

Arumlily

Spathe of Voices

by

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Part One of Two Parts

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ARUMLILY
Spathe of Voices
Prologue

Zantedeschia aethiopica – native to Southern Africa

Common name: white or arum lily (English); *wit varkoor* (white pig's ear in Afrikaans). The plantzafrica website says that the lily 'is actually many tiny flowers arranged in a complex spiral pattern on the central column (spadix). The tiny flowers are arranged in male and female zones on the spadix. The top 7cm are the male flowers and the lower 1.8cm the female flowers. If you look through a hand-lens you may see the stringy pollen emerging from the male flowers which consists largely of anthers. The female flowers have an ovary with a short stalk above it, which is the style (where the pollen is received). The spadix is surrounded by the white or coloured spathe. According to Marloth, the whiteness of the spathe is not caused by pigmentation, but is an optical effect produced by numerous airspaces beneath the epidermis.'

The science of optics, the neat mathematics of light, adds to our understanding of the non-linear complexities of nature hidden in the spirals of the arum, and the elegance of Crick and Watson's double helix underpins the arum's image, which can be seen as the two-stranded flowering of South Africa's White Tribe.

Double helix

The *Afrikaans strand* of South Africa's White Tribe begins its upward spiral in 1652 when the Dutch establish a trading post at the Cape
The *English strand* unfolds from the beginning of the nineteenth century as Britain shapes up to colonize the Cape in 1806

Arum lilies grace bridal bouquets. They are also placed on coffins and graves.

Beginning of the Afrikaans Strand of South Africa's White Tribe

Act One

1708

Characters

BARENDT, a Dutch Sea Captain working for the VOC (Dutch East India Company)

TULP, a pubescent Malay slave taken from Colombo by Barendt

CHORUS, a sampler of voices

1.1 *Enter BARENDT and TULP*

She is the bud that I
pluck from the swamp of
Satan. She is the sinner
that I bear to my *Heer*.
She is the flower that I
bring to my Claertje. The
storms will not split the
sails of her petals. I will
guide her through the tempests of the deep. She voyages to salvation in the fort of my ship.

He unwinds my sarong. He speaks the words of my *Tata* and my *Amma*. I must not be afraid. I am not his slave. I am the treasure he finds in Colombo. He washes me with his salt water. He finds my shame. It hides between my legs. He sponges my *skande*. He takes away my filth. He dries me with the song of the sun.

In the *hut* of my castle I will form you. I will heat you in my dusky forge. Your metal will curl on the horn of my anvil. My chisel will unlock your sinful flesh. Soft from my fire you will flow like molten steel. I will baptise you with His water. Your bell will set for my *Heer*.

1.2 *Enter CHORUS*

‘It is a virtue to subdue those before whom all go in dread’ is the motto that is carved above the 17th century entrance of the House of Correction: the Tugthuis, on Heiligeweg (Holy Way) in Amsterdam. In his book *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of the Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* Simon Schama says that this institution (and its equivalent for fallen women, the Spinhuis) was built to meet the enlightened standards of the time, which attempted to balance the required dosage of corrective discipline with some incentives for rehabilitation through work and moral teaching. Weaving was the first skilled trade that the inmates were taught, while daily Prayers, Psalm singing and Bible readings from the wisdoms of Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus) took care of their spiritual salvation.

In 1708, Barendt, who has worked his way from cabin boy to captain of a Dutch-East-Indian trading ship asks his friend, the senior merchant David Okkers, to find him the

prettiest bloom in Colombo. He has no qualms about making such a request. On the contrary, Barendt believes that he does what he does out of love for his sister, Claertje, who needs a maid to help her cope with the burden of bringing up eight children in the shadow of an isolated Cape mountain and a stern husband. Furthermore, he believes his act to be humanitarian; one of *christelijcke mededogentheyd*: Christian compassion based on the alleged material and spiritual salvation of the individual slave's body and soul.

The girl (Barendt names her Tulp – the flower of his homeland) that his friend chooses for him is the pubescent daughter of Muslim slaves, Maria and Achmat. Initially, they had belonged to the Dutch merchant, David Okkers, who traded for the Dutch East India Company in Batavia. (In the seventeenth century, Hindu, Muslim and Dutch law permitted slavery – Roman Dutch Law stated that ‘the fruit follows after the womb’. Children of slaves were slaves, so were those captured in campaigns waged by the VOC

and its allies as were Maria's parents. She is their only surviving daughter – high mortality rates, poor living and working conditions resulted in an adult-to-child ratio of 6 to 1 in the slave population of Malacca in 1682.

Maria's beauty had attracted the attention of the merchant, who bought her and took her back to Batavia to be his concubine (their two daughters died in infancy) and a cook for his newly-arrived bride from Delft. He also bought Achmat (Tulp's father), the son of a prince of Ambon, who had rebelled against the invading authority. The merchant needed a high-quality slave to run his household as he was frequently away from home and he was happy, for appearances' sake, that his servant Achmat should marry Maria.

Unfortunately, in 1698, things got uncomfortable for David Okkers. His Delft wife took exception when, on overhearing the servant's gossip, she realised what is going on behind her back. Not being one to stand by, while her good name was trampled in the mud, she confronted her husband with the *vuyligheden*: filthy deeds that were being perpetrated under her own roof. In order to restore honour and harmony and keep his wife from going back home to the Netherlands, the merchant, arranged for the slave couple and their two-year-old daughter Jala (Tulp) and their baby, Maleeya, to be shipped to the VOC's fort in

Colombo as a gift for the *Grootagthaare de Heer Gouverneur en Directeur van't Eyland Ceylon*, who was looking for reliable servants.

Barendt is the lost son of Anna. He is fourteen when, in 1688, he leaves Zeeland with his mother, two brothers and sister Claertje. (There is no record of him disembarking at the Cape. The ship's *daghregister* makes no mention of any deaths on this voyage.) Barendt decided to stay on board. It offered him adventure and an escape from the dangers of an uncertain future. He was also angry with his mother. A few months after his father had died she had abandoned his beloved island of Walcheren and set sail for the Cape of Good Hope, in order to marry the stranger, Jean, who had fled religious persecution in Flanders.

Barendt's family had been happy to give this refugee shelter and, in return, he helped in their smithy, but Barendt believes that this intruder caused his father's untimely death. He made a poor job of welding the broken barrel of his father's gun and when Abraham fired it, it exploded and blinded him. As no record of Abraham Pieterzoon Smid's death can be found in the Zeeuws Archief in Middleburg, it is unknown for how long he lived after this accident. What is known is that the refugee, Jean, left for *Die Kaap*: The Cape in June 1686 and that, when Anna followed him eighteen months later, she was his fiancée. During that time she sold the family home and smithy, but this did not provide enough money to pay for the passage of her two eldest sons. They had to work as deck-hands on their voyage from Wielingen to the Cape.

Three months later Barendt does not disembark with his family and the other refugee families. The captain has agreed to let the boy, who was happy to scrub decks at daybreak, or man the water pumps for two shifts, if necessary in bad weather, remain on board as a member of his crew. It is customary for the officers and passengers to dine together in the stern castles of seventeenth-century sailing ships and, as a result, the captain befriends Barendt's mother on the long sea voyage to the Cape. He promises to take Anna's son under his wing. Besides making him his cabin boy he will teach Barendt all there is to know about rigging and navigation.

'If he applies himself to his tasks, obeys the commands of his superiors and is man enough to be steadfast in a storm, he might, one day, God willing, rise to the highest rank of seafaring personnel, and become a *schipper*.'

The boy will sleep in his master's quarters. Here, the Captain reassures the wavering mother her *jongeheer*: gentleman son will be safe from the occasional rough behaviour of fellow sailors. He omits to add, 'but defenceless against the advances of his *heer*: master'.

As could be expected, sodomy was rife in the all-male-soldier-sailor ship communities of the time. Pioneering articles, which deal with the homosexual trials held in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century, have appeared in the popular Dutch historical magazine *Spiegel Historiael* and the titles of two of the most widely known tracts against "sodomy" in the 1730's reveal what the upright, Dutch-Christian community of the time felt about the filth of homosexuality.

Beels, L. *Sodoms zonde en straffe of strengwraakrecht over vervloekte boosheid, en Loths vrouw verandert in een zoutpilaar* (Sodom's sins and retribution for the accursed evil, and Lot's wife turns into a salt pillar), Amsterdam, 1730. Dutch children were well-acquainted with Biblical stories and what lessons were to be learnt from the brimstone and

fire that rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah because ‘their sin was very grievous to their Lord’. They also knew verses 17 and 24 of Genesis Chapter 19 and what punishment is inflicted on those who dared to disobey the commands of the Lord’s angel.

Byler, Henricus Carolinus van. *Helsche Boosheit of Grouwelyke Zonde van Sodomie, in haar Afschouwelykheit, en welverdiende Straffe uit Goddelyke, en Menschelyke Schriften tot een Spiegel voor het Tegenwoordige, en Toekomende Geslagte opentlyk ten toon gestelt* (Hellish evil and heinous sinfulness of Sodomie in its hideousness and well-deserved punishment according to the texts of God and man to serve as a mirror, a true representation for present, and future generations), Groningen, Jacobus Sipkes, 1731. A ‘very good copy, some light water-stains throughout, top and bottom of spine damaged’ of this ‘remarkable eighteenth-century study of a controversial subject’ is offered for sale by asherbooks.com for € 2250. According to them it is ‘the most scholarly eighteenth-century book on sodomy. Byler gives several names for the sin of sodomy, and also pays attention to the different kinds: women with women, men or women with animals, a Jewish and a Christian female or a Christian male with a Jewish female, and other kinds.’

In the eighteenth
century the punishment
for crimes against the
natural social order was
drowning, from which
there could be no
escape. Employees who
were found guilty of
sodomy were hanged
from the gallows of The
Dutch East India
Company’s forts and ships before their corpses were tossed into the ocean.

The struggle to survive rising water was the primal Dutch experience. The heraldic device of Zeeland was a lion breasting the waves, its motto, *Luctor et Emergo* – “I fight to emerge”. Fortunately Barendt finds himself in the hands of a father, who can lift his son out of poverty, by arming him with skills that can raise him from the lowliest rank of *scheepsjongen* to the highest rungs of senior officers. Being the son of a religious fugitive, courageously seeking a new life in an unknown land, Barendt’s skipper does not class him

as an ordinary sailor, or as a soldier recruited from the lowest social orders, or one rescued from the deprivations of an orphanage.

The boy starts his ascent by becoming a trumpeter. He gives the signal when the guard is changed, or when the small boats, lowered from the ship, land on shore, or when personnel from other ships come on board. He performs this duty satisfactorily and is promoted to vink. Six months later he is a chief cooper and ably assists the steward to deliver the crew's daily rations of food and drink to the cook, and give a weekly report on what provisions remain and how empty the barrels are.

Barendt does not allow his luck to change him. He does not forget the privations he suffered as the poor son of a village blacksmith; the bullying and teasing he had to endure at the hands of the children, who thought that he was below their station, was still fresh in his memory. They called him *rotzak*, *stommeling*, *sufferd*: scoundrel, nerd, duffer, just because their father happened to be the Elector of Middleburg and Commander of the East Indian Company: chamber of Zeeland: or they lived in 't Huys Om or in 't Hof Noordhout, or their grandfather was buried in the church and his family crest hung on the wall. But Barendt does not forget the care given to him by his hard-working and God-fearing parents, or the devotion of his grandmother, or the special bond he shared with his one-and-only sister, Claertje, who is two years his junior.

Barendt is not proud. He is approachable, fair-minded and able to commiserate with those less fortunate than himself and so his promotion to quartermaster is welcomed by most. He now has direct control over the men, hands out their food and maintains order between shifts. He joins them on watch duty, wakes them before their shifts and supervises the pumps so that the ship is delivered dry to the next watch. He is also responsible for the compass lamp and the ship's lanterns. When a boat or sloop is lowered into the sea these lights must be primed so that he, or one of his fellow quartermasters, can take them on board with them as they accompany the small vessel to its destination.

At the age of nineteen, his *schipper* believes that Barendt is capable of taking responsibility for the rigging of the Bowsprit and when *Schieman*, Cornelis van der Gast, falls to his death as he climbs the Fore Topmast Shrouds to assess the storm damage to the Fore Top gallant Clew lines; Barendt, having proved himself to be an able and committed junior officer, takes on the dead man's duties. At sea he looks after the foremast and on shore he oversees the loading and securing of cargo in the ship's hold and the safe stowing of the heavy cables. A year later, having earned the trust and respect of his *kaptein*, fellow officers and sailors, Barendt is promoted to the rank of high boatswain and is now responsible for the main mast, the crew and the day-to-day running of the ship.

The opportunity to rise to the rank of an officer presents itself when Understeer Leiden Frans Erasmus has the top of his head removed by the hoof of a bucking mare, when he takes part in the round-up of wild horses near Pelicat. Out there in the wild, far away from the Nautical College of Amsterdam and its choice of students, Barendt is the obvious candidate to replace this hapless officer, psalmed to rest from the buttressed pews of the red silk cotton tree and the overhead descant of birdsong; for, over the years, Barendt's skilful *meester* has woven the science of navigation into the art of their love-making.

1.3 BARENDT

His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me
as my *heer* whispers verses from *Solomon's Song* in my ear:

3 As the apple tree among the
trees of the wood, so is my beloved
among the sons ...

Lying beside me, long ago, my *kaptein* tells me that officially Upper Koopman holds the highest position on board ship, but that practically a *schipper* "lord of his ship" is in charge. He must represent and carry out the wishes and instructions of the *Heren*: Lords *XVII*. He must maintain good order and discipline amongst the sailors and last, but not least, he must take ultimate responsibility for navigation of his ship, although, before he sets his course, he must have been in thorough consultation with his senior officers.

'Navigation is the key to success,' my *heer* informs me. 'Knowing how to use the instruments, whose purpose is to observe and measure the relationships between heavenly bodies, sorts the men from the boys. It is the way best suited to find a safe passage over a stirred ocean to the promise of a harbour.'

The day following he takes it upon himself to show me how to use *De Jakobsstaf*. It being the requisite way of measuring the height of the sun above the horizon, he sets about positioning both objects in the square. This said square being cut from the plank that he holds up to his eye. My master counts the knots on the string that hangs down the middle of the opening in order to see how many may be found between the sun and the horizon. He takes that number so that he may calculate the height in degrees from the logarithmic scale on the side of his instrument.

Alas, it is now my belief that to look into the flames of a furnace in a smithy offers as little benefit to the viewer as it does to a *kaptein* when he takes the daily measurements of the sun with *De Jakobsstaf*. Before the accident that blinded my father, the eyesight of

Abraham Pieterzoon Smid, had grown dim due to the sharp light of the coals blazing in his forge. In his last years he depended on the help of his eldest son, *ouboet*: big brother, and me, *grootman*: big man, his second eldest. We stood ready by his side, so as to pass him his chisels when he had need of them to punch holes through the glowing metal that lay on his anvil, or to fill his wooden spoon with water when the time came for the molten mass to be cooled down and hardened into steel.

Several months before the accident that killed my *schipper*, he asked me to take the necessary readings from the stars, as their light no longer formed into recognizable groups and constellations, but was only visible as blurs that could not be deciphered. Filled with anguish, he confided, 'I am no longer capable of determining direction accurately. I am become a danger to my men.'

I should have realised the direction that his thoughts were taking when, not many days before we were due to arrive back in Zeeland, my captain gave me the gift of his Porcellis, with one stipulation. He hoped that on the day I became captain of our ship, as he was sure that I must, the picture would remain hanging where it could bring as much pleasure to its new owner as it had to its past one.

My *schipper* had acquired his seascape of *Dutch Ships in a Gale* many a year ago when visiting Amsterdam. Jan Porcellis was considered to be foremost among the nautical artists of his day. Constantijn Huygens, the renowned astronomer and Rubens and Rembrandt, the celebrated painters, collected his works, as did many an eminent burgher, who delighted in such matters. *Mijn heer* assured me that he drew great comfort from this spiritual picture.

'The broken-masted ship that battles against the rage of an ocean, serves as an emblem of hope for those who find themselves similarly afflicted in the course of their life, for they can see that light breaks through the blackest of clouds.'

My master was rightly advised to have his highly-sought-after purchase suitably mounted in a broad, gilt frame. When, at length, he returned to his command, my *heer* thought that it might be best to hang his masterpiece in a position where it could be seen as he awoke of a day, or in those moments before he extinguished the flame of his bedside candle and committed himself to the workings of the night. He believed that the only place where this desire could be satisfied was from the comfort of his own bed, which stood against the port side of his cabin. His picture was therefore duly hung on the panelled starboard wall, between the window and his *kleinhuisje*: loo.

My *heer*, being of a fastidious nature, wished to *poepen* in private. Newly in command and with the mind of a ship's architect, he set about designing an enclosed seat-

of-ease. Although he was harkening back to a time before quarter galleries were enclosed and officers could enjoy the facilities of a garderobe situated at its forward end, my heer was prepared to be forward in his thinking; his convenience was to be similar in shape to the pillared roundhouses on the bow and it would be constructed in panels, in keeping with those of his spacious cabin, where it was set to stand in the starboard fore-corner. When my *meester's* plans were complete, the ship's carpenter had no difficulty making an opening for the vulgar tube below the stern castle and the aforesaid, being far smaller than a canon aperture, did in no measure take away from the majesty of his East Indiaman's stern.

Giving depth to Mijn Heer's Porcellis from below was the glass-fronted teak cabinet,

in which many a wondrous chart, alive with land-and-sea monsters, was stored. As a boy of fourteen, I thought that one of these brightly-painted parchments would look better on the wall, especially the terrible one where a wild savage holds up the severed head that he has just sliced off a pale sailor with his fearsome dagger. At that time, dangers, like those encountered by my hero Bontekoe and his fearless men, seemed far

more colourful than a grey painting.

'Ah, but think how richly coloured are the thoughts of those who wonder why men would risk their lives to labour at a mainsail broken loose by the force of a gale,' my *heer* said, referring to the nobility that was to be gained in the contemplation of his Porcellis.

My *heer* cautioned me not to lose my head delighting in barbaric deeds, for their reality, of which he assured me he had much knowledge, was best forgotten. He further informed me that even if it were his fervent desire to disport me with scenes of depravity, as we lay together in his port-side bed, he would be unable to satisfy such a lust. He was required to roll and store his precious charts in the solid brass holder, which was kept locked in his cabinet, for they were not his property. Rather, they belonged to The *Kamer Zeeland* of the *Compagnie*. He had signed a bill of lading for them and he would lose his deposit unless they were returned, undamaged, to their rightful owners on his return.

He rose before daybreak. (Did he kiss his sleeping boy as he usually did when pulling the covers back over me? Although being a man, who had survived the rigours of this world for twenty five years and more, *mijn seun*: my boy, my son, my blessing was yet the name *mijn meester* gave to me, as we talked together in the intimacy of his *kajuit*: cabin) Within

arm's reach of his hometown Vlissingen and only a few hours before we entered the straits of Wielingen *mijn Heer, mijn Vader*, left our cabin and guided by the halo of Venus, freshly positioned as the morning star, he made his way to the port side of his ship and stepped over the rail into the embrace of his beloved *zee*.

1.4 CHORUS

Naturally, in 1703, no one, in a nation obsessed with doing what was right and proper, dared to call his death *selfmoord*. A captain does not commit the heinous crime of suicide. According to the ship's *daghregister*, the night watchman Jan Dirksz reported seeing his *kaptein* stumble and slip on the poop deck; the wet planks being iced over by the north wind. The *schipper* hit his head on the railing and as he stood up a starboard wave catapulted him into the turbulent sea. The ship's company furled the sails and lowered the sloop, but the water was choppy. 'For how long was it possible, even for the hardest, the bravest, to survive in this freezing February dawn?' they asked. At length the men gathered on the deck to say prayers and sing Psalms and commend the soul of their departed *kaptein* to his maker.

1.5 BARENDT

As swift as the lightening that rents the parchment of the sky, the rumblings of this world disappear, even as to the voice of the *ziekentrooster*: comforter of the sick praying and giving readings from his *Bybel* and the full complement of our ships' men singing Psalms. All that is air, all that is water, have become as silent to me as the gulls that fly beyond the lace of the waves to land on the line of Vlissingen's beach, for I am gone with my *heer* to the place where the wings of sound seek rest.

As luck will have it, a few days later, I am sufficiently returned to this world so as to hear the summons that instructs me to proceed to Middleburg and present myself before the Zeeland Chamber of the Company. At which time I am informed that the written wish of my *Kaptein* was that, in the advent of his death, I, being worthy of such an honourable promotion, should be commissioned as *schipper* of his ship. This is duly done and as I prepare to set sail on my East Indiaman some several months later, I decide (having said lengthy farewells at the memorial gravestone of my *heer*, who lies at peace in the bosom of Abraham) to enjoy the last of the tulips by walking to the place where I was born; it being the village that my sister liked to call Straatkerke.

At first light, on Sunday, the fourteenth day of May 1703, I set off briskly along *Steenweg*. An hour later I cross the deserted streets and squares of Middleburg and presently I find myself north of the city on *Den Noord Weg*. I pass St Laurens and by the time I ford the canal before *'t Huys Om*, the sun is warming my right cheek and shoulder. I cannot resist the temptation to sit on a wall and look down at a sky of untroubled water and to give my thoughts back to the time when, as children, we used play 'upside-down world'.

As we looked down at the sky-land in the canal, those many years ago, we pretended to be part of the congregation of the blessed, who were merrily drifting along the canals of Heaven. We called the clouds angels and the ship that we were sailing in *'t Kerkse Dak*, because the roof of our church looked like the upturned hull of the ship that we saw being built in Middleburg's shipyard.

We did not tell our *Moeder* and *Vader* of our game, for we knew that they would forbid such a game. In our hearts we knew them to be right, for man is not called upon to be in heaven before his time.

'We could be tempting God to strike us dead,' our oldest brother and protector reasoned, yet even the younger ones knew this to be impossible, for God is above all temptation.

'Joos could drown if he fell into the watercourse,' and by adding, 'We all could, for none of us can swim,' I further strengthened Claertje's argument.

Nevertheless, being as yet children, easily tempted to do what was wrong, we allowed ourselves, but on less occasions than desired, to play *omgekeerde wêreld*, for it was most pleasurable to be in Heaven.

I can't tarry long in this world of lost pleasures, as I hope to reach the church square of our village before the commencement of the morning service. My judgement proves to be correct, because by the time that I have crossed *het Sandweg* and skirted the great oaks enclosing *'t Hof Noordhout*, I have but a few minutes to wonder how reduced in height is the tower of our church and how close the linden trees stand to one another in the square between The House of our Lord and the house and smithy of our long-since-departed family.

'You are returned to the bosom of your people at a God-given hour,' Tant Martie welcomes me.

‘The hand of The Almighty has guided you to be with us this day,’ Oom Gijsbert says.

The soberly-attired congregation is gathered to hear the inaugural sermon of their new *dominee*. His text is taken from Psalm 116: 6 ‘*De Heer bewaart de eenvoudigen, ik was uitgeteerd, doch Hy heft mij verlost.*’

I was sorely perplexed, not know what meaning the Lord intended me, his humble servant Barendt Abrahamson Smid, the poor boy raised to the great height of a *schipper*, to take from this text. Unlike my father, I am now important enough to have my coat of arms placed beside the gravestone of the Lord of the Manor and to be buried inside the church and lie amongst the honourable dead of our neighbourhood.

I resolved to think more earnestly about the meaning of his words, ‘The Lord preserveth the simple’. Although my father, the lowly smid, Abraham Pieterzoon, was given a small plot of land, it was on the sunny side of the churchyard. His last resting-place was to be in the everlasting light of Heaven, for he was not a sinner. He was not a sodomite, like me, his son. If I were to be buried here, I would not lie with the righteous beside my father. My grave would be dug in the narrow strip of permanent shade between the north side of the bell tower and the stone wall enclosing our church. I would be condemned to lie with sinners for eternity.

It becomes clear to me why, by the grace of God, I have, this day, been called upon to hear the sermon preached by His Excellency *Ds. Gargon*. Until this moment I could not thank Our Merciful Father for the love he has shown to one who is so unworthy. For I did not realise that if, in His Wisdom, Our Saviour had not taken my *kaptein* to be with Him in Paradise, I would not have been made *schipper*, neither would I have troubled myself to pay a visit to my home village so that I might tell my father how right he was, all those years ago, to call me *grootman*: big man. My soul would have remained in mortal danger, if I had not seen the light of His words, ‘I was brought low, and he helped me.’

I feel the blessing of my Lord to be upon me, for like St Paul I hear the voice of my Saviour saying:

he is a chosen vessel
unto me, to bear my name before
the Gentiles,

1.6 CHORUS

Barendt's gracious Lord, has helped him to see the error of his ways, the evil of his 'unnatural crime'. Like a true Dutchman, who survives the sea battles and floods of his

Nation's *trial* by water, Barendt
has survived his trial by flesh.
He heeds the call of his Lord
and Master. He will be a soldier
of Christ, a fortress for the
Reformed Church. From the
stronghold of his vessel he will
convert the sinful. In the fort of
his ship, *Nieuw Zeelandt*, he

will defend the Empire of the Most High.

'If we study the idea of fortifications from Floriani, da Capri and San Micheli, by way of Rusenstein, Burgsdorff, Coehoorn and Klengel, and so to Vauban and Montalembert, it is amazing,' writes W. G. Sebald in his book *Austerlitz*. 'To see the persistence with which generations of masters of the art of military architecture, for all their undoubtedly outstanding gifts, clung to what we can easily see today was a fundamentally wrong-headed idea: the notion that by designing an ideal tracé with blunt bastions and ravelins projecting well beyond it, allowing the cannon of the fortress to cover the entire operational area outside the walls, you could make a city as secure as anything in the world can ever be.'

Of course this twenty-first-century insight was unavailable to Barendt. For fifteen years, from 1688 until the schipper took his own life in 1703, Barendt was educated in more ways than one. His new father, his learned mentor, started off by improving his boy's reading skills. The first book that they read together was Barendt's favourite tale of adventure.

The Dutch believed that their freedom was a divine reward for their steadfastness to God's Commandments. On many an occasion when facing certain defeat in the eighty years of war with Spain and in the joint attacks by the British and French fleets, the Almighty interceded on their behalf. By changing tides and wind to confound the enemy, He turned calamity into victory for 'His Chosen People'.

Children were brought up on these tales of national drama where men of faith, on the brink of disaster, were justly rewarded for their resourcefulness, fidelity and endurance by Celestial grace. Being a sea-faring nation the Dutch added briny yarns of intrepid nautical heroes overcoming shipwreck, piracy, savages and sea monsters to their spicy diet of

disaster epics. As a boy Barendt would have listened keenly to the real-life adventures recorded in the

JOURNAL
OR
MEMORABLE DESCRIPTION
OF THE
EAST INDIAN VOYAGE OF WILLEM YSBRANTZ
BONTEKOE OF HOORN,
Comprehending many wonderful and perilous happenings
Experienced therein;
Begun on the 18th of December, 1618, and completed on the
16th November, 1625.

In his introduction to the English translation of this work Professor Geyl writes that 'Bontekoe's East Indian Voyage was one of the most popular adventure books in which the Dutch seventeenth century public delighted.' It was reprinted throughout the following two centuries and Bontekoe's name became part of the Dutch language. '*Een reis van Bontekoe* is still a common expression to denote a journey with more than its due share of accidents'.

As Barendt became a more skilful reader he also memorised verses from the Bible – even some from foreign plays – and like his *heer*, he ribboned them through the enriching warp-and-woof of their love-making.

O be some other name.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet,

His *meester* had translated these words for him, telling his beautiful boy that they were written by an Englishman, whose plays he buys in his favourite bookshop in Amsterdam. He explains that *Romeo and Juliet* fall in love, but that their love, like theirs, was forbidden; for fear of being put to death, it had to be kept a secret. When Barendt says that no-way can the feelings between a man and a girl ever be as exciting as their same-sex explosions, his *heer* strokes and teases him with his familiar phrase '*Een stijwe jonkheer heeft geen verstand*' before finding more lines from Solomon's Song to explain that the out-pourings of love are the same for all.

1.7 TULP and BARENDT

I am his sister. His *sussie* is the flower of his Zeelandt. My name is Tulp. I am waking from the green of my sleep. I am not safe near my *oerwoud*. He must cut me from the leaves that sparkle. He must take me from the storm that will rage in

my land. The wind must not tear my bud. The thunder must not bruise my petals. He carries me to his *pondok*. Here the lightening will not burn my folds. He cradles me in his arms. He rocks me like a small child. He strokes me with the song of a mother. *Slaap kindje, slaap*. It is the song of the hummingbird.

The singer sits in his tree. He is safe in his cover of leaves. He sings for his Tulp to stir. He waits for her sun to rise. He sees her light. He lifts the *kompers*: blanket of her night. He wants her warmth. He moves over the roofs of her city. He seeks her hidden compound. He smells her yellow spices. Tulp lays her *babotie* on a plantain leaf. He hovers over her dish. Her bird of paradise must eat.

I am the scallop that is picked up on the beach. I cannot show it to my *Amma*. I cannot give it to little Sina when she lies on her *katel*. She cannot hold it as I *abba* her to the hen coop. I cannot pour the milk-and-egg-yolk mixture over my mother's *babotie*. My baby sister cannot suck curried mince from my *pinkie*.

She is the moisture saved from the tear-drop of her land. She is the empty shell brought to my *hut*. She is the jewel I take to my Claertje. The pure milk of *My Liewe Heer* pours into her. Her grit will pearl in the oyster of His love. The gates of *Paradijs* will open.

1.8 BARENDT

I, Barendt Pietersz Smid of Middleburg, set sail from Wielingen, being *schipper* of the ship named *Nieuw Zeelandt* in the year of our Lord 1707, the 6th June in company of four ships. We set our course out to sea S.W. by S. and by the Grace of God with no loss of ship or life on the 27th August, baring eastwards, the wind being N.W. we sight black-specked gulls. We know them to be a token that we were not far from land. The 21st we find the compass to hold straight south and north, this being a trustworthy sign that we are at the height of *Die Kaap*. God Almighty be praised, who thus has answered our prayers.

We find good anchorage in 15 fathoms of water in the roads of *Die Baai* and while my men bring about the necessary repairs to my ship and replenish our stocks of food and water, I hire a horse so as to visit my sister at her farm near the isolated village of Stellenbosch. My mother lives on a neighbouring farm with her refugee husband Jean. I

have found it in my heart to forgive him for causing my father's death, but it is not so easy to do the same for my mother, although, God knows how I have prayed over this matter.

Ten years have passed since I last saw *Moeder*, for it was at that time that she implored me to leave the protection of my *kaptein* in order to marry the upright daughter of her neighbour. I was younger then, more impetuous, and when I told her that my love for my *meester* would never permit me to do such a thing, she told me to get out of her sight and never again to allow the shadow of a sinner to darken her door.

'Men who commit deeds of *helsche boosheit* and *grouwelyke zonde* sail on a ship of fools.' My mother takes on the voice of her *Dominee*. *Moeder* warms to a sermon that is not to my liking. 'According to the prophet Jeremiah, unless sinful men give up their evil desires and choose to live, in peace and harmony, amongst the corn and vineyards of the Promised Land, they will not find favour in the sight of the Lord.'

Ten years ago, I had no choice, but to turn my back on my mother, for according to the Gospel of John, Jesus said, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone'. Like the scribes and Pharisees, *moeder* had no right to condemn me for wrongdoing, when her sins were similarly grievous to our Lord. For had she not abandoned my father's grave to marry a murderer? Should she not, in equal measure, fear the judgement of her own heart? But I am happy to spend some days with my sister, Claertje, as I will have little occasion to do so in the future.

'The Lord has spoken to me again through his servant.' I tell Claertje. But before I explain how this new revelation came about I begin by telling my sister about that Sunday, five years ago, when I visited her beloved *Straatkerke*.

'Ds. Gargon's inaugural text, 'The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low and he helped me', reformed my life, for, from that day onwards, I was wholly committed to saving the souls of my men.' I give pause at this early stage of my narrative, so that my sister can think on the meaning of the *Dominee's* words.

'When Satan is the foe, this is no easy matter,' I resume. 'Since that time when our Lord and Saviour expelled the devil to the realms of hatred and envy, his fallen angel has tried to punish his rightful oppressor for the justice of his maker's deed.

This he does first, being a coward, by attacking the weakness of the woman. When they lend their ear to do the serpent's bidding,

Satan, risen from the dungeons of hell, to hold court in the heathen lands of the East, can inflict his suffering on my *matrozen*, as they dare to voyage to his ungodly kingdom.'

This, and more, to hear, my Claertje was seriously inclined, but she had to attend to the needs of her children, one being grievously sick from the effects of a chill.

'My blankets are in threads' she complains. 'The children suffer from the cold. I have enough down from the geese and the hens, but no cotton sheets to make eiderdowns.'

Presently she returns and I am able to add the distressful strokes of another sea monster and wild savage to the hand-painted chart of my story.

'Temptation is the ploy that the devil uses against the soldiers and sailors, whose bodies are afflicted by the scourges of scurvy, the fevers of malaria, the dysentery of worm-infested water, the bodily infestations of lice and flees, *de gevreet* of their meagre rations by cockroaches and rats. It is far better for the souls of these men that they do not survive such grievous torments (on board ship they can benefit from the daily prayers and teachings of the comforter of the sick), for Satan, clever as a cat, is licking his lips, as he creeps towards his prey; his hunger eats inside him like a cannibal.

In every harbour he waits to pounce, by luring men, disfigured by smallpox and robbed of their teeth and their strength, into the infectious comforts of his whores. Before long, the pustuled bodies and crazed minds of these ravaged souls are too weak to resist being carried off to the hell-fires where they must burn for all eternity.'

'Tis pitiful. I wish I had not heard it,' Claertje says. 'But in truth, I know of such woeful tales, for my husband suffered from spotted fever when he was serving as a soldier on an East-Indiaman. Fortunately for us, when he arrived at the Kaap he was too sick to continue on his ship and when he recovered, the Lord be praised, he had the sense to become a farmer's *knecht*: servant.'

'And the ability to become a farmer, for this is his farm, is it not?'

'That is true, but a lot more is true too.'

'And the truth of it pains you?'

'My husband is very strict.'

'Which is not such a bad thing; you have to be firm to create respect.'

'Yes, the children listen to him, but they also fear him.'

