

PART III:

The making of the *Keurboslaan* series

Chapter Five:

Setting the Scene: Writing, publishing and reading Afrikaans

Introduction

This chapter describes the social context that forms the backdrop against which Stella Blakemore's *Keurboslaan* series was published in the 1940s. The first section of this chapter is devoted to an overview of the early years of the political mobilisation around the Afrikaans language. This is supplemented with an account of Isabel Hofmeyr's study on the role of Afrikaner intelligentsia and the publishing industry in the development of Afrikaner nationalism from the late nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. The chapter further sketches developments in the Afrikaans book market, including the growth in popular fiction in Afrikaans, from the mid-1930s and the increase in demand for Afrikaans books spurred by the outbreak of the Second World War. It also attempts to provide some insight into the reading public for Afrikaans books from the 1930s. A brief overview is provided of the growth and development of a publishing industry for Afrikaans books, with specific focus on the 'nationalist' sentiments of some of these publishers and the way in which these sentiments were reflected in their business operations and publications.

Afrikaans literary production and publishing in the early years: The First Language Movement to the late 1920s

According to canonised histories of the Afrikaans language and literature - an example of which is J. C. Kannemeyer's influential work *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur 1652-1987* (1988), which was used as the primary source for this section²⁰ - the first impetus for the recognition of Afrikaans as written language or print language was provided by the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaanders (GRA), a group established in the Paarl in 1875. This came to be known as the First Language Movement. The GRA produced its own magazine, *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*. In addition to the magazine, a whole set of small publications were produced, including a history book, *Die geskiedenis van ons land en*

²⁰ This study would have benefited from an engagement with debates about the status of Kannemeyer's history of Afrikaans literature. The work of Theo du Plessis, including *Afrikaans en taalpolitiek* and *Afrikaans in beweging*, though surely not as widely circulated as Kannemeyer's, is regarded by some as historically more correct than Kannemeyer's work, and based on primary research rather than secondary sources. In order to keep this argument focused, I refer to Kannemeyer's text only, but it may be necessary to read Kannemeyer in conjunction with other literary and language histories of Afrikaans. It is possible that such cross-referencing may provide a correction on the argument presented here.

die taal van ons volk (1877), a book on the principles of the Afrikaans language (1876) and an Afrikaans calendar (from 1877). The most important figures to partake in this movement were S.J. du Toit, A. Pannevis and C.P. Hoogenhout. Kannemeyer concedes that the First Language Movement was strongly opposed by Dutch intellectuals in the Cape, who either felt that English was to be used as a print language or who did not want to cut ties with Dutch tradition and cultural heritage. It should be noted that the work of the GRA was undertaken parallel to a movement for the recognition of Dutch as language of instruction in schools.

The first Afrikaans language congress took place in the Paarl on 15 and 16 January 1896. At the congress it was decided that a new grammar and dictionary of Afrikaans needed to be compiled, that a monthly publication of Afrikaans creative writing pieces needed to be launched, and that S.J. du Toit was to be encouraged in his endeavours to translate the Bible into Afrikaans. By the end of the century, Du Toit had translated and published a number of books of the Bible in Afrikaans. The outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 practically signalled the end of this movement.

Whereas the First Language Movement was located in the Paarl, the Second Language Movement was not bound to a specific geographical location and the term is in fact a loose rubric describing a range of initiatives that was undertaken around the promotion of the Afrikaans language in the first part of the twentieth century. The Anglicisation policy that followed the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War is regarded to be a major factor spurring a second movement around the Afrikaans language. In the peace treaty signed to conclude the war, a condition stipulated that English was to be the administrative language used in the four colonies. This stipulation, in particular, drew strong criticism from the corps of teachers at the independent Dutch medium CNO schools.

By 1905 Afrikaans was used in newspapers in all four colonies. In the same year, the politician J.H. Hofmeyr from the Cape delivered an important address, entitled 'Is't ons ernst' about the importance of retaining the Dutch language. The address was widely published and read. G.S. Preller, who argued in *De Volkstem* that while it was clear that Afrikaners lacked commitment to the Dutch language it was perhaps possible and desirable for Afrikaners to foster a commitment to their mother tongue, Afrikaans, took the debate on the issue of Afrikaans further. In reaction to this, a number of associations were established (the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap in Pretoria, the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging in Cape Town, and similar associations in Potchefstroom

and Bloemfontein) with the aim of promoting the status and use of Afrikaans among Afrikaners.

Just more than a decade after the end of the Anglo-Boer War, the publishing industry for Afrikaans books became more established and expanded. In 1914, Hertzog formed the National Party. Shortly thereafter, in 1915, the Nasionale Pers was established. J.L. van Schaik, another publishing house, opened its doors in Pretoria in 1914. In the period 1913-1924 serious attention was devoted to literary production in Afrikaans. Strategies adopted included persuading various upstanding members of the community to publish books and to run a host of creative writing competitions. Part of this process was the production of the history of the 'Afrikaner' in print in a number of forms. The Rebellion of 1914 provided a further impetus to the celebration of the history of the Afrikaner in texts and many titles were devoted to this event. In this same period, a range of popular publications was launched. Many of these were targeted at the Afrikaans family, in particular at women. These included the magazine *Die Boervrouw* (published from 1919-1939) and *Die Huisgenoot* (originally *Ons Moedertaal*, first published in 1916).

In 1918 Afrikaans was for the first time offered as a subject at two universities. At roughly the same time, the process of standardising Afrikaans and producing dictionaries and grammars commenced. Many of these activities were located in the universities. In 1925, Afrikaans became one of the two official languages and the first translation of the Bible in Afrikaans was published in 1933. According to Kannemeyer virtually all school education for Afrikaners was through the medium of Afrikaans by 1925 (1988:43).²¹ The late 1920s saw the consolidation of a range of processes that were aimed at the official recognition of Afrikaans, the creation of a publishing industry for Afrikaans books, and the popularisation of Afrikaans among Afrikaners. These developments formed the foundation for the substantial growth in the Afrikaans book market from the 1930s.

Class, nationalism and the construction of Afrikaner identity, 1902 – 1924

The canonised account of the development of the Afrikaans language displays certain gaps, in particular with regard to recognition of the class alliance that was forged through and underpinned the language movement and the link between the language

²¹ It was not possible to verify this information, but the comments made in footnote 1 on page 126 may be pertinent here as well.

struggle and the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. The history of the political mobilisation around the issue of the Afrikaans language in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries speaks directly to Benedict Anderson's work on the construction of the nation, which was discussed in Chapter Two. Anderson himself inserts the story of the political struggles around the formation and recognition of the Afrikaans language within his broader account of the development of nationalism around the world:

Elsewhere in the latter portion of the nineteenth century, we find Afrikaner nationalism pioneered by Boer pastors and litterateurs, who in the 1870s were successful in making the local Dutch patois into a literary language and naming it something no longer European (1991:75).

In 'Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902-1924', Isabel Hofmeyr (1987) traces the links between nationalism, class, language, the spread of capitalism and the formation of Afrikaner identity in a study of the Afrikaans language movement and Afrikaans literary production in the period 1902-1924. She argues that there exists a general paucity of knowledge on the process of construction or fabrication of Afrikaner identity, particularly around the production of cultural artefacts. Hofmeyr rejects the view of a monolithic, organic Afrikaner identity, claiming that the process around the construction of Afrikaner nationalism was fractured, contested and uneven. She focuses on the important role of class interests and the strategies employed by the lower middle-class intelligentsia – associated with the First Language Movement - and the petty bourgeoisie – associated with the Second Language Movement - respectively to get working class Afrikaners to buy into the idea of the Afrikaner nation. She frames her research in the context of social and economic developments in the early part of the twentieth century. Theoretically, she uses Tom Nairn's (1977) ideas on the nature of nationalism to frame her research. Of significance for this study is the importance Hofmeyr attributes to the notion of the written text as a strategy for the construction and consolidation of Afrikaner nationalism and the difficulties associated with the process of manufacturing a literary culture among Afrikaners, which she highlights.

Whereas Hofmeyr concurs with most of the facts contained in accounts of the development of the Afrikaans language by pro-Afrikaans authors (see Antonissen (1955), Schoonees (1922), Pienaar (1943), Dekker (1961)) and the canonised histories of Afrikaans literature, her emphasis is on filling in the silences in these histories. She

offers a class perspective on developments in the Dutch/Dutch-Afrikaans/Afrikaans/Boer communities from the 1800s to 1920. In her analysis of these historical developments, Hofmeyr highlights the particular class agenda of those who exerted themselves for a more prominent role for Afrikaans. She suggests that the First Language movement – which she argues never possessed the tight-knit organisational unity often suggested – was primarily set in motion by lower middle class intelligentsia, such as schoolteachers and clerics, who felt marginalized because the world of commerce and government was overwhelmingly British and because funds for schooling were increasingly being channelled towards urban English schools rather than under-funded Dutch schools. In addition, Hofmeyr shows that this movement came into conflict with the propertied Dutch middle class who resisted the use of Dutch-Afrikaans.

Hofmeyr argues that by the end of the nineteenth century important changes had taken place in the social relations of kinship and family that linked the Boer community. At the time, three groups could be distinguished in the North of the country, namely the landed notables, those with tenuous land rights, and the entirely landless. Those who were landless often lived on the properties of wealthy kin as ‘bywoners’. There is evidence that some tensions arose between the ‘bywoners’ and the landed notables and that traditional lines of authority came under pressure. During the Anglo-Boer war, one in five ‘bywoners’ joined the British side and even more became ‘hensoppers’. Following the war, Afrikaners in increasing numbers moved to the cities. In particular, the urban areas provided employment opportunities for young women. Many of those moving to the cities were unskilled and poor. The result of the urbanisation was increased social problems. These developments alarmed both the urban and rural middle class. The church played an important role in taking care of the impoverished Boers in the cities.

Many groups among the middle classes were disgruntled with Milner’s post-War Anglicisation policy and feared that their own positions would be marginalized. Among these were journalists, teachers, clerics, small farmers and clerks. For example, a group of teachers and clerics were concerned about their own positions, the former because funding to (independent) CNO schools were drying up and there was little support for Dutch in the Union. These groups could not turn to the British government, nor to the wealthy farmers or to the generals after the war. Hofmeyr argues that they had to find a support base. She summarizes the developments that led to the Second Language Movement as follows:

The Second Language movement was shaped by these heteroclitic processes. In broad outline, the movement involved a petty bourgeoisie in search of a wider audience that could turn language and educational broking into a new professional avenue for a group of people who feared marginalisation.

The main focus of Hofmeyr's article is the manufacturing of an Afrikaans literary culture. An important part of her analysis is to show how an audience for Afrikaans publication was 'captured', not only among the petty bourgeoisie but also among ordinary Afrikaners, the working class. It is against this background, that Hofmeyr traces developments around the Afrikaans language in the period after the war.

By this time, Afrikaans was being used in many newspapers. As a result, persons such as G.S. Preller started to argue that Afrikaans could be turned into a professional language as it clearly had a potential readership. However, to achieve this, two tasks had to be accomplished first. The first of these was to make Afrikaans respectable and 'beskaafd' (civilised). That entailed standardizing the language. Second, the language had to be turned into a print language through the production of books and written texts. A third challenge was to get Afrikaners to read, i.e. to instil a culture of reading among Afrikaans speakers and to persuade them to buy books. Hofmeyr argues that as part of the process to transform Afrikaans into a respectable language it was necessary to create or manufacture a history for the Afrikaner. She shows how the idea of the Groot Trek (Great Trek) became institutionalised by the 1920s, whereas until the 1880s the word was not known and even by the 1910s it was common practice to refer to the movement as 'landverhuisers' (land movers) or 'emigrante' (emigrants). A range of books and publications on the history of the Afrikaner followed. The Rebellion of 1914 was a symbolic event that could be celebrated in Afrikaans texts, whilst the establishment of Nasionale Pers in 1915 provided a mouthpiece for Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie to ask for language and cultural rights. Literary competitions were launched to encourage new writers to write in Afrikaans and a number of magazines, notably *Die Huisgenoot*, *Die Brandwag* and *Die Boervrou*, encouraged reading habits among Afrikaners. Many of these publications were targeted at the household, specifically women. The content of these publications had as a recurring theme the importance of reading and buying books and regularly featured (repackaged) versions of everyday life as Afrikaner cultural goods, such as features on Afrikaans architecture,

interior decorating, humour and dress. A whole industry around the creation of Afrikaner cultural artefacts was spawned.

Hofmeyr points out that Preller, in his columns in *De Volkstem*, made deliberate attempts to link the movement around Afrikaans to other nationalist movements around language, notably those in Flanders, Quebec, Wales and Ireland as a strategy for 'selling' Afrikaans as a civilised language. Another strategy used was to emphasize links between Afrikaans and Dutch, thereby perpetuating the idea that Afrikaans was a European (i.e. 'white') language and removing the stigma of 'colouredness' that had been attached to it.

At the heart of Hofmeyr's thesis is the following: After the Anglo-Boer war a growing number of landless Boers became urbanized. At the same time, certain networks of kinship and authority that had held the Boer community together became unstuck. Unskilled as they were, these poor whites in the urban areas came under the fold of the petty bourgeoisie, who undertook a process of social engineering – inspired by imperial thinking on this topic – to turn them into a working class that could be incorporated into the capitalist system. At the same time, however, this Afrikaans speaking petty bourgeoisie themselves felt marginalised and excluded from certain privileges and lifestyles that seemed to be reserved for the British. A convergence of these two concerns resulted in the invention of the nation. Thinking about these two problems in the context of an Afrikaner nation seemed to be a way to achieve both goals. Hofmeyr argues that, particularly in literature, attempts at social engineering came to take on a particular form – that of a nationalist discourse. She rejects the organic view of nationalism as categories of language and religion and shows the close links between class formation and the making of a particular ethnic identity. She summarizes this as follows:

The simultaneity of middle-class philanthropic 'intervention' and nationalist innovation is crucial to grasp since many other commentators have attributed to Afrikaners a particular propensity for being more religious and moral than the rest of society (1987: 103)

Hofmeyr's argument is persuasive. Drawing on Gramsci, she indicates that she is not arguing that the barrage of information contained in popular reading matter and literary works had the effect of creating exclusive Afrikaner identities among the working class. Rather, she concedes that the readers of those magazines and literary works in all

likelihood retained a number of other identities. However, she believes that somehow the combined impact of all the efforts had caused a 'sediment of "Afrikanerness"' to settle in many households.

Hofmeyr's account is underpinned by a strong notion of agency, and the picture she sketches of the process of literary production is of a process driven by particular individuals and particular class interests. Admittedly, she concedes that the production of literature was diverse and that its very diversity would form the building blocks of the imagined nation. Nonetheless, she situates the notion of editorial control quite tightly with some of the objectives of the petty bourgeoisie. Her discussion on the invention of the 'Volksmoeder' discourse in particular, would seem to suggest close ties between editorial control and the 'men of languages'. In addition, Hofmeyr attempts to define the target audience of the literary manufacturing process. She claims that the petty bourgeoisie alone could not support the Afrikaans literary industry and that they had to expand their market among the rising proletariat. For this reason, popular publications encouraged the reading classes to read.

A brief history of the publishing industry for Afrikaans books

In 1894, a publishing house was established as an outflow of the formation of the Suid-Afrikaanse Taalbond. This publishing house later became known as the Hollandsch-Afrikaansche Uitgeversmaatschappij (HAUM) (Kannemeyer 1988:31). Together with the small firm D.F. du Toit & Co, they published many of the first Afrikaans texts produced before 1900 (Steyn 1992:23). Another firm that was involved in the printing of Afrikaans texts was that of J.H. De Bussy in Pretoria, an Amsterdam-based bookstore and publishing house. This firm published the influential volume of poetry *Oom Gert vertel en ander gedigte* by C. Louis Leipoldt in 1911. Het Westen Drukkerij was established by Hendrik de Graaf and produced the newspaper *Het Westen*, which eventually became *Die Volksblad*. According to Steyn (1992:22-24) this firm, which was originally situated in Potchefstroom and later moved to Bloemfontein, published some of the most important literary texts in Afrikaans. Het Westen Drukkerij produced seventeen of the thirty-three works of prose and poetry that were published in Afrikaans between 1907 and 1915. The publishing house published works by Totius, Langenhoven, Cilliers, Cachet and Reitz, among others. There also existed numerous smaller printing houses, such as the Van de Sandt de Villiers Drukkers Maatschappij Beperkt in Bloemfontein and A.H. Koomans (Steyn 1992:23).

