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THREE ICONOLOGIES OF THE BOER DWELLING

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Drie ikonologië van die boerewoning

In hierdie essay word die grafiese voorstellings van die boerewoning deur drie kunstenaars, Rembrandt van Rijn in die middel sewentiende eeu, Francois le Vaillant in die laat agtiende eeu en 'Henk' Pierneef in die vroeë twintigste eeu, aan die hand van hul ikonologiese belang ten opsigte van die uitbeelding daarvan ondersoek. Dié van Rembrandt, alhoewel deel van die Nederlandse landskapstradisie, word medium vir weerkaatsing van 'n eie innerlike psige; dié van Le Vaillant, ten spyte van die gebrek aan artistieke meriete, word weens sy taksonomiese benadering bruikbaar as toegang tot die Kaapse volksboutradisie terwyl Pierneef se keuse van die Boerewoning verband hou met die opkoms van die landskapstradisie as deel van 'n opbloeï van Afrikaner nasionalisme in 'n tyd van doelbewuste soeke na eie kulturele identiteit. Twee hedendaagse sienings van dié landskapstradisie word gegee en teen mekaar gestel.

In this essay the graphic representations of the boer dwelling by three artists, namely Rembrandt van Rijn of the middle seventeenth century, Francois le Vaillant of the late eighteenth century and 'Henk' Pierneef of the early twentieth century, are examined in terms of the iconological significance of the use of the boer dwelling as subject for depiction. Rembrandt's, although part of a Dutch landscape tradition, is shown to be the vehicle for reflecting his inner psyche; Le Vaillant's, although artistically poor, prove useful for an objective understanding of Cape vernacular architecture because of his taxonomic concerns while Pierneef's choice of the Boer dwelling contributes to an iconology of landscape as part of an emergent Afrikaner nationalism at a time when there was an active search for an independent cultural identity. Current readings of the landscape tradition of the Afrikaner are cited and contrasted.

Preamble

The symbolic contents of artworks are termed its iconography, and the interpretation iconology. In previous centuries the schema of iconographic representation was well known, but today, where artistic representations are far more personalised and autobiographical, there is a need to be more astute and delving in attaining an iconological understanding of the artwork. The question which arises is whether, when a building is portrayed, be merely by way of factual representation, it can be interpreted iconologically?

It may be sensible to start with a definition since it then allows one to immediately assess any differences of opinion, and if so, whether it is fundamental or merely on matters

of detail. We speak here of iconology. The American Heritage Dictionary¹ gives iconology as "the branch of art history dealing with the description, analysis and interpretation of icons or iconic representations." Clearly we need to understand what an icon is. Collins² gives it as "a symbol resembling or analogous to the thing it represents (C16 from Latin, from Greek *eikōn* image, from *eikenai* to be like)."

This essay deals with the "boer" dwelling. The term means "farmer" in Dutch and is chosen because of its association with the artists whose works are discussed and later, in its capitalised form "Boer", as reference to the naturalised European colonists in South Africa who have Dutch and its derivative, Afrikaans, as their mother-tongue, and its connotation of the rusticity of the dwelling type, that is the humble farmhouse.

Can the boer dwelling be considered an icon and can its representation in artworks thus be interpreted iconologically? We need here to recapitulate on the use of the representation of the rustic shelter in Christian iconography. Its use is invariably, when associated with Old Testament subjects, a device for indicating the great age of the subject matter, or, as depicted in scenes of the annunciation or nativity, emphasises the humble circumstances of the players, Mary and Joseph.

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that in choosing to depict the boer house, even when the representation is objective, an iconological reading of the artwork is possible.

Only graphic artworks are chosen for discussion, because they were done deliberately for reproduction in numbers and therefore the choice medium suggests that the artist wished to address a wider audience.³

A Dutch iconography⁴

We start with Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), an obvious choice since the litany of his life is well known to art lovers. He was a native Dutchman, born in Leyden and moved to Amsterdam in 1631 where he was to achieve fame in his youth, affluence in his prime, but die materially impoverished yet after a rich life as an individual and artist.

We in South Africa have an additional interest in him since he was active as artist at the time of the European colonisation of South Africa by his fellow countrymen (or perhaps geographic proximates) and his depictions of the humble home may therefore have provided some clue as to the native dwellings the colonists might have constructed.

From an art-historical point of view our interest is in Rembrandt as etcher. The refinement of the technique of etching as an art-form was Rembrandt's achievement, although earlier artists such as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), a German, and the Italian, Parmigianino (1504-1540), developed the medium, but exploited it as draughtsman rather than as artists. Not only did Rembrandt explore the diverse effects of multiple bitings, additional engraving or scraping and burring, but also the effect of paper texture and colour or colour washes applied to the finished product.

