, categorised and annotated. Unconventional punctuation, for example, has not been touched upon, neither has Schoeman's treatment of modal verb constructions (... as *ek **sou** opstaan, sou ek my pad nog blindelings **kan** vind ... A:1*). Another example that comes to mind is his inclination to omit the double negative. However, it is hoped that, within the limited scope of this study, a representative number of recurring problems have been identified, and that the annotations have succeeded in justifying the strategies and solutions elected, while providing a kind of running commentary on the act of translation in progress.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter a retrospective view is given of the progression of the study (6.1). The research goal is restated and an attempt is made to place the translated text that forms part of this study into perspective with reference to other existing English translations of Schoeman novels. The study is evaluated (6.2) in terms of the attainment of the initial research goals. Attention is focused on the aspect of untranslatability, and translator competence is discussed. The final section (6.3) is dedicated to an exploration of further research projects that might evolve from this study.

6.1 Summary

This study was undertaken with a twofold goal in mind. First, this translator wanted to demonstrate that, by aligning herself with Steiner's views of translation as a hermeneutic act and by implementing Venuti's method of foreignisation, it was possible to produce a competent and adequate translation of a portion of Karel Schoeman's novel *Hierdie lewe*. At the same time the goal was to substantiate a hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the study, namely that, in spite of a perception that Schoeman's fictional works are, in general, considered untranslatable, this is not necessarily so. This perception is based on the fact that, despite his fame at home and the critical acclaim with which his novels are usually received, relatively few have been translated into other languages.

Of the 22 works of fiction from Schoeman's pen, only three have been translated. *Na die geliefde land* (1972) was published in translated version in the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia. The English version was also distributed in South Africa and in 2003 the novel was filmed locally. *'n Ander land* (1984) was translated into English and distributed in the United Kingdom as well as South Africa. Translations were also published in France,

Germany and the Netherlands. *Afskeid en vertrek* (1990) was translated into English and distributed in the United Kingdom as well as at home.

The research question focused on two possible reasons for the apparent lack of interest in the translation of Schoeman's work. The possibility was stated that translators might be daunted by the task of finding equivalents for Schoeman's distinct signature style, characterised by lengthy sentences, awkward punctuation, flowing rhythms, rich imagery – repetitive and associative by nature – and by the emotional intensity and atmospheric richness suffusing his texts. A second obstacle might be the culture-specific world Schoeman creates in his novels. Critics have asserted that his work is too South African and that no degree of effort could bridge the cultural gap between ST and target addressees. It has also been felt by some that his work is not 'politically correct' as the author does not act as an apologist for the human rights transgressions committed in the South Africa of the past.

A review of the literature consulted as background research was provided before concepts central to translation studies theory which were relevant to the strategies developed in this study, were analysed and discussed. These included the hermeneutic motion, as advocated by Steiner, foreignisation and domestication, as debated by Venuti, and Nida's views on naturalisation. A functional approach to translation (as advocated by Nord, Schäffner and Vermeer) provided a framework. These scholars regard the translator as a professional who, with a clear skopos in mind, produces a text during a process which is both 'a social and a cognitive activity' (Schäffner, 2001:12).

This translator concurs with the belief that, before a translation can be produced, an understanding of the source text must be reached and an interpretation must take place. Steiner's view of translation as a hermeneutic action was endorsed, as well as Venuti's belief in the violence inherent in the act of translation.

Karel Schoeman's source text as well as the translation produced by this translator provided the material for a descriptive case study, empirical in

nature. The research method involved thorough *textual analysis*, providing the context for an interpretation. *Textual data* was selected to provide 'occurrences of particular problems' in the ST as well as 'occurrences of the proposed solutions' in the TT (Williams & Chesterman, 2002:90). Such data is described by Toury as 'pairs of replacing and replaced segments in the target and source texts' (Williams & Chesterman, 2002:90). These samples from the texts were described by means of annotations which provided an in-depth commentary, illustrating the reasoning behind decisions and evaluating the merits of the chosen strategies. *Textual indicators* such as ideology and power relations also featured in the commentary. (Italicised terminology from Williams & Chesterman, 2002:90.)

6.2 Evaluation of the study

The production of an adequate TT has substantiated the hypothesis that Schoeman's fictional works are not untranslatable. Answers to the research questions were provided during the course of the annotated commentary, demonstrating how, by using a foreignising method, yet accommodating the need for fluency, the perceived obstacles can be overcome and adequate equivalents found.

About untranslatability, Bassnett-McGuire (1980:35) quotes Mounin's view that 'too much attention has been given to the problem of untranslatability at the expense of solving some of the actual problems that the translator has to deal with'. She asserts that it is the task of the translator to 'find a solution to even the most daunting of problems' (1980:36). She argues for a greater awareness of the pragmatic dimension of translation, quoting Levy's view that 'translation theory tends to be normative, to instruct translators on the optimal solutions' whereas the translator 'intuitively resolves for the so-called minimax strategy' – the solution which 'promises a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort'.

Vermeer (1998:61) states that the 'freedom and responsibility' of the translator 'rest on competence' and adds that 'not everybody can translate everything'. Thus the translator should be aware of his own strengths and weaknesses. Vermeer (1998:63) is extremely critical of the competence of some translators and the quality of their work:

Real experts (still?) seem to be rarer than the Toms, Dicks and Harrys who think they can translate, because they know two languages and have inherited a dictionary.

Schäffner (2001:20) regards translation competence as 'a complex notion which involves an awareness of and conscious reflection on all the relevant factors for the production of a TT that appropriately fulfils its specified function for its target addressees'. As 'sub-competences' she lists linguistic competence of the languages concerned; cultural competence about historical, political, economic and cultural conditions in the respective countries; textual competence involving 'knowledge of regularities and conventions of texts, genres, text types'; 'domain' or 'subject-specific' competence; research competence and transfer competence.

The value of an empirical and annotative study such as this one, lies in the demonstration of the skills (intuitive as well as deliberate) and competence of the translator. It develops and demonstrates the expertise of the translator, leads to increased self-awareness and is also an invaluable tool in the field of translator training.

The ideal would, of course, be to be able to develop from such a study a set of universal 'rules' that could be applied to other translations of the same genre. Bassnett-McGuire (1980:37) warns, however, that '[t]he purpose of translation theory ... is to reach an understanding of the processes undertaken in the act of translation and not, as is so commonly misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation'.

Tymoczko (2002:20) warns that translation strategies are not consistent. She argues that translators 'privilege certain aspects of the source text over

others, just as they privilege certain areas of resistance in their translations while conforming to dominant norms in other respects'. She urges translators to be aware of such inconsistencies and to 'analyse and explicate the fragmentary nature of the translation strategy as the hypothesis is pursued'. Objective research, according to Tymoczko (2002:22), is 'a serious intellectual anachronism' and the best that the researcher/translator can do is to be 'self-aware' and to 'interrogate [his/her] presuppositions'.

6.3 Further research possibilities

To add value to this study, it would be meaningful to compare and contrast this translation with the other English translations of Schoeman's novels, namely *Promised Land*, *Another Country* and *Take Leave and Go*. Certain themes recur in Schoeman's novels and his signature style has been discussed at length. The assumption can be made, therefore, that problems similar to the ones identified during the course of this study may have surfaced in other English translations. To examine process and problems and to discover the strategies employed by other translators (one of whom is the author himself) might be extremely illuminating. As a result of such a study it might even be possible to develop certain norms, or rules, applicable to the English translation of Schoeman's texts.

A further interesting research possibility would be comparing the English translations of Schoeman's novels with their foreign-language (Dutch, French, German and Russian) counterparts, considering whether foreign-language translators struggled with similar problems and examining the strategies they devised to solve such problems. The result might be the development of universal norms applicable to the translation of Schoeman's texts into other languages.

Such research could make a valuable contribution in the field of descriptive translation studies (DTS) where target texts are considered as 'facts of target systems' (Schäffner, 2001:12). Scholars in DTS examine

decision-making in translation, translational norms ..., the effects of translated texts on the target national literature, how TTs have been brought into line with the system of norms that govern the literary system in a culture ..., how they succeeded (or not) in competing with original texts and genres for prestige and power in the target polysystem.

Lefevere's views (1985:215-243) on the part played by 'rewrites' or 'refractions' in a literary system are of particular interest for a study which might examine the way Schoeman's novel *Promised Land* was 'translated' into film. Parallels might also be drawn between the print and film versions of *Promised Land*. Observations might be made about the transfer of thematic aspects from novel to film and about the success with which Schoeman's characteristic literary style is reflected on film.

The filmmaker Jason Xenopoulos (Sonnekus, 2003:1) remarked that 'once [he] allowed [himself] to look beyond the surface narrative [he] discovered a well of thematic content with which [he] really connected'. He described his approach as follows (Sonnekus, 2003:3):

I set out to make an "expressionist" film. I specifically wanted to depict the emotional landscape that the characters inhabit, not just the physical one. ... [T]he visual style one chooses should reflect the essence of the underlying content. I have tried to use lighting, colour, camera movement and composition to create a cinematic subtext through which to explore the underlying psychology of any given moment.

When asked why the credits read 'based on a novel by Schoeman', Xenopoulos (Sonnekus, 2003:2) had the following to say:

Initially the credit was going to read "Inspired by the novel Na Die Geliefde Land" (sic). Promised Land is not, nor was it intended to be, a literal translation of Karel's book. Within the pages of Karel's novel I discovered a texture, an ambiance, a sense of space, of desperation, a tragic sense of decay. It was this "essence" that I sought to capture. The credit is worded the way it is to reflect this.

Other refractions pertaining to Schoeman's translated oeuvre might also be studied to examine the possibilities of shared problems and parallel strategies. Tymoczko (2002:20) mentions 'paratextual documents such as translators' introductions, statements about translation from the cultural context, and contemporary reviews of ... published translation[s]' which might also yield interesting research material.

This study might be instrumental in an exploration of the discourse between the works of Schoeman and those of J.M. Coetzee, as suggested by Crous (2003:7) in a review of an anthology of essays on the works of Karel Schoeman, *Sluiswagter by die dam van stemme*. He compares Schoeman with J.M. Coetzee and Henry James, and calls for English translations of more of Schoeman's works to facilitate such an investigation.

Returning to the initial research question in this study, it must be conceded that the possibility exists that other considerations than the ones proposed might have contributed to the limited number of translations of Schoeman's works available. Venuti (1995:15) deplors the 'international expansion of Anglo-American culture' and the 'global drift toward American political and economic hegemony' which account for the fact that English is 'the most translated language worldwide, but ... isn't much translated into' (1995:14). Publishers are hesitant to buy translation rights of foreign books, as they are considered financially risky. Lefevere (2001:246) also comments on the economic aspect of translation when he quotes a reviewer reporting in *Variety* on Brecht's 1963 Broadway production of *Mother Courage*:

Why should anyone think it might meet the popular requirements of Broadway – that is, be commercial?

Thus, the publication of translations is often considered commercially just too unsafe. Research might be done into the sales figures of Schoeman translations in South Africa and the various countries abroad where they have been published. It might also be interesting to compare such figures with the sales figures of translated versions of the works of other contemporary

Afrikaans authors, some of whom might be writers of more 'popular' fiction. Authors such as Dalene Matthee and Marita van der Vyver come to mind.

Addressing the reluctance of publishers to commission translations into English, Venuti (1995:312) proposes that the project to translate a foreign text should be initiated by the translator. He argues that 'the translation of a foreign text ultimately depends on the efforts of a translator to interest a publisher, especially in Anglo-American publishing, where so few editors read foreign languages'. The feasibility of such an approach and the marketing strategies of publishing companies might be examined as part of a project researching the status quo in the translation of Afrikaans texts into English.

It is of course possible to extend the scope of this study by doing further research based on the novel *Hierdie lewe* and a complete translated version of *This Life*. Other relevant passages might be studied, annotated and commented on, or other research methods employed. A more encompassing, systemic approach might be utilised such as advocated by Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:51), who endorse the study of 'a single translated text or a single translator' but encourage an approach which takes into account that 'this translation or this translator has (positive or negative) connections with other translations and translators'. Ultimately, the text also lends itself to research on issues such as translation and power and translation and gender.

6.4 Concluding remarks

The final word is granted to Venuti, whose translating method of foreignisation has provided, for the most part, the methodology utilised to produce a translation of that portion of Karel Schoeman's *Hierdie lewe* serving as the source text in this study. Venuti's strategy of resistance to TC values and conventions and his opinions on the status and visibility of the translator have shaped the thought processes reflected in the study. The act that is translation should never be considered out of context. Its communicative reach stretches across cultures.

A translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best preserve that difference, that otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgable gaps between cultures. (Venuti, 1996:306)

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Addendum A

Source text: *Hierdie lewe* by Karel Schoeman

Die nagliggie flakker en brand uit; in die donker lê ek wakker en hoor die reëlmatige asemhaling van die slapende meisie op die katel aan die voetenent van my bed. Dit maak nie saak nie, niks maak meer saak nie, want al wat oorgebly het, is om te wag, en lig of donker maak nie meer saak nie. Ek ken hierdie kamer waar ek as kind geslaap het, hierdie ou huis teen die rant met Maans se nuwe huis op 'n afstand daaronder, die krale, die damme, en die lae heuwels van die vlak, vaal land. Ek hoef my oë nie eers toe te maak nie: oopgog in die donker sien ek die huis waar ek gebore is, die plaas waar ek grootgeword het, en as ek sou opstaan, sou ek my pad nog blindelings kan vind oor die misvloer van die kamer en die nuwe plankvloer wat Stienie in die voorhuis laat insit het; op die gevoel sou ek die grendel van die voordeur kan vind, sonder om te aarsel, die swaar ou deur ooptrek sonder om die skarniere te laat kraak, en uitgaan op die werf. Dit is donkermaan, maar ek het geen maanlig nodig om die plaas van my jeug te herken nie of om die voetpaadjie te vind, kaalvoet oor die klippe sonder dat hulle my seermaak, verby die buitegeboue en die kraal, en oor die rantjie na die begraafplaas, om daar te staan met my hand op die opgestapelde klippe van die muur. En dan? Wat dan? Ek weet nie meer wat ek hier kom soek het nie. Die silwer skynsel van die nag word troebel, die vaalgrys land verduister voor my oë, en ek weet nie meer waar ek is nie.

Maar nee. Nee.

Waar is ek? Ek lê vasgevang in die donker en hoor hoe iemand in die donker naby my asemhaal. Is dit Dulsie wat op die velletjie voor my bed bly slaap het om te waak terwyl ek siek is; is dit Sofie wat aan die slaap geraak het waar sy wag op die klop teen die luike? Maar nee, ek is nie meer 'n kind nie, en Dulsie is lankal dood en Sofie ook; dit is Annie se dogter wat hier by my waak en wat aan die slaap geraak het omdat sy jonk is en moeg van die dag se werk, en 'n sterwende ou vrou in die bed vir haar niks beteken nie – waarom

sou sy iets vir my voel, wat geen familie van haar is nie, en waarom sou sy dankbaar wees vir Maans se genade waarvan hulle leef? Sy slaap, en dit maak nie saak nie, want wat is daar nou nog wat ek sou kan nodig kry en watter rede sou ek hê om haar te wil roep? Annie se dogter – haar naam kan ek nie meer onthou nie, maar dit is ook nie meer belangrik nie.