1915 saw the establishment of Nasionale Pers in Stellenbosch. Nasionale Pers was not the only publishers of Afrikaans books in the South, though, as, for example, Pro Ecclesia publishers, also based in Stellenbosch, had an advantage over Nasionale Pers in the schoolbook market until the thirties (Muller 1990:509). In 1917, Nasionale Pers bought all De Graaf's enterprises and thus took over both the newspaper *Het Volksblad* and Het Westen Drukkerij (Steyn 1992:25). J.L. van Schaik was established in 1914 in Pretoria (Kannemeyer 1988:43).

Kannemeyer argues that the establishment of J.L. van Schaik in the North and Nasionale Pers in the South were the most important factors in the Afrikaans literary publication in the first thirty years of the twentieth century and that in the 1930s the most important Afrikaans books were published by these two publishers (1988:43). Three new publishing houses emerged during this period. Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel was established in Pretoria in 1932, Unie-Volkspers²² in Cape Town in 1936 and Voortrekkerpers in Johannesburg in 1937. Tafelberg, originally a subsidiary of Die Goeie Hoop publishers, which was established after the Second World War by Blaar Coetzee (MP for the South African Party), was established in Cape Town in 1951 (Steyn 1992f:160). Burger Boekhandel (later Nasionale Boekhandel), an affiliate of Nasionale Pers, was set up in 1917. In the forties, A.A. Balkema and Constantia publishers were founded. These publishers revolutionised the typographical process, which resulted in an improved technical quality of books. By the 1950s a number of smaller publishing houses became active. These included Culemborg, Simondium, John Malherbe, Buren, Saayman & Weber, and Rubicon. Human & Rousseau was founded in 1959 and became a major publisher of Afrikaans books. Affiliated to this house was also Kennis-Boekhandel and H&R Academica.

Dagbreekpers and Afrikaanse Pers became one company in 1962, whilst this new company in turn amalgamated with Voortrekkerpers in 1971 to become Perskor. Tafelberg was taken over by Nasionale Boekhandel in 1959, and in 1970 Nasionale Boekhandel and Tafelberg were amalgamated under the name Tafelberg. Further consolidation in the industry took place in 1977, when Human & Rousseau became part of Nasionale Boekhandel. In 1986, J.L. van Schaik was also incorporated.

²² The latter was established to counter the Nasionale Pers newspaper *Die Burger* to provide the United Party with a mouthpiece in Afrikaans. Unie-Volkspers' newspaper, *Die Suiderstem* was launched on 8 October 1934. See Muller 1990:448).

Hofmeyr (1987) eruditely describes the way in which segments of the Afrikaans petty bourgeoisie mobilised around the Afrikaans language from the late nineteenth century. A strong element of this mobilisation was focused on the production and the circulation of texts and included the setting up of a number of publishing houses to produce these texts. There was therefore often a very close association between publishers of Afrikaans books and the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. As a result, publishers of Afrikaans books often published books that were sympathetic to or deemed necessary for the advancement of Afrikaner nationalism and did not operate solely on business principles. As a result, many of these books did not sell particularly well. Examples of such publications are the *Tweede Trek* series and the *Kennis vir Almal* series published by Nasionale Pers and the *Monument* series published by J.L. van Schaik.

The expansion of the Afrikaans book publishing industry from the 1930s and the emergence of popular fiction

It should be noted that by the mid-1930s the printing industry for Afrikaans literature was already well established. For example, according to an article in *Die Volksblad*, Nasionale Pers had printed and disseminated close to 3 million books between 1916 and 1937 (Steyn 1992:10).²³ Steyn (1992d:115) further reports that between 1937 and 1940, Nasionale Pers had printed 1 087 050 books in Bloemfontein. This figure increased to 2 191 549 between 1941 and August 1946. The table below gives an idea of the circulation of texts by the mid-1930s.

Table 1: Total print number of the most popular books printed by Nasionale Pers from 1917 - 1937²⁴

Title	Author	Number of copies printed and disseminated
<i>Uit oerwoud en vlakke</i>	Sangiro (A.A. Pienaar)	50 000
<i>Sonde met die bure</i>	C.J. Langenhoven	45 000
<i>Ons weg deur die wêreld</i>	C.J. Langenhoven	35 000
<i>Die lig van verre dae</i>	C.J. Langenhoven	30 000

²³ Hofmeyr cites a fairly similar figure. She says that in the first twenty-three years of its existence (that is 1917 – 1940) Nasionale Pers produced 1100 books of which they sold 3,274,581 copies (Hofmeyr 1987:112)

²⁴ Information obtained from Steyn (1992:10).

<i>Mof en sy mense</i>	C.J. Langenhoven	35 000
<i>Die burgemeester van slaplaagte</i>	Jochem van Bruggen	17 000
<i>Die vlakke en ander gedigte</i>	Jan F. E. Cilliers	16 000
<i>Uit drie wêrelddele</i>	C. Louis Leipoldt	10 000
Literature for children		
<i>Afrikaanse Kinderbybel</i>	W.J. Conradie	31 000
<i>Stories vir die kinders</i>	C. Louis Leipoldt	15 000
<i>Brolloks en Bittergal</i>	C.J. Langenhoven	15 000

In the war years between 1939 and 1945, the demand for books increased dramatically. This was due in part to a drop in numbers of books imported from Europe, a phenomenal rise in the price of imported books (up to 400% in comparison with a 25% price increase for local books) and the shortage of paper. However, nationalist sentiment among Afrikaners, opposition to the war and worsening relations between English speaking and Afrikaans speaking South Africans also contributed to the increase in demand (Steyn 1992d: 86-87). Steyn (1992) argues that the market for Afrikaans books had recovered by 1936 from the great decline in demand caused by the depression period. The economic position of Afrikaners was improving and this was further stimulated by an increase in salaries and a decline in unemployment as a result of the Second World War. As a result, the demand for Afrikaans books increased by 150% in the years between 1939 and 1945. The result of the growth in the industry was that publishers could print far larger quantities of the same book.²⁵ Steyn (1992d:115) reports that Sarel Marais from Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel predicted that the circulation of a bestseller in Afrikaans could go up to 25 000 by the end of the war.

An important new development that already started in the 1930s but only fully blossomed in the war conditions of the 1940s is the growth of a body of popular fiction in Afrikaans. During the same period the quality of literary works in Afrikaans steadily improved. Steyn reports that this development caused concern in the ranks of the intelligentsia about the quality of popular fiction produced in Afrikaans. An example of such a text is *Mammon se afgronde* by Roelf Britz, which was published in 1944 and of

²⁵ Hennie Roux from Die Volksblad-Boekhandel made the point that before the war publishers would print 2 000 copies of a novel. This figure went up to 5 000 by 1945 (Steyn 1992d:86).

which 10 000 copies were printed. The main concern was that the language usage and consistency in the books were poor and that the texts relied heavily on terminology borrowed from English (Steyn 1992d:101-102). Moreover, from religious circles these texts were criticised for the poor moral values they ostensibly displayed. During the same period there was also a significant increase in demand for devotional literature and the demand for Christian popular literature increased by 300% (Steyn 1992d:87). Linked to the increase in demand for popular texts in Afrikaans but also more broadly to the nationalist project of many Afrikaner oriented organisations, the need to expand the market for Afrikaans books in a more systematic and structured way and encourage the reading (and purchasing) of Afrikaans texts became a priority. In the first few decades of the twentieth century the marketing and circulation of books in Afrikaans happened through fairly conservative and established channels. These included advertisements and book reviews in the press (including newspapers such as *Die Burger*, *Die Vaderland* and *Die Volksblad*, as well as in magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot*). Another strategy was to produce a catalogue of books that could be ordered through a mail order system. In the last instance, the industry depended on the network of bookstores in the various metropolitan areas and on the publicity value of information about forthcoming books that was printed on the cover jackets of publications.

In the 1930s and 1940s, both the number of books published in Afrikaans and the number of copies printed of each title increased substantially and new mechanisms for disseminating books to the reading public were required. Steyn and Scannell (1992:491) report that the first 'book week' for Afrikaans books was organised in 1934. The event was coordinated by the FAK on a national level and by a host of Afrikaner organisations on local level. So, for example, were 'book weeks' held in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, the Paarl and other towns in that year (Steyn & Scannell 1992:491). This became a regular event that took place annually until some time in the 1950s (Steyn & Scannell 1992:491). Another development was the emergence of book schemes. The first of these was *Die Burgerleeskring*. The '*Ons Eie Biblioteek-plan*' book club was launched by Nasionale Pers through Die Volksblad-Boekhandel in Bloemfontein in 1936. By 1938, the club already had 5 000 members.

The emergence of book schemes meant that far larger quantities of titles could be printed. In addition to popular fiction, works of literature were also offered to club members at special discounts. In 1946 there was a further development in the schemes. Nasionale Pers consolidated the schemes run in Cape Town and

Bloemfontein into an 'Eie Biblioteekskema'. The way in which the books were printed from that point onwards indicated on the cover jacket that they had been especially written for the scheme. In addition, the new scheme focused more on popular fiction. As a result of the consolidation of the schemes, 14 000 books were printed of each title printed as part of the scheme. This can be seen as the first step towards the notion of series books, which offered the advantage of a captive audience.

By the 1950s there was yet again a decline in the market for Afrikaans books. The book schemes closed down, sales dropped and even the annual Afrikaans book week event did no longer take place. Steyn argues that this turn of events had been predicted by Mr M. Hutton from Unie-Boekhandel, who said that the low quality of the popular fiction and trash literature produced in the 1940s would eventually impact negatively on the sale of Afrikaans books (Steyn 1992d:115).

Locating the Afrikaans reading public from the 1930s to the 1960s

Hofmeyr (1997) argued that a publishing industry for Afrikaans books was not sustainable if it was to be supported by the petty bourgeoisie only and that the market for Afrikaans publications had to be expanded among the rising proletariat. For this reason, popular publications encouraged the reading classes to read. It was shown previously that a range of popular publications emerged in the first decade after the Anglo Boer War, and that the producers of these publications saw for themselves a role in educating Afrikaners from the lower classes and encouraged them to read. By the 1930s the Afrikaans publishing industry was well established and there was a fair number of publishers in three of the four provinces. It thus became possible to produce popular fiction in Afrikaans. It is argued here that by the 1930s the Afrikaans reading public was no longer limited to the middle classes.

Elsabé Brink (1987) paints a vivid picture of the desperation that drove many white Afrikaans families, many known as *bywoners*, i.e. not landowners, to the urban areas. However, her work also casts light on who some of these ordinary men and women were that made up the Afrikaner working class in Johannesburg. Of importance for this study, is information about literacy rates and leisure time activities she provides. The Carnegie commission, which conducted its work in 1932, found that among 562 female factory employees surveyed by the commission, 57% had attained Standard Six or a higher qualification (Brink 1987:185). In addition to the information contained in the Carnegie Commission report, the mere fact that the Garment Workers' Union had its own in house magazine *The Garment Worker/Die Klerewerker*, which was established

in 1936, is an indication of literacy levels among the factory workers (Vincent 2000: 63). In addition to Afrikaans factory workers, a forthcoming study by Bridget, which focuses on another stratum in the working class, namely shop workers or shop assistants²⁶ show that many of the shop assistants were drawn from poor Afrikaans families. Shop workers generally had to be able to speak English, and thus their general literacy levels can be assumed to be higher than that of the factory workers. Callinicos (1987) reports that, at least in the Transvaal under Paul Kruger, many Afrikaner men were employed as police officers, which also required specific levels of education.

Anecdotal evidence further supports a claim that by the 1930s and 1940s, readers of Afrikaans books included members of the lower classes. An article that appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* of 21 May 1928 reported that: '[s]everal of the girls interviewed by the *Rand Daily Mail's* representative were refined and apparently educated".²⁷ Brink (1987) recounts the story of Mrs Minnie Burger, who had been trained as a shorthand typist but had been unable to secure this type of employment when her husband lost his job during the Depression. As a consequence, Mrs Burger took up a position in a clothing factory (Brink 1987:182). These two anecdotes are indicative of the fact that the economic situation at the time led some people to take up working class positions and that people in such positions were able to read.

Steyn (1992:12) quotes an article published under the pseudonym "Hoopvol" in *Die Burger* in 1935. In this article, the author writes that (Afrikaans) people like to read popular fiction and love stories and that one is confronted with this fact 'in ons biblioteke, huise, treine en trems' and 'in die lifts van ons kantoorgeboue'.²⁸ In 1938, *Die Vaderland* reports on a survey about reading preferences conducted amongst tram drivers, tram conductors, factory 'girls', policemen, railway clerks, and café and shop assistants. The survey highlighted some of the problems these readers identified with regard to the kind of literature that was available in Afrikaans (Steyn 1992:13). This indicates that the Afrikaans reading public was drawn from a large class base and that readers from the lower classes were well aware of what the Afrikaans literature had to offer. According to Hennie Roux, an average of 1000 copies of each new novel in Afrikaans was sold on railway stations during the war period. He further stated that during the war years, when the sale of books shot up, bookstore managers reported

²⁶ Kenny, B. Forthcoming PhD thesis, untitled.

²⁷ Quote from Brink, E. 1987. . "Maar 'n klomp 'factory' meide": Afrikaner family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s' in Bozzoli, B. (ed). *Class, Community and Conflict – South Africa Perspectives*. Johannesburg. Ravan Press.

²⁸ 'in our libraries, homes, trains and trams' and 'in the lifts of our office buildings'.

that women were the main consumers, but that lots of books were sent as presents to men on the warfront (quoted in Steyn 1992d:87).

A survey conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church in Johannesburg in the 1940s, found that the major leisure activity among young Afrikaans speakers in the city was reading. The church noted its concern about the quality of reading matter that was available to these young people (Stals 1986:35).

Whilst the above provides evidence to support a claim that by the 1930s the Afrikaans readership was no longer drawn exclusively from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, and that indeed by the 1940s the readership for Afrikaans books had broadened substantially, Anderson (1991) reminds us that the notion of the reading classes refers to entire families: 'In the most general sense: the families of the reading classes – not merely the 'working father', but the servant-girded wife and the school-age children' (1991:75). It can therefore be assumed that reading members of the working classes would have encouraged and supported their younger family members to read. For example, Brink (1987) argues that poor white parents made significant contributions to their children's education and utilised the schooling opportunities available in the cities.

The Afrikaans reading class was not situated in the metropolitan areas only. From early in the century, a system of mail orders for books was already in place to service rural areas. In the rural areas, issues of poverty and illiteracy were especially acute. One of the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission (Grosskopf 1932:xiii) read as follows:

Om die gevolge van sociale isolement te kan teëwerk is dit nodig dat die plattelandse skole, en veral die plaasskool veel ruimer voorsien word van geskikte leesstof en dat leeslus aangekweek word wat ook in die later lewe as opvoedingsmiddel sal bly voortbestaan....

[To combat the consequences of social isolation it is necessary that rural schools, and especially the farm school, be provided with much more appropriate reading materials and that a love of reading be cultivated, which will also serve as a means of education in later life...]

There thus followed a number of initiatives to expand the reading base in the rural areas and to intervene in the situation sketched above. Initiatives included the

expansion of public libraries and projects undertaken by various organisations to encourage reading, such as the development of book schemes reported earlier on.

By 1960 76,5% of Afrikaners lived in the towns (Bonner, Delius & Posel 1993:39).²⁹ Evidence presented by Lazer³⁰ (in Bonner, Delius & Posel 1993:22-23) suggests that the ranks of the middle class and petty bourgeoisie expanded in the first decade after the Nationalists came to power in 1948. He argues that whereas this period is marked by expansion in Afrikaner capital, the number of Afrikaner entrepreneurs being successful in towns and cities remained small. The proportion of Afrikaners in white-collar occupations, however, increased substantially. Added to this, a growing number of Afrikaners were employed in the civil service, not only in clerical positions but also in more senior positions for those who were better educated.

Under National party rule, the Afrikaans publishing industry boomed and public library facilities were improved and extended. By the 1960s all white Afrikaans speaking children would have had access to a public library. This is reported on in more detail in the next chapter.