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1. W. Morris (chief ed.), *American heritage dictionary of the English language* (Boston, 1970).
 2. P. Hanks (chief ed.), *Collins dictionary of the English language* (London, 1979).
 3. Based on a lecture presented on 7-9-1995, for the 7th Sophia Grey Memorial Exhibition of the Works of Hannes Meiring (Architect) at Olienhuis Museum, not only an architect of note but also an artist of ability. The subject matter of his drawings and paintings is usually buildings.
 4. The following have proved helpful in assessing the etchings of Rembrandt:
C. White, *Rembrandt as an etcher. A study of the artist at work. Text* (London, 1969).
C. White and K.G. Boon, *Rembrandt's etchings. An illustrated critical catalogue in two volumes, I Text & II Plates* (Amsterdam, 1969).

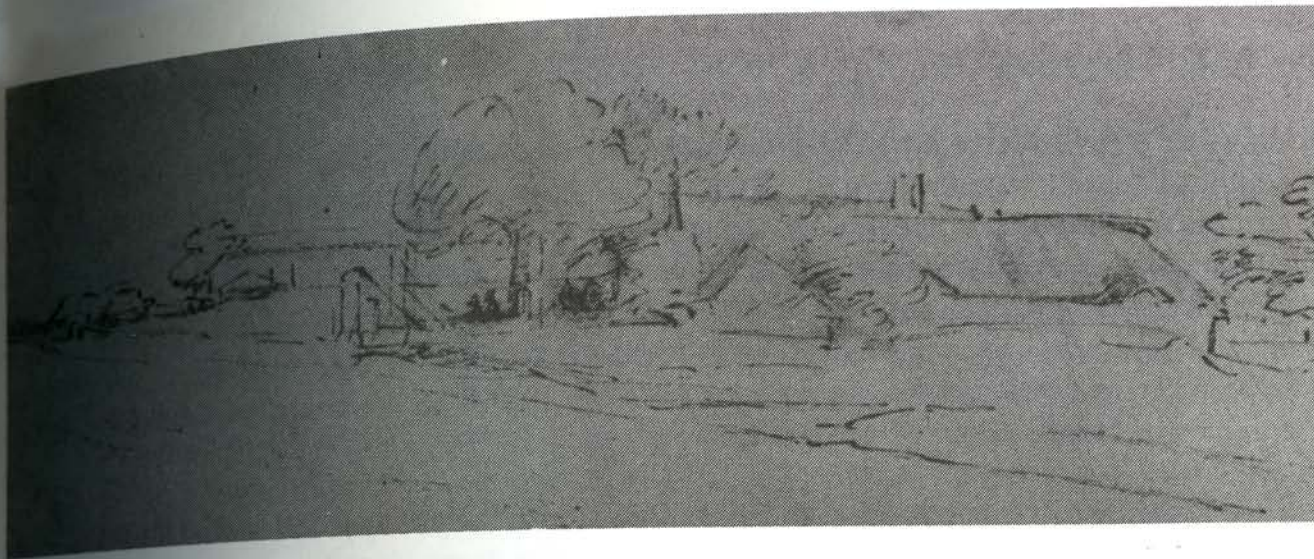


Figure 1a. Rembrandt, 'Farm building' (detail), pencil sketch, c. 1648/50 (British Museum).

From: C. White, *Rembrandt as an etcher. A study of the artist at work. Plates* (London, 1969), Fig. 320



Figure 1b. Rembrandt, 'Farm building' (detail), pencil sketch, c. 1650 (Ashmolean Museum).

From: C. White, *Rembrandt as an etcher. A study of the artist at work. Plates* (London, 1969), Fig. 321

But what of his subject matter as an artist?

Rembrandt's portraiture has the immediacy of psychological intimacy. His characters in his biblical representations were all likenesses of persons known to him. Then what of his landscapes? Rembrandt had a tangible relationship with his environment. Somehow the medium of copper and ink and the making of etchings satisfied him in his exploration of his environs, the physical surrounds of Amsterdam. For twenty years after 1640 he pursued the subject continuously in his sketchbooks and, in two outbursts of production, his etchings. Whereas his landscape drawings were always "plein air", that is done out in the open air, his etchings were the product of the studio. Yet there is always a close relationship between what is sketched and what is etched.

Rembrandt's landscapes — and his representations of cottages fall within this category — form only a small portion of his oeuvre; some two dozen depictions amongst his six to seven hundred paintings — are of landscapes and only a few more than two dozen amongst his two-hundred and fifty to three hundred etchings.