Dit is my eie kamer, nou weet ek weer, die kamer waar ek as kind geslaap het: daar is die deur na die voorhuis en daar die klein venstertjie met sy binneluik, diep in die muur ingebou, wat oor die werf uitkyk na die skuur en die buitekamers. Waarom sien ek dit nie? Deur die gleuf tussen luik en kosyn het die maan na binne geskyn om die plek van die venster aan te dui, deur die smal gleuf het die strook maanlig na binne geval om in die spieël te skitter, en as ek wag, sal ek weer sien hoe daardie vierkant in die donker deur die maanlig afgeteken word, hoe die luik geluidloos oopswaai en die maanlig uitstroom oor die vloer, en Pieter my broer buite voor die venster sy hande op die vensterbank sit om hom op te trek en na binne te spring.

Maar nee, nie meer nie; nee, nou onthou ek weer, en deur die donker kom daar sekerheid vir my verwarde gedagtes en herinnerings. Later jare het ons glasruite in die vensters laat insit: hoe sou Pieter hom nou nog kan opswaai deur die venster as hy moes kom? En die skuur en die buitekamer waar hy geslaap het, het bouvallig geword, sodat Maans dit laat afbreek het, en Pieter self is dood en rus onder die uitgebeitelde steen wat ek by oom Appie bestel het en waarvoor ek self betaal het.

Daar is geen rede meer om op te staan nie, selfs al kon ek nog beweeg; daar is niks meer wat ek sou kan doen nie en niemand na wie ek sou kan gaan soek nie, want oor die jare het almal reeds gegaan, die een na die ander. Waar is julle in hierdie groot donker, en kan julle my hoor? Praat met my as julle naby is, hier waar ek alleen lê in die nag en nie kan slaap nie, vasgekeer met my verwarde gedagtes en herinnerings aan die einde van my lewe; praat met my, julle wat meer weet as ek, en verduidelik vir my wat ek nie kan verstaan nie. Maar daar is niks nie, geen stem in die donker of selfs nog die geruis van 'n rok nie, swart in die diepte van die skadu: ek is alleen waar ek hier lê, spraakloos en verlam, met die gedagtes waarmee ek nie raad weet nie en die herinnerings

wat ek nou nie meer kan ontwyk nie, die onverbiddelike wete wat ek liefs sou wil vermy.

Daar is te veel wat ek onthou, want my hele lewe lank het ek te veel kans gehad om te kyk en te luister, om te sien en te hoor, en om te onthou. Ek het by hulle gesit en die koffie help skink, die borde aangegee, die skinkbord weggedra; ek het gehoor hoe hulle praat, oor die huwelike en sterftes, die kerkraadsvergaderings en vendusies, die blink swart perdekar en die wit marmarsteen, al die dinge wat vir hulle belangrik is, en noudat hulle dood is, onthou ek dit nog. Ek het by hulle gesit en die stiltes tussen die woorde gehoor, die aarseling voor die antwoord, die byna onmerkbaar ontwyking; ek het die blik in die oë of die vinnige beweging van die hande gesien waarop niemand ag geslaan het nie omdat hulle aandag op belangriker dinge gevestig was, en ek onthou dit nog. Ek het nie met opset hierdie kennis versamel nie nòg gevra om dit te behou, maar nou waar ek aan die einde van my lewe daardie opgehoopde wysheid betrag, besef ek skielik dat dit nie sinloos is nie, soos die toevallige opwelling van grond wat dui op die verborge paaie waarlangs die mol getonnel het. Al wat oorgebly het, is hierdie kennis; al wat ek van hierdie lewe oorgehou het, is hierdie opgegaarde wysheid.

Hoe ver terug moet ek gaan? So ver terug soos wat ek kan onthou, na die dag toe ons die heuning gaan uithaal het, Jakob en Pieter en Gert, en hulle my op hul skouers teruggedra het omdat ek nog so klein was dat ek moeg geword het en nie kon terugstap huis toe nie, daardie lang tog huis toe met die jong mans wat onder mekaar lag en skerts oor die prestasies van die dag, met die harde, vaal land vir 'n oomblik verlig in die gloed van die aandson en die damme wat skitter in die verte? Of nog verder, na 'n tyd wat uit verhale en oorlewerings en afleidings vir my ewe werklik geword het, na die lendelam kar en die klein kudde brandsiek skaap, na die plooiemussies en die geborduurde voorskootjie en die helder rooi en blou van die kommetjies wat in die muurkassie bewaar is? Ek weet nie: ek is moeg en ek wil rus, maar die slaap wil nie kom nie en daar is geen teken dat die nag sal eindig nie; net die gedagtes en die herinnerings bly, en ontwyking is nie meer moontlik nie.

Die donker voor my oë, die hulpelose liggaam, en hierdie opgebankte massa herinnerings waardeur ek vir my blindelings tastend 'n pad moet baan. Woorde en beelde van meer as sewentig jaar, fragmente van gesprekke, 'n toevallige sinnetjie waar die bediendes saamgesels in die kombuis, 'n paar woorde van 'n skaapwagter in die veld, oorlewerings en storiëtjies, versies, rympies, en die psalms wat saans om die tafel in die voorhuis gesing is of later in die kerkie op die dorp, flitse waarvan ek nie meer weet waar hulle tuis hoort nie, die huis met die werf in die maanlig, die skittering van die maanlig in die spieël en die verre geskitter soos die water van die damme die daglig vang, die spekbos helderwit teen die rante in die lente, die gloeiende silwer van die renosterbos in die verstrooide sonlig van die laatmiddag, en die dooie lam wie se oë deur kraaie uitgepik is, die ribbok dwarsoor die saal met die droë bloed om sy kake; die veerpen, die knipmes, die blaker op die kassie langs die bed; die koelheid van die ruit teen my vingers en die koelheid van die klip, die harde, reguit rand van die spatbord onder my hand waar ek langs die kapkar staan. Dis wat ek oorgehou het, en al wat vir my oorgebly het waar ek hier wakker lê in die donker, is om dit uit te soek, alleen, met geen hand om my te lei nie, geen fluisterstem in my oor. Ek was 'n stil, skugter kind op wie se aanwesigheid niemand ag geslaan het nie, 'n nuuskierige kind met wakker, oplettende oë, wat waargeneem en onthou het, en my geheue en verstand is nou nie minder helder nie, al is dit die enigste vermoëns wat ek behou het. Om die brokkies en klippies en skyfies, die lappies en draadjies en lintjies en briefies uit te soek en te rangskik, en uiteindelik daaruit die verhaal te kan lees waarvan ek al hierdie jare deel uitgemaak het, swygend en waaksaam in die hoek of aan die rand van die geselskap, en om miskien ook te verstaan, en selfs te vergewe, al die onuitgesproke kwelling, verwyte en leed uitgewis, die laaste skuld gedelg. Om te onthou.

Ek moet opstaan en deur die donker terugbeweeg in die verlede, alleen deur die jare. Ek moet deur die donker van die slapende huis beweeg, geruisloos sodat niemand my sal hoor nie, en die voordeur ooptrek; oor die drumpel moet ek uitgaan.

Die maan het nog nie opgekom nie, maar in die vaal, verstrooide glans van die sterre kan ek die wêreld van my jeug herken, die wye landskap van my lewe, die kaal, vaal land van bossies en klip, die harde land van ryp, kapok en droogte. Bitter land waar ek gebore is, skraal gruisgrond waar hulle my graf binne die klipmuur van die begraafplaas sal grawe. Ek sou nog een maal so deur die slapende huis wil uitbeweeg en afskeid neem van my lewe; ek sou nog een maal wil uitgaan en uitkyk oor die land, by sonlig en sterlig, en die smal paadjie volg na die begraafplaas agter die rant, tastend met my hand tussen die opgestapelde klippe van die ringmuur. Nooit weer nie. Net in my herinnering, slaaploos in die donker, sal ek die ou paaie nog betree; net in my gedagtes sal ek nog geluidloos deur die vertroude donker van die huis beweeg, terug oor al die jare.

Staan op en gaan, staan op en loop deur daardie donker; trek die deur oop en gaan uit uit die slapende huis, uit oor die drumpel op die werf waar die land in die sterlig uitstrek. Oor en oor volg ek daardie bekende pad, sonder dat iemand my in die donker kan hoor, oor en oor aarsel ek voor die deur, aarsel ek op die drumpel, en dan eers kan ek my hand uitsteek na die grendel en die deur ooptrek, dan eers kan ek na buite uitgaan in die nag.

Arm land, bitter land, dierbare land. Hoe het ek dan my lewe lank hier deurgebring en nooit na jou gekyk nie, of so min en so skrams gekyk dat ek onversadig gebly het en nog altyd na weersien hunker? Arm land, skraal land, harde land van bossies en klip, droë spruite en fonteine van brak water; net óns fonteine het altyd geloop en net by óns het die damme geskitter in die lig. Land sonder genade waar die wildekat die skaap verskeur en die arend op die lammers neersak, waar die skaapwagter dood gevind word in sy skerm, bedek deur die fyn, siftende kapok, en die jagter se voet gly op die klip; land sonder vergifnis, waar broer teen broer gerig is en kneg teen meester, waar die oortreding onvergewe bly en die geskrewe woord die leuen bestendig, die uitgebeitelde woord onwaar.

Ek moet verder gaan, kaalvoet in die halflig van die nag, stap vir stap en herinnering vir herinnering; elke woord wat ek kan onthou, moet ek nagaan, en elkeen wat my dalk ontgaan het, probeer herwin; langs die klipprante, in die droë

skeure en holtes van die dorre land moet ek soek na die seldsame fontein, die gedrup van water en die vogtigheid van die aarde wat dalk 'n voetmerk bewaar het, van ontdekking na ontdekking voortgedra.

Helder land, glansende silwergrys land wat voor my wegdrywe in die nag, waar ek verwonderd sien hoe elke tak van die harpuisbos glinster soos die digte spirale van sy blaartjies die skynsel van die lig weerkaats en elke rots dof gloei teen die rante. Die ystervark verdwyn in die skadu tussen die bossies, die geelsing seil voor my voete weg, en langs die kliprante draf die jakkalse sonder om die skaap te steur waar hulle wei. Daar is niks meer om te vrees nie, kaalvoet en alleen deur die veld en oor die klippe in my wapperende nagrok tot by die rand van die eskarp waar die kranse loodreg afstrek, die afgrond onsigbaar in die diepte van die skadu asof dit nie bestaan nie, kaalvoet op die klipbank aan die rand van die wêreld met die klip kil onder my voete en die wind wat skerp na my toe waai sonder dat ek koud kry of huiwer. Onder my lê die bergerye, kranse, klowe en vlaktes van die Karoo, die een bergketting agter die ander geskaar tot aan die horison; onder my lê die warm laagland met die kruiegeur van sy bossies, en nog een maal kyk ek daaroor uit; maar dan draai ek terug na die lae deining van die plato waar die wind so skerp waai, terug na die land waar ek gebore is, die bitter land, die geliefde land, en stadig in die sterlig, tussen die bossies en die ruwe graspolle deur, verby die rante waar die jakkalse skuil, deur die leë spruite met hul klipperige beddings en die skeure waar daar so lank laas water geloop het, stap ek terug, om uiteindelik weer in die verte die skittering van die damme te sien en die donker gestalte van die huis met sy hoë grasdak teen die rant, die kraal en die skuur en die buitegeboue daaragter, die liggende peerbome oortrek met bloeisels in die lente; en verby die boord lei die voetpaadjie na die begraafplaas met sy enkele kliphope en kopstene binne die beskutting van die ringmuur van opgestapelde klippe.

1

Die plaas is aan Vader se oupa uitgegee toe die eerste witmense by die passe van die Roggeveldberge opgesukkel het om hul skaaptroppe hier langs die rand van die eskarp te laat wei. Dit was seker hy of sy seun wat die ou kliphuis gebou het wat in my kinderjare nog deel van die buitegeboue uitgemaak het, met mure van opgestapelde plat klippe en 'n groot herd; die grasdak het reeds begin insak oor die balke toe ek dit leer ken het, en later het Maans dit ook laat afbreek toe die buitegeboue verskuif word. Dit was nie so 'n groot plaas nie, maar dit was gunstig geleë hier op die rand van die plato, en dit was een van die beste skaapplase in die distrik, met goeie weiding en damme wat deur fonteine gevoed is en slegs in die kwaaieste droogtes opgedroë het.

Van my oupagrootjie en sy vrou weet ek verder niks nie, en van my grootouers nie veel meer nie, want hulle is almal dood voordat ek gebore is, en Vader was maar 'n teruggetrokke man wat nooit baie geneë was om oor die verlede te praat nie. Moeder het nóóit oor die verlede gepraat of selfs in die verbygaan verwys na iets wat vroeër gebeur het nie. Ek weet net dat ons as kinders soms in die veld pylpunte opgetel het, en dat Vader genoem het hoe hulle toe hy klein was van die plaas moes vlug na die Karoo omdat hulle deur Boesmans aangeval is; wanneer mense besig was om 'n voor te graawe of 'n land om te spit, het hulle ook op krale van geslypte volstruiseierdoppe of 'n armring afgekom, en soms op 'n graf met skedels en gebeente. Eenkeer het Vader ook vertel hoe die slagtersknegte vroeër uit die Kaap gestuur is om te kom skaap koop, en dit is seker hoe Oupa sy geld gemaak het, want hy was glo 'n vermoënde man gewees vir hierdie geweste toe hy dood is. Hy het 'n vrou uit die Bokkeveld getrou, en dis hy wat die groot opstal gebou het; maar nee, ek onthou dat Vader ons vertel het dat dit sy self was wat oor die boumense toesig gehou het terwyl hulle werk, omdat Oupa seker maar 'n saggearde en gedweë man was, soos Vader ook, en sy dus die leiding geneem het. Die oumense het na die nuwe opstal oorgetrek, en toe Vader en Moeder getroud is, het hulle in die ou huis gebly – Jakob en Pieter is al twee

daar gebore. Eers toe Oupa dood is, het Vader-hulle in die nuwe huis kom bly, en dit is toe daar dat ek gebore is, in die huis waarin ek ook sal doodgaan. Vader-hulle het nog twee kamers laat aanbou, en daarna het niemand weer daaraan verander nie.