Literary production in Afrikaans and ordinary readers

An issue that is not always given the necessary prominence in studies on the First and Second Language Movements and the link between Afrikaner nationalism and literary production in Afrikaans is the reaction of the (Afrikaans reading) public to the products of the cultural industry at the time. The book *Boekewêreld* (Beukes 1992), the third of a trilogy on the history of Nasionale Pers, is enormously insightful in this regard. In a chapter in this volume, Steyn (1992:3-13) traces some of the most important polemics in and around the Afrikaans publishing industry including the production of popular literature in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Steyn's argument is that already by the mid nineteen-twenties dissatisfaction was expressed by some members of the Afrikaner community about the quality and content of Afrikaans cultural goods. This was expressed in a number of ways, the most important of which were letters to the press and reviews in the media.

²⁹ This information seems to have been obtained from Lazer, J. 1987. *Conformity and Conflict, Afrikaner Nationalist Politics in South Africa, 1948-1961*. Doctoral Thesis, Oxford University, p. 96.

³⁰ Also from: Lazer, J. 1987. *Conformity and Conflict, Afrikaner Nationalist Politics in South Africa, 1948-1961*. Doctoral Thesis, Oxford University, p. 96.

From Steyn's article it is possible to surmise that at first, criticisms stemmed mostly from elite sections of the Afrikaner establishment, such as reviewers and literary circles.³¹ However, as the publication of texts and the production of other cultural goods in Afrikaans grew, 'ordinary' consumers of the cultural products were voicing a growing concern about the direction the industry was taking.

The turn the debate on the content and quality of Afrikaans books took is best exemplified in the furore that followed the publication and subsequent dissemination of Jochem van Bruggen's novel, *Ampie* in 1924. *Ampie* immediately received wide critical acclaim. The renowned critic P.S. Schoonees wrote in 1924 in *Die Burger* that 'if *Ampie* is not reprinted a number of times within the next few months, then Afrikaners still need to learn to appreciate a real work of art' (*Die Burger*, 8 October 1924 quoted in Steyn 1992:11). Moreover, he described *Ampie* as 'die simboliese verteenwoordiger van 'n hele volksgroep'.³² For Schoonees, the genius of the novel lies in the fact that it depicts life as it is, and not a 'cowboy' production of the imagination (*Die Burger*, 8 October 1924 quoted in Steyn 1992:11). However, the response from the broader public was far more guarded. The book was prescribed in a number of schools and a debate followed in *Die Kerkbode* (Steyn 1992:11). The problem raised by most commentators was that the character Ampie was depicted as a typical 'poor white' and that an obvious link was made between Ampie's status and that of Afrikaners in general. Steyn summarises the debate around *Ampie* as follows:

Ampie het volgens kenners soos Schoonees baie daartoe bygedra om die volksgewete oor die toenemende verarming van die Afrikaner wakker te maak. Verskeie romans, kortverhale, en sketse van die jare dertig het die armblanke as motief gehad. Teen 1935 het die publiek protes begin aanteken teen hierdie neiging in die Afrikaanse letterkunde. Baie van die boeke moes op skool behandel word, en volgens Schoonees het daar 'n gevoel ontstaan dat sulke leesstof die prestige van die Afrikaner verlaag. By opvoerings van

³¹ Steyn recounts the story of Hendrik and Mathilda Hanekom's Afrikaans Theatre Company – one of the first of its kind. In 1926 the company went on tour with the production *Oom Gawerjal se dogters en die stemregkoors*. The play proved to be enormously popular and performances were fully booked.

Responses in the popular press in the form of letters (to *Die Burger*) were mixed. Whilst one anonymous writer felt that it was a play filled with 'eg tipiese Afrikaanse humor' another stated that when calls are made to the Afrikaans people – ostensibly to support Afrikaans productions and cultural goods – the basis on which that is done should go beyond the level of sentiment and include the notion of value for money (Steyn 1992:4). However, the play was also damned by 'official' critics (such as the reviewer for *Die Burger*, Professor E.C. Pienaar). The consequence of the bad press the theatre company received was that Hanekom had to close his own company and join Paul de Groot's theatre company.

³² He described *Ampie* as the symbolic representative of a whole 'volksgroep'. The notion 'volksgroep' can be read as 'volk' group, people, or 'nation'.

die toneelverwerking van *Ampie* het sommige mense uitgestap omdat hulle gekrenk was in hul nasionale trots (Steyn 1992: 12).

[According to experts such as Schoonees, a book like *Ampie* contributed significantly to awaken the consciousness of the 'volk' to the increasing impoverishment of the Afrikaner. Numerous novels, short stories and sketches dating from the thirties had the poor white as theme. By 1935 the public started protesting against this trend in Afrikaans literature. Many of these books had to be read at school and, according to Schoonees, a feeling emerged that this type of literature lowered the prestige of the Afrikaner. At theatre productions of adaptations of *Ampie* some people walked out because their national pride was offended.]

Surveys conducted in 1935 among the readers of Afrikaans newspapers indeed confirm that the books that readers regarded as 'good' literature, i.e. 'Literature', overwhelmingly had poverty, drought and the plight of the Afrikaner as themes. In the same surveys, the most popular children's books according to readers were *Patryshulle* by E.B. Grosskopf, *Die Krismiskinders* by C.J. Langenhoven, and Grimm's fairytales (Steyn 1992:10).

Table 2: Results of informal surveys undertaken in 1935 among readers of *Die Burger*, *Die Volksblad* and *Die Vaderland* to identify the best works of prose in Afrikaans³³

	Die Burger	Die Volksblad	Die Vaderland
1.	<i>Uit oerwoud en vlakte</i> Sangiro	<i>Ampie</i> Jochem van Bruggen	<i>Ampie</i> Jochem van Bruggen
2.	<i>Ampie</i> Jochem van Bruggen	<i>Uit oerwoud en vlakte</i> Sangiro	<i>Uit oerwoud en vlakte</i> Sangiro
3.	<i>Hans-die-Skipper</i> D.F. Malherbe	<i>Hans-die-Skipper</i> D.F. Malherbe	<i>Onder bevoorregte mense</i> Marie Linde
4.	<i>Droogte</i> C.M. van den Heever	<i>Wrede Grense</i> Sophie Roux	<i>Droogte</i> C.M. van den Heever
5.	<i>Kees van die Kalahari</i> Brothers Hobson	<i>Langs die grootpad</i> C.M. van den Heever	<i>Kees van die Kalahari</i> Brothers Hobson

³³ Data from Steyn (1992: 9-10) and based on articles that appeared in *Die Volksblad* on 4 April 1936, *Die Burger* on 2 December 1935, and *Die Vaderland* on 21 June 1935.

In 1938, *Die Vaderland* reports on a survey about reading preferences conducted amongst tram drivers, tram conductors, factory 'girls', policemen, railway clerks, and café and shop assistants. The survey found that a lack of variety in Afrikaans literature, the high prices of books, gloominess, and a tendency to 'bewuste mooiskrywery'³⁴ about everyday themes were the most important criticisms against the Afrikaans books that were available (Steyn 1992:13).

There was thus a general call for popular, escapist fiction in Afrikaans and a rejection of the direction 'Literature' in Afrikaans was taking. An article by a certain 'Hoopvol' (a *non de plume*) to *Die Burger* in 1935 captured this feeling:

Hoopvol skryf feitlik elke jaarverslag van ons openbare biblioteke vermeld 'n teleurstellende gebrek aan belangstelling in die Afrikaanse letterkunde. 'n Deel van die antwoord lê daarin dat daar iets verkeerd is met 'Afrikaanse skrywers as 'n klas'. Die publiek lees die graagste van 'n 'agtermekaar kêrel en 'n mooi nooi'. Die feit staar jou in die gesig – in ons biblioteke, huise, treine, en trems en 'in die lifts van ons kantoorgeboue. Net ons Afrikaanse skrywers, op enkele uitsonderings na, het dit nog nie raakgesien nie. Hulle geliefkoosde onderwerp is die gesukkel van veragterdes en abnormales. Hulle skep hul behae in droogtes, armoede en ellende en al die ander dinge wat tot swaarmoedigheid stem' (Steyn 1992:12).

[Hoopvol (Hopeful) writes that almost every annual report from our public libraries mentions a disappointing lack of interest in Afrikaans literature. In part, the answer lies in the fact that there is something wrong with 'Afrikaans writers as a class'. The public most enjoy reading about a 'fine bloke and a pretty lady'. This fact is evident everywhere – in our libraries, homes, in trains, and on trams, and 'in the lifts of our office buildings'. It is only our Afrikaans writers, with a few exceptions, who have not noticed this fact. Their favourite topic is the struggle of the backward and abnormal peoples. They derive pleasure from droughts, poverty, and suffering **and all other things that makes one feel depressed.**]

Die Burger even devoted space to this issue in an editorial on 23 September 1935, and argued that there was a mobilisation around the issue of a more up beat Afrikaans literature, and that words such as 'sjampanje en kaviaar'³⁵ and 'knap kêrels en mooi

³⁴ This phrase refers to a practice of writing that aims to deliberately transform everyday and mundane activities into something aesthetically pleasing through the superfluous use of (wordy) adjectives, which then tends to produce clichéd and trite writing.

³⁵ 'champagne and caviar'

nooiens³⁶ became the battle cries of this movement. This should not only be seen as a call for more popular and escapist novels in Afrikaans, but also an expression of resentment against depictions of Afrikaners as dirty, backward, and tragic.

Conclusion

Isabel Hofmeyr highlights the relationship between class, literature and the formation of Afrikaner identity in the early part of the twentieth century. She shows how the petty bourgeoisie took control of an Afrikaans publishing industry that aimed to produce a history of the Afrikaner in print. In addition, a range of popular publications were produced by the petty bourgeoisie and encouraged Afrikaners to read.

The Afrikaans reading public expanded from the 1920s to the late 1940s and was drawn from a wide class basis, including strata from the working classes. A range of initiatives by members of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie to promote reading among Afrikaans speakers marked the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, findings of the Carnegie Commission had prompted the state to invest in public library systems for the rural areas. The argument presented here is that the ranks of the Afrikaans reading class broadened substantially during the 1930s and 1940s. Three reasons can be provided to explain this phenomenon. First, members of the petty bourgeoisie needed to expand the market for Afrikaans books and therefore devised a wide range of schemes and initiatives to encourage reading. Furthermore, Afrikaans speakers streaming to the cities were very poor and investments in education were seen to be a mechanism through which to secure a future. Third, job opportunities in the cities favoured the young. Adapting to city life was difficult for many of these young people, and reading became a favourite leisure activity.

In this chapter it was shown that at the end of the 1930s – just before the first title in the *Keurboslaan* series was first published - literary production in Afrikaans found itself at an interesting crossroad. Whilst the quality of literary texts in Afrikaans had improved significantly from the early years, the Afrikaans reading public had also expanded by the mid-1930s and ordinary readers were beginning to express a need for popular fiction in Afrikaans and favoured a move away from the thematic of the poor, struggling Afrikaner characterising literary texts produced and approved by the petty bourgeoisie.

³⁶ 'fine young men and pretty ladies'

A central question in this study is who the target audience or intended readers were for books such as the *Keurboslaan* series. From the discussion above it is clear that the *Keurboslaan* series did meet the criteria of ordinary readers expressed in the media. That is, *Keurboslaan* can be described as light popular fiction. On the other hand, the series upheld 'high moral standards', which the establishment felt the kind of popular fiction that was being produced in Afrikaans at the time did not do. It would therefore seem that the *Keurboslaan* series was well positioned to appeal to both these groups.

Chapter Six:

Publication, circulation and reception of the *Keurboslaan* series

Introduction

In this Chapter, the publication history of the *Keurboslaan* series is outlined. In addition, sales figures are provided and the extent to which the series had saturated the market assessed. Finally, against the background of these developments, the history of J.L. van Schaik publishers – the firm that published the *Keurboslaan* series - is briefly sketched and the reception of the *Keurboslaan* series by critics reviewed.

Publication history of the *Keurboslaan* series

Stella Blakemore published twenty books in the first *Keurboslaan* series. Blakemore was also the author of a popular series for girls, the *Maasdorp* series. For a number of reasons, primarily Blakemore's need to get as many of her books as possible in print so that she could get an advance or earn royalties on them, but also a disagreement between her and the publisher of the series, J.L. van Schaik, a small number of *Keurboslaan* books were originally published by Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel under a slightly different name, whilst J.L. Van Schaik published the majority. Initially it was not really the intention of J.L. van Schaik Publishers or Blakemore to produce a youth series for boys. This was most probably in part because series books in Afrikaans were still a novelty. The claim that the books were not initially conceptualised as a series is supported by the facts that the *Keurboslaan* series was not written chronologically and that the titles were distributed amongst two publishers. Only in the 1950s when J.L. van Schaik reprinted and revised the series, did the cover jacket of each book indicate the correct chronological order of the books in the series. The titles in the first series are as follows:

Table 3: Publication date, chronological order, publisher details and print run information on titles in the *Keurboslaan* series

Title	Chronological Order	Publisher	First publication date	Print runs
1. Die hoof van Keurboslaan	4	J.L. van Schaik	1941	2 nd print (1944) 3 rd print (1946) 4 th print (1957) 5 th print (1962)
2. Keurboslaan se peetvaders	5	J.L. van Schaik	1942	2 nd print (1946) 3 rd print (1957)
3. Avonture op Keurboslaan	6	J.L. van Schaik	1942	2 nd print (year unknown) 3 rd print (1957)
4. Die kroon van die skool, (Die Lente Serie)	8	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1943*	2 nd edition (1944)
Die kroon van Keurboslaan		J.L. van Schaik	1959	
5. Twee nuwe seuns op Keurboslaan	7	J.L. van Schaik	1944	
6. Jong doktor Serfontein	1	J.L. van Schaik	1945	2 nd print (1946) 3 rd print (1955) 4 th print (1960)
7. Die Serfontein-kinders	13	J.L. van Schaik	1946	2 nd print (1957)
8. Raaisels op Keurboslaan	10	J.L. van Schaik	1947	2 nd print (1958)
9. Spanning op Keurboslaan	9	J.L. van Schaik	1947	2 nd print (1959)
10. Keurboslaan se eerste Kaptein	2	J.L. van Schaik	1948	2 nd print (1958)
11. Moleste op Keurboslaan	11	J.L. van Schaik	1949	2 nd print (1959)
12. Die skool se struikrower	3	J.L. van Schaik	1949	2 nd print (1958)**
13. Die skool stuur speuders (Die Lente Serie)	12	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1948***	2 nd print (1949)
Die skool stuur speuders		J.L. van Schaik	1958	2 nd print (1958) 3 rd edition (1958)****
14. Kaptein Richard	14	J.L. van Schaik	1956	
15. Rugby op Keurboslaan	16	J.L. van Schaik	1956	
16. Gevare op Keurboslaan	17	J.L. van Schaik	1957	
17. Misverstand op Keurboslaan	19	J.L. van Schaik	1959	
18. 'n Sukkelaar op Keurboslaan	15	J.L. van Schaik	1959	
19. Kultuur op Keurboslaan	20	J.L. van Schaik	1961	
20. Oorwinning vir Keurboslaan	18	J.L. van Schaik	1961	

* No copy of first edition could be obtained, but all available sources point to a likely publication date of 1943

- ** Now published under title *Keurboslaan se struikrower*
 *** Date of first publication could not be certified but seems likely to have been 1948.
 **** Now published under title *Keurboslaan stuur speurders* by J.L. van Schaik

In the 1970s the series was revised with the assistance of Blakemore and published as the *Nuwe Keurboslaan* series. The original twenty titles were condensed into nine titles and two new books were specially written. In table below, the titles of the eleven books in the new series are given with the original titles that were subsumed into the new books in brackets.

