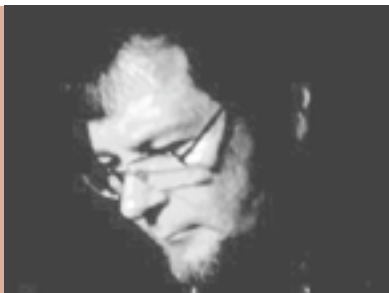


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## Sleeping with cats, or; Making circles

Charlene and I were honoured by a visit from three of local librarianship's luminaries - the *immergroen* Dalena le Roux and the very welcome couple from far-off Beaufort West: Pieter and Santie Hugo. What a pleasure it is to speak with people who share a love of something one holds so very dear! I am referring to books of course, and everything associated with books - who was it that said there is nothing so pleasurable as conversing with those one shares one's mind with? Well, something like that, and if I am willing to take the credit for the quote if it is wide enough off the mark ... but you know what I mean. If you don't I feel sorry for you, because then you really do miss something profound. Anyway, the conversation strayed to other things and back again, a bit like ice skating really - one goes around and around, picks up speed and slows down, but never leaves the circle, because then the fun stops. Unfortunately it was not always all that much about fun, because I had heard that the computers had crashed again and I imagined that Grizéll and company were close to crashing themselves. At any rate I do hope that this last disappointment will have a positive outcome - maybe **Cape Librarian** will rise as Tutu the Arch implored in the TV-ad: up, up an' away, from where it will hopefully seem to be shaking off the last low blow (shades of Rocky, guys!) again (!) to come to roost in the upper echelons where it belongs, and by the time the new generations avidly read the beautiful glossy magazine we have all come to love and cherish, the present editorial team will look back and smile.\* And murmur 'Jjup, the good ol' times!' Grizéll must be shaking her head right now, reading this, and thinking 'What a crackpot!' But: in the background I hear Susan Boyle singing **Midnight** and hey, is that appropriate or what?

To get back to our conversation - this was in our house some months ago, with the *binnebraai* going strong and me darting to and fro (if you can imagine that) to keep the glasses filled and also struggling not to totally incinerate the meat (with constant backseat driving from Charlene to support in this regard, or that was the rationale, you understand). And then one of our cats made an entrance. Iris (also known as *Kleinkat*, to distinguish her from Kelvin, or *Grootkat*, the ginger male and reluctant playmate), pitch black with yellow button eyes - the cutest little

thing on four legs, suddenly craved attention, and with great determination too. Well, she dominated attention from then on, doing half-rolls on the carpet and slinging her bushy tail over her back in a weird ground squirrel imitation, but we did manage in-between to touch on different literary themes, as well as Pieter and Santie's trekking from another galaxy far, far away, et cetera. Even the Cape Archives got a mention - and the conversation suddenly took a downward turn, so we quickly watched some IPL Bollywood razzmatazz to get back on track (just kidding).

Later, when our guests had sadly taken their leave, I returned to my laptop and it became very quiet. It was Sunday night after all: the impending week was looming, lurking like a big black panther; slyly silent but very much in attendance. Or that was what I thought until I noticed Iris snug in a corner, curled up in a tight half-circle. Lord, I thought, what is it with cats that they entice one so to just curl up and forget about work yourself? Very peaceful - and death to productivity. Too much for me to bear tonight. I walked over to my easel and looked at the canvas I blacked out many weeks ago, with no clue what to do next. The abstract painting I tried to create just did not work and it ended up black and dead, staring at me like a depressing rectangular fissure. But I refused to be sucked in. I rather turned to writing. Less messy to begin with - I hate the smell of turpentine in the evening as much as the late Mr Brando (?) may have loved napalm in the morning. I again hear classical music and helicopters churning the air rhythmically. In our war, twenty years ago, we preferred Queen - 'another one bites the dust ...' Imagine, two decades ago and the images are still there. Talk about black panthers prowling. But now, now I saw Iris peacefully minding her own business over in a corner, and I ambled over to the bathroom, careful not to disturb Charlene who has perfected the art of sleeping with a book propped up on her chest. I took a razor blade. Thought a while. Then I returned to the easel and scratched off most of the black paint. After a while a range of colours emerged, so much so that I applied some Payne's Grey to soften the reds bleeding through. And the blues and yellows. In the middle an almost perfect circle emerged. It looked like a brightly-coloured eel touching a dewdrop with its head, its tail fading into the blackness before reaching the sparkler from behind. I stood back and felt something soft against my leg. It was Iris sitting up straight, looking up at the canvas towering above her, seeming engrossed. Maybe it was the sound of me scratching away, but I choose to believe she was really interested in my creation.

Well, they say being positive is an intellectual choice. Some-time later we joined Charlene and Kelvin in bed. Besides art, Iris and I love sleeping with cats - they are part of our circle of friends. Oh, yes ... maybe I actually should say something about books: Iris and I are enjoying **Favourite cat stories** edited by Nerys Huges ...

\* We have indeed risen again ... ED