

THE BEND IN THE ROAD

THE BEND IN THE ROAD by Katie Hendriks (Howard Timmins, Cape Town. 10s. 6d.). Whether this book is entirely autobiographical or partly fictional, I do not know. The central figure in the book bears the writer's own name, which indicates autobiography. Yet she describes events at which she was not present with a freedom usually reserved for the narrators of fiction.

Not that it matters very much. Whether these events really happened or not, they form a true picture of the lives and problems of the Coloured people.

A good deal has already been written about people who live on the borderline between coloured and white. Katie Hendriks lives on another borderline — that between Coloured and African. She is the daughter of a Coloured mother and an African father, and the conflict between these two elements in her ancestry forms the main theme of the book. In her youth, she follows the accepted fashion and tries to escape and repudiate her African ancestry as far as she can. Later she abandons this attitude, marries an African of her father's tribe and goes to live among his tribe in Rhodesia. She associates the African side of her with the simple, clean, but possibly, stultifying life of the Rhodesian countryside and the Coloured side of her with both the evils and the attractions of Cape Town. Thus her conflict is not only one between races, but between entirely opposed ways of life.

This city — countryside contrast is rapidly becoming the most hackneyed theme in South African literature, but Katie Hendriks succeeds in avoiding its worst banalities. She has at least recognised that the reserves are not an idyllic demi-paradise and have their evils and problems no less than the cities.

The characters of the book, particularly Katie's mother and father, are well drawn. The narrative is a little bare, with few attempts at description or the creation of atmosphere. Perhaps the writer will be able to improve these points as she gains experience.

The publisher is to be congratulated on his vision in launching this new and promising writer, but unfortunately not on the technical merits of the publication. The book is full of misprints and at the end one is left wondering whether the authoress spells her surname with or without a "C."

Readers will be interested to know that **THE BEND IN THE ROAD** is being run as a serial in the progressive weekly 'Advance.' This is a new departure in progressive journalism which will be welcomed by all friends of South African literature.

—A. O'DOWD

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Printed by Royal Printers and published by the Proprietors, Liberation, P.O. Box 10120, Johannesburg.