Table 4: Titles in the *Nuwe Keurboslaan* series

Title	Publisher	First pub. date	Print runs
1. Jong doktor Serfontein <i>(Jong doktor Serfontein, Keurboslaan se eerste Kaptein)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	2 nd print (1980)
2. Die hoof van Keurboslaan <i>(Keurboslaan se struikrower, Die hoof van Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	2 nd print (1980)
3. Nuweling op Keurboslaan <i>(Keurboslaan se peetvaders, Avonture op Keurboslaan, Twee nuwe seuns op Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	2 nd print (1980)
4. Die kroon van Keurboslaan <i>(Die kroon van Keurboslaan, Spanning op Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	2 nd print (1982)
5. Raaisels op Keurboslaan <i>(Raaisels op Keurboslaan, Moleste op Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	
6. Die Serfontein-kindere <i>(Die Serfontein-kindere)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	
7. Kaptein Richard <i>(Kaptein Richard, Rugby op Keurboslaan, 'n Sukkelaar op Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1973	2 nd print (1982)
8. Geheime op Keurboslaan <i>(Gevare op Keurboslaan, Oorwinning vir Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1974	2 nd print (1984)

Title	Publisher	First pub. date	Print runs
9. Misverstand op Keurboslaan <i>(Misverstand op Keurboslaan, Kultuur op Keurboslaan)</i>	J.L. van Schaik	1974	2 nd print (1988)
10. Krisis op Keurboslaan	J.L. van Schaik	1974	2 nd print (1980)
11. Ongenooide gaste op Keurboslaan	J.L. van Schaik	1974	2 nd print (1982)

In the 1990s the *Keurboslaan* series was yet again reprinted, this time in omnibus form. The series was substantially modernized and updated, replacing, for example, the word Transvaal with Gauteng, and so forth.

Table 5: Titles in the *Keurboslaan Omnibus* series

Title	Publisher	First publication date
1. Keurboslaan Omnibus I (incl. Jong doktor Serfontein, Die hoof van Keurboslaan, Nuwelinge op Keurboslaan)	J.L. van Schaik	1996
2. Keurboslaan Omnibus II (incl. Die kroon van Keurboslaan, Raaisels op Keurboslaan, Die Serfontein kinders)	J.L. van Schaik	1997

Circulation and sales figures

It was not possible to obtain accurate print and sales figures for either the *Maasdorp* or *Keurboslaan* series.³⁷ The *Maasdorp* series was perhaps slightly more popular than the *Keurboslaan* series, based on the number of reprints of titles in the series. This can be explained in part by the fact that one of the titles in the *Maasdorp* series, *Allegra op Maasdorp*, was prescribed as a set work in schools in the 1940s and had been reprinted three times by 1948. From the 1930s to the 1960s, the market for Afrikaans books remained small, even in the boom years for the South African publishing industry during the Second World War. Hence, the number of copies printed in each print run was fairly low. In Chapter Five the sales figures of a couple of books published in Afrikaans during that period were provided and provide some comparative data.

³⁷ NALN in Bloemfontein has in its possession records of Van Schaik and J.L. van Schaik, including financial information and sales figures. However, this information has not been indexed or computerized, nor has it been organised around particular titles or series. For the purposes of this study it was therefore not possible to obtain accurate sales figures, but this researcher will attempt to locate the information in subsequent studies following from the research reported on here.

Based on information from NALN, it appears that the number of copies per print run for some of the *Maasdorp* books was low. In the case of the second book in the *Maasdorp* series, *Die jongste meisie in Maasdorp-skool*, J.L. van Schaik printed 1000 books when it was initially published in 1933 and 2000 books of a revised edition in 1954. However, this book was reprinted again in 1937, 1941, 1942, and 1944. Three of these dates fall within the war years, when book sales went up dramatically only to decline during the 1950s. The information available about the number of copies per print run is based on figures from the 1930s and the 1950s and it is likely that the print run of books during the war were substantially higher. It can therefore fairly accurately be assumed that between the beginning of the 1930s and the end of the 1950s, a standard print run for books of the *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* type was never less than 1000 and more likely to be between 2000 and 3000. If a book was selling exceptionally well, the print run could have been as large as 5000. The information available for other books in the series confirms the fact that a print run was usually 2000 books.³⁸ Unfortunately, no information was available about the average size of a print run for J.L. van Schaik's juvenile books in the 1960s.

At least four titles in the *Keurboslaan* series, *Die hoof van Keurboslaan*, *Jong Dr. Serfontein*, *Avonture op Keurboslaan* and *Keurboslaan se Peetvaders* were reprinted a number of times before the mid-1950s when the series was revised the first time.³⁹ Based on this, it is possible to calculate that at least 6000 copies of *Die hoof van Keurboslaan* and 4000 copies each of *Avonture op Keurboslaan* and *Jong Dr. Serfontein* were in circulation by the time of the first major revision in the 1950s. In addition, from correspondence between Blakemore and her publisher, it is evident that by the 1960s, the book that had sold the best was *Die Kroon van die skool*, the title under which the J.L. van Schaik book, *Die Kroon van Keurboslaan*, was first published by Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel.⁴⁰ No figures were available about the standard print run of APB books, so it is difficult to estimate how many copies of this title was produced, but it must have exceeded the number of copies sold of the other four books. By the end of the 1960s, as many as 12 000 copies of *Die hoof van*

³⁸ For example, 2000 copies of *Die Meisies van Maasdorp* printed in 1932 and again in 1954, with four print runs in between for which the number of copies are not specified. 2000 copies each is printed of *Allegra op Maasdorp* and *Juffrou Kobie* in 1954 and of *Kobie Regeer*, *Maasdorp se nuwe onderwyseres* and *Kobie en die Wonderkind* in 1955.

³⁹ *Avonture op Keurboslaan* was originally published in 1942, and reprinted in 1945 and 1957; *Die Hoof van Keurboslaan* was originally published in 1941 and reprinted in 1944, 1946, 1957, and 1962; *Jong Dr. Serfontein* was originally published in 1945, and reprinted in 1946, 1955, and 1960; and *Keurboslaan se Peetvaders* was originally published in 1942 and reprinted in 1942 and 1957.

⁴⁰ Letter to Jan van Schaik from Stella Owen dated 4 December 1957.

Keurboslaan and 10 000 of *Jong doktor Serfontein* could have been sold. Many of these copies were bought by public libraries. The possibility that these figures could be on the conservative side is strengthened by information about the large royalty payments Blakemore was receiving from the mid-1950s. Royalties were paid in two payments per annum: one in June/July and another in December/January. The available figures for that period are as follows:

- June 1955: Royalty cheque for £257.2.2.⁴¹
- July 1956: Royalty cheque for £327.0.10d.⁴²
- July 1957: Royalty cheque for £325.1.11d.⁴³
- Total royalties accrued by Stella Blakemore for book year July 1956 – June 1957: £690.13.9d.⁴⁴
- June 1959: Royalty cheque for £408.0.6.⁴⁵
- December 1959: Royalty cheque is £339.1.9.⁴⁶
- June 1960: Royalty cheque for £431/5/2d.⁴⁷
- December 1960: Royalty cheque for £160.13.3.⁴⁸
- January 1963: Royalty cheque for £200.⁴⁹

On 13 December 1957, Jan van Schaik wrote to Blakemore that '[y]our royalties this year seem to be breaking records'. He explained that this was because of the reprint of the *Keurboslaan* books and the fact that all Maasdorp books were in print.⁵⁰ In the 1970s the whole *Keurboslaan* series was modernised, abridged and published in eleven titles, two of which were altogether new books. By that time the market for Afrikaans books had matured, and it is possible that the print runs were much larger.

⁴¹ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 23 June 1955.

⁴² Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 17 July 1956.

⁴³ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 5 July 1957.

⁴⁴ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 5 July 1957.

⁴⁵ Letter to J.L. van Schaik from Stella Owen dated 26 June 1959.

⁴⁶ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 24 December 1959.

⁴⁷ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 11 June 1960.

⁴⁸ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 23 December 1960. In this letter, Jan van Schaik wrote that he was surprised at the fact that sales have not been so good.

⁴⁹ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 14 January 1963.

⁵⁰ Letter to Stella Owen from Jan van Schaik dated 13 December 1957.

A concise history of J.L. van Schaik Publishers⁵¹

J.L. van Schaik publishers is the firm that published almost all Stella Blakemore's Afrikaans books, including the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series. In an article in *Boekewêreld* (1992), a collection on the history of Nasionale Pers, Jan van Schaik and Heinrich Raubenheimer provide an historical overview of J.L. van Schaik publishers. Johannes Lambertus van Schaik came to South Africa and established two associated ventures in the book industry. Van Schaik was born in Weesp, which lies close to Amsterdam, on 2 April 1888. He came to South Africa in 1911 as manager of the Johannesburg branch of J.H. de Bussy's bookstores. Van Schaik and Raubenheimer state that J.L. van Schaik's decision to come to South Africa was based on his interest in and support for 'die Boeresak' (1992:476).

In 1914, he took over the Pretoria branch of the bookshop of the well-known Dutch firm Höveker & Wormser. Here he first opened a bookstore, which he called Van Schaik Boekhandel and later established a publishing house. In 1938 the bookstore and the publishing business were split into two companies, the first kept the name Van Schaik-Boekhandel, while the publishing company became known as J.L. van Schaik. The Van Schaik bookstore became so successful that he later opened three more bookstores with the same name in Pretoria.⁵² In the early years his clientele largely comprised of well to do business people and civil servants who spoke English, but there was also a Dutch contingent and a smaller Afrikaans-speaking group that regularly visited his store. According to Van Schaik and Raubenheimer (1992:478) Van Schaik felt very sympathetic towards the Afrikaners, and realised that there was a gap in the market for literature in Afrikaans. Van Schaik and his brother-in-law, A.K. Bot, discussed the possibilities of producing books in Afrikaans with a particular focus on the school book market and in 1915 he started publishing his first titles in Afrikaans. In 1917, Jochem van Bruggen's novel *Teleurgesteld* - a Van Schaik publication - was awarded the Hertzog Prize for Afrikaans prose. Van Schaik and Nasionale Pers were the most important publishers of Afrikaans literary works from the 1920s onwards. In addition to

⁵¹ This section is largely based on the chapter 'Van Schaik' in *Boekewêreld*, a social history of Nasionale Pers, published in 1992 and edited by W.D. Beukes. Heinrich Raubenheimer and Jan van Schaik wrote the specific chapter. In addition, I conducted an interview with Mr Jan van Schaik to clarify some of the issues in the chapter and to obtain more information.

⁵² These stores were situated close to universities. Stores were opened in Hatfield and Sunnyside in 1959 and one in Lynnwood Rd in 1964.

Afrikaans prose works and dramas, van Schaik also published a significant body of poetry in Afrikaans.⁵³

The first children's book to be produced by this publisher was *Die kaskenades van Klein Duimpie* (The antics of Tom Thumb) in 1917. Van Schaik also secured the translation rights to good European children's books to counter the dearth of good illustrators in South Africa at the time. In 1918 Van Schaik published its first textbooks for schools in Afrikaans and in Dutch, and in 1921 produced its first Afrikaans/English dictionary. One of the most successful children's books ever to be published in Afrikaans, *Patrys-hulle* by E.B. Grosskopf was published by Van Schaik in 1926.

In a letter from Stella Blakemore (signed as Theunis Krogh) to one of her fans, a school teacher who wanted to put together a creative writing course, Blakemore wrote that she came in contact with J.L. van Schaik publishers when one of the first plays she had ever written was performed and Mr van Schaik was in the audience.⁵⁴ After the performance, Mr van Schaik made contact with Blakemore and suggested that she submit the play for publication, as he felt that there were very few plays in Afrikaans at the time. It is likely that she referred here to her play, *Die Goue Sleutel*, which was published by J.L. van Schaik in 1931. *Die Meisies van Maasdorp*, the first title in the *Maasdorp* series was submitted to the firm by Stella Blakemore in 1932 (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:482), and the first *Keurboslaan* title in 1941.

The firm was, however, never exclusively dedicated to publishing books in Afrikaans. It published numerous books in English and continued to publish books in Dutch, in particular for the university market. From 1942, J.L. van Schaik also published books in other South African languages for the schoolbook market.

The Van Schaik bookstore in Church Street, Pretoria, was situated in close proximity to the offices of *Die Volkstem*, a daily newspaper that was edited by Dr. F.V Engelenburg. Engelenburg attracted around himself a large group of enthusiastic and young Afrikaans writers, who would write pieces for his newspaper. Because of the proximity of the two sets of offices, these young writers would always drop in at the Van Schaik store. Through that, J.L. van Schaik got to know many of these young voices

⁵³ Van Schaik published, among others, the majority of the works by the acclaimed author Eugène Marais, Uys Krige's debut volume of poetry, entitled *Kentering*, *Die Stil Avontuur*, by Elisabeth Eybers, and *Deining* and *Aardse vlam* by C.M. van den Heever.

⁵⁴ The letter is undated, but is likely to have been written in the 1950s. Extracts from the letter were later used as text for the cover jacket of the revised *Keurboslaan* series.

personally, and they served as a pool from which he could draw new talent for writing manuscripts.⁵⁵ Among these young writers were Gustav Preller, C. Louis Leipoldt, Eugène Marais, and Jan. F. E. Cilliers (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:482). As was the case with Nasionale Pers, the decision to publish new manuscripts did not always hinge on sound business principles, as Mr van Schaik's commitment to the development of the Afrikaans culture influenced his decisions:

Winsbejag of die begeerte om 'n treffer of goeie verkoper uit te gee, het nie altyd die uitgewer se besluit om te publiseer beïnvloed nie. Dit was dikwels eerder 'n opregte begeerte om deur publikasie die Afrikaanse kultuur te bevorder en om boeke die lig te laat sien wat weens hul gehalte, maar veral ook in daardie dae 'as eerste in sy soort', uitgegee móés word (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:482).

[The strife for profit or the desire to publish a best seller did not always influence the publisher's decision to publish. It was often rather a deep-seated desire to promote the Afrikaans culture through the publication of books that simply *had* to be published, either because of their high quality, or because they were 'the first of its sort' (in Afrikaans).]

J.L. van Schaik's commitment to the cause of Afrikaner nationalism became more evident when, during the centenary of the Great Trek, the firm published a series of popular scientific booklets on 'aspects of the Afrikaner's cultural life (history, religion, literature, pedagogics, and art)' (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:484). The series was published in 31 titles and was written by a wide range of authors including H.A. Mulder, Sangiro, G. Dekker, Abel Coetzee, E.P. Groenewald, J.C. Coetzee, N.P. van Wyk Louw, P.J. Nienaber and P.C. Schoonees (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:484). The series was called *Die Monument-reeks* and was very similar to the *Tweede Trek* series published by Nasionale Pers to commemorate the same event.

Mr Jan van Schaik, J.L. van Schaik's son, describes the 1930s as a difficult time for booksellers as there did not exist a good infrastructure for the distribution of Afrikaans books and sellers therefore had to rely on distribution through the CNA. Bookshops and publishers also placed advertisements in magazines, such as *Die Huisgenoot*, and local newspapers. In addition, the bookstore was well placed and well-known and there was a strong passing trade at the shop, comprising not only of residents of Pretoria but

⁵⁵ Interview with J.J. (Jan) van Schaik on 26 October 2001

also of out of town visitors for whom a visit to van Schaik's was standard practice when they were in town, as the following quote suggests:

As hier 'n sinode was in Pretoria, of 'n TO [Transvaals e Onderwysers] vergadering dan het die mense gewoonlik tuisgegaan in die Residensie Hotel. Dan het hulle altyd na die boekwinkel toe gekom om te kyk wat is nuut op die rakke. Daar was 'n 'passing trade' by die winkel.⁵⁶

[When there was a meeting of the synod in Pretoria or a meeting of the Transvaal Teachers' Association, people usually stayed at the Residensie Hotel. Then they always went to the bookshop to see what is new on the shelves. There existed a 'passing trade' at the store.]

J.L. van Schaik formed part of a network of booksellers and publishers, including Juta, Maskew-Miller and Adams in Durban, who assisted each other in the distribution of books. Since the formal structures for book dissemination were limited, J.L. van Schaik regularly produced a catalogue of its publications, which it distributed to bring in mail orders.

Mr Jan van Schaik recounted that there was a strong revival of Afrikaans and a significant increase in Afrikaans books during the Second World War, particularly given the strong Anti-War feelings held by the majority of Afrikaners in the North. In particular, there was an increased demand for Afrikaans books for schools and libraries. In the early 1950s, criticism was voiced in Afrikaans circles, more specifically intellectual circles including the Afrikaans literary establishment, that too many of the existing publications in Afrikaans were of poor quality and included exaggerated representations of violence. J.L. van Schaik tried to foster close ties with some of the librarians at the Transvaal Education library services, among them Mrs Fuchs, Mrs Groenewald and Mrs Hoekstra, and used these contacts to promote the firm's publications and solicit information about current demands for books. As a result of complaints about the poor quality of children's literature, the firm translated a selection of children's literature from all over the world into Afrikaans published these titles as the *Libri Series*.