Dit was nie 'n besondere groot huis nie, nòg sou 'n mens dit deftig kan noem – vir Stienie was dit altyd, donker, beknop en ouderwets, en sy het nie gerus tot sy vir haar 'n eie huis gebou het nie – maar dit was geleë in 'n arm en afgeleë streek waar die meeste boere gedurig moes rondtrek agter water en weiding aan, oor Rietrivier na die Nuweveld of af na die Karoo in die winter, en tussen die eenvoudiger en meer tydelike wonings van die Roggeveld het dit solied en indrukwekkend gelyk, en selfs deftig in my kinderoë. Dik mure, byna twee voet dik, 'n balkplafon met 'n brandsolder bo-oor, onder 'n hoë grasdak, klein vensters met houtluik aan die binnekant, en kleivloere – ek was 'n opgeskote meisie toe daar besluit is om glasruite te laat insit; nee, dit was net voordat Maans met Stienie getroud is, en ek was al 'n volwasse vrou. Vir Stienie was die huis desondanks egter nooit goed genoeg nie, al het sy haar klagtes verswyg terwyl Moeder nog lewe, en dit wás seker ook maar koud en donker en ongerieflik, maar ons het al die jare so gewoon en nooit van beter geweet nie. Vader wat daar dood is, en Moeder, óns kinders wat daar grootgeword het, Sofie in die tydjie wat sy by ons gebly het en Maans wat daar gebore is – ja, en Stienie ook vir al daardie jare totdat Maans vir haar die nuwe kliphuis laat bou op die vlakke na die pad se kant. Daarna het hulle nie meer baie moeite gedoen om die ou opstal in stand te hou nie, want dit was maar net Pieter wat daar gebly het, en nou gedurende hierdie laaste jare Annie en haar dogter, en wat beteken hulle einlik vir Maans dat hy vir hulle moeite sou doen? Die huis het begin verwaarloos raak, maar wesenlik is dit nog soos ek dit in my kinderjare geken het, sestig en sewentig jaar gelede, met die groot, lang, donker voorhuis waar mens binnekom en twee klein kamertjies aan elke kant; in die voorkamer op regterhand het Vader en Moeder geslaap, dié op linkerhand was later Jakob en Sofie s'n, en agter Moeder-hulle se kamer was myne, met die venster wat uitkyk oor die werf na die buitegeboue, totdat die luik toegetrek en vergrendel is teen die maan. Dit is hierdie kamer waarheen

hulle my gedra het, hierdie kamer waarheen ek teruggedra is, om wakker te lê in die donker, wagtend op my dood.

Teen die agterste muur van die voorhuis soos jy inkom, sou mens in ons koue geweste seker 'n herd verwag het, maar ons het vuur gemaak in die kombuis, en toe 'n besoeker eenkeer 'n opmerking daaroor maak, het Vader sy skouers opgehaal en geantwoord, "Nee, dis maar soos my oorlede moeder dit wou hê", asof alles daarmee verduidelik is. Wou Ouma die kosmaak en die bediendes uit haar voorkamer uithou, en was dit haar manier om haar eie leefwyse te handhaaf in die huis wat onder haar oog en hand gebou is? In die agterste muur, waar mens die herd sou verwag het, was twee muurkassies met glasruitdeurtjies ingebou, die enigste glasruite wat daar in my kinderjare in die Roggeveld te vinde was, en in daardie kassies is Ouma se porselein bewaar, koppies en pierings en kommetjies met rooi en wit en blou patrone en hier en daar 'n bietjie goud daartussen. Moeder het dit nooit gebruik of selfs uit die kassies uitgehaal nie, en as kind het ek soms Sondagmiddae ure lank daar gestaan en deur die glasruitjies gekyk na die rooi en blou en goud van die porseleinpatrone, die enigste helderheid in ons somber huis of in die vaal, vlak geweste waar ek grootgeword het. Nou het Stienie dit seker alles, alhoewel ek nie kan onthou dat ek dit ooit gesien het nie; eenkeer het daar in ons dorpshuis mense uit die Boland gekuier wat in sulke ou goed belangstel, en het Stienie 'n bietjie misprysend genoem dat sy nog van Oumagrootjie se ou porselein het, maar waar sy dit gebêre het, weet ek nie, en sy het dit nooit gebruik nie, want dit was ouderwetse stukke en glad nie na haar smaak nie. Dis al wat ek van Ouma weet, die feit dat sy uit die Bokkeveld gekom het en 'n huis laat bou het met diep muurkassies om haar porselein in te bêre. Oupa lê hier in die begraafplaas agter die rant begrawe, met 'n steen waarop iemand moeisaam sy naam en datums uitgekap het, want hy is eerste dood en sy het gesorg dat daar vir hom 'n steen gemaak word, maar toe sy self oorlede is, het niemand moeite gedoen nie, en sy rus dus naamloos onder een van die toegegroeide kliphope langs hom. Vader het waarskynlik nog geweet watter graf hare is, maar vandag sou niemand dit meer kan uitken nie.

Die veelkleurige porselein in die muurkassies het my aandag getrek as kind, maar daar was tog meer wat Oupa en Ouma ons nagelaat het. Toe ek 'n kind was, het ons selde die plaas verlaat behalwe wanneer ons in die winter aftrek Karoo toe, maar toe ek ouer word en ons meer dikwels oorry na huwelike of begrafnisse op naburige plase, het ek meer waardering gekry vir die beskeie en onopsigtige welvaart wat ons van hulle geërf het: nie net die veelkleurige porselein wat die aandag van 'n kind getrek het nie, maar die soliede woonhuis met sy stewige mure en die enkele swaar, eenvoudige meubelstukke wat nie plaaslik gemaak is nie, maar met waens oor die bergpasse van die Boland gebring is: Vader en Moeder se hemelbed, die katels, die groot tafel in die voorhuis met die riempiestoele langs die mure gerangskik, en die kiste waarin ons klere en ons linne gebêre is. Deur hierdie huis en hierdie meubels wat ons by my grootouers geërf het, is ons as 't ware van ons bure in die Roggeveld onderskei, en namate ek die feit besef, het ek tog – ja, ék ook – iets ervaar van die trots en die dodelike hoogmoed wat ons familie deurtrek het, van geslag tot geslag aangevul en versterk. Die ambisie het my egter gespaar gebly, want dit was nie my taak om te strewe en krampagtig vooruit te beur nie, maar om te sien, te hoor en te onthou, soos ek hier aan die einde van my lewe uiteindelik besef.

Wanneer jy die plaas nader, of dit nou uit die Karoo is met die ou pad langs Vloksbergpas of die pad van die dorp, is dit die nuwe huis wat jy eerste sien waar sy blink dak uit die verte die lig weerkaats lank voordat jy aangekom het, en dit is net ék wat nog elke keer wanneer ons terugkom byna instinkmatig vorentoe leun in die perdekar om te kyk na die ou huis met sy buitegeboue teen die rantjie daaragter wat wag om my welkom te heet. Wanneer ek die aankoms op die plaas hier voor my sien in die donker, is dit vir my soos dit al die jare was voordat die nuwe huis gebou is, want met watter pad jy ook aangekom het, van Groenfontein se kant of Oorlogskloof – die dorp het in daardie tyd nog nie bestaan nie – langs die spoor van die wiele tussen die lae heuwels en klipbanke, of met die pas teen die berghang op en by Klipfontein verby, wanneer jy uitkom op daardie wye, oop, golwende land van die eskarp, het jy oor 'n lang afstand reeds anderkant die deining van bossies en gras en die skittering van die damme die huis met sy hoë grassdak teen die rant gewaar,

die huis met die skuur en stal en ander buitegeboue op 'n afstand daaragter, die vrugteboord met sy skeef gewaaide peerbome, en die begraafplaas met sy onreëlmatige muur van opgestapelde klippe. Dit was die wêreld van my jeug en die omliggende plase het die grense daarvan uitgemaak, behalwe wanneer ons in die winter aftrek na die Karoo.

"Hy't ook nie met so danig veel begin nie," het ek oom Herklaas Vlok ná Vader se begrafnis hoor vertel, "net die twee plase en 'n handvol skaap", maar teen die tyd van sy dood het die grond en die skaaptroppe aangegroei, en daar was 'n sekere misnoeë in oom Herklaas se stem. Watter afguns daar in die distrik dalk ook bestaan het, glo ek egter nie dat daar ooit nyd was nie, laat staan nog vyandigheid, want Vader was nie iemand wat vyande gemaak het nie, 'n rustige, swygsame man wat oor sy baard stryk en lank nadink voordat hy 'n mening uitspreek of 'n vraag beantwoord, en na wie se uitsprake mense bereid was om te luister. So deeglik kon sy oorweging wees en so traag was hy om eenkant of anderkant toe te besluit, dat dit dikwels Moeder was wat die besluite geneem het, en soms het sy in haar voortvarendheid so ongeduldig geraak oor sy aarseling dat sy self ingespring het terwyl hy nog sy optrede oorweeg. Sy het die seuns met die karwats of die sambok uitgelooi selfs toe hulle al opgeskote was, en soms was dit ook sý wat die skaapwagters uitgelooi het, want Vader het selde en onwillig aan iemand geslaan. Seker was dit ook maar sy wat hom oor die jare van hulle huwelik aangespoor het tot die aankoop van daardie skaaptroppe en daardie grond.

Ek het as enigste dogter by Moeder grootgeword in die huis en sy het voor my oë doodgegaan, byna vyftig jaar het ek en sy dag in, dag uit naas mekaar gelewe, hier op die plaas of in die dorps huis waar sy oorlede is, maar wat kan ek van haar sê waar ek my herinnerings nou moet saamvat en probeer verduidelik, probeer verstaan? 'n Skraal, donker, vinnige vrou met 'n kwaai humeur en 'n skerp tong – dit het die bediendes en die bure egter ook almal geweet, en al die mense van my leeftyd onthou haar vandag nog so en vertel staaltjies oor haar opvlieëndheid en haar onversetlike trots wanneer hulle nie weet dat ek naby genoeg is om te hoor nie; en ek, haar eie dogter, kan uit 'n samesyn van amper vyftig jaar nie eintlik iets vind om hierby te voeg nie, want

meer as dit het sy selfs teenoor my nie prysgegee nie. Maar hoe sou so iets dan moontlik wees? léts moet daar tog wees tussen al die toevallige woorde en gebare, skerwe en splintertjies wat mens kan bymekaarsoek en saamlê ten einde te kan verstaan en verklaar, te probéér verstaan, te probéér vergewe.

Uit my kinderjare onthou ek maar net wat ander mense ewe goed onthou, al het ek dalk meer geleentheid gehad om dit waar te neem: die ywer, die dryfkrag en die drif, die onversetlikheid wat so maklik verbeterheid kon word, die skielike aanvalle van blinde en onbeheerbare woede wat ons elke keer opnuut verskrik het met hul geweld; dryfkrag en drif, ja, en amper sou ek wil sê gedrewenheid, asof sy na een of ander verre en skaars waarneembare doel aangedryf word deur kragte wat vir almal onsigbaar was behalwe vir haar en selfs vir haar onbegryplik. Klink dit snaaks as ek dit so probeer beskryf? Dalk oordrywe ek nou; maar ek probeer maar net om woorde te vind waarmee ek iets sou kan weergee van daardie ongenaakbare vrou in wie se skadu ek grootgeword het en langs wie se bed ek gewaak het tydens haar lang, pynlike, woordelose sterwe. Dit is al wat ek nog kan doen, om te probeer, want niemand het oorgebly wat meer sou kan doen as dit nie.

Drif en gedrewenheid – dit is seker tog maar die beste woorde. En later, soveel jare later, toe sy oud en sterwend was? Op haar oudag het die gespannenheid of spanning gebly, want oor die jare het dit deel van haar geword en dit was te laat vir haar om te verander, selfs al sou sy dit nodig geag het, maar toe, heel aan die einde van haar lewe, het daardie gedrewenheid gewyk, asof die verre doel uiteindelik bereik en alles wat sy nagestreef het verwesenlik is. Was dít dus wat sy al die jare begeer het, sonder om dit self ooit duidelik te weet: die geld en die plase en die huis op die dorp, Maans se geleerdheid en sy deftige jong vrou, haar eie aansien in die klein gemeenskap as Vader se weduwee, die stoel in die voorste ry in die kerk, die skitterende git? Was dit dus alles daarvoor, die onwrikbare ambisie oor die jare, en die hoogmoed tot die bittere swygende einde toe?

Sê dit iets meer oor Moeder?

Daar is nog twee dinge wat ek oor haar weet, twee dinge uit die tyd voordat ek haar self geken het, uit 'n verlede waarna sy self nooit met 'n woord

verwys het nie. Ná haar begrafnis, toe die mense by ons huis op die dorp kom koffie drink, het ek gehoor hoe een van die jong mans in die loop van die gesprek vir ou oom Koos van Wyk vra of sy ook hier van uit óns wêreld was: "Nee," het oom Koos toe geantwoord, "haar mense het maar rondgetrek in die Karoo." Hy het dit so terloops gesê, as iets wat vir niemand van belang kan wees of interesseer nie, sonder om te weet dat ek luister, en niks tot die opmerking bygevoeg nie, sonder om te weet hoe ek roerloos wag om meer te hoor, en nou is hy lankal dood, hy en al sy tydgenote wat dalk oor soortgelyke kennis beskik het; dit is dus al wat ek oorgehou het, hierdie enkele sinnetjie en die byna neerhalende manier waarop dit uitgespreek is; dit, en 'n fragment van my eie herinnerings uit my kinderjare, 'n beeld wat behoue gebly het sonder dat ek dit meer in sy verband kan plaas, sodat dit onbeslis en onduidelik moet bly staan soos ek dit onthou.

Dit was een winter toe ons onder in die Karoo was, en ek was nog klein, alhoewel ek nie sou kan sê hoe oud ek was nie; ek weet nie eers meer of Maans al gebore was en of Jakob en Pieter nog by ons was nie. Net hierdie enkele beeld het oorgebly: hoe daar op ons legplek eendag 'n trekgeselskap opdaag met 'n lendelam kar, 'n paar skraal honde en 'n troppie brandsiek skaap, en daar vir ons gesê is dis oom Ruben, Moeder se broer. Waar hy en sy gesin vandaan gekom het, waarheen hulle op pad was, hoe hulle ons gevind het en wat die rede was vir hul besoek, daarvan weet ek niks nie, en al wat behoue gebly het, is die beeld van die verslae klein trekgeselskappie in die sonskyn van die wintersdag, die vrou wat van onder die tentseil uitkyk asof sy geen verwelkoming verwag nie, die sku, verwaarloosde kinders, en die man met die wilde swart baard en Moeder se donker, flitsende oë, diep in hul kasse soos hare; dog bowenal is dit Moeder self wat ek onthou, hoe sy en hierdie vreemde man mekaar sonder uitdrukking van geneentheid of selfs herkenning begroet het, asof dit vreemdelinge was wat hier op ons staanplek uitkom, en mekaar waaksaam en agterdogtig van oor 'n afstand betrag, asof hulle mekaar te goed ken en verstaan om enige vertrouwe in mekaar te kan hê. Ek glo nie daar is lank gekuier of baie gesels nie: die besoeker het gekry wat dit ook was waarvoor hy gekom het – geld, neem ek aan – en toe het die hele vreemde, half verwilderde trekgroepie omgedraai en tussen die geelbos en die

doringbome verdwyn soos hulle gekom het, en nooit is daar met 'n enkele woord na hulle of hul besoek verwys nie, nòg het ek ooit weer iets van hulle verneem.

