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CREATIVE WRITING MASTER OF ARTS

by Course work

Research Report

by

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Charmaine Sandnes

15 February 2006.

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Foreword

In this Theoretical Introduction the reasons for the choice of the historical fiction genre for the creative component of this Research Report will become clear in relation to other notable examples of the genre, indeed the academic essay will revolve around primary concerns with regard to the narrative of historical fiction and the debates around the representation that the work engages.

In the postscript to the academic essay the possible destination for publication will be considered, as well as a summation of the writing and revision process, and a rumination of the projected readership or audience. As the creative component will be submitted in partial form, the postscript to the theoretical introduction will extrapolate the rest of the project, so as to provide some sense of the intended eventual work.

Finally a special thanks to Ashleigh Harris, whose untiring help and encouragement is deeply appreciated; and to my husband, Norman, whose concern and enormous patience has sustained this endeavour.

Theoretical Introduction

‘Re-constructing the past: narrative in historical fiction.’

The nature of re-constructing the past as historical fiction poses numerous questions with regard to the importance of narrative and the mnemonic. The latter in particular will give further rise to some of the complexities with regard to plagiarism and the ethics of ‘writing a life.’

Historical fiction differs from pure non-fictional biography. The reasons are that a non-fictional rendition of a person’s life may lead towards an encyclopaedic recitation of facts – as Paula Backscheider suggests “- what Tony Tanner once described as an archive that feels like a mausoleum – and an unwillingness to assign and exploit the drama suggested by configuration of facts. Therefore many academics’ biographies become essential reference works but seldom-read books.” (Backscheider, P, 2001, p xix). This factual account may be suited to a specific type of biography not necessarily more or less meritorious and as an example of this type Anissimov’s *Primo Levi. Life of an Optimist* springs to mind. Yet this factual account may not be the best genre for relating the seemingly more frivolous life of José Dale Lace in *The Lady of Northwards*, which forms the creative component of this research report. The latter’s real life seems to have been covered by romance, wealth, intrigue, interesting aristocratic connections as well as pain and suffering – all areas a reader would be able to relate to because of its deep ‘human interest’ quality. In historical fiction the subject’s connections to other well-known historical figures may well serve to enrich the narrative. The milieu may further demand an historical fiction approach as it reflects the essence of a specific time and connects the subject to it. For example, in Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, in the main subject’s search for his identity, he is forced to recall the holocaust and all its accompanying horror such as

kinder-transports and the displacement of small children. In *The Lady of Northwards* the milieu is essential to the narrative where the main protagonist's life reaches its zenith in the Edwardian era, called 'the Lotus Years', a time of frivolity and decadence. This very period was often referred to as 'the last good time of the upper classes.' The main subject herself was a member of the privileged few "who enjoyed a world which no longer exists, a world in which there were no shadows, where it was always afternoon, a world of wealth and security which enabled its fortunate inhabitants to live with no thought of tomorrow. It was a time of excess." (Carter, E, 1977, p13). This kind of milieu is so evocative that it seems best suited to historical fiction because of the opportunities it offers for narrative elaboration.

Furthermore José Dale Lace, the subject of the historical fiction, left behind so little factual data about her own history and the exciting period in Johannesburg's history that it seems to demand documentation through rather an imaginative reconstruction of the past as a way of filling in the gaps and yet must remain rooted in events which research indicates actually did happen. Thus it would seem legitimate for "the biographer to borrow from the techniques of the fiction writer," (Backsheider, P, 2001, p 19) and so the historic fiction genre provides not only a means of reconstructing the past but also a means to construct a story which is based on fact, as the historical novel definition suggests, "the historical novel takes its setting and some of its characters and events from history; the term is usually applied if the historical milieu and events are fairly elaborately developed, and important to the central narrative." (Abrams, M.H, 1971, p113).

Of course re-narrating history cannot essentially escape the tenets of biography precisely because it involves 'writing a life' or narrative within a specific social milieu, and therefore will "provide a window through which to observe the nature of social change and finally a way to explore intersections between human agency and social structures". (Finkelstein, B, p46). This is evident in an historical fiction such as *The Silent Duchess* by Dacia Maraini (the famous Italian feminist writer), where the strict patriarchal society

of eighteenth century Sicily is rendered questionable and the main protagonist succeeds in giving the female 'voice' sway.

Some interesting aspects with regard to narration worthy of exploration in the historical fiction are: the choice of narrator; the relationship between the author and subject; the selection of facts or information used in the narrative; the establishing of how much of the present exists in the past and how representative the chosen historical subject is of its history.

When the third person omniscient narrator is used attached to the biographical subject, Abrams defines this point of view as, "the assumption in a work of fiction that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about agents and events and he is entirely free to move as he will in time and place, and to shift from character to character reporting (or concealing) what he chooses of their speech and actions; and also that he has privileged access to a character's thoughts and feelings and motives." (Abrams, MH, p134). Thus bearing in mind Abram's definition when the third person omniscient narrator is attached to subject of the historical fiction it allows for the narrator to be 'camouflaged' under the guise of that subject thereby allowing the author to report (or conceal) his or her speech and actions in order to suit the purposes of the 'story'.

Within this mode the narrator can deliberately be made to appear un-intrusive because the comments on society, the evaluation of the characters, their motives, actions and even judgments, seem thus not to come from the author but from characters themselves and their specific social milieu. For instance in *The Lady of Northwards* at the first Northwards Charity Ball, Lord Milner reveals his rather caddish Colonial arrogance which José's reaction makes pointedly questionable in a covert way:

" 'Absolutely, my dear, with Britannia's hold on almost the entire known world, the English language you refer to is quite obviously the Lingua Franca now and I do believe it will be the universal touchstone for linking cultures and civilizing peoples.'
'Heavens, how clever.' " (*The Lady of Northwards*, p13)

In the aforementioned instance, the narrator is not the same person as the author – but rather, through the use of the imagination the author clandestinely becomes an 'interpreter' who tries to extrapolate what may have been the 'truth' with regard to the character and that time period. This is also especially noticeable in *The Silent Duchess* where Dacia Maraini, uses her heroine Marianna Ucria to reflect her own feminist views. The latter is clear when, as Simona Wright concludes, that Marianna must write from within the confines of the male conceived linguistic model but Maraini skillfully shows that women can make this model their own through, as she puts it "selecting themes, strategies of communication and [she must determine] the rhythms, modes and tones of expression." (*Italian Quarterly*, xxxv, No.s133-134, p63). Thus Maraini successfully imbues in her subject her cardinal belief that writing and the language it uses are intrinsic in the very act of identification.

Yet in this regard, one might take cognizance of Paula Backsheider's comment in her book, *Reflections on Biography*, that whilst the author may wish to

> disappear behind the voice of neutral objectivity those who want to let the subject 'speak' or those who make themselves a character or even the hero of their biographies, we are affected by the writer's choice…The biographer is explorer, inquirer, hypothesizer, compiler, researcher, selector and writer: none of these is a neutral act. The best biographers know that they are inventing and psychologising through their selection and arrangement of materials: they are establishing cause-effect and other relationships, and they are determining what was most formative and important for someone else, someone they do not know. (Backscheider, 2001, pp118 -119).

Here Paula Backsheider clearly shows how impossible it is for the historical fiction writer to be neutral, simply because whether consciously or unconsciously a selection of details or facts is taking place and through what is imagined, the past is being reconstructed and may be far from the literal truth because the boring details may be omitted and the colourful and exciting details highlighted. The latter may be achieved through a careful re-creation of dialogue because the way a person speaks effectively

captures not only the character of the person but also through the conversation in the text the reader might place the character in his or her social milieu.

When narrating the past, the selective process seems to be essentially unconscious yet the authorial position is always in the subject's future. Thus, with the advantage of hindsight, the author can confidently allow for the 'prediction' of certain negative socio-political repercussions that occur in the present but which were foreshadowed in the past. For example when the author in retrospect can see that certain foundations were laid by some of the negative precepts of colonialism, such as the inhumanity of racist policies which later culminated in apartheid, and then from the authorial vantage point he or she can weave its prediction into the narrative by perhaps covertly suggesting it in the dialogue. For example, in a letter Karen Blixen writes, "If for a long time we continue in this way to dazzle and blind the Africans, we may in the end bring upon them a longing for darkness." (Dinesen, I, *Shadows in the Grass,* p 464 [Donelson, L p146]). In the *Lady of Northwards* the author's present in the past is again evident in dialogue as we see in:
" 'Did you hear about the unease in the shafts this week, the bastards!' Dale Lace had foreseen an uprising…" (*The Lady of Northwards,* p11.) Here the author can 'predict' the future uprisings with complete confidence because he or she knows it did happen from the vantage point of the future looking back on the past.

Thus even in the historic fiction it becomes clear that the author must establish exactly how much of the present exists in the past and how best to serve the purposes of the narrative through its incorporation.

This brings to mind what Kochar-Lindgren suggests is "WG Sebald's attempt to en-fold temporality, to render the past in the present, for the sake of the past, the present and the future." (Kochar-Lindgren, G, p370 In Sebald's historical fiction, *Austerlitz,* Sebald writes with hindsight after the Second World War and thus uses the present to analyse the holocaust through one of the narrators visiting Breendonk, the Belgian fortress once a place of torture but now a museum. Narrative therefore empowers the author to take the present into the past because it must not be forgotten, and at the same time it helps one to

analyse the situation in the present in order to prevent the horror being repeated in the future.

However, narrative considerations seem to go far beyond the mere choice of narrator and the debate over narrator versus authorial position, because it seems to enhance philosophically the narrative process in its entirety. It also provides an opportunity for philosophical and ethical reflection. Great biographers of the past and of the more recent present have wrangled with the question of the validity of reconstructing the life of an individual as microcosm, in the face of the whole of mankind, as macrocosm. In 380 Gregory of Nyssa wrote the *Life of Macrina,* a hagiographical composition and produced the earliest surviving biography of a Christian woman where the narrative transcends the mere documentary or 'story' purpose by becoming an exemplar for a life of ascetic piety. Thus the individual life becomes an example for mankind. (Derek Kreuger, Journal of early Christian Studies, 2000, p 498). The link here to *The Lady of Northwards* of course is not hagiographical but lies rather in the secular sense in the 'absent' life that is rendered 'present' where the reader may reflect on the philosophical and ethical issues that arise out of that life. Because the individual reflects the whole, there is truth in "Augustine's sense that the individual life is analogically, synecdochially the history of humanity." (James Olney, p165).

Ultimately the importance of narrative, albeit the writing or telling of a story or the narrative style adopted in the reconstructing of the past, is made clear in a comment by Tzvetan Todorov who observes: "No life is lived in vain if it leaves behind a story that when added to countless other stories by which we know who we are, even if in the smallest way, to making the world a more harmonious and more perfect place." (Todorov, p9). Consequently it would seem that the goal of narrative in the historical fiction as it reconstructs the past is to reflect all the aspects of a life in its social milieu to ultimately help us possibly to better understand who we are in relation to the intrinsic philosophy and ethical considerations it expounds in order to render the world a better place for us all.

