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## Going on safari: the tales of two Koos Prinsloos

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*In Kiswahili, the word safari simply means going on a journey. This article is about journeys begun, aborted and ended by two people with the matching names of Koos Prinsloo. Koos Prinsloo Senior used his handwritten memoir about his journeys and hunting adventures as a symbolic reference to his masculinity and frontiersman status in Kenya at the height of British colonialism. Koos Prinsloo Junior, his Kenyan-born grandson, who left Kenya as a youngster and lived in South Africa, embarks on journeys where his short stories explore, amongst other issues, matters of homosexuality and notions of the father, power and colonial nostalgia. Koos Prinsloo Junior uses excerpts from his grandfather's memoir, descriptive references to his parents' past and present homes, mementos and trophies from the erstwhile British colony to provide a critique on bravado and male inadequacy. Using Veracini's outline of circular and linear colonial narratives a contextual and historical background on Koos Prinsloo's grandfather's memoir and his hunting tales is provided by briefly examining settler life-writing from Kenya, the hunting safari and ideas of homecoming. Before turning to Prinsloo Junior's relevant short stories and examining his attempts to debunk ideas of colonial masculinity, patriarchy, nostalgia, and loss, the notion of going home, not feeling quite at home and homesickness are explored.*

**Keywords:** hunting, Kenya, Koos Prinsloo, life-writing, masculinity, memoir, narrative, nostalgia, safari, settler colonialism.

### Introduction

Twentieth century settler colonialism in East Africa lasted only sixty years but from a literary perspective it has left an enduring and on-going legacy in respect of autobiographies, memoirs and journals. Kenya continues to inhabit not only the imagination of former settlers and the expatriates of its postcolony but a quite considerable number of readers beyond the continent as well. In fact, in terms of writing that has emerged from this former British colony it can be said that autobiographical and biographical writing dealing with life on the White Highlands forms an entire sub-genre of life-writing emerging from Africa itself.<sup>1</sup>

After briefly examining the different sub-genres of Kenya-based life-writing and of narratives about hunting, this article will concentrate on the texts of two Koos Prinsloos.<sup>2</sup> Each occupies an extreme of the life-writing continuum. Koos Prinsloo Senior (1885–1950) was an early settler colonist who wrote a chronicle of his hunting exploits in Kenya while Kenyan-born Koos Prinsloo Junior (1957–94), better known as an Afrikaans postmodernist and postcolonial/anti-apartheid South African short

story writer, was intent on examining and exposing aspects of power, patriarchy, conquest and misaligned notions of masculinity. His grandfather's chronicle comes under scrutiny in some of his stories. These stories, even though the narrating subject may not always be explicitly named, nonetheless carry verifiable autobiographical markers and signposts to designate the protagonist as Koos Prinsloo Junior.

In the course of this examination I will look at ideas of going on journeys and then returning 'home'. The word *safari* has been absorbed into other languages, especially English, to indicate an excursion either to hunt and shoot wild animals or to travel through a wildlife preserve to observe and photograph wild animals. In Kiswahili, the word *safari* indicates an overland journey which can last days or months. Journeys and returns on the macro level can be circular or linear especially in so far as it pertains to colonialism but on the more intimate and personal level of taking a safari there is always the expectation of returning home.

The grandfather's memoir remains unpublished except in so far as his grandson has presented edited extracts to readers in his short stories. Handwritten copies of the memoir are however available for perusal in two archival repositories.<sup>3</sup> Four collections of Koos Prinsloo Junior's short stories were published by different South African publishers before his death in 1994: *Jonkmanskas* (1982), *Die hemel help ons* (1987), *Slagplaas* (1992) and *Weifeling* (1993). In 2008 Prinsloo's complete works were reissued in a single edition called *Verhale*.<sup>4</sup>

In *Verhale* (2008) no biographical details of the author are provided except a mention on the back cover that Prinsloo died in 1994 from AIDS-related causes. This is in direct contrast to biographical details provided in some of his earlier collections. In *Jonkmanskas* and *Die hemel help ons* readers are informed that Koos Prinsloo was born in 1957 in Eldoret on the Uasin Gishu Plateau in western Kenya.<sup>5</sup> In 1962 his family moved to South Africa where he completed his schooling in Newcastle before studying at the University of Pretoria. The publishers and editor of the collected short stories, *Verhale*, probably felt that there were sufficient autobiographical details in some of the short stories themselves for a reader to come to his or her own conclusions regarding Koos Prinsloo's heritage. To my mind this is a gap and especially so because Prinsloo, while he was still alive, provided personal details to the various publishers and, in so doing, indicated that these paratextual markers were of significance in themselves. Other paratextual indicators include the covers of the single collections—especially that of Prinsloo's final anthology *Weifeling*, which contains neither references nor stories related to Kenya, but nonetheless has a cover page containing photos of an open sea, a 1950s tractor ploughing through the soil and a field of ripening golden wheat. Each photo is topped with an endless horizon. The land-based photos originate from his father's farm in Kenya but are also a reflection of the proverb, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap" as is indeed the case with the stories contained in the anthology which reflect Prinsloo's relationships with mentors,

publishers, friends and former lovers. The photo of the open sea is also a reflection of the multiple journeys undertaken by Prinsloo and of his final journey as he already knew that he was dying. It is also a commentary on rootedness and lack of anchorage, of his own unknown future journey and his father's and grandfather's respective misaligned journeys. Readers who might have been introduced to his oeuvre through his final collection, *Weifeling*, would have been flummoxed by the obtuseness of the paratextual indicator of photos that hold no bearing on any of the stories contained between the covers.

Accompanying the Prinsloo family's migration to South Africa in 1962, a year before Kenya obtained its independence, was the carefully preserved and unpublished hunting memoir of Koos Prinsloo's grandfather, Koos Prinsloo Senior. In some of his short stories, Prinsloo refers to this family chronicle and transcribes and edits portions thereof. However, there is a steadfast refusal by the younger Koos Prinsloo to succumb to the romanticisation of settler colonial life in Kenya, to participate in and perpetuate the patriarchy of his forebears or to revel in the mysteries and thrills of the hunting safari. His discomfiture is evident throughout even though he does not deny that his past forms an intrinsic part of who he is and also who he does not want to be or, could never quite be. In certain senses, some of Prinsloo Junior's short stories add to the already expansive genre of life-writing emerging from Kenya but eschew loading his heritage with nostalgia and loss. The original meaning of nostalgia was aligned to homesickness and was described and diagnosed as a medical condition which especially affected European armies on the march and young women sent away from home to work as servants elsewhere. Nostalgia is of Greek origin: *nóstos* (going home) and *álgos* (pain). It was a condition based on geography and a sense of place. Over time, as Allnutt notes, the meaning of nostalgia shifted to become a psychological disease and thus became "a longing for the past as it is often understood today, and denigrated as retrograde and conservative" (30). There is a move from a sense of place to a sense of romanticised past time and an "understanding of nostalgia [as something] of sentimentality, of longing certainly, the usefulness of which [is] questionable" (Allnutt 30). Koos Prinsloo Junior's short stories question the ways in which his family members cling nostalgically and sentimentally to the past but fail to recognise that such a condition is no longer useful.

### **Settler life-writing from Kenya**

In the past one hundred years there have emerged, broadly-speaking, five categories that characterise life-writing and biography in first, the East African Protectorate (up until 1922), Kenya Colony (until 1963) and finally the postcolony of Kenya. These five categories or sub-genres of settler life-writing comprise: the lives of early colonial settler farmers and their offspring; those settlers known as the Happy Valley gang whose hedonistic and dissipated lifestyles scandalised everyone else; the narratives of

professional hunters and later conservationists who made pre- and post-independence Kenya their home; people who were raised in the postcolony or spent extensive work time there and; a fifth but smaller category in the form of semi-biographical novels, memoirs and anecdotes regarding military life in Kenya during the First and Second World Wars as well as during the Mau Mau uprising of the 1950s. In all, settler memoirs, autobiographies, biographies and independently published anecdotal anthologies far outnumber the personal, published narratives of indigenous Kenyans.<sup>6</sup> The continuing allure of the country for readers appears to far outweigh those narratives dealing with the everyday realities facing this African nation.

