

**Lien Botha**



## *Wonderboom*

*Wonderboom* (Wondertree) could be considered a dystopian novel that takes place in a post-apocalyptic era within the South African landscape. It is the time of disillusioned citizens and access to most resources is limited, except for the plutocrats. The result is that the division between the haves and have-nots is more severe than ever before and is particularly evident along the fringes of society.

The protagonist, Magriet Vos, is a fifty-year-old violinist whose memory is disintegrating. Due to the fact that she is a regular performer at the 'court' of the despotic ruler Albino X, her impending mental incompetence pitches her at a knife's edge, because when she will no longer be able to master her art, Albino X will have her killed and dispatched to the taxidermist in order to extend his diorama.

Further to this, she has virtually no friends or relatives left in the coastal village where she lives, and she is thus compelled to migrate north, back to the Magaliesberg and the last members of her clan.

Vos raids her past in a desperate attempt to survive the post-revolutionary wasteland in the hope of arriving 'home' safely. The text fluctuates between the territory of memoir and travelogue as the journey

progresses and her sense of consciousness starts to dissipate. Aspects of her musical craft, such as rhythm, tone and tempo are synthesised in the structure of the novel. Further to this, careful consideration was given to references to existing texts by particular authors, serving the purpose of either parody or elegy.

Vos' journey commences in Betty's Bay on the southern coast of South Africa and unfolds through four voices or perspectives:

- The main narrator (illuminating the idiosyncratic viewpoint of Magriet Vos)
- Magriet's diary (memoir)
- Encyclopedia (endnotes)
- Disintegrating photo texts: a series of constructions/collages, which serves as introduction to each chapter and refers to the 'image sequence' of the British photographer Eadweard James Muybridge (1830-1904) and which is here applied as dismantling device to allow text and image to dovetail. The tree is a central metaphor – both as axis in nature and as archaic source of 'knowledge of good and evil.'

## Wonderboom

*Wonderboom kan beskou word as 'n distopiese roman wat afspeel in 'n post-apokaliptiese tyd binne die Suid-Afrikaanse landskap. Dit is die era van die ontgogelde digitale boorling en alle bronne is skaars. Die gevolg is dat die skeiding tussen ryk en arm meer skreiend is as ooit vantevore en veral in die 'buiteposte' gaan dit benouend.*

*Die hoofkarakter, Magriet Vos, is 'n vyftigjarige violis, wie se geheue besig is om die gees te gee. Omdat sy gereeld aan die 'hof' van die despotiese maghebber Albino X optree, hou haar toenemende rasionele onvermoë vir haar 'n wesenlike gevaar in, want wanneer sy nie meer daartoe in staat sal wees om vir hom te speel nie, gaan hy haar van kant maak en haar oorskot na die taksidermis stuur om sy diorama aan te vul.*

*In haar kusedorp is daar weinig vriende of familie oor en sy is dus uitgelewer aan migrasie noordwaarts, terug na die Magaliesberg, waar die laaste lede van haar stam woon. Soos die reis vorder en haar syn al meer kwyn, plunder Vos haar verlede en geheue in 'n desperate poging om die post-revolusionêre wasteland te oorleef met die hoop om veilig 'tuis' te kom in 'n reisverhaal wat terselfdertyd as 'uiteenvallende dagboek' funksioneer. Haar medium, musiek, vorm 'n sintese in die struktuur van die roman om onder andere ritme, toonwaarde en tempo*

*aan die teks te verleen. Terselfdertyd is 'n bewuste poging aangewend om na bestaande skrywers se tekste te verwys, hetsy as ode of parodie.*

*Magriet Vos se reis begin in Bettysbaai aan die suidelike kus van Suid-Afrika en ontplooi deur middel van vier 'stemme' of perspektiewe:*

- Die hoofverteller (belig die idiosinkratiese blik van Magriet Vos)
- Magriet se dagboek
- Ensiklopedie (eindnote)
- Disintegreerende fototekste: konstruksies/collages wat dien as inleiding tot elke hoofstuk en verwys na die 'image sequence' van die Britse fotograaf Eadweard James Muybridge (1830-1904) en wat hier as ontbindende beeldsekwensie toegepas word om teks en beeld te laat swaelstert. Die boom dien deurgaans as sentrale metafoor – beide as 'n spil in die natuur en as bron van 'kennis van goed en kwaad.'