When reconstructing the past at the root of the narrative lies the mnemonic or memory and much has been written on memory and its intrinsic incorporation not only of the act of recollection, but, also of the imagination and invention. This is referred to as Vichian memory which in all three of its aspects "is to recall origins, to return us by way of recollection, imagination and invention to the human beginning, whence one can see unfolding, as by as inner necessity, the course of a life of an individual, of a nation, of humankind." (Olney, J, p97). James Olney's underlying argument is "that memory and narrative together and alike, are two major epiphenomena of consciousness, the dual defining conditions of our being human and not something else." (Olney, J, p390). Therefore the significance of memory in its relationship to man's knowledge of being lies in the narrative and the attempt at reconstructing the past as notable historical fictions such as *Austerlitz, Out of Isak Dinesen, Karen Blixien's untold story* and even *The Lady of Northwards* avers. This can also be seen in various memoirs, particularly of the Edwardian aristocracy these were based on an older person's memory of his or her own past illustrious life which is essentially turned into narrative**.**

Sandy Toussaint mentions in her article entitled, "Searching for Phyllis Kaberry via Proust: Biography, ethnography and memory as subject of inquiry", that "Marcel Proust in 1981 was among the first to write about the richness of memory and its contribution to understanding everyday life…" (Toussaint, S, p.17). She goes on to demonstrate how Proust defined memory as something that goes beyond the past, it is a complex concept which conversely implies forgetting and as Verne Harris so enigmatically suggests in *Refiguring the Archive,* "There is no remembering without forgetting. Forgetting can become a deferred remembering. Forgetting can become a way of remembering. They open out of each other, light becoming darkness, darkness becoming light. Between consciousness and the unconsciousness there are no stable boundaries. Dancing between remembering and forgetting, at once spanning them and within each; is imagining." (Harris, V, p75). The consequence of this for life writing is that valuable evidence may be omitted because the author may not feel it relevant to the narrative. Yet the imagination may well weave the two concepts of remembering and forgetting together to establish a more pleasing artistic whole albeit in the form of the historic fiction.

The narrative of historical fiction relies heavily on 'archival' resources – documents which include biographical details, letters written by or about the subject, newspaper clippings, perhaps his or her own memoir and even novels for which he or she may have been the inspiration. Precisely because all these 'archival memories' may well be blurred by imaginative apprehensions of the subject's personality and character, one may need to turn to cold factual evidence in perhaps genealogical records, at least to prove his or her existence. For example proof of the existence of the subject of *The Lady of Northwards* is available in the place of her birth in Richmond, in the Richmond Eastern Cape's 'Records of Births and Deaths'. The latter accurately corroborates the factual details given with regard to her roots and family history that she mentions in her own memoir.

Through this kind of evidence one may have proof of the data in memoirs, diaries, letters and so forth as 'sites' of memory. Even though the writing in memoirs and such like may exaggerate the glamour of the life led, some of that writing may possibly remain true to the memoirist's understanding of his or her own being. Thus in attempting to re-narrate his or her 'truth' through making use of his or her own writing, one must believe that as Maya Angelou intimated, "One doesn't tell every truth but one chooses the truth one is going to tell, and one remains truthful while telling it." (Silverblatt, M).

Memoirs are, for the purposes of writing historical fiction, particularly valuable because the memoirists are themselves engaged in narrating their own past and this has particular relevance in this essay as it again focuses on the importance of narrative and memory when attempting to reconstruct the past.

In a memoir, according to M.H. Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*, "the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people he has known and the events he has witnessed." (Abrams, M.H, 1971, p15).

On careful scrutiny of José Dale Lace's unpublished memoir it is quite clear that she was familiar with the memoir genre that was so popular in her day. She stipulates that her

memoir was written in her ‘old age’; thus she is obviously relying on remembrance in the text. She writes essentially about her ‘connections’ with the aristocracy and with other illustrious personages thereby supporting the myth of a privileged life-style that Northwards attests to as being quite real. Interestingly, she blatantly refers to her reservations about the memoir genre, as she seems critical of the egotistical nature of so many memoirists whose work she had read. Indeed on a close reading of her own thirty-seven page memoir she does seem to steer away from direct self-appraisal but rather comments in- depth on her acquaintances.

The use of the first person narrator is of course essential to the memoir genre and she dutifully uses the same, and proceeds to innocently confess to all her moral indiscretions that she admits were frowned upon in her day, lending a rather charming vulnerability to her recollections, (although of course this is still a self construction, and therefore not neutral). For instance, on describing her illicit relationship with the Baron of Grimthorpe, a married man, she recalls how, “all those who had been my friends were beginning to drop me”, and so she continues explaining how she became friendly with others who are also “under the shadow of sin.” (Dale Lace, J, p.24). The first person narrator here allows for the colloquial tone that enhances her frivolous attitude towards what must have been a very socially precarious situation during the notoriously conservative Victorian era.

The incorporation of a meta-textual playfulness in historical fiction definitely enhances the narrative possibilities of the work and numerous examples prove this, *In Out of Isak Dinesen: Karen Blixen’s untold story,* the main subject’s letters are used extensively, which enhances the narrative. In *The Lady of Northwards*,by having the character José write her own memoir in the ‘story’ which is of course totally reliant on the mnemonic, and thus through it unconsciously she reflects the gentility and wealth of her social milieu which is, a very real ‘parterre’ of the Johannesburg ‘high society’ of the late Victorian and early Edwardian period. This in itself is worthy of documentation as it offers valuable insights into the social aspects of colonial life at that time. Thus there is so to speak ‘a narrative within a narrative’.

Janet Malcolm explores succinctly “the blurred line between fictional and non-fictional and in particular how life stories are constructed. In her distinctive biography of Sylvia Plath, Malcolm argues that it is only in the non-fiction that understandings about what is known in the present or what happened in the past remain open.” (Toussaint, S, p18). However, one cannot fully agree with Malcolm on the latter in that it is not only in non-fiction that these understandings of the past are conveyed and archived, but also in historical fiction other sites of memory (photos, fictions, stories, memoirs, etc) may also all contribute towards a more integrated and ‘whole’ understanding of the past.

In fact, through incorporating the ‘non-fictional’ into historical fiction, like extracts from memoirs and letters, all of which entail memory in the fictionalized account of the subject’s life, some new understanding of not only this historical life is revealed but also an understanding of the milieu. This opens up for the author and the reader the opportunity for comparison between the author and reader’s present time in relation to the time of the subject of the narrative.

Consequently, one has to agree with Sandy Toussaint who points out in her article that: “One of the ways in which we can focus on interpreting past and present life is by asking questions about the usefulness of memory – not only with respect to constructions of history but also how the present is lived.” (Toussaint, S, p18). However, she concludes that ultimately, “while memory clearly matters – it informs human speech, thought and action – it is also something which may never be consistent, fully known or understood,” and thus “ memory can never be fully relied on as a source of information because it will always be open to re-interpretation.” (Toussaint, S, p19). Yet when reconstructing the past there is no alternative but to use memory even if it is often ‘flawed’ in relation to the ‘facts’ or ‘truth’ of the matter and for this reason it is imperative to explore different ‘sites’ of memory in order to establish the closest concept to what the possible truth is.

‘Sites’ of memory may take on the form not only of literature written in the past, but may also be situated in the real world of matter – in the form of buildings, material artifacts such as objects, paintings and photographs.

In “The Birth of The Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception,” Michel Foucault explores the idea of “history in the present” where “fundamental structures of experience” were changed in the past to eventually become structures “through which we still experience the world.” (Foucault, M, p.320). This echoes how ideologies were being constructed at any given time, may be embedded in the material. The very building itself becomes a ‘site’ of memory or indeed a monument to the ideologies that created it. In *The Lady of Northwards* José contemplates the solidity of her new home created by the British colonial architect Sir Herbert Baker whose directive from Lord Milner (who himself embodied colonialism and the concept of ‘The Empire’), was for him to use architecture to represent an ideology which exudes power and permanence.

A century later Northwards still stands as a kind of working museum and is a valid ‘site’ of memory because as Annette Horn suggests, “memory is bound to place such as museums, libraries, zoos and even curiosity cabinets”. (Horn, A, p1). Thus memory manifests itself in the material, and one may even go so far as to embrace Foucault’s hypothesis on his microphysics of power that one can read buildings ‘as an excrescence of power’. The fact that architecture has to do with a specific systemization of knowledge, a designing of complex structures and construction itself – historical architecture may well be used to evoke memory as a means of identification with the past. Historical fiction writers may then use these descriptions of buildings in their narrative to portray these ideologies.

Today one can go on tours of museums and historical mansions and this very act has of course to do with remembrance and the relevance of the past in the present. On such sites of memory one can ‘read’ the narratives of the past in the present in order to apprehend the future. To this end the museum, or building or the house itself becomes an archive of the previous owners’ lives and therefore a useful mechanism for mapping life stories. This immediately brings to mind a small but very pertinent aspect of Julia Kristeva’s theory of semanalysis, namely the concept that the ‘text’ “is to be understood as not only verbal or linguistic, but as a translinguistic apparatus”. (Noth 1995:322). Inna Semetsky

explains that, "The crucial feature of the text according to Kristeva, is that it is not reduced to just representing or literally meaning the real. For Kristeva, whatever text "signifies, it participates in the transformation of reality, capturing it at the moment of its non-closure," and Semetsky goes on to show that the "text can be ascribed to different modalities for as long as they serve a purpose of communication and fulfill a specific generative activity called by Kristeva 'a signifying practice.' Thus, pictures as well as any cultural artifacts may be considered as 'texts', albeit extra-linguistic. The lengthy narratives can be composed by pictures due to the fact that 'pictures have a continuous structure [which] induce the reader to …read the picture as if it were a written text" (Posner1989:276). In the same article Semetsky goes on to suggest that "etymologically the position of 'analysis' in semanalysis points to decomposition or dissolution of the sign and the text alike, which leads, by virtue of the process of work, to the empirical discovery in practice of some deep and hidden dimensions of meaning." (Semetsky, I, p2).

This is so relevant to the question of artifacts as 'sites' of memory where in museums such as Northwards today there exist pictures and artifacts which call back the past and suggest exactly those 'deep and hidden dimensions of meaning'. One such 'site' of memory or artifact hangs in the main reception room of Northwards, a large Hal Hurst rendition in oils of José Dale Lace in a pink ball gown, this may well be 'read' as an extra-linguistic text and as such narrate the past. This is rendered in the text of the historical fiction as an unveiling of the said portrait in the following way:

"At this point she tugged at the golden cord which drew the drape aside to reveal the magnificent rendition of Mrs José Dale Lace in the gown she was wearing that very evening. There was a gasp followed by complete silence." (*The Lady of Northwards*, p13.*)*

'Sites' of memory can become the triggers for great works, as in the case of the writing of Dacia Maraini, which was inspired by a portrait, "a frozen memory" of her distant ancestor Princess Topazia Alliata who becomes a model for Marianna Ucria in *The Silent Duchess.* On viewing the portrait of her ancestor in the family mansion outside Palermo,

Maraini is purported to have said, “She seemed to stare at me, asking for her story to be told. It was a most extraordinary encounter.” (*The Silent Duchess,* p253). Thus it becomes clear that ‘narrative’ exists in other forms.

There are numerous black and white photographs of José and Northwards as she and it once were. These have been well preserved and are visual ‘texts’ which invite a careful ‘reading’ as they provide a kind of historical visual narrative just as the main protagonist in WG Sebald’s *Austerlitz* felt that photographs as ‘sites’ of memory allow for the active contemplation of what was; and thus this makes retrospective identification with the past possible within the authentic object.

Sebald creatively uses his main protagonist’s need constantly to take photographs of all the architectural elements he comes into contact with, to both challenge and signify this visual means of documenting and preserving history. Thus it would seem that photography’s significance lies in the metaphysical, which is discernable from the physical in photographs. Walter Benjamin explains this un-canniness as follows: “Before the advent of the modern reproducibility of images, the individual work of art possessed - in part as a function of its authenticity and its uniqueness as a physical artifact its own distinctive ‘Aura’.” He goes on to say, “The aura both connects the artifact to the domain of tradition and bears authentic testimony to our relationship to our own history.” (Darby, D, p.5.[Benjamin, W, Gesammelte Schriften, Frankfurt, 1972. (Vol 2, p.371)]).