Is dit dus die wêreld waaruit Moeder gekom het? wonder ek nou waar ek terugkyk en onthou: die dogter van 'n gesin wat met hul kleinvee van fontein na fontein en van plaas na plaas reis om tydelike staanplek te soek, deur die witmense geduld, deur die bruinmense verag, 'n halfwilde groepie swerwers en jagters soos daar in daardie jare nog in die binneland bestaan het, rondtrekkend in die Karoo, soos oom Koos gesê het waar hy in ons dorpshuis sit en koffie drink ná haar begrafnis. Oom Ruben en Oupa Adam – ja, waar kom daardie herinnerings nou skielik vandaan, soos eggo's van onder in 'n put, dinge waarvan ek nie eers meer wis dat ek dit onthou nie? Vader wat Maans se geboortedatum moeisaam in ons familiebybel sit en opteken met krassende veerpen wat klad, en Sofie wat agter sy stoel staan en kyk en hom vra of Pieter ook sy oupa se naam gekry het. "Nee," het Vader geantwoord, "sy oupa se naam was Adam, maar ons het nie gevoel dis 'n behoorlike naam vir 'n kind nie." Dit was Moeder se Vader na wie hy verwys het, die oupa na wie Pieter as tweede seun vernoem sou moes gewees het. Adam en Ruben, Bybelse name – wie was dit wat daarteen besluit het? Dalk Moeder self, wat liever wou vergeet van die name en van die wêreld waaruit hulle kom, of dalk Ouma, wat toe nog gelewe het, Ouma uit die Bokkeveld met haar muurkassies met porselein? Maar as dit alles so is, hoe het dit dan gebeur dat Vader vir Moeder getrou en haar hierheen gebring het, en hoe het hulle al die jare saam hier gelewe, met Vader en Moeder in die eerste huis en Oupa en Ouma in die nuwe opstal? Dulsie sou geweet het, maar ook sy is dood, en die bietjie inligting wat sy ooit prysgegee het, was so onvolledig en verward dat ek geen antwoord sou kan saamstel uit wat ek daarvan onthou nie. Nou sal ek nooit meer weet nie; nooit sal ek nader aan die waarheid kan kom nie as met daardie enkele herinnering aan oom Ruben en sy sku, afsydige gesin met hul waaksame oë wat soos skraal wolwe uit ons lewens wegsluip na een of ander verre en onbepaalde bestemming; oupa Adam en oom Ruben met hul mankolieke waens en hul ou roers, swygsame mans met diepliggende swart oë.

In die tyd toe ek haar kan begin onthou, moet Moeder teen die veertig gewees het: haar geboortedatum staan in die familiebybel in Maans se huis en op die groot wit steen in die dorpsbegraafplaas wat hy vir haar laat oprig het, en voorlopig sou dit nog nageslaan kan word as dit belangrik is. Ek onthou hierdie dinge nie meer nie. Sy was teen daardie tyd reeds meer as twintig jaar lank getroud, en watter besware of bedenkings daar eens ook oor haar huwelik kon gewees het, is dié met die dood van Oupa en Ouma weggeruim; sy en Vader het oorgetrek na die nuwe huis met sy muurkassies en sy hemelbed en dit vir hulle en hul gesin vergroot, en daar was niemand om haar besit daarvan te betwis of te bedreig nie.

Al het Vader dalk nie baie geërf nie, soos oom Herklaas beweer het, moet dit genoeg gewees het, en in die tussentyd het sy besit vermeerder; al was hy nie 'n ryk man nie, sou ons tog as welvarend beskryf kan word. Daar was by ons nooit werklik gebrek nie, selfs in tye van droogte of in jare wanneer die trekbokke, die sprinkane of die ryp besondere skade aangerig het: daar was altyd genoeg kos – skaapvleis of wildvleis, met stampkoring en rys, vrugte, vars of gedroë, as die ryp nie die bloeisels gevang het nie, melk en botter in die somer, en soms selfs brood, want ons het 'n land gehad waar Vader 'n bietjie koring kon saai. Daar was genoeg klere, genoeg kerse; daar was vel- en donskomberse teen die koue, en brandhout wat uit die Karoo aangery is met die wa; die soliede huis met sy grasdak en sy luike het ons skuiling gebied. Dog as daar altyd genoeg was, was dit in daardie jare ook nooit veel meer as net genoeg nie: met onvermoeibare aandag het Moeder die sleutels bewaar en oop- en toegesluit, die voorrade afgemeet en -geweeg, en klere gelap, verstel of omgemaak: geen kers is ooit onnodig aangesteek of toegelaat om te lank te brand nie en geen stomp of tak te veel op die vuur gesit nie.

Ons as kinders het dit maar so aanvaar, want ons was aan niks anders gewoond nie, en waar ons so afgesonder lewe in 'n kaal en harde wêreld was dit nodig om versigtig te wees, maar waar ek nou terugdink, wonder ek tog of sy haar versigtigheid nie met daardie selfde verbeterheid oordrywe het nie. Waarom onthou ek uit my kinderjare dan so min besoekers en het ek later die

gevoel gekry of die mense van ons geweste ons huis vermy; waarom moes hulle so moeisaam na ons toe gelok word met die dans toe Jakob getroud is en jare later weer met die dans vir Maans se mondigwording? Die Roggeveld was yl bevolk en die paaie was sleg, sodat mense nie baie rondgekuier het nie, maar die mense wat oor Vloksberg gereis het tussen die Karoo en die Roggeveld, die Karoo en die Hantam, het nie ver van ons verbygery nie; waarom het so min van hulle in daardie jare by ons stilgehou tensy hulle gedwing is om hul watervaattjies te kom volmaak? Het hulle gemerk dat die gasvryheid wat aan hulle betoon is pligmatig en afgemete was, en dat daar gelet is op elke brokkie wat hulle eet en elke entjie kers wat vir hulle aangesteek moes word en dat elke vaatjie water met skaars verheelde onwilligheid afgestaan is? – deur Moeder, moet ek byvoeg, nie deur Vader nie; nooit deur Vader nie. As bure oorry om raad of hulp te vra, is hulle eweneens nie aangemoedig om te vertoef nie, en ek kan nie onthou dat die vroue dikwels met hulle mans saamgekom het om vir Moeder te kuier nie; ook hulle sou gou bewus geword het dat hul koms sonder warmte begroet word en daar geen poging gedoen word om hul vertrek te laat uitstel nie; ook hulle sou die teruggetrokkenheid en stugheid aangevoel het wat Moeder gewoonlik teenoor buitestaanders getoon het, en in die al hoe ongemakliker stilte om die groot tafel in die voorhuis besef dat elke lepeltjie tee onwillig afgemeet is en elke klontjie suiker wat hulle gebruik hulle misgun word. Sover die mense in ons geweste oor en weer gekuier het, het ons geen deel aan hul onderlinge verkeer gehad nie, en die byeenkomste by naburige plase het ons selde bygewoon. Later eers het dinge begin verander, toe Maans mondig word en trou, toe die huis op die dorp gebou word, en Moeder haar sitplek inneem tussen die ouderlingsvroue in die voorste ry in die kerk, om dit tot haar dood toe te behou. Dog dit was alles baie later.

Dit was Moeder se toedoen, alles Moeder, nooit Vader nie. Hy was nie 'n gierige of suinige mens nie, maar altyd bereid om te help, hy het van geselskap gehou, al het hy nooit self baie gepraat nie, en oor 'n glasie brandewyn kon hy op sy ingetoë manier selfs plesierig raak; maar sy pad is vir hom bepaal soos ons almal s'n, en gewoonlik het hy dit gelate gevolg. Net een of twee keer het ek gesien hoe hy wit word van onderdrukte woede en Moeder

vir hom toegee sonder dat hy nodig gehad het om sy stem te verhef of selfs baie woorde te gebruik. Dit was sý wat so doelgerig gepas en gemeet en gespaar het – oordrywe ek as ek sê angsvallig, asof sy vreesbevange probeer wal gooi teen een of ander onheil waarvan slegs sy bewus is, en geen inspanning te groot is om die dreigende gevaar te probeer afwend nie? Dalk is dit oordrewe, maar nie heeltemal nie. Dalk was dit die herinnering aan 'n bitter en honger jeug wat haar gedrywe het om nou vir haarself veiligheid en sekerheid te probeer bewerkstellig, en was daar inderdaad vrees met die herinnering vervleg. Ek weet nie; ek kan maar net probeer, en kan nie eers sê of die poging sinvol is nie – oom Koos se toevallige verwysing ná haar begrafnis en oom Ruben se skielike besoek en daardie angsvallige meet en pas, dit is al middele wat tot my beskikking staan. As kind op die plaas het ek dikwels alleen naby die ou begraafplaas agter die rantjie gespeel waar die voorgeslag alles uitgegooi het wat hulle nie meer nodig had nie, en tussen die klippe het ek skerfies erdewerk en porselein versamel of stukkies blou of perserige glas. Soms was daar tussen die fragmente egter ook groter stukke, net so groot dat mens uit die ronding en versiering iets van die vorm en patroon van die oorspronklike koppie of kommetjie kon aflei; en so het ek ook maar net die fragmente van my herinnerings waaruit ek nou die vorm en patroon van die verlede moet probeer herwin.

Dit was 'n eensame jeug, al was ek self nooit daarvan bewus nie, en ek was bowendien die jongste kind en die enigste dogter. Tussen Jakob en Pieter, en toe weer tussen Pieter en my, was daar ander kinders wat doodgegaan het, en waaraan slegs die inskrywings in die familiebybel en die naamlose kliphopies in die begraafplaas nog herinner het, en net ons drie het oorlewe. Jakob was die oudste seun wat altyd die verantwoordelikheid moes dra en deur Moeder 'n bietjie voorgetrek is, sover sy ooit 'n blyk van guns of geneentheid gegee het, sodat daar 'n afstand tussen hom en my was afgesien van dié wat die verskil in ouderdom bewerkstellig het, en daarby was Jakob ook maar 'n stug en inkennige mens. Ek was maar nog 'n kind toe hy dood is, en hy bly dus skaars meer as 'n donker, swygsame figuur aan die rand van my kinderwêreld. "Blink Jakob" het hulle hom genoem, onthou ek nou, en lank ná sy dood het mense wat hom geken het soms nog van "Blink Jakob" gepraat. Spottend of

met bewondering, of dalk albei? Ek kan nie sê nie, en ek weet ook nie die oorsprong van die bynaam nie, maar later het hulle van hom gepraat as 'n mooi man, en Moeder het op haar oudag wanneer sy met vreemdelinge oor hom praat ook 'n paar keer met 'n sekere voldaanheid gesê dat hy 'n mooi man was. Onthou ek meer, of is dit slegs die herinnering aan die bynaam wat verdere beelde oproep: kan ek werklik iets van 'n blink ryperd onthou, 'n glansende swart hings waarvoor ek bang was as kind? Dit sou die perd kon gewees het waarmee hy in die Karoo saans na oom Wessel se plaas oorgery het deur die kloof; of miskien is dit net verbeelding. Ek was nog 'n kind toe hy dood is, tien of twaalf jaar oud.

O ja, en dat hy Moeder se opvlieënde geaardheid en haar kwaai humeur geërf het, dit onthou ek nog. Was dit dalk waarom die mense by hulself geglimlag het wanneer hulle aan "Blink Jakob" dink? Hy kon skielik sy humeur verloor en het hard met die plaasmense gewerk, sodat hulle geeneen baie lief vir hom was nie. Miskien het hy na Moeder se mense geaard, en was dit hoekom sy hom soms voorgetrek het en hom die beste kon verstaan.

En Pieter – ja, Pieter was 'n ander soort mens. Eintlik het ek Pieter ook nooit veel beter leer ken as Jakob nie, want ek het albei my broers vroeg verloor, toe ek nog 'n kind was, maar tussen Pieter en my was daar nie soveel verskil in leeftyd nie, en hy het meer tyd vir sy sussie gehad as wat mens van 'n ouer broer sou kan verwag en partykeer speeldingetjies vir my gemaak of selfs met my gespeel vir sover hy nie op die plaas ingespan is nie. Pieter was meer soos Vader se mense, fyner en skraler as Jakob, met ligte hare en blou oë, en hy was ook opgeruimder van geaardheid, vinniger van tong en lewendiger van verbeelding, geneig om te terg en om skoor te soek: Pieter wat by homself sing waar hy werk, Pieter wat speel op 'n ou viool, of laggend op die dansvloer in 'n waas van kerslig en fyn poeieragtige stof. Hoekom onthou ek dit nou weer ná al die jare, waarvandaan kom daardie beeld so skielik by my op? "O, maar hy kon darem goed dans!" het Hesther Vlok eenkeer versug toe sy al 'n middeljarige vrou was, en dit moet haar eie herinnerings gewees het wat haar so laat glimlag, want sy was ouer as ek en sy sou seker een van sy dansmaats gewees het. Pieter rats en lenig op die dansvloer – dit moet met Nuwejaar

gewees het, die dans wat ek onthou, toe Sofie na ons toe gekom het as bruid en daar by ons gedans is. Pieter met sy skraal wit lyf wat die gerwe vashou op die wa, Pieter se gesig voor die venster in die maanlig, Pieter se gesig by die flakkerende lig van 'n kers, Pieter laggend waar hy deur die veld hardloop, waar hy in die lente deur die plate blomme hardloop en dan bly staan met hare wat waai in die wind. Later het hy nooit meer gelag of selfs geglimlag nie, onherroeplik teruggetrokke in sy swye, sodat niemand nog kon sê wat hy dink of onthou nie.

Jakob en Pieter en ek, maar wat kan ek oor myself sê? Toe ek 'n kind was, het ons geen spieël besit nie, en ek het dus nooit geweet hoe ek lyk nie: 'n skraal, skugter, swygende kind was ek seker maar, soos ek later 'n skraal, skugter swygende meisie geword het. Ons het almal Moeder se driftigheid en haar humeur geërwe, maar terwyl die seuns nooit geleer het om hul humeur te betuel of hul gevoelens weg te steek nie, is daar vir my vroeg reeds geleer om stil te bly, te gehoorsaam en te aanvaar, en die gevoelens waaraan ek geen uiting mog gee nie, het seker maar na binne toe geslaan en diep onder die oppervlak verder gewoeker. 'n Skraal, skugter kind wat op 'n bankie in die hoek 'n lappie omsoom of 'n kous brei, op wie niemand ag geslaan het nie en van wie se aanwesigheid hul amper dadelik vergeet het, sodat hulle voor my dinge sê wat hulle anders dalk sou verswyg het of gevoelens toon wat hulle waarskynlik sou probeer verberg het as hulle besef het ek is daar om hulle waar te neem. Moeder se skielike wit gesig, Vader se bewende hande, die haat wat vir 'n oomblik in Sofie se donker oë uitvlam – hierdie dinge het ek gesien en meer as dit, meer as wat hulle ooit kon raai, en baie daarvan bewaar, om nou aan die einde van my lewe tussen die opgegaarde skerwe en fragmente rond te krap en die betekenis daarvan te probeer verstaan. Ek het my kop egter oor my werk gebuk en probeer om deur geen geluid of beweging die aandag op my teenwoordigheid te vestig nie; ek het geleer, sou mens kan sê, om te veins en te huigel waar ek al die jare van my lewe daar in die hoek bly sit het, die ongeagte meisiekind, die ongetroude dogter, die oujongnootante, altyd iewers in die hoek van iemand anders se huis of aan die rand van 'n geselskap waar sy nie tuishoort nie, aan die rand van ander mense se lewens waaraan sy

geen deel het nie, besig om te kyk en te luister, besig om te bespied, besig om te onthou.

