

BENNETT, John - The Night of The Great Butcher

John Bennett's stories are sometimes confusing but, he holds the reader's attention to discover what will come out of the next chapters till the end of the book. Being a surrealistic writer his writings demand much concentration on the reader's part. His themes are about art (plus drugs), sex, music and everyday life. At times they are shocking. Still the reader realizes that violence, oppression, lack of humanity, drug problems and lack of understanding exists all over the world.

In The Night of The Great Butcher John Bennett creates a central character called Achilles Jones, whom he considers the "prodigal son" of his "imagination". Achilles is an American who studies in Munich. He is married to a German telephone operator and has a four-year-old son. While living there, he gets involved with local minor artists, hangs around bars, has love affairs, makes shady acquaintances and tries to promote his writings.

It seems that the search for tenderness and understanding among people constitutes this character's hidden desire.

One of the most striking passages in the book takes place when Achilles, The Great Butcher, one of his closer friends, and Stanley decide to visit one of Achilles' lovers. Here is a sample that shows John Bennett's surrealist style and depicts the conlicts of his own mind:

"When they reached the Dutch girl's apartment, she would not open the door, and the Great Butcher was forced to reveal a cleaver hidden under his shirt. He chopped in the door and they found the lovely Dutch girl in bed with two Africans, one on either side. The Africans pulled the stained sheet up to the whites of their huge eyes, and the Dutch girl lay staring at the ceiling, a trickle of blood running out of the corner of her mouth.

Stanley got very sick all over the floor, Achilles dropped into the Lotus position, and The Great Butcher split open his own skull with his cleaver. The Africans stared. The Dutch girl stared. The blood trickled. Under the bed was a nine-week fetus in a

bucket. It belonged to Achilles. He went to the bed and pulled out the bucket. He stared into it and bit his lip too severely, for it began to bleed. He began to hum Sweet Sixteen and walked slowly out of the apartment, leaving The Great Butcher and Stanley and the door wide open."

In the book we find stories about other character's (who are also artists) and their struggle for art. The effort these un known artists make to have their poetry known is tremendous, for they cannot afford publishing expenses and sometimes if they want to create they are forced to leave their country and culti vate their art overseas.

ANGELA P. SOARES

