

The Choice

Elizabeth Robertson Campbell

CALITZDORP LEESKRING

Die boek ressorteer onder nie-fiksie (920 CAMPBELL) en ons benader dit hoofsaaklik as 'n biografiese, religieuse novelle/liefdesverhaal.

Is geestelike literatuur nog enigsins nodig in vandag se samelewing? 'n Geestelike leier het eens in 'n radioprogram gesê geestelike literatuur is beslis vandag nodig as die onderbou van die samelewing.

Volgens opnames wat gereeld deur streekbiblioteke gemaak word, blyk dit dat al hoe meer lesers in geestelike literatuur belangstel.

Ons vra onself af: Wat is volgens Audrey Blignault (**Van leser tot leser**) die hoofkenmerke van 'n biografie/outobiografie in hierdie 'liefdesverhaal'?

- Die hoofpersoon in die boek moet oortuig en as 'n volledige mens deur die leser ervaar word.
- Dit moet 'n boeiende verhaal vertel.
- Die hoofpersoon se lotgevalle moet so uitgebeeld word dat dit aansluiting vind by ons universele menslike ervaring.

When you have done reading the book you realise that somehow you had a part in it.

Born Elizabeth Robertson in the Eastern Cape in 1960, this multitalented woman spent her schooldays in the coastal town of East London where she took art as a subject, later completing a two year diploma course in graphic art in Cape Town. She must have had a very solid foundation on which to build her strong faith in later years.

This is a first-time writer and as she actually was an artist first and foremost (watercolour paintings and magazine cartoons), she herself was surprised that she ended up writing at all. On top of that she is dyslexic!

As we know, very few people can resist a good old-fashioned love story. 'This is the story of how I fell in love with a man, a country and a city and the obstacles we had to overcome.'

On reading the book we find there is so much more to discover. She says, 'Whether or not it has a fairy tale ending, you'll find out only if you read it from beginning to end.'

Today she is also a dynamic, sought-after motivational speaker at ladies' groups and book clubs worldwide.

She admits variety is the spice of life.

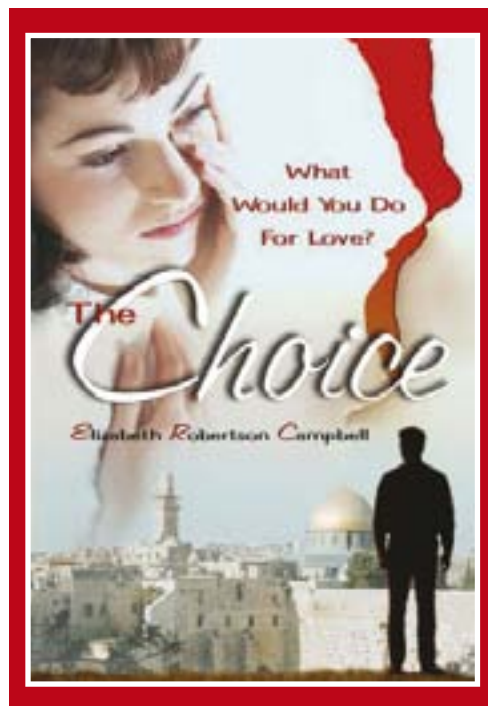
Elizabeth Robertson Campbell gives us a true story that is stronger than fiction. A story so harrowing that it reads like a novel. Shakespeare would have been proud to come up with a plot like this one.

Sy het die boek self uitgegee en die boek het vanaf haar tuiste in Suid-Afrika die pad gevind regom die wêreld, van land tot land, deur Europa tot by die Verenigde State van Amerika - van leser tot leser wat vir mekaar gesê het: 'Jy sal dit nie glo nie ...'

Die verhaal

Elizabeth Robertson het in Israel verlief geraak op 'n Joodse man. Sy het in die destydse Christen Ambassade in Jerusalem gewerk en daar met hom, 'n ortodokse Jood, kennis gemaak. Hy wou op daardie stadium niks van die ambassadepersoneel weet nie en het gesê: 'Laat ons Jode alleen en gaan terug na jou land.' Dit was Aaron, die man op wie sy in die volgende paar maande haar hart sou verloor.

Hulle het vele debatte gehad oor hul onderskeie godsdiens. Sy wou hom, 'n intellektuele Israëli, oorreed om in te sien dat Christene 'n doel in Jerusalem het. Regdeur die boek is dit



duidelik dat sy 'n wye kennis van die Joodse leefwyse, tradisies en feeste het en dat sy ook regtig lief is vir Israel en sy mense.

Sy het Aaron so ver gekry om 'n Messiaanse byeenkoms by te woon, maar gedurende die finale gebed het hy uitgeloopt en vir 'n paar maande geen kontak gemaak nie. Sy het baie goed die gevare van so 'n verhouding besef: 'Ek was nie verlief op 'n gawe man in sekulêre Suid-Afrika nie, maar op 'n ortodokse Jood.'

Hy het vir etlike maande die Talmoe bestudeer en bepeins en toe het God sy Seun aan hom openbaar: Oplaas het Aaron Jesus as God se Seun aanvaar, maar hy kon nie waag om dit aan sy ortodokse ouers mee te deel nie.

Sy pa het hom oplaas op die Joodse Raad van Rabbi's beroep en Aaron is verbied om die naam Yeshua (Joods vir Jesus) te gebruik. Sou hy die bevel verontagsaam, sou hy verbied word om sy kinders uit 'n vorige huwelik te sien en uit die Joodse gemeenskap uitgesluit word.