'On my ship a bit of fear maintains order and discipline, without which we would not survive thirty-foot waves or arrive safely in a harbour to visit an all but lost, but never forgotten, beloved sister. But let me tell you of the wonderful coincidence that promises once again to change my life.'

‘Can you believe it, four years after Ds. Gargon delivered his opening sermon in Straatkerke, he was called to serve the reformed community in Vlissingen. By God’s grace, I was in that very church that morning? That was Sunday, April the 10th, nearly five months previous. God be praised, I had been in the town for these past two months preparing my ship to join the convoy sailing south from the roadstead of Texel to the *Kaap* before going on the East Indies.

‘I was much vexed by Ds. Gargon’s text that was taken from Isaiah 40: 4-6 and accordingly, after the service, I went and knelt by the memorial stone of my wise *kaptein*. As I wept and prayed amongst the tulips of the churchyard, the wisdom of the words of Isaiah the Prophet became clear to me. I must go, one more time, to the Far East, as I had contracted to do. Thereafter I must not retire, as I had a good mind to do, and enjoy the comforts of a new house that the Company of Middleburg would build to honour me for my many years of service to them.

‘No, by the Grace of the Almighty, having being born again, not of corruptible seed (the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away) but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth forever. The Lord was calling me to minister to the fallen (every valley shall be exalted; and the crooked shall be made straight) in the ports of Satan, at the cockfights and brothels on Java. I must return to Batavia, not as a *kaptein*, but as a missionary. I will fear no evil, for my Lord will be with me just as he was for my eminent predecessor Philippus Baldaeus when he conducted his church services under a tamarind tree.’

‘This turn of events is strange; ‘tis wondrous strange,’ my sister sighed and became tearful at the thought that she might never see me again when I returned to do His good work.

To bring her some cheer we talked of shared pleasures from our past. She recalled the excitement she felt when our *moeder* asked us to fetch the flour-ticket, handed out by the schoolmaster.

And this talk leads us on to another time, when she and I had sat on the beach in Vlissingen. That was on the eve of our departure to the Cape of Good Hope.

‘The sun’s golden path seemed to be asking us to follow its light from the water’s edge, out over the strait of Wielingen to the horizon,’ Claertje said.

‘And we believed it to be a sign from God that He was blessing our journey.’

‘I do not wish my thoughts to be irreverent, but with all the hardship that I now suffer it pains me to think that so many years ago ... how many is it exactly?’

‘Nineteen.’

‘Nineteen years ago! *My maggies*, is it so long? I was a girl of eleven then; younger than my daughter Sara is today, and just as pretty. But look at me now, worn out mother of eight children; a bad-tempered, old woman of thirty.’

‘I’ll change that for you, my dearest sister. I’ll find a suitable *meidje* to help you bear your burden. I shall be back with her by May next, God willing.’

1.09 CHORUS

Barendt leaves the Cape on the 18th of September 1707 and arrives in Negapatam (Fort Naarden) on the 10th of December of that year. By the end of the seventeenth century the trade in cotton cloth between Europe and the Coromandel Coast had become increasingly important.

Gentlewomen in Holland desired elaborately painted, fine-quality textiles.

On his previous voyage Barendt had given his Jewish dealer in Negapatam the patterns he wished the local craftsmen to hand-paint onto chintz wall hangings, bedcovers and skirts. He would come to fetch the following year.

Besides giving Claertje a few of these chintzes, he wanted to take her something special as a parting gift, so he asked a reliable Chinese merchant to find him the best local artist to make a hand-painted copy of his Porcellis on a yard of white linen. Below the picture the craftsman was to paint the words from the gospel of St

**Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?
Then he arose, and rebuked the winds
and the sea; and there was a great calm.**

Mathew concerning the miracle of his Lord. The letters were to be similar in colour, but far larger, than those in his Bybel.

He told the Chinaman that he realised time was short, that he had not given him the customary year in which to complete his order, but due to the urgency of the matter, he would be much obliged if he could have his painting delivered to him before he set sail, in early February, to join the home-bound fleet in Colombo. He also desired a roll of sturdy cotton suitable for making skirts and jackets and another suitable for making eiderdowns. Furthermore he needed some needles and buttons and enough silk to keep a seamstress's hands busy on a three-month voyage to the *Kaap* and for many years after. And if the Chinaman knew of dress and coat patterns suitable for smaller women and some fine sharp scissors for cutting the cloth, they would come in handy too.

Dutch girls began their embroidery work by the age of ten. The first sampler a girl would make was an *Alphabet Sampler*. Since school was not mandatory for girls in the seventeenth century, this not only enabled her to learn her alphabet but taught her how to initial the linens and clothing in her own home. The second sampler was a *Technique Sampler* called a *Stoplet*. It enabled the girl to learn and illustrate her talents of seaming, darning and all sewing required in the management of a household. On the third one known as *The Honeymoon Sampler* the girl would embroider designs and emblems that brought meaning to her life. Sometimes she would stitch all three types of samplers on one piece of cloth. Most samplers were cross-stitched, backstitched or satin stitched in silk threads on white linen.

While fourteen-year-old Barendt's mother had shown eleven-year-old Claertje how to cut out and sew an outfit for their new life at the Cape of Good Hope, Anna had helped her middle son make a shirt for himself. When they set sail Claertje was embroidering The Tree of Life motif on a sampler that she had bordered with red and pink tulips. Barendt hoped that, on the long sea voyage from Colombo to the Cape, the *meidje* he was taking to his sister would learn to sew and embroider as well as Claertje could.

He had asked his good friend the Dutch merchant to pick him a girl, who was a year or two riper than his sister was at the time of their Zeeland-to-*Kaap* sailing. For the first couple of years after his *heer* had died, Barendt, being a Shepherd to his men, didn't stray. Eventually his fellow officers persuaded him to join them in the pleasurable pastime of picking untouched blooms from the heathen bushes that flowered so prettily in their Christian ports. They assured him that there would be no risk of disease, as there was in the sailors' brothels and that the wretched creatures would be only too grateful for a few coins.

If they happened to fruit with his seed, the child, fortunate in having a Christian father, would be blessed with a soul predetermined to be saved.

Barendt was looking forward to a longer-than-usual relationship with a blushing bud. He would keep her safe in the fort of his ship for the duration of their voyage and make sure that the words of his Bible brought light to her darkness. In addition, he would teach his little concubine the many skills required to *naai* properly. In his language this meant two things: she would discover the joys of the flesh as he help his little bloom open petal by petal, and also learn how to embroider gold silk around the dark letters and masts of the Ship-of-Faith sampler and how to sew a jacket and skirt for herself.

Barendt believed his gift of *naaiing* to be better than money, for, *in 't wilderness*, his tulip would be unable to spend it and, furthermore, she would fail to keep out the cold and rain of a Cape winter, if simply covered in a sarong. Best of all though, Tulp's skill would be most useful to Claertje, who needed new cloths for herself and her children.

1.10 TULP

Rises and falls, rises and falls; the ship as it talks to the water; his Tulp as she *naais* with her *meester*, her fear as she creaks alone on his chair by the window of his *kajuit*.

The voice of the ship does not sleep. Past night and day it groans like my *Tata* sunk in his sorrow. Past working and resting it sighs like my Amma longing for her lost girls. Past living and dying it moans like Maleeya bitten by the snakes of the *canaal*.

Mijn heer's worm is as hungry as those Maleeya and I feed with the leaves from *Meester Ching's* mulberry tree. He grows on the sunlight of my green. He is wrapped in the cocoon of my silk. He flies on the wings of his worm. His eggs lie on the sunlight of my shame.

Mijn heer gives me his silk thread. He will teach me his letters. I will light the candles of his dark words. His *Heer* will see to save the ships. My *heer* shows my fingers how to hold his needle, how to thread his gold in and out of his white cloth, how to wind the shine around each letter. Some of the letters are missing. If he can't find them *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* he will find them somewhere else in his Bible. *The First Book of Moses, called Genesis* has more leaves than *Meester Ching's* mulberry tree and each leaf has more flowerbeds than the *Gouverneur's* garden.

Maleeya and I
climb the wall to peep
inside. We are not
allowed to play there. We
must take care of baby
Sina in the compound of
our *pandok* : small home
that lies behind his
Excellency's mansion. It

is also forbidden that we go to the *canaal* that coils from the sea, through the middle of our castle to the lagoon on the other side.

Amma calls the canal the *henakandaya*
and tells us that we must fear it more than
the terrible serpent that hangs from the
branches of the forest. When the
anaconda finds its prey it knows that it
must wrap its tail around the trunk of a
tree. Then it will be ready to throw the
coils of its strength over the elephant or the tiger or the buffalo. But before the snake can eat
the animal that fights to save itself, it must drag this food that roars in fear to the tree.

'The noise that is made as the bones of these beasts are crushed is loud as the cannon
that shoots from a ship,' our *Amma* tells us. Then she asks, 'Why then do you think that the
people, who live in the walls of our city fear the *henakandaya* more than this deadly
anaconda that covers its prey with spit before swallowing it?'

When we cannot find an answer, she tells us
'The *anaconda* sleeps in the jungle, for that is where
its food lives. The *henakandaya* cannot swallow a
tiger. It is better for it to live here in Colombo with
us. Here it is easy to catch the rats that come from
the ships and the frogs that swim from the lagoon.
This is the animal that the brown snake asks its large
eyes to find. It is the meal that its long snout can
trap. The brown snake is happy to stay in the city. It
can wind through the trees between our houses like the brown *canaal*.

‘We think it is safe to live together with these two snakes. We think that the bite of the thin, brown *henakandaya* cannot make us sick when its fangs cut our flesh. We think that the thin, brown canal cannot make us sick when it opens its mouth for the small boats to sail through the wall of the castle. But it is not the truth.

‘When *Papa* rings the slave bell, we do not see the measles and the small pox that climb from the boat with the sailors and the slaves. We do not see the diseases when they lie in the canal waiting for the daughters of the mother that cooks all day in the mansion of her *meester*. These daughters do not know how hungry the diseases are for the meal that they can swallow. When these girls come near to the edge of the water, the fever rises up like the head of the *henakandaya*. The hidden fangs of the canal strike the child that is chosen, with the poison of the snake. Those who are bitten by the bite of this thunderbolt won’t walk. They won’t eat. Their leaves will fall from them as the leaves of the tree that is burnt by the lightening.’

When we listen to our *Amma*, when we don’t go to the canal, the diseases that are hungry grow tired of waiting. The mother snake sends her children to our compound. *Tata* rings the slave bell when the measles strikes my two little sisters. He carries the butterfly of their souls, as they hover over the dead flower of their bodies, through the Delft gate. In the Dutch cemetery the *Dominee* prays that Bati and Sula will lie in the bosom of Abraham until that Day when the Lord will decide if they are to rise up to heaven, or to fall into the fires of hell.

The Dutch *Dominee* does not read from the *Qur’an* that *Amma* has hidden in a *blatjang*: chutney jar on the shelf where she stores her spices. He does not hear *Tata* speak the words of our Prophet Mohamed behind the closed door of our *pandok*. He does not know that the souls of my sisters will be stored in *Barzakh*. In the cold sleep of their little graves they will wait for Judgement Day. The *Dominee* does not know that Bati and Sula, although they are small, have listened to the words of our *Tata* and our *Amma*. They will go, with the angels, to *Jannah*.

Amma has only three girls left to care for now. Two little sisters lie in Batavia. Two little sisters lie in Colombo. Jala, Maleeya and Sina must not leave her. We must keep ourselves safe from the dangers that wait to harm us in this land of strangers.

1.11 CHORUS

Barendt failed to rejoin the home-fleet after making a slight deviation, in order to pick up the gift that he had bought for his sister from the Dutch merchant in Colombo. Despite being knowledgeable about the effects of the off-shore sea currents and the direction of the

March winds he was unable, for several days, to take readings of the sun and stars due to the unseasonable build-up of cumulous cloud. When, at last, he could calculate his true latitudinal position from the sightings taken of several constellations with his astrolabe, he found his ship to be only 3 degrees south the equator. He consulted his chart and saw that he was yet in danger of foundering on the archipelago of islands below the mainland of India. He adjusted his ship's course by finding the pointers of the Southern Cross and for several weeks his company of sailors and soldiers enjoyed fine weather and a following breeze.

No-one expected these favourable conditions to last for the entire length of their estimated three-month journey from Ceylon to the Cape, but the severity of the storm that overtook them in the early hours of the twentieth day of March in the year of Our Lord one thousand, seven hundred and eight was out of the ordinary. Barendt, being aware of the dangers of tumultuous seas and heavens, stayed at his post on deck for the duration of the storm.

When, at length, after three days, he returned to his cabin he slept for the whole of the night and a good part of the following day, but his weariness would not leave him and soon the bouts of fever, which had plagued him in the past, returned.

The *ziekentrooster* spent much of his time at the *schipper's* bedside, taking blood from him in the hope of drawing out Barendt's fever. Whenever he left, Tulp would sit in the chair beside her *heer*. She listened to his moans as he tossed and turned and she saw how the cloth that covered the cut in his arm was red with his blood. Her *heer's* lips were cracked and when they moved, Tulp, believing that he was asking for a drink, wet the side of her sarong from the jug of water standing on the table and dripped it over his mouth. Then she wiped his face and neck as she had seen her mother do when the fever made Maleeya's body burn.

1.12 TULP

Tata did not hear the *soebat*: plea of *Amma*. He would not let Maleeya lie in our *pandok*. The poison of her bite was too strong for *Amma's* medicine. *Tata's* faith was not strong like the faith of the Prophet *Ibrahim*. He could not offer this child to *Allah*. He could not lose the laughter of the breeze when it took the heat from the day.

Tata carried Maleeya to the Dutch hospital, but they could not stop her soul separating from her body and rising up to the roof of the hospital. *Tata* carried both halves of my sister to the Dutch

graveyard so that she could lie with Bati and Sula in the cold sleep of *Barzakh* until the angels took them to *Jenna*.

I did not want *mijn heer*'s soul to rise up to the roof of his cabin. He told me that if I read my *Bybel* and prayed to his *Heer*, his *Meester* would hear me. I must put my trust in him. He would calm the storm.

I want his *Meester* to hear me. I want him to calm the storm that is making my *meester* roll and groan like a ship that fights not to sink. I remember the words that *mijn heer* has read to me from his *Bybel* before he is sick. He always asks me to repeat what he reads and when I do, he says that for a heathen like me to have such an outstanding memory is extraordinary; verily, a sign that his God wants me to be saved.

I want my *heer* to be saved. I sit beside his body that does not know if his soul must stay with him or rise to the roof of his kajuit. I say the verses of his *Bybel* out loud and the thoughts of Maleeya and *mijn heer* and my sisters and my *Amma* and my *Tata* and little Sina are mixed with these sad thoughts and their weight makes me bend forward over the bed and my tears fall on the blood of my heer.

When I say the words that the angel of the Lord speaks to Abraham as his arm is raised to slay his child, 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thy fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me,' *mijn heer* opens his eyes. His Lord had taken his fever from him and the waves lay down in the bay of his body.

1.13 BARENDT

By the Grace of God I have this day been saved. I might deem that to be miracle enough, but when I think of the salvation of my Tulp's soul, my recovery to full health does not carry so great an importance. The Lord, in His mercy, approves of my mission. He rewards the labour of my daily Bible readings and prayers. Through His Goodness I have taught Tulp the words that allow her to weep for the sacrifice demanded of Abraham. I have helped her submit to the will of Our Lord. She is born again of the incorruptible seed of Our Maker.

Being so transformed, I am of the joyful opinion that my Tulp will blossom more richly if I were to show her further manifestations of the wonders of our heavenly Father. Accordingly, when the four bells are rung to announce that the eight hour-glasses of the flat-foot watch have run their course I wait for another two bells to ring before I take Tulp onto the Poop deck. This being the hour when the light of day is long since departed; when

all but the first watch are asleep on board my ship and the stars are risen to their full magnificence.

For lack of wind the mizzen and main sails have been furled and I am able to point out the constellations of the stars that dwell in the sky. The history of the hunter Orion interests Tulp greatly especially when I recall how the jealous goddess Artemis sets him safely in the sky far away from the love of Phoebe. I tell her of Hydra the water snake and how the monster is slain by the hero Hercules. She wonders at the strength of a man who can kill a serpent when its many heads can grow back to life in the same minute that they are cut off.

I help her eye find the Pleiades, calling them by their common name, the Seven Sisters. She can only see six, but when I convince her that the seventh can easily be seen through an eye-glass, she is most anxious to know if these sisters will stay near to the sword of Orion as he hunts across the sky and, further, asks if I believe Orion to have strength enough to slay the water snake when Hydra appears to be so much bigger than the moon. I inform her that this hunter is the son of Poseidon, who, according to the belief of the ancients, was the god of all the oceans. I therefore can happily assure her that Orion is up to the task; his strength being equal to that of Hercules.

When Tulp has gained some knowledge of the Southern Skies, I venture to hand her my brass astrolabe that I have just this year acquired. And I undertake to explain how, by holding it up to the heavens and sliding the top disk, embedded with the images of the constellations, over the bottom disk, measured out in the degrees of our world's circumference, I could ascertain the latitude and moment where our ship-of-time sails. Tulp is greatly amazed and confides that even if she so wished, she could never know how to accomplish such tasks. She is happy enough to hold the astrolabe between her hands, as if in a prayer, and to slowly turn the separate hemispheres over one another.

When I venture to place my hands over hers, she lifts her beautiful countenance towards me. Being unable to resist bending forward and touching her lips with mine, I cause her to tremble with such intensity that I know her petals to be, at last, shaken free. She is no longer the child, who must be shown the way, but has become the woman, who knows her path. This proves to be the

case when I take her below deck and show her the workings of my star charts and globe.

No sooner does she see the mammoth beasts and heathen gods of the stars writhing as if of one flesh, than she turns to unbutton my coat, the outreach of her fine fingers (the which, to amuse me, she had placed over my sturdy ones), having failed to enclose the Southern mound of my Celestial globe, as mine did.

Both being soon deprived of all containment, I draw her to me and fall backwards onto the bed. Tulp, being full well acquainted with the force of my desires, wraps her legs around my body, as like to the curved timbers of an East Indiaman that hold the main mast to the keel. Together, in the upside-down hull of her ship, we sail into the troughs and swells of a cumulus sky.

It grieves me to say that, for the next several weeks, I so delight in the billow of my Tulp's flower that the Devil sees fit to tempt me never to leave her. This turn of events causes me much disquiet, for I know that by groaning to the sigh of my Tulp, I harken to the voice of Satan, who would have me forgo my mission. My soul, being wretched as like to the sinful souls of the Israelites, turns to the lamentation of Amos for guidance.

1.14 TULP

From sunset to sunrise the sarong of night unwinds around True South. She is the secret place in the stars all navigators seek. *Mijn Heer* knows where she waits. He comes to her door. He brings her his brass Astrolabe. He moves the top disk over the bottom one. They cannot be apart for they are ringed at their bellies. They circle as one; they slide over each other; they rise to measure the meridian; they lie down to fill their hemisphere.

True South is found when the waves wash into the walls of Colombo and the breath of the air is filled with the smell of the sea and the ripe sun falls from the sky spilling the sweetness of its juice over the skin of my ocean.

1.15 CHORUS

As they sit in the Dutch cemetery with their *Tata* and *Amma* on the day Bati and Sula are buried, Tulp and Maleeya see how quickly the colours of sunset are eaten by the mouth of night. Scientists can explain that this phenomenon is due to the fact that Colombo lies close to the equator. But how will they explain why, in the months after Maleeya is taken to lie in the cold sleep of *Barzakh*, in those months preceding her abduction, Tulp sits alone on the wall of the old fort playing a favourite game, asking the hovering soul of her sister to say which length of silk, laid out over the bay by the setting sun, she would like to wrap around her when they go as guests, rather than as slaves, to the mansion of *Grootagbaare de Heer*

Gouverneur en Directeur van 't Eyland Ceylon, where they can eat as much as they like at his Excellency's rice-table.

On August the 10th 1708, while astronomers of the *Academie Royale Des Sciences* begin to chart the passage of the moon over *les Etioles des Pleiades*, no gaze is directed to the sandy bed of the bay of The Cape of Good Hope. Officials at the *Kaap* know of the ship and its entire crew that foundered in the great storm of June. But no one knows where it lies, or how to look through the thirty fathoms of the glass-fronted cabinet of the *Baai*, to where the cold Agulhus Current stirs the recently-settled ship. Two varnished legs from the chair that Tulp sat on to *naai* for her *meester's* Claertje, manage to rise to the surface before becoming water-logged and are washed ashore.

In 1710, Roman Dutch Law, as practised at the Cape, finds a local farmer guilty of murdering his two slaves and sentences him to four years imprisonment on Robben Island. This prisoner is no other than Claertje's violent husband, Pieter. He finds one of the turned legs from Barendt's ship while collecting driftwood for his warders. Being able to persuade a cruel guard of the advantages of such an instrument of punishment, Pieter is allowed to escape. Until he feels safe enough to return to the isolation of his farm, he hides in the brothel, the so-called Slave Lodge in the town.

The other leg of Tulp's chair is picked up seventy years later (coincidentally on the same day as the astronomers of the *Academie Royale Des Sciences* begin another charting of the passage of the moon over *les Etioles des Pleiades* – their number having increased as the result of the improved magnification of telescopes over the years)) by a *strandloper*. He is the third-generation son of the alcoholic-fired unions in the whore house of the Slave Lodge and scavenges for a survival on the desolate beaches of *Die Baai*.

He will however never be lucky enough to find Barendt's astrolabe, even though it is now less heavy (the brass ring holding the two disks together having been corroded by the water and scoured to breaking point by current and sand), for its two parts will not surface (unless, perchance, the wreck is brought to light, as many more have been in these days of

ever-improving technology), as they are buried separately in the debris of decaying timbers, broken crockery and coins.

Tulp, having been placed in the dubious care of Barendt's sister, finds some safety by fixing the man she loves, and will never see again, in the sky, as the jealous goddess Artemis did. Standing up there in the shiny shoes of Orion her love will always be near her; even when she can't see him, as Claertje's husband, Pieter, rapes her from behind (this being a favourite position, for it brings to mind the first time he became complicit in a gang-rape with his fellow *matrozen*) on the dung floor of the *buitekamer*: outside room, while his children and wife sleep in the farm house; she knows that her loved-one's sword will always protect the seven sisters from the many heads of the water snake.

Feeling her *heer*'s constant presence above and within her helps Tulp cope with her new *meester*'s drunken abuse. She feels safe in the knowledge that his seed will be useless; for ever since that night, when Tulp sits with her Barendt on the Poop Deck and vomits over the side of his ship, she has felt the growth of his child in her breasts. And now, on this tenth day of August, there is joy upon joy in her heart. The thought that her beloved will soon be safely home in Zeeland delights her, but even better, she has felt her *heer*'s Pearl (that is the name she will give to the child for she knows it to be a girl) stirring in her tummy.

Tonight Tulp will be able to block out most of the thoughts that keep her awake. Those that take her back to when she and her *heer* sit beneath the stars on the poop deck for the last time and see the silhouettes of the mountains, and the shadows between them, grow bigger and clearer as they enter the *Baai*.

Perhaps she won't feel the emptiness of the sea when the light runs back to the moon, or hear the wind that carries the sound of *Amma* crying for her lost daughters, or the toll of the bell that *Tata* rings when the slaves are brought to be bartered along with the cotton, cinnamon, butter, hens and pigs.

Perhaps, tonight, she won't long too much for the little arms of Sina that reach up and wrap around her as they hold each other tight.

Act Two
Cape of Good Hope Passion
On the evolution of the species
1714

Outline:

1	Chorus <i>of Naturalists</i>	In the beginning a creature called man brought order to the wilderness
2	Chorus <i>of Huguenots</i>	We, thy people, offer praise and thanksgiving
Interlude		
3	Choral <i>of Indian slaves</i>	May our prayers be answered, as were the prayers of Bhagiratha
4	Recitativo <i>Gouverneur Fiscal Governor</i>	Know ye that the <i>Heeren XVII</i> , to whom we are all indebted Marie Jeanne Steenkamp of the farm Sonskijn, in the District of Stellenbosch <i>Nihil dicit</i> . The defendant gives no answer
5	Chorus <i>of Huguenots</i>	We will answer for our sister, for it is rightful that she should be judged
6	Aria <i>Anna</i> (Pieter, Barendt and Claertje's mother)	Jesus went unto the mount of Olives
7	Arioso <i>Reformed Church Dominee</i>	Except the Lord build the house
8	Aria <i>Anna Madeleine</i> (Anna's daughter-in-law and sister of Marie, the accused)	Death is certain, its hour is uncertain As it is written in St John, Chapter 3: For God so loved the world
9	Choral <i>of naturalists</i>	Death becomes a way of explaining life
10	Aria <i>Madeleine</i>	Have mercy on my sister. She has suffered enough at the hands of evil men
11	Recitativo <i>Fiscal Tulp Gouverneur</i>	This Court while vouchsafing the thoroughness with which its officers Where is the snake that can bite the <i>baas</i> ? Who is this woman
12	Aria <i>Tulp</i> Anna's slave (Barendt's concubine, Claertje's ex slave)	Excuse me for interrupting your Excellency

13	Recitativo <i>Chorus of Huguenots</i> <i>Gouverneur</i> <i>Tulp</i> <i>Fiscal</i> <i>Tulp</i> <i>Fiscal</i>	Heaven protect us. This is a Christian court Indeed it is, but in the interests of impartiality I speak for my new <i>miesies</i> Anna Get on with your evidence woman Yes, my <i>baas</i> . Sorry, my <i>baas</i> My Lord, the case to which this free slave refers
14	Aria <i>Marie, the accused</i>	He said that the stream flowing from the open petals
15	Recitativo <i>Reformed Church</i> <i>Dominee</i> <i>Gouverneur</i> <i>Chorus of Huguenots</i>	Nature does not reveal God Your Salomon seems wise enough Indeed we must know what other sweetness this wily serpent whispered
16	Aria <i>Marie, the accused</i>	No guile, only love, my sisters
17	Recitativo <i>Claertje</i> <i>Anna</i>	And a good man he was too God brought joy to our hearts
18	Aria <i>Marie, the accused</i>	Sadly my first child was not long for this world
19	Recitativo <i>Guillame, Marie's father</i> <i>Chorus of Huguenots</i> <i>Dominee</i> <i>Fiscal</i> <i>Claertje</i> <i>Chorus of Huguenots</i> <i>Tulp</i>	The shame of it, for I believed that my nine-year-old Marie She is a Judas to her people It is written according to the Epistle of Paul Mater simper certa est And yet it is not a sin for a white man to love a slave? A good lesson to be learnt by all Excuse me for interrupting your honour
20	Aria <i>Marie, the accused</i>	I didn't have much time to think
21	Aria <i>Anna</i>	Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean
22	Chorus <i>of Naturalists</i>	J. Leniger writes in his <i>Hortus Malabaricus</i>
23	Choral <i>of Hottentots</i>	The people of this place have no spears that can kill the smallpox
24	Chorus <i>of Huguenots</i>	And the Lord God said unto the serpent
25	Recitativo <i>Gouverneur</i> <i>Anna</i> <i>Huguenots</i> <i>Gouverneur</i> <i>Dominee</i> <i>Huguenots</i> <i>Madeleine</i> <i>Tulp</i> <i>Dominee</i> <i>Fiscal</i> <i>Huguenots</i> <i>Marie</i> <i>Madeleine</i>	Minatur innocentibus qui parcit noncentibus

	<i>Anna Claertje Anna Dominee Marie Guillame</i>	
26	Chorus <i>of Huguenots</i>	
27	Choral <i>of Indian slaves</i>	

Chorus

of Naturalists

In the beginning a creature called man brought order to the wilderness at the southern tip of Africa, for in accordance to the Law of Life, which states that only the fittest will survive nature's battles-to-the-death, his large brain gave him dominance over the less well adapted, by allowing him to conceive of ways to confound the enemies of time and space and by so doing to venture across the vast and perilous oceans in search of riches, whereby he planted the seed of his *Colonie* in his God-given land, for so advanced were the thoughts of this breed of man that, being of the elect few, predestined to inherit life-everlasting and readily armed with the Laws of his Lord and those of his United Provinces of the Netherlands, as based on the legislature of the mighty Roman Empire, he believed himself chosen to establish His Father's Kingdom in this isolated region of the world.

Therefore, in accordance to the will of God, Simon van der Stel, proud of all he had achieved after following in the illustrious footsteps of Commander Jan Van Riebeeck, the founder of *Colonie* at the Cape of Good Hope, and being accompanied by two highly-placed representatives of the Lords XVII of the Dutch East India Company, Hendrik van Rheede *tot* Drakenstein and the reverend Lord St Martin, ventured into the hinterland of the Cape Colony in the bitter wind of a rain-sodden day in May 1685.

As their open vehicle, drawn by four lean mules, laboured over the sedge-covered sand of the Cape flats, through the black mud of De Kuilen and over the stony foothills of the Hottentots Holland the occupants, being of a studious and curious nature, made use of the halting progress of their carriage, to step down into the damp vegetation and admire the last of the gladioli, or smell the tuberosc scent of the star-shaped asparagus blooms protected in the crevasse of a sandstone rock, or to delight in the spread of the red heath on the lower slopes of the Helderberg. The highlight of this nine-day journey was to show the overseas dignitaries how well Van der Stel's isolated little community of free burgers had settled on their new, fifty-morgen grants of land and to spell out his plans for future development. When, towards the end of the day, van Rheede stood in front of a settler-farmer's two-roomed, white-chalked dwelling and gazed across the fields and gorges sparkling in the sunlight breaking through the rain clouds, his eye picking out the reed roofs of the thinly-spread farm houses rising above the young vineyards, wheat fields and oak plantations, his thoughts turned to his Bible. Before him, lying like

the fertile Plain of Sharon at the foot Mt Carmel was his jewel of Lebanon. He would rejoice in its flowering.

And so it was decreed and the new town of Stellenbosch rose on the big island that lay between the rolling stones of the branching *Eerste Rivier*. The first Christian church of the colony was built, in the hope of maintaining the sobriety of the Godly, or restoring it to those of the flock who were prone to wonder. A Drosdy and a house for the Landdrost, who with the Fiscal and the Company's soldiers, would maintain law and order in the new district, was also erected. In 1788 more land was opened up to farming in the neighbouring district of Drakenstein – named after van Rheeде's estate in the Netherlands – but there were too few farmers and most of this unsuitable bunch of free burghers, ex-sailors and employees of the Company, were in need of wives to impregnate, so as to keep them from uprooting and returning to their motherland.

Van der Stel wrote to the Heeren XVII requesting that they send him blooms of good standing from Zijp – the dyke-lands in the north of Noord-Holland, or the sand-flats of Gooiland, or from an orphanage of the True Faith, for he believed that such individuals, being well-adapted to poverty and hard work, had a good chance of surviving and multiplying in the Cape's harsh environment. This hardy stock would have the spirit to battle on in isolation, through wind, drought and storm and the not-so-infrequent encounters with house-flattening elephants and flesh-tearing beasts-of-prey. And indeed, so too, the masters of the Dutch East India Company believed, would the destitute Huguenots families fleeing from religious persecution in France and the Spanish Netherlands to the safety of the Reformed Church in Zeeland. Such a migration would not only benefit the struggling refugees and their hard-pressed hosts, but it would increase the numbers of farmers able to provide sufficient fresh produce at the Cape and for the passing ships.

By 1702 the number of free burghers had increased to 1,368 with a total Huguenot population of 250 almost all of whom had settled on farms in Districts of Stellenbosch, Drakenstein, Franschhoek, Paarl, Wagenmakersvallei and the Land van Waveren.

By 1711 the gross 'white' population at the Cape was 1,756, of which 545 were men, 337 were women, 462 were boys and 412 were girls. Two years later, as a result of a smallpox epidemic the total number had fallen to 1, 585; the men had decreased by 28, the woman by 51, and the boys by 75. The girls showed most resistance to the disease, for their numbers had increased by 173.

Chorus*of Huguenots*

We, thy people, offer praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God our Heavenly Father for freeing us from the iniquities of our Catholic oppressors, from those for whom no act of cruelty was deemed too great to inflict on men of conscience and steadfast heart, men who would chose to keep their covenant with their God and stand in defence of the innocence of their wives and children, rather than violate the sacrament of the alter, as the cowardly amongst them did, who by renouncing the true faith, preferred to retain the comfort of their houses, their livelihoods and their freedom and escape the injustice of the king's soldiers, knowing that each one of these unruly dragoons, believing himself to be both judge and executioner and enjoying praise and reward if he had the talent to invent new brutalities, would inflict whatever punishment he chose, as he raided and pillaged every Protestant home.

Holy Father, as You delivered Moses and his people from the bondage of the pharaohs, so too have You, in Your great mercy, delivered us from King Louis of France and Navarre, who, by giving ear to evil council, has revoked the wise Edict of Nantes, as decreed by his grandfather, King Henry the Great, thereby forbidding us to practise our religion, as God our Saviour would have us do, or allowing us to have our children baptised and schooled in private in our temples and dwelling places, under penalty of five hundred livres, or in fear of letting them be forcibly taken from our homes into the care of the parish priests. Furthermore, in his wickedness, the king decrees that those, together with their wives and children, who refuse to become converts and embrace the Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion, or try to escape with their goods and effects from his kingdom, lands and territories are under penalty, as respects the men, of being sent to the galleys (certain death) and as respects the woman, of imprisonment.

But You, our Loving Father, having brought war, famine and pestilence to our enemy, have delivered us to the Cape of Good Hope, to our Promised Land, the place where you would have Your Elect prosper, for no other hand, but the Divine, could lead us to where we will be safe from our foes, having bound our coasts with the vastness of the oceans, shaped our land with the grandeur of the mountains and filled the forests with the trumpet of elephants, the ravines with the roar of lions, the slopes with the grace of buck, the fields with the beauty of flowers, the sky with the

movement of wings, the air with the scent of the rainbow and the night with the wonder of the stars.

Dear Lord let us not squander these precious gifts of nature that You, in Your great goodness, have bestowed upon us, but, rather, as we observe the diligence of Your ants, the neighbourliness of your grasses, the perfection of Your honeycomb, help us, Your Chosen, to use these, Your precious gifts of knowledge and understanding, to work the soil, sow the seed, plant the oak, harvest the wheat and prune the vine so that we may grow in stature and number to Your great honour and glory. Amen.