Dit was dus ons gesin; maar daar was ook nog ou Dulsie, van wie ek amper vergeet het, soos mens maar geneig is om van die bediendes te vergeet, alhoewel sy by ons was so lank soos wat ek kan onthou. Sy het nog as slavin met Ouma saamgekom uit die Bokkeveld toe Ouma getroud is, want Ouma se ouers het die kind as troupresent vir haar gegee, en jare later toe die slawe vry geraak het, het sy by ons gebly en gehelp om my groot te maak. Dulsie het altyd op ons ander werksmense neergesien omdat sy die Ounooi se eie slavin was, soos sy self gesê het, en in die huis geslaap het, voor Ouma se bed en later voor die herd in die kombuis, terwyl hulle, die knegte en skaapwagters, Hottentotte en Basters, snags vir hulle slaapplek moes gaan soek in die buitegeboue of skerms bou in die veld. Sy moet reeds 'n ouerige vrou gewees het toe ek haar leer ken het; nee, sy moet al oud gewees het, want sy het Vader ook help grootmaak, maar sy het saam met Moeder die meeste van die werk in die huis gedoen. Vader het haar altyd met 'n sekere mate van agting behandel, seker maar om Ouma se onthalwe, maar Moeder het geen agting geken nie, en as Vader nie by was nie, het Dulsie ewe goed onder haar woede deurgeloopt as enigeen anders.

Ouma met die vergulde porseleinkoppies en -kommetjies, Ouma wat haar eie slavin uit die Bokkeveld saamgebring het – al wat ek nog kan onthou, is dat Dulsie dikwels teenoor my oor die Ounooi gepraat het, en dat daar 'n klaerigheid in haar stem was wanneer sy na die ou dae verwys. Hoekom het ek nooit geluister na wat sy my vertel nie? Sy het vir my beskryf hoe sy met 'n pypyster die plooitjies in die Ounooi se mussies moes stryk, en hoe punteneurig die Ounooi altyd oor haar mussies was. En een aand toe ons saam sit voor die herd in die kombuis het sy uit een of ander holte waar sy haar besittings bewaar het 'n bondeltjie te voorskyn gehaal en by die skynsel van die vuur vir my oopgevou, 'n verslete syvoorskootjie, met blomme uitgeborduur, wat die Ounooi by deftige geleenthede gedra het en later vir haar gegee het toe dit nie meer bruikbaar was nie. Waarom dink ek nou eers oor hierdie dinge na; waarom het ek Dulsie nooit oor Ouma uitgevra nie? Sy sou kon onthou dat

Vader en Moeder getroud is en geweet het waar Moeder vandaan gekom het, sy sou gehoor het wat Oupa en Ouma onder mekaar gesels sonder om op die teenwoordigheid van die slavin te let en watter spanning daar tussen Moeder en Ouma bestaan het sonder dat hulle besef dat sy daarvan bewus is; soos die swygende kind in die hoek sou sy kans gehad het om waar te neem, en teenoor Moeder het sy geen besondere lojaliteit gehad wat haar sou verhinder het om te praat nie. Hoeveel sou ek nie by die bediendes kon uitgevind het nie van wat ek wil weet om my te help verstaan. Maar nou is dit te laat, want Dulsie is dood en lê onder een van daardie ongemerkte klipstapels anderkant die ringmuur van die begraafplaas, en Gert en Jacomyn het ook gegaan en is seker ook lankal dood soos sy, ver buite my bereik met al die kennis wat hulle besit het. Al wat ek kan doen, is om hul stemme te probeer onthou en oor die jare te luister na wat hulle my nog kan vertel waar hulle onder mekaar gesels, langs die kraalmuur, op die werf of voor die herd in die kombuis, sonder om hulle te steur aan die wit kind wat luister. Ek het van hulle vergeet; ek het van hulle kennis vergeet.

Die bediendes was dus ook daar, in en om die huis en op die werf, daardie gedurige aanwesigheid waaraan ek skaars nog name of gesigte kan koppel, net af en toe 'n stem of 'n paar woorde van 'n halfvergete gesprek, 'n skimp of verwensing, 'n liedjie of 'n versie. Gert se naam en gesig kan ek natuurlik nog onthou, want soos Dulsie was hy altyd daar: hy was 'n Baster, of so het hy homself altyd genoem, en hy het by ons gekom toe hy 'n klein kind was, so klein dat hy later selfs nie meer wist waarvandaan hy gekom het of wie sy ouers was nie. Hulle het hom sommer opgetel, het Vader eenkeer glimlaggend opgemerk, en hy het dus maar rondom die huis aan die rand van ons gesin grootgeword, êrens in die buitegeboue geslaap, en kos van ons tafel gekry om te eet en ou klere van Vader of die seuns om te dra. Hy was die seuns se speelmaat, want hulle was ongeveer ewe oud, maar tussen hom en Jakob was daar altyd 'n skaars versweë vyandskap. "Jakob het Gert nog nooit vergewe vir die loesing wat hy dié dag by die fontein gekry het nie," het Pieter eendag gesê toe hy besig was om met Jakob skoor te soek, dit kan ek onthou; en hoe Gert 'n ander keer wit en star geword het van woede, 'n mes in sy hand – "Sit net jou hand op my, duusman, dan weet jy wat met jou gebeur." Was dit

dieselfde geleentheid, en met wie het hy gepraat? Met Jakob, sê my geheue vir my, maar ek weet nie van waar die sekerheid kom nie, net dat ek 'n verskrikte toeskouer was in die hoek van die kraal – die reuk van die kraalmis kan ek onthou en die ruwe klippe teen my rug, en my angs.

Dulsie in die huis en Gert êrens op die werf saam met die seuns, besig om te werk of te korswil of te speel – so onthou ek my kinderjare. Jacomyn het eers later gekom, saam met Sofie, en toe het hulle saam weggegaan en alles het verander; maar dit was láter. Van die skaapwagters kan ek egter niks meer onthou nie. Die mans was in die veld met die skaap en het daar vir hulle skerms gebou, die vrouens het gekom om ons wasgoed te was en ons vloere te smeer, en met die kinders het ek soms gespeel, sodat dit hulle is wat die duidelikste in my geheue uitstaan al kan ek geen enkeling meer onder hulle onthou het, kaalvoet kinders met sere aan hulle bene, in 'n skamele rok of broekie van gebreide velle of 'n ou karos. Later wou Moeder nie meer hê dat hulle naby die huis kom nie, maar later het ek self ook nie meer behoefte aan hul geselskap gevoel nie, later, toe alles verander het; ek weet net dat hulle altyd maar êrens rond was, agter die peerboord of anderkant die kraalmuur, sodat mens hul gedurige aanwesigheid aanvaar het sonder om verder aandag aan hulle te skenk. Die mans is soms uitgelooi omdat hulle dronk was of skaap laat wegraak het, hulle is afgedank of hulle het kom sê dat hulle wil loop, en soms het hulle eenvoudig in die nag met hul bondels verdwyn en het net die swart kol van hul vuurmaakplek nog gewys waar hul skerms gestaan het.

In my kinderjare het ons net twee plase besit, die een in die Roggeveld en ons winterlegplek in die Karoo, maar daar is reeds begin om ons grense te probeer uitbrei, en ek weet dat daar gedurige vyandskap met bure bestaan het oor betwiste grondbesit of bakens wat na bewering verskuif is, en een van die vroegste dinge wat ek kan onthou, is hoe Jan Baster van sy woonplek aan die rand van ons grond verdryf is. Ook hiervan het ek nooit die besonderhede geweet nie, maar ek kan 'n ouerige bruinman onthou wat met sy hoed in sy hand voor ons deur staan, bewend en stotterend van ontsteltenis oor die onreg waarvoor hy hom by Vader kom bekla: ek moet nog klein gewees het, want ek

weet dat ek self ook ontsteld geraak het sonder om te beseef hoekom. Vader het swygend op die drumpel gestaan met Moeder net agter hom, en ek onthou hoe sy hom 'n stampie in sy rug gegee het; "Sê vir die Hotnot hy moet padgee!" het sy gesis. Hoe goed kan ek dit nie onthou nie, Moeder se swart rok en haar woorde en daardie klein, ongeduldige gebaar waarmee sy hom aangehits het. Daar is op een of ander tydstip ontdek of besluit dat die grond waar Jan Baster bly deel van ons plaas uitmaak en hy is aangesê om pad te gee, terwyl hy aan sý kant beweer dat dit al die jare aan hom en sy mense behoort en sy vader voor hom daar by die fontein gebly het; en toe het Jakob en Gert een aand oorgery, of is hulle oorgestuur, en het hulle die geboutjies by die fontein afgebrand. Jakob en Gert was vyande, maar in die afsondering waarin ons saamgeleef het, kon mens nie bekostig om jou aan jou gevoelens van vyandskap of geneentheid oor te gee nie: Jakob en Gert wat saam worstel om die os onder die juk te kry of die klip met die koevoet los te beur waar hulle die kraalmuur pak, hul koppe vlakby mekaar; Jakob en Gert wat saam oorry na Bastersfontein om die droë gras van die hartbeeshuisies aan die brand te steek.

Hoe het ek hiervan geweet? Daar is seker aan tafel daarna verwys of in die kombuis opgewonde daaroor gepraat. Ja, en eendag, lank daarna, het ou Dulsie een aand vir Gert toegesnou, "Jan Baster se vloek op jou, jou en Jakob al twee!", en Gert se gesig wat donker word van woede in die dowwe vuurlik, "Ou meid, praat nog net één keer...." Sy stem sterf weg in my ore, sy gesig raak weg in die wuiwende skadu van die vuurlik, en ek onthou nie meer nie. Maar Jan Baster het padgegee, want watter teenstand kon hy ten slotte bied en waar moes hy vir hulp gaan aanklop? En hy en sy familie het oor Grootrivier getrek na Griekwaland, het ek die bediendes later hoor vertel. Kan ek dit werklik onthou, hoe daardie klein stoet met die lendelam wa in die verte langs die pad verbysukkel, drywend en dobberend oor die golwende bossies van die veld, en dat ons dit van die plaas agternakyk, dat 'n stem vir my sê, "Daar gaan Jan Baster-hulle"? Daarna is ons skaap dikwels gestuur om by Bastersfontein te loop en het ons skaapwagters daar hul eie huisies opgerig, en niemand het meer aan Jan Baster gedink nie, bewend van veronregting voor ons deur in sy armoedige pak van gebreide velle. Wie weet vandag nog waar die fontein sy

naam gekry het behalwe ek wat hier wakker lê en hom skielik weer onthou? Ek het nooit 'n mening gekoester of 'n oordeel gevel nie, laat staan nog dat 'n woord soos onreg by my opkom. Daar was net 'n ou man in 'n velpak, en 'n fontein waar ons skaap sedertdien al die jare gestuur is om te wei.

Dit was seker maar op hierdie manier dat ons grondbesit aanvanklik uitgebrei en ons aanspraak daarop verseker is, deur geskille met bure en dreigemente of geweldpleging teenoor diegene wat swakker was as ons. Bastersfontein was die eerste toevoeging wat ek kan onthou en daarna Kliprug; later was daar die aankope, en nog later, toe Maans 'n jong man was, die erfenisse, maar dit het beskeie en verbete begin, en as ek nou daarvoor nadink, besef ek dat my vroegste kinderjare eintlik gevul is met die gedurige dowwe getwis oor die grenslyne en bakens van Kliprug, waar oom Barend Swanepoel se skaapwagters na bewering op ons grond oortree het en deur Jakob en Gert met geweld verdryf moes word. En weer is daar so 'n skielike, ontstellende herinnering aan gewelddadigheid, ou oom Swanepoel met sy rooierige baard, wat met sy vuus op die groot tafel in die voorhuis slaan, Moeder wat oorkant hom oor die tafel leun in haar swart rok terwyl sy met albei hande op die tafelblad leun en skel op hom skreeu soos sy skreeu op die werkvolk in die kombuis, en Vader wat hulpeloos of magteloos tussen hulle sit en hom nie met hul heftige woordewisseling probeer inmeng nie terwyl Moeder die ou man met haar woorde uit die huis uit verdrywe asof dit 'n sambok is wat sy hanteer. "Ek laat my nie hier wegjaag soos Jan Baster nie!" het die ou man ter afskeid nog teruggedroep, en hulle kon dit ook nie doen nie, want hy was 'n witman en hulle kon nie eenvoudig sy huis afbrand en sy mense uitsit nie, maar tog is hy uiteindelik uitgedwing, hoe weet ek nie. "Jou oupa het Worcester toe gery om daardie stuk grond in die hande te kry," het ou oom Kasper Vlok jare later vir Maans gesê by die troue op Gunsfontein, "en jy's vandag seker ook nie spyt nie, nè?" Hulle het gepraat oor die skaap wat Maans laat loop op die grond wat vroeër deel van Kliprug uitgemaak het, alhoewel niemand vandag meer die naam onthou nie, en hoe goed die weiding daar is; ek het oorkant hulle gesit aan die tafel en die ou man se woorde gehoor, en toe het ek die naam Kliprug onthou en weer skielik vir ou oom Swanepoel gesien. Ek weet dat hulle by kerslig beraadslaag het, Vader, Moeder en Jakob, en dat daar papiere op die

tafel gelê het wat Meester vir hulle moes kom lees, dus moet dit voor Jakob se troue gewees het, toe Meester nog by ons was. Dalk het hulle die hulp van 'n prokureur of van die magistraat ingeroep, of het Vader selfs sy perd laat opsaal en die hele ent ingery Worcester toe soos oom Kasper gesê het, want die Vloks het in daardie jare net anderkant Kliprug gebly en hy sou seker weet. Maar hoe dan ook, die Swanepoels het eweneens verdwyn, geruisloos en sonder naklank het hulle verdwyn, en Kliprug is by ons grond gevoeg asof die betwiste grenslyn nooit bestaan het nie.

Moeder in haar swart rok – toe het ek nie nagedink oor wat ek sien of hoor nie, maar namate ek oor die jare waarneem hoe sy trotser en meer onversetlik word, het ek besef hoe belangrik grond en eiendom vir haar is, en hoe 'n hoë prys sy bereid is om te betaal vir dit wat sy begeer, akker vir akker, morg vir morg en plaas vir plaas. Wat het hierdie hebsug aangevuur, wat vir niks en niemand teruggedeins het nie en alle metodes as geoorloof beskou het – daardie ou onsekerheid en armoede dalk, die bittere jeug, die skamele wa, die verslete velkomberse, die handjievul blikmesse en -lepels? Het grond vir haar miskien iets meer beteken as net 'n gegewe stuk rante of bossies of sóveel fonteine en weiding vir sóveel skaap, en het sy dit gesien as middel tot alles wat eens vir haar onbereikbaar ver was, die mag en die aansien wat sy uiteindelik dan ook verower het, die huis op die dorp waar besoekende predikante tuisgegaan het, en die sitplek onder die voorste gestoelte in die kerk? Ek kan maar net die patroon probeer uitmaak en herken; verstaan kan ek nooit meer nie.

Sedert die begin moet daar dus 'n doel gewees het, hoe vaag dit vir eers miskien ook was, en 'n plan, al is dit aanvanklik slegs blindelings uitgevoer. In die tyd waaroor ek eintlik praat – my kinderjare, toe ek self begin waarneem wat óm my gebeur en dit onthou – het dit algaande egter gestalte begin kry, eers rondom Jakob as oudste seun en later om Maans, sy erfgenaam; maar 'n doel was daar altyd, en ook ons kinders is gebruik om dit te help verwesenlik.