Kenya was not originally designated a settler colony. Bull notes that “in 1900 the land of Kenya was thought to be a useless region that had to be crossed in order to reach what became Uganda, then widely recognized among missionaries and empire builders as the jewel of east-central Africa” (186). To render Uganda more accessible and to curb German and Belgian influence in the area (both the Belgian Congo and German Tanganyika rimmed Lake Victoria and it was thought this inland body of water provided direct access via the Nile to Egypt and the Suez Canal which had been placed under British protection), a very costly railway was built from Mombasa to Uganda. It was expensive not only in terms of finance but also in terms of supporting and protecting the nearly 15,000 labourers, engineers and station masters contracted and indentured from India to build a railway line across arid plains, marshes, through the Rift Valley and up the escarpment of the valley to nearly 9000 feet before descending to the tropical heat of mosquito and crocodile infested Lake Victoria. Less than one hundred miles from Mombasa construction stopped overnight in 1898 when most of the indentured workers absconded in fear of two enormous male lions that had already killed 135 compatriots under the most audacious circumstances. The project leader, Colonel John Henry Patterson, eventually managed to shoot the two lions whereupon construction on the line continued. Patterson’s memoir of the lion hunt, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (1907), caught the world’s attention and putative settlers and hunters hastened to the Protectorate. This was helped along with the publication of posters by the Uganda Railway authorities that urged the world’s aristocracy to pursue their winter field sports in temperate Kenya.<sup>7</sup>

In order to administer and maintain the high costs of the railway (and what has since become known as the ‘lunatic line’), the colonial government began to urge white settlement in the early 1900s. By then it had been found that large expanses of the protectorate were extremely fertile and the high altitude of certain areas, even though the equator ran through them, guaranteed a cool and fever-free climate for Europeans.<sup>8</sup>

One of the earliest settlers was Karen Blixen who sailed to Kenya to join her Swedish husband, farmer/hunter and philanderer, Baron Bror Blixen. Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa* (first published in 1937) and James Fox’s *White Mischief* (1984) constitute

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Poster issued by the Uganda Railway in 1908 encouraging settlers, hunters and naturalists to relocate to British East Africa (Kenya).

the two extremes of an axis which hosts a whole range of other autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs about life in Kenya from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century. Both texts were made into films. The two publications could not be more different from one another. Blixen's text deals with the trials of setting up a coffee farm (the high altitude and climate of which was ill-suited to the berry), dealing with ill-health and eventually losing her lover, Denys Finch-Hatton in a flying accident. Life was difficult and required a hardiness of spirit and doses of largely unfulfilled hope. Bankruptcy was a continual worry (as it was for most settler farmers) and she eventually moved back to her country of birth. Her memoir of her life in Africa, written in Denmark, is nonetheless filled with longing and a sense of loss. Blixen writes about her farm in Kenya where "up in this high air you breathed

easily, drawing a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: “*Here I am, where I ought to be*” (14, my emphasis).

Blixen’s memoir formed the template of life-writing about living in Kenya by settlers such as Elspeth Huxley, Kuki Gallman, Joy Adamson and others who, despite death, drought, floods and severe economic hardship, created Kenya as an allegory of a lost idyll—a place where one felt one belonged. For the settler, both in pre- and post-independence Kenya, the aesthetic of the landscape often transmuted into a desire for proprietorship. In order to fulfil that desire of limitless skies, limpid days and an ever-stretching horizon, land needed to be acquired. Land and proprietorship lie at the heart of these autobiographies.

The hugely successful 1985 film of *Out of Africa*, produced by Sydney Pollack, transported millions of viewers into lives they had not lived and into an aesthetic of a savannah they had never visited. Kenya once again entered an international consciousness based on a romanticised Edwardian Eden in Africa and served as a prosthetic memory that mediated a view of colonialism that blurred the distinctions between history, memory, racism, exploitation and land appropriation. Pattynama, referring to the anthropologist Lizzy van Leeuwen’s text, *Ons Indisch erfgoed* (2008), writes about the Netherlands’ “massive flirtation” with its colonial past and how Indonesia has been “discovered” a second time, not least through popular culture and the media. Judging by the ongoing popularity of life-writing emerging from Kenya one could argue that readers and viewers engage in a similar flirtation with the colonial past. These prosthetic memories and flirtations with the past tend to gloss over the fact that settlement most often involved appropriation of vast tracts of land and the use of the native population as a labour force. Atieno-Odhiambo points out that

John Ainsworth, a colonial administrator and the man who planned the original layout of Nairobi along racially segregated lines, argued in 1917 that had there been no native population in Kenya it is reasonable to assume that there would have been no British occupation and consequently no European settlement. *European settlement in Kenya would not be possible without native workers*. (quoted in Atieno-Odhiambo 102, emphasis in original)

Land ownership, the native population’s servitude, and to a greater degree, entitlement, also lie at the heart of the so-called Happy Valley settlers. But in complete contrast to the Blixen genre, the real-life characters of Nicholas Best’s *Happy Valley: The Story of the British in Kenya* (1979) and James Fox’s *White Mischief* (1984) were infamous for their sexual escapades, spouse-swapping, weeklong carousing and alcohol and drug-filled days. The Happy Valley crowd were a group of wealthy, mostly aristocratic Europeans who influenced generations of outsiders as epitomising every imaginable hedonistic excess of colonial life. Such was their notoriety that the jest, “Are you married or do you live in Kenya?” was frequently bandied about

at clubs and the race courses before and just after World War II.<sup>9</sup> Another category of life-writing constitutes the adventures of hunters. The hunters' view of Kenya forms a class of its own even though there may be some overlap with the sub-genres noted above. Not all the hunters were settlers; some, such as the Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward VI, and his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, came to Kenya on safari in 1928 and 1930. As Barnes remarks, "their conquests [were] not restricted to the animal kingdom" (5) as they managed to conduct a number of liaisons, not least of which was a simultaneous one with the aviator, Beryl Markham. Greater sexual probity, but poorer marksmanship was exhibited by ex-US president, Theodore Roosevelt, who came on a much publicised year-long safari in 1909.

Many settlers became hunters or led hunting safaris in order to supplement their income until such time as their farms became more economically viable. On the Uasin Gishu Plateau a railway branch line to Eldoret and Kitale was eventually opened in 1922 and only then were farmers able to transport their harvests to Nairobi and Mombasa for sale. Previously, the expense and time taken to transport grain by ox-wagon curbed a full scale agricultural enterprise on the Plateau and people like Koos Prinsloo (Senior) turned to hunting and the sale of skins to augment their meagre income.

The fourth and minor fifth categories comprise those autobiographers and memoirists who spent their childhoods in post-independence Kenya or served in the armed forces—notably the East African Mounted Corps (World War I) and the Kenya Regiment (World War II and the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s).

### **The early Prinsloos**

Settlers were recruited from Britain and many British colonies. Amongst the earliest settlers from South Africa were a party of farmers or Boers from the Ermelo-Carolina district. One of the families that trekked north was the Prinsloos comprising old Koos Prinsloo, his wife, Stoffelina, and 11 children. The then 19-year old hunter, Koos Prinsloo, writer of the hunting memoirs, who had accompanied his parents in 1908, soon returned to South Africa to first work on Willie's Deep mine and then in the Prison Service as warder. Two years later, in 1910, he took passage back to Kenya with his young wife, Lalie, because he was homesick: "the hankering after my parents and the open plains was too great" (50–1).<sup>10</sup> The Prinsloo family were part of the Van Rensburg trek.<sup>11</sup> Jan Janse van Rensburg had held meetings in the Ermelo and Carolina districts of the Transvaal recruiting families who felt they wanted to find a new home. Unlike the numerous family treks to German East Africa most of whom wanted to avoid being ruled by the British after the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), families who trekked to British East Africa did so for a variety of reasons. As De Waal notes:

One section [of trekkers] freely advanced their anti-British sentiments, but those who had been seen as pro-British never stated, in so many words, that they left South Africa

because their compatriots had anathematised them as *hensoppers* or *joiners*. They chose to let their emigration be taken at face value... And yet both these extremes—anti- or pro-British—had one thing in common. Perhaps their actual reason for emigrating—the reason beyond the one they offered to history—was that they chose to.... One could... ask what the actual reason for their choice could have been, and perhaps the answer would then be, like so many pioneers, that they desired something new, and that the reasons they offered for their emigration often hid their own restlessness even from themselves. (n.p.)