Interlude

‘Given the opening address as usual; I should have expected no less.’

‘Who are you?’

‘No descendant of this holier-than-thou lot, thank God, but my children are. It is not only for them, but for all the confused devils, who have had the misfortune to roam the veld that I intercede. I believe that we have as much right as this red-toothed bunch of Darwinists and Calvinists, to stake a claim on the goldfields of reverence and immortality, if such they be. So why don’t we get down to brass tacks and agree that it is Marie’s Passion, not theirs, which is deserving of glory in this sorry saga.’

Dear gracious me! It’s the old battle axe – the name we used when referring to our combative mother. My fiction is turning into a nightmare séance. My mother’s voice of dissent is for real and it’s scary. I’ve no doubt that lashes of her anger can skew the sensuous spiralling of my Arum and I want the desecration of my lily as much as my Huguenot forbears want my Passion!

It’s time to call in the cavalry; no use soldiering on by yourself if you are to contend with warring factions and survive. Who better to send for than Granny Kay and her trusty piano? Hopefully, this wedded pair will restore the harmony as we advance across flats of burning lake, over heights of natural selection, past spewing springs of the dispossessed to the safety of nightfall.

Granny Kay, I appeal to you to come to my assistance in bringing calm to the troubled breast. Just as the silent-movie audiences of the nineteen-twenties needed, not only your renderings of Beethoven’s Appassionato, Chopin’s Impromptu in C Sharp Minor and Haydn’s Fantasia in C Major, but many an improvisation on the Toccata and Fugue by Bach and Rimsky-Korsakov’s Schéhérazade to carry them along with the acrobatic antics of

The Thief of Bagdad, who must earn the right to the happiness of whisking away the Beautiful Princess on The Magic Carpet, I need you, eighty-six years later, to be my accompanist, for I have reached a sticky patch in my endeavour to put breath back into the lungs of my *volk*.

Having done so well in your Royal College of Music exams and choosing to forgo the dream of being a concert pianist in order to lie and laugh in the late afternoon beside your beloved Willy when he returned from the *dorp's* pharmacy, or to help him perform his mayoral duties in a predominately Afrikaans community (especially at the rehearsals of Gilbert and Sullivan extravaganzas and Handel's *Messiah*), you are uniquely placed to help me soothe the ruffled feathers of my *Boere* ancestors when they ask me where my shame is. They are not enquiring about the one that is safely tucked up between my legs, I might hasten to add, or have I got it wrong? I'll draw a veil over that for the moment. Right now I must answer for my present actions; explain to my people how it is possible that after being in receipt of so much of their love I would wish to dishonour the Passion of their Lord and their own agony and ecstasy by equating it to the suffering and strangling of a cold-blooded murderess and the beheading and impalement of her barbarous accomplices.

When the *Boere* tell me that I am no longer welcome in their midst, I am sure that your response would be less angry than your daughter's reply, 'To the child of an unworthy mother, peremptory dismissal should come as no surprise'.

Granny Kay, you would also see the rejection of your granddaughter as worthy of a response, albeit much milder, encouraging my father's people to get off their high horses and suggesting that a little less pretence at holiness (you'd liked to say *skynheilig*, but pronouncing the g is too much like gargling) might help them do what comes naturally with more gusto. Although you are not of their blood and are happy to give as good as you get, I know that beneath this rivalry you care about their aches and itches, as they do about yours, for, in their isolation, *die Engelsman* and the Afrikaner have joined in song on the *dorp's* stage, made merry at barn-dances and stood beside each other at the open grave.

If you will come with me, we can call upon your favourite, Chopin, to illuminate later passages of my Opus – as of old, you can trill an arpeggio or two as you serenade the veld with mazurkas and etudes and the moon with preludes and nocturnes – but right now I need help with some Bach.

According to the notes accompanying The Monteverdi Choir's recording of J.S. Bach's St. John's Passion, the passion as a genre belongs to a tradition that is many centuries old and embraces the histories of both music and the modes of Christian belief.

The form of musical passion which was to reach its culmination with J.S. Bach was known as ‘oratorio passion’. Its most important elements are:

- specially composed recitatives where the words spoken by individuals came to resemble operatic recitative – the solos being constructed on the model of large-scale da capo arias. (Da Capo – from the head – is a ternary form (ABA) aria. The first section is tonic; the second is in a related key and then the repeat Aã has a bit of ornamentation – for Heaves sake, why am I telling you all this when it must be familiar territory?)
- the expansion of opening and concluding choruses
- the inclusion of chorales and poetic texts.’

The addition of extraneous texts can, in part, be attributed to the rise of Pietism in Germany. The individual’s concern with his or her own soul led to a new awareness of religious states of mind. New emotions of personal piety sprang to life giving rise to hymns concerned with the first person singular and to non-biblical religious lyrics.

Phew, Granny Kay, do you realise that not only have we been let off the hook, but we should see the on-going development of this genre of music as a golden opportunity. It leaves us plenty of room to make room for the new as we silence our critics. After all, rather than being sacrilegious, we’re only following the established trend of religious music, when, like the Lutherans, we place emphasis on the da capo side of passion and we certainly won’t be breaking the bounds of 18th century Pietism if we allow for greater self-expression of individual belief.

“One swallow doesn’t make a summer.” Funny to hear my father using one of my mother’s expressions. I can see his knowing smile, conceding, now that he is gone from our midst, the injustice of questioning the precision of her broad-sweeping utterances, and that, instead of putting me on the back foot by tripping me up as to the flimsiness of my *modus operandi*, this homage to my mother’s flowery reasoning would be a more appropriate way of reminding me of the merits of the scientific method. Fortunately, his caution that urged a thorough and thoughtful approach is water-marked in my mind, for deep-down I also believe that the methodical gathering and analysis of evidence offers the best hope of getting to the truth of the matter.

So, Granny Kay, being sure that you would agree with me that your son-in-law’s voice is one to be respected, let us give the matter a little more thought. Do you think he questions the appropriateness of my action because he believes that my later choruses, being in English, will not have the same number of syllables, as Bach’s contrapuntally

treated biblical texts, and will therefore be unable to reproduce The Maestro's intricate, imitative choral patterns?

No, this would not be it, for I don't think he is musically that well attuned to probe in such a direction. My hunch is, rather, that his interest would lie more in silencing me, he being a past-master at practising those dark arts on my mother, albeit, with diminishing returns as the years went by. He does so at his peril; I have revisited a scholarly text that credits Virginia Woolf for being 'the first woman of letters to pay detailed attention to literary history and the place of the woman writer in it'. 'Daughters did not inherit' an 'authorial identity' like men, who 'built on the common literary property that was formed and passed down to them by other men; 'we think back through our mothers if we are women', and the female tradition available to women writers was both 'short', because 'women began writing later than men' and 'partial', because they fitted themselves into already established forms which were not necessarily adequate to express the experiences of women 'tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts'.

"Conditioned by this socio-historical 'reality', what kind of subjectivity could be expected of the female self?" When women writers sat down to continue each other's books and tell the common tale of female life, what did they reveal? Not surprisingly, according to many critics of the mid- twentieth century, they revealed frustration and rage."

It is comforting to know that I am not alone in my present frustration, nevertheless, let us not be deterred, for our present situation isn't as fraught with danger as Marie's was when, in 1714, she squared up to her stony-faced accusers in the Cape of Good Hope's Court of Justice by laying claim to her forbidden feelings. Hopefully, I will be less exposed when 'telling the truth about my own experiences as a body', if, in a fitting way, I write about the unbecoming passions of another 'oppressed self', who failed to be the 'the self-sacrificing, self-denying ideal ... whose purpose in life was to serve men'.

In my book, Marie's insensitive treatment at the hands of the almighty law-makers deserves to be honoured with a passion. By dying for her shame, this long-ago mother of mine lives on in my heart as a saviour of the Beautiful Princess, petalled as a rose by the Sands of the Sahara and so desired by *The Thief of Bagdad* that he takes on all rivals and overcomes the Valley of Fire, the Vale of Monsters and the Cavern of the Enchanted Trees, before visiting the Old Man of the Midnight Sea and galloping on the Wingèd Horse to the end of the sixth moon, in order to have her for his own.

of Indian Slaves

May our prayers be answered, as were the prayers of Bhagiratha, descendant of the ruler of Ayodhya, King Sagar, an ancestor of Rama, of the solar race, whose horse, which he sent around the earth for the hundredth time, while performing the sacrifice of Aswamedha, was kidnapped, in an act of jealousy, by Indra the King of Gods and hid in the hermitage of Kapila Muni. When the sixty thousand sons of King Sagar came to the hermitage to look for his horse an enraged Kapila Muni, having been accused, falsely, of the horse's abduction, burnt the princes to ashes. One of King Sagar's grandchildren, hearing about the plight of his father and uncles, asked Kapila Muni for a solution to the problem and was advised that the waters of the Ganga would bring the dead princes back to life.

Bhagiratha continued in the effort of his forefather to bring the Ganga down to earth from heaven, but when his prayers were rewarded, the might of the river was too much for the earth to withstand. Fearing a catastrophe, Bhagiratha prayed to Shiva, who held out his matted hair to catch the river as she descended, after which Bhagiratha led her down from the Himalayas to the sea. But being unable to locate the ashes, he requested Ganga to follow her own course. In the region of Bengal, she divided herself into a hundred mouths and formed the Ganges delta. One of these streams washed over the ashes and offered salvation to the souls of the departed.

We pray, as those who prayed in the days of our ancestors, that Shiva will allow a new manifestation of his *Gangaadhara* to flow down from heaven and wash over the souls of the hundreds, who were taken from the sacred waters of the Ganges, by officers of the ships and officials of the Dutch East India Company returning to Holland (where slavery was forbidden) and sold, at high profit, at the Cape of Good Hope, to do domestic work for the settlers as well as the dirty and hard work on their farms.

We pray especially for the kidnapped children – some younger than ten, like Ari, taken while playing with other children on a Surat beach and sold from master to master. He was treated so harshly that he ran away and joined other fugitive slaves and lived on stolen food until he was caught in 1706 and confined in the Cape castle's dungeon with a Dutch political prisoner, Jacob van der Heiden. Because of the intercession of the Dutchman, Ari escaped being flogged, branded, pilloried under the gallows and sentenced to 25 years of hard labour in chains like Alexander,

from Bengal, who managed to escape again, but was re-captured and broken on the wheel after eight pieces of flesh were pulled out of him with red-hot tongs.

4 **Recitativo**

Gouverneur

Know ye that the *Heeren XVII*, to whom we are all indebted for our livelihoods in this remote region of the world, have seen fit to apply the civilised norms of their homeland, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, so that the wisdom of our forefathers (especially that of our compatriot Hugo Grotius, the eminent scholar of Delft, who by his learned interpretation of the Roman Laws, as taken from the *libri legales*, as based on the *Corpus iuris civilis* of Emperor Justinian, established the universal maxims that form the cornerstone of our new jurisprudence, the *Ius commune*) can spread to *De Kaap*, as the humble servants of the Company endeavour to establish and maintain law and order in their far-flung trading post, to the benefit of all who seek to prosper in this new Dutch colony.

As God has taught us when he summonsed Adam to account for his disobedience in the Garden of Eden, it is the right of the individual to be summonsed to a court of justice, for not even the Highest Judge can deliver a just sentence and expel Adam and Eve from Paradise unless the accused stand before him to answer for their sins. If God gives the devil his day in court so too must we. I therefore I entreat the fiscal, in accordance with the natural law of our people, to charge the convict standing before us in the dock, so that our duty can be rightfully discharged and the citizens of the Cape be assured that the full weight of the law will be brought to bear on those who seek to undermine the noble principles of a civilised people, as they endeavour to uphold and to vouchsafe justice for the benefit of all those now living and for the generations of the upright to follow.

Fiscal

Marie Jeanne Steenkamp from the farm, Sonskyn, in the District of Stellenbosch, you stand here, under oath, before the Court of Justice, accused of the cold-blooded murder of your husband and protector, Adriaan Wilhelm Steenkamp, of the same address, together with the slave, Salomon of Bengale, who having confessed, not only to the crime of murder, but to that of taking the lawful wife of a free burgher to be his concubine, for reasons of excess of lust and the love of gain, thereby committing the illegal crime of fornication and further, that by entering into the act

of carnal knowledge with the aforesaid wife, the slave Salomon of Bengale became the putative father of an out-of-wedlock child of mixed race, and was therefore, duly impaled after which, and so as to serve as a deterrent to all slaves who enjoy the protection of the Company, or of their free-burgher masters, and in addition, to be a warning that a civilised community will not tolerate a black savage bringing disrepute to the good name of our womenfolk, his head was chopped off and stuck on a pole on the main road leading out of Table Valley, together with that of his accomplice, Claas of Angola.

How do you plead?

Gouverneur

Nihil dicit. The defendant gives no answer.

5 **Chorus**

of Huguenots

We will answer for our sister, for it is rightful that she should be judged according to the laws that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai.

‘He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.’ So sayeth the Lord when he stood hidden in the cloud on Mount Sinai and spoke to his people on the third day after they had sanctified themselves, by washing their clothes.

Likewise he commanded,

‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’

This daughter of Eve, knowing full-well that it was woman’s disobedience to the will of God that brought about the loss of Paradise, has placed her soul in mortal danger by refusing to heed the blessed words that the Lord hath spoken, but choosing rather to lend her ear to the hiss of the serpent and give way to the temptations of the flesh and by so doing, she has failed to stand in her rightful and proper place by the side of her husband and their baptised child.

Heavenly Father protect us from those who have willingly turned from you, for it is the sinful followers of Satan who would have us all be led, in shame, beyond the locked gates onto the flaming lake of Lucifer’s fiery dominion; having fallen so far as to the dark depths of that dread place, there to be wracked forever, on the raging sea of Hell’s insatiable furnace.

Jesus went unto the mount of
Olives.

2 And early in the morning he
came again into the temple, and all
the people came unto him; and he
sat down, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees
brought unto him a woman taken
in adultery; and when they had set
her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this
woman was taken in adultery, in
the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law com-
manded us, that such should be
stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him,
that they might have to accuse him.
But Jesus stooped down, and with
his finger wrote on the ground, *as
though he heard them not.*

7 So when they continued asking
him, he lifted up himself, and said
unto them, He that is without sin
among you, let him first cast a stone
at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and
wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard it, being
convicted of their own conscience,
went out one by one, beginning at
the eldest, even unto the last: and
Jesus was left alone, and the woman

Standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

7 **Arioso**

Dominee

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

Satan seeks us out. Let us not be tempted by the guile of him, who would be foremost among the host of the fallen angels, for he, together with those outcasts driven from the realms of paradise by their own despicable desires, being trapped in outer darkness, is unable to return to that world of bliss and seeks to defeat his detested master through the weakness of his noblest creation, man, to whom, in his wisdom Our Saviour has granted the gift of free will. The Devil knows that if evil is to triumph he must needs approach the woman, for she is the weaker sex, easily persuaded on the right of an action that has been forbidden

8 **Aria**

Anna

Death is certain, its hour is uncertain, for we are all sinners.

Madeleine

As it is written in St John, Chapter 3, verse 16:

For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in him
should not perish, but have ever-
lasting life

9 **Chorus**

of Naturalists

Death becomes a way of explaining life as botanists discovered long before *Gouverneur* van der Stel established the Company's outer garden of Rustenburg in Rondebosje. Without light a plant cannot make nectar, without nectar it cannot entice a pollinator, without a pollinator no seeds can be produced for life to continue. Although there was plenty of light in the hostile and remote region of the Cape, a foreign species' chances of survival in the battle of nature were slim, for they were ill adapted to growing in the yellow or white clay, or on the treeless, sandstone slopes, stripped of their top soil by the winter rain and a merciless wind blowing in from a raw and wild sea for two-thirds of the year.

According to J. Leniger's *Hortus Malabaricus, a contribution to the history of Dutch Colonial Botany*, Simon van der Stel enclosed his forty acre garden with a brick wall surrounded by a hedge of alder and bay trees and Cape shrubs in order to ensure the survival of the European apple, pear, cherry, peach, orange, lemon and pomegranate trees and all sorts of green, vegetables and roots. He employed fifty-four male and female slaves under the direction of a Dutch head gardener to till the fertile black soil washed into the valley from Table Mountain, conduct water all over the garden by means of a system of ditches and dams coming from a brook throughout the dry summer, and sweep and weed and clear the paths, walkways and canals running between the orchards and the fields. Both slaves and white men were housed within the walls in a solid, square, brick building which had a drying room for storing seeds, roots and fruits.

10 **Aria**

Madeleine

Have mercy on my sister, for she has suffered enough at the hands of men, even before she came to this land. She believed that throughout the investigation the *Landdrost* and the four members of his *Heemraad* and the *veldkornet* of the *wyk* connived with the local farmers and the members of the church council. They were the people Marie trusted to come to her aid, but they let her down badly. She

couldn't understand how Christian hearts could strike and burn a man until he fell at their feet and told them what they wished to hear, for the truth of it was that Salomon was no savage, but a gentle man who would never lay a finger in anger on anyone.

11 **Recitativo**

Fiscal

This court, while vouchsafing the thoroughness with which its offices carry out their manifold duties, nevertheless gives credence to our *suster*'s desire for justice, by answering her false accusations as a father would. For is it not the duty of a loving parent to protect the sympathetic heart of his child when she is too readily led astray, as she is now, when the man she wishes to defend, Salomon of Bengale, is the confessed betrayer of her *suster*'s virtue?

However of greater bearing on this case is the betrayal of the master, the deceased Adriaan Steenkamp, the one who provided his slave with food and shelter and endeavoured to convert his heathen soul. Such a murderous felon as this deserved to be punished, thereby rooting evil from our midst, and keeping our innocent woman from being led astray by the serpent.

Tulp

Where is the snake that can bite the *baas*?

Gouverneur

Who is this woman?

12 **Aria**

Tulp

Excuse me for interrupting your Excellency. I am the girl taken from her Muslim parents and named for the flower of my *kaptein*, who brought his Tulp over the mighty ocean to give her as a gift to his sister Claertje. When my *meester* left me in the rain and cold of winter, so as to return to his ship and never to return, my new *miesies* told me that I now belonged to the *baas* and that I must never fail to obey him.

This I did, being more fearful of the *baas*'s sjambok and hot tongs than of his *piel*, which stayed up after the *miesies* and the children were asleep in their *kooi*. He told

me to get off my blanket that I laid near the ash that was still warm in the kitchen and go with him to where his two slaves slept. Sometimes when the *brandewijn* was confusing him my *Baas* forgot to chase David and Petrus out of the *buitekamer*. In my first season of such treatment my *kaptein*'s child was growing inside me. There was no place for my *baas*'s seed, it dried together with the seed from the grass covering the floor on which we rolled, but when my *Pêrel* was harvested, my ground was ready to be furrowed and sowed again and in its time another child was born. This little one was paler than my *Pêrel*, for his father, my *baas*, had come to the *Kaap* from a country where the sun was too far away to lay its warmth on sleeping eyes and so the lashes he gave to his child were white when, after four weeks of life, my baby closed them for the last time as the *henakandaya* bit him and his soul rose up to *Barzakh*.

13 **Recitativo**

Huguenots

Heaven protect us. This is a Christian court.

Gouverneur

Indeed it is, but in the interests of impartiality let the witness, although not called upon to do so, finish what she has to say.

Tulp

I speak for my new *Miesies* Anna. She is the mother of *Baas* Pieter. He is the living brother of my dead *kaptein* and the living husband of *Miesies* Madeleine and she is the *suster* of the accused *Miesies* Marie who stands before the court. My *Miesies* Anna is good to me and my five-year-old child *Pêrel*, the only living daughter of my dead *kaptein*.

Fiscal

Get to the point woman.

Tulp

Yes, my *Baas*. Sorry, my *Baas*. *Miesies* Anna would never tear flesh from my bottom like her daughter *Miesies* Claertje and her now-divorced husband *Baas* Gustav, whose head does not hang from a pole on the highway although he has

through the open lips of the lower petals and offload her stickiness while plunging deeper inside like a thief to lift a sack of gold from the silky throat of her hostess before withdrawing and moving onto the next bloom of the orchid's bunched flower-head and continue feeding until enough nectar has been eaten to move her mass of maggots?

After my first child died Salomon showed me all these things and many others

because he said that it didn't matter which insect takes pollen to and from the different plants, the important thing is that the lowly insect did so for love for only then can it move up the silver tree of Karma and by the next season be reborn as a mountain-pride butterfly that lights up the chandelier lily by rubbing the grains of gold sticking to his

wings onto the silky threads of her candles while his feelers search for the perfumed sachets hidden inside the scarlet funnel of her bright petals and if the butterfly finds what he is looking for, his soul will soon be cracking open the shell of the egg that his sun-bird mother has kept warm in a thicket of *fynbosch* before flying with her along the stream to nibble at a fringe of sweetness hanging from the open tube of a red-hot poker so that in a few years he can move higher into the sky and become an eagle.

Salomon said that everything was as it should be in our valley, for if the land were not covered in a rich carpet of giving and taking it would be barren and no *wildedagga* would offer us her leaves and stems and flowers to boil and rub onto the horsefly's bites or onto the eczema of my little girl to stop the itch and there would be no wand-like branches of the confetti bush to wave in the wind and drive away the mosquitoes with the sweet smell of their needles or any fleshy leaves of the *varkoor*: pigs-ear to cut open and cover a wart so that it can soften enough to be removed in under a week or be warmed into a leaf pulp and used as a poultice for boils or inflammation and we would find no leaves of the wild geranium to pick and boil into a tea that kills the worms that give us stomach ache and brings comfort to the lower back or takes away the burn of a piss or the ache when a

woman bleeds.

15 **Recitativo**

Reformed Church Dominee

Nature does not reveal God, only His word can save us from our woes.

For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth unless we keep our covenant with Him.

Gouverneur

Your Salomon seems wise enough to be worthy of the fine name that his Christian owner gave to him. I believe that it would be in the interest of the court to know more about this noble savage.

Chorus

of Huguenots

Indeed we must know what other sweetness this wily serpent whispered into the unsuspecting ear of our poor *suster* in order that he might lead her from the paths of righteousness, for in doing what is required of us we protect the innocent from the guile of the tempter.

16 **Aria**

Maria

No guile, only love, my *susters*, for Salomon knew that the best remedy for heartache is to look for the ones you long to be with, in the silky flow of a flower or in the winged touch of fingers for this is how he brought light back to his day many years after he had been grabbed by two sailors and thrown into the hold of their ship, when he went from the place where his father was sitting with the eagles that they had carried across one of the slow-flowing arms of the Ougli River as she followed her own course to bring life-giving water to his region of Bengale after dividing from the mighty Ganga descending from the Himalayas on the matted hair of Shiva.

Salomon knew little about the plants that grew down our mountain slopes to the banks of our stream until four years after he had been stolen from Ougli when the free slave Jonas bought him as he stood on the slave table in the *Baai* and was then loaded into the cart that his new master's two donkeys pulled through the whips and spears of reeds and bushes on the sandy flats and the twisted trunks of hard

leaves on the stony slopes all the way past Stellenbosch to the small farm that Jonas had been granted at the top of the valley.

Jonas didn't beat Salomon like his previous masters in Batavia and Ceylon did because his mother had been a slave in Bengale who came with her owners to the Cape in 1661 and when they left eight years later they made her and her three bastard children free slaves and when Jonas was fourteen he went to work in the *Gouverneur's* walled garden in Rondebosje and although he was free he lived with the slaves in their garden house and when he was twenty-two the *Gouverneur* granted him a farm along the *Eerste Rivier* in the District of Stellenbosch and he took his concubine with him and until she died a few months before he bought Salomon they grew vegetables to sell in Table Valley because his land was too narrow and shadowed for wheat and vines.

Jonas had no children and Salomon was like his son and he taught him all that he had learnt about the fynbosch in *Gouverneur* van der Stel's garden and when Jonas died my deceased husband entered into a contract with the authorities to buy his farm, for having been married for a year and our first child being safely baptised, Adriaan wanted his own land believing that his knowledge of working the fields and caring for livestock would soon be as good as his knowledge of using a weapon which was the reason why the VOC employed him as a soldier and put him on a ship to protect their *Colonie* at the Kaap, but my husband did not like the roughness of his life in the Kasteel at *Tafelvallei* or sharing the drunkenness of the men and their *hoere* at the Slave Lodge and so he asked to become a free burgher and came to Stellenbosch and worked as a *knecht* on my father's farm.

17 **Recitativo**

Claertje

And a good man he was too, coming to my rescue when my husband Gustav beat me and the children.

Anna

God brought joy to our hearts when the eldest daughter of our good neighbour Guillame married this God-fearing young man and also, two years later, when Marie's younger suster Madeleine married my eldest son Pieter and he became part of our family.

Marie

Sadly my first child was not long for this world although he was still alive eighteen months after we had moved into the two-roomed house of our new farm when his sister was born, but little Fransie's lungs were not as strong as baby Sarie's were when the first storm of autumn broke the glass in the window of our sleeping room as the wind scattered the dead branches of the bushes that were burnt in the fire that flamed through our valley a week earlier killing the last of the vegetables that we had kept alive through the dry summer by leading water from the river through canals to the leafy beds.

Adriaan wanted our son to be buried in the churchyard in Stellenbosch for it was the custom of his family to do so as his father and all his fathers before him had been laid to rest in hallowed ground, but I saw no reason for our beloved firstborn to lie so far from us and I persuaded my husband that because our son was baptised his soul would rise to heaven no matter where he was buried and that Salomon and our other slave Claas should dig his grave on the far side of the rise to the east of the house so that first rays of light entering our valley would shine for him.

It was impossible to make a six-foot hole in the sandstone ridge so the little coffin that Adriaan nailed together from his store of planks was only covered by two feet of rock chips and Salomon carefully spread the rich soil that he had put to one side over the top and said that soon the stems of white, yellow, pink and purple flowers would rise from my Fransie's grave because the smoke of the fire had softened the hard skins of their seeds and now the winter rain would be able to water their rolled-

up roots and while I waited for their colour I might find some comfort in the beauty of the May-flowering *herfspympie*, if we could find one that had escaped being burnt and so I went further into the valley and higher up the mountain slopes with Salomon leaving Claas to round up the two milk cows and see to the horse and pigs and the hens and geese and Adriaan to find consolation for the loss of his son in a bottle of brandy and the scarred arms of the sprouting orphan that our slave Claas had

brought from Tafelvallei to care for little Sarie as we worked with the vegetables down by the river and be his bare-headed concubine after taking off her *kalotje* in the *buitekamer* at night.

Eventually Salomon and I found a single gladiolus plant and its leaves were wrapped around its stem as if its body needed to be enfolded by arms to protect it from the loneliness of being alive when everything around it was dead and Salomon sat beside me as I cried and afterwards he lifted my hand so that I could feel the silk of the flower and I trembled as we moved past the mauve lips to follow the gold and purple markings. Whenever it was possible I went up the slopes with Salomon that winter and the following spring and summer for there was much to marvel at because the fire had made room for new growth and the rain and the returning warmth allowed the delicate bulbs and annuals to bloom before the shrubs blossomed and the Cape grass clumped and the larger Protea bushes sprouted from buds buried in the corky bark of their trunks and as the interweave of colour increased Salomon pointed out the shapes of the flowers that were like stars cups bells and trumpets and he also let me name the shapes of the leaves that looked like straps eyes spoons and moons and we looked at the pollen glands at the tip of the male tube and the pollen sac at the bottom of the female tube and Salomon said that if we looked as closely at ourselves as we did at the plants we would find that we flowered as beautifully as the fynbosch for each of us is both of us but our shyness robs us of knowing this richness and so with wings as wide as outstretched arms and fingers feathering each other our Bengale eagle lifts like the *wit* lily from the green of a soft bed of leaves to flower the sky with a petal of white satin as we spiral out and in and round and up to our peak before flowing back out and round and down to curl within our coil of silk as Salomon damasks my tube with his yellow pollen and our seed is golden-brown and sleeps in the *slaapkamer* of the farm house while the orphan takes care of him and her blue-eyed child who plays on the floor with her half-sister Sarie and the rest of us see to the livestock and vegetables.

19 Recitativo

Guillame

The shame of it, for I believed that my five-year-old Marie was safe from temptation when Our Beloved Father blessed me and allowed me to rescue my two

daughters from the perilous lust of the dragoons that killed their mother in the ice of February in the year of our Lord 1694. But what will become of her now? Our Saviour does not look favourably on the bastard child of a Christian mother. He will not allow a wayward daughter to escape for a second time, but rather, she must face the wrath of her creator.

Chorus of Huguenots

She is become as a Judas to her people.

Dominee

It is written according to The Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Galatians chap 6: verse 7 and 8

Be not deceived; God is not
mocked: for whatsoever a man sow-
eth, that shall he also reap.

Fiscal

Mater semper certa est. The mother of the child is always known. Woman, know
yea not that it is a sin for white woman to love a slave?

Claertje

And yet it is not a sin for a white man to love a slave?

Chorus of Huguenots

A good lesson to be learnt by all is that you can't always have what you want in life.

Tulp

Excuse me for interrupting your Honour for this is the same wisdom that my Amma in Colombo tried to give my Tata, but he took her hand at low tide and led her down the steps onto the wet sand and his fingers felt for the handful hiding in the seaweed that covered a shelf of rock below the castle wall and when Tata found his oyster, he chipped it off and gave it to Amma and their eyes laughed as she sucked the satin from the rainbow of its opened shell.

20

Aria

Marie

I didn't have much time to think when Adriaan found us fastening the buttons of our clothes after we had washed ourselves in the river. For my future Karma to remain as clear as the mountain stream that flows through our valley and keep flowering as the length of silk hand-painted by Salomon's mother the killing of Adriaan needed to be an act of love and as I bent down to pick up the stone smoothed by the moving water I allowed good thoughts to flow over my anger and when it struck Adriaan's head as he aimed his rifle at Salomon I became the leaf of the *doublom* that slowly bends so that the insect stuck in the sticky fluid on my surface falls to my hairy centre and is suffocated and dissolved and Adriaan would feed me as he became my flesh and I would love him as I did when he helped my father plough his field and sow his wheat and so the furrow made by my murderous act would ripen with the corn of good Karma and me and my Salomon would rise up the silver tree and return to be together in our next life as our golden eagle, but Adriaan staggered up and aimed his rifle at me and Salomon threw the second stone and I threw the third and both of us did so in terror and anger but Adriaan would not die and Claas come to finish him off because we could not, but his convulsing body needed peace and now we will all have to go back to the beginning of our lives and there is no hope that we will find each other when we are as lowly as the serpent, or ever again after that and my two little children will have no mother to love them in this world or in the one to come.

21

Aria

Anna

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I
Shall be clean...

22

Chorus

of naturalists

J. Leniger writes in his *Hortus Malabaricus, a contribution to the history of Dutch Colonial Botany* that when Hendrik van Rheede tot Drakenstein arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1685 he inspected the castle taking measures to improve fortifications, amend the administration, regulate the working conditions of the Companie's employees (he pitied in particular the slaves and serfs and advocated a

Christian treatment of the poor wretches and tried to give them greater legal security) and the supervision of the hospital, gave directions for the extension of trade in wines and the building of new churches and a special school and, with a view to improving relations with the natives, he advised the colonists to study the life and thought of the Hottentots and learn their language, because as 'regards knowledge, brains, fairness and reasonableness in so far as required in their housekeeping and civil manner of government, they are not second to any other peoples'.

During his fifteen-day excursion with Simon van der Stel in the hinterland of the Cape Colony Van Rheeде concerned himself with agriculture, forestry, horticulture, stock-breeding, hunting and mining and was made aware of the acute shortage of pasture lands and cornfields and that according to the colonisation policy of the *Heeren XVII* this territory belonged to the Company rather than to the pastoralist Hottentots and hunter-gatherer Khoikhoi who, although granted grazing and hunting rights, had never been landowners and, as the colonist moved further inland, the Khoikhoi chose to hunt for game further north along the barren coast, or in a more easterly direction over the mountain ranges, while many of the Hottentots erected their round reed huts on the farms allocated to the free burgers and in exchange for being given some grazing rights for their cattle and food for their families the men and women laboured for the farmers and bore their bastard children.

Natura non facit saltus. Nature makes no leaps like these free burgers did when they cleared the fynbosch with their man-made fires. The natural vegetation of the region, sustained by divergence, adaptation and specialisation over the millennia, could not compete with the domesticated European varieties thriving in their cultivated fields.

23 Choral

of Hottentots

The people of this place have no spears that can kill the smallpox that comes to us from the ships in the *Kaap*. Our children die when they are burnt by the sores we do not know. We know the sores of our land. We can fight them like the plants of our land fight the fire. But when the fire eats before the food is cooked our people are like the flower that the white farmer in Franschhoek calls the bride's bloom. It is a flower that is ripe for a husband. It is a flower that has walked away from the trees on the mountains of our valley. Every year it is burnt by the fires of the farmer when

we clear the land for the vines and the wheat. The *suikerbosch* has too few seasons to grow tall and give the sweet food to the *gogga*. The buds cannot open to give the seed to the ground. Now when we walk in the *kloof* with our cows we do not see the flower that is the colour the sun gives to the sky when he bends his head to go into his hut to sleep. When our ancestors hold out their hands to the flames that warm the many huts of the mighty chief who is the spirit of the night we dance around our flame to ask for the smallpox that burns our children to be taken back to the ships and for the flower that shines in our trees to be given back to us. We stamp our feet and sing hottentot hottentot hottentot so that our ancestors can hear our song and stamp on the fires that burn the sunlight from our land.

24 Chorus

of Huguenots

14 And the Lord God said unto the
serpent, Because thou hast done
this, thou art cursed...

15 And I will put enmity between
thee and the woman and between
thy seed and her seed...

16 Unto the woman he said, I will
greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy
conception; in sorrow thy shalt
bring forth children; and thy desire
shall be to thy husband, and he shall
rule over thee

25 Recitativo

Gouverneur

Minatur innocentibus qui parcit noncentibus. He threatens the innocent who spares the guilty. Marie Jeanne Steenkamp having no regard as to the will of your Heavenly Father, or the laws of a Christian land, or indeed, the love of a God-

fearing people and having allowed the evil of your desires to deprive a dutiful and upright husband, whom God rightly ordained to be your master, of the pleasures of his earthly life, I have no choice, but to find you guilty as charged with the murder of your aforesaid husband Adriaan Wilhelm Steenkamp. Do you have anything to say in mitigation before this court sentences you?