1. *Bome ontbreek* (Trees are absent)



## 2. *Diereboom* (Animal Tree)



### 3. Spookboom (Ghost Tree)







## 5. Papierboom (Paper Tree)



6. *Die see spoeg 'n boom uit* (The Sea spits out a Tree)



7. 'n Bloekom val in Atlantis (A Bluegum falls in Atlantis)



8. *Die klank van Kersiebome* (The sound of Cherry Trees)



9. *Doringboom* (Thorn Tree)



## 10. Sterboom (Star Tree)



## 11. *Bloedboom* (Blood Tree)



## 12. *Aptekboom* (Medicine Tree)







## 14. Oorlogboom (War Tree)



15. *Kerkboom* (Church Tree)



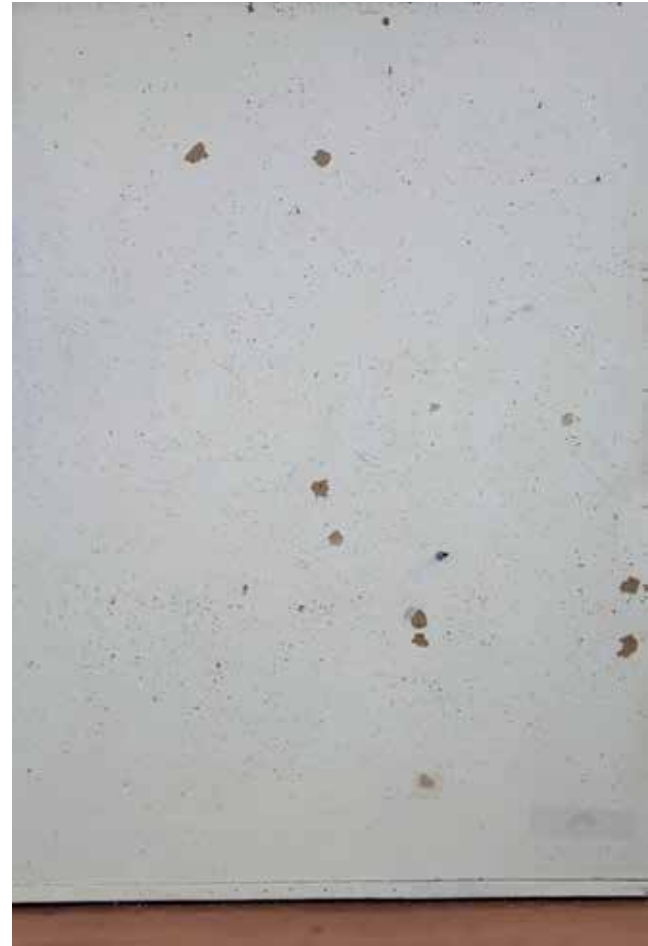
16. *Blomboom* (Flower Tree)



17. *Versteende boom* (Fossil Tree)



18. *Wonderboom* (Wonder Tree)







Modern Art Projects South Africa • PO Box 39 Groenkloof 0027 South Africa  
info@map-southafrica.org

Introduction: Lien Botha

Published in 2015 in South Africa by Modern Art Projects South Africa, on the occasion of the exhibition *Lien Botha WONDERBOOM*, Map-Richmond, Northern Cape, South Africa coinciding with the 10<sup>th</sup> Richmond Book Festival. All rights reserved. *Wonderboom* is Lien Botha's first novel. It was published by Queillerie in 2015.

© 2015 Modern Art Projects South Africa and Lien Botha

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission by the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-9922401-7-2





Cullinan - Gauteng



Dullstroom - Mpumalanga



Graskop - Mpumalanga



Pretoria - Gauteng



Richmond - Northern Cape