It is perhaps true that J.L. van Schaik's understanding of the close ties between the publishing industry and the birth of nations and nationalism enabled the firm to capture a significant portion of the market for indigenous South African languages. J.L. van

⁵⁶ Interview with J.J. (Jan) van Schaik on 26 October 2001

Schaik's role in the publishing industry highlights the relationship between the publishing industry and capitalism. Whilst it was true that the founder of Van Schaik, J.L. van Schaik, felt himself close to the cause of the 'Boere' and therefore produced many publications for the sake of promoting Afrikaans culture and language, the publication of key texts in Afrikaans (including dictionaries and literary works) in the long run turned into a profitable industry once the firm had managed to grow a readership for its products. The principles of this undertaking could in turn be generically applied to the development of other languages:

Die uitgewery se uitgebreide produksielys word veral gekenmerk deur die steeds toenemende aantal titels in die Afrikatale. Behalwe letterkundige werk is grammatikas, leerboeke, en woordeboeke uitgegee. Waar die verkoop van hierdie publikasies in die jare veertig en vyftig skaars in die omset gereflekteer is, neem dit in die jare sewentig en tagtig sodanig toe dat dit al byna die helfte van die omset verteenwoordig. In die veranderende Suid-Afrika geld die slagspreuk wat vyftig jaar gelede op een van die uitgewery se embleme verskyn het, naamlik: "Jong Lewe Vol Strewe" (JLVS) (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:487).

[The publisher's extensive production list is characterised by the increasing number of titles in African languages. In addition to literary works, the firm publishes grammars, readers, and dictionaries. Whilst the sales of these publications were hardly reflected in the firm's turnover in the 1940s and 1950s, it has increased to such an extent in the 1970s and 1980s that it currently represents almost half of the turnover. In a changing South Africa the motto that appeared on the firm's logo fifty years ago, namely 'Young Life Full of Strive' still holds true.]

Once again, the firm's efforts in this field were rewarded. In the late 1980s, books produced by J.L. van Schaik publishers had been awarded with, among others, 'the E.M. Ramaila prize (Northern Sotho), the B.W. Vilikazi prize (Zulu) and the Venda literary prize' (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:489). Up until 1989, Van Schaik had produced fifteen of the sixteen publications awarded with the E.M. Ramaila prize, and the firm produced a Sotho collection of poetry in 1989 (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:489).

Already in 1947, the firm was approached with a proposal that the firm be bought and incorporated into Nasionale Pers. Though Mr van Schaik initially declined, this proposal was finally accepted in 1986 when Van Schaik and Nasionale Boekhandel merged. The names of the Nasboek branches of Nasionale Boekhandel's bookstores were

subsequently changed to Van Schaik, at the request of Mr Jan van Schaik that the name of the family business started by his father would in this way continue to exist (Van Schaik and Raubenheimer 1992:476).

Critical reception of Blakemore's books

The first reviews of Stella Blakemore's work appeared in the early 1930s in publications such as *Die Huisgenoot*, *Die Volkstem*, the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Die Vaderland*. On the whole, reviewers tended to be enthusiastic and positive about her work. In particular, Blakemore was praised for the fact that her books filled an important gap in Afrikaans literature, namely that of popular fiction for the youth. She even received some acclaim from the English press, especially for the *Keurboslaan* series, which was described by one reviewer as strongly influenced by the Talbot Baines Reid tradition (*Rand Daily Mail*, 17 May 1941)⁵⁷ Books in the *Maasdorp* series were also recommended for English speaking children (*Rand Daily Mail*, 30 March 1935). Equally, in the Afrikaans media, the school setting of the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* books was seen to be very positive and refreshing in Afrikaans fiction for children (see, for example, *Die Volkstem*, 1 February 1941 and *Die Volkstem*, 9 September 1933). Reviewers made it clear, however, that whilst her books could be regarded as good popular fiction, they did not meet the criteria set for literary works and could also not be regarded among the best books for children produced in Afrikaans such as, *Patrys-hulle* by Grosskopf (*Die Vaderland*, 13 November 1939).⁵⁸ The positive reception of her work despite, Blakemore was criticised for the poor quality of the language, the number of spelling and typing errors in many of the books, the non-idiomatic Afrikaans she used, and for too many 'Anglismes'⁵⁹ (see, for example, *Die Burger*, 15 April 1935).⁶⁰

With regard to the *Keurboslaan* series specifically, many reviewers were of the opinion that boys and girls would equally enjoy the *Keurboslaan* books (*Die Volkstem*, 1 February 1941). What is unusual about many reviews of the *Keurboslaan* series from the period is the extent to which reviewers seemed to be in agreement that the books

⁵⁷ Reviewer indicated as E.R.

⁵⁸ Also see 'Avontuur-verhaal', newspaper clipping, no date, no publication mentioned, no author, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁵⁹ (words borrowed and directly translated from English, in cases where there do exist Afrikaans words with a similar meaning)

⁶⁰ Also see Die jongste meisie in Maasdorp-skool. *Die Huisgenoot*, no date, author's initials given as E.B., reference number 2000/88/3805.1, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein and Skoolkaskenades, no date, no author, no publication. Press clipping. Reference number 2000/88/3805.4, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

would be popular among and appropriate for school children but also adults and educators (*Die Burger*, 5 January 1933). The following two extracts from reviews illuminate this point:

Wat ek so interessant vind, is dat die skrywer daar uitstekend in geslaag het om nie net vir die kinders 'n bekoorlike boek te skep nie, maar ook onderwysers en opvoeders (*Die Volkstem*, 1 February 1941).

[What I find so interesting is that the author succeeded so excellently in writing a proper book not only for children, but also for teachers and educators.]

and

Die geesdrif, maar veral ook die duidelike strekking waarmee dit geskryf is, sal die guns van die volwasse leser ver buitekant die skoolkring verower (*Die Vaderland*, 5 April 1941).

[The enthusiasm, but also especially the evident tenor with which it is written, will conquer the favour of the adult reader far outside the school ambit.]

Moreover, the majority of reviewers chose to focus in the reviews on the strong educational component of the *Keurboslaan* books and the way in which the books provided answers to some of the problems experienced in the education system at the time. So, for example, reviewers talked about the 'message' of the books that went far beyond the story. Reviewers thought that the books displayed a healthy moral tone (see, for example, *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 March 1935 and *Die Burger*, 15 April 1935) and that they provided answers about how to deal with adolescents and, more specifically, 'problem children' (*Die Vaderland*, 13 November 1939). Reviewers often invoked scientific and pseudo-scientific terminology to explain that the series was educational, not only for the child, but also for teachers and parents:

[V]erskeie van die seuns is raak na aan die lewe uitgebeeld en daarby het die skrywer daarin geslaag om 'n duidelike boodskap te bring in verband met die behandeling van die probleem, waarvan die karakteristieke eienaardighede so dikwels deur ouers en onderwysers verkeerd vertolk word.

'n Oormaat van lewenslus, dikwels 'n geheimgekoesterde grief, 'n onaanpasbaarheid teenoor die lewe, veroorsaak dat in die vroeë jare van die kind die kiem van verbittering teenoor die lewe gelê word. Hierdie boek wys, *sonder om opsetlik didakties of wetenskaplik te word* [my emphasis], hoe die

hoof van Keurboslaan daarin slaag om 'n lewenshouding by sy seuns te kweek, wat hulle noodwendig na 'n suksesvolle lewe moet lei (*Die Volkstem*, 21 February 1941).

[Several of the boys are portrayed very close to real life and what's more, the author has succeeded in bringing a clear message with regard to dealing with the problem, of which the characteristic features are so often misinterpreted by parents and teachers.

Surplus energy, often a concealed grievance, an inability to adapt to life in general, bring about that the seed for bitterness towards life is planted in the early years of the child. This book demonstrates, *without intentionally becoming didactic or scientific* (my emphasis), how the principal of Keurboslaan succeeds in fostering a disposition towards life in the boys, which inevitably leads them to a successful life.]

Moreover, the author of the books was suspected to be someone who had written the books with a particular agenda in mind – that of building an educational system, implicitly for Afrikaans-speaking children:

Elke leser sal op sy manier egter iets uit hierdie buitengewone heldeverering haal, maar as ek my nie vergis nie, sal elke onderwyser 'n maksimum voordeel uit die deurlees van die boek kry. Dis of die skrywer daarop uit is om aan die hand van spannende avonture, waar abnormale en ondernormale leerlinge af en toe 'n rol speel, 'n *opvoedkundige stelsel te bou* [my emphasis]. Te rewolusionêr is dit gelukkig nie; hy laat mens as opvoeder egter keer op keer jou hand in die eie boesem steek. Maar is dit nie van belang dat 'n skrywer vir die jeug daar volkome in slaag om op dié manier twee vlieë met een klap te slaan nie? (Kritzinger 24 December 1941).

[However, every reader will in his way get something out of this extraordinary hero-worship, but if I'm not mistaken, every teacher will derive maximum benefit from the reading of this book. It's as if the author is intent on building *an educational system* (my emphasis) by way of thrilling adventures wherein abnormal and subnormal pupils play a role from time to time. Too revolutionary it is fortunately not; as educator, it lets one search one's heart time and again. But is it not important for a youth writer to fully succeed in, in this way, killing two birds with one stone?]

It should be noted here that the *Keurboslaan* books were published under the name of Theunis Krogh, and that reviewers were not aware that the author was a woman. That information only became public knowledge much later on. The books were therefore

generally deemed as very appropriate for ‘school libraries, the classroom or individual reading’ (see, for example, *Sunday Times*, 15 February 1942 and *Die Burger*, 15 April 1935). The following extract illustrates this point:

Hulle sal ook – en dis vir karakterbou die vernaamste van alles – onbewus besiel raak met ideale wat vir hulle van baie betekenis sal wees. In skool en huis behoort hierdie boek aan kinders voorsien te word. Ons beveel ook die boek sterk aan vir ouers en onderwysers wat meer moet weet van die lewe van die puberteitskind (*Die Christelike Skoolblad*, September 1937).

[They will also – and that is of paramount importance for character building – subconsciously become inspired by the ideals, which will have great significance for them. We also strongly recommend the book to parents and teachers who need to find out more about the life of an adolescent.]

Reviewers frequently made mention of the quality of the production and print work and the general attractiveness of the books (see, for example, *Onderwysblad*, 1 January 1948, *Cape Times*, 11 January 1934, and *Die Volkstem*, 9 September 1933). This was characteristic of the publications produced by J.L. van Schaik. For that reason, their publications were often more expensive than those of their main competitors, Afrikaanse Boekhandel.

A last issue that is often mentioned in reviews is the extent to which both the *Maasdorp* and the *Keurboslaan* series encouraged a form of hero-worshipping. In the case of the latter, the object of this worship was the school principal, Dr Serfontein (Kritzinger 1941). Despite the overwhelming emphasis on this character and his impossible achievements, most reviewers were of the opinion that this did not lessen the reading pleasure for young readers:

Ek het vantevore al daarop gewys dat ons hier met ‘n besondere ongewone seunsskool naby die Swazielandse grens te doen het. Die awonture van die geleerde prinsipaal, wat ook ‘n kranige sportman is, word so lewendig vertel dat die jeugdige leser die onnatuurlike daarvan heeltemaal oor die hoof sien. Miskien maak dit juis die boeke by seuns en dogters so gewild (Kritzinger 1943).

[I have previously indicated that we are dealing here with an extremely exceptional boys' school near the Swaziland border. The adventures of the erudite principal, who is also a fine sportsman, are narrated so vividly that the

young reader completely ignores the artificiality thereof. Perhaps it is precisely that which makes the books so popular with boys and girls.]

Already in the early years, some reviewers made mention of Blakemore's idiosyncratic writing style. One reviewer remarked that the book *Kobie Regeer* in the *Maasdorp* series clearly did not meet any artistic requirements and in fact didn't conform in any way to the acknowledged form and structure of a story or narrative as such. Yet, the same reviewer felt that the novel was successful. Its success was ascribed in part to the fact that the author made extensive use of dialogue and the fact that she succeeded in giving each of her school girl characters an exceptional individuality (*Die Burger*, 15 April 1935). Few reviewers disputed Blakemore's unique ability to portray characters or that she was in touch with the development phases and psychological and emotional life of the school children she wrote for. One reviewer wrote that 'die skryfster ken blykbaar die skoolkind en sy tas nie dikwels mis nie'⁶¹, while another remarked that that the author possessed the ability to understand the mind and emotions of the child (*Die Burger*, 5 January 1933).

Three characteristics became the trademark of all of her work and were emphasised by reviewers. The first was her ability to create warm, true-to-life, and individualistic characters – each with his or her own idiolect and mannerisms. Arguably, this was Blakemore's greatest strength as a writer, and she relied heavily on the use of dialogue to bring her characters to life. The second trademark of her work, namely the prominence of the lives, thoughts and emotions of adults in her children's books, did not go unnoticed among reviewers. The fact that it was slightly odd that so much was written about intrigues and love affairs in the lives of adults in books for the youth was remarked upon more than once (*Die Burger*, 5 January 1933). In the last instance, reviewers commented on Blakemore's peculiar understanding of narrative. Her books generally comprised of a number of episodes or incidents that together do not really add up to a story, so that the narrative is structured around an account of events (*Die Burger*, 5 January 1933).

Unfortunately most of the reviews that could be located were from the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s. No reviews of any of Blakemore's books dating from the late 1950s and 1960s could be found. These were important years as Blakemore was still

⁶¹ 'The writer is familiar with the schoolgoing child and usually gets it right'. *Skoolkaskenades*. No date, no author, no publication. Press clipping. Reference number 2000/88/3805.4, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

churning out more volumes in the *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* series. Also, in the 1950s all her titles were revised and reprinted and were therefore freshly produced for a whole new generation of readers.

In the late 1960s, Enid Blyton's works were banned from libraries in England. This was part of broader criticism emerging against formulaic literature and series books, both of which were hallmarks of Blyton's oeuvre. From correspondence between Blakemore and her publishers, it is clear that these events also had an effect on the assessment of her work in South Africa. The fact that no book reviews could be located to confirm this trend is disappointing, but may be indicative of the fact that her books were no longer regarded as 'good literature' and were therefore not discussed in book reviews, and so forth. The correspondence between Blakemore and Jan van Schaik definitely confirms that her books were severely criticised in the period, and that this criticism mainly stemmed from educational and library circles. By the 1960s an extensive system of public libraries for white South Africans had been established. The purchasers for libraries in the four provinces therefore yielded enormous influence and power. A number of incidents involving the Cape Town Library described (Du Plessis 2002), show that Blakemore's books were no longer in good standing. However, this did not affect the popularity of the books among children, and both series were substantially revised, shortened and modernized for a new generation of readers in the 1970s.

There is, however, one other form of critical reception that provides some insight into the way in which her work was received by the establishment. J.L. van Schaik contracted professional reviewers to approve and edit manuscripts submitted by Blakemore. In the next chapter, the feuds between Blakemore and these reviewers are discussed in more depth. However, based on review reports, there can be no doubt that Blakemore's Afrikaans writing was really rather poor. This was also clear from some of the original manuscripts that I surveyed in the NALN Collection in Bloemfontein. The manuscripts were clearly very heavily edited, and the pages literally drowned in the red ink. Excerpts from two review reports, the one more sympathetic than the other, will illustrate this point. In a handwritten note in the NALN Collection dated 1964, a reviewer of a new *Maasdorp* manuscript, someone who had worked on other *Maasdorp* books previously, sets out her assessment of the new manuscript:

Dialogo soms gedwonge en die taalaanwending nog op dieselfde vlak as die vorige boeke: 'n verbasende mengelm oes van eienaardige Blakemore-taal en werklik goed behoue idiomatiese woordgebruik.⁶²

[Dialogue sometimes forced and the language application still on the same level as was the case in previous books: a surprising mix of peculiar Blakemor(ish) language and some really well preserved idiomatic word usage.]

In a report from another reviewer, which is undated but signed as C.H. Hoekstra, the reviewer reports that he/she would not recommend that *De Rissies in die Stad* be accepted for publication. In particular, the reviewer felt that the author's command of Afrikaans was poor and that the manuscript read like a poor translation from German or English. In addition, the reviewer was of the opinion that the author was not competent in writing in a register suitable for children or writing dialogue that is true to the way in which children speak:

Watter nasionaliteit is die skryfster? Bepaald nie Afrikaans nie. Die hele verhaal skep die indruk van 'n uiters swak vertaling uit Duits of Engels. Frases en sinsnedes soos die volgende:

'n streek op hulle afspeel'

'voor Jan hom kan ophou, is hy by die deur'

'met 'n fyne kam deurgegaan',

sê Jan op 'n lang asemhaling' ens., ens., ens.,

is bepaald on-Afrikaans. Geen kennis van die Afrikaanse idioom nie. Taal is beroerd, getuig van 'n uiters gebrekkige kennis van Afrikaans.