Landscapes as subjects in themselves were once frowned upon. Michelangelo is positively derisory:

They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadows of trees, and rivers and trees, which they call landscapes ... without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skilful choice or boldness, and finally without substance or vigour.⁵

Well it is these very "stuffs and masonry" of Rembrandt which interests us. Landscapes done prior to the seventeenth century were used chiefly as backgrounds to the subject or setting for the allegory. Seldom were they accurate representations of actual scenes.

As the iconographic structures of Renaissance art relaxed into genre the likes of the Dutch Hieronymus Bosch (c.1460-1516) and Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525-1569) used the everyday home as backdrop to their scenes. Dutch artists were of the first to draw landscapes as ends in themselves, and then from the spot of observation. Rembrandt however added the farmhouse as topographical device, almost a natural emanation, using the rustic dwelling as a device for suggesting that which endures. The primitive house was as natural as nature's own — grass, trees, soil, sea and sky. The boer house and its natural surrounds are treated as one. It is the object of depiction. The people who inhabit these pictures are incidental, looking like some lower creatures in a crevice or at an edge, lost in deep shadow.

Renée Descartes (1596-1650), who sojourned in Amsterdam in these times, has his *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) stood on its head. *Video ergo est* (I see therefore it is) would seem to be Rembrandt's injunction. If we are to give iconological significance to the humble boer dwelling it must be within the grand order of the natural realm.

Let us examine such a sequence. In the latter half of the 1640's Rembrandt lightly sketched in pen a study of a low farm building (Fig. 1a).⁶ The subject is reworked in more detail in 1650, and shown during another season, for now the haystack has risen above the roofline of the farmhouse (Fig. 1b). The trees strain in the wind but cosset the buildings. Later the landscape "naer het leven" (from life) although informed by the drawing, is turned into the etching "Landscape with trees, farm buildings and towers" (Fig. 1c) in 1650 "uyt het

5. A.M. Hind, *Rembrandt* (London, 1938), p. 98. A slightly altered version of the same quotation is attributed to Michelangelo by Francesco de Hollanda (D. Freedberg, *Dutch landscape prints of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1980), p. 11).

6. C. White, *Rembrandt as an etcher. A study of the artist at work.* (London, 1969), p. 211.

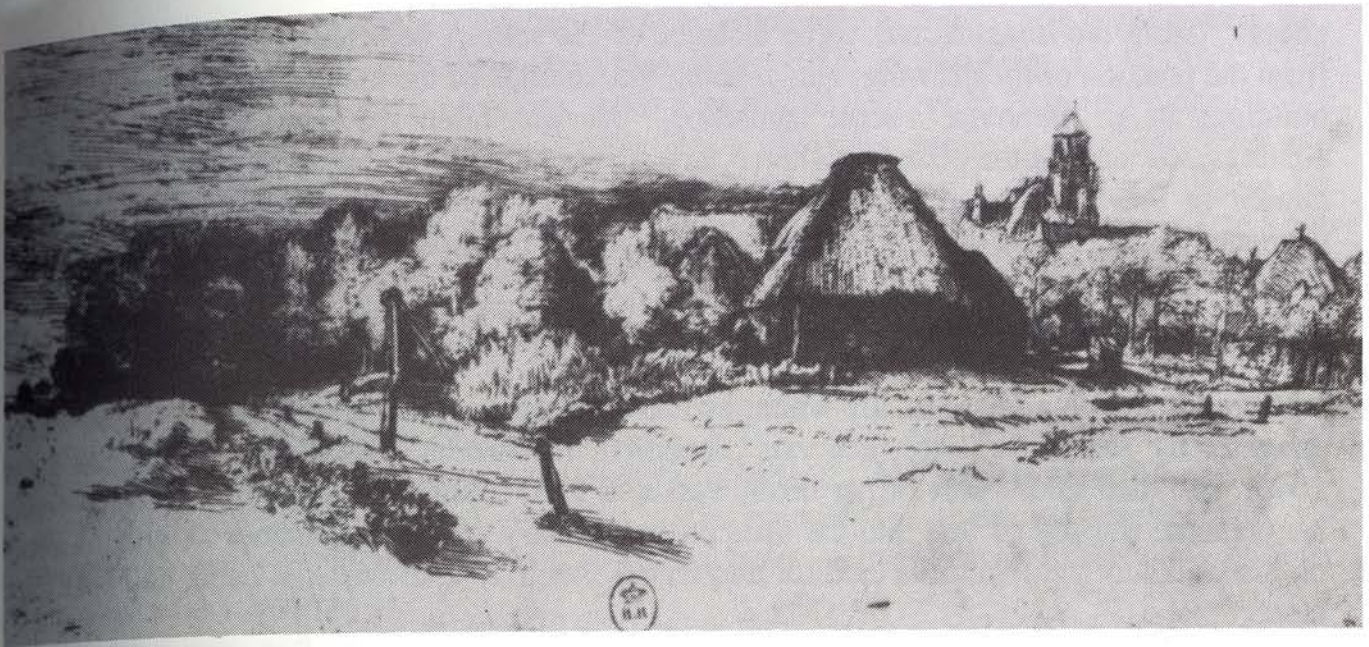


Figure 1c. Rembrandt, 'Landscape with trees, farm buildings and a tower', etching, c. 1650 (British Museum).