De Waal also outlines that not all of the choices to trek were politically or socially motivated. A great many *hensoppers* and *joiners* or people who had suffered in the concentration camps, chose to remain in South Africa. In the Van Rensburg trek each of the 47 families who set forth on the chartered German ship, *SS Windhuk*,<sup>12</sup> left for a variety of reasons. In 1938 W. A. C. Bouwer conducted an interview with the 82-year old Koos Prinsloo (father to Koos Prinsloo Senior) regarding his life in Kenya as one of the original pioneers. The reason Prinsloo “offered to history” is recorded as follows:

I, too, have thought lately a lot about our trek up here thirty years ago, and in some ways it does seem similar to me to the trek made more than 100 years ago by our forefathers from the Cape Colony to then unknown and wild country north of the Orange River. But our reasons for moving were different to theirs. They trekked for freedom, I trekked because my family was big and I did not have sufficient land for all of them [...] I heard that Mr. Jan van Rensburg, who lived in the same district in the Transvaal as I did, had been up to Kenya and had come back with glowing reports concerning the country. There and then I got on my horse and rode over to see him. He was so enthusiastic that after my wife and I had talked the matter over, we decided to join the trek, and come up here. We sold everything we had with the exception of our wagon and my riding horse, and on a winter’s day in 1908 we left the Transvaal and South Africa for good.<sup>13</sup>

There is particular significance in the words “and on a winter’s day in 1908 we left the Transvaal and South Africa for good”. In truth, a great number of the 1908 trekkers were close to destitution and many were *bywoners*. The families, most of whom knew each other, were voluntary migrant settlers and old Koos Prinsloo was convinced that he was part of a linear story—a story where families willingly move from point A to B and quickly establish a communal infrastructure comprising churches, schools, roads, surveyed farms and the basics of officialdom. Van Rensburg shipped along the trek’s own pastor to minister to parishioners. A small bamboo church was soon erected and for years stood on old Prinsloo’s farm before a brick and mortar church and parsonage were built in the township of Eldoret. Most of the new settlers were poor and built homes made of papyrus or bamboo before constructing

homes of granite and mortar. Writing about settler colonialism in general Veracini argues that “[s]ettlers do not discover: they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them. At times, they even relocate with their neighbours. As they move towards what amounts to a representation of their world, as they transform the land into their image, they settle another place without really moving” (98–9). Veracini’s comments are particularly apt when it comes to the Van Rensburg and other treks to East Africa. The trekkers moved along with their neighbours and brought “their lifestyles with them”. While the Boer settlers did not initially carry as much cachet with the colonial government as did wealthy and connected British settlers, they nonetheless already had representatives on the Government’s Land Board and colonists’ associations by 1911.

### **A linear narrative**

The trekkers were as deeply enmeshed in the colonial project as any other section of settlers. In certain respects however, as Veracini notes, colonial settlers should be viewed differently from colonial officials. Although colonisation is deeply embedded within the enterprise of colonialism, there remains a difference in respect of the progression and objective of colonial narratives. Exogenic colonial officials’ narratives are circular by nature: “they represent an *Odyssey* consisting of an outward movement followed by interaction with exotic and colonised Others in foreign surroundings, and by a final return to an original locale” (96)—a kind of *animus revertendi* (desire to return). In contrast, the settler does not harbour thoughts of return to the original homeland or “home”. Settlers’ narratives of migration are linear by their very nature and Veracini draws an analogy with Vergil’s Aeneas “where the settler colonist moves forward along a story line that cannot be turned back” (98)—a kind of *animus manendi* (desire to remain). “*Animus manendi* is thus manifested by residency, suitable reproduction, and possession” (Veracini 53).

Invariably this manner of settlement goes hand in hand with degrees of conflict and violence. The trekkers who arrived on the Uasin Gishu Plateau in western Kenya trekked, after a reconnoitring expedition, to an almost entirely uninhabited swathe of fertile, game-rich land. This does not mean that it was unclaimed. The most recent inhabitants had been the Masai but as a result of internecine conflicts with a neighbouring clan had fled over the escarpment in the 1860s. On the other side of the Plateau the Nandi began to nibble at the edges of the Plateau with a view of establishing their extensive cattle herds there but their plans were cut short first by an outbreak of rinderpest and secondly by a series of extremely punitive expeditionary attacks led by the British who claimed that the Nandi (an ethnicity living on the western slopes of the plateau) were tearing up the rails and sleepers of the Uganda Railway as the very tracks were being laid.<sup>14</sup> The remaining Nandi were literally herded into a native reserve leaving the Plateau almost completely

unoccupied. Initially the trekkers on this then-remote plateau struggled to find labour and young white men took on ploughing and building contracts. Some also hunted wild animals and sold the skins. As farms became established labour from neighbouring native reserves was recruited with increasing ease as the colonial government implemented poll taxes on black men who were then obliged to seek employment.

In 1962 the majority of settler narratives of *animus manendi* were cut short when a settlement for independence between the British Government and the indigenous leadership of Tanganyika (led by Julius Nyerere) and Kenya (led by Jomo Kenyatta) was reached. Most Afrikaans and English-speaking settlers sold up their farms, resigned their jobs, packed their belongings and left to resettle elsewhere. While many South Africans regarded the East African settlers as returning to their original homeland, most of the settlers, despite the fact that they could speak the official languages, perhaps had family in the newly formed Republic of South Africa and could move more or less seamlessly into liturgically familiar religious communities, nonetheless felt that what others regarded as a “return home” was actually a move into a diaspora.

Suddenly close-knit communities, even families who had farmed in the same district for decades, found themselves scattered over tens of thousands of square kilometres. The third-generation Kenyan Prinsloo family was no exception. There are two observations that arise from this: first, the South African short story writer, Koos Prinsloo, was only six years old when his family embarked on their journey to South Africa and the possibility exists that young Koos was too young to experience a personal sense of loss but perhaps sensed that his parents and sisters felt a keen sense of loss themselves. And, secondly, how does one set about writing the end of a narrative that continues to linger in the consciousness of one’s family but which has been replaced by newer personal journeys and narratives of oneself as author? How does one break with that chain of nostalgia, melancholy and loss which inhabits the living beings one calls family?

Brian du Toit, a US-based South African anthropologist, has published extensively about the post Anglo-Boer War Afrikaner in the diaspora—whether it be in Argentina, German East Africa (Tanganyika/Tanzania) or Kenya. He was writing as an “insider” from a perspective where he views migration away from South Africa—people who leave their homeland and, often unwillingly, have to settle elsewhere—as a move into the diaspora. A glance at memoirs and other life-writing of the early East African settlers reveals these settlers did not experience their life in the eastern Africa colonies as diasporic. Theirs was, in line with Veracini’s thinking, a linear narrative where one willingly moved from point A to B. Point B became home (and thus point A) and was regarded as home even if later there was some form of political or economic imperative to move once again. When many felt obliged to migrate to their ancestors’

former homeland, they suffered from the so-called *whenwe* syndrome—a pattern of behaviour where, in this case, former Kenyans nostalgically relate stories about their past lives. To a great extent it is a natural response to culture shock and the dissolution of community and the familiar. People have lost their sense of belonging and no longer quite know how they fit into a new community. *Whenwe*-ing is initially a natural reactive depression related to the notion of nostalgia and which should diminish over time. In comparison to adults, young children often adjusted quite effortlessly to their new environment. Steyn notes that youngsters can subsequently suffer from a kind of “reverse culture shock” (10) when, as young adults, they come home from a journey, or another city, and find it difficult to fit into a home persistently reflecting a nostalgia for the past and where artefacts and hunting trophies that represent that loss continue to be prominently displayed.

### **The hunting safari**

Harry Selby, a legendary Kenyan white hunter, notes that hunting safaris before 1920 were largely on foot or horseback while post-1920 was characterised by safaris conducted with motor vehicles which not only enabled greater and faster mobility but also minimised any danger to the hunter. Selby feels that

The number of animals allowed on each hunter’s license was overly generous, having been formulated at a time when the early foot safari would require meat for eight to 100 people over several months. For example: twelve buffalo, twenty zebra, twenty wildebeest, twenty kongoni, four lions, unlimited leopards, and equally generous numbers for all other species. Elephant and rhino required a special license even then, as the elephant ivory and rhino horn could be sold [...] The complacent colonial government controlled from London took a long time to initiate a reappraisal of the entire licensing system, and that didn’t happen until some years after World War II.

Consequently, hunters basically had *carte blanche* when it came to animal hunts. Licences were easy to come by and many farmers shot animals on their farms that threatened their families or ate their crops. The hunter who set the tone for future profligacy and slaughter however, was ex-American President Theodore Roosevelt, who undertook the Grand African Safari on horseback in 1909. Ironically, back in the United States itself, Roosevelt, as President, had already set up

fifty-five wildlife refuges, expanded America’s parks, created his country’s monument system, organized national and international conservation conferences, and generally provided the founding momentum for the conservation and environmental movement in the United States. More than anything, he popularized a sensibility, a respect for nature, a sense of trusteeship for the wilderness at a time when the phrase ‘man against nature’ still evoked a thrill of conquest. (Bull 159)

Ostensibly to collect wild life specimens for the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D. C., Roosevelt's personal safari train complete with taxidermists, photographers, doctors, journalists, grooms and hundreds of porters, was often "strung out over a mile, led by the [American] flag and Africans playing a tin drum and an antelope-horn trumpet" (Bull 169). Altogether, the year-long "expedition collected and shipped home to the Smithsonian 4,900 mammals, 4,000 birds, 500 fish and 2,000 reptiles. Some of Roosevelt's specimens are still on display, and not all the original packing cases have yet been opened" (Bull 173).

Clearly, under the pretence of scientific discovery, Roosevelt felt that Africa was exempted from the same conservation controls that he had advocated back on home soil. The safari exhibited a similar kind of proprietorship over the continent's non-human animals as did that of colonial governments regarding the annexation of territory and expropriation of natural resources. Roosevelt published his hunting memoirs in *African Game Trails* (1910) and one of the book's illustrations speaks volumes: he is standing behind a recumbent and clearly dead lion, holding his rifle in one hand and his hat aloft in the other. He has proven his manhood on two figurative fronts: by the sword (rifle) and by the pen—both considered phallic symbols of power and dominance especially since Victorian times in Britain and frontier times in the USA.