Dialogo: Swak. Geen kennis van kindertaal nie.⁶³

[What nationality is the author? Not exactly Afrikaans. The whole narrative creates the impression of a very poor translation from German or English. Phrases and clauses such as the following:

⁶². Handwritten note, no date, unsigned, reference number MS 2000/95/1965, NALNL Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁶³ Typed notice, signed by C.H. Hoekstra and titled *Die Rissies in die Stad*, no date, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

University of Pretoria etd – Du Plessis, I (2004)

'n streek op hulle afspeel" (directly translated from 'play a trick on them' instead of, for example, 'hulle 'n poets bak')

'voor Jan hom kan ophou, is hy by die deur" (directly from "even before Jan can hold him back, he is at the door", instead of, for example "voor Jan hom kan keer, is hy by die deur")

'met 'n fyne kam deurgegaan' (directly from "go through it with a fine toothcomb", instead of, for example "haarfyn ondersoek"

'sê Jan op 'n lang asemhaling' (non-idiomatic use of Afrikaans) etc, etc, etc,

is decidedly un-Afrikaans. No knowledge of the Afrikaans idiom. Language is wretched, proof of a highly insufficient knowledge of Afrikaans.

Dialogue: Bad. No knowledge of child's language.]

Of interest here is the fact that the first reviewer knew that she was dealing with a Blakemore text, not only because she had edited some of Blakemore's texts before, but also because the manuscript was clearly another volume in the *Maasdorp* series. In the case of the manuscript for *Die Rissies in die Stad*, this was not the case. Not only was it the first manuscript for a new series, but it was also written under yet another pseudonym. The reviewer could therefore not have known who the author was and had to evaluate the manuscript solely on its face value. On the other hand, Jan van Schaik, Blakemore's publisher, read the manuscript of *Die Rissies in die Stad* himself and accepted it for publication. He also went ahead and published another three books in the series. From this can be surmised that publishers and reviewers were more accommodating of Blakemore's work when they knew it was hers, based on the popularity of her work among children and the sales of her books. For that reason, they were prepared to substantially edit the manuscript.

In 1973, Blakemore visited South Africa after an absence of eighteen years. During this time, many articles appeared in the press that gave an overview of her work and the contribution she had made to Afrikaans children's literature. Her visit coincided with the launch of the revised editions of the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series. Her work was also celebrated in reviews that appeared after her death. Numerous obituaries were published in the Afrikaans media. An example is an article by Marina le Roux (Le Roux 1991:6) in which she reviewed Blakemore's life and made an assessment of the impact her work has had in the Afrikaner community. Once again it was emphasised that the books were equally popular amongst girls and boys. It too commented on the

important and exaggerated role hero-worshipping play in Blakemore's books and on the explicitly sexist-patriotic tone of the *Keurboslaan* series. However, an assessment of her work leads the author of the article to the conclusion that it was Stella Blakemore and her *Maasdorp* en *Keurboslaan* books that got the Afrikaans child reading and kept them reading. In a commemorative article on Blakemore, published in *Insig* in 2001, the fact that the *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* series had incited their love for reading is confirmed by a number of prominent Afrikaans-speakers (Dick et. al. 2001:61-63). Among these are many prominent academics, writers and journalists including Chris Louw, Eleanor Baker, Erika Murray-Theron, Martie Meiring, Madeleine van Biljon and Franci Greyling. Chris Louw, for example, remarks in the article that 'Blakemore's books 'have spoilt him for ever with an irrevocable nostalgia for Afrikaans'⁶⁴ (Dick et. al. 2001:62). The authors of this article find it significant that someone who has had 'such an impact on the Afrikaans readers spent the majority of her life overseas' (Dick et. al. 2001:62). They conclude their assessment of her work by stating that even though it was difficult to estimate the impact of the two series, it had to have been substantial (Dick et. al. 2001:63). To substantiate this point they publish the following quotes from two prominent Afrikaans journalists:

As ek soms wonder wie of wat ek nou eintlik wou word toe ek jonger is, dan keer ek altyd terug na *Maasdorp* en *Keurboslaan*, en dan verskyn my groot lewensideale en drome glashelder voor my – en skielik weet ek weer waarheen (Dick et al 2001:63)⁶⁵.

[When I sometimes wonder who or what I wanted to be when I was younger, I always return to *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan*, and then my great goals in life and dreams appear before me clear as daylight – and once again I suddenly know whereto.]

and

Dit was die enigste *aspirational* lektuur, buiten die Bybel, wat ons jeugdige Afrikaners gehad het (Martie Meiring in Dick et al 2001:63).

[Besides the Bible, it was the only aspirational literature our young Afrikaners had.]

⁶⁴ Original Afrikaans: 'hom vir ewig met 'n onhaalbare nostalgie vir Afrikaans besmet [het]'

⁶⁵ The article refers to a 'well-known journalist', but does not mention the journalist's name

The article notes that the *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* works are currently regarded by many to be a celebration of patriarchy, in addition to being sexist, racist and patriotic with an unnecessary focus on outdated middle class values. Nonetheless, the writers concur that 'Blakemore is known as *the* author of juvenile fiction that got Afrikaans children reading by providing them with escapist fiction of the highest quality' (Dick *et al* 2001:63). Many other Afrikaans academics, reviewers and critics have in the past confessed their addiction to Blakemore's novels (*Sarie*, 5 July 1995).

Conclusion

The *Keurboslaan* series was published by a publisher with close ties to the project of Afrikaner nationalism. Whereas J.L. van Schaik did publish a number of books on the grounds that it would further the promotion of the Afrikaans language and culture rather than on business grounds, the *Keurboslaan* series was not published for ideological reasons and sold well. Moreover, in the long run the firm's investment in Afrikaans books paid off as a public for Afrikaans books was successfully manufactured. This draws attention to the relationship between publishing, nationalism and capitalism as explained by Benedict Anderson.

Given that there were at the time very few examples of quality popular fiction in Afrikaans, especially for children, and that the type of publications that were starting to emerge in this genre were of very poor quality, the *Keurboslaan* series received initial approval from the intelligentsia in charge of the literary establishment and its instruments, including the media, and was welcomed despite concerns about the quality of language usage in the texts. In particular, it was felt that the texts were of educational value. By the 1960s, however, the publication of Afrikaans children's books had matured and following international trends the *Keurboslaan* series together with other series books were no longer approved by the intelligentsia. Yet, despite this lack of official approval, the books continued to sell and were reprinted in the 1970s and again in the 1980s, and revised and published in omnibus form in the 1990s. An assessment of Blakemore's legacy after her death showed that her books had made a lasting impact on generations of readers and that her *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series were instrumental in getting Afrikaans children reading.

As a result of the fact that the *Keurboslaan* series was produced as popular fiction for children and because J.L. van Schaik did not see the series as part of its commitment to Afrikaner nationalism, the series was subjected to far less control and censure from

the intelligentsia than would have been the case had it been a literary work, a schoolbook or an educational text.

Whilst the print figures for titles in the *Keurboslaan* series were low in the 1940s and 1950s, this should be seen against the background of a relatively small Afrikaans book market. It can be argued that the titles achieved a high level of saturation among Afrikaans readers if the sales figures for these publications are compared to sales figures for some of the best selling Afrikaans literary works (which were prescribed in schools). In addition, these books were available in public libraries. Work undertaken by Snyman (1994, 1997, 2001) indicates that these books are still widely available in public libraries today.

Whilst Chapter Four illuminates similarities and differences between the *Keurboslaan* series and the British public school story genre of fiction, some preliminary conclusions about the status of *Keurboslaan* as popular fiction can be drawn here. First, while it is evident that the *Keurboslaan* series was produced as popular fiction, based on the formula, it cannot be argued that it constitutes mass produced popular fiction. The series was never aimed at a mass market since the market for Afrikaans books was very tiny in the 1940s. Moreover, some of the characteristics of the *Keurboslaan* texts, for example the strong emphasis on character development, do not conform to the model for mass-produced popular fiction for children, such as the books by Enid Blyton. This may have contributed to the fact that it was never mass-produced. At the same time, from the reception study it is clear that the *Keurboslaan* series was never accepted as good children's literature either. It is evident that the series occupied an interesting space. While the series was not canonised, it also did not match up to the definition of mass fiction for children. It was not accepted by the Department of Education as good enough to be prescribed in schools, yet the series was bought by the public libraries in the provinces, which meant that it was widely available to children.

It can be argued that the *Keurboslaan* series was in part and probably unintentionally set up as a class project. J.L. van Schaik publishers were renowned for high quality production and as a result their books were generally more expensive than books produced by, for example, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel. More significant perhaps is the fact that no reference could be found where books produced by J.L. van Schaik, including popular publications and children's books, were referred to as trash literature or low quality fiction in the same terms as books by Afrikaans Pers Boekhandel and

other publishers were often described. The print runs of all Van Schaik's children's books, with the exception of books produced for the school market, were fairly small and the *Keurboslaan* series, despite the fact that a number of titles were reprinted several times, cannot be regarded as a bestseller in mass market terms. Blakemore herself hinted to the fact that her readership was more likely to be drawn from the children of the professional classes and upper working classes in the city than from those that attended under resourced schools in rural areas and on farms.⁶⁶ Together, these factors seem to indicate that the *Keurboslaan* books would be within the financial reach of the children of the professional classes, the upwardly mobile and in particular children from the cities and that everything about the series supported the idea that the target audience was the upper classes. Yet, a well-developed public library system meant that these books were available to a far broader readership.

The successive reprints of the series (in 1959s, 1960s, 1970s and 1990s) denote that *Keurboslaan* books have been read by Afrikaans readers across generations.

⁶⁶ This issue is discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven:

Stella Blakemore⁶⁷ and the *Keurboslaan* series⁶⁸

Haar vader, kaptein in die Britse leer, die gehate vyand. Haar moeder Emma, uit die blouste Boerebloed as 'n mens ooit van 'n 'Boere-adel' kan praat. Uit dié teenoorgestelde pole, die twee wêrelde, is 'n meisie gebore wie se skryfnaam, Theunis Krogh, 'n huishoudelike naam sou word, soos die tafels en stoele in die huise waar Afrikaanse boeke gelees word. Sy is in baie opsigte 'n lewendende ironie van die geskiedenis: Half Brits, half Afrikaans, berese en belese met 'n wye blik op die wêreld, onbekrompe en tog nog in murg en been een van ons...⁶⁹

André du Toit, *Die Vaderland*, 28 July 1972

Introduction

In Chapter Two it was indicated that two central questions posed in this study are 1) how did the Afrikaner intelligentsia manage to disseminate its ideas and ideology of Afrikaner nationalism to a wider audience across class fractures and turn it into a kind of mass consciousness?; and 2) what was the composition of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, what evidence is available about upward and downward mobility between this class and other classes, and what kinds of contestation and resistance took place within this class? In this chapter, these two questions are addressed.

In their work on Afrikaner nationalism, scholars such as Bozzoli (1981, 1987), Hyslop (1996) and Hofmeyr (1987) place a strong emphasis on the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie who are fashioned as self-conscious creators of the myths around which communities and ethnicities are shaped. Consequently, these theorists are interested in the way in which Afrikaner identity has been constructed and invented. In exploring this issue, they focus on the creators of the very myths and symbols that make it

⁶⁷ The name Stella Blakemore is consistently used in this study, as this is the name under which she is best known in this country. Blakemore did, however, use her married name, Stella Owen in official and personal correspondence.

⁶⁸ This chapter is based on a summary of my master's dissertation, entitled *Crafting popular imaginaries: Stella Blakemore and Afrikaner nationalism*

⁶⁹ Translation: 'Her father, captain in the British army, the hated enemy. Her mother Emma, of the bluest Boer blood – if one can ever talk of Boer royalty. Of these two opposite poles, these two worlds, a girl was born, whose nom de plume, Theunis Krogh, would become a household name, like the tables and chairs in the homes where Afrikaans books are read. She is, in many respects, a living irony of history. Half British, half Afrikaans, who has travelled much and is well read with an open view on the world, broadminded yet still inherently one of us...'

possible to 'invent a nation' and on the artefacts or products that these 'actors' produced to speak to those that they wanted to endow with a particular identity.

This research aims to address issues relating to class formation and the role of the petty bourgeoisie by foregrounding and examining the class position of the author, Stella Blakemore, and to document her complex relationship with other members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia. It is this group that is generally regarded as the self-conscious community creators, the actors in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism. Yet, the petty bourgeoisie was not a homogenous group and their efforts to capture a new power base for themselves culminated in the establishment of a wide and disparate range of movements and interventions. Moreover, it is recognised that community creators do not operate in an unlimited field. Identity is fragmented and fractured along many other lines, including class, ethnicity, geography, etc. The question is therefore what strategies these self-conscious community-creators employ in order to craft myths and symbols that transcend, for example, class fractures. In terms of its theoretical basis, this chapter draws on Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of *habitus* and Antonio Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual.

Stella Blakemore: A brief biography of the author of the *Keurboslaan* series

Stella Blakemore, the daughter of Emma Krogh and Captain Percy Blakemore, was born on 13 April 1906 in the Heilbron-Lindley district of the Orange River Colony. Her maternal grandfather was Theunis Johannes Krogh, former Under State Secretary for Home Affairs of Paul Kruger's Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), and her father was a British soldier who had stayed behind after the Anglo-Boer war to become a farmer (Hazelhurst 1978:6). Percy Blakemore had married her mother, a music teacher, during the war years (*Hoofstad*, 14 June 1974:29).

As a child, Blakemore went to boarding school in Natal and admitted that she did not enjoy the experience (Van Rensburg 1975:8). After matriculating, she studied further in Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg.⁷⁰ On completion of her studies, she travelled through Germany and the Netherlands, before going on to London where she stayed for eight months and obtained her piano and song licentiate from the London Royal

⁷⁰ Handwritten photocopied document entitled 'Suid-Afrikaanse sangeres – Mej. Stella Blakemore', 1930, with words 'E. Lindberg' and 'afgeskryf' (copied) on cover page. 10 January 1930. Reference number B.15 (4474): 8, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

Academy of Music as well as an ARCM in song.⁷¹ She then left for Germany where she studied opera at the Dresden Opera School under the guidance of Felis Petreng⁷² and at the Conservatorie für Lieder under Professor Klüge. According to a friend, Anneke Reitz, Stella had 'a very beautiful soprano voice' (Pretoria News, 5 June 1991:7). In Dresden she played the leading part in a number of operas, including 'Faust', 'Fra Diavolo', and 'Die Zauberflöte'.⁷³ She wrote her first book, *Die Goue Sleutel*, a drama in Afrikaans, whilst she was studying opera in Germany, and it was published by J.L. van Schaik in 1931 (*Die Volksblad*, 5 June 1991:2).⁷⁴

In January 1930 she returned to South Africa for a series of concerts. It was reported that she planned to stay in South Africa for six months before returning to Germany to further advance her career.⁷⁵ She married a Welshman and civil engineer, David Owen, in 1933 in London⁷⁶, where she was teaching and singing professionally.⁷⁷ In 1934 she suffered a miscarriage and was ill for a long time. In May 1935, after recovering her health, she returned to South Africa where she planned to settle in Pretoria and take over some of her mother's singing and music pupils. Her husband came along and took up a position in Swaziland. Blakemore lived in Pretoria where she owned a house in Muckleneuk and worked with her mother in the Blakemore Studios for music, singing and drama students, which she had opened (*Die Volksblad*, 5 June 1991:2).

Her husband worked for the British colonial service and was therefore deployed to work in a number of African countries. It could not be established exactly when Blakemore and her husband left South Africa for Kumasi in the Gold Coast (later Accra, Ghana), but from the correspondence in the NALN Collection in Bloemfontein, it would seem that it was sometime in 1947.⁷⁸ Blakemore later also followed her husband to

⁷¹ Handwritten photocopied document entitled 'Suid-Afrikaanse sangeres – Mej. Stella Blakemore', 1930, with words 'E. Lindberg' and 'afgeskryf' (copied) on cover page. 10 January 1930. Reference number B.15 (4474): 8, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷² Handwriting of the surname illegible, could also be Petreng, Petieng, etc.