Photographs in *The Lady of Northwards* might do exactly what Walter Benjamin suggests, i.e. to ‘authenticate’ some of the biographical details and to create in a sense that there is an element of truth in the historical fiction. But the photographs and the fiction may seem to be at odds with one another, which creates an interesting textual dynamic, because the photographs represent the authentic whereas fiction is fabricated. However, the careful incorporation of photographs in the historical fiction is vital because their function must extend beyond mere illustrative representation of the written narrative. It must itself become part of the narrative as it ‘tells’ its portion of the story in pictures**.** There are photographic representations of José’s life at Northwards during her

day. On close scrutiny of these ‘frozen memories’ of José with her dogs, José in her horse-drawn carriages, José in her garden presiding over a Nazareth House Orphanage tea-party or José with King Edward VII - the list goes on, each photograph exudes that very ‘aura’ Benjamin advocates so that they become in themselves snippets of history in the present, and provide a visual ‘site’ of memory just waiting for some form of imaginative interpretation to fill the gaps through written narrative.

W.G. Sebald himself comments on the use of the photograph in the written text to prove just how they may be used to enhance the narrative. He states “This photograph, like all others… elicits from the text and takes the spectators into an unreal world unknown to them.” (Sebald, W.G, Interview, Feb, 2000).

Amir Eshel notes that; “Sebald’s images relate the spectator to temporality - they make one aware of both the ‘now’ that is frozen in the image and the ‘now’ of spectatorship, of the reading process. His dramatic effect originates from the visual and temporal positions that structure and mark time.” (Eshel, A, p.94).

From this it would seem that the incorporation of photographs in *The Lady of Northwards* should go far beyond a means of merely enhancing aesthetic pleasure but should aim at becoming as Eshel points out; “ ‘genuine images’ in Walter Benjamin’s sense, devices that relate the reader to what is and what will remain absent - the events and the protagonists of the past. Sebald’s images are indeed Benjamin’s images, dialectics at a standstill, or, in Benjamin’s own words; ‘what comes together in the flash with the now to form a constellation.’ (Benjamin, The Arcades Project, p.42.).” (Eshel, A, p.94.)

The challenge of inserting photographs into *The Lady of Northwards* (which must reflect something of the ‘aura’ of the past Benjamin refers to, owing to the fact that they were taken over a hundred years ago) lies in just how successfully the photographs may poetically suspend the temporal procession allowing the text to be put into slow motion resulting in the past being experienced in the present on a metaphysical level.

What is it exactly that fascinates and holds one's attention about an historical, mystical house, its objects and pictures which seem to have an 'aura' of their own? Again memory and the narrative it implies seems to be the answer when we consider Backsheider's suggestion that: "it is that in people a remembered, or hoped for way of living is ever present.' (Backsheider, P, 2001, p.138). Perhaps it is Benjamin's 'aura' that the imagination is able to apprehend intuitively when on the site of some remarkable memories and thus it would seem that it goes far beyond "the secretive and that which is merely awe-inspiring," as suggested by the Oxford English Dictionary.

In the same way photographs leave an 'aura' which one may argue results in a 'feel' for history - other 'sites' of memory may well do the same, 'sites' of memory such as original letters, to and about the subject or memoirs written by the subjects themselves. Thus the incorporation of these in historical fiction, would serve to enhance and further the narrative. Extensive research with regard to actually obtaining such valuable authentic documentation is necessary. In the research required for the writing of *The Lady of Northwards* numerous sources had to be investigated to locate such documents. Using such documents of course gives rise to the ethical implications of referencing the 'real' within the fictional because the genre of historical fiction or in layman's terms, the 'story', must not be compromised.

When reconstructing the past, because the writer is indebted so much to research and to the atmosphere gleaned from various sources both primary and secondary and because narrative and memory combine, the very real spectre of plagiarism arises. The latter requires careful consideration and analysis because as a writer of an historical fiction one would not want to be accused of plagiarism in the sense of its common definition i.e. "to use the writings, thoughts and ideas of others as one's own." (Oxford English Dictionary.)

In the writing of the *Lady of Northwards* absolution from this 'crime' must surely lie in the context of the genre being used. Shelley Angelil-Carter in her article entitled, 'De-constructing Plagiarism' grapples with the notion of authorship which seems easier to

determine or identify in the non-fictional academic essay as it requires meticulous acknowledgement of all the sources used; but in other genres it seems more difficult to assess particularly with regard to fiction. She states that: "the novel is interesting in that again, there is no way of crediting a source within a novel other than with a dedication or footnote. The genre does not permit it although historical information may be used in a novel, which obviously comes from somewhere; it does not need to be documented, whereas in an academic history essay it would need be." (Angilil-Carter, S, p3). Thus because an historical fiction, is essentially a fictional account of a real person's 'history', and because it is merely an imaginary account of what a life might have been like – already it is automatically not professing absolute 'truth' except with regard to certain historical facts gleaned from specific primary and secondary sources. And as a genre it is also not entirely certain as to how much is fictive and how much is truth yet it is this very opaqueness that enriches the writing. Thus it would seem that if one does not feel a Bertolt Brechtian effect, that of shocking the reader with the 'present in the past' would enhance the narrative, one of the only possible solutions to avoid plagiarism is to carefully acknowledge all authentic sources used in either a preface or an afterword.

In Linda Donelson's *Out of Isak Dinesen in Africa. Karen Blixen's Untold Story*. Donelson's authorial voice is clearly heard throughout and because this is essentially non-fiction, she cites letters meticulously with even the names of the writers of letters abbreviated in the text and these have been carefully referenced under a 'Key to References' in the front of the book. An example of this as it appears in the biography is: "She received news that Denys Finch Hatton was returning to Kenya, sometime in the month of April 1922. Karen told her mother she had had a letter from Denys. (LFA, 126)".

In the 'Key to References' 'LFA' stands for 'Letters from Africa, I.Dinesen.' (Donelson, L, p.xv.). Here the incorporation of the extracts from the actual letters represents exactly what they stand for in a non-fictional sense. In historical fiction as for example in *The Lady of Northwards*, the subject of the story, although a real historical character, is first and foremost the 'heroine' of a story, and thus when this 'fictional' protagonist writes her

memoir as part of the narrative even though the author uses extracts from the historical figure's actual unpublished memoir it would be inappropriate to cite the same with references and page numbers in the text as this would detract from the historical fiction as a genre. Thus in order to remain true to the narrative form adopted here, even though the actual memoir and adaptations of the same are used, no references in the actual original are made except for in a preface and in a bibliography**.** Thus it would seem that the problem of plagiarism or its 'absolution' depends on the genre used, and because the definition of historical fiction is so opaque – if in fact, extracts from an original text are used 'as is' or adapted for the sake of the narrative it should not be regarded as plagiarism per se.

In conclusion it would seem that in the attempt to reconstruct the past, narrative is essential because it is the essence of consciousness. The latter is mostly reliant on memory, and the genre of historical fiction raises questions as to the relationship between fiction and the historical realities it represents and how one incorporates research into fictional writing. These questions are at the very heart of how this genre is defined. In the final analysis it would seem that historical fiction enables the re-telling and thus archiving of history in its ability to incorporate what Griffiths calls "the perspectives of past, present and future time that underpin the making of selfhood." (Griffiths, M, p.1).

Postscript

The first three chapters of *The Lady of Northwards* trace the subject of the historical fiction, José Dale Lace's footsteps through her new mansion where each room evokes different memories. In chapter one the lady is seen in her house whilst preparing for the first Charity Ball. She is staring out of the huge double volume windows of the ballroom to the distant hills of the Magaliesberg in the north. Initially, in the writing process, there was a dearth of adequate description of the visual, yet after third and fourth revisions, through reconstruction and selection, from an enormous amount of data, the visual seems to appear more satisfactorily. The rest of Chapter One reflects her relationship with some elements of her past, her husband, her servants and the illustrious guests who cross the Northwards threshold.

In the second chapter there is a movement from the public space to the private space where José shares personal details of her childhood with her masseuse. Here the revision process entailed reworking 'factual' data into the fiction largely through an imaginative re-creation of dialogue and character.

In the third chapter the heroine's relationship with her son is developed and she continues the writing of her memoir which relies largely on her own genuine memoir thus introducing a meta-textual playfulness. In the revision process, the issue of whether it is ethical to use authentic documentation without referencing in the text arose. After much deliberation and research, the solution of its permissibility arose out of the genre namely that, in historical fiction it would be inappropriate to provide references in the text per se but that these might rather be noted in a preface. In this same chapter three her memoir reveals more detail about her youth in South Africa and her London debut. The revision process throughout entailed re-thinking specific elements of narration with regard to representation and its clarity and historical accuracy.

The insertion of photographs still requires much debate as no captions are used in a deliberate attempt to render these as 'readable' extra- linguistic texts advancing the narrative rather than merely illustrating it.

Thus the first three chapters serve as an extended introduction to the lady of Northwards herself – positioning her in her own house which becomes the 'map of her life' and her milieu. As the creative component is submitted in partial form, a possible structure is suggested here for the intended historical fiction in its entirety.

The outline or structure of the biography is difficult to determine absolutely at the outset, as it is an evolving entity. However, having tentatively decided upon a post-colonial or partly a post-modern approach I am tempted to follow an 'Austerlitz' type of "programme", using the Herbert Baker house as a 'loadstone' site of cultural memories and thus a key to the narrative.

Each chapter may not be strictly chronological from a temporal point of view, but may in fact jump from one memory to another yet the central focus will always be the physical tangibility of *Northwards* which is ironically mystical and a mere reflection of what really was anyway.

In exploring the possibility of titling each chapter with an ethereal or mystical quote relevant to the content it is hoped that finally the real and unreal become intertwined and perhaps even figments of the reader's imagination. Furthermore "Northwards" is used as a site of memory by locating each chapter "spatially" "in" the house so that the narrative space becomes a kind of "map" of the subject's life.

Tentatively fifteen chapters are briefly outlined below, indicating only the content of each chapter:

Chapter 1 '*Northwards'* – the first year.

Chapter 2 José's childhood memories and schooling in London.

Chapter 3 José's return to South Africa, the Robinson connection and her London debut.

Chapter 4 High society and her first real love.

Chapter 5 His desertion and her acting career begins.

Chapter 6 First marriage to Colonel John Dale Lace and the Oscar Wilde connection.

Chapter 7 Return to her first love and a paternity suit.

Chapter 8 Second marriage to Colonel John Dale Lace.

Chapter 9 Building of '*Northwards*' begins. Touring the continent, the King Edward VII connection.

Chapter 10 The peak of the Dale Lace era.

Chapter 11 A decline in fortune and *Northwards* burns.

Chapter 12 A return to the country and the Great War begins.

Chapter 13 José, the war heroine.

Chapter 14 Back in South Africa.

Chapter 15 Illness and death.

I would like to submit the final work for publication possibly to various publishers in South Africa and the United Kingdom as the nature of the historical fiction (given the subject's origins), the society in which she moved, and its contents may prove interesting and valuable to all those interested in the life and times of an extraordinary woman.

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CREATIVE COMPONENT:

Historical fiction – *The Lady of Northwards*

Preface

I chose to write *The Lady of Northwards* as an historical fiction albeit an historical novel, and thus it seemed pertinent, in order to maintain the correct register for this genre, deliberately to use the omniscient third person narrator attached to the Lady of Northwards herself, José Dale Lace.

Consequently through avoiding the intrusion of the 'biographer's' voice the story itself is allowed to become the vehicle for documenting a remarkable life within an interesting historical social milieu.

Furthermore I wish to acknowledge from the outset that I have made extensive use of José Dale Lace's unpublished Memoir which belongs to the Johannesburg Public Library, as one of the most valuable secondary sources in the three opening chapters of the novel because her own 'voice' seems so clearly to filter through her own written words.