Vader kon sy naam teken en effens moeisaam voorlees uit die Bybel, maar nie veel meer as dit nie: in die tyd wat ek kan onthou, was dit gewoonlik

Meester wat Sondaie uit 'n Hollandse boek vir ons 'n preek moes voorlees, en later een van die seuns, want hy het gesê dat die letters sy oë seermaak. Moeder het ek nooit met 'n pen in haar hand gesien nie, nòg kan ek haar naamtekening êrens onthou of onthou dat sy selfs ooit 'n briefie geskryf of gelees het nie. In daardie jare en in daardie geweste was daar geen skole nie, en daar was min geleerde mense onder ons; Vader en Moeder se tydgenote kon seker nie veel meer presteer as hulle nie, en hul kinders ewe min. Óns moes egter geleerd wees, en toe Jakob en Pieter nog klein was, is daar al moeite gedoen om vir hulle leermeesters te bekom. Waar het Vader hierdie mense in die hande gekry en hoe het hy hul dienste behou? Daar was 'n hele reeks van sulke onderwysers, van wie geeneen lank gebly het nie, en in stukkies en brokkies het die seuns oor die jare op 'n manier geleerd geraak, sodat hulle albei kon lees en skryf en somme maak; Jakob was nie lief vir die leerdery nie, maar Pieter het selfs 'n paar ou boeke gehad waarin ek soms gesien het dat hy lees. Dit was altyd Jakob wat ingeroep is om met Vader en Moeder te beraadslaag, soos ek onthou, maar as daar 'n brief geskryf moes word, was dit Pieter wat moes kom terwyl hulle vir hom sit en kyk en sê wat hulle geskryf wil hê.

Ek kan geeneen van hierdie onderwysers onthou nie, net die laaste een wat ek self nog as Meester geken het. Jakob was teen daardie tyd al aangeneem en het opgehou om skool te gaan, maar hy het vir Pieter onderrig, en omdat hy baie tyd gehad het en niks om hom besig te hou nie, het hy my ook tussenin hier en daar iets geleer, alhoewel dit nie een van sy pligte was nie. Ek glo nie Moeder het eintlik baie daarvan gehou nie, maar ten slotte sou ek ook een of ander tyd 'n bietjie geleerdheid moet kry om aangeneem te word, en ek kan nie onthou dat sy ooit iets daarvoor gesê het nie. Meester was 'n Hollander, en ek dink dis al wat ons ooit oor hom uitgevind het. Dulsie het eendag vertel dat Vader hom kaalvoet in die Karoo in die pad gekry het met sy bliktrommeltjie op sy skouer en hom toe uit medelye opgelaai en huis toe gebring het om die seuns te leer, maar Dulsie het nie 'n baie hoë dunk van Meester gehad nie en dit hoef nie noodwendig waar te wees nie, alhoewel hy inderdaad 'n bliktrommeltjie besit het. Hy het saam met ons aangesit en sy voete is saans voor die ete saam met óns s'n gewas; ja, en soos ek gesê het,

het hy Sondae vir ons die preke voorgelees, en ek onthou hoe mooi die oorgawe vir my was waarmee hy dit doen, ook al het ek die Hooghollandse woorde nie verstaan nie. Dit is egter so ver soos wat hy deur die huismense aanvaar is, want hy het in een van die buitekamers gewoon en Dulsie en Gert het op hom neergesien asof hulle nie voel dat hy by die witmense gereken behoort te word nie.

Die verlede is 'n ander land: waar is die pad wat soontoe loop? Jy kan net blindelings die spoor volg waar dit voor jou voete uitstrek, nie self die rigting kies waarin jy sou wil gaan nie. Waarom onthou ek nou die buitekamer met die karige meubels waar Meester gebly het, en hoe ek as klein dogtertjie soms vir hom gaan kuier het, en hoe plegtig hy my dan verwelkom, asof dit 'n grootmens is wat hom kom besoek? Dit was natuurlik net 'n speletjie, maar vir my het dit baie beteken, en vir al wat ek weet vir hóm ook, want hy was seker maar eensaam onder vreemde mense op daardie afgeleë plaas, ver van sy eie land. Waaroor ons gesels het, weet ek nie meer nie, alhoewel ek glo dat dit meestal maar hy was wat gepraat het terwyl ek verwonderd en onbegrypend sit en luister soos Sondag na die preke wat hy voorlees. Soms het hy my van sy boeke gewys, en ek onthou dat sommige van hulle prentjies gehad het, wat vir my mooi was, want by ons in die huis was daar maar min boeke, en prente het ek nie geken nie. En eenkeer het hy sy blikkoffertjie oopgesluit en 'n sysakdoek te voorskyn gehaal en my gewys wat daarin toegedraai is, en dit was 'n ding wat ek nooit eerder gesien het nie, 'n swart-en-silwer kruisie so klein dat dit in my handpalm pas. Dit is die kruis waaraan onse Here gehang het, het Meester my vertel, en toe het hy dit gou weer toegedraai en vir my gesê dat ek nie vir Vader of Moeder moet noem dat hy dit vir my gewys het nie. Wat dit beteken, het ek nie verstaan nie, en die geheimsinnigheid ewe min, maar die gedeelde geheim was soos 'n band tussen ons, en wanneer ek daarna by hom in sy kamer kom, het ek partykeer gevra om weer 'n slag na die kruisie te mag kyk en dit in my hand vas te hou. In ons huis was daar geen prente en geen beelde nie, en al wat ek in my jeug gehad het, was Ouma se veelkleurige porselein in die muurkassies, die prentjies in Meester se ou boeke, en daardie kruisie waaroor ek nie mog praat nie, wat ek nie kon verstaan nie en waaroor ek nie durf uitvra het nie. Dit moet iets gewees het wat Meester saamgebring het van

oorsee en wat vir hom waarde of betekenis besit het in sy eensaamheid by ons op die plaas.

Meester het lank genoeg by ons gebly om my te leer lees en skryf, dit weet ek seker, want ek onthou dat ons later vir mekaar briefies geskryf het wat ons weggesteek het in 'n holte tussen twee klippe in die ringmuur om die begraafplaas; Meester het blaaië uit sy boeke geskeur waarop daar niks geskrywe was nie en daarvan smal strokies afgeskeur wat ons dan opgerol het, en agterop mekaar se briefies of tussen die reëls het ons ons antwoord geskryf. Dit was 'n speletjie, niks meer nie, 'n blyk van geneentheid en vertrouë, en wat ons vir mekaar geskryf het, was nie belangrik nie. Hoe min mense was daar eintlik nie wat my ooit selfs geneentheid betoon het nie, laat staan nog liefde; net so min soos wat ek self ooit liefgehad het. Vader, Meester, Pieter; Sofie, en later Maans – was dit al? Ja, daar was niemand meer nie, en behalwe Maans is almal lankal dood.

Meester het ons verlaat toe Pieter aangeneem is: hy het met ons saam afgegaan Worcester toe vir Nagmaal soos gewoonlik, en toe was hy skielik weg. Waarskynlik is hy ontslaan, of miskien het hy besef dat sy dienste nou nie meer benodig word nie, en vir die ander mense was sy verdwyning so vanselfsprekend dat hulle dit nie nodig gevind het om 'n verduideliking daarvoor te gee of selfs daarna te verwys nie; maar ek het van hom ten minste 'n woord van afskeid verwag, en dae lank het ek tussen die Nagmaalgangers op die dorp en tussen al die saamgeskaarde gesigte op straat en in die kerk na hom gesoek, maar vergeefs. Toe ons weer terugkom by die huis, het ek dan ook dadelik na die begraafplaas gegaan om in die holte tussen die klippe 'n boodskap van hom te soek, en ingestoot in die smal ruimte tussen die klippe het my vingers op iets afgekom, 'n stuk papier wat uit 'n boek geskeur is, met die kruisie daarin toegedraai soos hy dit as afskeidsgeskenk vir my agtergelaat het omdat hy wis dat hy self nie na die plaas sou terugkeer nie. Ek het dit weer tussen die stene gebêre, want ek het besef dat dit 'n geheim is waarvan niemand anders mag weet nie, en later het ek êrens 'n stukkie oorskietlap gekry om dit in toe te draai en 'n stukkie skaapvel om dit veiliger toe te wikkel,

en so het ek dit jare lank bewaar sonder om die aard van die geskenk te kan verstaan wat ek ontvang het.

2

Dit was toe dat Jakob getroud is en Sofie na ons gekom het, Meester was weg, en Pieter was aangeneem en moes sy plek vol staan op die plaas, sodat hy nie meer soveel tyd vir my gehad het nie; ek was self ook nie meer klein nie en het al hoe meer verpligtings gehad in die huis, waar ek die meeste van my tyd saam met die twee vroue deurgebring het, Moeder en Dulsie. En toe het Sofie gekom; en ek onthou nog hoe sy ons swygende kring betree waar ons voor die huis gestaan het om haar welkom te heet, en hoe sy skielik voor my neerkniel om my te omhels en uitroep, "Nou's jy my sussie!" Soveel ouer as ek kan sy ook nie gewees het nie, al was sy 'n getroude vrou: haar geboortedatum staan in die Bybel opgeteken saam met haar sterfdatum, en mens kan dit naslaan, maar as die een lieg sou die ander ewe goed onwaar kan wees, sodat dit geen sin het om die moeite te doen nie. Sewentien of agttien sou ek haar nou skat, of dalk nog jonger, want meisies het in daardie jare vroeg getrou, en hoe bly was sy seker nie om in die afsondering, in die klein, geslote wêreld en in die swygende kring 'n kind te ontdek nie saam met wie sy ook self nog 'n kind kon wees.

Hoe kan ek sê hoe Sofie in daardie jare was; hoe kan ek selfs probeer sê hoe sy vir my gelyk het of hoe mooi sy in my kinderoë was, hoe moet ek weet waar om te begin? Sofie se gesig in die gloed van die kerslig, ja, laat ek dáármee maar begin, want wanneer ek haar naam noem of aan haar dink, is dit die beeld wat onverbiddelik voor my oë oprys in die donker, Sofie wat oor die kers buk met haar lang, donker hare soos 'n sluier oor haar gesig, soos 'n skerm voor die lig, en dan die donker wat alles uitwis asof dit nie bestaan nie. Nee, nie dit nie, nie dit, dit was nie wat ek wou onthou nie, dit was iets anders. Sofie met die kers in haar hand, Sofie wat die blaker effens oplik bo haar kop, drywend deur die donker, Sofie soos ek haar die heel eerste keer gesien het; laat ek daar begin.

Elke winter het ons soos al die mense op die Roggeveld met die skaap en al ons huisraad afgetrek na ons legplek in die Karoo. Gewoonlik het die vroeë winter hier op die hoogte reeds begin, en soms het die eerste yl kapok al oor die rante gedwarrel terwyl ons by Vloksbergpas af sukkel met die belaaide wa en die skaap voor ons uitjaag, en van die vaal grys wêreld van renosterbos en harpuijsbos het ons stadig by die steiltes van die berghang af gesukkel, stampend en stotend oor die klipbanke, na die warm lig en kruierige bossiegeur van die Karoo, na die veld waar die geelbos gloei in die son en doring- en kareebome skadu bied teen die hitte van die dag. Daardie besondere dag wat ek onthou, het daar weer langs die pad iets gebreek wat reggemaak moes word, soos maar dikwels gebeur het, en eers teen sonder het ons die onderent van die kloof bereik, nog ver van ons bestemming; dog met daardie eienaardige koppigheid wat Vader soms beetgepak het, het hy besluit dat ons moet deurdruk, al kom ons ook teen middernag eers aan, en soos gewoonlik wanneer dit gebeur, het Moeder geen weerstand gebied nie. Met skemeraand was ons gevolglik nog op pad, en ek het maar in die wa geklim en teen Dulsie aangeleun aan die slaap geraak, net gedeeltelik bewus van die stamperige beweging van die wa oor die ongelyk grond en die geur van die gekneusde bossies onder die wiele. Ek het eers wakker geword toe Vader vir die osse skreeu om te bly staan en ek die geblaf van honde hoor, en half aan die slaap nog het ek orent gekom en agter onder die tentseil uitgekyk om te sien, vaag bewus van mense en stemme en die getrap van perde in die donker; en ek het êrens 'n lig gesien, 'n flikkerende lig dobberend deur die donker, en 'n vrou se gesig het vir 'n oomblik in die verte anderkant die donker verskyn soos sy die kers in haar hand oplig en weer in die donker tussen die verwarde klank van stemme en perdepote verdwyn, terwyl ek versuf en verwonderd daar bly kniel en uiteindelik maar weer aan die slaap geraak het. Die ovaal van haar gesig en die reëlmaat van haar wenkbroue en haar donker oë, net vir 'n oomblik; maar om vir áltyd te onthou.

Ons het in die donker verdwaal en op die plaas uitgekóm waar Sofie se mense daardie winter gestaan het, net duskant die kloof van ons eie legplek, en ons het daar oornag en die volgende oggend met 'n ompad óm die berg op ons eie grond aangekom, dit is al wat gebeur het. Maar so soos ek haar daar

gesien het met die kers in haar hand moet Jakob haar daardie aand ook gesien het en moet Pieter haar in die donker vir die eerste keer gesien het, want hulle twee het te perd die skaap aangeja en dit moet hulle gewees het wat onsigbaar in die donker om die wa rondgedraai het. Hulle het haar gesig dus ook so gesien soos ek: het hulle dit ook tot die einde toe onthou soos ek, het Jakob dit voor hom gesien toe hy gly en val, sy gesig teen die klip; het Pieter dit met hom saamgedra in die stilte?

Dit is al wat ek van daardie winter onthou wat dit van ander Karoowinters van my jeug onderskei. Sover ek weet, het ons Sofie se mense nie eerder geken nie, want haar pa was 'n vermoënde man wat 'n heelpaar plase in die Karoo en die Bokkeveld besit het, en dit was die eerste keer dat hulle in die winter hier kom staan het, maar dit was so te sê ons buurplaas, net óm die berg van ons. Het Jakob dalk oorgery na die bure? Seker maar, want dit was net 'n uur te perd met die kortpad deur die kloof, en mense het in die winter altyd baie oor en weer gekuier in die Karoo en onthaal: hoekom sou hy nie vir haar gaan kuier nie? Oom Wessel was nou wel 'n gesiene man, maar ons was self ook gegoede mense in die Roggeveld, en Jakob was die oudste seun en die erfgenaam, en daarby 'n aansienlike jong man, dalk 'n bietjie nors en buierig, maar mooi om na te kyk met sy donker oë. Op sy blink swart perd deur die kloof in die maanlig om vir Sofie te gaan kuier, met die warm lug soet van die geur van bossies – is dit iets wat ek my nou verbeel, of is dit tog 'n herinnering ver weg êrens in die diepte van my geheue? Dit moet ook daardie winter nog gewees het dat hy besluit het om haar te trou, of dalk is daar vir hom besluit dat hierdie rykmansdogter 'n geskikte bruid sal wees, want soos alles wat by ons gebeur het, moet ook dít oorweeg en bespreek gewees het, sy dit nie openlik nie, en Jakob sou nie sonder Moeder se goedkeuring opgetree het nie, soveel weet ek darem. Was dit hoe dit gebeur het? Ek raai nou maar net; meer as die helfte van wat ek weet, is gissing en vermoede, en van trapklip na trapklip deurkruis ek die verlede, onseker oor elke stap. Baie anders as dit kon dit egter nie gebeur het nie. "Dis jý wat dit so wou gehad het," het Vader vir Moeder gesê sonder om op te kyk, en sy stem was toonloos, maar sy hande het gebewe terwyl hy die Bybel optel, en dit was die enigste keer dat ek ooit

gehoor het dat hy haar 'n verwyt maak; en sy het skielik wit geword en weggedraai en nie geantwoord nie. Só moet dit dus gewees het.