From: C. White & K.G. Boon, *Rembrandt's etchings. An illustrated critical catalogue in two volumes, II. Plates* (Amsterdam, 1969), Fig. B 223/II.



Figure 1d. Rembrandt, 'Landscape with trees, farm buildings and a tower', etching, c. 1650 (British Museum).

From: C. White & K.G. Boon, *Rembrandt's etchings. An illustrated critical catalogue in two volumes, II. Plates* (Amsterdam, 1969), Fig. B 223/III.

gheest" (from the imagination). The distance of the subject depicted are some steps away from the position of the drawing, emphasising the isolation of the huddled cluster of trees and buildings in an otherwise vacant landscape. As was often the case with Rembrandt's etchings, the state of the plate was altered through further reworking, where the tower of the church in the background becomes truncated thereby ageing the scene and the shadows deepened so as to emphasise the earth-bound qualities of the buildings (Fig. 1d).

The *leitmotif* is the farmhouse protected by trees. Why?

Rembrandt was in a phase of life where he had suffered a sequence of personal losses. His daughter by Saskia (b. 1612, nee van Ulenborch, married in 1632), Cornelia (b. 29 July 1640), had died in the year of her birth, Saskia in 1642. Rembrandt, as artist, turned from his personal tragedy of loss into the bliss of the ordinary and natural scenes he encountered on his walks to meet with his creditor and friend, Jan Six, to discuss the debts he could not meet.

Both his art and we are the richer for that. He precludes the art of psychology, of making overt the introspective and, through a type of Pantheism, invents an art wherein the physical world is infused with the psyche of the human condition.

For this we can admire Rembrandt all the more as artist but must be cautious if we wish to use his depictions as accurate documents of the vernacular architecture of the time.

An Enlightened iconography

The Swede Carolus Linnaeus (Latinised form of Carl von Linné, 1707-1778) was to become genealogist to Nature and the face of Nature was to change. He set the scheme for the full hierarchy of natural relationships in his 'Systema Naturae' (1735), followed by 'Species plantarum' (1753), of which the fifth edition of 1754 was to become the internationally accepted standard work for the system of binomial classification in plant nomenclature. His disciples went to every corner of the New World to discover the natural order in its full diversity. So too the collectors and chroniclers came to South Africa. We have, amongst others, his two fellow countrymen, Carl Pehr Thunberg (1743-1828), physician and botanist of enduring repute, Anders Sparrman (1748-1820), collector and gardener, and then the Frenchman, Francois le Vaillant, of whom we shall learn more presently.⁷

They had been preceded by the landless Dutch and German peasants who had invaded and naturalised to this new Eden as Trekboers. These settlers had retained in their collective memory the patterns of their cultural inheritance and so, whether through direct recall or cultural recapitulation — we do not know — they built their dwellings: cottage, kapstyl and hartbeesthuis. By the time the chroniclers discovered them in the hinterland they were as native as the Khoi, San and Xhosa, and were recounted and depicted as such. These depictions were meant to have the authority of objectivity, to be as dry as the mounted animal and pressed plant specimens sent home for classification.

Let us discover something of our protagonist.

Francois Vaillant was born in the Dutch colony of Surinam in 1753, the same year that

7. See V.S. Forbes, *Pioneer travellers of South Africa. A geographical commentary upon routes, records, observations and opinions of travellers at the Cape 1750-1800* (Cape Town, 1965).

Laugier published his *Essai sur l'Architecture* anonymously in Paris. His grandmother was wet-nurse to Louis XVI and his mother thus foster sister to the King, Louis XVI. The Vaillant's of Metz had, for generations, been a family of lawyers in Eastern France.