In chapter 2, I attempt to 'reconstruct' her life through imaginatively elaborating on details from her Memoir, and in Chapter 3, I chose again deliberately, to incorporate and adapt some of her very own words in the 'memoir' she begins writing in the story (See portions of italicized writing in *The Lady of Northwards*, pp26-33 in relation to pp6-17 of the unpublished *My Memoirs by José Dale Lace)* in order to lend a sense of authenticity to her story. Furthermore the incorporation of photographs in the work is meant to advance the narrative in an extra-linguistic way, and thus appear without captions or explanation.

January 2006.

The Lady of Northwards



Chapter 1

"It is always an adventure to enter a new room: for the lives
and characters of its owners have distilled their atmosphere
into it, and directly we enter it we breast a new wave of emotion…"
Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting*

There is something about the scent of roses which excites her, some strange memory of events long past entwined in the whorl of petals and the sharp pain of the forgotten thorn.

A thousand hothouse roses filled the Northwards reception rooms on the ground floor. The name 'Northwards' seemed so right for this great house from its vantage point on top of this new city's longest ridge. The view north is breathtaking leaving behind to the south, the heat and dust of the mine dumps often coating the buildings in a grey pall belying the pure liquid gold extracted from each grain. Mrs José Dale Lace breathed in the pink rose scent and looked out of the double volume window of the Ballroom towards the Magaliesberg far in the north. There was something so solid about her new home. It seemed to rise majestically out of the very mountain it stood on. This was her forty-roomed country house in Africa. She was glad it lacked the turrets, spires, cupolas, art nouveau ironwork and the conservatories which she felt so out place on this African ridge. She much preferred Baker's innovative South African interpretation of the decorative gables of Holland and Belgium, set off with Tudor and Venetian windows, plain chimneys and the delightful recessed verandah in front.

Her thoughts drifted beyond those hills and Johannesburg as she remembered the same scent of the pale pink corsage pinned to the daringly low décolletage of her silk ball gown. It was a warm London night when she, the young Josephine Cornelia Brink, and the debonair Cecil John Rhodes bound by Africa and the power of youthful idealism were alone at last in the hansom cab. She thought to herself, "I could have been the wife of

Cecil John Rhodes the Prime Minister of the Cape – why did I not realise then that he could never give himself totally to a woman? I was misled by the gentle way he caught my head and placed it on his shoulder." Her eyes misted over as she recalled snippets of their conversation.

"Would you like your head to rest there always?" he had asked.

"Yes I should".

She sighed, "That did it of course, I should never have accepted so willingly. How my heart ached when he broke our appointment and disappeared the next day. Has it really only been two years since my dear John let me go to Muizenberg to be at Cecil's side as he lay dying in that dark cottage with that awful oxygen canister waiting next to him, silent and cold?"

The furniture had been re-arranged to open up the dance-floor – José shivered as her mind swung back into the present everything was ready for the first Northwards Charity Ball on that winter's evening in 1905. She was so grateful they had heeded their architect's advice (who would not obey the dynamic Herbert Baker?) and kept the Ballroom lightly furnished, it was simply a case of moving the Louis XV lady's working table and a secretaire of the same period out of the room, and moving a pair of Empire card tables against the wall. Delicate antique chairs were arranged in a row to offer relief for weary dancers against the northern wall beneath casement windows framed in wine-red brocade. Everything was new, the exquisite brass chandelier above and the teak floor below which smelled of beeswax and gleamed in the late afternoon light as it filtered in through the windows as the drapes had not yet been released.

It was so quiet she could hear the delicate twitter of a swallow in its mud cradle under the eaves. She looked up above the enormous fireplace and noticed that the newly arrived painting had been perfectly covered with the velvet drape to await its unveiling. Just as she had ordered, the entire operation was conducted in secret. James, her butler, had gone to great lengths to ensure this. Her footsteps tapped across the wooden floors as she left the room through the heavy glass and wood doors into the passage towards the entrance hall to where she saw James at the bottom of the steps. There he stood like a dumb waiter

awaiting orders. José was so happy to see him and was so pleased with her new home – her bit of England in Africa.

"James, please see to the lighting of the fires at six o'clock sharp." Her voice quivered with just a hint of apprehension.

"Of course ma'am," her butler bowed slightly, "everything is completely under control."

"Thank you – you realize that Lord Milner himself will attend? Please ensure that the red carpet is securely hinged to the front steps".

"I will see to it myself ma'am. The chef would like to see you in the kitchen if you please, ma'am."

"Thank you."

She swirled down the passage and headed for the doors, which lead into the dining hall in the west wing of the house.

The light had changed to a mysterious gold as it filtered through the French doors to settle on the laden tables. José expertly glanced over the room, straightened the odd candle, shell pink, like the ethereal floral centrepieces she adjusted with a delicate flick of her slender hand. Once she was satisfied she went through to the kitchens to hear her 'Cook-General's' queries. Delicious aromas met her nose, spicy hints of cinnamon and almond.

Seven hundred canapés waited in state including egg and cress sandwiches, smoked salmon garnished with Russian caviar, roast venison with Cape red currant and port jelly and row upon row of tiered silver trays laden with dainty dessert cakes and miniature fruit flans.

"It looks superb, Jason!" José said, clearly pleased. Jason was secretly relieved that the mistress of the house approved of his efforts because a month before she had almost dismissed him when the glass bottles in which he was boiling peach preserves exploded in her new kitchen to leave slimy trails of half cooked fruit running down the newly painted walls.

"At exactly what time shall we serve the hors d'oeuvres?" He asked quickly blotting out the terrible memory of the Lady's wrath.

"At 8:30 please and do offer two sorbets between the fish and the meat."

"I have the lemon and champagne sorbets in the ice-chests and Colonel Lace has selected the wines which have already been brought up from the cellars, ma'am."

"Excellent, thank you, Jason."

She loved the proportions of the kitchen. Twenty staff members could work in it with ease without touching shoulders. The double volume windows looked out onto an inner courtyard she had had filled with exotic tree ferns and shrubbery which already curled up towards the second floor. She walked through the scullery and an outside door where she heard the whimper of her four borzois bounding towards her like giant cream-coloured feathers.

"Hello my darlings." She patted each one in turn and ran her hands over their silky coats. They were so tall they reached her waist. She admired this aristocratic breed - especially its aloofness towards strangers. José picked up a stick and threw it across the yard. All four hounds flew after it to become a tumbling mass of playful, silken threads. 'Tzar' had the firmest grip and was the first to drop it at her feet, she was sure he smiled at her. The others soon joined him boisterously awaiting her affection. She wondered how these delicate creatures could become so renowned for pulling down fleeing wolves in Russia's icy wastelands. She called to a groom to walk them until sundown.

Already there was a chill in the air: how mild these South African winters were compared to those of England. It was the dryness she found unbearable it seemed to cut right into one's soul. It would soon be sunset since it was almost five o'clock. She looked into the distance and could just see whispy tendrils of smoke curl up from the chimneys of Pallinghurst on the north bend on Pallinghurst Road. The dry yellow grass rustled as the wind came up. José always found this twilight time eerie. It was only at dusk that Africa became truly beautiful for her. She loved the thrill of hearing the bark of chacma baboons echoing in the distance as the soft peach sky mingled with the first traces of the evening blue deceiving one into believing this was indeed ethereal. The Schumachers had

accepted her invitation to the ball. They had been so kind in allowing her to scrutinize every nook and cranny of their mansion, which had been completed the year before, also designed by dear Herbert. She smiled as she recalled Lord Alfred Milner calling him his 'Randlord architect-in-chief'. She knew Alfred was impressed with this young architect whom he met in Cape Town where he was particularly taken with the palatial Groote Schuur he had re-designed for Cecil John Rhodes after it had burnt down. In 1900 prior to coming to the Rand, Rhodes had sent Baker on a tour of Italy, Greece, and Egypt to study ancient monuments. This experience Milner heard about and knew would benefit his determination to mould the Transvaal into a fitting colony for the Empire, as he regarded architecture as vital to that characteristic and he was convinced Baker was his man. She thought of the exquisite stone work of not only Pallinghurst but even his own house called 'Stone House' hewn from the very stones it stood on, how exciting it was to be part of this new adventure, Johannesburg.

She watched a flock of guinea-fowl chirrup raucously by, to disappear down a slope. She sighed nostalgically as she thought of this brilliant young man whose golden years stood before him whereas she felt that somehow her destiny was set in the stones of Northwards. She turned back into the house, the wire-mesh door twanging behind her as it slammed shut. She could hear the chatter of the kitchen staff further down the passage in their dining room finishing their four o'clock tea and resting before the function was to begin. She looked into their dining hall. They all rose in unison.

"Be seated please, I'm glad to see you're all looking well." She smiled but was aware of every unspoken detail; they were calm and yet quite excited. She felt satisfied that all seemed in order. She had insisted on this rather pleasant room for a staff dining room with its white pressed-steel ceilings contrasting elegantly with the cream walls and lively fireplace. The south windows looked onto the outer yard, which was kept swept and tidy under what would one day be giant Jacaranda trees. The lady of the house instinctively knew that pleasant surroundings were paramount to ensuring a happy staff, and the best service. She was aware that her house staff of twenty British citizens regarded her as strict, but fair and that Jamie Blane and Betty Bunty deserved to be sent packing back to

England. Their behaviour had been unacceptable when three months earlier they had been caught spitting into the mint juleps they had intended serving Lord Milner's new men from Oxford. What a 'to-do' that had been.

She went upstairs to soak in her deep marble bath which had taken thirteen men to carry up the stairs into her bathroom. It was sculpted from the finest Carrara marble. She sank into the perfumed water. Violetta had scattered rose-petals on the surface so that it felt as though she was slipping into the very whorl of sensuality itself.

She closed her eyes and thought of Hal Hurst and the pink 'Lucile' gown designed for her by the remarkable English dressmaker, specifically for the sitting. She was excited about wearing it for the first time in public that night. She knew the soft pink chiffon nipped in at the waist showed off her S-shaped figure to perfection, accentuated by the soft belt of spun gold. The dark purple flower pinned to the right breast is of course the *tour de force"* and was as Lucile said, 'positively wicked!' Her name for this creation delighted José: 'Passion's Thrall.' It somehow conjured up visions of ravishing femininity. "The colours are so marvellously amorous," José thought, "so deliciously anti the dull Victorian preference for black clad necks and ankles even when not in mourning."

Running her fingers along the patterns in the marble, on the edge of her bath, her thoughts went back to their first mansion, in Doornfontein called 'Norman House' and her bath-on-rails, which at the touch of the button, by means of an elaborate system of pulleys and chains, moved from the bathroom into the bedroom. How John loved to show his friends and colleagues. Once he flitted the bath through without realising José was in it in all her pink and white glory! How she giggled at the memory of that unforgivable *faux pas* which caused a monumental stir throughout the Johannesburg high society.

There was a tap at the bathroom door. John was home.

“And the giggles?” She did not miss the twinkle in his eye as he bent down to kiss her wet shoulder. She was truly magnificent, no, ‘statuesque’ was the word that went through his mind. They chatted comfortably as he went through to his adjoining dressing room.

“I was just remembering the bath at ‘Norman House’,” she said languidly. He smiled as he recalled the horror on Sir Percy Fitzpatrick’s face and his embarrassed attempt to avert his stare, once he had taken it all in of course. Secretly José thought it had served Percy right after his delight at her embarrassment the year before onboard ‘The Briton’ when she had mistakenly walked into his cabin instead of her own to find him standing perfectly still, a comical picture of politeness with only slippers on and a sponge in his hand!