⁷³ Handwritten photocopied document entitled 'Suid-Afrikaanse sangeres – Mej. Stella Blakemore', 1930, with words 'E. Lindberg' and 'afgeskryf' (copied) on cover page. 10 January 1930. Reference number B.15 (4474): 8, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁴ See also photocopied document, no date, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁵ Handwritten photocopied document entitled 'Suid-Afrikaanse sangeres – Mej. Stella Blakemore', 1930, with words 'E. Lindberg' and 'afgeskryf' (copied) on cover page. 10 January 1930. Reference number B.15 (4474): 8, NALN collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁶ Photocopied document, no date, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁷ Photocopied document, no date, reference number 785/78/20, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁸ The first letter in the collection that was written by Blakemore from Kumasi, in the Gold Coast, to her publishers is dated 11 September 1947. It could be that they had left a few years earlier in 1945 as there is a gap in the correspondence, but it seems more likely that they only left in 1947.

Swaziland and Nigeria. They also lived for periods in London and often travelled to Italy for holidays. In 1945 she adopted a baby girl from the Armstrong-Benin Tehuis in Bloed Street in Pretoria and in 1946 adopted a baby boy from the same home. Both children were given up for adoption by Afrikaans-speaking families. When the children became of school-going age and she and her husband were living in Kumasi in the Gold Coast, the children were sent to school in Wales where they stayed with Blakemore's mother, Emma. Blakemore tried to spend time with her mother and children in Wales whenever she was not with her husband in Africa. In 1954, Blakemore and her husband bought a four hundred year old land cottage in an apple orchard in the scenic coastal town Warrenpoint, which is situated in County Down, Northern Ireland and is in close proximity of the town Newry and the Mourne Mountains (Van Rensburg 1975:8, Hazelhurst 1978:6). They restored the house and used it as a holiday home when they were not living there (Van Rensburg 1975:8). Emma Blakemore and the children moved to Northern Ireland where they lived in the cottage and where the children went to school.

In addition to writing books, Blakemore was involved in many other creative activities. She taught music all her life and was involved in broadcasting. Blakemore also actively participated in community activities and was a member of the Royal Commonwealth Society (*Die Vaderland*, 28 July 1978) and of the Women's Institute in Ireland, an organisation of both catholic and protestant women (Louw 1974:13). She was also involved in religious activities.

Despite Blakemore's dream of returning to South Africa to settle there permanently, this never materialised, partly because of her husband's work commitments and in part due to her poor health. She did return to South Africa for a visit in 1956 and again in 1974, this time after an absence of eighteen years, and visited the country a number of times thereafter. However, the cottage in Northern Ireland was to be the place where Blakemore finally settled. She lived there for thirty years until her death in 1991. Stella Blakemore died in the age of 85 and was buried on 26 May 1991 (*Die Burger*, 5 June 1991:3), after having been bed-ridden for a long time following a stroke (*Die Transvaler*, 5 June 1991:4).

Publications by Stella Blakemore

All Blakemore's published books that could be traced are in Afrikaans. She wrote two plays in English for a South African audience, but these were never published. From

correspondence between Blakemore and her South African publisher, it is clear that she had written works in English for an Irish public. It is, however, unclear if these were ever published. For political reasons, which are explained more in depth further on in the chapter, Blakemore felt that she was not in a position to disclose her other interests – which included her writing in English – to the South African public. This may be the reason why she said in an interview in 1978, that all her published works were in Afrikaans (Hazelhurst 1978:6). However, based on her correspondence with the Van Schaiks – her publishers in South Africa - it seems fairly likely that this statement was indeed true, and that - with the exception of a couple of short stories, contributions to magazines and single poems - she never published in English.

Besides the name Stella Blakemore, she wrote under a number of pseudonyms. These included her married name, Stella Owen, as well as Theunis Krogh, Annelise Bierman and Dien Grimbeek.⁷⁹ It could not be established exactly how many books she wrote in her lifetime. Estimates range between fifty and seventy. In an interview with Mary-Ann van Rensburg in 1975 – when she was nearly seventy years old - Blakemore stated that she had already written more books than the number of years she had lived (Van Rensburg 1975:8) and in a later interview she estimated that she had written between 60 and 70 books, ‘including two plays with music and some poems’ (Hazelhurst 1978:6). It is possible that a number of these manuscripts may never have been published.

Blakemore specialised in literature for children. She wrote only one novel, *Katrientjie* that was aimed at an adult audience.⁸⁰ Her most successful books were the *Keurboslaan* books, a series for boys about a boarding school for boys, and the *Maasdorp* series, books for girls about a boarding school for girls. Blakemore wrote the *Keurboslaan* series under the pseudonym Theunis Krogh, whilst the *Maasdorp* series was published under her own name, Stella Blakemore. Blakemore’s *Maasdorp* series was enormously popular amongst girls. The original *Maasdorp* series consisted of sixteen titles. In the 1970s this series was also revised and condensed by Blakemore and published in ten parts. To this she added two new titles, *Ontgroening op Maasdorp* and *Lalage op Maasdorp*, which brought the revised series to twelve books. The full list of books in the *Maasdorp* series is provided in the table below.

⁷⁹ Photocopied document, no date, NALN Collection, Bloemfontein.

⁸⁰ No information could be obtained about her book, *Verpleegsters is altyd die ergstes*, which was published under her married name, Stella Owen. It may be that this was also targeting an adult audience.

Table 6: Titles in the *Maasdorp* series

Title	Author	Publisher	First publication date
<i>Maasdorp</i>			
1. Allegra op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1942
2. Jongste meisie in Maasdorp Skool, Die	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1933
3. Meisies van Maasdorp, Die – 'n Verhaal vir meisies	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1932
4. Hoofmeisie Kobie	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1947
5. Kobie en die Wonderkind	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1939
6. Kobie gaan verder	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1951
7. Kobie regeer: 'n storie van Maasdorp se skool	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1935
8. Niggies op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1956
9. Maltrappe op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1961
10. Juffrou Kobie	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1953
11. Maasdorp se drie Musketiers	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1943
12. Maasdorp se nuwe onderwyseres	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1946
13. Maasdorp se redaktrises	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1957
14. Maters op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1961
15. Nukke op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1965
16. Jongspan op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1955
17. Ontgroening of Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1972
18. Lalage op Maasdorp	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1974

The *Maasdorp* series was reproduced in the 1990s in omnibus form:

Table 7: Titles in the *Maasdorp Omnibus* series

Title	Author	Publisher	First publication date
<i>Maasdorp Omnibus</i>			
1. Maasdorp Omnibus 1	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1995
2. Maasdorp Omnibus 2	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1996
3. Maasdorp Omnibus 3	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1997

In Afrikaans juvenile fiction, Blakemore reigns supreme as the queen of series books. She produced no less than six book series, including *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* books. A comprehensive list of Blakemore's other publications is provided in the table below.

Table 8: Other titles by Stella Blakemore (excluding titles in the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series)

Title	Author	Publisher	First publication date
Janse Cloete Series			
1. Die kuns van Janse Cloete, Die Lente Serie Die kuns van Janse Cloete	Theunis Krogh Theunis Krogh	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel J.L. van Schaik	unknown
2. Die erfporse van Janse Cloete	Theunis Krogh	J.L. van Schaik	1949
Delarey Series			
3. Vorm II op Delarey	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1948
4. Stryd oor Peta Stryd oor Peta	Stella Blakemore	Unie Boekhandel Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1946
Blourand Series			
5. Ses kamermaats op Blourand – Die Lente Serie no. 1	Stella Blakemore	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1944
6. Judith op Blourand- Die Lente Serie no. 9	Stella Blakemore	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1945
7. Drie klontjies op Blourand – Lente Serie no. 34/39	Stella Blakemore	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1950

Title	Author	Publisher	First publication date
8. Elfie, Apie en Carolus – Lente Serie no. 23	Stella Blakemore	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	1946
Die Rissies Series			
9. Die Rissies en die Masels	Dien Grimbeek	J.L. van Schaik	1960
10. Die Rissies in die Stad	Dien Grimbeek	J.L. van Schaik	1960
11. Die Rissies en die Kersboom	Dien Grimbeek	J.L. van Schaik	1960
12. Die Rissies en die Bure	Dien Grimbeek	J.L. van Schaik	1960
Plays and Operettas			
13. 'n Wedstryd in Droomland	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1934
14. Eerste April – toneelstukkie in een bedryf	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1934
15. Die Goue sleutel – 'n blyspel vir kinders in een bedryf	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1931
16. Die Toweruur – operette in een bedryf vir kinders	Stella Blakemore	J.L. van Schaik	1932
Other Books			
17. Die Familie Karelse	Stella Blakemore	Nasionale Pers Beperk	1938
18. Die swaard	Annelise Bierman	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	unknown
19. Katrientjie, 'n grappige roman	Stella Owen	Nasionale Pers	1939
20. Die Wilde Raubenheimers	Theunis Krogh	J.L. van Schaik	1948
21. Verpleegsters is altyd die ergstes	Stella Owen	Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel	unknown

The initial *Keurboslaan* series comprised of twenty titles and when the books were condensed in the 1970s, two new titles were added. The full *Maasdorp* list includes the original sixteen titles and the two new books that were released in the nineteen seventies. Together with her other books, it brings the total number of original books written by Blakemore, excluding the revised, condensed and amalgamated versions of earlier books, to sixty-one titles. To this list can be added the five *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* books that were published in omnibus form, the ten titles that were published in the revised *Maasdorp* series that were abridged and merged from the

sixteen titles in the first series, the nine titles in the *Nuwe Keurboslaan* series that were abridged and merged from the twenty books in the first *Keurboslaan* series, the translation of her novel *Katrientjie* in Zulu⁸¹ and of one of the Maasdorp books, *Juffrou Kobie*, in Dutch, as well as the words for a score of music published by Unie Publications.⁸² This brings the total list of books by Stella Blakemore to eighty-eight, excluding reprints, revised editions, and single titles published by more than one publisher – which is the case with some of the *Keurboslaan* books, as well as the Janse Cloete and other books.

A slice of her life: Getting to know Stella Blakemore through selected letters and interviews

In the J.L. van Schaik Collection housed at the National Afrikaans Literature Museum and Research Unit (NALN), a very valuable collection of correspondence between Stella Blakemore and her South African publisher, J. L. van Schaik, and later his son, Jan van Schaik, is stored. The letters are not representative of the total period over which her relationship with the Van Schaiks stretched. In the collection there are letters from the 1930s, when her business relationship with J.L. van Schaik commenced, another selection from the late 1940s, and a comprehensive set of letters covering the 1950s up to the end of the 1960s. In the period that Blakemore lived in Pretoria, between 1935 and approximately 1947 she was able to meet with her publishers personally, and there are therefore only records of contractual agreements for that period and no letters.⁸³ Unfortunately, there are no records of her exchanges with her publishers during the crucial 1970s or later. However, when she returned to South Africa in 1974 after an absence of more than eighteen years, her visit received extensive media coverage.

Stella Blakemore was a prolific writer. Her letters to her publishers are generally written in a conversational style and sometimes contain fairly personal information. The tone of the letters she received from various persons at J.L. van Schaik, however, is far more

⁸¹ Published in 1966 by Via Afrika in Cape Town with title *U-Phum'phele:inja yezidumo* and translated by W.M.B. (Wiseman Bishop Maqhawe de Kelsy) M'Khize. It was reprinted in 1966 by Juta in Cape Town.

⁸² Lentelied no. 1 in A. Music by Sydney Richfield, words by Stella Blakemore. Published by Unie Publikasies c1946, Pretoria. Consists of 1 score (11p.).

⁸³ The first letter in the collection that was written by Blakemore from Kumasi, in the Gold Coast, to her publishers is dated 11 September 1947. It could be that she and her husband had already left South Africa a few years earlier in 1945, as there is a gap in the correspondence, but it seems more likely that they only left in 1947.

guarded, restrained and formal. Countless of the publisher's letters include a paragraph or sentence to explain an unnecessary delay in responding to a letter or request from Blakemore, contributing to an impression that they were continuously falling behind in replying to the sometimes unstoppable flow of letters from their author.

The following section comprises of a summary of findings in my master's dissertation, based on a symptomatic reading of Blakemore's letters to her publisher and the interviews she granted to the South African media during her visits. Her letters offers a glimpse of the life and thoughts of a complex and perplexing figure in the Afrikaans literary scene at particular periods of her life in relation to her writing, her relationship with her country of birth, and her multiple identities as woman, Afrikaner, exile, South African, and world traveller.

At the outset of this chapter it was indicated that two central questions animated this part of the study. These are 1) how did the Afrikaner intelligentsia manage to disseminate its ideas and ideology of Afrikaner nationalism to a wider audience across class fractures and turn it into a kind of mass consciousness and 2) what was the composition of the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, what evidence is available about upward and downward mobility between this class and other classes, and what kinds of contestation and resistance took place within this class? It was indicated that one of the problems of explanation in studies on Afrikaner nationalism is the level on which accounts are provided. Studies on Afrikaner nationalism tend to focus on national, macro level events and representations, which undermines the ability of such accounts to adequately explain the phenomenon of Afrikaner nationalism on the level of everyday life. In this case, it is hoped that this local, micro level study of the life of a popular fiction author will augment other theoretical accounts of Afrikaner nationalism.

Blakemore and the publishing industry

In terms of the relationship between the publishing industry and Blakemore, Du Plessis (2002) demonstrated that Blakemore's books were never conceived of as a nationalist project by its publishers or its author. Given that her books were regarded as popular fiction for children, these texts were not explicitly tied in with any of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie's literary projects aimed at promoting the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. These arguments are supported by the founding history of J.L van Schaik publishers, the firm's likely motivation for producing the

Keurboslaan series, as well as Blakemore's reflections on her personal reasons for writing the series (see Du Plessis 2002). J.L. van Schaik's involvement in producing the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series seems to have been motivated by a combination of the drive for profit and commitment to the cause of Afrikaner nationalism and thus the promotion of Afrikaans. However, based on a scrutiny of Blakemore's letters to her publisher as well as Chapter Six of the present study, it is clear that in the case of popular fiction for children, the profitability of ventures was a key concern. It was shown that J.L. van Schaik felt sympathetic towards the cause of Afrikaner nationalism and that the firm did indeed publish a number of books that served the interests of this cause despite the fact that these books were unlikely to be profitable. Yet, it appears from the correspondence between Blakemore and her publishers as well as from the interview with Jan van Schaik that the main motivation for publishing the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* books was simply profit. There was virtually no intervention from the publishers in the narrative of her books or attempts to give the books a particular political slant. On one issue the publishers stood firm, though, and that was that Blakemore could not translate the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* books into English. While the motivation informing this directive may in part have been sentiment towards the Afrikaans language, the evidence seems to suggest that it is more likely that the publishers were concerned about the reaction of a conservative Afrikaans book buying public on finding out that these series books have also been published in English and the implications that would have for sales.

The Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and Blakemore

Whilst Blakemore's class position was that of the petty bourgeoisie, Blakemore's relationship with the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie seems to have been ambiguous. Based on her letters to her publisher it can be argued that Blakemore did not embark on writing books to promote the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. On the contrary, she distanced herself on many occasions from the terrain of politics in general. Besides the overarching objective of writing to obtain an income stream, her main motivation for writing in Afrikaans seems to have been sentimental and a marker of her South African identity. Not only did she often claim that she thought in Afrikaans, but after having left South Africa writing in Afrikaans provided Blakemore with a connection to the country to which she planned to return. For these reasons, she was prepared to write for an Afrikaans market and, in order to promote her

sales, she was willing to make some changes to her manuscripts and to write her stories in a way that would be acceptable to her audience, even if she did not always agree with their sentiments. Yet, she made it clear on a number of occasions that she would have been more than prepared to have her works translated into English for a broader South African audience. Actually, in quite a few of her letters she requested her publisher to review this restriction. While she suggested more than once that she was not fond of 'the English', it does seem to be plausible to suggest that her problem with the English was largely with the British. Phrased alternatively, Blakemore seems to have had some dislike for both the British and South African English speakers who embraced a British identity rather than a South African identity. In terms of her own identity, it appears that she saw herself primarily as a South African, rather than an Afrikaner. In one letter, she states that one shouldn't marry outside one's race as she had done by marrying a Welshman, as such a union of necessity implied that one of the partners needed to leave their country behind. This implies that Blakemore understood a close relationship to exist between nation and country. The Transvaal was her heartland and she did not feel at home in Natal, where she went to boarding school and which she felt was too English for her liking, or in the Cape Province. It could therefore be argued that rather than Afrikaner nationalism, Blakemore herself was embracing a kind of South African nationalism that was rooted in her experience of living in Transvaal but moulded by her experience of living away from South Africa, where her South Africanness came to dominate over her Afrikanerness and where distinctions between white Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans became more vague. In a sense, this sentiment therefore encapsulated a world where Afrikaners outweighed English speakers in numbers but where there was not a clear distinction between white Afrikaans speakers and white English speakers and where the boundaries between the groups were fairly fluid.