Aan die einde van die winter het ons na die Roggeveld teruggekeer, en ek neem aan dat Jakob met ons saamgekom het om te help met die trek, maar hy moet gou weer teruggegaan het om vir Sofie te gaan haal. Hulle het seker op Worcester getrou, maar geeneen van ons was daarby nie, alhoewel ek van geen rede hiervoor weet nie, net dat hulle al getroud was toe hulle na ons toe kom en dat hy haar as sy vrou ingelei het in ons kring. Dit was in elk geval nog lente toe sy kom, daardie yl, verraderlike lente met sy onbestendige wind en sy gedurige dreigement van koue en ryp, die veld kortstondig oortrek met kleure en die damme skitterend soos vleie en moerasse in die son. Ons het hulle seker lankal verwag, want ek kan onthou dat die wagtyd vir my as kind oneindig lank gelyk het, en toe die honde begin blaf en ons perde buite hoor, was dit al donker, sodat Dulsie gebuk het om 'n brandende tak van die herd op te tel waar ons uitgaan om hulle te verwelkom. So het ek haar die tweede keer gesien nes sy die eerste keer vir my verskyn het, die ovaal van haar gesig vir 'n oomblik verlig deur die flikkering van 'n vlam, voordat Jakob haar van die wakies aflig: so het Sofie na ons toe gekom.

'n Rykmansdogter – wie het dit gesê? By 'n troue of op 'n begrafnis, soos gewoonlik, waar die stemme deur mekaar weef en ek tussen die mense beweeg sonder dat hulle van my bewus is en besef dat ek hul woorde hoor, inligting bymekaarmaak en skerwe versamel om saam te voeg tot 'n patroon. Vader se begrafnis, en die mans het saam gesels oor Maans – wie se stem was dit gewees? Ek kan dit nie meer herken nie nòg kan ek 'n gesig daaraan koppel, en net die woorde onthou ek nog: "Maar sy was darem ook 'n ryk man se dogter"; want teen daardie tyd was albei Maans se oupas dood, en van albei het hy geërf. Ja, dit was seker waar, want dit was duidelik dat daar in die huis waar sy grootgeword het nooit gewik en gemeet en gepas is soos by ons nie en dat alles wat nodig was ruimskoots en vanselfsprekend voorsien is, en ook in haar manier van optrede was daar 'n sekere fynheid en verfyndheid wat nie algemeen was onder die mense van ons wêreld nie. Dalk sou jy hierdie dinge nie dadelik raaksien nie, maar vir ons wat met haar saamgewoon het in

dieselfde huis, het dit duidelik genoeg geword, en ek onthou dat Moeder wanneer sy haar vererg, haar teenoor Vader uitgelaat het oor die nuwe skoondogter se fyn gewoontetjies en fieterjasies. Meer geld, meer bediendes, meer gerief, die paar maande wat sy op 'n kosskooltjie in Worcester deurgebring het en die satynrok en die robynkettinkie wat sy in haar koffer saamgebring na ons toe toe sy getroud is, al hierdie dinge het Sofie se wêreld van ons s'n onderskei.

Was dit hoekom Moeder, hoeseer sy haar soms dalk ook vererg het, nogtans voor Sofie geaarsel het, om haar uiteindelik in nukkerige swye terug te trek sonder om die stryd selfs te probeer aanknoop? As daar tussen hulle stryd moes wees, sou dit tog vanselfsprekend Moeder gewees het wat sou seëvier, en wanneer het sy ooit gehuiwer om haar opdragte gehoorsaam en haar wil deurgevoer te kry? Waarom het sy wat anders so driftig, so deurdrywend, so heerssugtig was dan voor hierdie meisie geaarsel en aan Sofie 'n mate van vryheid toegestaan wat haar eie kinders nooit beskore was nie? Geneentheid of agting was dit nie, want Moeder het vir niemand geneentheid gevoel behalwe Jakob nie; liefde was dit ewe min, want net vir Maans het Moeder ooit liefde gekoester. Hoogstens is Sofie by ons geduld, nooit aanvaar nie of selfs goedgekeur – nee, dit is nie verbeelding nie, al kan ek geen bewyse gee vir wat ek sê nie; ek weet ek was nog maar 'n kind, maar hoe sou ek dan nie van dinge soos hierdie bewus gewees het nie in daardie huis waar ons familie in vyf vertrekke saam gelewe het en óns vroue dag na dag naas mekaar gewerk het terwyl die mans uit was? Waarom sy hierdie byna bevoorregte posisie onder ons bekleed het, dit weet ek egter nie, en slegs aarselend kan ek dit probeer verklaar. Tastend deur die verlede, tree vir tree langs die onsigbare pad, onthou ek die huis in die Karoo waar ons daardie aand aangekom het en Sofie op die drumpel met die kers in haar hand, Sofie in haar satynrok op die dansvloer, Sofie wat skoolgegaan het op Worcester en kon lees en skryf, en ek onthou vir oom Ruben met sy verslae vrou en halfwilde kinders en hul vreemde onderdanigheid en vyandigheid selfs teenoor diegene wat hul familie was. Ek sukkel om die gedagte te vorm, ek kry swaar om die woorde uit te spreek, en hoe sou 'n mens 'n woord soos vrees ooit met Moeder in verband kan bring, sy wat onverskrokke gebly het tot daardie bitter en swygende sterfbed toe? Maar

weer wonder ek of dit tog nie maar was wat agter al Moeder se drif en ambisie verskole gebly het nie, en of dit nie ook die rede vir haar onverklaarbare toegeeflikheid teenoor Sofie was nie, die skielike angs en onsekerheid van 'n kaalvoet dogter uit 'n plakkersgesin teenoor die welgestelde boeremense van wie se welwillendheid en genade hulle lewenslank afhanklik was? Niemand sal ooit weet nie.

Wat praat ek alles? Woorde maal deur my kop, en alleen in die donker string ek nou woorde saam waarvan ek nie eers wis dat ek hul ken nie en ryg sinne uit op 'n manier waarop my trae tong dit nooit sou reggekry het nie. Maar waarvoor, waarvoor?

Woorde help nie meer nie, en die verlede is onredbaar; as die meisie op die katel by my voete sou wakker word, sou sy in die donker geen geluid waarneem en geen beweging hoor nie, as sy sou opstaan om die nagliggie weer aan te steek, sou sy in die dowwe skynsel niks sien nie behalwe die vertroude kamer en die ou vrou in die bed roerloos teen die opgestapelde kussings, oopog en wakker. Sy slaap egter onverstoord, haar asemhaling reëlmatig, en die donker brand waar Sofie voor my oë dans, flakkerend soos 'n vlam, glansend in haar satynrok, swart op swart, versluiser deur die goue waas van die kerslig en die poeieragtige stof, op die maat van viool en trekklavier, op die ritme van die gestamp van voete op die kleivloer, soos 'n gedurige dringende polsslag. Sofie slank en regop in haar swart rok, en Pieter my broer oorkant haar in die kerslig, in die donker, hulle twee saam, flakkerende skadu's swart op swart in die donker. Die meisie roer nie.

Nooit het ons self onthaal nie en selde het ons toe ek 'n kind was die buurplase besoek, maar met Nuwejaar nadat Jakob getroud is, het my ouers by ons 'n dans gegee, want met sy huwelik het baie dinge begin verander al het die verandering nie lank geduur nie; dit was eers jare later, toe Maans mondig word dat daar weer by ons gedans is. Toe Jakob getroud is, is daar egter by ons 'n dans gegee om die huwelik te vier en die nuwe skoondogter te verwelkom, en seker ook maar om vir die bure te wys, kyk, dit het ons, so ver het ons gekom deur swygend en verbete te skraap en te spaar en te beplan, en nou kan ons weer asem skep en opkyk sonder om van enigeen afhanklik te

moet wees, en ondergeskik aan niemand nie; kom kyk. Veronreg ek jou nou, Moeder? Maar jy het nooit self gepraat nie, jy was nooit bereid om te verduidelik nie, nòg het jy ooit getoon dat jy die minste verpligting tot verduideliking of regverdiging voel. Nou is dit te laat, en net ek het oorgebly om my stukkies en skerwe aanmekaar te pas en self te kyk watter patroon daar uitkom.

Met Nuwejaar is daar dus by ons gedans, soos ek gesê het, en dae lank, weke lank, was ons huis vol bedrywigheid en iets wat ek selfs as opgewondenheid sou kan beskryf, al dink ek dalk hoofsaaklik aan Sofie wanneer ek dit sê, want sy was so uitgelate soos 'n kind by die vooruitsig van lewe en mense en musiek ná die eerste maande van afsondering en stilte wat sy by ons deurgebring het, vrolik en laggend in die donker huis waar ons in stilte naas mekaar gelewe het, dansend soos 'n vlam deur daardie donker, sodat ek in al my skaamheid en sedigheid ook deur haar vrolikheid geraak is. Die musikante het al gekom en in die kombuis met die bediendes geskerts, en af en toe het een van hulle skielik begin speel, 'n fragment van wals of seties op die viool of trekklavier wat tergend en uitdagend deur die skemerige huis weerklink; buite het Pieter geroep dat die eerste gaste aankom. Die son was nog nie onder nie, maar in die slaapkamer was dit reeds nodig om 'n kers aan te steek, en Sofie het na my omgedraai van die spieëltjie waaroor sy gebuk het om haar hare vas te steek; uit die skemerte, uit die skadu, uit die donker het sy na my opgersoek soos die swemmer uit die donker water van 'n dam, verstrengel in die swaar, glansende voue van haar swart satynrok, haar trourok, wat sy vanaand vir die eerste keer hier by ons gedra het, en haar twee hande na my uitgestrek. "Sussie, jy moet my help," het sy gefluister, haar oë blink van opwinding, asof dit 'n geheim was wat sy met my wou deel, maar sy wou maar net hê dat ek die krale om haar nek moes vashaak, krale so swart soos haar rok waarin daar skielik dowwe kleur uitgloei waar ek dit ophou voor die kers. "Dis robyne," het sy vir my gesê, nog altyd fluisterend asof dit 'n geheim is wat ons deel, en my hande het so gebewe dat ek gesukkel het om die hakie vas te kry. Woordeloos het ek die donker, blink steentjies aangeraak en die donker, gladde stof van haar tabberd, want sulke dinge het ek nog nooit gesien nie, en ek het na haar ander sierade gekyk, die smal goue armband en

die goue ringetjie met die hartjie. Sofie se donker kop gebuk na die kersvlam, en die gepols van die ongedurige musiek deur die huis en Gert wat buite roep en Pieter wat aangehardloop kom oor die werf, laggend van opwinding, en die kaal, wye land daarbuite uitgestrek in die koestering van sononder, al het dit hier in die huis reeds lankal donker geword, die deinende veld waar die bossies en klipprante brand in die laat lig en in die verte die stof van die rytuie op pad hierheen.

Ons het nie baie bure gehad wat uitgenooi kon word nie, aan die rand van die plato in die ylbevolkte Roggeveld met sy skaarse opstalle, maar buurskap is buurskap, en dié wat kon, het oorgery, verwonderd, onseker en nuuskierig oor hierdie skielike gasvryheid aan ons kant; van Kanolfontein en Driefontein en Jakkalsfontein en Gunsfontein het die mense gekom, en hul karre het langs die kraalmuur uitgespan gestaan. Die huis was vol mense en geluid en beweging, die goue skynsel van kerslig het dit gevul; die vroue het op die stoele langs die mure van die voorhuis stelling ingeneem met hul glasies soetwyn, en buite in die donker kon mens die gelag van die mans hoor waar hulle om die brandewynvaatjie vergader.

Ek onthou vir Moeder daardie aand, met blink oë en 'n seldsame blos op haar jukbeendere, styf, gespanne en waaksaam asof die koms van die vreemdelinge vir haar 'n bedreiging inhou en hierdie ongebruiklike vertoon van vriendskaplikheid haar blootstel aan gevaar, maar daarby ook trots op haar huis en die gasvryheid wat dit kon bied, so trots dat sy by al haar ingespanne pogings tot vriendelikheid en welwillendheid byna uitdagend was teenoor haar gaste. Vir Moeder onthou ek, en vir Sofie in haar glimmende swart tabberd wat die middelpunt van daardie hele byeenkoms uitgemaak het, vir 'n oomblik verdonker soos die kersvlamme flikker in die trek of mense voor die lig verbybeweeg, maar dan weer gloeiend voor my oë in die verstrooide lig. Ek het gesien hoe die agterdogtige buurvroue op 'n ry langs die muur haar betrag, en die afguns van die boeredogters, skamerig saamgebondel in hul kerkkrokke; ek het die oë van die mans gesien wat takserend op haar rus, alhoewel ek daardie uitdrukking nie geken of verstaan het nie, en hoe onbegryplik dit na al die jare nog vir my gebly het, het ek dit sedertdien tog dikwels genoeg weer gesien om

die woorde te ken waarmee mens dit benoem: verwondering, bewondering, wellus en begeerte.

Jakob kon nie dans of wou nie dans nie, Blink Jakob, swaar gebou, gespierd en onhandig – sy dik nek kan ek onthou, en hoe styf die lakense baadjie oor sy skouers gespan het. Jakob het dus gou tussen die mans in die donker by die brandewynvaatjie verdwyn, en die jongkêrels was vry om met mekaar mee te ding vir Sofie se guns: die skaam, woordkarige boereseuns ongemaklik in hul kisklere, die windmaker jong mans met die stywe boordjies en geborduurde onderbaadjies, die eenvoudiges en minder eenvoudiges, die selfversekerdes en aarselaars van ons klein wêreldjie het rondom haar saamgedrom in die voorhuis. Ek het in 'n hoek op die grond gesit buite die kring van die kerslig, tussen die kinders van die kuiermense in wie ek nie belanggestel het nie en wat ná hul eerste vergeefse pogings tot toenadering gou genoeg van my vergeet het. Algaande het hulle egter vaak geword en omgekantel waar hulle sit of lê, maar ek het wakker gebly en waargeneem, slaaploos in die skaduwee, en die opmerkings van die getroude vroue onder mekaar langs die mure gehoor wanneer Moeder nie naby is nie, en die gefluister van die meisies wat hulle in die kamer by kerslig voor die spieëltjie verdring.