“José, what is this that I heard at the Rand Club today, about a painting being unveiled at Northwards?”
“Oh blast it!” José spat out, “it was meant to be my surprise for you, darling – you’ll see later,” she added mischievously. “I heard that you’ve been an absolute cad thrashing that ‘Lantern’ journalist, what’s his name again? Joseph van Gelder – that’s it – because he might have referred to the daring décolleté dress your wife wore to ‘The Standard’ last week. *The Importance of being Earnest* was abominable – he had to find something more newsworthy to review, sweetheart.”
“You’re the most wicked goddess I’ve ever come across, Joséphine!”



“ Well haven’t you heard? He’s laid a charge of assault against you!”

“Oh really how devastating, I’m afraid I really don’t care. Remind me who is on the guest list for tonight, angel,” he said nonchalantly.

“Oh, the usual, including Herbert Baker, Lionel Phillips and Florence, the Fitzpatricks and I even invited Mrs Eckstein and Friedrich. I hear she’s fuming because he accepted the invitation on their behalf – I’ll send over the nail clippers again…”

“José!”

José just laughed.

“Oh Dewey, Lord Milner will be our guest of honour tonight – I’ve seen to the laying of the red carpet”.

“Good show.” He knew very well that a special request was impending when José called him ‘Dewey’, a term of endearment from their first sea voyage together when the master of the ship, a certain Captain Dewey carefully orchestrated all the privacy necessary for the handsome couple’s intimacy. The tall, strikingly good looking aristocrat with his golden brown hair and matching eyes, who was always superbly attired, wearing chamois gloves, Bowler hat and carrying a gold top walking stick and his equally imposing new wife almost as tall with golden blond hair, superb figure and enough charm to topple kings, couldn’t help but command the best attention.

“ I know, let’s have a fun auction to add to the funds!”

He loved watching the way she moved when up to her most beguiling tricks almost cat-like she’d hold her head a little to one side and gently offer up her bosom like a wave to the moon,

“ Then we could extend Nazareth House Orphanage. We might even auction one of the Empire Eagle Clocks. We don’t need two!” John smiled; he knew she disliked them from the moment they were unpacked.

“I don’t mind – it is for a good cause, Herbert will be furious of course as he selected them. But it is merely a worldly possession after all and my wife has to preserve her reputation for giving away all the money her husband earns, not so my beloved?”

“Of course darling, it’s such fun!”

They could hear the musicians tuning in the minstrel gallery. Eventually strains of ‘The Blue Danube’ rehearsal wafted up into their bedroom, as the couple was carefully dressed up for the occasion by a valet and a lady’s maid, ever in attendance.

“How do I look, Colonel Lace? ”José pirouetted in front of her husband. He was silent for a moment, truly taken aback.
“Dear Lord, you are magnificent!” He bowed, turned on his heel and left the room.

Excitement hung in the air like invisible bubbles caught in the arms of the brass chandelier overhead. The guests mingled, sipping Sherries and French Champagne and glanced up at the minstrel gallery from where the strains of gentle music unwittingly threaded the company together. José moved among her guests the epitome of pink graciousness. Her husband, ever tall and striking caught her eye across the room. “No wonder he is called ‘the most handsome man on the Rand’,” she thought. “No doubt he is causing many a heart to flutter amongst those bejewelled ladies in those rather *passé* ball gowns.”



No one even thought of the biting highveld winter outside. The fire crackled in the giant grate over which hung the velvet-draped painting patiently awaiting its unveiling. Two men stood a little apart smoking thick Havana cigars.

“Good work, Baker, old chap. The house is magnificent!” Sir William Dalrymple snorted. He was a tall rather stout man with fiery red cheeks and a large bulbous nose. He came to Johannesburg in 1892 and became manager of the Anglo-French Exploration Company in 1900. During the war years he acted as President of the Chamber of Mines working from Cape Town. Lord Milner brought him back to the Rand.

“Thank you, William. I’ve tried to utilize the quartzite stone of the area, Lord Milner insists on a type of building baroncy in Africa.” He smiled somewhat wryly.

“Well done! There’s no doubt it is unique and this dancing hall is distinctively innovative – you are going to go far, my man! May just commission you myself.” Baker smiled a little sardonically. He was not sure of this strange Scotsman; rumour had it that Milner would soon elect him as Town Councilor. At that point, their host joined them.

“Hello Lace, congratulations man! This residence certainly is fitting for our largest shareholder.”

“Thank you William, how are you and dear Isobel keeping?”

‘Very well thank you, we’re seriously considering moving onto this ridge.”

“Excellent, we love it.”

“Did you hear about the unease in the shafts this week – the bastards!” Dale Lace had foreseen an uprising with the poor workers sweating in the bowels of the earth, thousands of feet away from the light of their African sun, earning a pittance, never seeing their women, which he was convinced played a major role in their resorting to ‘unspeakable abominations’. He knew an eruption was bound to occur.

“Let’s not go into that now, Will, I’m not happy about the complaints or the way this matter is being dealt with there. I shall look into it next week, there are certain cruelties I will not allow.” Dale Lace said coldly.

“Don’t upset the apple-cart, old boy. You have the most to lose,” he said narrowing his eyes, the smoke from his cigar hung like a barrier between them. Dalrymple resented Dale Lace’s reputation for being the most considerate employer on the Rand. Dale Lace changed the subject abruptly.

“Ah, the dinner-gong. Shall we?” Dale Lace ushered him to the door, his jaw set.

Before a glowing fireplace the main table graced the centre of the dining hall, comfortably seating thirty-six guests with their host at the head and José at the other end of the table clearly commanding admiring attention all round. The candlelight sparkled against the crystal and silver plate. Six smaller tables accommodated the remaining guests who numbered a further seventy. A hushed chatter filled the room, almost as though a peacock might be expected to dance down the tables in its blue and gold splendour.

As she took up a delicate glass of claret José announced to those nearest to her,
"The Prince of Wales HRH King Edward VII is indeed charming and it was an honour to serve him tea in my apartments," her eyes twinkling at her captivated audience. "I provided six pots of jam and he enjoyed the Elizabethan Brambleberry and Apple Preserve with Honey so much he finished the contents of the entire pot!"
"No!" said Lady Elliot who balked at the mere thought. "What on earth are brambleberries?"
" Bramble is an old name for blackberries which grow wild in English hedgerows." José responded.
" Oh of course, I remember now, I've been in Africa too long." She smiled wryly at her hostess.
" Where exactly did you meet his Highness Jose?" she continued.
"At Marienbad six months ago, through the Marquise de Gamay and Count de Waru who has financial interests in South Africa. I met both these gentlemen when I took apartments in Paris while Northwards was being built."
"Oh really? How exciting! Speaking of England, I heard that a certain Lord Ponsonby was a little peeved at that particular invitation to lunch in the King's apartments…" she added with a knowing look in her eye. Lady Elliot was soon to be the headmistress of a new exclusive girls' school in Johannesburg and rather saw herself as the authority on all-important social issues.

"Oh the silly man, it would seem that recently he wrote in a book he hopes to publish that, 'Mrs Dale Lace with an eyeglass, short skirts and a murky past came to have

luncheon with the King.' See if I care what he writes, be sure to purchase a copy though, it will be entitled *Recollections of Three Reigns* apparently."
Lady Elliot blushed, and quickly looked down into her uneaten venison.

Lord Milner, at her right hand, leaned across to his hostess, clearly under her spell and whispered, "You simply have to write a memoir, my dear, I heard just this morning that Barnato's Auctioneers has a lackey with a bugle in his hand waiting outside their warehouse in Commissioner Street."
"Whatever for, Lord Milner?" she asked innocently.
"Why, to herald your approach madam, so that all the men in town can line the street to admire your four-in-hand," he added mischievously.
"Oh no, Alfred! And what of my latest 'Charles Creed' riding habits from Paris? Blast it; I'll have to educate these provincials. Some more pheasant, Percy?" She turned to Sir Percy Fitzpatrick on her left but did return her attentions to Lord Milner with a disarming smile.
"So glad the bloody war is over," she said delighting in seeing his mustache quiver a little at her profanity. "I think your establishment of the Rand Water Board is an absolute *coup*, Alfred, but I'm not so sure of your enforcing the English language onto our Afrikaner friends in schools. Do you think it's wise at this point?" José loved feigning political interest just to evoke an impassioned response from her more than willing victims.
"Absolutely, my dear, with Britannia's hold on almost the entire known world, the English language you refer to is quite obviously the *Lingua Franca* now and I do believe it will be the universal touchstone for linking cultures and civilizing peoples."
"Heavens, how clever." José beamed, wisely keeping all her reservations to herself.
There was a hint of silence as just for a moment the fire crackled in the grate erasing the clinking of silver and crystal. At last the desserts were ceremoniously brought in, tier upon tier of sweet delights .The rest of the meal proceeded without incident.

Eventually the company was summoned to the ballroom where José stood before the draped painting. With a charming smile she spoke:

“Ladies and gentlemen and especially my dearest John, please forgive my being so presumptuous in delivering this speech but I do cherish the reputation I have for doing exactly as I please, so Dewey darling, you can reprimand me later!” There was a knowing twitter amongst the female guests and outright laughter from the men. “ Firstly I would like to thank you all for sharing our new home with us as such a large company, and particularly the unveiling of my personal gift to Colonel John Dale Lace as a token of my deep love for him and especially for his making my every wish his command, quite literally I am so happy to say.”

She looked her husband unashamedly in the eye.

“John, dearest, this portrait is just for you! It was exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery in London a year ago. We’ve kept it a secret that long and here it is now, hanging in your own home…”

At this point she tugged at the golden cord which drew the drape aside to reveal the magnificent Hal Hurst rendition of Mrs José Dale Lace in the gown she was wearing that very evening. There was a gasp followed by complete silence.

Dale Lace stepped forward bowed to his wife and kissed her; everyone clapped amidst frowns from some ladies and downright envy from the men. ‘The Blue Danube’ Jose’s favourite piece floated down and the Laces took up the first waltz. Soon everyone joined in and the floor became a colourful swirl of silks and tulle and men in black.

Once the music faded glasses clinked as the dancers refreshed themselves with even more champagne, laughter filled the hall, cocooned by darkness and the cold, bright winter night outside where the stars glittered ice. Herbert Baker looked about, pleased with his handy work, this was the first time he had designed a home on country house scale. He looked out for Lord Milner whom he found leaning his elbow against the fireplace staring nostalgically into the flames.

“Let’s step outside Baker, the moon’s full. I want to have a good look at the front façade again.” The moonlight lit up the house as it glistened eerily in the crisp winter air, the men shivered. A gentle rustling sound startled the two men.

“What’s that?” Herbert whispered involuntarily, “a snake?”

“Not in winter old chap. Oh Lord, it’s Edward in an embrace, move over here quick!” Milner steered Baker around the corner to the west.

“We didn’t see a thing of course.”

“Of course.”

“Heavens, the moon is bright. If you look carefully you can see how the gardens to the north have been laid out by the clearings in the bush.”

“Excellent, your trips to Italy and Greece have stood you in good stead I see. The layout is indeed superb.”

“ Northwards is quite magnificent, this is exactly what I had in mind Baker, something solid rising out of the very rock on which it stands. It is of utmost importance that the Burghers see that we are here to stay.”

“ What a cheek their calling my boys the ‘Kindergarten’, ”

“ I have heard the term bandied about.” Baker smiled.

“They do not realise your positions here will alter the history of this new land! “Kindergarten” indeed! Only the finest minds of Oxford have been carefully selected by the Empire to administer and develop this, dare I say, raw, war ravaged country. Age has nothing to do with brilliance.”