Van verskeie kante is druk op Elizabeth uitgeoefen om die land te verlaat.

At this point it was very clear to her that she had fallen in love not only with a Jew, but also with Jerusalem and the Hebrew people. An impossible situation.

Deportation in 1986 and separation made her even more determined to be with him. She thought that maybe, if she converted to Judaism it would solve all their problems.

He, on the other hand, remarried his first wife, but sadly the marriage failed again. In the meanwhile she persevered with her studies of Judaism and when Aaron came to South Africa in 1988 a wedding date was set. They were finally going to be married!

Before concluding her conversion and their marriage there was still the final appointment with the Rabbinical Council at the Chief Rabbi's home.

When she had been questioned at length and had given all the correct answers, the rabbis were satisfied. It seemed to be as an afterthought that the chief Rabbi, also a very dear friend, asked her: "Who is Jesus to you now?" At first she couldn't understand why they wanted to know. Then he said: 'Elizabeth, you have to understand that you cannot have Aaron and Jesus. You'll have to make the choice!'

'They gave her four hours to decide. The reader really agonises with her as she walks the beach at Sea Point, but there was only one answer for her. She chose Jesus as the Christ and promised Messiah. Even the rabbis respected her for holding on to her faith.

She was in the shadow of terrible agony - she knew her choice had been the right choice but: 'Ek kan nie verstaan waarom God my tot hierdie punt gebring het en nou my geluk van my wegneem nie.'

The wedding was called off and shortly afterwards Aaron left for Israel.

Eventually, during a telephone call from Aaron they decided to separate permanently. Aaron, her beloved, was gone forever.

Somtyds sien ons iets goeds as 'n gawe van God terwyl dit eintlik sleg is vir ons. God tree dan tussenbeide om ons te red van onself. Ons moenie net die goeie kies nie, maar wel die beste!

Sy sou later hoor Aaron is getroud met 'n Jodin en dat hulle in Amerika woon.

As leser wonder 'n mens hoe 'Jesus' nou inpas in sy lewe?

Deurentyd is Elizabeth deur verskeie mense aangemoedig om haar wedervaringe te boek te stel. Haar eerste voorlegging aan 'n uitgewer in 1994 misluk egter en sy raad aan haar is om weer aan die manuskrip te gaan werk. So the years went by

So, after her wedding plans had crashed she spent years searching for a soulmate and eventually gave up, embracing singlehood ... until in 2001 she rewrote her story and handed it back to the publisher, Jamie Campbell. Then it was love at first sight ...!

'By making the choice I have been given everything I sacrificed in a husband to die for!'

In conclusion a few thoughts from a short article by A Jonker-Bryce published in the East London *Saturday Dispatch* (3 May 2003), with some other comments thrown in:

'This autobiographical story has to do with the struggle she had with having to refute what she believed in order to be with the man she loved. In a moment of truth she was forced to make *The choice* which would change her life and challenge her faith with far-reaching consequences. Deeper than that, it explores the links between religions, in this case Christian and Jewish.

'It is about how we all have choices in life that determine our destiny and whether or not we're successful and happy', she says.

'Sometimes it's making that choice that's the hardest thing to do.

'If you choose what you believe is right, don't compromise, you end up reaping the fruits of that choice.

'If you run after what you know is not right for you, you will still have a vacuum that only God can fulfil. Your love has to be put in the right place.

'**The choice** is an inspirational journey as colourful and revealing as Elizabeth's paintings which capture the spirit of her fascination and love for the human condition, its strength and frailty in the context of religious commitment.'

'Ek het die keuse gemaak en die seëninge het op Sy tyd gevolg. Om God met hart en siel lief te hê, is die antwoord vir my. As 'n mens dit regkry, sal al die meetsnoere vir jou in plek val.'

'A thought-provoking love story which challenges the reader to examine his or her own truth of spiritual integrity. She had to choose for or against Jesus.'

Soos een resensent dit stel:

'Both genders, young and old, Jewish and Christian, have enjoyed this story, making it a wonderful gift bridging the gap between two faiths and encouraging dialogue. A must read.'

Om terug te kom na die eenskappe van 'n biografie wat aan die begin genoem is, het die leeskring gesê die boek voldoen nie heeltemal aan die vereistes nie. Dit is eintlik 'n baie eerlike 'vertelling' van wat alles met haar gebeur het. Ons vind sy het ons binne haar wêreld toegelaat, maar daar is tog tydgapings in die verhaal wat vir sommige lesers hinderlik was en wat veroorsaak het dat dit nie so gemaklik vloei nie.

In die tweede Suid Afrikaanse uitgebreide uitgawe brei die skryfster 'n bietjie meer uit en word sommige vroeë outomaties beantwoord soos, byvoorbeeld, het hulle toe in Jerusalem getrou? Nog nie moontlik nie weens haar destydse deportasie in 1986.

Maar tog was almal bly hulle het die boek gelees: vanaf 'n jong onderwyseres van 25 tot 'n dame van byna 70 jaar oud! Dit het weereens vir ons 'n ander wêreld oopgemaak.

Hierdie boek se agtergrond en die intensiteit waarmee die skryfster die land Israel en sy mense ervaar; herinner sterk aan die boeke van Marzanne Leroux-Van der Boon, byvoorbeeld, **Granate bloei in Jerusalem**.