In some ways, Koos Prinsloo Senior, the hunter, resembles Roosevelt. Like the former President, he hunted with his rifle and once he felt his physical powers diminish he adopted the pen to capture his safari adventures in a chronicle intended for his descendants and other readers. In other ways, Prinsloo was entirely different: initially he preferred to hunt alone and eschewed porters and fellow hunters except some of his brothers. Later, as hunting became restricted to designated areas, he took along farm labourers to act as beaters, camp managers and skin preparers. He was a settler who remained aloof, as far as it was possible, from community and colonial politics.

Towards the end of his safari Roosevelt progressed over the Uasin Gishu Plateau. He would have encountered the first sets of Afrikaner families that had trekked from South Africa to the Plateau in 1906 and 1908.<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly these farmers would have watched his progression across the Plateau with some bemusement. The entire Plateau was overrun with wild animals. The fact that it was not being utilised as grazing for livestock and that for several decades there had been no significant human interference with the natural balance being maintained by predators and prey,<sup>16</sup> made farming almost impossible. Any grain that was being planted was eaten overnight, fences were being kicked down by zebra and overfed lions were to be found behind almost every anthill.

In 1912 Lord Cranworth who postulated that there were only two reasons to go to Kenya—a shortage of cash or big game hunting—accused the trekkers of indiscriminate slaughter of wild animals. As a so-called "gentleman settler" in Kenya, Cranworth exempted British settlers from his criticism and failed to mention the

post-Roosevelt settler hunting extravaganzas that slaughtered hundreds of animals in a day from the safety of a car. He later confessed “that my [own] memories still cling affectionately to the thud of a bullet correctly placed” (quoted in Kok 83). Another settler, A. A. Ortlepp, responded to Cranworth pointing out that the Highlands earmarked for settlement in Kenya “could not be an agricultural country as well as a game reserve” (quoted in Kok 83). Similar to other British settler colonies in Africa, it was legal to kill “vermin” such as “lions, leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, otters, baboons, some monkeys, large birds of prey, crocodiles, poisonous snakes and pythons” (Sorenson quoted in Waithaka 25). This meant that the natural predator/prey balance was catastrophically affected and herbivores proliferated. There were also “massive killings of game to feed troops, prisoners, and labourers during World Wars I and II, incidents that went unreported though they may have been the most intense legal game use of the twentieth century” (Waithaka 26).

At the beginning of his memoirs Koos Prinsloo (Senior) recalls walking home one evening (probably in 1911) after having worked for another settler:

I was amazed by all the game grazing on the plains round here, there were giraffes, eland, zebra, hartebeest, blesbok with black blazes and also small game—as big as sheep. So gracefully did the densely packed game graze in the red sweet veld, you were amazed by the beauty of it all and Sergoit hills plonked down here on the plains and the forest over there in the east—so beautiful that anyone who has not experienced it would not believe it. (33–4)

This is the only time where Prinsloo actually regards the landscape from an aesthetic point of view. This particular passage follows on the opening pages of Prinsloo’s hunting memoir where he recalls how utterly enthralled he was by the sea passage from Delagoa Bay to Mombasa and how differently the coastal Swahili behaved from South African ethnicities when the *SS Windhuk* docked. In the rest of his memoir of endless, detailed, and increasingly self-glorification regarding his hunting prowess, the country is regarded as only there to be traversed and exploited in search of game. It is clear however, that upon arrival on the Plateau most of the farmers were inexperienced hunters and every now and then there was a panicked and sometimes hilarious—if Prinsloo is to be believed—response to lions lounging around in a neighbour’s back yard.

By 1911, Prinsloo reports that new settlers were asking him to act as leader on their hunting excursions because he was already intimate with the hunting grounds. He adds without a hint of self-consciousness that when his hunting companions made a mess of things he went off on his own and shot a leopard: “the other friends came along while I was sitting and having a smoke and admired the beautiful animal and took photographs. Uncle Chris<sup>17</sup> was even more depressed and said that it looks as if this man whom we hired actually prefers to hunt alone” (59). Prinsloo then

informed the company that he was abandoning them and going home. In a sense, even though he was hired and would thus have made some much-needed money, he has an understanding neither of the basic contractual obligations incurred nor the protocols or needed etiquette of being a professional hunter which he would have become having been appointed hunt leader. One of the most basic obligations would have been to lead his clients to big game and give them the opportunity to shoot. An additional, but equally important role would have been to see to the safety of his clients. A hunt leader would only step in if his clients were in grave danger and not shoot for his personal pocket. Another rule would be to point out that gravid females or females with young were to be left alone. This aspect never bothered Koos Prinsloo and judging from his memoirs, he would shoot (and mostly only wound) any four-legged animal that came in sight. In most cases the skins would be sold and it would appear, was often the only income the family had. He writes that "in those days one could get twenty Rand for a buffalo hide and we were poor" (116).<sup>18</sup> Koos Prinsloo's earliest recollections of arrival in Kenya admit that his first few encounters with dangerous animals left him shaking in his shoes and that he would mistake warthogs for lions. Soon though, his initial fear turns to an ever-expanding cockiness, bravado and sometimes idiotic risk-taking. Once this happens the memoirist's detailed but meandering tales of the hunt reveal an increasing covetousness to control not only the animals aligned in his sights but also the family member(s) that might accompany him on a hunt. He continually teases, berates, undermines and mocks his son, Daan, for exhibiting greater caution and less of a taste for slaughter when the latter begins to accompany him on safaris in the 1940s. On one occasion Daan goes off in search of lion without his father and is severely reprimanded. Koos Prinsloo's wife intercedes by pointing out that he himself shot his first lion without the presence of his own father and "how can he expect him [Daan] to become a man if he always has to be present?" (192).

Olivier points out that "there is a high frequency of the word "shoot" (18n) in the memoir and for most readers a feeling of complete revulsion at the insatiable slaughter and endless massacres very soon settles in. While the majority of settlers on the Plateau shot animals on a regular basis for food during severely depressed economic times, or in an attempt to protect their livestock and crops, it appears from other anecdotal evidence and memoirs, that Koos Prinsloo's rapacity was frowned upon by the rest of the community.<sup>19</sup> Prinsloo's account of the so-called Zebra Election in 1922 is a case in point. Election campaigning for the Legislative Council was about to begin when an Irish-born candidate, Tommy O'Shea, managed to convince the colonial government not to dispose of ammunition left over from World War I by dumping it in the sea, but to make it available to Plateau farmers. O'Shea proposed that should he be elected, he would see to it that each zebra tail or complete skin brought to the District Offices would "earn the bearer 3/50 or 4 shillings and two .303

bullets" (V. Cloete 5). Huxley confirms the details of the electioneering campaign on the Plateau and adds that

at about this time, a process was discovered in the United States for tanning zebra hides, which then became saleable instead of worthless, as had been the case before. These factors together spelt the doom of the zebra. Tens of thousands were slaughtered, and, in the next few years, kongoni, eland, giraffe, wildebeeste and gazelle also paid the price for inconveniencing mankind. The Uasin Gishu was stripped of what had been its greatest glory; but fences stood, and wheat grew. (75)

Prinsloo did not wait for a second invitation. A hunting licence of 15/-, which needed to be renewed every fortnight, was acquired and he and one of his brothers, Niek, threw themselves into an unremitting programme of zebra eradication. He writes that "not three months had passed and nothing was left of the big stuff, but small antelope were still plentiful" (119). He continues by reporting that "Niek and I shot until we gagged from it. One day we *again shot a herd* of zebra and when we went home Niek said that he was finished with zebra [because] his life did not depend on it" (119, my emphasis).

No such insight ever occurred to Prinsloo and he was obliged to go ever further afield to designated hunting grounds—mostly around present-day Masai-Mara, Serengeti and Ngorongoro. Game licenses had to be bought and no dogs were allowed to accompany the safari—this time round in lorries, extended camp sites, farm workers to act as beaters, porters, cooks and camp site guards as well as barrels of brine for the skins. Every detailed anecdote about the hunt reveals his personal recklessness and chest-thumping boastfulness. More insightfully for the reader, Prinsloo reveals ways in which he desires to dominate and continually covet admiration. He was also covetous of his role as hunter. He was a patriarch in all respects and despite the fact that women had been an intrinsic part of safari life for decades and accomplished shots in their own right, it never occurred to Prinsloo that his wife might also like to go along instead of having to manage the farm and fourteen children by herself. In the 1940s he eventually relented to pressure from his wife, Lalie. At one time, just as another example of his unremitting self-interest, a doctor recommends that his wife, who was suffering from a heart condition, go to South Africa for specialist treatment. Lalie was bed-ridden and very weak. While he was packing for the journey, Koos Prinsloo comes across three unused game licences to shoot rhino. As each licence cost £10, he elects to go on safari first (198–9). Ironically, his wife then outlived him by almost 40 years.