“’I agree fully Sir. But as far as architecture is concerned I do feel the need to combine South African elements with European so as to create a unique style peculiar to this very place.”

“Absolutely, old chap. What does a construction of this nature put a man back?”

“Somewhere in the region of twenty-five thousand pounds and the stables approximately eight and a half. Considering the average white miner’s salary is twenty-four pounds sterling a month, it is, I suppose, costly but of course only the finest materials have been used.”

“That is a sizeable amount! Why did the stables cost almost one third of the entire mansion?”

“Indeed, they were shipped out lock stock and barrel from Buckingham Palace!” At that point they both looked through the enormous bay window to see their hostess throw her head back clearly laughing at a comment which came from the lips of the dashing Lionel

Philips, Milner's new secretary. The fire threw a warm glow of light over José it seemed to mingle with her charm, tangible even from outside the house. Baker smiled as he watched Florence who was only just managing not to frown, possessively place her gloved hand on her husband's arm

"What was that, did you say the Buckingham Palace stables?"

"Yes the king decided to refurbish his stables and seemingly José insisted on having the originals for herself. You must see them; pure marble water troughs, highly polished brass and wrought iron embellishments and Burmese teak panelling. It's quite palatial."

"No matter, these material phenomena are handy monuments to power, Imperial power! Parktown must play its part to ensure confidence in the new administration and above all, investment."

"Indeed."

" Baker, what's this I hear about your returning to England so soon?"

"I aim to bring back a wife Sir. The trip will only be as long as that should take."

"Oh I do beg your pardon my boy, I didn't realise …"

"Don't apologise, I have kept it all under my hat so to speak. How is Violet the young wife of Major Lord Edward Cecil? I believe you met her at Groote Schuur when Cecil John Rhodes was alive."

"Her husband is always up-country. We do correspond on a Platonic level of course." Lord Milner quickly changed the subject and continued, "I have spent the last three years working towards building up this country, but my most criticised project has been the Chinese Labour issue. May well force me to consider retiring from the ranks old chap."

"You don't mean that Sir."

"I'm afraid I do. All the plans are in place, my 'Kindergarten' is operational. I feel the need to return to England, now, when all is said and done."

"But the country is still so young and the possibilities are enormous!"

"They certainly are for you my Boy, there is much for you to do, many commissions are in the offing and you need to build the Empire. Allow the styles to merge if you must but let Imperial power speak always, that is your patriotic duty, Herbert."

Herbert Baker took a deep breath and after a moment of silence suggested they should go back into the house as the cold had suddenly become biting.

Lady Elliot, Mrs Barnato and Mrs Ockie Smith formed a little huddle of bright colours and giggles. Each reached for yet another glass of bubbly from a stony faced steward who teetered for just a moment when Ockie accidentally bumped the silver salver, tinkling the few remaining champagne glasses. She let out another quivery giggle.

“Oh darlings look who has just walked into the room, the British High Commissioner himself, and with the dashing Herbert Baker!” Lady Elliot whispered.
“Have you heard about his Lordship’s sweet little Violet?” Mrs Barnato’s decidedly red cheeks puffed out, anticipating the horror she knew she was about to unleash.
“You don’t mean Lord Edward Cecil’s Violet Maxse who married into the illustrious family of the third Marquess and Marchioness of Salisbury!” Ockie’s voluminous bosom heaved as she tried to retain her composure.
“I’m afraid I do Ockie, I have even heard they write to each other every day and she is very possessive of him too!”
“Well I have heard rather questionable things about Lord Milner’s treatment of the Chinese.”
“Oh what? Do tell!”
“ Well he has had them beaten…”
“No, I don’t believe it …” Lady Elliot said all fanning herself with her chubby fingers covered in sparkling diamond rings.
“Don’t believe what ladies?” José had quietly joined their little circle.
“Oh nothing really, José. We were just admiring Lord Milner’s formal attire, quite a dapper gentleman…can’t believe he still belongs to the Order of Bachelorhood!”
“I quite agree my dears, do have some more champagne the night is young.” José allowed a smile to touch her lips her expression just quizzical enough to let the ladies instinctively know that they had not quite fooled her.

The brightness of the moon shone through the bay window lighting up her face. The women felt slightly uncomfortable in the presence of such a formidable woman and nervously reached for yet another glass of champagne.

Chapter 2

"In the inner Sanctuary, the curtain is drawn.
Dreams, memories and soft thoughts linger and are
oft' shared only with a special friend …"

Anonymous

José lay quite still on the *chaise long* in her bedroom. She looked up at the muted shadows on the vaulted ceiling. She had declined having the curtains opened because her head throbbed. John had gone riding and she lay all the while thinking it was mid morning already and she could not understand why Miss MacDonald was late. José's back was in a spasm and her calf muscles ached. She was about to reach for the bell pull when there was a gentle tap on the door.

"Come in! Hello 'Mack', I thought you would never come! Why are you so late?"
"Good morning, or should I say good afternoon, Mrs Dale Lace. I'm so sorry, my carriage wheel came off so I had to walk along the ridge for the best part of a mile. I hope you don't mind but James kindly offered to come to my rescue. He has sent some of your men down to take care of it."
"Oh you poor dear I'll send for a cold juice!" José sat up with a wince and reached for the bell pull, "I'm in agony darling, too much champagne and too many dances."
"I'll take care of it immediately, Ma'am," Miss MacDonald said, pouring water from a blue and white Spode jug into a matching porcelain basin. She expertly selected a variety of scented oils from the little shelf above the French water stand. She removed the stoppers and poured the contents into the basin and immediately the most delicate perfume effused into the room as they touched the water which Violetta had previously warmed for precisely this function. Jose's skilled masseuse knew just how to soothe her client. José had removed her silk dressing gown and turned over onto her stomach expectantly. Holding her head to one side her beautiful golden hair fell over the edge.

Mack discreetly placed a towel over her buttocks and carefully massaged her neck, and moved down her back, quickly easing the tension she felt there with her strong perfumed fingertips. She worked her entire back without saying a word so deep was her concentration. She could feel José relax there was something magical about offering her patients such release.

"Ah, Mack you're an angel, that feels so much better. I don't know how you do it. Promise me you'll never leave this God forsaken place. I shouldn't survive here if it weren't for those hands of yours."

"I'll never leave Africa now Mrs Lace, it's got into my blood. I love the wildness and ruggedness of this terrain, the warmth even in winter and the smell of it. Have you noticed how the land seems to be a living thing as though we're on the back of some furry creature, both exciting and deliciously frightening at the same time?"

"Come to think of it you are so right, perhaps this land is not forsaken if I think of the way the grass sings when it takes the wind and moves in its own tribal dance for all the birds to see. And when I do go out riding the scent of the different grasses as the horse's hoofs crush them, is indeed intoxicating. Definitely not the soggy, green countryside of England!"

"I know I am right, do you remember much of your early life in the Cape Colony Mrs Lace?"

José sighed, she did not open her eyes as she recalled the past in her deep husky voice. She told Mack that she was born in Richmond in the Western Cape and that at that time it was just a tiny little Dutch town in the heart of the Karoo with the odd thorn tree overhanging the streets and little market square which became her personal play ground amongst little farm stalls and milk bushes. Many people would hate the hot, arid conditions of the surrounding semi-desert but she loved the vastness and loneliness of the plains in which Richmond was set like a miniature oasis where two or three windmills whirred in the afternoon breeze or clunked monotonously in the night. Her father was of Danish descent which she thought might account for her fair complexion and blond hair.

"I would never have dreamt that you are originally from Africa you look like the proverbial 'English rose'. I don't know much about the Karoo other than from Ralph Iron's, *The Story of an African Farm.* And I was so struck by the unconventional views,

particularly on the status of women that I fear I may well have missed the significance of its being set in the Karoo. Have you read it?" Miss Macdonald was fascinated by José. Her glamorous life had captured the imaginations of all those she came into contact with, her life was never conventional but always exotic. Mack loved her sense of mischief and yet intuitively she felt that this remarkable woman also understood the pain a life of privilege teaches.

"I did start the novel; my copy is by Olive Schreiner though. I don't think it's been unpacked yet there are still hundreds of trunks and tea chests in the basement waiting to be unpacked."

"How did your father come to live in Richmond?'

"Well apparently at the age of twenty he arrived in Port Elizabeth and worked for two brothers in a woollen factory in Uitenhague. He fell in love with the beautiful daughter of the elder brother, the fine Miss Bertha Lange. They got married and began their life together in Richmond by opening a little winkel."

"What is a winkel?"

"A little shop which sells all kinds of things from boiled candies and haberdashery to lucerne and hayforks." Mack allowed two or three drops of wild orchid oil to drip slowly onto Jose's back which she smoothed into her skin, but she didn't seem to notice because she continued rather dreamily, "To cut a long story short my father worked his way up until he became the one and only attorney in Richmond and even started a newspaper of his own called the 'Richmond Era'"

"I've actually heard of that paper."

"I was one of a family of ten out of which five of us survived. I was born on the tenth of April1869. My father made a fortune in Richmond, a huge amount in those days of fifty thousand pounds! He then moved to a beautiful property in Cape Town, the estate was called "Klein Westerford". There I grew up in beautiful surroundings until I was nine years of age. I was always a very naughty and willful child, getting spankings galore from my mother and a stolen kiss from my father who adored me and from whom I never got a harsh word. Apart from being naughty I'm afraid I was also a little thief. I remember going to the Dutch Reformed Church with my father (who was one of the elders) and when a man came around with a black bag on the end of a stick to collect the

offertories instead of putting my tickey in I pretended to stick it in, but actually took it right out again!"

"How sweet, I can just see it in my mind's eye!" Miss MacDonald laughed.

"Another incident of my naughtiness was brought home to me forcibly and under very humiliating circumstances when I made my debut at Government House in Cape Town at the age of sixteen and a half when a certain Mr Maskew came up to me and introduced himself as an old friend of the family. He remarked on my beautiful set of teeth and said he still had the marks of them on his leg; I was terribly embarrassed for I naturally could not understand what he meant. He then explained how, when he was on circuit with the Judges, he toured the country and was a guest at my father's and mother's house when I was playing in the very market square I spoke of earlier. One of my mother's servants came to fetch me home as dusk was falling. I refused to go in, my mother even came out and tried to bring me home but I defied her and as there were other guests in the house, Mr Maskew hearing of the trouble with me went out to the square to join the battle. I was lying on the ground kicking and fighting anyone who came near me. He determinedly took me by the feet to carry me home upside down which he did with my head down I sank my teeth into his leg so strong had my little teeth been that he had carried the impressions during all these years! I know he meant it as a joke but I was too young then to appreciate such jocularity."

"Oh no! But before that where did you go to school then?"

"I was sent to England at the age of nine and a half years for my education under the chaperonage of Mrs Alexandra van der Byl, one of the most noted women of the times having had the honour of entertaining the present King and his brother, the Duke of Clarence. The school I went to was called 'Catherine Lodge in Chelsea in London. The owner and principal being a Miss Hall. In those days the school was quoted as "a school for young ladies". I was the youngest in the school, the average ages being from thirteen to sixteen years and so *recherché* was the school that one could only get in through special influence and for me that influence came from the then Colonial Agent for South Africa, Sir Charles Mills my guardian. I was frightfully happy there and loved Miss Hall who loved me too. But the shadow over my life occurred at the age of fourteen when my father died after he had lost his fortune through the misguidance of two men. A Mr Peter

de Villiers and a Mr Woodrine Cloete hoodwinked him into a disastrous ‘investment’, something to do with ostrich imports and transportation. Anyway Miss Hall kept me on at her school until I was sixteen and would have kept me on longer but my mother insisted on my returning home. I returned to Cape Town under the chaperonage of Mrs Graham (on board was Henry Robison the only son of Sir Hercules Robinson of Rondebosch then Governor of the Cape.) I may say that the commencement of my life began then and the tragedies that were to follow.”

