

Cape Times

Afrikaans Stories on a New Note

Windroos: Verhale deur 10 Sestigers (Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel).

"WINDROOS" is a collection of stories by ten writers belonging to the rather amorphous group which has become known as the *Sestigers*, writers of this decade, grouping themselves loosely around the literary magazine *Sestiger*.

In the introduction Prof. Van Wyk Louw, the leading poet and critic, writes of the importance of change and innovation in art, and claims that a significant development took place round about 1960 when a new vision appeared in much Afrikaans writing. He describes it as a change of climate expressing itself in a new approach to many things—sex in all its variations, religion, politics, problems of race. Essentially these writers have become more aware of the complexity of the South African scene, have faced it honestly and have dealt with it with less inhibition than their predecessors.

So what do we find in "Windroos"? A woman trying to hide herself from the world after an abortion; the emptiness of a marriage; the passing love affair of a young Afrikaner artist in Paris; a cashier's liaison with a married man; a woman's frustration and resentments; a satirical revue of village life; a man's encounter with a child being corrupted by race prejudice; the death of a woman who has lived on her daughter's earnings as a prostitute; a crazed woman waiting for the return of her dead son; an insecure man's attempts to build himself up emotionally. These writers are dealing with Things That Ought Not To Be Spoken Of; things that happen among us and around us all the time.

New Approach

But even though the themes are a little more varied, a little more sophisticated than has been usual in Afrikaans, it is in approach and treatment that the real difference lies. There is a manifest desire to see and to portray things as they are rather than as one would like them to be; a sharpened observation, a clearer, more sound analysis. Treatment—technique, style, call it what you will—probably strikes Afrikaans readers more

than those who are familiar almost to the point of saturation with the "experimental" writing of other literatures.

Let it suffice to record here that Afrikaans writers are making their experiments; about some there is a slight air of self-consciousness, a compulsion to write differently, even if that involves resorting to typographic acrobatics. (This is reflected too in the already dated, not to say outmoded, use of lower case only on jacket, title page, and so on). "Windroos" gives a good example of the sort of work that is being done; one welcomes such signs of health and vigour and wishes the pioneers well.

Unworthy Attack

Having referred to Professor Louw's interesting and useful introduction, I cannot end this review without deploring the unworthy and now notorious attack on English-speaking South African writers which it contains. While this is a review of the work of the *Sestigers* and space should not be devoted to another issue, I cannot refrain from pointing out that, since Professor Louw's introduction is in fact a partial reprint of an article in *Sestiger*, the unnamed compiler of "Windroos" could easily have omitted the offensive passage.

Instead he has helped to perpetuate and disseminate an attack, both general and personal, on the integrity of English writers in this country, an attack which was not only offensive but did nothing to enhance Professor Louw's own stature and dignity. Must we remind our leading poet that—to adapt his own words—South African writers moet werklik ons komplekse situasie deurdink before setting pen to paper?

Nancy Baines.