Prinsloo was not a pillar of the community. His name does not appear on the member lists of any of the multitude of District Committees and Boards neither was he appointed as deacon or elder of the Dutch Reformed Church (although some of his brothers were).<sup>20</sup> He did not join up during the First World War despite the fact

that many within his own community did so (some for the Germans and most for the British forces). He bemoans the fact that his son Daan was undertaking military training during the Second World War and not available to bring in the harvest (*Verhale* 117).<sup>21</sup> Unusually for a settler on the Uasin Gishu Plateau, he seems oblivious to any major events in the Colony except in so far as it affected him personally. He also never mentions the birth of his fourteen children. Veracini (103) argues that the stories settlers tell themselves and about themselves are crucial to an exploration of settler colonial subjectivities. In Camus's reconstruction [*The First Man*—an incomplete autobiographical account which explores the settler colonial condition in Algeria, published posthumously], every settler is a 'first man' and, therefore, settler manhood (as opposed to metropolitan manhood, for example, but also to indigenous manhood—that is, settler manhood as opposed to exogenous *and* indigenous alterity at once) is a truer form of manhood: a manhood that grows in isolation and is self-constituted, volitional, self-imposed.

Prinsloo, the braggart hunter and bully, truly believed himself to be a "self-constituted" "first man" and of necessity had to carry a rifle. This constantly affirmed his manhood. Even though many settlers were dismissive of his exploits, Prinsloo encapsulated in many respects the imperial ideal of masculinity. Ryan argues that "[h]unting trophies, whether claws, bullets or photographs, also served as badges of manly identity, for hunting also embodied a romantic ideal of Victorian masculinity: independent, courageous, physically robust, honest and white" (110).

While Ryan notes that the replacement of guns with bulkier cameras from the mid-nineteen twenties might signal a shift in European attitudes towards wild animals and conservation in general, the shift is a chimera in that

organised camera safaris merely signal "a shift in domination, away from a celebration of brute force over the natural world to a more subtle though no less powerful mastery of nature through colonial management and stewardship. This shift is inescapably linked to the broader colonial transformation of Africa itself, from an era of exploration and conquest to one of settlement and administration. (136)

Prinsloo only took a camera along on safaris to record his conquests: while his panicked family had sensibly clambered onto the roof of a lorry, Prinsloo grabbed a wounded lion by its tail shouting all the while at his wife to take a picture. Prinsloo remained reliant on "brute force" as the continuing signal of his mastery. On the final pages of his memoir, the 63-year old Prinsloo admits that he now no longer had the physical strength to go hunting but what calmed his "hunter's nature was the wild game trophies collected over the years" (217). As his health and strength diminished he could walk down the passage or sit on his encircling veranda and look at the hides, horns and heads that he had killed. His final words are addressed

to a putative reader: "People who read these hunting tales should understand that everything genuinely happened and that it is not a fabrication. This book contains about ten percent of all my adventures" (217). He anticipates a potential reader and he anticipates, perhaps unwittingly, that his hunting memoirs will become a "book" and therefore immortalise his adventures in print. It is especially interesting what his grandson does with his "book".

### Going back 'home'

Many of Prinsloo Senior's anecdotes about going on safari end with the words "[and] then we just went home again" (*toe is ons maar weer huistoe*) or a variation thereof. Although he does sometimes mention that he misses his wife his tone about returning home manifests as resignation and obligation—as if he cannot wait to get out into the hunting grounds again. After all, back home he must contend with the necessities of farming the land, caring for a multitude of children and doing things that require discipline. Back home he is no longer the brave frontiersman but the settler—one who has to settle back into an orderly pattern and fulfil the chores of daily life.

In some of Prinsloo Junior's short stories the act of going 'home' to his parents' house manifests a different kind of gravitational pull. Each visit home also serves as stark reminder that such a return seldom provides any form of anchorage or even satisfaction. Home, where he still has a room of his own and where he is always welcomed back carries within it the distinct tone of not quite feeling at home. Home is a place where he feels distant and at a disjunction not only to the dwelling space itself but to the people who have remained behind in it. In those short stories that deal with visits home the connections are tenuous and the notion of a centred identity revolving around home is mostly shattered. There is no mistaking the narrator's feelings of estrangement. Short stories that deal with aspects of home appear in Prinsloo's first collection, *Jonkmanskas*: "On writing notes about a journey" ("By die skryf van aantekeninge oor 'n reis"), "The farm was called Jakkeldraai" ("Die plaas se naam was Jakkeldraai") and the final story "The jonkmanskas" ("Die jonkmanskas").<sup>22</sup> Seen in terms of some form of dislocated return it becomes significant that the anthology is nonetheless dedicated to his parents and two sisters.<sup>23</sup> In subsequent collections stories such as "And our fathers that begat us" (in the collection, *Die hemel help ons*) and "The affair" ("Die affair"), "Home visit" ("Huisbesoek") and "Promise you'll tell no one" ("Belowe jy sal vir niemand sê nie") in *Slagplaas*<sup>24</sup> Prinsloo also refers to visits back to his childhood home(s) or conversations/communications between himself and one or both of his parents.

The first story in *Jonkmanskas*, "On writing notes about a journey" deals with a young man (*jong man/jonkman*) on a visit to his parents' home near Newcastle in South Africa after an overseas journey. Symbolically, upon his arrival at the family home, the young man encounters changes to the familiar environment as he opens the gate: the

honeysuckle hedge has disappeared, the gate and fence have been newly painted, another coffee table purchased and the whole yard “looked like a new world” (11). As has been noted by critics such as Olivier and Scheepers, the young man himself has encountered new worlds on his journey but finds it impossible to communicate his experiences to his family or to fulfil their expectations in terms of tales he can tell of distant places. Attempts at conversation descend into bizarre scenes where each family member talks past the other and efforts at comprehension are futile. The young man has seen far off countries and garnered narratives different to those of his family. He has outgrown their stories of longing and loss for a lost world. Later in the day, in a fit of boredom, he wanders into the sitting room and begins paging through his grandfather’s memoir—an entirely different world which his family remembers and cherishes. The fact that the family chronicle is easily accessible in the sitting room appears on the surface as an attempt by the young man to access anew the old order of the lost farms in a colony. It is an attempt to recognize the symbolic value the rest of the family have assigned to the memoirs.

In the short story the young man ‘reprints’ the handwritten Foreword ostensibly provided by the grandfather for his descendants. Scheepers (49n) notes that the Foreword has been rewritten by the younger Prinsloo himself and that it has been edited in terms of grammar and spelling and even shortened in some respects. It is also understood by Scheepers that the Foreword was dictated to Prinsloo’s grandmother by the hunter himself. Because he fails to mention anything about the spiritual and political existence or even welfare of the Afrikaner community on the Plateau in his memoirs, I am inclined to argue that the handwritten Foreword which appears in the short story writer, Koos Prinsloo’s very first short story, “On writing notes about a journey”, was conjured up by the hunter’s wife herself when she made copies of the memoir for her family once they were in South Africa.<sup>25</sup> The so-called Foreword placed in “On writing notes about a journey” (13) talks about “taming the land” for descendants and about the great ideal of “keeping the Afrikaner pure” [...] “by example and through the faith of [the] forefathers [they] could remain pure” as the “outlanders [the British] were unable to discern that there were differences between blacks and whites” (13).

Written as if it were dictated by the grandfather, mention is also made about the fact that the grandchildren could now enjoy the good life because their forefathers tamed the wild frontier and “always looked ahead” (13). The Foreword is not part of another handwritten copy of the memoirs that I consulted. Koos Prinsloo Senior died in 1950. While the Afrikaner communities in East Africa were fully apprised of political developments in South Africa especially from 1948 onwards when racial segregation became legislated, the early settlers were committed to their new homelands, and were, whether they liked it or not, British subjects, and when the memoir was written the Mau Mau uprising (which didn’t really affect Uasin Gishu settlers

or those in Tanganyika) was still something in the future as was the possibility of independence. The fact that the grandparents had “always looked ahead” is ironic in that the linear narrative, which such words would indirectly refer to, had abruptly ended to be replaced by a circular narrative of a “homecoming” where racial and ethnic purity was paramount. While this Foreword is of little relevance in the larger scheme of things, my impression is that it was written by the grandmother post-1962 when the family had already settled in South Africa.

The entire short story deals with the issue of homecoming, loss and longing and Prinsloo quotes stanzas and verses from contemporary poets and singers to indirectly emphasise his point: stanzas from Breyten Breytenbach, the exiled Afrikaans poet who returned home to South Africa and was then imprisoned; Joni Mitchell’s 1970s lyric “California” which proclaims that she is coming home to California and; the final verse of Paul Simon’s 1973 song “American tune” where the singer is longing for some rest in a new home. The first verse of “American tune” refers to the pilgrims of the *Mayflower*—the first white settlers in North America who find themselves so far from home. By the final verse a new home has supplanted the erstwhile home and home country.