His childhood in Surinam fostered in him a liking for nature, the natural order and primitive peoples and a dislike for formal education. He had a particularly liking for ornithology, and its off-shoot, women. He was to publish his bird studies in 1801 to 1806 in six folios⁸ and marry three times, fathering ten children. An apostatic Roman Catholic, he worshipped at Nature's shrine, thus a true disciple of the eighteenth century French enlightenment. His addition of "Le" to "Vaillant", making him "the valiant", says something of his character.⁹

In 1781 he came to the Cape shores, a free agent and naturalist collector, and undertook his first great journey to the eastern hinterland. His second great journey to the northern hinterland commenced in 1783. His accounts of these are exaggerated yet valuable.¹⁰ It is the drawings — not all of his hand — intended as illustrations of boer dwellings which interest us.¹¹

Lewcock and Visser¹² have assessed these as being "deficient" in perspective particularly where buildings are shown from eye-level while the landscapes settings are aerial depictions or having proportion "inaccurately judged", specifically buildings or parts such as windows and doors, each to the other, or widths and lengths distorted in respect of heights.

Most of his illustrations of dwellings come from his second journey, hence depicting those which lie north of the Cape. He categorises the dwellings relative to degrees of diminishing affluence and sophistication in his descriptions which correlate to their increased distance from the Cape.

Trekboers, the forebears of the Trekkers, had developed a lifestyle so different from their European ancestors that the travellers and chroniclers of the eighteenth century rendered accounts of them, their habits and lifestyle in the same way as they did for the local peoples, supporting a sense of them being an endemic tribe.

Even though an adherent of Jean Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) "noble savage", Le Vaillant finds nothing admirable in the devolution of the colonists as they became "primatifs" in adapting to their new circumstances. One would imagine that he would have been enchanted at the discovery of his kin coming ever closer to nature but this he judged as "indolence" and

When their flocks oblige them to sojourn for a while in the same place, they construct, in haste, a rude kind of hut, which they cover with matts, after the manner of the Hottentots, whose custom they have adopted, and from whom they in no respect differ, but in their complexion and features.¹³

8. That which dealt with the South African collection was published in Paris as *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux d'Afrique*.

9. W.J. de Kock and D.W. Krüger (eds.), *South African biographical dictionary II* (Pretoria, 1972).

10. F. le Vaillant, *New travels into the interior parts of Africa, by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85* (Translated from the French, London, 1790). Published in French, Paris, 1790, and in Dutch, Leiden, 1796.

11. J.C. Quinton and A.M. Lewin (eds.), *Francois le Vaillant traveller in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1973), plates 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 and 25.

12. R.B. Lewcock and D. Visser, The buildings in the Le Vaillant watercolours, in *Francois le Vaillant traveller in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1973), pp. 111-126.

13. F. le Vaillant, *New travels into the interior parts of Africa, by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85, I* (Cape Town, 1790), pp. 44-45.

We can be a little more forgiving than Le Vaillant in our judgement of our forebears and of him as artist and consider their architecture from a naturalists point of view. What is interesting is that he portrays a variety of habitations in one picture, as if to show the variety of natural order of the dwelling which one can encounter beyond the Cape. We have bell tents, tents, waggons, matt bee-hives, thatched bee-hives, conical thatched structures, "kapstyl",¹⁴ and wattle-and-daub, nearly all in the scope of a picture (Fig. 2).

These are architectures no longer extant for, like the blue antelope¹⁵ and quagga¹⁶ he also depicted, they were to become extinct in the Cape and supplanted by more permanent structures in the Cape Dutch and later Georgian vernacular styles. Thus, although of questionable artistic merit and sometimes of dubious authorship the illustrations are of great value in discovering the diversity of that South African vernacular architecture which originated in Europe.

A Boer iconography¹⁷

The third iconology of the Boer dwelling derives from the works of the post-Second Anglo-Boer War artists. In particular we shall look at the work of Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957). However, one must first understand the trauma of the second phase of the war, after the scorched earth tactics of the British. An episode of the burning of a farmstead is depicted by the sculptor Anton van Wouw (1862-1945) on one of the bas-relief panels of the Vrouemonument in Bloemfontein. Emily Hobhouse's (1860-1926) watercolour depictions of them in their ruined state are in the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein. The conflagration of the homesteads of the Boer was more than the burning of something of little material worth, some thatched clay or stone house, easily replaced. Not even the compensation of the Liberal government which was to replace the Tories of the war was to achieve that. It was also the violent demise of that symbol of individual independence and freedom for which the farmers had striven for two centuries in South Africa - eternity, if their European heritage is considered. Thus when the post-War artists turned to the theme of the Boer dwelling it was with specific intent.

Who were these artists?