Blakemore did not form part of the inner circle of the Afrikaner intelligentsia that mobilised around the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. This could be explained by a number of factors but conclusive evidence is lacking. First, Blakemore's family history would have made it very difficult for her to be included in this circle. Whilst she was described as Afrikaner royalty, she wore the taint of the enemy given that her father was an officer of the British army. This would have been exacerbated by the attempts of the Afrikaner intelligentsia in the decades following the Anglo-Boer war to revive the atrocities of the Anglo-Boer War as a strategy for advancing the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. Second, Blakemore married a Welshman, which

meant that her home language was English. Third, Blakemore was not an author of literary works in Afrikaans, but produced popular fiction for the youth, which was a marginal literature. Fourth, Blakemore's acceptance into this circle would have been hindered by her identity as a woman. While women did play a prominent role in advancing Afrikaner nationalism, Blakemore's identity as the wife of a foreigner must have made it very difficult to gain credibility. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that Blakemore herself wanted to be part of this circle. In many ways, her extensive travels and the long period she spent in various parts of Europe in her early twenties had turned her into a European cosmopolitan.

While she therefore clearly belonged to the stratum of the petty bourgeoisie, Blakemore was never a full member of the Afrikaner intelligentsia and there is evidence that many Afrikaners saw her as a foreigner. In terms of the broader white Afrikaans speaking population, Blakemore was not a very well known public figure. This was the result of the fact that she lived away from South Africa for so many years of her productive writing life, but also because her publishers were concerned about the fact that boys would not be keen to read the *Keurboslaan* books if they knew the books were written by a woman. Moreover, after she had left South Africa, J.L. van Schaik was concerned that the reading public would find out that Blakemore did not live in South Africa and was indeed 'English-speaking'. As a result, Blakemore was in a way shielded from her reading public. Hence, the impact she could make as a public figure on events in South Africa was very low.

Not only did Blakemore not belong to the inner circle of the Afrikaner intelligentsia in Pretoria, but she also clashed with members of the stratum on a number of occasions. Her outspoken, sometimes brash, manner landed her in trouble with many prominent Afrikaners in the Transvaal, an issue she comments on in her letters to J.L. van Schaik. Her disagreements with the Afrikaans language purists and the editors of her manuscripts have been well documented. Her relationship with her publishers is yet another example of an interaction with the Afrikaner establishment that did not always run smoothly. J.L. van Schaik's relationship with their author can be summarised as cautious. Whilst the relationship between Blakemore and the senior Mr van Schaik had always been strained, she developed a much closer relationship with his son, Jan. Yet, even Jan's relationship with Blakemore can be described as guarded and from the correspondence one senses that Jan saw his role principally as mediator, having to keep Blakemore away from and guarding her against the Afrikaner establishment. Finally, already in the early

years, but particularly from the 1960s onwards her work was scorned by decision-makers in academic and government circles who described it as poor quality fiction. It is therefore very difficult to cast Blakemore in the role of prophet of Afrikaner nationalism and as spokesperson for the Afrikaner intelligentsia set on promoting Afrikaner nationalism. Not only did Blakemore not belong to that circle, but also there were some enemies of hers among their ranks.

Blakemore, the project of Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner subjectivity

Despite the fact that her books were not conceived as a nationalist project and that its author, Blakemore, was not a popular or well known member of the Afrikaner establishment, the combination of a private sector initiative, based on the expansion of the market of the Afrikaans book, and a well-travelled and at times voluntarily exiled South African writer homesick for her country of birth proved to be a powerful combination that played into the agenda of Afrikaner nationalism. It is argued here that Blakemore's books contributed to the project of 'inventing' an Afrikaner nation and thus to the development of Afrikaner nationalism in at least six ways.

First, Blakemore's decision to write popular fiction for children in Afrikaans, whilst apparently born out of two competing motivations – the fact that entry into the Afrikaans market seemed to be fairly easy given Blakemore's need to earn extra income through writing and her sentiment towards the language and country of her birth – was deeply political, at least in terms of its implications. At a time when there were dismally few examples of children's literature in Afrikaans, she started writing popular fiction. When she started the *Maasdorp* series for girls in the early 1930s and the *Keurboslaan* series in the early 1940s the market for Afrikaans books was still very small. It can be argued that Blakemore did not only fill a gap in the market, but, instead, contributed to creating a market for popular fiction in Afrikaans. In this respect, her books have contributed to the expansion of the Afrikaans book market.

Second, the popularity of the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series enticed children to read Afrikaans books. On the event of Langenhoven's death on 15 July 1932, *Die Burger* wrote in its editorial that it was Langenhoven who had taught the Afrikaner people to read through his column in *Die Burger*, 'Aan Stille Waters', his books and his literature for children (Steyn 1992:39). After his death, though, it was Stella Blakemore – together with perhaps Mikro, though his children's books targeted much younger readers – who was to become the first author of Afrikaans children's

literature that understood the charm of the formulaic series books and the popularity of series novels in English and who was able to produce an Afrikaans equivalent. After Langenhoven's death and the popularity of his *Brolloks en Bittergal* and *Die Krismiskinders*, and later E.B. Grosskopf's successful children's book *Patrys-hulle*, it was Blakemore who introduced the idea of the series book to a wide range of young Afrikaans readers, and, in doing so, expanded the market for Afrikaans books and created a captive audience lured by the attractiveness of the series book. For this reason, Blakemore's biggest contribution is often said to be the fact that she got Afrikaans children reading.

Third, through her books, Blakemore created a community of Afrikaans readers. The *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series functioned to create new kinds of communities. People who had never met each other before shared the experience of having read the *Keurboslaan* series and that became a way in which connections were made. While readers of *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* may not have known each other, they were connected through the fact that they all felt that they knew Roelof Serfontein intimately. These connections should not only be seen as transgressing space and geography, but became inter-generational connections as successive generations of Afrikaans readers came to know the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* characters. As these books were not translated from or into English, they became part of a uniquely Afrikaans imaginary world. This is a practical example of how what Isabel Hofmeyr (1987) refers to as 'a sediment of Afrikanerness' began to settle in amongst Afrikaans speakers.

Fourth, while Blakemore was not an influential public figure in South Africa and among Afrikaners it was precisely because details about the author were not widely known in South Africa that she was able to make such a considerable impact through her fiction. For example, it was indicated that reviewers of the *Keurboslaan* books were of the opinion that the author, Theunis Krogh, was trying through his books to establish an indigenous educational system. Reviewers therefore actively and strongly encouraged parents and teachers to read the books themselves as an educational experience. From the correspondence between J.L. van Schaik and Blakemore, it is clear that for a long time it was not known that she was the real author of the *Keurboslaan* books. The fictitious author therefore was received as a flesh and blood male Afrikaner who used the medium of children's literature to promote and develop his views on what an authentic Afrikaner educational system and establishment should look like. As a result, the obvious links between this

genre of fiction in Afrikaans and the school story tradition in Britain was either overlooked or not regarded as important. As a result, the *Keurboslaan* series was imbued with a status well beyond that of popular children's fiction.

Fifth, the desire of both the author and the publisher to increase the sales of her books to the Afrikaans reading public saw both parties placing a strong focus on making the books appear as 'authentic' Afrikaans texts. Blakemore, for example, assumed the identity of a man and an Afrikaner in her many letters to fans. One of these letters was used on the cover jacket of the *Keurboslaan* series. It was therefore read by the many *Keurboslaan* readers. In this letter, she explained that the *Keurboslaan* characters were based on people she knew. For a range of reasons, the firm J.L. van Schaik too was trying to pass Blakemore off as Theunis Krogh. They therefore tried to keep Blakemore away from the South African public and were in fact quite upset when it was leaked that Blakemore had been the author of both the *Maasdorp* and the *Keurboslaan* series. These combined efforts succeeded in obscuring the relationship between fiction and reality. This contributed to a dominant view that the series was written by an Afrikaner about Afrikaners and that even though the stories were fictitious they had a factual base in reality and that characters such as Eugene Krynauw and Roelof Serfontein were modelled on prominent 'real life' Afrikaners.

Sixth, returning to Taylor's notion of the social imaginary as the background against which social practices are performed and at the same time constitutive of the performance of such practices, it can be argued that Blakemore's books, in particular the *Maasdorp* and *Keurboslaan* series, in some ways produced the Afrikaner social imaginary at the eve of Apartheid and the seizure of state power by Afrikaners. The *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series reflect and represent a kind of moral order. Phrased differently, it can be argued that these series produce answers to questions about the way in which one ought to live one's life and the relationship between members of the South African political society. Given that the social imaginary is not a set of doctrines, rules or values, but rather is captured or represented by images, myths and stories of which these texts, which were widely read in the white Afrikaans-speaking community, form part. Since the scope of this study did not include an analysis of the contents of these two series, further research on this topic needs to be undertaken.

Conclusion: Rethinking the imagined community through the notions of *habitus*, the organic intellectual and the social imaginary

In terms of analysing power, Gramsci demonstrates the importance of taking into account notions of culture. This study embarked with a question about the way in which the ruling class exercises hegemony. Through his notion of the organic intellectual, Gramsci explains the way in which such intellectuals can persuade the population to share their beliefs. As part of his revolutionary politics, Gramsci therefore argues that organic intellectuals can assist to develop an alternative hegemony. This is achieved through the creation of a common culture. Faced with the erosion of their power base after the Anglo-Boer War, members of the Afrikaans-speaking intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie were faced with the double challenge of producing a counter-culture against the existing hegemony of British imperialism and acting against other organic intellectuals who attempted to foster a new hegemony on the basis of class.

The claim that Blakemore furthered the cause of Afrikaner nationalism through her writings therefore begs the question as to whether she can be regarded as an organic intellectual in Gramscian terms. In order to answer this question, we need to return to Gramsci and the evidence presented in this study.

In Chapter One, Gramsci's notion of hegemony was outlined. Focusing on cultural aspects of hegemony, Gramsci argues that political power cannot only be seized but that an alternative hegemony needs to be created in order to secure a complete revolution. Such a revolution is explained as a revolution that 'brings to power a coherent class formation united behind a single economic, political and cultural conception of the world' (Adamson 1980:171). This description seems to apply well to the phenomenon of Afrikaner nationalism, which did succeed – albeit temporarily – not in creating a coherent class formation but in bridging class divides and in uniting white Afrikaans speakers behind a single economic, political and cultural conception of the world. The question then is in what way Gramsci thought that an existing hegemony can be replaced with an alternative one. Adamson argues that Gramsci saw political change as possible through a dialectic interaction between what he termed 'organic intellectuals' and ordinary people (Adamson 1980:169). Gramsci argues that organic intellectuals emerge from the subject classes themselves and that they are successful precisely because they have themselves lived and grown up in the same environment as ordinary people:

New ideas would not be introduced or 'propagandized' as extraneous inputs into mass politics but would be integrated into the very fabric of proletarian culture, life-styles, language, traditions, etc. by revolutionaries who themselves worked and lived within the same environment. Only this could ensure the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, the intellectual and the spontaneous, the political and the social, which could lay down the foundations of an authentic *Marxist* subjectivity in popular consciousness itself (Boggs 1976:77-78).

Gramsci explains the reason why organic intellectuals have a better chance in appealing to the masses than intellectuals as follows:

The popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel. The two extremes are therefore pedantry and philistinism on the one hand and blind passion on the other... The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned: in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual if distinct and separate from the people-nation, i.e. without feeling the elementary passions of the people... One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation (Gramsci 1971:418).

According to Boggs it is necessary for organic intellectuals to work from 'within' and embed their projects within the very fabric of culture, life-style and traditions. If this is the case, then the domain of popular fiction for children provides fertile ground indeed for the operations of organic intellectuals.

Returning to Blakemore, it is clear that she cannot be described in any terms as a Marxist organic intellectual. However, Gramsci did not see this as a unique feature of the Marxist project. Rather, he argues that any political movement that wishes to succeed needs to have its own organic intellectuals. The question therefore is to what extent Blakemore can be described as an organic intellectual promoting the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. To answer this question, we have to turn to Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*.

If we take the *habitus* as a person's cultural habitat, an internalised and non-self-conscious set of dispositions acquired from both acculturation and personal

characteristics, then the evidence offered in this study may be used in order to draw some tentative conclusions about Blakemore's position as organic intellectual.

There is no evidence to suggest that Blakemore consciously set out to create or foster through her writings an Afrikaner community in Afrikaner nationalist terms. On the contrary, Blakemore distanced herself from what she regarded to be politics. Yet, she explicitly commented on the fact that it pleased her deeply to write for 'her own people' in Afrikaans. She articulated a close link between her understanding of nation and country, and she did indeed promote a kind of South Africanism. However, finally, if one takes into account her motivation for writing and producing texts at such frantic speed, it would seem that her notion of community was closely linked to her language: her children, mother and the elderly Afrikaans-speaking relatives are the ones on whose behalves she felt she had to build up her financial resources. And in some way she thought of all three these groups as 'Afrikaners'.

There are many contradictions in the way in which Blakemore describes her project of writing fiction in Afrikaans. It is, however, clear that she did not use the blueprint of Afrikaner nationalism to guide her writings. The political and cultural content of her writings in Afrikaans are perhaps best explained with the help of Bourdieu's understanding of *habitus*, or the field of possibilities within which an author operates, whether on a conscious or subconscious level. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* is not unproblematic in this context as he clearly distinguishes between works of literature and mass-market fiction. However, whilst it is clear that Blakemore made a conscious effort in her writings to keep in mind the preferences of her target market she also stated that the kind of writing she undertook was the best she could possibly produce and that she derived great joy from her writings. Moreover, whilst it is true that she did try to shape her writings for a specific audience, she did so based on her own interpretation of that community, filtered and understood through her *habitus*. Blakemore used a medium – that of popular fiction – that crossed class divides and spoke to ordinary people. While it is therefore difficult to describe her as an organic intellectual, since she did not seem to be self-consciously committed to fostering the Afrikaner nation, it can be argued that she fulfilled the role of the organic intellectual for the petty bourgeoisie, based on the reasons provided in the preceding section.

It is therefore argued that – in some respects – Blakemore was more successful in fashioning an Afrikaner community through her children's literature than members

of the Afrikaner establishment were in their endeavours to foster Afrikaner nationalism. Indeed, Blakemore succeeded in areas where the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie had failed. From her letters it is evident that a great deal of creativity and spontaneity went into writing her books. Yet, that her books were not part of the 'authorised' canon of Afrikaner nationalist texts, but were read by ordinary readers who had to purchase the texts or obtain them from local libraries.

In summary, the author's *habitus* is instrumental in the production of fictional texts. In turn, as Taylor illuminates, these texts have the ability to create shared social imaginaries, which is the way in which ordinary people interpret their social surroundings. As such, the notion of the social imaginary is immensely powerful. This begs questions about the ways in which ordinary readers of the *Keurboslaan* and *Maasdorp* series 'read' these texts and the way in which these texts embroidered the social imaginary of white Afrikaans speakers.

In addition, Blakemore's reflections on her writing indicates that the relationship between popular fiction writing and the market economy is more complex and less singular than it is often rendered in scholarship on the subject. The research demonstrate that Blakemore took her craft as a writer serious, and whilst she was acutely aware of market desires and the fact that her writing was not regarded as 'literary', she brought to her craft a certain amount of dignity and integrity. In some ways, this finding challenges the binary opposition between popular fiction and high literature and invites further research.

Finally, it was argued that popular children's literature may have been one of the avenues through which the ideas and ideology of Afrikaner nationalism were disseminated to a wider audience across class fractures to turn it into a kind of mass consciousness. However, by illuminating the complex and sometimes fraught relationship between Stella Blakemore and the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie, it was shown that this kind of dissemination was not the prerogative of self-conscious community creators only.