The young man has seen different worlds (literally and figuratively) and his return to the commonplace is at odds with his recent experiences and new awakenings. There is always a return to the notion of going home, of looking for some form of anchorage. But the experience of actually getting home turns one irrevocably adrift at the same time. The fact that a great deal has changed in his parents’ home and that there is a significant breakdown in communication are declarations by the narrator and the author of ‘homelessness’. As becomes evident in later stories, the Prinsloo family itself suffers, in the broader sense, from homelessness as well—diasporas within diasporas.

As ironic commentary on the Foreword the narrator provides an “Afterword”. Upon his return from a pub where he had met up with some old friends and acquaintances the young man arrives home to find the family already gone to bed. The television is still on but instead of displaying a test pattern or playing the then national anthem of “Die Stem”, the young man hears a version of “Nkosi sikelel’ iAfrika” (17). As afterword the author anticipates another and new kind of world which will supplant that of his forebears and especially that of his grandfather. At the end of the previous section I mentioned that Prinsloo, the author, was a postcolonial writer. “The jonkmanskas” was first published in 1982, twenty years after the family had left Kenya, and twelve years before the first democratic elections in South Africa. The choice of “Nkosi sikelel’ iAfrika”, even if he couldn’t understand the language it was being sung in (isiXhosa), is a significant choice because he aligns himself with a still distant post-apartheid/postcolonial order where the linear narrative of the colonial settler, whether in East or South Africa, is cut short and a new regime, albeit uncertain (he did not recognise the language), is anticipated. Significantly too, the song is

being sung on television after the normal broadcasts of the government-controlled SABC have ended for the day.<sup>26</sup> Late at night when the family has gone to bed the potential for subversion is signalled alongside the potential for a new majority-led leadership. The subversion of the familiar (home/settler country) is also a subversion of power and control by the male-dominated order and the 'order' over the natural world and his own family instituted by his grandfather. Further 'dis-order' is effected by the final story of the first collection, "The jonkmanskas".

In *Jonkmanskas* (1982), the eponymous final story deals with a narrator called Koos attempting to type up his grandfather's memoir with a view to publication. From being the unnamed young man who pages through his grandfather's memoir in the first story of the collection, the author has moved his narrator into first person narrative where the protagonist, Koos Prinsloo, has been prevailed upon by his grandmother to see to it that his grandfather's memoir gets published. Together with his grandmother, who is no longer the semi-senile 'crone' of the first story, the narrator is driving down to his parents' home in Natal:

Outside Volksrust a signpost warns against speed traps. We drive through town slowly. And then, when we crossed the border between Transvaal and Natal, with Majuba clearly in sight, she spoke again: 'You must see to it that your grandfather's book gets published.'

'His book?' I keep my eyes on the road.

'Yes, he wrote down his hunting experiences and it was never published, but you have an education.' (86)

The narrator pages through the memoir and decides that it has potential. Back in Pretoria, he begins with the transcription. He starts off well enough but soon gives up. He does however include a series of explanatory footnotes to the pages already transcribed—one of which notes that the Afrikaners were guilty of mass slaughter when it came to wild animals (96). After the final scholarly footnote, Prinsloo attempts to continue with the transcription but finding that he cannot he turns to looking up the phrase "penile insecurity" in an academic book. Quotations relating to this insecurity lead to various connections between hunting and the notion of virility and as such the grandfather's preoccupation with the virility of the rifle is debunked and emasculated by the younger author's pen. In addition, in Prinsloo's short story the narrator decides to omit all the hunting tales from his transcription ("sonder om die jagstories te verhaal" (96)). In Afrikaans the word *verhaal* has several meanings. Prinsloo uses it as a verb—to recount or narrate—but it can, in this sense, also imply that he refuses to provide the stories of the hunt with some form of redress by actually affording them cogency by the very act of being typed up.

The narrator then pages through the memoir to the final entry where the grandfather assures the reader that the tales are not fabrications but "genuine manly

experiences" (97). The author/narrator has inserted the word "manly" himself (it does not appear in the original memoir) and such insertion compresses all the hunting adventures of the grandfather into one significant but deliberately sardonic word. For the grandfather, disingenuous as he is, hunting and killing is a form of putative masculinity. For the grandson on the other hand, hunting and killing animals becomes an ineffectual and cruel prosthesis for masculinity.

"The jonkmanskas" contains several internal stories that feed into one another and fold back upon themselves. Riana Botha, in an investigation into the structure of "The jonkmanskas" has likened it to a box puzzle (1) where interlocking pieces hold the rest together and a series of complex moves are needed before it can be disassembled or re-assembled: one section, perhaps the most visible, informs the reader about a luncheon date the narrator, Koos, has with friends where he sees a jonkmanskas for the first time and declares that he would like one just like that; another section reveals that the following day he actually encounters such a cupboard in a second-hand shop and opens one of the top drawers where he finds three Croxley writing pads containing the handwritten memoir, a gold pocket watch and two old photographs—presumably those of his grandfather's family and a picture taken of the latter and his wife, Lalie, on their wedding day.

The two photos had been shown to him by his grandmother on the journey to visit his parents when she asked him to see to the memoir's publication (87). To some extent, Prinsloo's grandfather is equally and simultaneously anchored and adrift. One photo, displayed below but not actually reproduced in the short story itself,<sup>27</sup> represents the Prinsloo family shortly after they arrived on the Plateau. The short story writer's great-grandfather and great-grandmother and ten children are seated in front of a hut neatly constructed from papyrus (the only building material initially available in that area to build a shelter against other predators and the elements). The children hold posies of wild flowers and the family dog is lying next to one of the youngsters.

Upon enquiry, the narrator learns that his namesake grandfather is not present in the photo as he had returned to South Africa to work on the mines and the prison service (87) only to return a year or so later because he felt homesick—longing for his family and the wide open spaces. Despite the author, Koos Prinsloo's predilection to sometimes insert recognisable photos of his mother and father into his short stories,<sup>28</sup> his grandfather remains visually a deliberate absence—not only in the arrested moment of the family photograph his grandmother shows him as they are travelling down to Natal from Pretoria, but also in the series of short stories where his grandfather's past is featured.

While photos of his parents are reproduced in some of the short stories (and thus lend themselves to persistent, arbitrary and on-going interpretation) the family photograph of his antecedents is not reproduced and thus the missing grandfather



The Prinsloo family posed in front of their temporary papyrus home on the Uasin Gishu Plateau. This photo, the worse for wear (*erg verweer*), was shown to Koos Prinsloo (junior) by his grandmother as they were travelling down to his parents home near Newcastle. The photo was taken by a roving photographer, Scholtz, from the then Orange River Colony and posted to the Prinsloos in 1909.

is doubly removed. First, because he was physically several thousand miles away when the photo was taken (probably in 1909) and secondly, because the grandson was denying the grandfather status or recognition as symbol. The narrator however, finds the two photographs in a drawer of the *jonkmanskas*. Hastily he places a few loose sheets of paper—"the incomplete manuscript of a story" titled "The hankering was too great"—next to these 'found' objects (82) and thus provides a codicil where all talk of killing animals has been left out (82).

"The hankering was too great", a phrase that can also be denoted as homesickness, is taken directly from his grandfather's memoir where the latter recounts his return to Kenya to rejoin his family and the open plains of that country after a short sojourn in South Africa (circa 1909–10). Prinsloo Senior takes up a linear narrative again and presses ahead seamlessly to "tame" the frontier by ridding it of animal "pests" considered vermin by the colonial authorities. Prinsloo Junior's longing is of a different nature—a desire perhaps for acceptance of his otherness and an ironic commentary on his grandfather's desire to conquer. A third interlocking section of the box puzzle/narrative structure assures the reader that the story about his grandparents is entirely fictional (even though there are historically verifiable facts available to confirm some of the stories). A fourth recounts the actual journey to his

parents' home with his grandmother where she asks him to see to it that the memoir gets published. The fifth section, closely interlocking with all the sections mentioned above, recounts his efforts at typing up the manuscript (noted above) and then laying it aside after radical editing. The entire story ends with the narrator still in front of the jonkmanskas in the second-hand shop musing about the possibility of using the second drawer for underpants, socks and handkerchiefs and perhaps some shaving equipment. When the shop owner berates him for touching the piece of furniture he quickly climbs into the cupboard below and closes the doors. He takes possession of it by closing the cupboard doors upon himself and figuratively speaking joins the objects in one of the drawers above. For the moment, he climbs *into* the closet rather than out of the closet and it is only in later short stories that his homosexuality is implicitly discussed with his father. He cannot escape his past entirely, but he can attempt to redress some of that past by editing and rewriting it—hence the placement of his own incomplete manuscript alongside the memoir as an alternative text which can be read as a critique of settler colonialism. While the narrator's past cannot be escaped its very incompleteness provides an invitation to other readers, critics and perhaps family members to add to it or write a new story completely. Just before he climbs into the cupboard he notices that it smells of *motwortel*, a Cymbopogon grass species that holds whiffs of turpentine (and is also known as turpentine grass). Like turpentine, the narrator's manuscript can act as a form of solvent to the past and as a compass point to a future.