Frans Oerder (1867-1944) who was born in Holland was to portray in his art the landscape of his adopted country. He immigrated to the Transvaal Republic in 1890 and became South Africa's first official artist to the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War. His depiction of the Highveld was distinctive and influential on the development of Pierneef's style.¹⁸

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14. Today a distinction is made between their structures of clay walls and thatched roof, now understood as a 'hartbeest' house, and an all-roof structure, now termed a 'kapstyl' or A-framed house. *Kapstyl* is a C20 neologism borrowed, possibly, from the German *kapstil* to describe the A-frame structure.
 15. J.C. Quinton and A.M. Lewin (Eds.), *Francois le Vaillant traveller in South Africa II* (Cape Town, 1973), p. 85.
 16. J.C. Quinton and A.M. Lewin (eds.), *Francois le Vaillant traveller in South Africa II* (Cape Town, 1973), p. 108.
 17. The following sources have proved useful: N.J. Coetzee, *Pierneef, land and landscape. The Johannesburg station panels in context* (Johannesburg, 1992); Pretoria Art Museum, *J.H. Pierneef Pretorian, Transvaler, South African*; F.G.E. Nilant, *Die hout en linoesneë van J.H. Pierneef* (Cape Town, 1990); P.G. Nel (ed.), *J.H. Pierneef: his life and work* (Cape Town, 1990); M. Vorster, *Jacob Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957) as printmaker* (Johannesburg, 1986).
 18. D.W. Krüger and C.J. Beyers (eds.), *South African biographical dictionary III* (Pretoria, 1977).

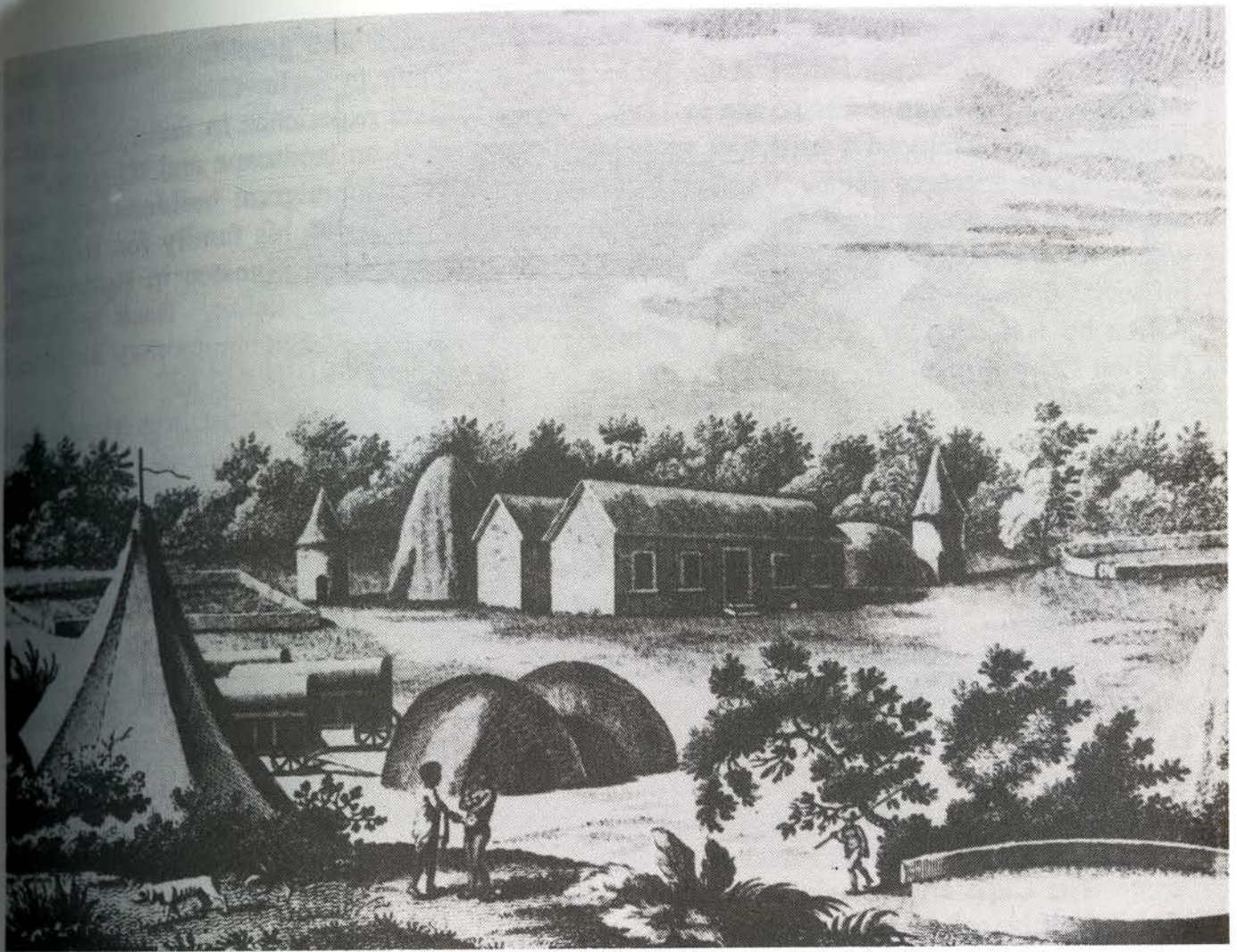


Figure 2. F. le Vaillant, 'Homestead of J. Slabber at Theefontein in the Swartland', engraving.