Anna

It is the custom of our people to forgive, for who is above sin?

Chorus of Huguenots

Sinners have no rights. They are not fit to live.

Gouverneur

Marie Jeanne Steenkamp you are to be taken from this court and tied to the convict's pole in the courtyard of this castle and strangled until you are dead.

Dominee

Marie, repent you of your sins and ask our loving father for his mercy as you say these verses from Psalm 88 after me...

Chorus of Huguenots

Rejoice for Christ has suffered death on the cross to save our souls.

Madeleine

May the angels take you to heaven to be with our mother.

Tulp

May you be in Barzakh with your loved ones.

Dominee

Forgive me Lord, for I have failed in my duty of care.

Fiscal

A Christian head will not hang from a pole like those of barbarous slaves.

Chorus of Huguenots

O beloved Saviour, be with her in her hour of need.

Marie the accused

Fly with me Salomon, my falconer

Madeleine

Suster, your bastard son will be baptised Salomon. He and his suster *Sarie* will be our new son and daughter.

Anna

Tulp and Pêrel are free to live with them, for my time has come to die.

Claertje

Hemel togje my liewe moedertje: heavens above my loving mother how will I live without you?

Anna

My child, you are strong. Since you have divorced your cruel husband you farm as well as any man and take good care of your brood of eight children.

Marie the accused

Smile on me Mama as you did when the candle of the star held by the new moon shone on the ice of the ditches that led Papa, Madeleine and me to safety through the freezing night of your murder.

Dominee

Be at peace, Daughter of Eve, for your seed gave birth to our Redeemer.

Guillame

My child, may you lie safely in the bosom of Abraham until that blessed day when, once again, we will all be together with the angles in Heaven.

Beloved Saviour, the grave that is yours and holds no further suffering, for me opens Heaven and closes Hell.

27 **Choral**

of Indian slaves

All that is true, all that is good and all that is beautiful is God.

Granny Kay, I need to tread very carefully now because this Passion has affected me more than I thought it would and, consequently, at this point of the proceedings, I am discouraged from being flippant, as was my intention, by saying that for the sake of peace it was probably better to clip the wings of the final two protagonists and not tempt fate any further by giving the last word to the Naturalists.

‘To a large extent, my belief that there is nothing good or beautiful about Marie’s suffering still holds true and that the horror of her trial and execution cannot simply be expunged by the hope of salvation. There is no easy way of coping with the pain of loss. In *The meaning of Things*, A.C. Greyling ends his chapter on sorrow by saying, ‘We never quite get over the sorrow caused by losing those most loved; we only learn to live with it, and to live despite it; which – and there is no paradox here – makes living a richer thing. That is sorrow’s gift, though we never covet it’.

It must have been especially hard for you to endure all your grief Granny Kay. When, by 1945, rheumatoid arthritis had disfigured your body and left you in constant pain and unable to play your piano, you still had another fourteen years to get through before aspirin and Anadin tablets destroyed your kidneys and blood.

‘You died when I was thirteen. I loved the corn-flower-blue paisley bed-jacket that you put on once you had managed to pull yourself up into a sitting position in bed, claiming that it matched the twinkle in your eye. I knew that it helped to keep your aching body warm, but I knew little of the ache it failed to ease, for you made light of that to us kids and you took no tablets to take away your longing to stroke your Willy’s hand (he died of a heart attack in 1937), or the ivory keys of your piano.

I thought that a good way of ending Marie’s Passion would be for you, Marie and me to sit on the stoep in Komga (the village that you moved to when your beloved Willy went bankrupt in 1931) and for you to play your piano as the sun sets. It is a year after your Willy’s funeral and you are starting to pack up your belongings for your move to Johannesburg with your two teenage sons. Although it is highly prized, you are not one who is known for her tidiness, and, under the present circumstances, you might

have to rummage around amongst all the clutter to find the sheet music that your friend Berta gave you when you left Burgersdorp, so that we can hear your rendition of Brahms' Six Pieces for Piano.

To put Marie in the picture, opus 118 was completed when Brahms was sixty and, of the twenty pieces of piano music that he divided into sections, it was the only one he called a Piano Romance for it holds some of the most beloved items that the composer wrote for the solo instrument and, not unexpectedly, he dedicated it to Clara Schumann, whom he had loved ever since the eighteen-fifties for encouraging and nurturing his desire to compose when she and her husband had taken him into their home to share a passion for music.

Granny Kay, in the first piece Intermezzo in A minor, *Allegro non assai, ma molto appassionato* (not too quick and lively, but with much passion) you can take us back to those heady days in Burgersdorp when you and Olive and Berta were the leading lights of the musical scene. After a couple of minutes you introduce us to an altogether different passion. For the next 5 minutes and 19 seconds of the Intermezzo in A major, *Andante teneramente*, in walking pace tenderly, we will delight in the beauty and emotion of your interpretation of the three-note cell motif that opens up compositional space as it ends up an octave, in a small climax of top A, and then slyly puts the tune into the base before inverting it back into the treble.

The flow of the melody will transport us to the music room that opened into Berta's garden where desire first bloomed as the two of you sat on the piano stool rehearsing for the village concert. After nursing your parents for more than a year and both having died within a few months of each other, Berta suggested that she and you play some of Brahms's piano waltzes, for four hands, in memory of them, for these fine pieces might comfort you, as you told her they had, ten years previously, when, accompanied by your music teacher, you played them at your school-leaving concert, shortly after your brother had died of rheumatic fever.

You never knew much about Berta, Granny Kay, did you? You and Olive, both in your late twenties, with husbands to satisfy and a brood of kids to rear, are the best of friends, but Berta keeps to herself. She studied the clarinet in the Cape and was appointed head of music at the high school fifteen years ago where she teaches the piano and the violin. It is rumoured that her fiancé was shot in the Boer War and that she came to the dorp to be near his grave, but nothing can be verified, as she doesn't play tennis at the club on Saturday, or attend services at either the Dutch Reformed

Church, or the *Herformde Kerk*, or at the Anglican chapel where you are the accompanist for the hymns. She prefers to garden instead.

Fortunately you were able to keep the lid on things in public by busying yourself in family and community matters, or in private on your keyboard, but when you were in Berta's presence you fumbled for composure and clarity, so don't think you can fool us, Granny Kay, we sense a tremble, as you drop down a whole tone and venture with Brahms into his blustery Ballard in G minor, *Allegro energico*, quick, lively and energetic.

Not wishing to linger in the discomfort of this disclosure and in melting accompaniment to the tonal confusion, you drop down another whole tone to the Intermezzo in F minor, *Allegretto un poco agitato*, fairly lively and fast and a bit agitated. With rising 4th and falling 7th you reveal the many mirrors and shadows that haunted Brahms, showing his stormy side as you cross hands back and forth, over and over, letting go of your grip as the conscious right hand reaches down further and further into the unconscious left hand.

And so, Granny Kay, we move on to the penultimate piece, the Romance in F Major, *Andante*, walking pace. Recalling the last concert in Burgersdorp, when the three of you played the Clarinet Trio Op. 114 in A Minor and Berta was happy for your piano to pour out feelings to her clarinet that you had no right to express (Brahms had intended his passionate dialogue for Olive's cello).

In the final piece, Intermezzo in E flat minor, *Andante, largo e mesto*, walking pace slow and stately and sadly we think on loss and longing as you play the three-note cell very starkly. Brahms was reaching into the depths of his soul, but he cannot find consolation. He has progressed tonally from the all-white key of C to end in E flat minor, the chord of black notes.

And now there is silence and we must look to the darkened sky and follow the candle held by the smiling new moon back into the west. Marie is to go all the way to the Cape so that she can lie beside her dead child beneath the flowers that will shine as they rise from the topsoil that Salomon sprinkled over the grave to catch the first rays of the sun, while you and I, Granny Kay, will stop off at the far eastern edge of the Kingdom of Fynbos to see what your great-great grandmother is writing in her Vellum Diary when Brahms is a young boy.

Beginning of the English Strand of South Africa's White Tribe

Act Three

The Song of Songs

Vellum Diaries: Retrospective 1838

Sept 1838 Desiring the best of Blessings, an incessant Serenity of Mind, I read the Psalms with Samson in my last months. I know that I must put aside my unruly passions if I am to regain my Trust in the Manifold Goodness of the Lord and allow myself the Hope that in His Great Mercy He will forgive my sinful Ways and bring me to Life Eternal.

Samson solaces me in my Affliction by making me Comfortable in the Spring Sunshine that sparkles on the Shrubs and Trees we plant'd after our Family mov'd to this spacious Graham's Town Home three Years ago. In the Neatness and Beauty of the Garden he makes a Bed for me and to increase my Cheerfulness he plays his Gourd. I can still see the delight on our dear depart'd Eliza's seven-year-old Face when, on the Slopes of Table Mountain, Samson explain'd that the strange Sound his native Instrument made was not 'some unearthly Noise' – my eldest boy Guybon had said this somewhat contemptuously, believing the Harmonies that he played on his European Violin to be Superior. Acknowledging the Pride of a Boy, Samson replied that in contrast to Guybon's music, his was simple, no more than the Voice of the Earth as she chatt'd with him about the Happy and Sad Events of Life.

I need comforting; my sore Stomach and slower Steps speak as knowingly as the Diagnosis of Dr John, my excellent Husband, that my Time is near, but in addition to that, I am grieving because Samson, my Support for fourteen Years, which have brought their usual Mixture of Cares and Troubles, is leaving me.

Samson will soon be returning to Genadendal (Vale of Mercy) to bring the Blessing of his Music, its Peace and Harmony, to his People. He was christened at this Moravian Mission Station. It was where he had always liv'd until, needing respite from the Heartache recently suffered, he accompanied us to Cape Town in 1823, when we stopp'd over in this Christian Khoekhoe Community. John, my husband, was greatly interested in the Achievements of the Brethren in the Cape Colony; eight Years previously, his Father had been buried in the Moravian Chapel in Oakham in Leicestershire.

March 31 1838. 'I thought you were my friend.'

'You know I am Samson.'

'I want to believe it, but I can't.'

‘Why?’

‘I thought you were different; that you understood.’

‘But I do.’

‘No you don’t. You are like all the other White People. You don’t really believe that a Bastard like me can ever be as Good as you are.’

How painful were his Confidences! Even more so if they had Merit for being the Truth!

‘I must return to my People.’

Forlorn, indeed, was I when he confid’d this to me, but my Spirits were somewhat raised when I consider’d that the Service he could render to Benefit the Disadvantaged at the Mission Village would be far more Useful than what he could accomplish in Graham’s Town. I was not long for this World and the younger Children were well-settl’d at School and believ’d that they were beyond the Reach of what we could teach them.

Fortuitously, and as the result of John’s continuing Contribution to the Moravian Missionary Work in the Cape, it was brought to our Notice that a Teacher’s Training College had just open’d in Genadendal. On further Enquiry as to the Nature of this most Apposite of Institutions we were inform’d that the guiding Principles of the College Curriculum would Mirror those develop’d for Cape Secondary Schools by Sir John Herschel, who believ’d in raising the Standard of Education for all in the Colony. ‘The finest Principles – the correctest Knowledge – the soundest Maxims and the most elevating Associations are not too good for the Humbles’.

Samson’s excellent Diary and his powerful Horn and Flute playing were ample Evidence of his Ability to teach English and Music. It was my sincere Conviction that after some Training he would find Happiness advancing the Understanding and Capability of his Pupils, thereby contributing to the Welfare of his Community. I would write and recommend him to my Friend, one of the two English Sisters at Genadendal, who, with Courage and Love, had stood beside Samson in his time of Anguish, Loss and Humiliation, fifteen years ago.

Samson’s Passions were evidently rous’d, his Anger excit’d by an inadvertent Remark that I had made the previous Evening at Emily’s twentieth Birthday Party. The Bitterness he felt at the Condescension of the Colonists was less painful to him now. A People with little Hope of Furtherance learn to endure the daily Insult of being class’d, at best, as reformed Heathens and, at worst, as filthy Layabouts and no-good Drunks. But Samson’s Expectations of me were different. I was the Friend he could Trust; the Confidante to whom

he could lay bare the Heartache of his Past; explain why, at his Christening, his Khoekhoe Grandmother had ask'd that he be given his Old Testament Name.

Emily, our second Daughter (She was the third before her older Sister Eliza was received into Heaven five Years ago) and George, the young Man with whom she has an Understanding, gives us Music. I can see Emily standing beside the Fortepiano in the long-room delighting our Guests with one of Haydn's English Canzonettas set to the Words of Shakespeare, 'She never told her Love'. Then George changes places with her so that she can accompany him as he addresses her Earnestness with a playful Reply, 'Why asks my Fair One if I love; Why, why?' before reassuring her that 'Eyes so piercing bright' have no need to doubt.

'Bravo, to you both!' And after my Niece Ann adds her heart-felt Congratulations to John's words, amidst the general Applause, her father, my brother, known affectionately as Captain Tom to family and friends, contributes his Appreciation of how well Emily displayed those Habits of Reserve and Modesty, which constitute the Female Character.

'I pay homage to her as I would to your Elizabeth,' my brother-in-law says.

'Certainly a watchful Mother; Emily is a credit to you, my dear John.'

'On a Day such as this, all your Sacrifices must seem worth the while,' a second Matron from the Parish contributes.

'Indeed, it would be folly for those who find themselves isolated in this hostile District to underestimate the Advantages of a liberal Education,' Ann adds.

'Without doubt, it is exceeding Beneficial to be in receipt of Privilege and Virtue, such as can happily be claimed by Emily and her Brothers and Sisters as a result of the Endeavours of their Parents,' the Vicar is inspired to say.

'And by the Grace of God.'

And by my Discretion! But I do not venture to say this. The Delights of Jane Austen were long since revealed to us by our Bookseller in Cape Town. However the name of Mary Wollstonecraft was not amongst the Female Authors we delighted in reading to each other as I endeavoured to shape my Daughters Notions of Propriety. Although the Earnestness of Wollstonecraft's Tone was convincing of her Sincerity, as she urged both Gentlemen and Ladies to find Betterment in Knowledge and in the Power of the Imagination, I did not believe that the free and bold Expression of Feeling exhibited by her Heroines were those Qualities of Discernment and Deference sought by John for his Daughters to emulate. It became necessary for me to hide these exciting Tracts and, in the privacy of my Bed Chamber, thrill to the Courage of a Lady Author unafraid, whatever the Consequences, to seek for the Truth hidden in Delights, alas, Forbidden.

‘Does not your eldest Son return within the Year from his Studies in Dublin and Heidelberg?’

‘You must be applauded, for he is a fine, upright young Man whose skills as a Surgeon when added to those of his Father’s must benefit our Community.’

‘But are you aware that Guybon’s first-class Degree does not limit him to a superior Understanding of Medical Conditions and their Treatments; he is also a first-rate Botanist, Geologist and Musician.’

‘We have to thank Samson for some of this Knowledge,’ I contribute.

‘Are we to understand that your Servant enjoys the Status of Teacher rather than House Boy?’ Robert, the controversial Editor of the Grahams Town Journal, goads me.

‘He is my companion.’

John supports me, ‘Elizabeth never thought of him as anything else. She even had the Liberal Society of Cape Town confused by her so-called modern Attitudes to Slave and Coloured Servants.’

‘Lucky Boy to enjoy such Freedoms considering that he is no more than a poorly-educated coloured Boy picked up in Genadendal fifteen Years ago.’

‘Lucky Boy, indeed, to believed that Man is like a Tree that must be pruned!’ I retort; Robert is a fine one to talk. Since becoming Editor of our Local Newspaper he forgets that he was once a simple Printer. He believes that his present Standing in Society allows him to express openly the View that ‘the British Race was selected by God Himself to colonize Kaffraria’.

My Ire, being excited by his cruel Conceit, encourages a rash Continuation: ‘Lucky Boy, for the second Time, to allow the Brothers to prune their Philistine of his Damon! But not thrice lucky when these Turn-coats denied their Samson the Blessing of his Fruit, the Love of his Magdalena.’ If I were not the Hostess guiding my Daughter into her twenty-first year I might have said more (I should have said less, for this public acknowledgement of his vulnerability was the Betrayal Samson felt so keenly; I had unwrapped the white-fingered Fist of Shame that he hid in the safe-keeping of my Heart).

The vicar comes to the Rescue. ‘Returning to the Virtues of your Son; is he not also a first-rate Negotiator?’

‘And Conciliator,’ John’s Sister directs us from our troubled Relations with the Colonial Natives back to the plight of Piet Retief and his *Voortrekker* Followers. This sorry Affair had preoccupied our threatened Community ever since their Massacre by the Zulus at the Kraal of Chief Dingaan was first rumoured at the beginning of the Month and finally confirmed in the Journal a Week ago.

Shortly before going abroad, Guybon had accompanied his Father when John went by Horse to Piet Retief's Farm near the new Settlement of Colesberg in order to discuss, with Temper and Impartiality, his Reasons for quitting the Cape Colony and to dissuade him from taking the immoderate Step of crossing the Orange River into uncharted and hostile Territory.

After hotly debating the Folly of this move John tries to cool the Ardour of his Friends. He has a soft Spot for Retief and his Family, for they had been his Patients and he knew their Suffering. 'You chaps should re-read Retief's Manifesto. His People's antipathy to your Englishness, to what you perceive as Right and Acceptable in the Political Life of the Cape Colony, is not as strong as you think it to be. The Afrikaner's Beliefs are as Noble as Yours. The hardy Farmers want nothing more than their Due for their emerging Nation.'

But few of our Guests are convinced by what my Husband has to say. Those living in isolation on Farms and growing less articulate and in need of support, be it from whatever source, find his Reasoning, although sound, to be a touch unrealistic, while the Town-folk, more accustomed to speaking from 'Bitter Experience', are inclined to refute the little Doctor's fiery Opinions on the true State of Affairs in their mighty Empire, branding his Notions as divisive, disloyal, cowardly and humbug.

Samson, assuming the duties of Butler, needs no Livery, but wears a black Tie rather than a white one, so as not to be mistaken for a Gentleman such as his Master, my Husband and the highly-esteemed District Surgeon of Graham's Town. I watch him moving back and forth in the Long Room, wending his way as John and I do through the Tittle-Tattle of Polite Conversation, seeing to the Comfort of Family and Friends, many of whom join us from outlying Farms.

Samson knows that a Good Servant can be relied upon to be deaf to the Utterances of his Superiors. He can be trusted never to Comment on what he might overhear, for it does not concern him. And he would be Unwise to Hope that his Opinion will be sought or, indeed, in the unlikely Event that it is, he would be foolish to think it would be of much Value.

All can hear when one of my Nephews toasts a Son hailing from a Family listed in *Burke's Landed Gentry*; saying that he is most certainly a welcome Addition to our old Warwickshire Clan, who can lay claim to Descent from the first King of all England.

'I believe George's Family is also mentioned in the *Doomsday Book*.'

'And of course Emily, on her Mother's side, is a Granddaughter of many of the Great Houses of Norfolk.'

‘Her Grandparents made a most propitious Marriage.’

‘And for Love, as is the Fashion these Days!’ My Niece Ann does not speak lightly of this Passion.

‘You know full-well its Meaning,’ Robert smiles knowingly. ‘Ever since your beloved Edward was murdered by the Xhosas three Years ago, you were cruelly bereft of your life’s Partner.’

‘Even before her thirtieth Year,’ a Matron of the Parish condoles.

‘Wisely has she sought whatever Remedy my good Husband is able to Dispense for the Comfort of an inconsolable Heart,’ Vexation allows me to betray my Jealousy. Soon my Children will need a Mother and John will need a Wife and who better to provide him with all the Home Comforts than a suitable young Heiress; my Brother’s only child.

‘Dear Friends,’ John adds his Toast, ‘George needs no other Recommendation than Himself. He is a man of Superior Education and Taste with a Desire to Improve Himself and his Community by means of his own Accomplishments and Endeavours.’

‘Shall we have another Song?’

Samson’s Diary

My beloved spake, and said
unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair
one, and come away...

As the leaves stroke their branches when they move in the breeze after Mrs Elizabeth plants the birch trees in her garden as a reminder of her Manor house at Lamas where she spent many a dreamy hour sailing on the River Bure, so the words of the *Song of Songs*, sway back and forth, intertwining with the notes of the Great Master Purcell that Miss Emily sings as she accompanies Master John and Master George and Missus Ann on the piano.

The guests hear the song of love flowing through the long room, but they can’t hear the words that were sentenced on the 30 August, 1714, by the Court of Justice. When the words that were written for me are hidden in their dungeon in the Cape they can lie still. But when those words have filled my heart they cannot lie still and they cannot sing of the coming of the beloved and they cannot walk away.

It has thus come to the attention and acknowledgement of the judiciary:
That the prisoner Marie Mouton has committed such an abnormal barbaric criminal deed against her lawful husband to whom she had to be subservient and whose life, next to her own, ought to have been the most valuable treasure on earth. That such a barbaric deed cannot be tolerated in a country where law and

justice must be maintained, but that they must be severely punished to serve as a deterrent to others.

So it happened that by the reading of the written criminal submission and conclusion which was compiled and delivered against the prisoners by the Honourable Magistrate as well as the voluntary confessions which were thoroughly compared with the items which had been lodged with the court by the prisoners, the Honourable Board of Justice found the prisoners guilty.

As is the local custom, on finding them guilty, the accused Maria will be bound to a pole and she will initially be half-strangled with ropes. After which she must be branded and then strangle to death.

The prisoner Salomon while alive is to be impaled on an iron stake. He must sit on the iron stake until he is dead. Thereafter his head and right hand must be chopped off and be placed on a pole outside the boundary of his master's land on a public road.

The third prisoner Claas of Angola must be placed on a cross, his right hand must first be chopped off and his limbs must be broken until he is dead.

Thereafter his head must be chopped off and together with his hand and the hand and head of prisoner Salomon must be placed on a pole. Hereafter the bodies of the three prisoners must be taken outside. The body of the prisoner Marie must be placed on a forked pole and the bodies of Salomon and Claas must be placed on a stake and must stay there until the air and the birds of heaven have consumed them.

Mrs Elizabeth is the only one at Miss Emily's birthday party who can hear the bitter words that my heart is condemned to sing. She knows what is written about my ancestors. Her friend, Governor Somerset, found them for her in his Castle and let his official copy them for her so that she could read them to me.

The song that tells of the terrible death of my great-grandfather Salomon and my great-grandmother Marie cannot be heard by those who do not know. The son of slaves and murderers sings in silence. He must hide his shame; keep his anger hidden behind the fine words of the white masters when they speak of the glorious deeds of their noble forefathers in the mighty time of the British Empire.

Master Guybon is happy that there are so many stones in the river. He is ten and old enough to walk over the bridge of stones from one pool to the next. Miss Kate's eight years make her think that the stones could be slippery because they are wet and smooth, and that Master Guybon better watch out or he might fall into the river. Seven years is enough time to make Miss Eliza wonder why the stones are so many and why they are white and smooth when the rocky walls of the gorge behind us is dark and rough and she wants to know more when I tell her about the messenger *Heitsi-eibib*, who flows as the water, or blows as the wind from the *kloof*.

I sit with Mrs Elizabeth and her four oldest children on the banks of the stream that flows through Genadendal. Miss Emily stays close to her mother watching the water that turns the mill where, since my disgrace and repentance I am permitted to grind the corn for the brethren, but not to teach the coloured children of the German mission school to speak English.

I tell the white children a story that is dear to my heart; it was told to me by my Khoekhoe grandmother. But I tell it to them in their language; in the precious language taught to me by my Magdalena as she read to me from her mother's English Bible.

Deep inside their wounded hearts is where the white stones hide the dark song of their terrible fall as they lie together, year after year, catching the sunlight that is broken, as they are, by the stream that is never quiet because it comes from the tears of those that are left behind. The ones who do not know how to stop crying are the Elephant Mountains who shadow the place that to Georg Schmidt was known as *Baviaanskloof*.

Georg Schmidt was the first pastor who was brave enough to cross over the mountains that are known as the Hottentots Holland on his own, more than eighty years ago, so that he could bring the message of his Saviour's love to my ancestors when they had built their kraals and guided their flocks to feed with them on the fynbos in the *Riviersonderend* valley.

But no one, not even the government, or the Reformed Church, or the white farmers liked this first Moravian Missionary. The grace of the blood of his Saviour and his ABC Dutch spelling book wasn't good enough to wash away their sins of greed and ignorance, and after eight years, they put him on a ship and sent him home.

Fifty years later, three more German pastors came to *Baviaanskloof*, but they didn't like its savage name, so they replaced the wildness of the words baboons and cliff with the cultivated words *genaade* and *dal* and called it Genadendal, which means Vale of Mercy. Here, in Genadendal, in the place where we now sit, my people were invited to turn away from the sinfulness of their heathen ways and through repentance receive the blessing of our Saviour's Grace.

But the Stones that lie here in the river as it flows from the ravine past Genadendal were not invited by the German pastors to turn away from their sinfulness. And hearts that do not repent cannot be softened by our Saviour's love. When the fire of a heart is stamped out it becomes cold and quiet and

cannot sing. And that is what happened to the heart of the mighty ancestor of the stones, the Elephant *Jk^oab*. For it was he, the high-standing one, who was hunted and dragged to the ground as he walked with his herd of Mountains along the path that was safe from those that can see to catch and eat their kill in the dark. It was on the path that is known to be safe for it is the one that is taken by the New Moon //Kwām when he rises to walk through the night to meet his father Tsui-//Goam the Dawn. It was on the path that is known to the bringers of light that the mighty *Jk^oab* was brought to his knees.

The Stones know of a time that was lived when my grandmother's people, the Khoi, left the grave of their great ruler !*Gurikhoisib*. The riches of this powerful chief were his large herds of cattle and sheep and his many wives. According to the beliefs of my grandmother's people a rich man is also a fat man. He can afford to be *gousa*. He can anoint himself with *goub* and that is how the word *gou-aob*, fat man, is the same as !*khū-aob*, rich man. Both words are used to address a ruler, a king, a chief, a master or a lord.

When I end my long story with the words, 'And that is how deception allowed the wily *Igiri-b* to walk over the stones of the river to the lambs on the other side,' Miss Kate says 'Jackal should know better than to tell lies,' and Miss Eliza agrees.

'What about the poor sheep who are going to be eaten?'

'If the stones were half as bright as they look they wouldn't have let *Igiri-b* walk all over them in the first place,' Master Guybon has an answer.

'But how can stones talk or feel angry?' And I answer Miss Kate with the words of my grandmother,

'The truth has many possibilities.'

'I'd like to walk up the gorge, as Papa has suggested, and find samples of the region's quartz and sandstone rocks so that we can learn more about its history.'

'I'll be happy to walk there with you Master Guybon. We can let *Heitsi-eibib* the foreteller lead the way.'

'I thought he was the spirit of the water.'

'That is one truth. But another one is that a powerful spirit is given many names.'

'Like Samson?' Miss Kate asks.

'Your hair is black and long, but you don't look nearly as strong as the Samson in my Bible story?'

'It's impolite to say that, Eliza,' Miss Elizabeth helps her daughter.

‘I don’t mind her rudeness, for she talks a truth. I have the strong hair of a Bengale slave, but my body is small like my grandmother’s Khoe father. When I was a baby it was her hope that one day I would be a *gou-aob*, a strong Khoekhoe chief, and so she rubbed the fat of *I^au-b* the snake into the little cuts she had made in my Dutch and German skin. Later, when I was old enough to understand, she told me ‘I have given you the */gais* of the snake. The snake knows you, it will not harm you. It will slide away. I have also given you the */gais* of the rain. You must not be afraid when lightning strikes; you must just say “I am your child, one of you.”’

‘My grandmother asked pastor Marsveld to give me the name Samson when he baptised me and to guide me with the watch words of the prophet Isaiah “Awake, awake; put on thy strength”. Pastor Georg Schmidt had been guided by the words “Arise, shine; for thy light is come” before he baptised my Khoi great-grandfather by the name of Josua. It was a good name to choose. Josua was the first Israelite to cross the River Jordan and enter the land of promise and my grandmother’s father was the first Khoe to be baptised into the death of Christ.’

‘Now I understand why your skin is not as brown as some of the other Hottentots who live at the mission station. You are a bastard.’ Master Guybon is not yet a good hunter. You do not find the animal that hides in the pale grass when you only see the colour of its skin.

‘Our blood has been mixed with the blood of those who did not name my grandmother’s people Khoekhoe, Men of Men, but thinking that their language sounded like a quacking duck called them Hottentots. Those of us who also share the slave-blood of my mother prefer to be known as Coloureds.’

‘Your grandmother chose a good name for you Samson. You know how to stand up and fight for the honour of a downtrodden people,’ Mrs Elizabeth says. She is not like her son. She feels the breath that flows in the spirit of things. The */gais* of *Heitsi-eibib* will enter her when she hears how the prophet of my people changed into the female part of his name *Hei-s*, which means a tree and let her boughs be hung with the flowers of love when Magda and I made our way over the path of stones to the other side of the *Baviaansrivier* to sing a new song.

Retrospective 1823

In May we bade farewell to my brother John, his dear Dutch wife Susanna and their lovely property situated on the banks of the Gamtoos River. For six weeks thereafter our convoy of ox wagons laboured up and along the top of Langeberge. Endeavouring to maintain our good health and keep our spirits high through a second month of freezing nights under

flimsy canvass, we decided to take the treacherous route down into the small settlement of George. Thereafter our journey along the coastal plain was less hazardous.

‘I feel safer walking next to the elephants instead of being on their bumpy backs,’ Eliza our dreamer said. ‘They can also protect us from danger with their trunks.’

‘What if they stamp on you with their enormous feet?’ Kate was happy to play along with her sister.

‘It’s silly to think of land forms as animals.’ Guybon did not appreciate his sisters’ flights of fancy, but I rather liked my girls’ way of seeing nature. The huge mountains to the north were a comfort; they blocked out a hostile and unknown interior. And they did look like a herd of elephants that were walking one in front of the other. And it was nice to think of them as guides who were leading us to our eagerly-sought destination.

But before we reached Cape Town we stopped over for a week at the Moravian Mission Station, Genadendal. We were keenly interested in the work of these good brethren as my dearly beloved Parents, my esteemed Husband’s father and mother, who had both sadly passed away before we sailed for the Cape, were buried in the Moravian Chapel at Oakbrook in Derbyshire.

Love threw its charm over us when we arrived at Vale of Mercy in mid-August. The spring sunshine shone through the winter clouds as the brothers and sisters, whose mission it was to grow the Community of God through the baptism of the Hottentots residing in their Missionary settlement, welcomed our somewhat bedraggled party as lost children who are found.

They were attentive to our every need. Our wagons were given pride of place beyond the church and not far from their valued Pear Tree, although it was not the original one planted by Georg Schmidt, a messenger sent to the heathen by the lot of the brethren of Herrnhut; a community whose whole life served but one purpose, to be at the disposal of their Saviour and the Holy Ghost.

When the brothers had showed us around the mission station, Sister Eva who had served with the brethren since 1798 invited me and the children to come to the river to see the weaver birds.

‘There is much fluttering about as the male considers the construction of a nest that must be good enough to satisfy the standards of a fastidious mate,’ says Sister Eva, who has accompanied us to the stream that flows through the mission village. ‘The safety of the eggs is paramount. It will be no good if a snake can crawl up the trunk and steal one, or if the upside-down opening is too low and the wind can rock a hatching chick out of its warm bed

and into the flowing water, or if the opening is too small and the mother gets stuck in the doorway holding the tasty morsel she's caught too close a squealing beak.'

Later that evening after the children had retired for the night and while John was discussing scripture with the brothers, I returned to look at Eva's *witolien* branches (or wild elder, as Guybon and John later classified them) that overhung the stream where earlier we had watched in delight as the male weaver birds adjusted pieces of grass and flapped their wings to encourage the wavering females to come and have a look and decide who would make the fittest father for their offspring.

Then I walked along the bank, beyond the watermill and found Samson sitting at the place where, earlier in the day, he had told my dear children the fable about the angry silence of the Stones. Replying to my concern that he might feel lonely living by himself in the nearby hut of an abandoned Kraal and not on the other side of the church where his people had build their new houses, Samson replied:

'I sit by the stones of the stream. They hear my *\goa*, as I hear them counting the hard fist of *\Gm*, the lonely one. *\Goa* is the Khoe word to count, to honour, to respect. My Khoe grandmother complained "*\Goalie tamata ha*; they do not look at me". Her son, my bastard father, Salomon the second, had left his coloured regiment at Wynberg with his pregnant wife, so that I could be born at Genadendal, but the brethren would not let my grandmother massage the healing breath of the spirit of the wind into the dying heart of my free-slave mother, saying:

"What can these primitives know about healing when they believe that the heart is the central organ that houses the soul and that */ao* the blood carries *≠i* the soul so that the one who drinks the blood of *//Gamab* is protected by his potency and that breath is as wind and that the different souls of the wind move in the blood to provide strength to those who are sick?"'

'When a heart no longer houses the soul and the blood becomes cold and the body is without energy it can find no answer to this question. For a long time after my Magda was taken from me, when the breath of the Holy Spirit no longer moved in me and the Blood of Christ which is shed for me no longer washed away my sins, I sat counting the Stones, honouring those that suffered, as I did, without hope.'

'No matter how we bastards try to hide our savagery under the pale skin that is given to us by our Dutch and German ancestors, we are never good enough to marry their pure-bred daughters. As it was known to my forebears Salomon and Marie that deceit is the bridge a non-white man and a white woman must cross to be together, so it is known that deceit is the way to be taken when they are torn apart.'

‘I have asked for forgiveness from the brethren, but I hide the angry stain of humiliation that does not wash away in the folds of my white robe of repentance.’

I know the suffering of a sinner. In my vellum diaries of 1806 to 1810, that treasured account of the momentous events of my last years at our manor house in Lammas, I record the anguish of a daughter, who dishonours the love of a father and defies brotherly affection in the fervent hope of satisfying the passionate desires of her own heart. When Samson hears the \Goa of my silence, he is able to continue.

Samson’s Diary

Mrs Elizabeth sits with me and the stones and I tell her about the beauty of the beloved.