“It must have been so difficult for you to come back to a country you did not really know anymore, surely?”

“Yes I realised that having been separated for so long from home influences that my mother did not understand my nature or my temperament notwithstanding that she was a wonderful mother to all her children and today I have to be thankful to her for all the knowledge and experience she shared with me.”

Before Mack could answer there was a knock on the door and Violetta entered carrying a large tray laden with refreshments, a large crystal jug of ice-cold homemade lemonade and plates of dainty sandwiches and little cakes decorated with fresh roses and asparagus fern.

“I never eat lunch unless I have guests, Mack, would you care to join me for some light refreshment as opposed to a formal lunch?’

“I would love to Mrs Lace, I never have much on week days either, thank you.”

Mack was about ten years younger than José of an upper class family who had lost their fortune through her grandfather’s penchant for gambling. She was an attractive young woman with an open intelligent face. A strange friendship seemed to be developing between these two women which both seemed to instinctively accept would last a lifetime.

“Mack, please call me José now. I don’t think there’s a person in Johannesburg besides Dewey who knows me as well as you do, my dear.”

“I’m very honoured José.” Miss MacDonald smiled genuinely pleased but not particularly surprised because she had always felt a special bond with this striking woman, so casually drawing her silk dressing gown over her shoulders without any hint of shyness. She couldn’t believe all the gossip she had heard about her caustic tongue and

the ‘dressing downs’ she was said to give some of the noted social butterflies in what the new city saw as their high society. There was a sudden knock at the door and then it flew open and in ran Lance Dale Lace all of nine and a half years of age,

“Hello Mama look what I have!” He came towards her holding a small snake in his chubby hands. He was a handsome child with ruddy cheeks, blond hair and blue eyes. He was tall for his age and still had the innocence of wealth about him in his blue and white sailor suit which he wore with the studied grace of a baronet.

“Good Heavens! Take it away please my darling, what if it’s poisonous?” José feigned terrible fear.

“Oh really! Father says it’s just a house snake and perfectly harmless, look at the brown colouring and the markings aren’t they remarkable?”

“If you say so dear, but don’t come too near if it’s all the same to you. Take it away please and wash your hands and if you meet me outside the scullery door in an hour I have something special to show you.” José had a twinkle in her eye as she knew her prize Borzoi bitch had dropped five perfect puppies the night before.

“What Mama? Do tell!”

“No my little prince, it won’t be a surprise then will it? Please greet Miss MacDonald nicely now.”

“I beg your pardon, Ma’am good afternoon,” The young boy bowed slightly still holding his precious pet, “Goodbye Mama. Goodbye Miss MacDonald”, he smiled disarmingly at both ladies and left the room closing the door with his foot. José shook her head.

“I allow that young man too many liberties, but I do adore him so. It’s hard being a mother, Mack don’t rush into it. By the way what is this I hear about the young Battiscomb?’ José noticed two pink spots emerge on her friend’s cheeks and found her embarrassment rather charming.

“Oh it’s nothing yet, do you know him José? He’s studying law in London at present. I must confess I am rather taken with him. I received a letter from him on Friday. He will be here in less than a month. I have to admit I am looking forward to his visit, isn’t that awfully wicked?”

“Not at all you silly goose, if there’s anything I can do to help I insist you let me. Come have something to eat. I’m sure James has sorted out that wheel by now and I feel fit

again." José smiled knowingly at her friend, who was so aware that one could not remain serious when she Madam was in one of her playful, spontaneous moods. She had such a knack for making life seem amusing and an adventure. The ladies took their refreshments out onto the verandah adjoining the bedroom and so warm was its north facing aspect that José couldn't help but observe,

"Imagine sitting outside in London in mid winter even at noon!"

They sank down into softly cushioned wicker chairs and looked out towards the distant hills.

CHAPTER 3

"I promise you vast quantities of food and drink, and raiment
for the night season. A fire in your bedroom and our love shall
out-heat the very fires and be hotter than the soups and curries…"
Carrington wrote enticingly to Lytton.

Later, as promised, José met her little prince at the scullery door and led him to the stables. He drew her arm through his much to her private amusement. Already he had the bearing of the aristocracy and she saw Ernest in his every gesture and movement but she would never breathe a word of this to John. They approached the bridle room and Lance saw the huge wicker basket in the corner at once.

"Oh mother, she's had her pups!" He whispered instinctively and approached the basket almost shyly. He gasped when he saw, nestled in clouds of silken fur, five hairless Borzois blind and mewling for milk at their mother's dugs. Tsarina did not take offence when Lance gently touched the tiny rat like creatures. They were warm and smelt like corn just ripped from their encasement of new leaves. The boy was in his element and his mother delighted in his joy.

"When were they born Mama?"

"In the early hours of this morning, darling. I wanted to show you myself, you may have first choice of one of them once they're weaned, my Sir Lancelot!"

"Oh thank you Mama, may I choose its name too?"

'Of course, it will be your responsibility to look after it though."

"I would love to, thank you, thank you!" José couldn't resist hugging him. They remained there until slowly the room darkened as the sun began its descent behind the ridge. They left the room and inspected the stables next door, stroking the heads of each of the horses as they strolled past. How she loved these beasts, the special smell of fresh

hay and the rattle of bit and chain as they moved in their stalls. She was pleased because she could see that her son shared her great love for horses and dogs, she knew she would lay the world at his feet given half the chance. They returned to the house and José sent him upstairs to play in his rooms before getting ready for supper. He raced up the handsome staircase to leave her alone with her thoughts as she ascended the stairs at a more sedate pace, reading a little note James had handed to her at the bottom of the stairs. John would be late: he had gone to see Dalrymple about the trouble in the shafts amongst the black mine workers.

She sighed as she went into her bed room which was quiet and in the late afternoon light she went to her armoire and retrieved from its depths her memoir which she had recently started writing, it was so funny that Lord Milner should suggest she should write one since she had already begun one in secret. She put it on her bed and carefully opened it. Her thoughts went back to England and her first true love. She opened her little writing bureau at the window and prepared herself to write another entry.

She thought back to how it all began the day Lady Robinson walked up the drive to surprise her mother and herself as they busied themselves in their garden. She recalled her embarrassment because she was covered in dirt and so was her mother. However, the first lady of the Cape Colony immediately put them at ease by taking a genuine interest in various aspects of their gardening endeavours. Lady Robinson was then invited in for tea. Over pretty Royal Albert teacups and Empire biscuits she blatantly invited José to become her little 'protégé', a rare privilege.

José took up her quill and dipped it into the inkwell filled with black Indian ink and began:

> *Being very unhappy in my home, (having said that my mother did not understand me) I joyfully accepted the suggestion and needless to say I said 'Adieu' to my old life and the real experience of my life began! I received so much love and affection from Sir Hercules and his wife who immediately made me one of the family. Lady Robinson's Irish temper always got the*

better of her but her heart was as good as gold for those whom she cared for and through all the time that Sir Hercules was Governor of the Cape and even when he became Lord Rosmead she would stand familiarity from no one. Sir Hercules was one of the kindest and most gracious of gentlemen, loved by everyone in Cape Town and its surrounds. Little did I know what was in store for me through this wonderful acquaintance!

Lady Robinson took me to London where we stayed at the Alexandria Hotel in Knightsbridge, I remember the evening so well when she took me to a glittering reception, the first I had been to, at the invitation of the Duchess of Beauleu. When we came back to the Hotel she told me that I was to be presented to Queen Victoria! That was on the tenth of April (on my birthday) I was in my seventeenth year and the presentation was to be made on the nineteenth of May by Lady Knutsford wife of Lord Knutsford who was then Colonial Secretary and my guardian, dear old Sir Charles Mills.

José conjured up every detail in her mind's eye, her pure white silk gown, the crystal chandeliers glittering by the light of a million candles overhead, she could still feel her heart flutter as she curtsied to the austere monarch who actually smiled at this glowing young girl from the colonies and gently touched her cheek as José's golden head bent down. She was clearly so innocently awestruck that it only added to her charm. José was not unaware of the admiring quiver which reverberated through the distinguished company who stood by ceremoniously awaiting their turn. Full of nostalgia José sighed as once again she dipped her pen into the ink well,

The next thing I remember is the big reception given by Lord and Lady Salisbury at Salisbury House and I found it all quite wonderful as I was presented to Dukes and their wives, my head was in a whirl with the glamour of it all. I had imagined Dukes and Earls always wore their full regalia as I had seen in fairy stories but I was to learn otherwise. When I went back to the Alexandria Hotel with Lady Robinson she gave me some sound advice which I was to heed for the rest of my life, these were her very words,

"José, you will have much joy and much flattery and temptation in your life and they will come across your path like rays of sunshine, snatch at every ray because they may never return again."
From that night on how I snatched at them. I never missed a ray!

I did not return to South Africa with Lady Robinson but wished to remain in England under the chaperonage of Lady Knutsford and Sir Charles Mills to enjoy my life going to parties at Country Houses one of the principal ones being 'Balls Park' in Hertfordshire the country home of Sir George and Lady Faudell Phillips (Sir George was then the Mayor of London). It was at this magnificent home that I was to meet so many aristocrats with whom I developed strong friendships with people like Baron and Baroness De Worms and Henry Stormont Finch Hatton and his wife Nan. Henry Stormont was to become Lord, Earl of Winchilsea. They had a young son called Denys who it was rumoured had just graduated from Oxford with a rather poor fourth and went off to Africa to find his destiny. Their home in the country was even more open to me than 'Balls Park'.

I also met Baron Ferdinand Rothschild and his brother Lord Rothschild of Tring, whom I never thought would play such a major part in my life as they did afterwards. During this period of time my mother, sister and brother came over to London, I at the time was staying with the Finch Hattons at their Town Residence, 30 Thurloe Square, S.W. Mr and Mrs Finch Hatton actually travelled to Southampton with me to meet the boat, which we did. On the same boat Cecil Rhodes was one of the passengers. Sir Charles Metcalf and Dr Jameson were there to meet him and we all travelled together to Waterloo in Cecil Rhodes' state compartment which was very exciting. He (Rhodes) had always been devoted to the Langes and especially to my mother and her nephew known as Ippie Lange, an exceptionally beautiful young man. Rhodes started him off with a fruit farm in the Paarl and Stellenbosch districts and he did so well that he eventually became his Managing Director,

it became one of the largest farms in the Cape known as the 'Rhodes Fruit farm.'

The notorious Mrs Asquith a well known socialite in her day, wife to one of Britain's greatest Admirals, has been so egotistical in her Memoirs that I feel I may be permitted to be a little likewise. I am positive that if Dr Jameson and Sir Metcalf were alive today they would be able to substantiate the statement that I might have been the wife of Cecil John Rhodes had it not been for Sir Charles Metcalf's influence who poisoned his mind against me by saying that I was flighty and had led a merry life since my presentation to London society and was with out home control!

It, the proposal that is, took place one memorable evening when we dined together at the most famous restaurant in Regent Street and afterwards went to the Lyceum to see 'The Bells'. I remember how Sir Charles Metcalf took my mother and sister home in a 'Growler' and I went in a hansom cab with Mr Rhodes. He suddenly caught hold of my head and rested it on his shoulder and said,

"Would you like your head to rest there always?"

I said, "Yes I should."