From: F. le Vaillant, *New travels into the interior parts of Africa, by way of the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84, and 85* (Translated from the French, London, 1790).

Erich Mayer (1876-1960) was a German born painter and graphic artist. He had studied architecture from 1894-6 at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin-Charlottenburg. He emigrated to the Orange Free State in 1898. His early field experience in the employ of a land surveyor developed a particular sense of the South African landscape and its trees.¹⁹

Jacob Pierneef (1886-1957) was the son of a Dutch immigrant builder. He was educated at the Staatsmodel School, Pretoria. In 1900 he left with his family for Holland, where he attended drawing classes at the Akademie vir Beeldende Kunsten in Rotterdam. Financial difficulties precluded him from completing architectural studies. Back in South Africa he was tutored in painting by Oerder and drawing by the contemporary architect Gordon Leith (1886-1965). He turned to being a professional artist in 1923.²⁰

You will see that at best these artists were mere first generation South Africans and of direct Dutch or German descent. Why did they take up the cause of Afrikaner Nationalism so passionately?

Landscape quickened an impulse which had its origins in the Dutch forebears of the Transvaalers, where the traditional Dutch landscape had, at the turn of the seventeenth century, come to symbolise the Dutch spirit of independence and hence imbued with a nationalist spirit. This was the artistic response of the truce of 1609 and shaking off of the yoke of Spanish hegemony. One could say that this same impulse was awakened in Pierneef when, on his return to Pretoria after the Second Anglo-Boer War, he discovered foreigners as rulers and a landscape empty of its labours and dwellings of his kinsmen through the scorched-earth offensive of the British. An awakening to the heritage of the lost Boer Republics also cultivated a critical reaction to the Cape Dutch tradition. He says:

The Cape Dutch style of building is certainly un-Afrikaans, for it might as well be called by any other style. ...

Yet even then the Cape Dutch style is not ours, no, we must search for a pure 'Afrikaanse' [African?²¹] style in the art of building, which carries the national spirit of the people (... wat die nasionale stempel dra van ons volksiel).²²

He sees the simple buildings, which are depicted, as truly in character with their landscape and in resonance with the spirit of the people, their makers.

Especially when in trek through the plains of Lichtenburg the traveller will be struck by the simplicity of it all. It's all isolated veld, yes a sea of grass and mielies and speaks of nothing else but straight lines, horizontal and vertical ...

See how well the 'bijwonerhuisie' [the house of a quitrent tenant] fits into its environment [Fig. 3a].

In this way must cognaisance be taken of the environment where the house is built, otherwise it will never be our good fortune to achieve an harmonious result. Here the 'bijwonershuis' is in harmony with the landscape.

19. C.J. Beyers (ed.), *South African biographical dictionary* IV (Pretoria, 1981).

20. C.J. Beyers (ed.) *South African biographical dictionary* IV (Pretoria, 1981).

21. Although 'Afrikaanse' may translate into 'African' it may well have meant 'Afrikander'. The sense of being a culture of Africa is however in the very name of the people.

22. All quotations are translated from the original Afrikaans 'Ons Boerehuise in Transvaal en hulle karakter' (Our Boer dwellings in the Transvaal and their character) in *Die Boerevrou*, April 1920, pp. 3-5.



Figure 3a. J.H. Pierneef. 'Voortrekker house, Naboomspruit', linocut (after sketch 'Bywonershuis, Lichtenburg' published in *Die Boerevrou*, April 1920, p. 14), 1931.

From: F.G.E. Nilant, *Die hout en lino-sneë van J.H. Pierneef* (Cape Town, 1990), Fig. 50.



Figure 3b. J.H. Pierneef, 'House, Lydenburg', linocut, 1916 (possibly used as a Christmas card).

From: F.G.E. Nilant, *Die hout en lino-sneë van J.H. Pierneef* (Cape Town, 1990), Fig. 51.

All are straight lines and utterly simple. Even the flat roof here comes into its own. There are no trees, no hillocks, no mountains, yet all is equally severe and rugged ['strak en stoer'] and makes for a restful, calm impression.

