|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **About you** | **[Salutation]** | Heilna | [Middle name] | du Plooy |
| [Enter your biography] | | | |
| North-West University | | | |

|  |
| --- |
| **Your article** |
| **Sestigers, The** |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| During the 1960’s a group of Afrikaans writers who called themselves ‘Die Sestigers’ (‘those of the sixties’), became prominent on the South African literary scene. Jan Rabie’s collection of short stories, *Een-en-Twintig* (*Twenty One*)(1956) and Etienne Leroux’s novel *Die Eerste Lewe van Colet* (*The First Life of Colet*) (1955) are regarded as the first clear signs of the movement that literary historians describe as the most influential literary movement in Afrikaans literature in the twentieth century. Despite huge differences in style and content these writers, including poets, novelists and dramatists, presented themselves as a group through their joint publications (the journals *Sestiger* and later *Kol*, as well as the collection of short stories *Windroos*), and by publicly debating their ideas about literature. |
| During the 1960’s a group of Afrikaans writers who called themselves ‘Die Sestigers’ (‘those of the sixties’), became prominent on the South African literary scene. Jan Rabie’s collection of short stories, *Een-en-Twintig* (*Twenty One*)(1956) and Etienne Leroux’s novel *Die Eerste Lewe van Colet* (*The First Life of Colet*) (1955) are regarded as the first clear signs of the movement that literary historians describe as the most influential literary movement in Afrikaans literature in the twentieth century. Despite huge differences in style and content these writers, including poets, novelists and dramatists, presented themselves as a group through their joint publications (the journals *Sestiger* and later *Kol*, as well as the collection of short stories *Windroos*), and by publicly debating their ideas about literature. They broke with tradition by explicitly rejecting existing literary styles and themes. They shared a world view that veered away from traditional Afrikaans cultural and religious views and which was influenced by philosophers like Nietzsche and Sartre, authors like Camus and Kafka, and art movements like surrealism and expressionism.  André P. Brink (1967:13) describes three prominent characteristics of the Sestigers: an acceptance of the relative nature of reality, ideas and literature itself; experimentation and even exploitation of the structure of the novel, resulting in a changed concept of ‘the epic world’; and the use and exploration of time and temporal relations as an active part of the structure of the novel.  The most prominent figures in the movement are novelists such as Etienne Leroux, André P. Brink, Abraham H. de Vries, Jan Rabie, Dolf van Niekerk and Chris Barnard, the poets Breyten Breytenbach, Ingrid Jonker and Adam Small, the last of whom was, like Bartho Smit, also a dramatist. Other writers such as Henriette Grové, Anna M. Louw, Elsa Joubert, Karel Schoeman and Berta Spies published in the same period but remain on the periphery of the movement of the Sestigers as such.  The Sestigers are regarded as the Modernists of Afrikaans literature on account of their views of literature and their literary practices. These include: the view that literature is not a realistic or mimetic reflection of life, but a representation of a perception of reality of an individual rather than a group; the belief that truth is unattainable and therefore an author can only present a preliminary and personal account of whatever he wants to write about; the acceptance that all knowledge is subject to epistemological uncertainty and doubt; a metalinguistic scepticism that calls into question the efficacy of language as a tool for the representation of meaning and that opens up the possibilities for free play and the exploitation and exploration of language in the literary process; and the acknowledgement and consciousness of the role of the reader as co-producer of meaning.  Consequently, the tone of the texts is often tinted with scepticism, cynicism, angst, a sense of being lost, a sense of meaninglessness, a debunking attitude, disillusionment, loneliness, an awareness of relativism, and a constant questioning of values and principles. Structurally and stylistically the Sestigers experiment with narrative structure and narrational devices and often make use of symbols and extended metaphors that activate a wide range of intertextual references. These texts thus opened up the Afrikaans literary mind to international ideas and concepts. Fantasy and irony were often used, and many texts can be described as surrealist. There are also numerous examples of experiments with typography and style, but the most prominent feature remains the experimentation with complex narrative techniques, including temporal relations, focalisation, narration and metatextuality, so that these texts are sophisticated and self-conscious in content and style.  Popular themes that are developed are the individual against the system, existential angst, man’s cruelty, the abject outsider, eroticism, the exploration of sexuality, and man as a traveller without a destination.  Existentialism was initially a strong impulse in the work of the Sestigers and in this regard Afrikaans literature came close to English and European literature of the first half of the twentieth century by gaining a more cosmopolitan and universal character. From the early 1970s onwards, however, the focus shifted away from the individual’s existential position to the political problems that dominated collective life in South Africa.  The Sestigers was an immensely influential movement in Afrikaans literature. Its practitioners all remained productive writers for at least three to four decades and developed their initial positions and principles to include a variety of styles, techniques and thematic material. Their texts were also influential in opening up political views in the Afrikaans community. The Sestigers paved the way for generations of writers to come. |
| Further reading:  (Cloete)  (Kannemeyer)  (Van Coller) |