After we were cast out by the brethren, Magda wrote *Du bist bei mei*: you are with me on the marbled endpaper of her leather-bound Bible that she gave to me before she was lifted into the ox wagon where she could lie down on the *katel* covered by the eiderdown and so lessen the distress to our unborn child as she was jolted by the corrugations on the road to Caledon.

Magda knew how much I would value the words sang by the sinner Mary Magdalene to her Saviour when she could no longer sing to me and I, her *Hei-si*, could no longer accompany her on my Horn to the music of the great Lutheran brother Herr Bach in the Church at Genadendal.

My Magdalena hoped that after reading *Du bist bei mei* I might page backwards from the Apocrypha to Chapter 5 verse 1 of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians. If I read the words that Sister Eva had used when she tried, but failed, to convince the others of the righteousness of our union, they might help me move away from the evil of our condemnation and expulsion and rediscover my love for the brethren.

But my bitterness increased ten-fold in the days after Magda’s departure, when I thought of the traditions and beliefs that I had renounced as ignorant, savage and primitive to prove my Christian faith and be baptised into the blood of their Saviour. This sacrifice served little purpose when, believing myself to be the equal of Brother Wilhelm in the eyes of the Lord, I tried to persuade him that I was worthy to be the husband of his beloved Magda. He could only see that her present condition was ample proof that his fears about my people’s sins of dancing, drinking, massage and immoral acts had merit.

‘Naturally one would fear that the sins of the father and of the great-grandfather would be passed down to him.’ Brother Hermann said. (In her testimony, before her baptism, my grandmother had admitted the failings of the past. The brothers knew about Salomon the First, her bastard husband’s Bengal-slave father and about their no-good

coloured son – when Salomon the third (my father) returned to his garrison at Wynberg after the death of my mother, leaving me at Genadendal in the care of my grandmother, he murdered a fellow soldier in a drunken rage and was tried and hanged by the Circuit Court).’

‘No one can wish to have the blood of their children tainted by the blood of murderers.’

‘And who would want to be likened unto the man who builds his house on sand?’

I thought nothing worse could happen when the lot cast by the brotherhood went against us and it became clear that I could never be accepted into their “inner sanctum” (the words used by Sister Sarah when she invited the children to come into her needlework class after Magda and I had dismissed them from their daily lessons).

But I was wrong. The final blow came a month later when Sister Eva found me sitting on the stony ground at the entrance to the *kloof* waiting for the /*gais* of the wind to give me strength to go and find my Magda.

Sister Eva said that the child, a girl was safely delivered and given into the care of a pious German Family who were on their way to Graaff Reinet, but had stopped in Caledon so that their infant daughter could be buried in hallowed ground by the *Dominee*.

Magdalena had lived for no more than a week after the birth of her baby, a beautiful child who had been blessed with the straight, black hair of her father and the fair, European skin of her mother and baptised and given the name Rachel. If it could be of any comfort to me in this time of anguish, Sister Eva told me that she had been informed by those who had nursed my Magda that I had been of strength to my beloved at the end. When she moved her fevered lips for the last time, she did not take the water that was offered her, but said the words *Du bist bei mei, Hei-si*.

Retrospective 1824-38

I leave my three girls (Guybon attends the boys school at the top end of The Gardens) ably supervised by their French and Needlework teachers, and John and Bliss in the care of their nursemaid, to sit beside Samson, who takes the reins of the donkey cart as we head off along the skirts of Table mountain and around The Devil’s Peak to the gullied slopes above Rondebosje in search of the herbs John needs for his dispensary.

‘Remember, Samson is strong enough to protect you from the snakes,’ Kate reassures me as she waves goodbye and Eliza adds,

‘You’ll be safe in our Land of Dreams.’

The Land of Dreams was born when, on a stormy afternoon, a double rainbow arched from The Devil's Peak to the ocean 'creating a doorway,' Kate said, 'past the dangerous pillars of Satan and the Sea into Dreamland', 'where even the wishes of the weakest ones will come true,' Eliza adds and tells her brother,

'Here all the animals that are trapped in your cages will be free.' Although Guybon's and his father's zoo was encroaching onto the lawn where the children played in our back garden, no one was allowed to complain about any inconvenience or concern caused by this advancing shrubbery of science.

Samson, who had taught at the mission school, helped Eliza with her writing by suggesting that she create a Book of Dreams. Her first wish was for Neddicky, the smallest bird held captive in the Zoo's bird cage to be freed.

'Then she can fly home to her nest and peep, peep, peep, her lullaby and her chicks will know how much she loves them.'

And I told my sweet Eliza that my first wish was to sit beside her as she coloured in the chestnut cap and golden eyes of her little warbler and pretend that I was still seven and doing what I like best, drawing the garden birds at Lammas.

When, at first, we began gathering the many herbs that John desired, it took all morning. As Samson showed me what the plants looked like, he explained their benefits. But I believed the fynbos would hold little charm for it lacked the grandeur given to a Norfolk landscape by its mighty trees and my only hope of consolation lay in the beauty of the protea and the silver trees.

But my uninformed opinion was soon exposed as Prejudice for, as Samson grew more familiar with the position of the herbs he was seeking, we were left with time to explore higher up and further along the eastern slopes before I settled down to sketch and he to gather what was needed. We marvelled at the wealth of animal life. Insects moved at our feet and on closer scrutiny of the surrounding twigs and branches we saw bees, butterflies, beetles, crickets, stick insects, even a praying mantis and Samson pointed out the egg sac of a rain spider that was slung in the low vegetation. And when we crossed the stream dragon flies and damselflies played above the water and a crab scrambled down the bank and a few *dassies*: rabbits sunned themselves on a rock and beyond the waterfall a grey buck ran for cover. Birds were in abundance, as was their song, and the strutting guineafowl marked their territory with their robed shadows, while the orange of sipping sunbirds hovered over the pink of the ericas.

On several occasions, when I lifted my eyes over the vegetation from the place where I sat drawing, I could see the top of Devil's Peak as I did when Samson said that I must put my head in his lap and inhale the wild mint as he massaged my brow so that he could relieve my headache as he had done the previous week. I trembled, but knew not if I did so in delightful anticipation or from the fear of prying eyes.

Believing me to be cold Samson leads me out of the wind to the cave we had discovered and lights a fire from the deadwood before he crushes his *buxu* of wild mint. As he bends to heal me, to rub the breath of the moth through my skin I tell Samson how, after the flighty butterfly, whose colours I was trying to capture, escaped my gaze, I had spotted my moth, who lay as still as a fallen leaf in the camouflage of mottled stone.

And Samson tells me that, unlike butterflies, moths fly at night and rest with their wings open during the day and I soften to his massage and while his hands move down my neck to the buttons of my blouse I tell him how robust and hairy my moth's body is and that his antennae are smooth and Samson tells me how, at dusk, a moth lands on the swollen mouth of a flower that is emitting a strong, sweet, spicy fragrance and when he feels her creamy droplets he unrolls his long tongue and begins to feed on her nectar.

And the birds hear the call of our unfamiliar cries and when the fire burns low we place new twigs on the embers and Samson asks me what is written in my Vellum Diaries and each week, thereafter, as he massages me with the spirit of the mouse, or the lizard, or the tortoise, or the frog I, in return, tell him of the young lady disappointed in love so many years ago.

'How easy,' I wrote, 'is the Transition of the Heart from Gratitude to tender Esteem,' but how forbidding a brother's censure 'when I hasten'd some arrangements and with light Heart ran to them in the Parlour! Found I had approach'd Gooch in my airy Steps instead of Castell. His Looks spoke.'

Under the unwanted gaze of the distant peak, I tell Samson of the initial delights of courting my Gooch. I recount the mornings when we sat together writing or reading in the

parlour, or went into town to visit a friend; the afternoons when we walked through the frozen fields, our steps marking the untracked snow or, as the sun shone bright, we mounted our steeds and 'the Exercise was delightful and each Mind became gradually harmoniz'd'; or the evenings when we dined, cheered by our raillery or the 'sweet Banquet of Intellectual Pleasure', and later dressed to 'trip to the light fantastic' at a Ball. And I tell Samson that the culmination of that special time was when Gooch held my glove and fan to his heart.

'After this high point, the slow creep of doubt directed the path of our intimacy. The period from when my father died in May 1808 until May 1810, the month that Gooch and I parted for the last time, was about waiting for or receiving letters of declaration and confirmation of affection; of suffering long periods of wretchedness and separation, when I knew not if my over-eager heart had cooled the ardour of one I held so dear, or if a brother's disapproval had advised him against an ill-conceived match.'

Rekindling our cave's fire, I tell Samson that if past delights had not lifted my heart in joyful flight, or if the ache of longing for Gooch and the regret of failing to secure his attachment had not caused hope's wings to fall into the abyss of despair, I could not have respected the anger of his shame, or honoured the passion he felt for his Magdalena and the anguish he endured at her loss.

These wondrous *fynbosch* encounters were ended abruptly by the terrible affliction suffered by Eliza, as a result of the chill she caught when we were unduly delayed in our cave and by the unexpected storm, which had drenched my daughter, as she sat sobbing in our back garden because, no matter how hard she had tried, she couldn't save her Neddicky.

With no-one to stop her she decided to free the tiniest of all the birds that John and Guybon had caught. But as her little warbler scurried away a *bokmakierie* spotted her and swooped and carried her off over the garden and all poor Eliza could do was to listen to her fading cheeps for help.

Samson and I were held responsible for this calamitous event. If we had returned in time to keep all the children indoors, Eliza would never have contracted the chill that led to rheumatic fever and enlarged her heart, leaving her an invalid and, according to John, a life expectancy of no more than a few years. The coloured nursemaid, in whose care the girls had been since the end of their lessons, wasn't expected to know better, or to be capable of keeping a constant eye on the whereabouts of all five children.

'You see it's safer to be in a cage,' Guybon vents his rage at Eliza. 'My prize warbler would still be alive if you hadn't got it into your silly head that he was better off in the wild.'

‘What took you so long?’ But John was in no mood to hear my answer, whatever I chose it to be. He put a stop to my forays into nature, restricting my sketching to the confines of our home and garden. Samson was to collect the herbs he needed to treat his patients on his own.

While the children ran about, Samson sat with Eliza and they created their Land of Dreams, which lay on the far side of the rainbow. Each time the Bird-girl and her best friend the Prince found a dead bird they carried it through the mighty doorway that arched its colours from the dark pillar of The Devil’s Peak all the way to the horizon beyond Blouberg Strand and they knelt before the great throne of Isis the Sun God (we had been reading a book on Ancient Egypt).

And as the Bird Girl chimed the reed pipes that Samson had hung from a branch in the garden and the Prince blew the tune that Samson had learnt from the German brethren at Genadendal into his Magic Flute, Isis brought Neddicky and each one of his friends, the grass-bird, the sugarbird, the chat, the sparrow, the starling, the wagtail back to life.

At Eliza’s funeral service held in St George’s two years before pieces were sung at the tea meeting in Graham’s Town (we moved here from Cape Town in 1828) to commemorate the abolition of slavery on December the 1st, 1834, Samson was permitted (because of John’s standing as District Surgeon in the community) to play Eliza’s favourite melody on his Magic Flute, while Emily chimed in with him. And Kate read Eliza’s favourite verse from the *Bible*. And thus in heathen and Christian voice we fare-welled our Noble Daughter, Sister and best Friend.

And now abideth faith, hope,
charity, these three; but the great-
est of these *is* charity

But charity did not rule my heart when the delights of my dreamland were forbidden me. My anger let me sketch sterile slopes and hollowed-out rock-faces, making my creations look quite different from the thriving fynbosch and awe-inspiring cliffs that nature presented to my eye from the back garden or the rear double-storey window of our house.

Seated at my easel or reading alone in my upstairs, back bedroom I raged, knowing that I lacked the courage to rewrite the words for my tombstone. No matter how far my rebellious heart advanced it was forced to retreat in the face of insurmountable barriers. Unlike my niece Ann, I was not an Heiress with the means to determine what course my life

should take; and the thought of losing my beloved children removed from me any idea of independent thought.

Thus unable to stray from the ways of feminine propriety, I returned to being 'a little woman', thereby endorsing the qualities of sacrifice and service that were so desired by my grieving father (but, alas, not by my resentful heart) when these words were carved onto my mother's memorial stone and placed above the family tomb:

Late wife of William
who died the 23rd August 1789
Aged 43 years
Her conscientious discharge of
the various duties of life makes
her loss Sincerely regretted by
all her knew her

October 1837. John compensates me for his lack of interest in my sexual charms by buying Norden's spacious home on the slope overlooking the town for six-hundred pounds. We now have a front parlour, long drawing room and a small sitting leading off the dining room that opens into the rear garden comprising three acres that slope down in an easterly direction from the outhouses and stables.

Last summer Samson and I extended the shrubbery near the house and he dug a channel from the lily pond to water our new vegetable garden, which we created near the bottom boundary between the apple and quince hedges. I asked Samson to extend his trench so that we could bring water to a frangipani tree that looked to be on its last legs. Only a few flowers blossomed on its stubby bare fingers, but their perfume delighted the senses.

We were rewarded for our efforts this spring when our ailing foundling flowered robustly and, encouraged by its beauty, I sketched so fine a bloom with my crayons that John, a connoisseur of botanical illustrations, granted that the imperfection of line was redeemed by the skill of my colour; 'how well the soft tone of the yellow centre works its lustre into the cream satin of the petals'.

However, he did not believe, as our youngest girl did, that it would make a suitable companion for his gilt-framed painting of Nelson's flagship the Victory, which brought distinction to the entrance hall, or that it should hang in the long room beside the highly-prized portraits of his mother and father, painted by his brother-in-law, the well-regarded artist Thomas Barber. John thought that my petalled star would certainly attract the eye if it graced the inside wall of the sitting room.

‘It would like be a candle lighting up a dark corner of the house,’ Bliss, our imaginative second-youngest, adds.

Samson and I sit hidden from the house and the surrounding *Suurveld* on the lush kikuyu lawn near our special tree and he tells me more about George Schmidt, the beloved of his grandmother’s people. She stayed true to him when Brother George returned to Europe eight years after he first arrived in the Cape in 1737, wishing only to win souls for the Saviour; and how from time to time, this brave missionary’s small flock gathered under the pear tree in Schmidt’s garden, praying and reading from the New Testament, and how they taught their children to read and pray in a simple way and continued to live in the vicinity waiting for their saviour to return.

And Samson tells me about his grandfather Salomon the Second. His Aunt Madeleine had taken him into her home and had him baptised in the Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch after her sister, the convicted murderer Marie, had been brutally strangled in 1714. As a young man his grandfather had overheard (he being a *bywoner* on his step-brother’s farm) the arguments raised by the local farmers when discussing their church’s objections to Schmidt’s ordination.

The Church Council believed that only members of the Reformed confession, who had been properly examined were permitted to give religious instruction; and that the so-called Hottentot-convector, who belonged to the sect of the Moravians and did not co-operate with the predikante was not qualified to teach or to baptise; although some, like Le Sueur, defended his position saying ‘that the fellow may be as defiled as he wishes, still, he cannot make the Hottentots worse than they already are.’

And as I listened to Samson’s sad story, I wondered if any of the wild rumours spread by the colonists, thirty years after Schmidt’s departure, were true. Did the brother, who converted an old woman who prayed near a fountain and possessed a Bible from which she would read and which she treated with great respect, live with Hottentot women and did he try to make himself their chief, using their servility to satisfy his own needs?

And I asked Samson if he thought that Brother George’s labours had been in vain.

‘That old woman was my great-grandmother. When her husband Wilhelm, the one who was baptised Josua, died in the smallpox epidemic of 1756, she sent her daughter, my grandmother to work on Baas Pieter’s farm and after her flower opened the baas and his son Baas Sarel could smell her nectar, but the baby died and the second child also and my grandmother ran away and hid with Salomon the *bywoner*: lodger, who had always been kind to her. But the *baas*: master found her and when he hit her, Salomon picked up a spade

and the baas said “*Jou wit kaffir! Jou moordenaar se kind! Hoe durf jy my aanrand!*” and Salomon answered, “No matter if I am of mixed blood or a murderer’s child, when you attack a defenceless girl, I must defend her.””

‘And Baas Sarel rode off to fetch his rifle and my grandparents hid in the kloof until the neighbouring farmers stopped looking for them and although Salomon was a free burger and the colour of his skin was more like his mother’s, the murderess Marie, than his father’s, the murderer Salomon, his questionable status prevented him from being a land owner and after threatening to attack Baas Sarel he couldn’t be a *bywoner* either. No one in the district of Swellendam would allow the few cattle of this bastard to graze on the land that the government granted to Dutch colonists.’

‘So my grandparents went back to her Khoi kraal and Salomon herded cattle and by the time my father, Salomon the third was born my grandfather was fifty and a few years later he fell from the high *kloof* path in a storm. The healing breath of my grandmother could not warm his blood and afterwards every time we passed the stones that were placed over his body we threw *Heitsi-eibib* a stick so that he could protect the soul of my grandfather from those who might wish to harm him.’

October 1838. *Samson will soon be returning to Genadendal ...* Mercifully that unhappy Event has been postponed, for my Beloved, well acquainted with my Grief and knowing how much I need him, will not take away the secret Gift he gives to a dying Friend. Samson will stay and be my Strength to the End. (The power of the Fat of *I^au-b* the Snake that his Grandmother rubbed into the little Cuts she had made in her beloved Grandson’s skin mixes well with the power of the cleansing Waters in which the Brethren immersed him at his Christening.)

We are as discrete as ever. John and the Children are spending the Night at Ann’s Farm to celebrate a Cousin’s Birthday. And it’s Lena’s Day Off and she is visiting her Sister. We find Ourselves alone as I lie on my Garden Bed grasping precious Time by curling my Hands lightly over Samson’s Neck and Face.

Once is not enough. Samson feels the Sorrow of my seductive Tickle and his gentle Caresses ease my Guilt and Fear and renews my Strength. We sleep on the *Riempiebank* in the dark Corner under my framed Bloom until Dawn’s Touch wakes us and for a while we watch the slow Mime of a Sea-anemone in the Home Aquarium that stands beside the Window in the Dining room. As the Spirit of the Water moves over the Huntress her reverend Tips open to receive his Ripple and her velvet Arms sway as she feeds his Light down into her hungry Body.

Act Four
Milky Way of Vrouelieder

Dedication: Ben Jonson, *Have you seen but a whyte Lillie grow*

Prelude: Wagner/Wesendonck, *Träume*

Prologue: Schubert/Bible, *Psalm 23*

Maude to Martie: Schubert/Krummacher, *Die nacht*

Martie to Maude: Schubert/Goethe, *Kennst du das Land*

Maude to Martie: Schubert/Goethe, *Heidenröslein*

Martie to Maude: Engelbert Humperdinck/Adelheid Wette, *Abendsegen*

Maude to Martie: Brahms/Goethe, *Alto Rhapsody*

Martie to Maude: Schubert/Goethe, *Erlkönig*

Maude to Martie: Brahms/Bible, *3 Ersten Gesäng*

Martie to Maude: Brahms/Bible, *4 Ersten Gesäng*

Tribute: Schubert/von Schober, *An die Musik*

Dedication – To the bitter aloe

Ben Jonson, *Have you seen but a whyte Lillie grow*

‘Was she beautiful or not beautiful? And what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?’

If the questions that Marian Lewes’ priggish man-in-waiting, Daniel Deronda, asks while observing the ‘problematic sylph’ Gwendolyn for the first time as she gambles at the tables of a German Spa, were to be asked of a bitter aloe, who has placed her survival-bet on the arid plateau of the Cape Colony’s north-eastern frontier, would the answer be the same?

‘Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?’

Accepting that the same can be asked of plants as of humans, a further question arises: Would the answer as to the aloe’s worthiness be impartial, or would it depend on the observer?

A disdainful soldier of the Queen, embroiled in the protracted Anglo-Boer War and dispirited by the guerrilla tactics of an intractable enemy and countryside might believe that his appraisal was as fair as Deronda’s, as he compared the contorted and disfigured shape of the dangerous aloe to the softness and sweetness of his homeland’s ‘whyte Lillie’.

But an Afrikaner would identify more readily with the bitter aloe. His long and desperate struggle to survive in the harsh economic and political climate of the sun-abused veld, allows him to see her good side; to honour her, as he does the *Boerevrou*, for her courage and perseverance, for the originality of her tenacious form, for the wonder of her winter-flaming flowers and for the curative properties of her precious sap.

The healing aloe would also be valued by an English settler whose hardy forebears sailed to Algoa Bay in 1820 to bear the brunt of the Kaffir Wars in the District of Albany, when marauding Xhosas and Khoikhoi killed their families, stole their livestock and destroyed their crops and farmsteads. To add insult to injury, Stockenstrom the turncoat *Boer*, returned by the British Government to his district as lieutenant governor of Graaff

Reinet in 1836, had the nerve to lump these loyal servants of the Crown with his bunch of law-breaking *Trekboere*.

Stockenstrom accused those, who were brave and resourceful enough to serve as a buffer between colonist and native in the newly acquired territory, designated as the Province of Queen Adelaide by the visiting Governor D'Urban, of being the cause of the trouble. 'Continuing expansion rather than better land management had deprived the natives of their means of livelihood.'

So the chastened border farmers looked to their soil, to the *Suurveld* to ease their woes and found its goodness in the winter plumes of the bitter aloe that fed the birds, that fed the flowers, that fed their hives to provide the means for them to buy paraffin for their lamps and medicine for their babies' croup and bring eggs to their tables when the shot from their guns stilled the slink of a fox moving around the fixed-form of the hen coop and chicken-wire poles.

A present-day botanist takes a more objective approach when describing the distinguishing features of *Aloe ferox*, commonly known as Bitter Aloe, Red Aloe (English); *Bitteraalwyn*, *Bergaalwyn* (Afrikaans); *iNhlaba* (Zulu); *iKhala* (Xhosa) and belonging to the Family: ALOACEAE. According to Alice Aubrey's article in the *plantzafrica* website, Aloe is derived from the Greek word for the dried juice of aloe leaves and *ferox* from 'fierce' or 'war-like' referring to the spiny edged leaves, which are arranged in a rosette. The old leaves remain after they have dried, forming a protective 'petticoat' on the stem.

This hardened warrior is valued for its winter blaze of flower-head spikes rising from an orange-tinged blue-green 'bodice' between May and September that attracts many bird species. It is also known for its medicinal qualities. The renowned "Schwedenbitters" contains the bitter yellow juice found just below the skin and the gel-like flesh from the inside of the leaves is reported to have wound-healing properties.

Maude's Prelude

Wagner/Wesendonck, *Träume*

The seed of 1820-Settler-labouring-stock, from which I hail, had fared well enough by 1886 for the fragrance of my eighteen-year-old English bloom to appeal to the German, Albert, whose sister, wishing to spare him the horrors of the compulsory five-year enlistment for Jews in the Prussian Army, sent her sixteen-year-old brother in 1874 from the Mecklenburg home of his father, a prince merchant, albeit in grain, to further his education in York.

In order to protect himself from being branded 'tricky and coarse' Albert chose to keep his Jewish birth a secret in anti-Semitic England. The benefit of trading his identity and integrity for fame and fortune soon became apparent. Now, that he was grown up, it made little sense to keep the promises he had made to his dying mother when he was eleven. Why should a fine-tenored young engineer resist being seduced in a black-balling Gentlemen's Club by the sweet-talking Cecil John Rhodes, or spurn the celebrated adventurer's inducement to go a step further and embrace a new homeland, one purportedly brimming over with milk and honey?

In 1896, when those heady dreams failed to materialize amongst the bitter aloes of King William's Town, Albert, as leader of the Eastern Province division of Rhodes' Chartered Company, was up and off to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. There in the disputed territory of Rhodesia he bolstered his *pater patriae*'s footing, by helping to take on the impi's of the warring Matabele, while overstepping the malaria-mosquitoed puddles of the boulderous Matoppos. (Can you believe that I am still so cynical after all Hedwig's efforts to soften my hardened heart and convince me that her beloved brother, a veritable Daniel Deronda, was more worthy of crying over than spilt milk?)

Anyway, getting back to *my* allure! Its lingering perfume had enough drawing power to captivate Albert's oldest sister, the above-mentioned Hedwig, when she came out to South Africa two years after Albert died of black-water fever in the Matoppos Hills. Hedwig wanted to meet me and my children William, Sophie and Ellen and to pay for the boarding school fees of my dux-quality, book-devouring son. She also hoped that her visit would restore my equanimity and some pride in the German side of our family.

Was I lucky or unlucky that sweet reason has its Achilles heel? I'm not sure. But I think that the evil genius was not yet dominant when Hedwig sailed to Port Elizabeth armed with the German Lieder of romantic men and the English novels of enlightened women. However, it took a mere three weeks for her evil side to swap places with the better half of her nature and to bedevil me with the titillation of unnatural advances.

Hedwig was inviting me to profane the sacred by indulging in feelings quite unheard of in the annals of discrete women. I couldn't believe that she was happily guiding me down a path so unseemly that if indulged in by men it lead to prison, as in the case of Oscar Wilde, or if practised, unthinkable, by the fairer sex, it lead to the attic, as in the case of the mad woman.

This was terrifying, quite unacceptable, but what could I do? I had never met anyone who could lift my spirits as she did. No one before had understood my feelings, not even my parents, although they were not as critical as Albert was. After causing my angry outbursts, he had the nerve to blame me for a shameful lack of self control, deriding me for not living up to his exacting expectations by allowing my hysteria to get the better of me and bringing shame to his good name.

Hedwig was the first person I knew who understood the anger of a woman, who is denied her rightful feelings and shouts at her children, not because she is cruel, but because she hates the way she is constantly being dismissed as useless, after failing to fend off the thunder and lightning of her husband's insults. No matter how hard I tried I could never please Albert. But Hedwig was not deaf to my silent cries and furthermore, she was a delightful tease, her amused smiles questioning the wisdom of one who is trying so hard to obey the rules and be a good girl.

And so I was a sitting duck to her charms. She knew that when I dared to look at her on that last day in February 1899 (a leap-year for my heart) the rising full moon gave enough light for me to see the quizzical smile in her eyes. I was telling her what Albert had told me when, likewise in our courting days, we had looked at a hawk moth hovering over a gardenia bloom.

Being an engineer, Albert was scientifically adroit and matters were not improved when he met up with Charles Darwin at a soiree given by his uncle in honour of George Eliot. A guest, Dr Hermann Adler, Rabbi of the Bayswater Synagogue, expressed his 'warm appreciation of the fidelity with which some of the best traits of the Jewish character were depicted in her great novel *Daniel Deronda*'. Haim Guedalla thanked her for representing the Jewish community 'in so favourable a light and in so attractive and scholarly manner before the world'.

Marian Lewes responded that she had treated the Jew with such sympathy and understanding to counter the usual impious and stupid attitude of Christians towards Jews. 'Can anything be more disgusting than to hear people called 'educated' making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty

in insulting?’ So Albert knew ‘what was what’ when in the cold light of day he longitudinally dissected the gardenia’s floral tube.

But Hedwig did not favour such enlightenment. Her nature was against butchering beauty. She sought involvement in the moon-light tryst of a creamy flower and her love-sick moth who, having had his fill of heavenly nectar, withdrew his long proboscis and gave Hedwig a turn to inhale deeply of summer’s sweetness.

And afterwards, while fluttering a finger over the luscious bud pearling at the centre of the satin star, Hedwig let the fine climber of her words tendril on the intimacy of her movement.

‘A rose can never be the equal of a bloom who will not allow a cluster of sticky stamens to obscure the perfection of her style.’

‘And rose leaves are a country cousin when compared to a gardenia’s glossy evergreen,’ I clumsily take sides, hardly able to speak. ‘And their thorny stems don’t drape half as well?’

‘Or pierce more keenly?’ she questioned, steadying my gaze in hers.

Later that evening, as we sat together on the piano stool, Hedwig continued enticing me with her deft touch, guiding my fingers as skilfully as she toyed with the keys of my mother’s upright piano, while teaching me some of her favourite *Lieder*.

‘*Mien liebchen* (in the heat of that moment it never entered my mind that this endearment could be common currency in London’s singing salons where Hedwig held sway), in today’s music circles it is agreed that Schubert was the master at interpreting and extending the passionate lyricism of Goethe.’ Having said that, she moved on to other realms as she brought the romance of her recital to a close; trying to straighten my overwrought feelings with a Mozart aria before concluding with *Träume*, Wagner’s love-song set to the words of his 1850’s mistress Mathilde Wesendonck.

Deliciously devious creature! Tempting me with the hook of a cautious thrill; knowing that if I took the bait, I was hers for the drawing in. Indeed hers forever, for I knew of no one else in my limited circle, who had the imagination and courage to air the complexities of love in such a compelling way.

Hedwig played with my forbidden desires as skilfully as she distilled the rich refrains of her contralto voice into the piano's soulful motifs. There was no escape when her *crescendo poco a poco* subsided into *dolce* and she lowered her foot on the pedal to let her strings vibrate freely. And now she's up to her old tricks again; rekindling my longing for her by sending me a fresh score of Wagner's *Träume* and adding a stanza from Mozart's *Così van Tutte* to warn me of the folly of trusting love.

But, she should know that two-and-a-half years after she returned to London all is not sweetness and light out here in the *grammadulas*. She should know that being embroiled in a war too tragic to imagine and striving to put personal pain aside I won't allow myself to be lead astray again. It is I who will put my foot down this time, so as to prevent further tremblings and heartache.

'No, no, no Hedwig! It won't do! I don't want to go to heaven, not ever again; it's too painful. Unless, of course, you can take me there and never bring me back again.'

Träume, who wants those? And after the bliss what then? It's a delusion to think you can escape the grim fate that awaits us all. Our enemies included. Why else do you think I wrote to you a couple of months ago, after Martie's son had slipped from the Tommie's grasp down the Stormberg into our valley during the prolonged deluge of an early spring storm and he told me about his *volk's* and his *moeder's* suffering?

It was certainly not to encourage any nefarious acts on your part I might hasten to add. I did so solely to let you know that because of your sensitivity, understanding and generosity, I was able to hear the silent cry of Martie's aloe-flower-head signals, sent from her concentration camp far away in Bloemfontein. And as a consequence, I decided to answer her distress calls by inviting her to join with me in song. I hoped that as your lieder floated over our troubled land they might prise open the sealed lid of our misery and, in so doing, help us to be of comfort to each other.

I can't believe you don't realise how dire our present situation is, how difficult it is to find some peace of mind. It's so unlike you to want to add more woe to these terrible times Hedwig. Why would you wish to open old wounds by sending me the melting words of *Träume*?

Is it not cruel to draw my attention to music so divine that I couldn't trust myself to play it ever again? Do you know that instead of putting the piece you left me in my piano stool – to savour from time to time – I walked along the veld-path, past the crumbling graveyard, to the donga-edged stream that puddles through my sister's farm? There I tore up your sheet music, gave it to the wind, which knows how to blow far better than the *spruit*

knows how to flow, but, unfortunately, is just as patchy when it comes to keeping its promise of rain.

Why inflame me with a longing that my bitter-aloe sap cannot heal? Why, knowing that we can never be together, would you, the one who holds my soul captive, the dream I cannot hold onto, wish to take me back to the month, oh, so briefly shared in the bays and gardens of the Cape Peninsula? Why remind me of the hopelessness of my love for you Hedwig; bring back memories of our beginning and our end? And then to cap it all, why give your enjoyable lifestyle the nod by taunting me with Fiordiligi's delectable but useless stand against infidelity?

Strongly founded, a marble tower,

'Yes Hedwig! Yes! Such defiance, such capitulation, such ecstasy! Such goings on are what I live for and, you devil, you know it.'

Why, oh why, would you want to subject me to this torture? Dare I think what I think? That you wanted me to know you are with me in my present sorrow. This revelation certainly would add up; it would be typical of your thoughtful and gifting nature. Heavens alive, if this be true, how did it enter my mind that you were being coercive and indifferent? And a question equally unpalatable to ask is, how on earth can I bear to be out of your arms, deprived of your fingers stirring my skin, your breath urging me to breathe?

Maybe, I can hope that you still care for me as once you did; that between the glamour and gaiety of enlightened London, a bit of longing-for-me lounges on the settees of your cosy Highgate setup, as you help Ella Russell sharpen her arpeggios before taking to the Queen's Hall with Isolda's *Liebestod*, or encourage Kate Lee to focus on her diaphragm, so as to sustain the passion of her *Träume* for a little longer.

Perhaps there are days when impatience with the dependency of these spiritual daughters makes room in your sympathy for an outsider's kiss; days when the elms of Regent's Park are but ghostly silhouettes of congealed smog and a Gloria Simmons turns out to be no better than a Klesmer's Gwendolyn.

Sadly, after granting enough time for all this emotional dust to settle, I am forced to resign myself to the marvels of my present lot. Well, alright, I suppose the district of Sterkstroom isn't the absolute pits. In the deep gloom of a sunset emblazoned by yesterday's sand storm, the evening air is fragrant by the long-awaited rain and my heart is warmed by the cuddle

of my two girls, after Sophie helped Ellen read Hansel and Gretel and I tucked them up in bed.

‘You’ll never let a wicked witch eat us, will you? Sophie didn’t want to let me go. ‘I’m glad I’ve got a good mommy to keep us safe and not a horrible old step mother who can shoo us off into the forest if we dare to irritate her.’

‘I wish we had a daddy to keep us safe too,’ Ellen chimed in.

‘Sadly we can’t bring back the past, no matter how much we wish to do so. We’ll just have get on with the present and try to make the most of it.’

‘And what will we do if you died and we were left all on our own?’

‘My darlings, you know that I will try my utmost to stop that from happening.’

I walked halfway along the veld-path that leads from my sister’s farmhouse to the weir holding back some of the rejuvenated *spruit*’s water. And now I am not without company as I sit on the stone wall that won’t be washed away, like the grave mounds it surrounds, by a sudden cloud-break descending on our parched region as an excuse for rain. The peaceful dead comfort me. So too does the tenacity of the lone thorn tree at my side and the hope of sharing some of my despair with Martie.

I look to the north, towards the concentration camp at Bloemfontein from where Martie (Mad Martie is what they call her these days, according to her son Harry) heliographs her message of surrender to anyone out there in *die vlaktes* who will hear her. And that probably boils down to me, but in these turbulent times I can see that my reply – our reply, after all they’re your songs Hedwig – won’t get through to her by road; the spread of the night-flower’s embossed skirt is hemmed in by the distant scallops of the Stormberg. I shall have to look to the stars to carry our Lieder for us; twinkle them over the mountains and *koppies* of our beleaguered homeland.