* * *

Now we travel to the Springbok Flats in the Waterberg District, to show a typical red sandstone boer house beneath a beautiful umbrella thorn ['Haak-en-steek doringboom'; *Acacia tortillis*] ... The red sandstone gives a warm impression and the harmony of the various sizes of stone is wonderful. Then too he chose the right place in building the home by the large tree and it just so, so that it afforded him a vista over his lands [Fig. 3b].

The return after a period of absence in Holland in his formative years must have awakened in him a new awareness to those particular qualities of the environment — both man-made and natural — which characterised the place of his birth.

The artistic expressions of a nation must show the character of their people; and then therein the climate and environment play a great role.

The common dwelling thus took on an aspect of the environment as natural as trees or mountains. He took to documenting houses as a vehicle for memory, and to awaken in the viewer a sentiment for that which is their own, thereby firing the spirit of cultural identity, nationalism and patriotism. The depictions are however not, despite being loaded with emotive connotations, in any way sentimental.

We see then that in Pierneef's iconography there is a search for a resonance between building style and landscape character and between both these and the identity of those people, the Afrikaner, who claim these as their own.

Although his artistic expression was influenced by the European stylistic tradition of the time, purism and cubism, which thus coloured his perceptions, all these fused to help develop an individual style with a uniquely South African character wherein the simple Boer dwelling, until then neglected in favour of its Cape Dutch variant, became the icon of the spirit of independence of its people.

Denouement

The relationship with the landscape by those of Afrikaner heritage has been recently topical and incisive observations have been made as to what this might have been and how it was represented. Here two contemporary accounts are given, one judgemental:

It is the destiny of the Afrikaner to occupy and own the land. By inference the loss of the land would mean the loss of divine election.

Thus the landscape had to be seen as empty, frozen and untainted. Its essence was embodied in the farm, the desert, the trees — through which the divine spirit passed — and the mountains — implacable, enduring and ineffable, just like the Calvinist vision of God. What makes the myth more enduring is the fact that it catered to the fantasies of patrons, who, in most cases, had only relatively tenuous links to the land. Though the mythology of Afrikaner nationalism was rural, its ideologists and its elite were essentially

urban classes.²³

the other empathetic.

[Ours is] a landscape which, perhaps, because of its size and implacability, also draws one to it. For it is inevitable that human beings respond in this way to place. We all understand the pull of the settings of our youth. I remembered a woman in Bloemfontein telling me that she always felt claustrophobic and locked in when she went to mountainous places. Ek is 'n meisie van die vlaktes, she had said; I am a girl of the plains. This was her response to place. The sprawling central South African plateau, the huge sky and the long view, had scarred her forever. To experience this sort of scarring is to experience a simple and profoundly reassuring geographic rootedness, that sense of home; without which the human psyche is never complete. White South Africans, perhaps especially the Afrikaners, know that they are at home. I too know that I am there. The harsh, uncaring land through which I drive, the very continent itself, the smell of it, the texture, the awesome extent, the endless variety, the boulders and the beaches, the dry places and the green — all this has scarred me, as it has scarred the girl of the plains. Africa has reached in and touched us; in our turn, we have made Africa our own ... the Whites of Africa, do have a sense of belonging. I know that I belong, not only because I know that I belong nowhere else, but because I carry the scars ... No wonder landscape is so dominant in South African art.²⁴

Recapitulation

Three periods have been presented and three iconologies of the depiction of the boer dwelling proposed.

The first is through the Dutch tradition of landscape where the humble home of the farmer is presented as part of the natural order. For Rembrandt they became the vehicle for representation, through association, of the inner realm of being and can be allied to particular autobiographical episodes.

The second is the depiction, by the travellers and chroniclers. Le Vaillant as representative, while he can be criticised artistically, never-the-less provides valuable insight into objective aspects of architectural features lost in or through time. His depiction of the home of the frontier burghers at the Cape is an attempt at an objective documentation. The representations can be seen to be part of the taxonomical concerns of the documentation and cataloguing of the natural order, and these then a particular ethnological concern of the period of the Enlightenment. From these studies the Cape Dutch home is seen as provincial cousin to its Dutch contemporary manifestations, where all derive from a common progenitor, and not a local variant of some seventeenth century Dutch, or German for that matter, prototype.

The third iconology is of the indigenous artists who, at the turn of the twentieth century, discovered the 'landscape', and the Boer dwelling as part thereof and used the images to foster, through their art, a strong cultural identity. In depicting these they propagated a spirit of patriotism and nationalism. The current iconological interpretation of this landscape tradition is either judgemental and divisive or empathetic and healing.

23. H. Friedman, Tainted landscapes, *The Ventilator*, 1, Sept. 1994, p. 26.

24. D. Robbins, *The 29th Parallel. A South African journey* (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), pp. 140-141.