As Scheepers points out, the reader should not mistakenly think that he/she is actually reading the grandfather's story, because Koos Prinsloo, the short story writer, is "re-telling his grandfather's story [and thus] it becomes his story" (81). Scheepers continues: "the story of the grandfather is therefore not an authentic story, but exists by virtue of the story into which it has been absorbed" (81). Olivier is also of the opinion that "increasingly the narrator's presentation of the memoir is neither neutral nor innocent, but an act of control wherein the grandfather is unmasked" as a person of "well-nigh unlimited self-confidence, a *macho* self-image and the conqueror's perspective over the... country he inhabits" (20).

Patricia Hampl, a scholar who writes about the relationship between memory and imagination, recalls her discomposure when she realises that a first draft she wrote about a specific childhood memory had actually been, upon reflection and research, wholly inaccurate. She is thus forced to ponder the "lies" and inventions of that first draft and concludes, "I came to see what I was up to: I was getting what I wanted. Finally" (30). Prinsloo, by placing his "incomplete manuscript" (a so-called first draft) on top of the grandfather's memoir and other artefacts, is finally getting what he wanted—it supplants the grandfather's memoir.

In "The jonkmanskas" Prinsloo provides a series of quotations, some of which have been 'doctored' by him in that they do not appear in the grandfather's original

memoir, where he (Prinsloo Junior) insists that the tale he is telling is “mere fiction” (82) as his knowledge of his grandparents is limited and subjective. But as Scheepers (17) points out, “there are persistent autobiographical markers such as the use of the name of Koos as primary narrator and the fact that a number of matters he mentions can be historically verified”. Nonetheless, Prinsloo, the young short story writer who insists he is writing fiction, is refusing “to embody the myth of memoir: to write as an act of dutiful transcription” (Hampl 26). He takes control, refuses to transcribe dutifully and instead attempts to reveal new truths.

Both “On writing notes about a journey” and “The jonkmanskas” deal with the narrator’s visits to his parents’ home where he spent some of his childhood. Prinsloo creates, according to Olivier, “a complex fictional identity and a manner in which the distressing truth of the world is represented” (17). As part of this “distressing truth” one of the questions we need to ask is how and where Prinsloo saw himself in the linear narrative of his parents, older siblings and forebears. When his parents moved to South Africa he was in all probability too young to regard himself as intrinsic to such a linear narrative but as he grew older he inevitably listened to the chronicles of loss and melancholy reflected by family members. He is a member of his family but largely missed out on levels of co-experience in eastern Africa. He is thus reliant on second-hand memory and sometimes even this is disputed by his parents when it comes to little details such as the location of the first church built on the Plateau (“The jonkmanskas”, 87–9). At times the author/narrator’s memories themselves can be factually disputed. Prinsloo erroneously thinks of his family’s farms as being called “Verbrandebos” (Burnt Forest, 117) and “Moiben” (284) but these are actually the names of those hamlets nearest to the farms. (Both townships, Burnt Forest and Moiben, still exist.) In this respect the epigraph set at the beginning of the short story, “Promise you’ll tell no one” (“Belowe jy sal niemand sê nie”) is particularly apt: “I have decided to be faithful to my memory even though it deceives me” (Guillermo Cabrera Infanta, *Infante’s inferno*, quoted in *Verhale* 285). Accidental deceptions are of little consequence as far as historically verifiable facts are concerned. Deliberate deceptions are of greater consequence in that Prinsloo purposefully tells the reader that some aspects of the stories are fictitious when they very obviously are not. These are all part of the plot to debunk the often unquestioned mythologies of the “first man” mentioned by Veracini above as well as the notions of bravery and virility that accompany such myths. Prinsloo the younger does not see himself as part of that linear narrative and sets out to question mythologies that have emerged from them.

In a story in which his father features prominently, “And our fathers that begat us” (in *Die hemel help ons*), it is clear that no assistance has come from heaven (as the collection’s title implies). The narrator, Koos, is once again on a visit to his parents’ home and the reader is informed that his father, formerly a successful farmer in Kenya, has been obliged through misfortune when an entire harvest was lost to hail

soon after he acquired a farm near Newcastle in Natal, to take up employment as a turbine operator at a power station. This was the second time where circumstances beyond his father's control led to the loss of a farm. In 1962 he had to give up his farm in Kenya and watch (with eventual admiration and respect) how a former Elgeyo foreman of his made a success of the enterprise. From a literary point of view both Scheepers and Olivier read the almost negligent way in which the reader is informed of the hail storm—imparted in the short story “And our fathers that begat us”—as a deliberate literary ploy by Prinsloo to illustrate the impending and ultimate failure of the patriarch. In reality during the 1960s there was no short-term crop insurance available and many farmers went bankrupt when a harvest was decimated by hail. In one violent hailstorm Prinsloo's father's life changed from that of landowner and farmer to that of being landless and a member of the working class. The reversal of roles from landowner (in a British settler colony) to figuratively speaking, a political ‘refugee’ and then from a new landowner in white-controlled South Africa to landlessness again is a double form of emasculation.

But the family did not lose everything. Apart from old photo albums and the grandfather's chronicle packed up when they moved into a house provided by the power station, they also took bigger physical reminders of their past with them: a piano (“On writing notes about a journey” in *Jonkmanskas*); and two elephant tusks elaborately mounted within two cured elephant feet, an elephant tail and perhaps even more incongruously for Afrikaans-speakers in nationalist South Africa, an ash-tray commemorating the coronation of Elizabeth II (as opposed to the ubiquitous sugar bowl of 1938 commemorating the Voortrekker Monument and the Great Trek of 1838). The elephant tusks (and piano) speak of a time and spatial dimensions irrevocably lost. Both need space to be displayed and the tusks would probably have been the focal point in a room that could cope with their size. A worker's house simply does not have the dimensions to display such a trophy and an expensively mounted one at that. The severely diminished environment, loaded as it is with things and memories too big to dismiss, is redolent of a loss of manhood in both the figurative and the literal senses. The description of the elephant trophy is followed by a snapshot of Prinsloo's father (his face is entirely obscured) sitting on an elephant shot by the grandfather on one of his last hunting safaris.

No photograph of Daan, Prinsloo's father, and his ‘own’ elephant was ever taken as the elephant was only wounded and had to be hunted down by an acquaintance that would see to it that Daan eventually got the tusks and feet. (A rather dismissive excerpt from the grandfather's memoirs relates the story of the hunt: Daan was not permitted to hunt down his own elephant as the old man wanted to get home in time for his birthday). The fact that the elephant had to be taken down by an outsider rather than Daan is another element in the unsuccessful pursuit of masculinity and proprietorship. The grandfather, who had in the meantime shot and killed his own

elephant, sees to it that Daan does not return home as a hero but as someone who misses the crucial shot and by extension does not fulfil the grandfather's own perverted notion of masculinity. What is evident is that Prinsloo Junior's own father had already been emasculated by Koos Prinsloo Senior long before the former's departure from Kenya. The display of the tusks in the worker's house is a conceit of something that did not quite happen and another indication that the father of the narrator, Daan, cannot compete in a 'man's world' where land ownership and a display of prowess with a gun is *de rigueur* (at least in the eyes of the grand patriarch, Prinsloo Senior).

In the short story further photos of Daan are displayed by Prinsloo: one is of his father in swimming trunks in a photographer's studio after completing a body building course and the other of him in his army uniform during World War II (in real life the father never saw action although this is not mentioned by the narrator). There is some bathos in these photos in that neither physical prowess nor the military renders the son acceptable to the brutish father who complains in a letter written during the Second World War (reproduced in the short story) that the son is not at home to deal with sowing and reaping the harvest. In the story itself it is clear that the narrator feels these disjunctures keenly. He is not entirely unsympathetic but allows the collection of incidents and events to speak for themselves. In so doing, he reiterates his remove from his parental home and distances himself from the melancholy of times past. The story ends with some level of reconciliation between the narrator and the father, Daan, where the latter, in a letter to his son, expresses relief that there has been some rapprochement between the two of them, even though the father has had to swallow a "bitter pill" at some revelation (presumably that his son is homosexual) (123). The feeling of reconciliation is perhaps mutual in that the author writes that the narrator has kept the letter in his shirt pocket and re-reads it.