At first, on hearing of Martie’s plight, I occupied myself by deciding which of your German Lieder would best capture the feelings of two white South African women, one English, one Afrikaans, whose futile communications, in the third October of the Boer War, aim to unravel a knot or two of the abuse crocheted into the warming shawl of their isolated communities.

And then, to the delight of my polio-crippled brother’s delirium tremens, I practised the chosen Lieder in my sister’s sitting room, on the piano that I inherited at the death of my mother last year. Remember the upright Hedwig, the one on which you taught me to play the songs we sang so deliciously together as we prepared to set sail for the Cape and savour the wonders of its two-ocean-enfolded peninsula?

Prologue

Schubert/ Bible, *Psalm 23*

Now it came to pass in a time when affliction was great in the land of Walcheren that a certain woman named Anna took her and her four children over the sea to a land of plenty. And later, when her son Barendt become the captain of his ship, he took a young slave woman from her island of Ceylon and he named her Tulp, she being comely as to the chief flower of his land. And Barendt lay with Tulp and she bore her meester a daughter giving her the name of Pêrel, she being as fair as the jewel of her ocean.

And Pêrel prospered in the District of Stellenbosch and was made a free slave. And a Huguenot farmer took her to be his bride and she begat Hannejie and Hannejie went with her Dutch husband to the Berg River in the *Koue Bokkeveld* and begat Sara. And Sara crossed over the *Nuweveld* Mountains in her husband's ox wagon and settled on the Gamka River in *Die Koup* and begat Hester. And Hester begat Susie and she and her kinsmen, the *veeboeren*: stock farmers, being desirous of venison for the their table and new grazing land for their livestock went to the grasslands of the upper *Zeekoe* River that lay in *Agter Sneeuberg*.

Together with their herds the farmers sojourned on the land of a people called the Khoisan being of two tribes. The one tribe, known as the Khoikhoi to their people, but also known as the Hottentots to the ignorant Dutch, had moved inland, both north and east, as the white farmers usurped the lands where their cattle once grazed on the fertile slopes adjoining the oceans. The other tribe, the San, better known as the Bushmen, had no flocks to tender, but roamed freely, shooting the plentiful wild game with their poisoned arrows and feeding off the berries and fruits of the plains known to them as the Karoo.

The Khoisan looked to the *veeboeren* for sustenance when the grass of their overgrazed land could no longer give of its sweetness and the ground lay fallow and the clay, eroded from the mountains after the top soil was washed away, cracked in the dry streams; when after the kudu and gemsbok and wildebeest had flowed away with the water to disappear in the dry interior.

The needy *Boer* of the isolated interior had little to give. Deprived of an easy means of transporting any surplus produce, they faced further difficulties on reaching the Cape. The powerful officials of the Dutch East India Company granted

the meat, grain and wine concessions to wealthy merchants in the *Baai*, who manipulated the market to suit their pockets.

And so it came to pass that the vast majority of the farmers lived a hand to mouth existence and believed that the best way to answer their barbarous neighbours the Khoisan, was to beat, torture, rape or murder the bastards.

Violence, kidnap, fear and revenge ruled on the Cape Eastern Frontier. No filthy thief, who robbed the *trekboere* of their livelihood, was spared. None who attacked his stone dwellings escaped. The *vuilgoed*: rubbish who murdered his family and slaughtered his livestock, when necessary, as they fled from the wrath of the commandos' rifles, were hunted down. And the few that were spared were divided amongst the weary commando units as a reward for safeguarding the community. The Khoisan children often taken from their parents and the wives separated from the surviving husbands served as slaves and concubines.

And so it was that cruelty, hatred and envy of the better-off few in their scattered communities, were the threads that were woven into the coat of many colours that was worn by these challenged trekkers. It was the coat worn by Susie and afterwards by her daughter Trudie when she took the mantel from her mother and moved with her youngest son Helmut to the plains of Camdeboo.

This was at the time when Stockenstrom's humane reforms added resentment to the hearts of men. When they believed that their God had forsaken them as it was foretold by the Prophet Jeremiah; for like the Israelites they were a people chosen by God and punished by Him for their sinfulness. Wishing to make amends for their evil ways many *trekboere* packed their wagons and gathered what remained of their flocks and followed their leaders across the arid veld and over the Orange River to rebuild their Promised Land.

These hardened but resourceful *volk* were willing to endure whatever hardship their Saviour placed in their path as they fled from the yoke of their oppressor, the English. For these greedy usurpers had broken the Lords Commandments by imposing their English laws in a land wrongfully taken. Their ungodly decrees deprived a chosen people of a livelihood, driving them from their farms by imposing heavy taxes, depleting their meagre and dissident stock of servants by the freeing their slaves and allowing the insolence and theft of these savages to go unpunished. The last straw added to the heavy load of prohibition was the law that forbid Afrikaner children to be educated in their mother tongue.

But Helmut was not one of those who went with his brethren on the *Groot Trek*. He had a deep respect and love for his land and he did not wish to leave his widowed mother. She it was who had been his comfort and protector when he was brought down by the lashes of his drunken father. She it was who called her son a brave and upright man for honouring her, as his *Bybel* commanded him to do, that his days may be long upon the land his Lord hath given him. So Helmut stayed on the plains of Camdeboo to eke out an existence at his mother's side.

And it came to pass that Helmut went into the town of Graaff Reinet and there he found Leah, the daughter of the bastard Rachel, who was taken by a German burgher and his wife from her dead mother Magdalena; she being the woman who brought shame to her father's house. And when it was her time the sinful woman was carried by ox wagon from the Moravian Missionary of Genadendal to die in the parsonage of the Dutch Reformed minister of Caledon shortly after giving birth to the daughter of the Bastard-Khoi, Samson.

But Helmut knew not what had gone before when he took Leah to be his bride in 1862. Her complexion was fair like her grandmother Magdalena's, and so too was the complexion of their first child. And they called her Mary. And it came to pass that a second daughter was born to Leah. And Helmut, whose hope was for a son, felt the curse of the Lord upon him. But Leah comforted her husband and the child was baptised Martha in the Dutch reformed church in Graaff Reinet, for their hope was that the two sisters would live in fear of Jesus, and that their Loving Father would instruct them so that they would grow in understanding of his power and of their safety in his love.

And the name of Helmut's farm on the plains of Camdeboo was Bethany for that was the name of the town outside Jerusalem where the sisters who loved Jesus lived in the first days of his ministry.

And it came to pass that Helmut went in unto Leah and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son and like unto the family of Bethany near Jerusalem he was called Lazarus. And it was seen that the boy's complexion was like unto his second sister Martie, which was darker than their mother Leah's, nay also to that of their blue-eyed sister Mary, and also that the hair of Lazarus was *kroes* like unto their bastard servant Nonzima. And Helmut's mother Trudie, believing her son to be deceived, urged him not to lie with a Jezebel, but to harken to the prophecy of Jeremiah and thereby to save his soul.

And it grieved Helmut to honour his mother, but he did not wish to bring down the wrath of God upon himself or his children and therefore he obeyed the Commandments of his Lord in respect of his mother. But in other respects he obeyed the laws passed down to him by his hardened forebears.

And so in the brutal world of master and servant the death of his servant went unreported and unpunished. And furthermore, in the remote frontier regions, where survival hung in the balance, the rod of man was needed so as to strike fear into the hearts of an ignorant and patriarchal community. A husband was granted the right to subdue his wife by whatever means his Christian conscience thought fit when she brought dishonour to his name.

Now it came to pass in the days that the *Boere* ruled that there was a drought in the land. And a certain Jew of Brandfort-Orange-Freestate-Republic went to sojourn in the Cape Colony.

And the name of the man was Benjamin and the name of his wife was Naomi, and the name of his two sons Jakob and Joseph and they came into the town of Graaff Reinet and continued there.

And Bennie, Naomi's husband died; and she was left and her two sons. And they took them wives of the Christian women of Graaff Reinet; the name of the one was Sarie and the name of the other Martie, she being the girl Naomi had taken into her household when the run-away child had looked in vain to her congregation for succour.

And Naomi being a seamstress taught her daughters in law to cut the cloth that the *smous* brought by ox-wagon from the interior according to the patterns desired by the ladies who dined and danced with the British officials at the Drosdy and at other notable establishments of the town.

And over the weeks and months Martie unrolled yards of organza and brocade on the cutting table, or sat by the window of the sewing room and edged a taffeta bodice with lace, or puff sleeves with velvet ribbon, or gathered chiffon over a satin lining, or hemmed a tulle skirt and her heart mended.

And Jakob and Joseph died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters in law that she might return from the Cape Colony for she had heard how the Lord had visited his people of the two Republics in giving bread to the congregations of His Dutch Reformed and Herformde Churches.

And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, 'Go, return each to her mother's house'.

And they said unto her, 'surely we will return with thee unto thy people'.

And Naomi said, 'Turn again my daughters go your way, for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me'.

And Sarie harkened to the voice of Naomi, but Martie clave unto her saying:

'Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee: for wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'

So they two returned and when they came to Brandfort Naomi's people the Jews had taken themselves throughout the two Boer Republics. And Petrus, a Christian man of wisdom and of wealth, was moved by them so they tarried in his house. And Petrus' kinsman Georg redeemed the parcel of land that was Naomi's husband Benjamin's and later inherited by her two sons.

And Georg raised up the name of Naomi and of Martie. And Naomi said unto Martie, 'Go you with Georg for he is a good man. Let his people be your people once more.'

And Martie heard the wisdom of her mother in law and Georg took her as wife and the congregation of Herformde Church bore witness. And Georg went in unto her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son.

And the women said unto Naomi 'he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.'

And the women, her neighbours, being mostly the Huguenots of French descent, named the child Hercule. And Naomi took the child Harry and together they went with his father Georg and his mother Martie to their parcel of land and there amidst the rocky hills known to the Boers as *koppies* they built their stone homestead. There too they walled their dam and planted their mielies and herded their sheep and cattle and Martie begat three daughters and a second son.

And Naomi died and after she was laid to rest Martie went to the top of the koppie in her velvet dress and there she danced so that her soul might find peace as did the soul of her mother in law.

Now it came to pass seventeen years after Martie had returned with Naomi to her people that there was a war in the Promised Land of their two Boer Republics and the enemy, the soldiers of the Queen, being desirous of their gold fields, removed the women and children from their farms to an incarceration in concentration camps; the British high command believing that this strategy would curtail the activities of the Boer guerrilla fighters who lived off the land and used farmsteads as places of refuge and replenishment.

And Martie and her five children from the district of Brandfort in the Republic of the Orange-Free-State were put in a cattle truck and railed in a southerly direction to the capital city of Bloemfontein to sojourn in a concentration camp of ragged, malnourished and sick women and children made homeless by Milner's scorched-earth policy.

And they dwelled there for the length of two years, the time it took for 27,927 (this number being one tenth of the small nation of the Boers that dwelt in the two republics and also being more than twice the number of their men killed in battle) of their sisters and their children to die in a plague of starvation and disease brought upon them by British neglect and incompetence.

In the bitter year of 1901 those guarding the camp did not prevent Martie creeping up the *koppie* from her over-crowded accommodation to signal to Naomi with the flower-heads of aloes in the hope of finding some comfort in her distress. Her sister-inmates amused by her intemperate semaphore called Martie mad. But there were a few mothers whose bitterness did not allow them to forgive. A dying child held closely in the mud-sodden dark of a candleless tent had put out the light of His love in their anguished hearts. These determined *susters*, would find a way of stopping the traitorous dance of this inflamed Jezebel.

Maude's Vrouelied to Martie:

Schubert/Krummacher, *Die nacht*

'How beautiful you are.' Was Hedwig saying this about me?

Martie, it was not my intention to introduce myself to you in such an unrehearsed fashion. I spent all morning practising *Heidenröslein* to give you some idea about who I was. But now, as I look up at the stars 'How beautiful you are' are the words that come to mind.

Two-and-a-half years ago, as we lay, looking south, under the canopy of stars on Kalk Bay's beach, Hedwig told me that *Die Nacht* was written for four male voices. Schubert never intended his *lied* to be sung by a single contralto voice. But Hedwig, no stickler for rules, was unafraid to take liberties. And her song stirred my breast into unladylike heavings; playing with the sea-sand, allowing it to slip between her fingers, she sifted my finer feelings, bewitching me into switching seasons, making March the springtime equinox of the Southern Hemisphere.

The star-studded mantel of Hedwig's magic was central to my being; it blazed through my universe like the Milky-Way cloak of Orion that was pinned to the right shoulder of the mighty hunter by the diamond broach Betelgeuse and dazzled down through the mid-point of my universe, past the Seven Sisters and the Southern Cross, onto the mountains of Cape Point and over the plains of the Indian Ocean.

Perhaps, rather than dismissing those ancient Greeks and Romans Martie, we should have another look at some of the amazing things they did and take a feather or two out of their imaginings. For one, if they could Pantheon their universe with gods and heroes, is it beyond the realms of possibility for us to star our sky with a Milky Way of *Vrouelieder*?

In the constellations of Shubert, Hedwig gives centre stage to Goethe's little dancer, Mignon; of all his creations she is the most pure and impassioned. Her ecstatic but unattainable vision of a homeland beyond the Alps is thrilling. Like an unearthly spirit she glides before us singing her homesick verses, her *Nur wie die Sehnsucht kennt*.

Getting back to earth again, Martie, where do I start my story? This is the question I ask myself. Do I begin with my present predicament? Tell you how the privations of our civil war affect English-speaking farmers like my brother-in-law? Or how the grandson of our Afrikaans neighbours was hanged as a traitor in Dordrecht, in order to serve as an example to any other colonial hothead, who might choose to betray his oath of loyalty to the Queen by throwing in his lot with his fellow Boer?

Do I tell you how your son, in search of his father, made his escape from your concentration camp in Bloemfontein and joined General Smuts' commando as they crossed the Orange River into the enemy territory of the Cape Colony? How, pursued by the Tommies in the terrible rains of early September, Harry slipped down from the Stormberg and lay injured in a clump of bitter aloes until I found him and hid him, for a night on a month, in my absent son William's *buitekamer*; nursing him back to health as he told me how you fended off the horrors of camp life by warming the dying children in your newspaper nighties?

Martie, your son Harry tells me that you are the one who lit up the dark months of winter as you danced with your bitter-aloe flower-heads on the camp's *koppie*. Unfortunately, a few hardened hearts could not bear you dressing up in all your finery and flashing your red-hot pokers about. They branded you a temptress, a Jezebel, and saw to it that you were locked up with prostitutes and other undesirables in the barbed-wire enclosure of the camp's 'Bird Cage'.

'Are you a lady of the night, Martie?'

Before you answer, just look at what has happened to Orion. He is no longer the invincible hunter, a-prowl in his zenith, as he was for Hedwig and me. He has been caught napping, showing us his human side. Look how his cloak is spread out beneath him over the peaks of the Stormberg. Poor thing, it can't be a very comfortable bed. When I came and sat here a little while ago all that I could see was his belt and sword, but now he is sitting up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, and seeing to it that his mighty broach, Betelgeuse, is visible to all above the eastern horizon.

You need to find your bearings in order to understand the workings of the stars. If you don't centre on true south they seem to change their positions very mysteriously. When Hedwig and I marvelled at our mighty warrior he was in the west walking tall, his cloak, a waterfall sparkling down a granite sky. But look at our hero now; he's lying flat on his back on the other side of the world. Luckily the seven sisters can still be seen and also the Southern Cross.

So I am not altogether without company, or completely lost. If I raise a perpendicular from the line I draw between the two Pointers till it meets the extended foot of the Cross, I can find the South Celestial Pole and feel safe, as I did when Hedwig and I lay on the beach thinking of those early sailors, the pioneering Dutch, French, German and English forefathers and mothers of our nation, Martie, who put their trust in the stars as they ventured to a new world over treacherous seas.

Of course, it was early autumn when Hedwig and I mused thus and we were facing south. Now it is late spring and I am facing north. I am not sure what the situation is as you look back at me from your 'Bird Cage' in Bloemfontein, Martie. Is Orion in the east? And is his cloak a phosphorus wave lacing the shore of an earth adrift on the midnight-blue of the sky?

Martie's Vrouelied to Maude:

Schubert/Goethe, *Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn*

I know about lace Maude, but I don't know anything about waves. I have never been to the ocean. My Naomi went. Like your Hedwig, she sailed across it, not on a visit, but to escape, forever, from cruelty and starvation in her Prague ghetto. After burying her baby brother she fled with her mother and father and her two sisters across Germany to Hamburg. As they sailed to the Cape and her family slept, Naomi crept up onto the deck where the Spanish lady, no stranger to the twists and turns of life's dance, showed the thirteen-year-old girl a few steps on how to entice and command.

Orion is rising in the East tonight. No matter what way I face he will always be there at this time in November. The only difference is that he is on my left rather than on my right-hand-side. I know this because I dance under the stars and see how the constellations stay in their nocturnal and seasonal places. In winter, after settling the children for the night, it doesn't matter whether you face north, or south, or east, or west on the rise above the tents where the aloes find enough shelter amongst the boulders to flower, the Southern Cross takes centre stage and Orion is nowhere to be seen.

It was the same as long ago, in Graaff-Reinet when Naomi found me tucked into her quince hedge under an orange tree growing beside the road. I had walked all night so that my father would not catch up with me and I was starving. After eating five quinces I folded some orange leaves until they split and I could smell their lovely scent.

Naomi said I wasn't a thief, or a *hoer*. I was a god-send. She didn't know how she would finish making all the *Voortrekker* dresses and bonnets before the Holy Communion get-together the following month. And three months later the district's Dutch-Reformed community would be gathering again for Easter and they would need to be decked out in suitably sombre outfits.

Naomi kept me busy and safely hidden away from the gossips on the look-out for me. We buried my dead baby on the Koppie above the town dam and once a month we returned to our little girl's grave and danced our stories for her. The Southern Cross was always there, spinning slowly around on her heavenly stage, but Orion only put in his appearance from the end of spring to the beginning of winter.

How well I remember those nights, Maude. Naomi said that the ascending moon was like a pale and haughty mistress trailing her imported stole over the dewed lawn of the Governor's Residency. She thought that the pair of them would do better if they deigned to stop and see what they were missing.

‘*Nebbish*, doesn’t the moon realise that we are her equal, queens of the veld, strong and unafraid as Jezebel, the murdered wife of Ahab the king of north Israel.’

Naomi told me that Jezebel believed in Baal and not in Yahweh, the God of the Prophet Elijah. The faithful hated her and she was thrown out of the window to be eaten by dogs until only her skull, feet and hands remained.

‘The pity is that good Christians read as gospel all that is written about the kings of the Old Testaments. They have never heard this condemned woman’s side of the story. Jezebel was treated in the same inhuman way as the Jews were, and still are, treated by the Christians in Prague and all over Europe. That’s why my brother died and why we fled.

But things didn’t improve much when we got to the Cape. Although we weren’t confined, like our black servants to the ghettos of their location, we were also considered to be unclean; the seed of Noah’s dishonouring son Ham and likely, if given a chance, to lead God’s chosen into committing the sins of idolatry, greed and worse.

Ignorant Christians know nothing of our prayers; of our *Shema* that commemorates their Ten Commandments: “Hear, O Israel: the lord is our God, the Lord is one.”

They know nothing about the verses that follow; the *V’ahavta* (and you shall love), the commands to love God with all one’s heart, soul and might; to remember all the commandments and to teach them diligently to your children and to recite the words of God when you lie down and when you rise; to bind these words “on thy arm and thy head, *tefillin*, and to inscribe them on the door-posts of your house and on your gates.”

‘Now that you are part of our family, Martie,’ Naomi said, ‘You know that we recite the Shema and hang the *mezuzah* on our doors. God will forgive my poor Joseph for not wearing *tefillin*. He knows that conditions in the interior favour short sleeves and wide-brimmed hats and besides which lions and hyenas prowl around his ox wagon and the dust and flies bring as much misery and disease as the mud and rats of Prague.

“But, my son, what are such difficulties compared to the shame my people have born for countless generations,” God asks when Joseph can’t make ends meet. “Why distinguish yourself as those in Europe who over the generations are compelled to wear the yellow badge? Why encourage the ignorant to point you out and beat you about the head and shout ‘Kill the Jew’? You are a good man, Joseph. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever.”

‘But in the meantime, *Shaddai*, we must eat,’ Joseph pleads for some relief from the trials he feels unequal to bear.

And God hears the poor tailor’s plea. He does not turn from my Joseph when he stops wearing *tefillin*,’ Naomi tells me. God shows him a path called resourcefulness. If

Joseph were to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers and became a hawker of cloth it would lead him through the barren wastes of inhumanity to a land of milk and honey.

Hoivey, my Joseph thinks he has found this oasis in the desert when his friend Gert, who farms round the gallows tree at *Galgenbosch*, gives him a leg of venison, some springbok biltong and a few handfuls of dried fruit in exchange for yards of ticking and towelling, muslin and gabardine and then throws in a bit of lace and ribbon! 'There's more to life than sleeping, washing and working.' And Gert's good wife hears him and throws in a bottle of her precious fig jam.

Heeding God's advice, Joseph packed up our wagon and with my two sons and me went from the midst of our relatives in Brandfort to settle in our flat-roofed, white-washed house in Graaff-Reinet. Three times a year, since then, Joseph has gone in an easterly direction along the wagon-road accompanied by his Hottentot servant, Klaas. Unlike his master, poor Klaas can never avoid being picked out as an undesirable, one who befouls the purity of a chosen folk, for he has no hope of hiding the colour of his skin.

At Pearston they filled their water pouches before crossing the Little Fish River a day later and turning north towards Cradock. It would be several months before they caught sight of *Tandjiesberg* again, because on their return trip they went all the way south to Port Elizabeth to buy the various materials and items of haberdashery desired in the isolated dorpiess and farms of the Eastern Cape and the Two Boer Republics.

Believe me while he was away, I was not idle. Firstly, to assure God that his leniency was appreciated, I embroidered a new *Mizrah* with the *menorah*, the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and a short text from Psalm 113:

From the rising of the sun unto
The going down of the same the
Lord's name is to be praised.

I hung my decorative tapestry on the northern wall of our modest dwelling, because if I chose the eastern wall, as we did in Prague, we would be directing our prayers to the unknown rather than to Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

Secondly, although I was considered to be an unscrupulous Jew ready to take advantage of the unfortunate Christians, I was an able seamstress. And being judged worthy of stitching up the corseted women of the district's pious community in my smart designs, I was able to enjoy their extreme graciousness and condescension.

Naomi told me all this, and much more, as she taught me to sew and make my first dance dress from the scraps of her customers' suitable but fashionable outfits. I wished that

I was not so backwards and uneducated and unfit for her knowledgeable company. So I tried to be more like my saviour and mixed some of her fashionable words and notions with the exciting occasion we had recently witnessed (secretly, we peeped through the bevelled glass at the candlelit entertainment enjoyed by the prominent burghers of our town) when I told her about the wonder of the displaying herds of springbuck on our farm.

‘They lift their heads and twitch their ears when they become aware of my father, my sister, Maria, and me. A few trot off into the distance, while the others begin their show. Bucking and bounding they hang ten foot in the air before dropping down to curtsy and leap back up again to lower their horned head-dresses and glide past each other, drinking the wind like *senoritas* feeding on fire over the floor of the Drosdy’s banqueting hall, showing snowy ankles as the dark arches of long legs slit their sky skirts and pouches of white-hair ribboning their cinnamon bodices fan open and change colour like shot taffeta.’

My springbuck outfit wasn’t the first dress I learnt to make. When Naomi took me into her home I needed something more to wear, but I didn’t know how to sew like my mother who also loved crocheting and gardening. Before Lazarus was born she taught me how to knit a scarf, but only Marie was old enough to make her own skirts and jerseys. I also helped my mother weed and water her beautiful flowerbeds. But she didn’t do so much of that, because my Ouma thought planting flowers instead of vegetables was a waste of God’s most precious gift to His troubled people. Watering roses was as sinful as an Israelite throwing manna away in the desert.

Maude, our greatest scarcity was water. Platrivier only flowed after the rain. During the drought nothing was spared by the sun until he took a rest on the rock-leguaan kaross that he spread out over our farm dam to chew on the white biltong of our cattle’s bones, while need stripped our pantry shelves of their bottled fruit and vegetables. Venison was our last resort. My father, Maria and I would gallop up the river bed to where the springbuck foraged on the plants sheltering in the shadows of the mountains.

Naomi’s mother told her that the greatest scarcity in Prague was goodness. ‘Why else would Jewish synagogues be destroyed, Jewish shops stoned and set alight and Jewish ‘pigs’ beaten up and left to starve in ghettos?’

‘Do not get impatient my child,’ her mother continued, as Naomi stood shivering beside her in the downstairs room of the house they shared with the Kraus family. ‘It is necessary to watch me spinning, so that you can learn to make the thread that clothes us and keeps us warm.’

‘But I am freezing mother,’ Naomi answered.

‘And in three month’s time it will be May and we can cross the river and climb the slopes of the Letenské sadi and you can pick flowers and your older sisters can dream of the patterns they will embroider on their wedding wreaths. While it is cold we must warm our minds with the wise teaching of Rabbi Jehúdá Loew ben Becalel. Why don’t you tell me about Golem, Naomi?’

‘I’m tired of that old fairy tale. I can’t see why Rabbi Loew dug up all that clay from our river bank to bring his big helper Golem to life, only to turn him back into dust and throw him into the Vltava. A wiser man would have kept his giant alive and then all the Jews of Prague would still be safe and warm and have plenty to eat.’

‘But our enemies wanted Golem at all costs. When the Rabbi couldn’t put him to good use, imagine what they might ask him to do.’

‘But Golem wasn’t their servant. He only obeyed his master.’

‘And if a new master wasn’t as good at resisting temptation as Rabbi Loew was, Golem’s strength could have been sold to the highest bidder. And who might that be? Certainly not the friends of Jews for, as you know, my sweet child, we have precious few of those. And they, like us, poor souls, know that their wealth lies not in gold, but in the respect they show to themselves and to their fellowman when they say, “I am a Jew, you are a Christian, let us be friends; let us be knowledgeable about each other’s faith and traditions; let us mourn and rejoice as one in the great company of the living”.’

‘Can you believe that a woman spun such wisdom?’ Naomi asked me, Maude. ‘And to think that she was not a woman favoured by King Rudolph II of Prague, in addition to his astrologers, alchemists, charlatans and conjurors; nor was she a woman, who understood old books and cabbalas like Rabbi Jehúdá Loew ben Becalel in the Age of Stars and Mandrakes in a city of science, art and magic; nor was she a woman chosen by God to save her unfortunate people and to help them overcome all adversities.

My mother could never become a legend. She was not called upon to perform deeds that would place her among those who never die. She was only chosen by God to keep his commandments and to teach her children the *Shema* and the verses that follow, the *V’ahavta*. When, in memory, I stand beside my mother, her words, her little candles of love, warm me as they warmed the heart of that shivering child in the Jewish Quarter thirty years ago.’

And Naomi helped me overcome my adversities by making me knowledgeable about her people’s traditions. Wrapping me and my dead baby in the shawl of the moon-lit Sundays River, binding us to our *koppie*, she explains her wedding ceremony as she dances and sings.

‘Before the *kiddushin*, the engagement ceremony, I veil myself in remembrance of Rebecca who did the same when she was first brought to Isaac to be his wife. I approach and circle Joseph. A fiddle is plucked as I make my pre-nuptial vow “this bride knows white... this bride between a month and a day bears a child”. Joseph ends the two blessing he makes over wine with, “lift your voice now in song”. Then he places the ring on my finger and says “be sanctified (*mekudeshet*) to me with this ring in accordance with the laws of Moses and of Israel”.

Now the door is opened for the *nisuin*, the wedding ceremony. The words “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” are followed by the sound of a drum. A flute plays a stately yet soaring tune before the rhythm changes to quicker steps and the plaintive and forceful chant of a women’s voice is heard.

Joseph and I stand beneath the *huppah*, a canopy held up by four poles and adorned with the biblical quotation, “the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness”. The *huppah* is a reminder of the biblical tent into which the bride was taken and represents the future home of the couple. We recite the *sheva brakhos*, the seven blessings, ending with the words, “May there ever be heard music in the streets... Blessed are you, O Lord, who causes his groom to rejoice with his bride”.

We drink the wine and Joseph smashes his glass with his right foot, to symbolize the destruction of the temple. Then to the glad cry of *mazel tov*, good luck, Joseph carries me off in the hope that I will grant him permission to *naai* me, which according to Jewish law is a wife’s right. As the guests get merrier, they become bawdy and vulgar, making fun of the marriage contract, bickering and cursing until the fickle ‘groom’ calls out, “may all labours and diseases be shared until death us do part”.

Order is restored when the musicians call for the stamp of a foot, the clap of his hands, the smile of his girl, the sway of their arms, the swirl of her skirt.’

Maude's Vrouelied to Martie:

Schubert/Goethe, *Heidenröslein*

The first thing Harry asked me for after I hid him in Willie's *buitekamer*: outside room was for was a bible. But I only gave it to him when he had changed into some of my brother's clothes – Kenny would never miss them, sadly his only concern is for the whereabouts of his brandy bottle. My immediate concern was for Harry's safety and, for that matter, for mine. Harboursing the enemy, let alone a traitor, was dangerous. No one on the farm, not even my sister must know what I was up to. Until his wounds healed I hid Harry in Willie's outside-room on my sister's farm. Nobody goes there during term-time when my son is at boarding school in Queenstown.

According to the latest proclamation all Boer prisoners wearing British uniforms were to be shot on the spot. Apparently a seething Haig got the jitters when he received news of Smut's victory in the Elands River Valley and saw the smashed and mangled bodies of his officers and men of the 17th Lancers. French and Kitchener's implacable orders were renewed.

After reading Haig's decree I was not in the best frame of mind, but I was in a state of terror when I discovered your son lying in clump of bitter aloes. Not only was he in a sorry way, but he was wearing an English officer's jacket and breeches.

You might wonder how he got to be wearing such an inappropriate outfit, Martie.

'*Tannie*,' he explained when I asked him the same question. 'When the blue hands of your enemy let go of his Lee-Metford you know that he is no longer your *vyand*. You also know that he can longer feel the frozen mud and the icy wind and that he won't mind swapping his thick-soled boots and swanky breeches and jacket for your worn *veldskoene*, your *flenterbroek*: torn trousers and shirt and your *mielie*-bag jacket.'

Martie you might wish to ask why Hedwig came to visit me two years after her brother had died of black-water fever in Rhodesia in December 1896. I invited her because the children were very keen to see their *schöne* aunt; their papa's favourite sister. I hoped that when she had met her brother's family and knew more about our dire financial situation – whose fault was that I ask you? But that's another issue – she would help our brilliant son William receive the education he deserved (given the chance my two girls would be as accomplished) by paying for him to go to boarding school in Queenstown.

Over the course of our marriage, I had corresponded with Albert's oldest sister Hedwig, who was more like a mother to him, his mother having died when he was only

eleven. As my German was not up to scratch, we always corresponded in English. She was fluent in the language having moved to London in 1880, after students from her university spear-headed the resurgence of anti-Semitism. She joined her brother, now an up-and-coming engineer, and taught singing, the other great love of her life.

Getting back to my forays into German; according to Albert they were not good enough for polite society. Initially, he had been happy to teach me the language of his birth and I thought I was getting the hang of things, but as the years went by my ability deteriorated. Albert spent more and more time at his Club entertaining dignitaries from the Cape, Transvaal and from abroad. He grew impatient with my lack of vocabulary and grammar and gave me up as a bad job. I clearly wasn't the girl he thought he had married.

Hedwig thought that fences could be mended between me and my misunderstood late husband if she and I reflected on the bit of reading she hoped we might do together. For a start, she believed that *Daniel Deronda*, the last great work by the revered novelist George Eliot, would fit the bill perfectly. I would gain enough insight into the vexed question of Jewish/Christian relationships to settle any score I might have in that regard.

Of course, Hedwig saw me as the flawed, but spirited Gwendolyn, but she didn't bargain on the possibility that I would re-cast her good, albeit misguided, brother as the dead-wood Grandcourt, instead of thinking of him as the wistful visionary Deronda. Mind you, it wasn't much of a thank-you on my part to switch identities like that, if you consider all the trouble she had taken, all the expense she had borne, all the protégés she had left in limbo, in order to make sure her wayward sister-in-law was back on track.

So what is the story of Albert and Maude? Who are these two characters? How did they meet?

It might be better to answer the second question first Martie. I was in Port Elizabeth in 1887 because my great-grandmother Elizabeth married John at St Edmunds in Exeter in England in 1809. She and her first five children sailed to Algoa Bay with him, the leader of the Devonshire Party, in 1820. But the farm that they were allocated on the Kareige River did not live up to expectations; kaffir wars, drought, pests and isolation not being their idea of a green and pleasant land. So they upped sticks and settled on the Baakens River a stone's throw from the bustling community in Algoa Bay where my great-grandfather, as well as being a noted cattle farmer, meat merchant and huntsman, bought up all the land along Main Street as far as Peel Street and down Jetty Street around to Strand Street.

His fourth child, my grandmother Elizabeth (he had sixteen children from two marriages), also found this move to be up her street. She met and married William from

Shropshire and the magnolia bushes she had taken from their native soil in the district of Albany bloomed, much to her father's astonishment. He didn't think the long-tongued moth that serviced their creamy flowers would venture so far afield.

'Nature will find a way,' was my granny's sunny belief. And, for a second time, she was proved right. My mother Hannah married her William in 1863 and the magnolia bush she planted in remembrance of their honeymoon still flowers beside its offspring, near the stoep of their farmhouse that overlooks Port Elizabeth. It was here that I grew up and where I became infatuated by my sweet-talking neighbour, the good-looking Dennis. Sadly, he was ill-equipped to do battle with the swashbuckling Adonis, the wax-moustachioed Albert, when he wooed me, until it no-longer suited him and he complained:

'She was my Kore, my spring, my summer, my autumn, the loveliest child ever born. My earth bloomed until Hades kidnapped this daughter of the harvest goddess, Demeter, and turned her into Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld. Now her dark kingdom is ploughed by cold winds and seeded with snow. And you are so beautiful Aphrodite. Don't give me back to this frozen crone. As a jewel on a wave you came to me, your arrows of love filling the coldest of hearts with joy. Let me stay with you a little longer.'