We were to have dined with him the next day but an apology came from him saying he could not have us to dinner as he had a very important engagement or some other excuse. He clearly dropped me like a hot potato and never did we hear from him again, neither did he communicate with my mother in any sense or form. All I know is that he returned to Cape Town. It was only a few years later when I was a married woman (to my present husband and in child) when I was staying at the Continental Hotel in Paris with my maid that I met up with him again as he and Dr Jim were staying at the same hotel. I phoned Mr Rhodes and said I would like to see him. He and Dr Jim did come up to my apartments. They sympathised with me in my condition and when Mr Rhodes rather awkwardly left the room I said to Jim,

"If it had not been for you I should have been Cecil's wife."

And his reply was, "It was not my doing, it was Metcalf who made the mischief."

José stopped writing and took out a delicately embroidered handkerchief to wipe away a tear she could feel making its way down her cheek. She turned on the new reading lamp next to the writing bureau, because it had grown quite dark and again her thoughts mingled with the sea air at Muizenberg as she recalled the visits to his little cottage on those windy afternoons as he lay dying.
"I must stop thinking of him and that terrible time, oh God…"she whispered out aloud when the dinner gong rang far off.

Later that evening John had still not returned from the Dalrymples. José knew something serious was afoot but felt confident that John would sort it out. She had eaten her supper in the dining room with Lance at her side. They had a plain cream of tomato soup followed by a beautifully served but simple casserole with fresh vegetables from the morning market. Lance chattered right through the meal and enjoyed a blanc mange with fresh mandarin segments. After saying 'Goodnight' to the staff, Mother and son raced each other upstairs laughing all the way. On the landing José gave Lance a kiss and a hug and they turned to their own rooms three doors away from each other.

José returned to her memoir to while away the hours until John came home. Taking up her pen she began,

Whilst we were staying at Westbourne Terrace in Bayswater mother received a letter from my brother Andrew saying that he was coming to London. He was in Johannesburg at the time and was one of the early pioneers as was Dale Lace, they actually shared a little cottage which they christened the 'Orphanage'. He had had a bit of good luck and he was coming to London for a three month holiday. When he arrived he moved us to a charming house in Ebury Street No. 109 where we had a very happy month with our own servants and the joy of a butler. All my friends were most kind to my people.

Lord and Lady Dufferin suggested we should visit Rome and as my brother wanted to see something of the continent we decided to heed this suggestion.

We stayed at the Hotel de Rome and then to my greatest astonishment Lord Dufferin who was the Ambassador in Rome, asked me to be their guest at the Embassy which I was for nearly a month.

Like so many artists and poets she fell completely in love with the Eternal City. They languished in sultry sunsets which never seemed to end when in that magical hour between day and night the ochre-tinted buildings turn to fiery red. They often sat in the fashionable Eighteenth century, 'Caffé Greco' along the Via Condotti, sipping espresso with all the celebrities of the day after many successful shopping sprees.

At the 'Caffé Greco' I met the Duke and the Duchess of Tarlonia and Prince Primoli a prince, legendary as a renowned amateur photographer as he was then. He asked whether he might take some photos of me. I readily agreed and being of a very artistic temperament as he was, he immediately photographed me in every conceivable position. He said he would like to take a picture of me as a statue, this he did in his wonderful studio on the Via Gregoriana which over looks the historical section of Rome. From the shuttered windows you could even see the Dome of St Peter in the distance towering over some of the most famous rooftops in the world. I was photographed as 'Victory' and then the most amazing thing happened, Waldo Storey, the famous sculptor recreated this self same photograph in marble and called it 'Victory'. I became quite famous through this as my picture was being reproduced and sold, appearing on famous British postcards representing King and Country. Much later I was to hear that Leopold Rothchilds bought it and it still stands in Lord Rothchild's Country House at Tring to this day.

In these few weeks at the Embassy my life, my love and my tragedy which followed afterwards began. At a ball held in the Palazza Torlonio by the Duke and Duchess a cotillion was one of the features, where gentlemen requested the pleasure of reserving dances for ladies, called 'favours'. I had the joy of being the recipient of many favours from various men whom I had had the pleasure of meeting. During this cotillion Waldo Storey introduced me to his great friend Ernest Beckett who gave me his favour and we danced to the waltz 'The Blue Danube' the music of this waltz haunts me even today.

One never forgets even the tiniest detail of these special moments. When after the dance he took her into one of the beautiful walled gardens surrounding the Palazzo, she remembered the breathtaking intimacy of the privacy under the Palm trees and scented climbing roses. The secluded courtyard was furnished with nineteenth century French patio tables and chairs. A cushioned banquette stretched invitingly across one corner.

José had stopped writing for a moment as she savoured the memory of her initial shyness which she tried to hide by cooing over what she thought was a doll's house on a little table nearby. She was so surprised when Ernest laughed out loud explaining that it was in fact an ornate eighteenth century birdhouse! There was something about the way he teased her that enchanted her. It was certainly not his looks for she realised rather cynically in retrospect that he was short and quite fat, if the truth be told. Also she secretly delighted in the audacity he had had asking her for a favour for himself, in return for the one he had given her. How embarrassed and confused she had been, as she knew at that time she did not really understand the ways of men, and she feared the way her heart seemed to be racing for no rhyme or reason. How relieved she was when he only asked her for one of the gardenias from a spray which was pinned on her breast. José turned over the page,

I gave him one and hoped he did not notice how my fingers were quivering, he asked me what my Christian name was.
I said "José."

And he said to me, "When you return to London I would like to see you and meet your people."
He asked if he might give me his card so that I might write to him on my arrival and that he would send the gardenia back to me to act as his ambassador. There was something intoxicating about the way he said that in his particularly deep, husky voice. I knew I could not resist such an invitation. We went back inside and I never saw him in Rome again. We stayed on in Italy for another six weeks before returning to London. I read the address on the card many times it said, '138 Piccadilly London'.

On my arrival I wrote to Mr Beckett informing him I was back in London. I received a letter from him enclosing my gardenia which he said was his ambassador, asking me if he might come and see me at my mother's flat. The letter was sent by messenger from the 'Bachelor's Club' Piccadilly (at that time the one and most recherché *clubs in London). I asked mother if I might do so and she gave her consent. He came towards teatime to see us and asked my mother's permission for me to dine with him at the Bachelor's Club and said that I would be under the chaperonage of Lady Brougham. My mother gave her consent.*

Mr Beckett called for me to take me to his dinner party. To me this was the most wonderful thing, this dinner at the Club. Afterwards we went to the 'Gaiety' to see a musical comedy. And then we went to the Savoy for supper, we had such fun he made me laugh all the time and I spoke to him about so many things from life in South Africa to my strange relationship with my mother who by the way, was waiting up for me on our return. Mr Beckett said "goodnight" to her and I went downstairs with him to the door, then he said to me,
"We must be great friends and you must lunch with me some time this week, will you?"
"Yes I will."

He asked whether he might kiss me and I said he might.
I got a letter from him the very next day asking me if I would lunch with him at the Savoy hotel and asked if I could do so without my mother's consent.

José remembered a little guiltily, how she went to lunch with him without her mother's consent. She lied to her mother as to where she was going. She further noted in her memoir:

So much in love were we with each other that it seemed quite natural when he took me into the bedroom adjoining his suite and with love and fondness I let him unclothe me.
'I want to teach you what love means', he said.

José put her pen down and opened the second drawer of the bureau and felt right at the back for the little copy of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam* bound in gold silk. Quickly she opened it up to where a faded dried gardenia smelt dank and sour. José read the lines it had stained so long ago,

'There was a door to which I found no Key:
There was a Veil past which I could not see;
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee:
There seemed… and then no more of Thee and Me.'

José got up and lay down on her bed burying her face in the counterpane, waves of memory broke over her. She whispered dramatically,
"I cannot write this blasted memoir anymore it's ripping open wounds I thought had healed."

She pressed her face deeper into the French embroidery on the counterpane. But the thoughts would not stop. She felt his hands on her face, his breath in her neck as he whispered he would keep for her a little flat in St James's Street where they could meet. What did she care about whether it was right or wrong, his wife was ill and knew nothing

of their liaison. So what if the darling of London society became a ‘kept woman’ and was no longer the innocent golden girl from the colonies who spread light and laughter wherever she went? She was in love and was loved as she had never been loved before.

She thought of how wonderful it was of her Grandma to have left her a legacy of six hundred pounds a year. She was able to provide mostly for herself after that and she was able to lease the charming Leicester Lodge for ninety-nine years herself. She was an independent woman. Leicester Lodge was one of the original lodges which belonged to the Duke of Devonshire. José smiled as she thought it could fit completely into the first three downstairs reception rooms of Northwards. It was really a most delightful little place with its little Jacobean staircase leading to the bedrooms above. In the entrance was a tiny little hall; to the right was a room equally attractive (on account of a window which had a very odd shape) which became her boudoir. Upstairs was a large sitting room which led into a glass conservatory which in turn led into a large garden with stables at the end of the lawn where José was able to keep two horses and a brougham and in the quarters above, a coachman. She even had a small garden facing Kensington Gardens.

“I must pull myself together,” she thought and lifted herself off the bed, she returned to her bureau picked up her pen and wrote:

My little home was now all my own and my life of love and sunshine began…

José threw her pen down and recalled how for two glorious years she had lived there, enticing Ernest with wonderful food and drink and love that was ‘hotter than the very soups and curries…’ and felt it was only when she spoke to Ernest about marriage that fights erupted and she smashed vases against walls and dashed out, and saddled her horse herself and galloped off towards Rotten Row where she terrified any rider or pedestrian who happened to be in the proximity.

But rather sheepishly she recalled how, as soon as the thunderclouds of reality blew over she was again at Beckett’s side, chattering away about other aspects of life and love and lust. José admitted to herself that she had only become aware that her friends were beginning to drop her after those two years of romantic bliss. She sighed as she thought

of just how naïve she was and so young. She was just about to reach for the bell pull to summon her chambermaid to turn down her bed when the door suddenly opened and John walked in obviously quite exhausted. José quickly lifted herself off the Louis the Fourteenth chair and flung herself into her husband's arms.

"Oh John I do love you so."

He kissed the top of her head and asked,

"What on earth is the matter my dear, your cheeks are quite wet with tears surely you weren't so worried about your old man now were you?'

"Not at all, I did receive your note. It's my blasted memoir again it's having a bad effect on me John…"

"Why so my dearest, you're not unhappy with your life at Northwards now, are you?"

"How could anyone in their right mind be, this is my destiny John. It's just the hurtful memories that rear their ugly heads every time that upset me."

José looked around her dramatically and returned to her writing bureau to tidy all her efforts away since she did not want her husband to read her memoir until she was dead, she told him adamantly. They both burst out laughing.

"What did old Will have to report about the trouble in the mines, darling?"

"Well it seems they are clandestinely forming an organisation whose sole purpose is to have some kind of channel to air their grievances. They seem to be using the term 'Trade Union'. I thought it was bloody ingenious and am all for it but Dalrymple will not hear of it. He won't give the poor bastards ice in winter. So we had a bit of an altercation."

"Oh Heavens, what now? Did you establish what their gripes were?"

"Absolutely. I obviously opted for an immediate increase in their salaries and have agreed to put up the capital for new living quarters."

"Oh John, that's why you are a man in a million!"

"Don't be too sure about that. It is sure to affect our stocks and shares but Lace Diamonds should bear it if you'll excuse the pun."

"I sincerely hope so John. I signed the papers yesterday to import the best stallion Europe has to offer for our stable," she said as matter of factly as she could.

“You did what?” John went quite red in the face, “For how much?”

“Well, just a few thousand pounds.” But José knew she had gone too far, and for the first time since their marriage on the twenty ninth of November 1896 almost nine years before, José felt uneasy about her husband’s reaction and she heaved a sigh of relief when there was a gentle tap on the door and Nelly came in to turn down the bed.

Afterword

These are the first three chapters of the extended biographically based historical fiction.

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