Sonder om haar aan Jakob se afwesigheid te steur of selfs daarvan bewus te wees, het Sofie heelnag gedans, en namate die ander dansers moeg word en uitval of hulle buite na die brandewyn begewe, was dit al hoe meer my broer Pieter wat haar dansmaat was, onvermoeibaar soos sy. Die boereseuns van ons geweste kon vir Pieter nooit eintlik heeltemal kleinkry nie, glo ek, maar onder die meisies was hy gewild met sy vinnige tong en vinnige voete, sy terglus en ratsheid en grasie. Waar het hy by ons ooit die kans gekry om te leer dans? wonder ek nou; maar hy kón dans, en goed ook, en heelaand het mens sy lenige lyf onder die dansers gesien asof hy nie tot rus kon kom nie; later het hy sy baadjie uitgetrek en in sy hempsmoue gedans, en al hoe meer was dit Sofie wat hy as maat gekies het. Hoekom nie? Hulle was ten slotte ook die beste dansers op die byeenkoms. Pieter in sy hempsmoue en Sofie in haar glansende rok van swart satyn, saam in die fyn waas van stof wat deur die

voete van die dansers uit die misvloer opgetrap is, in die goue waas van die vetkerse wat die kamer dof belig het, saam soos in 'n droom, met die kind in die hoek wat sien en onthou, luister en onthou: die afguns, die afkeuring, die wrewel, die nyd, die begeerte wat hulle omring, en die twee jongmense saam soos in 'n droom.

Uiteindelik het ek tog maar aan die slaap geraak tussen die ander kinders op die vloer, en iemand moet my daar opgetel en na my kamer toe gedra het, want toe ek wakker word, het ek op die kateltjie onder die venster gelê met 'n lappieskombers oor my, en op my eie bed het daar vreemde kinders lê en slaap. Dit was die lawaai van geweerskote wat my wakker gemaak het, want dit was dagbreek en op die werf was die jong mans besig om die nuwe jaar te begroet: ek het op die katel gekniel met my elmboë op die hoë vensterbank, en uitgekyk na die silwergrys oggend, kil en onberoer soos 'n waterpoel. Die geskreeu en geskiet was ver weg êrens voor die huis, maar binne het dit stil geword, en net 'n enkele viool het iewers aangehou, uitgehou, dralerig en weemoedig, asof die stryker nie meer wis hoe om die deuntjie te beëindig nie en somer sit en verder speel in die oggendskemering. Hy het seker in die kombuis gesit waar die bediendes voor die herd warmte gesoek het teen die kilheid van die oggend; en in die silwer daglig het Gert en Jacomyn saam gedans op die leë werf op die maat van die yl, dromerige wals.

Jacomyn – ja, ek het nog niks oor Jacomyn gesê nie; maar sy het saam met Sofie na ons toe gekom uit die Karoo; sy het agter Sofie uit die wa geklim toe Jakob haar na ons toe bring as sy bruid, en Moeder het vir Dulsie gesê om haar kombuis toe te vat. Sy was nog maar 'n meisie, net 'n paar jaar ouer as Sofie self, wie se moeder in die ou dae 'n slavin by Sofie se familie was, want oom Wessel-hulle was gegoede mense, soos ek gesê het, wat slawe besit het nes Ouma se mense in die Bokkeveld; Jacomyn is self nog in slawerny gebore, en toe die slawe vrygemaak is, het sy Sofie se lyfbediende geword en uit vrye wil met haar saamgekom Roggeveld toe toe sy trou. Sy het in die kombuis geslaap met ou Dulsie, of soms op die matjie voor Sofie se bed, en van háár het Moeder afstand bewaar net soos van Sofie self, terwyl sy haar aan haar

kant afsydig gehou het van ons en gewoonlik teruggetrokke en nukkerig teenoor ons was. Net teenoor Gert het sy 'n sekere dubbelsinnigheid getoon, en ná haar koms het hy veel meer dikwels by die kombuis rondgedrentel, sodat Moeder hom moes wegjaag en selfs Vader by geleentheid moes praat. Saam met Jacomyn het 'n verdere element van verdeeldheid in ons verdeelde klein wêreld ingetree waarvan ek in hierdie tyd al hoe meer bewus begin raak het, want Dulsie het met onmiddellike vyandigheid op die indringer gereageer, gedurig by Moeder oor haar doen en late gekla, neerhalend van haar gepraat as 'n "Slamaaiermeid" en beweer dat sy goël, terwyl Jacomyn haar weer uitgeskel het as Hotnot en met beledigende onverskilligheid behandel het.

Vanwaar die verdeeldheid in ons gesin, in ons huis, op ons plaas – broer teen broer, ouer teen kind, meester teen kneg en knegte onder mekaar; vanwaar die vyandskap, tweedrag en nyd? Ons het saamgewoon in dieselfde huis, op dieselfde werf, saam gewerk op dieselfde grond, dieselfde nood geken en dieselfde gevare getrotseer, onontkomelik op mekaar aangewese op daardie onherbergsame hoogtes, onlosmaaklik saamgekoppel in ons afsondering, en desondanks onherroepelik verdeel, met geen hoop dat die verdeeldheid ooit genees sou kan word nie. Nege mense in dieselfde huis en op dieselfde plaas, bukkend oor dieselfde taak, skouer aan skouer saam besig, en tog het ons mekaar nooit werklik leer ken of enige poging tot toenadering aangewend nie, net by mekaar verbygeskuur in ons gang, en algaande het die skaafplekke tot swerende wonde ontwikkel. Dit was net saans met die huisgodsdienste dat ons almal saamgekom het om ons in die oënskynlike eenheid van 'n gemeenskaplike handeling te verenig; of in elk geval saamgekom het in dieselfde vertrek, die lede van die huisgesin by die groot tafel in die voorhuis en die bediendes eenkant in die hoek by die kombuisdeur, terwyl Vader vir ons voorlees uit die Bybel en ons voorgaan in die gebed. Saam – ja, slegs oënskynlik saam, want was ons selfs binne die mure van daardie enkele vertrek verenig? Hoeveel het Vader verstaan van die teks wat hy van woord na woord met sy vinger volg, kop na die kersvlam geboë, die woorde van waarskuwing of veroordeling, van liefde of vergifnis tot 'n enkele dreuning vervlak; hoeveel het enigeen van ons daarvan gehoor, verstaan of ingeneem? Terwyl hy bid, het ek van agter my verstrengelde vingers die mense om my

betrag, my eie familie om die tafel in die onsekere lig van die kers, Vader, Moeder, Jakob, Pieter en Sofie, en in die drywende, vloeiende skadu langs die muur die dowwer gestaltes van die knegte, Dulsie, Jacomyn en Gert.

Wie het die gebed gevolg en hul daarmee verenig behalwe dalk Vader self in sy oorgawe? Oopoë het ek hulle waargeneem in hierdie oomblik wanneer hulle gemeen het dat hulle onbespied is, almal besig met hul eie sorge, drome of ambisies, die oë toe, die hoofde geboë, die hande opgehef, verstar in die gebruikelike gebare van smeking en aanbidding, maar met die gedagtes ver weg. Van agter die skuiling van my gevoue hande het ek die blik gesien wat ingedagte weg dwaal, die oë wat vir 'n enkele onbewaakte oomblik op 'n ander rus in begeerlikheid, vertedering of nyd, die oë wat die oë soek en mekaar vir 'n enkele onbewaakte oomblik oor die geboë hoofde van die ander vind. Ook wat ek hier gesien het, kon ek nog nie herken of benoem nie, maar reeds was ek daarvan bewus dat iets roer en verander, soos die veld wanneer die wolke vinnig verbywaai en die vergesig van klip en bos vir 'n oomblik sy starheid verloor om in ongedurige patrone van skadu en lig weg te vloei. Net vir 'n oomblik, in die onsekere kring van die kerslig, en dan is die gebed afgesluit, die stoele het oor die vloer geskraap, die kerse is opgesteek en ons het ons teruggetrek vir die nag: óns na ons kamers, Dulsie en Jacomyn na hul beddens op die vloer in die kombuis, Pieter na die buitekamer waar hy sedert Jakob se huwelik geslaap het, en Gert na sy slaapplek in die skuur of agter die kraal. Die kring van ons aanbidding is weer verbreek, elkeen van ons het opgestaan en van die ander weggedraai, en as jy in die nag wakker word, het jy in die groot stilte van die huis net die swaar asemhaling van die slapendes gehoor. Miskien het iemand uitgeroep in die slaap, gekreun of gesug, 'n onbegryplike klank in die donker waaraan jy jou eie vertolking kon gee as jy dit hoor, en dan was alles weer stil, slaper van slaper geskei in die tasbare stilte en donker.

Het die winter daardie jaar vroeg gekom, of is ons gebruikelike vertrek na die Karoo om een of ander rede uitgestel? Ons is weg van die huis in koue en waaierende mis wat die eskarp omhul het, ons het afgedaal langs Vloksbergpas na dieptes wat ons nie kon sien nie, die klein stoet van waens, ruiters en skaaptroppe het byna blindelings by die klipperige spoor langs die rand van die

kranse afgesak, asof dit die malende wit water van 'n drif was waarin hul verdwyn om nie weer te voorskyn te kom nie. Hoe weet ek dat dit daardie winter was, die winter ná Jakob se huwelik; wat gee my die reg om so seker te wees? Dit sou ewe goed enige ander winter van my jeug kan wees met ons uitgestrekte trek wat by die pas af beweeg na die Karoo, terwyl ek vir 'n oomblik agterbly, my tjaliëtye styf om my getrek teen die koue en die wind, turend om te sien of daar nie êrens 'n opening merkbaar is nie, of ons in ons daling nog nie laag genoeg teen die berge afgesak het om deur 'n gaping in die mis reeds 'n glimp te kry van die Karoo-landskap in die goue sonlig daar onder. Die laaste talmende skaap is reeds voortgejaag, die laaste skaapwagter het voor my verdwyn langs die pad, die laaste geluid, wat anders so duidelik hier teen die kranse weerklink het, is in die waaiende wolke gesmoor: vir 'n oomblik was ek alleen, en skielik was ek bang, bewus van die bobbejane op die kranse en die wildekatte in die skeure, bewus van elke ander dreigement wat onsigbaar in die mis kon skuil, en ek het omgedraai. My voet het teen 'n klip gestamp, en ek het gehoor hoe dit wegrol en ander klippe losmaak tot ook die geratel van die rotsval deur die dempende mis opgeneem word; en ek het gevlug, struikelend oor die los klippe en rotsbanke langs die afdraande in die rigting waarin die waens verdwyn het, blindelings deur die mis langs die rand van die onsigbare afgrond, totdat die agterhoede van ons trek onduidelik voor my sigbaar word waar hulle stadig hul pad voor hulle uit voel deur die newel. Ek kan geen angs uit my kinderjare onthou nie soos daardie skielike oomblik tydens ons trek na die Karoo, die eerste winter nadat Sofie na ons toe gekom het as bruid.

In die skooltjie wat Sofie op Worcester bygewoon het, het sy allerhande soorte naald- en borduurwerk geleer, en ek dink Moeder het verwag sy sal my nou ook leer, maar Sofie het nie werklik die belangstelling of die geduld gehad nie, en my onhandigheid met die naald moes selfs Moeder toegee, sodat daar nooit iets van die plan gekom het nie. Sy het ook 'n bietjie leer klavier speel, maar wie in ons geweste het 'n klavier besit, en ook dit was dus van geen nut nie,

alhoewel sy soms waar sy by haarself besig was van die liedere gesing het wat sy op skool geleer het.

Al wat sy van haar geleerdheid oorgehou het, was dus die paar boekies wat sy in haar koffer saamgebring het en wat sy soms te voorskyn gehaal het om in te lees, teen die muur naby die venster ter wille van die karige lig. Toe sy sien dat ek in haar boeke belangstel, en selfs so 'n bietjie daarin kan lees, het sy gelag en vir my gevra wie vir my geleer het: "Pieter," het ek sku geantwoord, want selfs met Sofie wou ek nie oor Meester praat nie, en op 'n manier was dit darem waar, want Pieter het my ook gehelp. Hierna het Sofie begin om saam met my in haar boeke te lees, en alhoewel Moeder die boeke met agterdog betrag het en Sofie se lesery nie goedgekeur het nie, sodat sy gou was om dit met een of ander opdrag te onderbreek, het sy die nut hiervan tog ingesien, en so het my onreëlmatige lesse met Sofie dus begin. In nut het ek self nie belanggestel nie, maar om in hierdie bedrywigheid met haar betrokke te raak, skouer aan skouer en koppe naby mekaar oor die bladsy geboë in die karige lig, dit was vir my goed, en die boeke wat sy saamgebring het, was bowendien storieboeke wat ek beter kon verstaan en meer geniet as dié waaruit ek saam met Meester geleses het. Later het sy my ook skryfles gegee: baie het sy waarskynlik nie geweet nie, so 'n bietjie Nederlands het sy geken en so 'n bietjie Engels, maar haar kennis was nogtans groter as myne en sy het my aangehelp sover sy kon. In die eentonigheid en afsondering van die lewe by ons, was die lesse vir haar seker 'n welkome onderbreking en byna selfs 'n speletjie met 'n meisie net 'n paar jaar jonger as sy: ek kan onthou dat ons soms baie gelag het waar ons saam sit met ons koppe geboë oor die bladsy. Dikwels het dit dan gebeur dat Pieter ook deur ons uitbundigheid aangetrek word en dat hy dit ten spyte van sy take op die plaas reggekry het om hom êrens in die nabyheid te bevind wanneer ek les kry en daarby ingetrek te word totdat Moeder hom in die huis ontdek.

Dit was nadat ons teruggekom het uit die Karoo dat hierdie lesse in die skemeragtige voorhuis begin het, in Sofie se eerste lente by ons: die leigrys land het weer kleur gekry in die koestering van die son, die damme in die vlei het in die sonlig geskitter en die kliprante was kortstondig deurtrek met die

helderheid van blomme. Die verte, die afstand, die sonlig en die skittering van die water het ons heeldag gelok waar ons in die huis besig was, fragmentsgewys sigbaar deur die klein vensters diep in die mure, en soms wanneer Moeder nie naby was nie om dit te sien en te verbied, het Sofie vir Jacomyn geroep en my aan die hand saamgetrek, en dan het ons die boeke of die naaldwerk laat staan en uitgeglim in die sonskyn van die dag. Oor die afstand in die verte, kan ek ons nog sien in die wydte van daardie lentelandskap, die twee vroue met die skittering van die water agter hulle, en Sofie wat haar lyfie losgeknoop het in die hitte, laggend en uitasem; en Jacomyn met die veldblomme wat ons gepluk het in haar kopdoek vasgebind en haar donker hare wat glans in die son. Sofie en ek saam by een ent van die tafel in die voorhuis waar ek met my skryfoefening besig is, die voordeur wat oopstaan om ons lig te gee en die helderheid van die landskap daarbuite, met Pieter oorkant ons, lui uitgestrek met sy elmboë oor die tafel, besig om te terg of die aandag te probeer trek, besig om 'n veerpen te sny en dit oor die tafel vir Sofie aan te gee. Die water skitter in die son, en my oë, gewoon aan die donker huis, is vir 'n oomblik verblind. Nooit het ek so 'n mooi lente belewe soos daardie een nie, moet ek hier aan die einde van my lewe toegee, die lente voor Maans se geboorte.