But fate will have her way, Martie. A year after my Adonis betrayed me, by heeding his Aphrodite's glorious call instead of his wife's anguished one, he was stabbed in the back, not, as of old, by the sharp tusks of a white boar on Mount Lebanon, or by the assegai of Lobengula, whose land he was annexing, but by the stealth of a mosquito in the Matoppo Hills.

How well I remember the second day of 1897, when the door to any hope of a happy future for me and my children slammed shut. The official communiqué bringing the sad tidings of Albert's death was delivered at the same time as The Eastern Province Herald's impressive supplement, *Eighteen Ninety Six in South Africa*. We were left in no doubt as to the truth of the telegram, or to the authenticity of the hefty tome. The stamp of authority blazoned from its front cover; a bugling Hermes knelt before a sun of 'Progress and Peace' and a banner proclaiming 'The Press is the Palladium of all our Liberties'.

Noble sentiments indeed, but not ones likely to ignite a raging bosom! Perhaps, in the light of what I know now, I should soften that word a bit, because rage sounds out of control and unacceptable; well it certainly must to you Martie. Naomi's suffering has given you a tolerant outlook on life. But it's what I felt when Albert died. Back then I had no-one to support me; no-one to help me cope, to understand why I hated him for abandoning me,

hated him for his betrayal, hated him for making me think I was worthless. And now I feel so guilty for saying all this to you.

So let me improve matters, embrace a more enlightened spirit, by adjusting our perspective Martie. Let us go behind our serene little couple emerging into the sunlight of wedded bliss. But before we find out who I was at this juncture, let's concentrate on Albert's Aphrodite. And let me assure you that the great love of his life was no Goddess.

His name was Rhodes, Cecil John Rhodes. A name you have surely heard, for it is one that fills not only every republican Boer's heart with anger, but my English heart as well. He has betrayed us all. And our local paper, The Eastern Province Herald would soap us into believing otherwise; stating that the causes of the failed Jameson Raid were defensible; that the *uitlanders* were wrongfully deprived of their right to vote.

It would have us believe that the policy 'directed to the maintenance of Boer supremacy at all costs' was adhered to with an 'obstinate determination' by the Pretoria authorities, who saw the demands of the Uitlanders as 'the thin edge of the wedge which would drive them from power'.

Perhaps the editor of the E.P. Herald is a shareholder and fearful of what would happen to the gold market if he refrained from skewing the facts to favour Rhodes' version of events. And so our bugling Hermes omitted to report that the Rand's mining magnates, financiers and industrialists, desiring stability, were initially opposed to the plot hatched by Rhodes and his comrade-in-arms Alfred Beit. But Rhodes needed them on his side if he wanted his dream of bringing about the federation of South Africa to become a reality.

Never one to bring a sensitive mind, or a lofty morality to his personal or political dealings, he coaxed these powerful and influential men into creating a revolution at Johannesburg; persuading them with his usual skill and charm as to the financial merits of whipping up the *uitlanders*' cause and the community benefits that would accrue to them should they choose to spear-head his revolutionary movement.

'No doubt about it, we can stitch up Oom Paul... Rest assured that when we're finished with him and his corrupt hoards of imported Dutch officials they will be the only ones accused of daylight robbery.' 'The enlightened policy of my Johannesburg Reform Committee is to share the spoils with all citizens, new and old alike, who have risked their lives to venture to a land that a bull-headed Oom Paul believes is sacred only to his *volk*.'

I can just hear Rhodes wheeling out his stock-in-trade phrases that Albert so eagerly echoed Martie. Albert was convinced of the merits of the case. 'We are perfectly in our rights to teach this backward-looking despot a salutary lesson or two. Inflexible and avaricious, the buffoon Kruger has the temerity to ignore the teachings of history and

common sense. Plainly he wishes to keep the riches of the goldfields to further the interests of his self-serving republic.'

When there's so much chicanery about, it's difficult to know who to believe. According to the 'Herald' of our district, it seems that from the outset – when, in high dudgeon at the contempt they endured at the hands of the invading British, the *trekboere* left the Cape in 1836 – all was not consensus in the Promised Land. The editorial claims that 'the following years were years of one long struggle against the barbarous hordes of Mosilikatse, years of continual fighting when many brave men fell, when all men lived in continual fear and when none were safe. From that struggle the Boers emerged victorious.'

After driving out Mosilikatse they established themselves 'under the ambitious title of The South African Republic' and made Paul Kruger their leader. But there was dissention in their ranks; many were unhappy when the British annexed their impoverished homeland. After the Boer victory of Majuba Hill, before gold was discovered in 1885, the republic was once again on the verge of bankruptcy and the Transvaal burghers were 'longing for the just and strong Government of the Queen'.

Fortunately, in the nick of time for Kruger and his fanatical *broeders*: brothers 'the blackness of this night was followed by a surprising dawn'. *Gulden*: Guilders beyond their wildest dreams had fallen, like manna from heaven, into their empty coffers. Their God-given Republic was safe from the grabbing hand of Empire; not only the Queen's mind you, but that of the Keiser's as well – he happily lent Oom Paul money to build an independent railway to Delagoa Bay and free his enlaagered *volk* from the clutches of the Cape.

Where did I pick up all this knowledge, you might ask Martie? Albert would too. He never dreamt that his feather-brained wife would be interested in the grave matters of State discussed after dinner over cigars and port. But on most occasions these visiting colleagues left their ladies in the comfort of their own homes on the Rand or in Cape Town and I was the only one left to eavesdrop in mine.

Of course, it could be argued that the Kruger administration was self-serving and bungling; that the situation would be far better managed, wealth more evenly distributed if the British were in control. Rhodes' Albert certainly took this point of view; delighted with the part he would play in the most momentous moment of the nation's history, when he and some other lackeys chose to be in Johannesburg in Rhodes' stead as Dr Jameson, aided by several Imperial officers, invaded the Transvaal at the head of the police force of Rhodes' Chartered Company.

'Pity he can't be there to see his 'Charterland' replace the Rand as the economic magnet of South Africa.' I goaded Albert.

But the blighter had bigger fish to fry and seeking some sort of truce with a wife on the war-path, he refused to take the bait and chastise me. 'As Prime Minister of the Cape it is certainly not politic for Rhodes to be seen taking sides, at least not until it is a *fait accompli*.'

'Why go along with a reckless adventurer? You know he always counts his chickens before they hatch.'

But in November 1895 Albert blocked his ears and boarded the train for the Transvaal. He didn't care to listen to my caution, or to the coastal breeze playing with the wreaths of fading flowers on our baby son Douglas's grave. What, after all, did a woman know; what was a mother's grief when The Empire stood at the gates of world domination armed with the wealth of Croesus?

Sadly, Albert was not one to learn from bitter experience. I can still hear him persuading my father as to the merits of investing in the blue-chip shares of Rhodes's Consolidated Gold Fields. When the bottom fell out of the market and my parents were forced to sell their beloved farm, my father died of a broken heart and my mother found shelter in one of her grandfather's houses, transplanting a 'honeymoon' magnolia sapling into her town garden for comfort.

Martie, you will say 'it takes two to tango' and I will agree. However much I might wish it were otherwise. We both knew that playing hard-to-get was part of luring's act, but Albert wasn't going to give me the chance to reject him and risk being consumed by the finer feelings of love. And being no sweet innocent, I knew how to use my charms to good effect and that meant, to my satisfaction.

'Woe betides the one who dares to fall in love with you,' my father commiserated. Secretly, he had a soft spot for me, even though I had always been a bit of a disappointment. He was set on naming his second child and oldest son, Kenneth John, but that Christening had to wait for another six years. He had to make do with his little Maudie as she played second fiddle to his pride and joy, his Minnie. Although his eldest child could turn a head more readily with her beauty she couldn't juggle ideas as well as his clowning daughter.

Albert knew that he had found his equal when, for the first time, I walked onto his stage. I wasn't quite what George Eliot had in mind when she described Gwendolyn Harleth, 'the Nereid in sea-green robes and silver ornaments'. Nevertheless I was a 'striking girl' who 'knew what was admirable and that she herself was admired'. Swept up by the excitement of our romance and believing that I was in charge, it never dawned on me that,

at heart, I was a simple farm girl, who was foolishly allowing herself to be carried away, buy into Albert's dream, despite being cautioned by my father.

'I would tread very carefully. He might be dashing, but he is a great deal older than you.'

Initially, my mother wasn't at all sure whether, or not, I should give up my feelings for Dennis. 'He is one of our own. We can trust him on the issues that matter.'

But who wouldn't be smitten when a mythical Odysseus sailed from far-flung shores into the midst of their local bunch of would-be toffs, Martie? I had never met anyone as dashing as our hero, Albert. How could I but be captivated by his doe-eyed version of *Heidenröslein*. Of all the guests who had ridden out to my parent's farm to enjoy their hospitality, I stood out in the crowd; I was the only one less interested in the temptations of a *braai* than in the promise of his German lied.

When everyone went out onto the *stoep*, on that December evening in 1886, I remained in the lounge to listen to his engaging rendition of a story about a boy plucking a rose. Our subsequent smiles conveyed to each other that we both knew that his deceptively simple song might be more than a charming folk tale.

Having enjoyed a good education I was reluctant to accept that its riches were at an end and that from henceforth I must brace myself for a life of fitting in with others as I attended to my womanly duties. All was not doom and gloom, I was assured. The delights of the bridal bed and the nursery more than made up for the drudgery of the churn and the oven and the darning basket. But I needed more time before we announced our engagement. And Dennis was hardly the type to stand in my way.

Albert was of a different mould altogether. And we were two of a kind; headstrong and spirited; prepared to go down the unbeaten path, but unprepared to be stopped in our tracks. And time was not on Albert's side – he was a few months shy of thirty. As he sized up his opponent, he had little doubt that I would succumb to the sizzle of his courtship, forgo the dung of the farm for the high-life of the city, especially if he added a piquant touch by pointing out what treats lay in store for me there.

The horses of our Geard & Co. carriage, when not called upon to convey me from showroom to showroom, would enjoy the care of our groom. We could chose from the largest and best assorted stock of household furnishings in the colony, if we paid Jas Brister a visit. And I wouldn't ever have to worry my pretty little head over baking. John Pyott, the proprietor of the Pioneer Flour and Meal Mills, though naturally not a patch on those owned by his late father in and around Strelitz, would supply our high class cakes and confectionary and Peycke & Co. all the Gold Medal condensed milk I could dream of.

The first class London experts of Marshall & Co. would see to my dressmaking and millinery needs, while I could rely on Bisseker, George & Co to find the right fit for my delicate feet from their leading lines of continental and American boots and shoes. And the celebrated 'Lampe Belge' would brighten my music books as in an intimate moment after dinner I accompanied the deeper strains of Albert's cello with the sunnier notes of our newly-purchased pianoforte.

Or, if we preferred more gaiety, we could dine at Bunton's Grand Hotel; enjoy a magnificent view of the Bay and the ships from its balcony as we sipped the best wines and spirits and Albert puffed one of the finest cigars. And we would make the acquaintance of the most distinguished visitors to the Cape Colony, after they disembarked from their Castle and Union Line steamers.

But best of all, I didn't have to worry how all this would be paid for. Albert assured me he had placed his considerable funds in the capable hands of the accounting and financial agents Clarke & Co. They were happy to arrange a first mortgage on whichever property we chose as our home.

Dear Martie I could skirt around the bush for days, but in the end, if I am to be straight with you, I have to admit that I am a bad girl. My best attributes have always been my dimple and my naughty laugh. Although I managed to keep a lid on my sinful desires, pretending to be a good girl, going to church and doing fine deeds, Albert spotted my weak point when we met and he knew he could exploit it. The one thing I truly desired he was happy to provide.

In the end it didn't matter what anyone thought about him or about us as a couple. The outcome of our future was settled by my lack of probity and the urgency of Albert's sperm. We gathered driftwood and lay beside our fire in the cosy hollow of a sand dune and the breeze rippled through the harp-strings of the stars and the phosphorous played on the keys of the sea and Albert bowed over the cello of my body drawing up deep sighs from its depths. And later, the moonlight lapped around the embers of the quartet, content as we were after our long journey through heaven.

Here I am rambling on about my own concerns when I know that if I were in your shoes, questions about the welfare of my son would be uppermost in my mind. Harry's wounds are well-healed and yesterday I took him to the local police station where he handed himself over to the British authorities.

Believe me reaching this decision was no easy matter for him. There were days when I feared for his life; when the turmoil of fever, fervour and fear was getting the better of him. But he is a fighter, a champion for his nation, a young man of character when confronted by a stark choice. Should he stick to his guns and fight to the bitter end for the rights of his people, or should he give up the struggle and accept, as it seems you do, that giving is the only answer to life's bitter struggle?

In the end Martie, his love for you and for his sisters and brother tipped the scales. When he realised how much you all will need him when this terrible war is over he accepted that his life was not worth the sacrifice; you would all be better off if he was alive rather than dead. Harry handed himself in at the local police station. And you can rest assured that he will be well-treated at the Green Point prisoner-of-war camp until you are all safely together again.

Hedwig has sent me newspaper cuttings from the Times and the Manchester Guardian to keep me up to date apropos Emily Hobhouse's struggle to get something done by the War Office and Parliament about the terrible suffering of Afrikaner women and children in the British concentration camps. Perhaps you know Miss Hobhouse, Martie, as she visited your camp at the beginning of the year.

It seems that efforts to nullify the effect of her reports, lest public sentiment should be aroused, have taken the form of criticising her and justifying the camps. Let me quote a few of their disparaging remarks; the moon is bright enough.

Miss Hobhouse has been labelled a 'political agitator' and 'disseminator of inaccurate and blood-curdling stories'. Her report is described as a 'weapon' used 'wherever the name of England' was hated. She is described as deficient as an investigator and had not the competence to compile these charges for she was 'hysterical' and put 'implicit belief in all that was told her'.

The famous author Arthur Conan Doyle, reporting on the war, never risked putting a foot inside your tented prison, but he knew that his opinion would carry great weight and so he accused Miss Hobhouse of complete ignorance in these particulars and, in consequence, her conclusions were to be considered untrustworthy.

There is so much discrediting and double-dealing going on, but apparently Miss Hobhouse is not one to take things lying down. She wrote an Open Letter to Mr Broderick: 'Can the appalling figures just shown in the government returns for August and the preceding month pass unnoticed by the Government and by the great mass of the English people?

If we leave for present the coloured camps and speak only of the white people, the returns show that the population of the camps has increased gradually during June, July and August from 85,000 to 105,000 souls. In the past month of August 1,878 deaths occurred among the whites, of which 1,545 were children. The total number of deaths for the three months for which we have returns is 4,067 of which 3,245 were children.'

Hedwig's Society of Friends came to the aid of Miss Hobhouse giving her the use of their meeting rooms when other venues were closed to her. Public meetings were held during the summer allowing Miss Hobhouse to defend her conclusion, saying that she was under no illusion as to the pressure placed on resources at a time of war, but she found that what was really lacking in the Boer camps were the bare necessities; no funds had been made available to spend on what would nourish, cleanse, or give warmth.

Shelter was totally insufficient. When eight to twelve people were crammed into a bell-tent trying to find shade, or to escape from the dust or rain storms there was no room to move, or air to breathe. And at night the regulation was to lower the flaps.

How could the Boer *vrou* be accused of being dirty and incompetent mothers and held responsible for disease brought on by neglect and unhygienic habits when they were not given soap or enough water to drink, let alone to wash their tattered and dust-coated clothes? And the majority could not afford to buy mattresses or blankets. The best bed they could hope for was dry earth and in winter the ground was freezing and the fuel foraged from the koppies had long-since run out.

Miss Hobhouse said the scale of rations for refugees amounted to a starvation rate and families, who have members on Commando, received less than half the amount of mielie meal and meat a day than those whose husbands and fathers have surrendered.

Naturally this has led to jealousy and a system of espionage. As you can confirm, Martie, the presence of spies and their tittle-tattle, founded on hearsay and prejudice, has reduced you to the bleakness of sharing accommodation in the 'bird cage' with those who have given up on life. In addition, scandalous tales have baulked the ladies of Bloemfontein at every turn, making them too timid to enter the camp and help clothe, feed and nurse the hundreds of children that are dying every month from dysentery, diarrhoea, enteric fever, measles and pneumonia.

A further horror is that the ladies of the Commission, appointed to bypass Miss Hobhouse and look into matters for the military and the present government are laying the blame for this entire debacle on the Boers. Dr. Jane Waterston writes the following to the Cape Times:

‘Judging by some of the hysterical whining going on in England at the present time, it would seem as if we might neglect or half starve our faithful soldiers, and keep our civilian population eating their hearts out here as long as we fed and pampered people who have not even the grace to say thank you for the care bestowed on them.

At present there is the danger that the Boers will waken up to have a care for their womenfolk, and will go on fighting for some time, so as to keep them in a comfortable winter quarters at our expense, and thus our women and children will lose a few more of their husbands and fathers.’

To top it all, it seems as if the church is in cahoots with them as well. The Bishop of Liverpool, Dr Chavasse, expressed his distress and dismay at the charges made against his Government for the inhuman, oppressive and unrighteous suffering meted out to innocent people.

‘Terrible as the farm burnings have been, it was only ordered when absolutely necessary by a British General whose character for humanity and godliness is beyond dispute.’ ‘The Boer women and children were crowded into camps because they could not be kept alive in any other way.’ ‘The great mass of Evangelical Christians would support the Government policy, because it involves the complete civilization of South Africa and the evangelisation of the native races.’

Martie, were you a starving, filthy savage when you and your five children were loaded onto an uncovered cattle truck and forced to sit in that oven waiting for all the families in the neighbourhood, whose farms and livestock were being destroyed, to be rounded up and shunted off to the Bloemfontein Concentration Camp with you?

Martie's Vrouelied to Maude:

Engelbert Humperdinck/Adelheid Wette, *Abendsegen* – *Evening Benediction*

Miss Hobhouse was a good friend of our *volk*. During the day she would distribute shoes, clothing and sorely-needed blankets – we had no mattresses – to those who had fled from their burning homes in such haste and terror that they had brought along next to nothing with them. She also found some milk and meat for the starving children of families whose husbands and fathers, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Queen, kept on fighting.

Later on in the day, as the light, but not the heat, faded from the white February sky, Miss Hobhouse walked around the camp listening to our stories of woe. One evening, before the twelve of us – three moeders and nine children – consigned ourselves, according to camp regulations, to the oven of our closed-up tent, this good English lady came and sat with us on a wooden stool that Harry had recently made. (On one of our permitted wood-gathering expeditions over the koppies to the north of the camp he had cut a few hard-wood stems from the dense tangle of bare branches at the centre of a *Witolienhout*: Buddleja saligna while, in memory of Naomi, I made a sweet-smelling posy from the last of its lacy-white flower – I had to wait until May to pick the winter flower-heads of the nearby clump of aloes so that I could try to signal for help.)

Fortunately, as we sat together that late February evening language was not a problem. Even our Afrikaans-speaking children could understand what Miss Hobhouse was saying. We had English reading books on our farm school and here in the camp the Queen's language is not to be taken lightly. My youngest daughter Sarie, who is just eleven, was smacked on the hand and called a dunce the other day for the bad spelling in her composition about camp life. But how was she to know that you can't write 'hunger and thirst are hard to bare'? How could my Sarie know that when you split the vowels in 'bear' the meaning of the word changes from, to endure, to uncover; or that it was a misuse of the well-known and happy expression to say 'I'm having a wail of a time' when she was thinking about her dolls that she was forced to leave behind in our burning farm-house?

Thankfully, at this stage, sickness had not taken our lives. My five children and I had only been transported to the concentration camp on the seventh day of January and they were still strong and healthy and the ground of our tent was not yet fouled by dysentery, or the air *besmet* with measles – which, of course, nothing can sweep away.

So we laughed when Miss Hobhouse informed us that those in command let it be known that the unsanitary and poor nutritional habits of the *Boerevrou* were responsible for the high death rates of our camp.

‘What do they expect their four hundred inmates to do in an emergency when all they provide for our stomach cramps are twelve latrines, whose buckets are only emptied by the *nagkar* at midnight?’ I asked.

‘I certainly see no signs of any fouling around your well-ordered tent; just a broom leaning against the guyrope, a trench dug around the perimeter to keep as much as is possible of the storm-water at bay and a cooking-pot hanging from a tripod.’

‘Naturally, as a Calvinist people we believe in Predestination,’ the now-deceased Susie, who was one of our three tent-moeders, replied. ‘According to our Prophet Jeremiah, we must suffer for the sins of our fathers, but as grateful inheritors of a provident and sober way of life we have little to fear in regard to the unjust allegations made by our cruel gaolers.’

‘They think we know nothing about *kleinhuisies*: outside loos, but they would change their minds if they could have seen me running bare-bottomed, out of one with a puff adder at my heels,’ Fransie says in support of his mother.

‘*My kind, so praat ons nie*: my child we don’t say that,’ she cautioned him. But of course Miss Hobhouse was not offended. She responded kindly to the child’s enthusiasm and her smile encouraged my Dou to open up and share a similar experience.

‘Wagter would always come along with me when I had to go to the place where, Ma says, even the Queen has to go on foot.’

‘For, as Pa says, there’s no pleasure without pain,’ Harry put in his bit of humour before his little brother finished what he was saying, ‘No snake would dare hang around our warm little-house when Wagter started barking.’

‘I wish I could say your dog’s name as beautifully as you do, Dou. You make him sound like a strong and a good friend.’

‘He was the best friend I ever had.’

Instead of belittling my son, in the usual British fashion, for the rough way we Afrikaners pronounce the letter g, Miss Hobhouse allowed Dou to believe that his language was as fine as hers, if not finer. Like Naomi she knew how to unlock a grieving child’s silence and make his wounded heart swell with love and pride.

My sad boy was able to speak about his Wagter for the first time since we took up our bundles of essential clothing, after making sure that the children had put on their shoes, hats and turned our backs on the blood-soaked ground of our cattle and sheep pens and the smoke and flames rising into the sky from the corrugated-iron roof of our farm-house and the thatch of Naomi’s *rondavel*: round room and the pine poles covering the stone barn and dairy – the mielie-fields down by the stream were still too green to burn – and walked along

the track past the broken carcass of our up-side-down, wagon that had been left to the thorns and dongas by our loyal *outa* and his two sons, after a mounted British officer commandeered them to carry out this act of treachery and destruction.

Only at gun-point would our loyal servants have broken the spokes, chopped up the seats and floor and uncoupled the shaft of the ox-wagon they had helped their master build, repair, load, inspan and drive. Only by being dragged out of the way by two determined soldiers would screaming and kicking Dou have given his Wagter to an enemy bullet.

‘Do you know aunty how clever Wagter was? He always knew when it was time to stop annoying Sarie and Nettie as they played their baby games. My susters weren’t fools; they knew that I wasn’t always aiming at *mossies*: sparrows with my *kettie*: sling.

‘If one more stone falls onto my doll’s cot I’ll call *moeder*,’ Nettie warned me.’

‘I suppose a cry-baby woman, like you is frightened I’ll wake your precious baby?’ I yelled back at them. I wasn’t going to let her *bangpraat* me.’

‘But, of course, Wagter thought otherwise. He didn’t want to lose his best friend and that might well happen if *moeder* gave up trying to whip me for my disobedience and resorted to sterner measures. And that meant calling the Noonday Witch. Wagter’s ears stood up when he heard those two words. What worried him most about the witch eating me for lunch was that he wouldn’t have a playmate in the afternoon.’

‘So I whistled to him and my *Korporaal* jumped up and barked at his troop of pine trees. They obeyed orders and stood to attention as their *Kommandant* turned his back on the *gepiep*: complaining of the birds and the *getjank*: bawling of his susters and climbed down from his pine-needle fort. And then the two of us turned on our heels and marched to the quince orchard to pick a couple of *uitmuntende kweperlatte*: superb quince whips. We had to make sure they was *stewig*: strong enough not to be snapped by the Noon Witch, but our weapons also had to be *buigsaam*: flexible enough to be good whips, so that we could give the witch a good hiding for trying to eat me, especially when I was still alive and, after that, she deserved some more *houe*: blows, because her spells were the worst in the world.’

‘*Ouma* Naomi told me that they were. And she knew what was true, because she came from the land where the Noonday Witch was born. *Ouma* Naomi even knew where the evil witch hid in disguise on the borders of Bohemia. But she couldn’t point out the Lunch Lady’s castle to us, because we wouldn’t be able to see it from our farm. It lay on the other side of the horizon.

Of course Wagter and I could climb the koppie at the back of the house to get a better view, but *Pa* always said *ewe voortwaards lig se kant toe, my kind*: ever onwards towards the light, my child; that’s why he built our house to face the sun as it sparkled on

the blades of his new windmill. *Papa* also said '*n Boer maak 'n plan*, so I thought the best plan was to climb the shiny stairs of Jacob's Ladder and stand on the top rung of our *windpomp* and see if the witch was coming and be ready for her if she dared to cross the *Vaal Rivier* into the *Orange Vrystaat*.'

'Dou, you know that is no longer the name of our Republic,' Anna, my eldest daughter corrected him.

'*Dit traak my nie*: I don't care, we *Patriote* will call *Ons Land* what we please. Anyway, it's rude to interrupt me while I am still telling Miss Hobhouse about Wagter. He knew that if he put his nose to the ground he would certainly pick up the witch's smell. So he nudges me with his wet snout, warning me that we had better be on the move and tip-toe past the thorny shields of the *turksvye*: cactus and the horns of the bull and run down the veld-path to the water trough, beside the windmill. When we see the wicked witch coming we can stand our ground and stop her from creeping under the barbed-wire fence into *mama se voortuin*.'

'Both of us know *dis klaarpraat*: it's over, if she gets as far as the garden, because then she will disappear completely and we won't have an idea where she is hiding her terrible clutches. You see the Noon Witch has the magic power to make her dress look like a flower-bed full of *vygies* and nasturtiums and to slip her powdered cheeks in amongst the pumpkins, and to hang her crooked nose in the *mik*: fork of an orange tree and to wrap up her pointed hat in the leaves of her lemon-tree cloak.'

Miss Hobhouse tells the children about the opera that she went to in London called Hansel and Gretel. Of course they know this fairy story, but they don't know about the little sandman, who walks into the clearing in the forest, and tells the hungry children that he loves them dearly and that he has come to put them to sleep. He puts grains into their eyes, and as he leaves they can barely keep them open. But Gretel reminds Hansel that before they go to sleep they must sing their evening prayer to keep them safe throughout the night.

When at night we go to sleep,
Fourteen angels watch do keep ...'

It is the *Lied* I sing to you Maude, as I remember those first terrible months of suffering and death. It is the *Lied* that my younger children sung to me at bedtime before I was separated from them for a month after being sent to the Bird Cage at the end of July for being of undesirable character. (As cold and disease ate away at our undernourished bodies and the death-toll kept rising, I was condemned for being a mad woman, an infidel and

hoer: whore. Some spiced up their accusations by calling me a witch. Despair made them believe that I was branding my red-hot pokers in the direction of their children in order to put evil spells on them as I danced on the koppie.

Why else did my children not die while theirs did, they asked.

Ashamed, confused, but loyal, my fourteen-year-old daughter Anna told them, ‘We give thanks to our Lord and keep His Commandments, for He is the God who has led His People from captivity to their Promised Land. In our darkest hour we will not forsake Him, nor He us.’

As was customary with our people we always sang an Afrikaans Psalm before we closed up our tent for the night. But in order to thank Miss Hobhouse for honouring us with a visit that late-summer evening and for teaching us to sing the Hansel and Gretel lullaby, the children recited an additional Psalm for her in English. During Religious Education at the camp school Anna had secretly learnt Psalm 114 by heart from the King James Bible. She was moved by the power and mystery evoked by a strange language and so she taught it to the others.

When Israel went out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a
people of strange language;
2 Judah was his sanctuary, *and*
Israel his dominion.
3 The sea saw it and fled: Jordan
was driven back.
4 The mountains skipped like
rams, and the little hills like lambs.

We buried Naomi on the Koppie behind the house. She wanted it that way. She believed that in order to go forward, step by step, with modesty and meekness, you must step back, make a personal journey to the past and find out what made you happy and what made you sad.

‘*Medelye*: empathy is born by opening up wrong-doing and by suffering shame. Compassion will help you find a better way through our troubled world.’ And she added ‘I hope you will dance for me again Martie, as once we danced for your little girl, letting our stories meander through the night like the moonlit shawl of the Sundays River.’

Naomi’s headstone was a pride of companionable boulders; her candles, the lace flowers of the *Witolienhout*; her cover, a patchwork of weathering ground, creeping thorns, broken rocks and clumped spears of white grass.

‘Don’t wish that I had died before Kruger and Chamberlain left off talking. By waiting for the spring to return, I could breathe deeply, once again, from the wisteria hanging over the *stoep*,’ Naomi said and added, holding my son’s hand as he sat at her bedside, ‘Dou will have to smell the intoxicating bunches of mauve blossoms for me next year.’

‘*Dou* is a good name for a boy,’ Naomi had suggested a month before my youngest child was born, nine years ago. ‘What can be more hopeful in a dry country than seeing the first rays of sunlight rainbow a dewdrop?’

‘What can be more hopeful in a death-camp than feeling the silky thread of love darn a *felters* heart?’ My bitter-aloe torches scratch an echo onto the icy air of this year’s winter as I reach out for the warmth of Naomi, begging a loving mother to help me find an answer to the cause of our terrible suffering.

Were our children dying in such great numbers because of the sins of our fathers, or was the evil to be found in the dark places of my own heart?

We did what we could with our freezing bucket of dirty Modder River water before the washed, but the uncoffined body of my Dou’s tent pal, the orphan Fransie, was lifted onto the death-cart, beside the bodies of three other small children by early June.

‘*Tannie* Martie are you sure that the wings of the *doodsengel*: angel of death didn’t get stuck when he took Mama’s soul up to heaven through the little chimney of our tent?’ Fransie had asked me a month previously at autumn’s end.

I reassured him that angels didn’t have to rely on holes made by hailstones to get our loved ones to heaven. ‘Some of our camp’s tents don’t have any. They were lucky enough not to be damaged, like ours was, in April’s terrible storm. Perhaps it will be easier to understand how freely the *engeltjies* move about if you think of our tents as trees and the angels as birds sitting on their branches waiting to pass a sick child or mother on to a better world.’

‘I wish I could have been passed on with my *Mama*.’

‘She needed you to stay down here with us and take care of Lettie.’

But a week later, numbed by the stench of Lettie’s limp body and by the creeping cold of an early-winter morning, our tent’s ten survivors shivered in the dark as we waited for the light of day; our candle having burnt out as we rocked the dying child to eternal rest.

When we could see what we were doing Hester, the other *moeder*, and my three daughters helped me prepare Lettie for burial. We pulled off the few pages of newspaper wrapped around her to keep her warm after she had soiled both her dresses and her cardigan

and coat. Then we used the last of our daily ration of washing-up water to clean off the caked faeces and vomit before shrouding her in some fresh pages of old newspaper. (Knowing that the child wouldn't survive the bitter-cold of the night with a single blanket on a damp floor, I had asked a camp policeman if he could request a couple of yards of muslin for her shroud, but he, a loyal *Hensopper*, said that those who chose to keep on fighting deserved all they got; and that was not a dignified burial.)

What did he know! Lettie was small enough to fit into the broken soap box (we never saw a cake of it) that Harry nailed back together for us. Luckily, as I sneaked past the outlying diphtheria tent after dancing on the koppie, I had found it lying on top of a few discarded copies of The Bloemfontein Post. While holding the little girl for the last time my eye caught the adverts on the page covering her chest and limp arm:

Cure for cholera Infantum – Never known to fail

During last May an infant child of our neighbour was suffering from cholera Infantum. The doctors had given up all hopes of recovery – I took a bottle of Chamberlain's Colic, cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy to the house telling them that I felt sure it would do good if used according to directions. In two day's time the child had fully recovered. The child is now vigorous and healthy. I have recommended this remedy frequently, and have never known it to fail – Mrs Curtie Baker, Ohio. Sold by all dealers.

Having our suffering rubbed in like this was too hard to bear! I would never allow poor little Lettie to be buried with such a cruel reminder of our helplessness and hopelessness. But before I removed the offending page I wanted to see what further privations and indignities we were forced to endure while others had it so good.

For picnics, 2lb Tins of Biscuits (H & P), Queen's Chocolate, as supplied to the Troops, Jenkins & Co.

Garlick's furniture store has an illustration of its 2ft 6in, Combination Bedstead, which it offers with coir mattress and two pillows for 47s and 6d.

SAVE YOUR HAIR with Shampoos of Cuticura Soap

Seeds! Seeds! For planting after this beautiful rain, C. W. Champions; **Seed Potatoes**, Early Rose Seed Potatoes, beside about fifteen other varieties.

NEW ORDER, LONDON, Friday (Special) – It is stated that the Queen will shortly institute a new order of knighthood, the Star of Africa, as a reward for distinguished service in South Africa, and including civilians.

Burns Bros, SCULPTORS and monumental Masons Maitland St – monuments Crosses etc., in finest Granite and Marble, of latest selected design.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE. Britain's best bicycle at £14 5s. Net. Catalogues posted free to any address.

Fransie and I couldn't follow the death-cart to the graveyard. It was three miles away and six miles in one day is too far for a child to walk, besides which he would never be given a permit and nor would a granite or marble headstone adorn his little sister's grave. Their mother, bless her soul, had been an undesirable like me. As long as our husbands were on *commando* we were denied all privileges and sufficient rations to help us fight disease.

'Eventually we might all die of starvation; our numbers swell daily,' the *moeders* of Camp A complained as they looked to the west and saw the rows of Camp-B tents, standing ready to accommodate the influx of bewildered new-comers.

'And what will they drink? We have none to spare. The water from one of our two bore holes is too sulphurous for human consumption.'

'But that hardly matters because neither of them have pumps.'

'How on earth are we supposed to relieve our chronic thirst? One can forget about relying on the trickle that comes from the town!'

'The measles, dysentery and diphtheria that hang around in the air or hide in the polluted ground of our camp will quickly spread to these poor devils.'

'While those in charge don't hesitate to blame the whole ghastly mess on the slovenly habits and poor mothering skills of the *Boer* women!'

Of course I am not neglectful enough to frighten a grieving child further with these disquieting thoughts, so I comfort Fransie with gentler words.