### Conclusion

In the three stories discussed above, "On writing notes about a journey", "The Jonkmanskas" and "Our fathers that begat us", the feeling of not feeling 'at home' is reiterated over and over in the descriptions of the narrator's return to his home. Prinsloo's short stories dealing with his family and their Kenya sojourn are not only a dismissal of the control of the patriarch or the power of the colonial settler but also question the ways in which homesickness has lost its usefulness. Being homesick used to be seen as a natural phenomenon used to cope with the unfamiliar. Nowadays instead it has become something where longing has turned into a thing of stasis and inactivity, hence the narrator's detailed descriptions of the elephant tusks whose elaborate mounting removes them from the original living creature that constantly uses them. The tusks thus become redolent of stasis and inactivity on two fronts: first, the lack of critical self-insight displayed by the grandfather in his memoir and secondly, the grip that the past has on the family.

In my opinion Prinsloo asks readers, most of whom would be familiar with life-writing from Kenya (such as Blixen's *Out of Africa*), to rethink the romance of the "first man" and the great white hunter on safari. All three generations—that of his grandfather, his parents and himself—go on safari. Koos Prinsloo (Senior) goes on safaris of conquest, ill-discipline and death, his parents hanker back to those days where their safaris or journeys signified better days, while Koos Prinsloo, the author, goes on journeys into his and his family's past in order to question the longterm usefulness of his family's nostalgia and in so doing write the end of a settler colonial linear narrative.

#### Notes

1. The White Highlands is an upland area running through Kenya which was set aside for European settlement primarily because of its mild and temperate climate—even though the Equator crossed it. Eldoret and its adjoining areas on the Plateau, for instance, have an altitude of between 7000–9000 feet (2100–2700 metres).
2. Eldoret, the principal town on the Uasin-Gishu Plateau in western Kenya was swamped by Jacobus Petrus/Koos Prinsloos. The original trekker was known as "ou oom Koos" (old man Koos). His son, the writer of the hunting memoir, was one of 11 children that accompanied his father to Kenya, and was known as "Boetie Koot Seningnek" (Little Brother Koot Sinew Neck). Boetie Koot's own son was known as "Jong Koos" (Young Koos) and was one of 14 children. Most of the children also baptised a son as "Jacobus Petrus" (Koos). Koos Prinsloo, future short story writer and the grandson of Boetie Koot, would have had a swarm of cousins with the same name. But, at six years of age, in 1962, he moved to South Africa with his parents and sisters. For the purposes of this article I shall designate the hunter and the author as Senior and Junior respectively.
3. Hand-written copies can be found in Koos Prinsloo Junior's literary archive at the National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre (NALN) in Bloemfontein while another hand-written copy will shortly be sent to the Bodleian Library (Rhodes House) in Oxford. The latter text has been made available for my perusal.
4. *Jonkmanskas* is literally translated as Young Man's Cupboard (a *jonkmanskas* is traditionally recognised as a waist-high cupboard with two doors and two drawers at the top). A 'jonkmanskas' may also refer to a cupboard provided to young gentleman visitors in the 'jonkmans' quarters. It is generally made of yellowwood and stinkwood. *Die hemel help ons* can be translated as 'Heaven help us' while *Slagplaas* refers to (among other things) an abattoir or slaughterhouse. *Weifeling* variously refers to vacillation, hesitation or the act of wavering. *Verhale* is the Afrikaans word for "stories".
5. Pronounced Wash-in Ghee-shoe—a Masai word meaning "stream of cattle".
6. With the possible exception of narratives by soldiers serving as members of the Mau Mau army.
7. The poster, dating from 1908 has been re-printed in Bartle Bull's *Safari* (158). Later posters, including those for sale on the internet, do not feature the gorilla in the foreground carrying away a longhaired woman. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* was only published in 1912 while the giant movie monster in the Hollywood film, *King Kong*, was first screened as late as 1933. The trope might indeed have originated with, or have been given added impetus by, the poster.
8. In the meantime, even though they were denied land rights in the so-called White Highlands, Indians who had elected not to return to the sub-continent upon completion of their railway construction contracts, set up supply stores, general dealerships, medical and legal practices and effectively ran the railway. By 1906 the colonial Government had already put in place ordinances regarding land appropriation, quarantine regulations for dogs and livestock, a differentiated hunting licence system, means to licence firearms, distribute post (mostly by runner to rural areas) and survey land claims. Even before major settlement occurred, a hut tax was implemented in 1902 to force the native male population to work on the farms and yet to be established towns. In 1910, when it was clear that a hut tax meant that only one male in a hut which might be shared by many other young warriors, would need to work to pay the tax, a poll tax was introduced on all those African males not already paying a hut tax. Sometimes this enabled families displaced by settlement or military campaigns and unable to pay the tax, to move onto farms with their own livestock and extended family and take some of

the grazing pressure off in the “native reserves” which had been created for those “tribal ethnicities” which the British felt needed to be “pacified”. In many instances, such as Kikuyu living around the Nairobi area and whose land had been expropriated, this meant squatting on an ever-extending circle of farms which could be a significant distance from traditional “tribal” land.

9. The (as yet unsolved) murder of the Earl of Erroll, one of the Happy Valley gang, was headlined throughout the English-speaking world in 1941 and provided a “welcome” respite to war reportage. Many books, a movie and further memoirs have been inspired by *White Mischief*. The most recent is Juliet Barnes’ postcolonial enquiry: *The Ghosts of Happy Valley: Searching for the Lost World of Africa’s Infamous Aristocrats* (2013).
10. Koos Prinsloo’s hunting memoir is handwritten in three Croxley writing pads. It is understood that he wrote some of it himself and dictated the rest to his wife in about 1948/9. The pages are not numbered and the numbering used in this article has been inserted by myself.
11. The Van Rensburg trek of 1908 comprised 402 people. A smaller trek (the Van Breda and Arnoldi trek) had arrived in British East Africa in 1905–6. Far bigger and more frequent treks to German East Africa (Tanganyika/Tanzania) were also taking place. These latter treks settled in the vicinity of Mount Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro.
12. Later corrupted to *SS Windhoek*.
13. “How the Dutch came to the Plateau” as told by J. P. Prinsloo (the original trekker and great grandfather to the short story writer) to W. A. C. Bouwer. This interview was published on 2 December 1938 in most probably the *Uasin Gishu Advertiser*. The newspaper article has a date but the title and page number have been cut off.
14. The Nandi people were using the iron rails to forge weapons and jewellery.
15. The last ‘great trek’ of almost 60 people (men, women and children) and livestock, seedlings, artisans etc. arrived on the Plateau in 1911.
16. Cloete reports that until 1920 zebra migrations made the wagon track to Eldoret impassable for several days. Anyone wishing to get to town had to turn back as the press of animals was impenetrable.
17. Christian Cloete, a 1911 settler. Uncle (*Oom*) is a title of respect for anyone older than oneself and does not necessarily signify a blood relation.
18. Koos Prinsloo died in 1950 and would have been unaware that South Africa would switch to a rand-based currency only in 1961. His memoir was clearly copied and adapted from the original by his wife once she arrived in South Africa and, when she remembered, ‘modernised’. She is not consistent with monetary designations and often refers to the original Kenyan Rupee currency, the British pound and the later East African currency of shillings and cents (1921–69).
19. Having been born and raised in the same district myself, I grew up with stories about the Prinsloos told by family members and friends (see also V. Cloete 14). Prinsloo was also known for regaling people with physically impossible tales, such as driving a team of oxen pulling a wagon entirely underwater through a mud river.
20. As far as I can establish from Dutch Reformed Church archival material. His boastfulness and at times clearly physically impossible tales he told were regarded with scepticism by the rest of the community (see V. Cloete 14–21).
21. Noted in Prinsloo Junior’s short story, “And our fathers that begat us” where a letter from Prinsloo Senior to his son Daan is reprinted.
22. All subsequent translations by myself. All page numbers hereafter refer to the combined short story collection, *Verhale* (2008).
23. In the collected short stories, *Verhale*, the original dedications remain but the biographical details which accompanied Prinsloo’s anthologies have been removed.
24. “On writing notes about a journey”, “The jonkmanskas”, “The farm was called Jakkalsdraai” (this refers to jackals who are thought to be evasive, clever, twisting and turning. It could also simply refer to a piece of land that jackals used as their home range). “Huisbesoek” literally means to visit home but it also refers to the notion of a pastoral visit.
25. The handwritten memoir that I consulted has neither foreword nor a dedication to the grandchildren.
26. In 1982 the SABC was the only television broadcaster in South Africa.
27. Original photo provided to East Africa Committee by Lalie Prinsloo, Koos Prinsloo’s grandmother. The photo was taken in the course of 1909. A copy can be found in Koos Prinsloo’s literary archive at NALN. The original, represented here, will be lodged at the Bodleian.

28. See for instance photographs of his father in "And our fathers that begat us" (110, 115 and 116) and a copy of his mother's passport photograph in "Die affair" (203).

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