'Reverend Daneel will make a plan. He will see to it that Lettie's coffin lies beside your *mama*'s before he says a prayer, asking for them to be united blissfully in Heaven.' And I stilled the child's sobbing by taking him for a walk to the new dam.

'Perhaps we can find a little tortoise. You know how clever they are at sniffing out water.'

But how would I quieten him after he and Dou had sung their evening prayer? Sometimes the little orphan tried to muffle his whimpers as he lay in the dark, curled up in fear, longing for his mother to stroke him and for his sister to hold his hand. Every now and again he would he cry out in terror. Was he remembering the suffering of Lizzie van Zyl? She faded away slowly; first in the make-shift hospital and later in the tent next to ours

when her mother could no longer endure the insults and neglect. Lizzie died a few days before Lettie did.

Fransie knew the wretched story of the living skeleton. Everyone, including Miss Hobhouse, was talking about the scandalous way Lizzie and her poor mother were treated. No undesirable would dare to put a foot into that miserable sink-hut they call a hospital. Poor Fransie, like all the other camp children and their loving mothers, feared that her fate would be theirs.

Sadly, for Fransie, it was; and he wasn't the last of our tent's children to die. A full-moon lit the way as the angels carried Frikkie, Hester's toddler, to Paradise. But a black-anger conveyed me to the Camp Superintendants office the next morning. I wasn't granted an interview, but a supervising officer relented when he saw my tears. And when he heard my woeful tale he gave us each another blanket and promised to look into the problem of our daily rations.

'We are not as heartless as you think. You deserve some compensation for delighting our chaps with your fiery twilight gyrations and loyal incantations.' Shamelessly he winked at me. But he would have been far less brazen if he knew that I recited Bloemfontein Post articles, as I danced for Naomi, to ask her to help me make sense of our tragedy, rather than for the amusement of those who chose to oppress my *volk*.

Naomi had said that one can never be a *mentsh* without hearing the opposite point of view. 'Martie, if you want to have a *yiddisher kop* like Rabbi Loew, consider the balanced argument Death put to us before he took my brother Eben.'

"On the one hand, your family will suffer when he is no longer with you, but on the other hand, who would wish ill on their loved one; have him dragged around as skin and bones, cursed, pelted, hungry, scabby, fevered, coughing and utterly miserable when he could lie at peace in your Jewish Cemetery, near to your great Rabbi and feel the warm trickle of his wisdom as the snow thawed?"

'What would you do under such circumstances, Martie?' Naomi asked me. 'Of course it's a difficult choice, especially, when faced by such a formidable opponent and your reason tells you that you have no choice at all. But on the other hand, if you listen to your heart, you would do all in your power to keep your loved one alive. And who is to say if your heart is more important than your head when reality is too stark?'

To find my way, I wove these stories into my dances:

The Bloemfontein Post
Saturday June 20th
Morgendaal's Murder

DE WET'S HOMICIDAL MANIA

The Daily News has been interviewing a young Dutch doctor named Poutsma who claims to have been with De Wet in his wanderings in the Orange River Colony, and was finally captured by Colonials in the Cape Colony.

When asked, "And what about the Peace Envoys? Was Morgendaal really shot?" the "good doctor simply replied, "Yes" and a shadow of pain crossed his bronzed kindly face.

"I was there when it happened. Morgendaal and Wessels, you see, were occupied in taking British proclamations to the farms when they were captured by our men. We regarded them as spies and traitors. De Wet had them arrested and kept as prisoners. They would have been tried by court-martial. But one morning we had one of our scares – the British were hard upon us. Orders were given to inspan. Froneman went down to Morgendaal, who was washing, and ordered him to get ready, as the English were coming. But he would not hurry. 'My friends are coming' he said, and still delayed.

Now in regard to De Wet's share; I am not an eye-witness. But I am told De Wet was standing some distance off, and saw the scene. He was impatient and was seized with a passion. 'Shoot him,' he cried to Froneman, and Morgendaal was shot. He was badly wounded, and died some time after. I was sorry, very sorry, and told De Wet so. It was a fit of passion – an outbreak of ill-temper. The circumstances were very trying."

From Boer to Boer

AFRIKANDER'S APPEAL FOR PEACE

"P.S." the Boer, who enjoys the hospitality of "The Times" columns, contributes another remarkable letter to that journal on the subject of the war. This last epistle differs from its predecessor in that the writer gives evidence of another frame of mind. He is not only less abusive to Great Britain, but he makes a significant admission that the Boer game is played out – that the best thing to do is to "make peace at once".

"Our independence as a sovereign State we shall never gain in the future, except as Canada and Australia are practically sovereign States to-day – that is as an integrant of the British Empire. For if England left South Africa tomorrow our land would be immediately occupied by the Germans, who boast that they can land 50,000 men per month in South Africa, all fully equipped and that they can easily keep half a million men there for five years."

"P.S." says it has always been Germany's ambition to possess the Transvaal – TO TAKE THE PLACE OF England in South Africa. Germans love not the Afrikanders, but they love the African gold. "All nations hate the British, but none of them love us. If we were independent and ruled from Zambezi to Cape Town other nations would conspire against us and our land would be their battlefield. There is now no chance of freedom or of safety for us, save under the British flag. We have our choice now ... Therefore I again call upon my kindred in South Africa to preserve their lives and the magnificent liberties by bringing every pressure to bear on those still in arms to end the war on any terms that may now be offered."

The writer withdraws none of the charges he has made against Great Britain, but he recognises that no other power would have treated the Boers as well as the British have done so far, and he is completely disillusioned as to the friendship and generosity of all other nations.

Tuesday the 6th

Humiliation

Mr Steyn, we were informed in a telegram a day or two ago, has appointed Thursday and Friday next to be days of humiliation and prayer through out what was formally the Orange Free state. Why not? If those who still owe allegiance to Mr Steyn consider that they stand in need of more humiliation than that misguided statesman has yet inflicted on them and on the country whose destinies were committed to his charge why should we stand in the way of their indulging their weaknesses? And as for Mr Steyn himself, he should do more than prostrate himself in all humility; he should clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes and do penance for all the wanton misery and suffering he has brought down upon the heads of those who trusted him, and whose trust he has so grievously betrayed ... If they intend to offer up a supplication to the Deity to bless their "arms" and that of their ruffianly allies in the Cape colony, to shed the light of his countenance upon the shooting of unarmed native scouts, the flogging of unoffending loyalists, and the hundred-and-one acts of brigandage and outrage which are today dignified by the name of "war" then we say indignantly that such a prayer would be a sacrilege and blasphemy. But if, as we would rather believe, the intention is to pray to God for light and guidance in the terrible pass to which the criminal folly and obstinacy of those who have counselled continued resistance have brought the country, then we can all fervently join in such prayer in the hope that it may bring comfort and reason to all who stand in such sore need of both, and lead to the abandonment of a wicked, devastating and hopeless struggle.

9th July

Dresses at the Theatre

(By a Lady)

"What a good play! How splendidly acted! It takes one away from South Africa ... back to London, to an atmosphere of refinement – pretty women and beautiful dresses!"

These were the general remarks passed as the audience left the theatre after witnessing the performance of "Lady Windermere's Fan", and indeed a word of praise may be well bestowed on the ladies' dresses.

With the constant demand each week for fresh garments, they have surpassed themselves in their efforts to be equal to the demand of one of the chief attributes for the general success of a society play – "dress" ... Miss Gimingham wears some very pretty dresses – a soft pale blue silk tea-gown, empire fashion, with a long lace fichu ... Her ball-dress is one of those indescribable combinations of colour – neither sea-green nor pale blue, but entirely covered with silver-sequined net. She also wears over this dress a long black velvet sleeved cloak, trimmed with ermine ... Miss Dorothy Clark's white satin gown is very beautiful, edged with tiny little frills, and the bodice prettily arranged with silver sequined "mousseline de soie" ... Miss Fortescue's dress of black embroidered net over pale blue silk is very becoming ... Miss Day's dress is composed of pale yellow and mauve brocade, perfectly cut with bodice and sleeves draped with mauve and yellow sequined embroidery ...

'Why would these off-stage ladies, delighting in their fantasy, care to know about our back-veld reality?' I ask Naomi. 'Why would they wish to hear that for us the wonder of dresses lies not in their showing, but in their creating? That the thrill of dress-making began for me

with a thump, thump, thump as you unwound the roll of folded material on your long sewing table before opening it out to let its yards of orange-brown taffeta sparkle over the White-stinkwood top, bringing with it the promise of new life, like rainwater flowing down the dry bed of the *Platrivier* as the thunder rumbles away over *Tandjesberg*.

A new life is what I hoped for, having run away from home with a still-born child. You gave it to me with your rolls of material Naomi. My barren heart flowered again, as I floated on chiffon and voile over thick piles of velvet strewn with embroidered petals, leaves and stars swirling on silky satins, organzas, crepes and brocades.

“My child,” you said, “if you think you are a *maven*, go right ahead and sew on the sequins and edge the bodice and cuffs with finest lace, or bead the bridal veil. But if you want to bring honour to your trade the best place to start is by spreading the washed sheet over the table to protect it from being scratched and to protect the material from being hooked on a splinter or soiled by a spilt saucer.”

Next, you require me to place the pincushion, tape measure and cotton and silk spools of thread beside the scissors – after I have sharpened them on the grind stone. And I am not to forget the thimble, although I can’t see the point of wearing one. You know I am not one to *kvetsh*; a little needle-prick won’t hurt the tip of a middle finger toughened by farm-work.

During the first consultation, our client lifts her arms as you take her bust measurement, and comment later “*Mien Gott* some of these *soustannies* stretch the limits of my tape measure. Of course, I would hate to stop them treating me with their *koeksusters* and milk tarts, but how am I supposed to get my tape around a *yenta*’s fat *tukhus* when she can’t stop talking or filling herself with her home-baked delicacies?”

And when you are satisfied with the inches required to fit our client at the waist and hip and from her shoulder to waist, shoulder to wrist, shoulder to shoulder and all you need to know is the length of her skirt, you ask her to stand on the chair. But only if she isn’t too *zaftig*, for who would repair the chair? Jakob is on his travels, and that letch *Oom* Guisbert is too touchy and his handyman Piet too much of a numb-skull to know how to carve a decent dowel and Brother Nils much too fond of his brandy to hold the screwdriver straight – besides only a fool would disrespect the time-honoured joiners trade by using screws – and Mr Joel, *oy vey*, I’m tired of that *ganiv*’s *spiel*; his prices are enough to make your eyes water.

Only now are we ready to cut out the pattern. Going straight to the material, oh no that would cost us dearly. Who, but a nincompoop, builds a house without a plan, knowing that when it falls down he has only himself to blame? And always there is enough brown

paper in the small wagon kist Joseph fills in Port Elizabeth. For what fool would use newspaper when he is not in the funeral trade? Surely dirty hands and black smudges must spoil his finished garment.

We *are* in the funeral trade when we make Juliet's love-grass nightdress. But our pattern is made of brown paper and my hands are clean as I cut out the long front, back and raglan-sleeved panels of corn-coloured satin. But we must keep things plain; there is to be no lace, frills, gathering or any other kind of trimming for I am a grass stalk and my silky sheath must remain unadorned as it hugs my body. And to allow my legs to move freely we only stitch the side seams to below my thighs. Although my stage is far from the prying eyes of the *Dominee* and his pious congregation I mustn't shame myself more than is necessary.

In order to tone down the blackness and make it look more like a seed-head Naomi threads golden ribbon through my platted dark hair. To finish off the outfit I will hold a stalk of weeping love-grass in either hand, for although the lovers will cocoon in me they must weave their silken tomb with separate threads.

Naomi tells me the sad story of Romeo and Juliet. She says that good teachers help an eager pupil (even if she is a girl) when they can, and that in some quarters things were getting a little easier for Jews. Mr Guttman brings Naomi books and plays to read, while his wife teaches her some ballet steps and just before she sails to South Africa with her parents they take her to listen to a mighty orchestra and choir sing of the ongoing hatred and revenge between the Capulets and the Montagues. A gentle harp accompanies the violins as a Capulet daughter, Juliet, sings of her love for her Romeo, while the flute and oboe give voice to the desires of a Montague son's sensuous nature.

Naomi plays the role of Mab, the Dream Fairy. She is joined by the night-time orchestra and choir of the veld as she inspires me to dance on the koppie for my little girl and all those, who would care to watch and listen. Before I rise on my moonlit patch of bare ground, she sets the opening scene of this desperate story of love and death.

'Dust-and-thunder storms rage over the veld, as the thrust of the Capulet earth meets the cut of the Montague sky. The clash and flash of their fury sends the kudu and black wildebeest tearing across the plains in the wake of the springbok. The rabbits and *meerkatte* retreat into their burrows. The cobras seek shelter under the floor-boards of houses. The lizards and scorpions find a hideaway in rock crevasses. And while the skirts of the sweet-thorn trees billow, the surly *soetnoors* manage to keep a spiny hold over the broken boulders and spiky undergrowth of a whipped up Camdeboo.'

As Naomi unrolls her second yard of material we hear sorrowful sighs reeding through the tumult of the subsiding drum-rolls and cymbals. These strains of longing come from the upper realms of the Montague mansion, where Romeo despairs of ever tasting the delights of his forbidden love, Juliet.

‘If we listen carefully,’ Naomi tells us. ‘If we go behind the voices of the instruments we will find a deeper sound to Romeo’s lament, which is not to be found on the embroidered wind; in the file and scrape of the *langasempies*’ fore-wings, the howl of the dogs, the call of a fox, the hoot of an owl, the snarl of the red cat, the squawk of the fowl, the croak of the frog or the buzz of the mosquito. It is the silence, the flat lining of the sky’s embossed drapes, which sings most terribly of his anguish.’

‘I take my cue when Romeo’s tears drip through my patch of ground to wrap my sleeping seed in their moisture,’ Naomi continues to inform our listeners as if she were me – of course she knows all about love’s dongas, for, until she died, she never stopped longing for the land of her birth.

‘My shell softens and my feet and fingers take root in the watered earth so that its murmur might move in me and bring forth the taste of its sweetness to open the bud of my lips that I might swell from my seed into the air and know of newer delights.

‘I am alone on my moonlit stage as the violin of my heart begins to sing of the wonder of my waking. How did this miracle happen? Why did it happen? Like Sleeping Beauty, longing for answers, after a hundred years, I take my first slow steps and move to where a pair of tussock moths display the orange and brown markings on their white wings as they fly from the sun-gouged branch of a thorn-tree to circle the silvery sky.

I follow their example and, growing in confidence, move in bigger steps, waltzing around my stage, swaying to the full sound rising from the orchestra pit. I plié and jeté and pas de chat, trilling on tip-toe as the piano rises and falls through the octaves of the keyboard and then, like gossamer, arabesque to the tinkle of bells, before moving back into the waltz, until the violins, keeping the beat, allow the flowing rhythm of the cellos to herald in Romeo, who flutes down on the tiger-moth cloak of his outstretched wings.

Romeo is true to his name, in as much as his ferocity lies in the strength of his passion. So as not to scare the tender stalk that trembles before him he curtsseys deeply and with bolder notes repeats the flutter of my strings on the reed of his oboe. Achingly we reach out to touch, but shyly withdraw. Then I rise up to spin in his containing arc and tenderly he guides me over the Charles Bridge onto our wild-flower stage draped to the side by linden and spruce. Our seed-heads thread through the poppies and daisies on a maypole

of moonbeams, then coupled as dragon-flies we skim over the silken Vltava until, drunk with delight, we glide towards the velvety depths of the forest.

The crisp call of a horn heralds the unwelcome arrival of my razor-sharp cousin Tybalt. Our Slavonic dances are proving to be too much for my warring kinsman. He has come to put an end to any foolish dreams. I am to be properly betrothed to one of my kind. To avenge Romeo's killing a bolt of Montague lightning daggers through my Capulet heart. Entwined we fall, but the thunderous downpour of hail cannot wash us away, neither can the tears of our families, left to water the seed of a more unified world, for I have gifted my posy of weeping love grass to the heavens. A new constellation folds into the Cloak of Orion.

If, at nine on a March evening, you kneel on a southern koppie, or beside another child's gravestone in Prague and look, very carefully, you might see Romeo and Juliet, sepulchred as one, sparkling between Betelgeuse and the Seven Sisters. And if you wait there until midnight, watching the lovers move slowly through the dark sky, arm-in-arm with the other stars, you can also sing them a lullaby as they fall asleep on the western horizon.

Maude's Lied to Martie

Brahms/Goethe, *Alto Rhapsody*

‘What could Brahms have been thinking to send such a sad song as a wedding gift to Clara’s daughter?’ I ask Hedwig when the low-tide of her contralto voice has lapped our rock-pool into a teardrop.

‘He was thinking of his heart’s anguish. In the years after 1856 when Clara’s husband Robert Schuman died, the young Brahms was one of her constant companions and confidants and he became more and more passionately attached to the older woman. But she rejected his advances and by 1868, when he wrote what he called his bridal song, Brahms had apparently accepted the situation as it was, rather than what he wanted it to be.’

‘But why sing it now, when life is all we could want it to be?’ I protest. My mother has agreed to care for my brood for a month, while I accompany Hedwig on her homeward journey, as far as Cape Town. She agreed that a change of scene, free from all responsibility, will revive my spirits. A few days in the company of two London friends, Selma and Matilda, now living and teaching music in Stellenbosch, followed by couple of weeks alone with Hedwig in their Kalk-Bay cottage, will restore me to my usual, cheerful self.

‘To line the rock-pool of our love with a hard shell; how else, in all weathers, can we keep its precious contents safe?’

‘Although it may appear to be so, my sweet Miss Optimism,’ Hedwig continues, ‘my Rhapsody isn’t the song of a misanthrope. Goethe, whose youthful poem inspired the middle-aged Brahms to pursue the future differently, no matter how hard it would be, was charting a new and diverse path when he wrote it.

It isn’t so hard to take off my clothes – Hedwig says that’s all they do on German beaches. Apparently, in a cold, dark land the covered skin cries out for the precious sun, whereas the rays indulging our bright sands give decorum a rather different slant. Luckily, today, we are unlikely to be accosted by any high-or-low-C of indignation. Out of sight, on the far side of the igneous headland, only the silent molluscs, the listening oysters and anemones, can know of contrition, as Hedwig sees it, when she tickles my modesty with her coy Renaissance song, while we linger on the lip of our rock-pool:

Might I redeem my errors with mine eyes...

I am so rich in sin, in tears so poor.

We are rich sin as we lie naked on the edge of the sea; our dark hearts, remembering the pleasures of the previous night, ache to merge with the sunlit delights. To hide the flush of desire I sing, 'In brightest splendour rises now the sun,' hoping to restore some equilibrium with thoughts of our massed Port-Elizabeth choirs pouring the wonders of Hayden's *Fourth Day of Creation* over the transported cathedral congregation.

Hedwig was thinking of something just as sublime when she continued, 'and darts his rays; an am'rous, joyful happy spouse...'

'How do you know the words?'

'My London choir does many a surprising thing in the course of a year.'

'But none, I suspect, as surprising as what we did last night!'

'And none as breathtaking as this morning's encore as we pattern in our Paisley teardrop!'

On the brink of oblivion, Hedwig wets me with a last, luscious splash of her *Sapphische Ode*, in which, under the gardenia blooms, overhanging the perfumed veranda, enfolded in the turquoise silk of her Parsee stole, we drowned the previous evening, for according to Zoroastrian belief, good is to be found in the fire of committing to the cleansing of the water.

Roses from the dark hedge I plucked at night...

'I wish we didn't have to love in secret.'

'We could challenge society's taboos.'

'In my neck of the woods, that's easier said than done.'

'I know.'

As we drift through crystal waters, Hedwig sings the song of the sorceress Morgana and brings us to the banks of the *Eerste Rivier* where the skin-smooth pebbles mature into mottled stepping stones, as we amble in the centuries-old shade of Stellenbosch oak trees.

Tornami a vagheggiar
te solo vuol amar...

'It means *come take me in your arms*,' is all I need to know, not wishing to break my Hedwig's spell, while we siesta in our balconied bedchamber overlooking the *Jonker's Hoek* Valley where the First River flows. We are enveloped, as Romeo and Juliet were, in heavenly music, although it does not come down to us from the stars, but rises up through

the yellowwood floorboards. Our hosts, Selma and Matilda, accompanied by their colleague Werther, rehearse Schubert's Trio No 1 in B flat major for their gala concert.

The Allegro moderato for piano, violin and cello is as golden as the autumning caress of the river's water, light and stones and no less paisley'd than the dappled stirrings of our springtime bed. As beams of light that filter through the leaves to meet the returning rays of the warmed stones, so the violin and cello sing to one another in the opening verse of their *Minnelied*

Delightfully sound the birdsongs...
The piano ripples in with a heartwarming second melody
Redder bloom the valleys and meadows...
And gives rise to sighs in our verandered room
Without her everything is dead...

And the whisper of silk

Darling, lovely woman,
Never wish to flee...

Softly awakes my heart with joy at thy dear voice, like the flower at the sun's bright returning; sighing as winds o'er golden grain...

Till 'tis swaying like the ocean,
So sways my burning heart
With rapture when you're nigh!

The sublime mingling of Saint-Saëns' song with Schubert's Andante un poco mosso draws the river back to its source, back to the time when there is water, but it cannot flow, for the earth is divided from the sea and lies in darkness and is devoid of life and cries out: 'I am nothing but hard rock, for there is nothing that can move in me and bring comfort, so that I might soften and give comfort to that which would grow in me.'

And the violin, harkening unto the ache of the cello, picks up the lilt that leaves a little breathing space between the beat-fall-beat-beat-fall-beat of each wave and gives gentle reply to the parched earth, for it also is devoid of light and lies alone in darkness; 'like unto you I am nothing, but empty air and there is nothing that can move in me and give comfort, so that I might delight and bring joy to that which would rise up in me.'

In the darkness, the piano flows with the rhythm of the earth and of the sky; of her who overlays them both, and says 'Drink, for I have much to give.' And the cello, knowing of no way to satisfy her yearning, calls out again; but the violin knows of a way. She brings

light to the sky and with it gives warmth to the sea and she offers up her moisture and her mistress fills with her raindrops so that they might pearl through their fingers and be spread amongst the mountains of the earth and in excess of silver and gold go forth and multiply.

Down in the waterfallled pool of the Trio's Scherzo the light fingered piano waltzes over the sun-kissed strings to recapture something of the Andante's melodic composure, before our river's bubbly Rondo meanders through the oaks of the *Jonker's Hoek* Valley to finish up where it started, overlooked by our bower of *Zufriedenheid*

My joyous, my contented heart
dances...

Later, caught in passion's spent wake, Hedwig and I walk along the oak-lined banks of the Eerste Rivier.

'Like Stellenbosch, it was named by the first Europeans to settle at the Cape in the time of Governor Simon van der Stel.' I tell Hedwig what she already knows, because we feel the chill in the air, rather than the enchantment of our out-of-step spring and talk of ghosts, as the leaves begin to fall and the greying clouds of a shortened day dissolve the sunset's glow and the birds, calling for early bed-time, abandon the pooled river to its mute stones.

We think of the spent passion of lovers who have flowered like the Fynbos on the limestone slopes, or on the banks of our First River.

'Perhaps, in the dim and distant past, a neglected *vrou* and her secret lover soared like arums from their soft bed of leaves.'

'And were stripped of their petals in a fit of jealous rage.' I am in no mood for happy endings.

'And maybe, some of their seed lived to fight another day.' Hedwig looks for an alternative path.

'That's not the point; the blissful moment cannot be brought back; once it is gone, it is gone for good.'

'Without a beginning or an end Schubert's Andante can never be beautiful.'

'I wish I'd never heard it; what am I going to do in three week's time? How will I bear never being able to touch you again?

She takes me in her arms and puts her lips to my ear comforting me with a lullaby of *Nacht und Träume*.

Holy night, you sink down;

Dreams, too, drift down...

‘You can’t get away from your beloved Schubert, can you?’

She doesn’t answer, but later, when her goodness has made me less brittle and the moonlight quilts our nakedness, I question her about past loves she tells me of her deep affection for Georgine, the other Schubert in her life.

‘The worst part about finding out is the jealousy. I just can’t bear to think of you loving anyone but me.’

‘I know.’ (Oh Hedwig, I wish you’d stop saying that to me; I nearly die every time you do!)

‘But you did.’

‘Yes, and I thought my life was at an end when Georgine went back to Berlin after ten years of teaching me all I know about singing and encouraging me to improve my piano playing by participating in the soirees held at her friend’s homes, or inviting me to accompany her to the distinguished chamber music concerts given by Franz Liszt’s pupil Klughardt, or to sit in the front row as she delighted audiences in the Großherzoglichen Theatre in Neustrelitz, or in the Concerthaus in Neubrandenburg with her leading Italian and French opera roles, especially when she took the part of Wagner’s Princess Isolda.’

‘Goodness me, she sounds very accomplished. I can never hope to compete with her in your affections.’

‘Of course you can; you are my spring, just as she was when my mother died in 1868. I was only nineteen and Albert not yet eleven, but it was my poor father who needed my care for he was despairing. He and my mother had been very close; she had renounced her Jewish faith to marry him and that proved to be a pill too bitter for my grandmother to swallow; after all, she was a Cohn, from the tribe of the scribes and unable to betray her God or let go of tradition. Her daughter, my Aunt Lina, who was only fifteen months older than my mother, was of the same mould. Like Daniel Deronda’s Ezra, she persuaded her nephew Albert to return to his Jewish roots and find a homeland for his people. But you know that story, so let’s get back to Georgine and the way she helped me make sense of my misfortunes.’

But I didn’t want to hear another word about her saviour; especially if it entailed Georgine drawing her *Liebe* Hedwig into the shadowed grass on the far shore of the Zierker See, or Hedwig returning her *Schatzie* favours with a posy of *Ranunkels* and trembling as she reached for the eternal beauty of her beloved’s springtime-embrace with a few lines of the other Schubert’s Ganymed.

No, no, no, I couldn't cope with any of that and Hedwig, recalling our past intimacies and the effect her songs might have on my overripe imagination, understood my distress and cleverly enticed me into the present with Debussy's *Beau Soir*

When streams turn pink in the setting sun,
And a slight shudder rushes through the wheat fields
A plea for happiness seems to rise out of all things
And it climbs up towards the troubled heart.
A plea to relish the charm of life
While there is youth and the evening is fair,
For we pass away, as the wave passes:
The wave to the sea, we to the grave

It isn't Hedwig's voice that tramples through my brain as she falls asleep in my arms; it is Albert's polished boots reinstating some scientific authority, despite having done precious little for the cause of evolution two years ago, when he failed to wipe out the wily mosquito, as it pitted itself against one of Darwin's most ardent supporters. Albert was all for the Survival of the Fittest; only, unlike his long-suffering wife, he didn't know how to put it into practice by staying at home.

But I am hardly one to talk; for here I am, abandoning principle, following suit. If you ask me, I have no one but myself to blame for my present state of agitation – and that's to put it mildly. But getting back to business, who, in their wildest dreams, could have conjured up the storm that I am about to unleash on the *Nacht und Träume* of my poor sleeping Hedwig! After I have done, she will do well to remember that I won't put up with being placed on the mantelpiece of her heart as a second-best spring-figurine.

Oh no, my Indian-Ocean fury is about to smash the allure of her sweet Georgine; that beguiling shepherdess leaning so assuredly on her gaily-coloured crook, in her daisied frock, amidst the clumped lavender, and replace it with the fierce determination of a gnarled survivor; with one, who has the wit to withstand the rigours of the off-season, just as our tested acacia trees do, by hanging onto their white thorns when all the trimmings have been nibbled away by the grinding molars of buck and frost.

But if I am to conjure up a storm to suit my purposes, its winds must be seen to be driven by a rage quite different from that of the sorceress and her companions who 'from the ruin of others our pleasures we borrow'. I would be defeating my own selfish ends if I claim to be possessed by such destructive desires. Hedwig would never love me, let alone elevate me to second-best in her affections, if I were to command

Wayward sisters...
Appear, appear!

She was just as moved as I was when we swung on my mother's garden bench, singing choice bits from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and we felt keenly for Dido in her Lament, knowing from bitter experience what it was like when we were parted, forever, from the ones we loved, through no choice of our own.

If I wish my Aeneas to 'remember me', 'when I am laid in earth', as she sets sail from the Carthage of our Cape, I will have to model my wintry self on a more benign sorcerer and find a kindly spirit to cook up a storm that makes my jealousy taste more palatable, its intention being noble; the defeat of villainy; the ousting of the usurper; the promotion of good by the bringing together, rather than the pulling apart, of true lovers. Shakespeare's Prospero will do nicely and, fortunately, I still know Ariel's song. I was awarded an A when, in my heyday, half a life-time ago, I sang it at my school's Eisteddfod

Where the Bee sucks there suck I...

Maybe, it is not as seasonal as I could have hoped for, but it'll do; it'll get us from our Stellenbosch bedroom to our Kalk Bay beach in time for the evening performance. After my call to arms, I have no doubt that Ariel and his fellow Spirits will have Hedwig and me sitting down in the front row when the pent-up South-easterly lets rip in the orchestra-pit of our rock-pool and a frenzy of gulls feed from their seething cauldron, while over False Bay's heaving slate the white horses rear up towards us from the reeling haze of lightening-forked Hottentots-Holland Mountains as the autumn tide of the rising full-moon floods through gale-bruised cumulus into the flying ash of the dead day.

'Who can survive our tempest?' my Spirits roar in triumph.

'Who wants to?'

I cannot fool Hedwig. She knows how to mistress a storm; in the mayhem of my anguish she knows how to answer my call; to sing, as Mozart's Marriage-of-Figaro-countess does, of her great love for me, her count, asking where all the moments have gone, the moments of sweetness and pleasure as she finds my thread, draws me closer, unravels my tangled skein and laces me into her stretch of soft sand.

Hedwig is my ally, not my foe, as I feared she might be after I had given way to a devil-may-care attitude, thinking it fit to unleash my unbecoming darker self on her the previous night.

‘You sleepy-head, look at the gift your storm has washed up on the beach for you this morning; an abalone in an abalone; my goddess in her shell,’ she says placing her pearly offering in my waking palm. But before disclosing anything more, she delights me with one of Purcell’s springtime songs

Sweeter than roses,
or cool, cool evening breeze...
was the dear, the dear
the dear, dear, dear kiss,
first trembling, first trembling...
made me freeze, then shot like fire
all, all, all, all,
then shot like fire all, all o’er.

“‘Love is my sin” Shakespeare declared as he penned his sonnets revealing his secret life of jealousy, passion, guilt and despair. I wonder what Botticelli’s thoughts were on this thorny issue when he painted his *Birth of Venus* a century earlier?’

Hedwig sits me up to put another pillow under my head before snuggling down beside me and opening the *Treasures of the Uffizi Gallery* that she found in one of the bookshelves in Selma and Matilda’s holiday cottage.

‘This 1486 canvas depicts the goddess Venus, having emerged from the sea as a fully-grown woman, arriving at the sea-shore.’ Not wishing to bore me with too much detail Hedwig scans the printed page, picking out the most salient points.

‘Origins - Scholars propose many sources and interpretations – members of the Florentine Platonic Academy believed that Venus was not only an earthly goddess who aroused humans to physical love, but also a heavenly goddess who inspired intellectual love – the contemplation of physical beauty allowed the mind to better understand spiritual beauty.’

Hedwig strays briefly from her upright position to roll me over and enliven the authority of scholarship with a musical touch. ‘As we gaze at the gorgeous *Birth of Venus*, my gorgeous goddess, expect the stirring of our souls not to be too dissimilar from what Tamino feels when he beholds the divine image of Pamina.’

Can the feeling be love?
Yes, yes! Love’s alone...
What would I? – Full of rapture
Press these hot breasts

And she would be mine forever.

Hedwig recommits to her script. 'A pagan reading of the *Birth of Venus* should not exclude a more purely Christian one. The nudity of Venus from a religious standpoint suggests Eve before the Fall and the pure love of Paradise.'

At this point I am inspired to add a footnote gleaned when our Port Elizabeth Musical Society staged *The Magic Flute*.

A girl or young woman
Papageno desires!

But Hedwig, not to be distracted from the serious business of understanding spiritual beauty, continues. 'Once landed, the Goddess of Love will don the earthly garb of mortal sin; an act that will lead to a new Eve, the Madonna, whose purity is represented by the nude Venus. Once draped in earthly garments she becomes the personification of the Christian Church and offers a spiritual transport back to the pure love of eternal salvation.'

'We'll have to pack our bags and leave right away if we are to see the scalloped shell upon which the image of Venus/Eve//Madonna/Church stands, as a pilgrimage to salvation' I say.

'Indeed, so we might do better to view the anatomically improbable Madonna, without weight or volume, sailing in shallow perspective over a broad expanse of sea, as a fantasy image and regard her shell as a metaphor for a woman's vulva that, more than likely, will carry its occupants to perdition.' Hedwig is not afraid to venture into fresh fields.

At this point, I briefly take back the wand from my enchantress, not to evoke any destructive forces as before, but to entice Hedwig along the walls of our Rock-pool (a more familiar hide-out to a child of the South-African shore) and meet the velvet touch of the sea-anemones and feed the insatiable mouth of their enclosing fingers with duets of Beethoven and Brahms, followed by a provocative composition by Clemente, after we have changed places on the piano stool, so that Hedwig can stop me from stumbling on any unfamiliar notes with her right hand, as the full-skirted palms of her base and my treble chase each other up and down the rocky coastline of the keyboard.

For dessert we open the oysters chipped from recesses lying below the neap-tide water-mark, to ensure their freshness, and between moist mouthfuls of souffléed pearl, Hedwig refreshes our palates with the unleavened refrain of a *Housewife's Lament*

Nothing is as I would wish it to be;
life is a toil, love is a trouble,
beauty will fade and riches will flee,
pleasures they dwindle and prices they double
and nothing is as I would wish it to be!

before allowing Mendelssohn to carry us away *On Wings of Song*

to the fields of the great Ganges
where I know the most beautiful place.
There lies a red-flowering garden
in the serene moonlight,
the lotus-flowers await
their beloved sister...

There we will lie down,
under the palm-tree,
and drink of love and peacefulness
and dream our blessed dreams.

Next day being overcast, we walk on the beach to collect shells and classify them as William and I had in the December school holidays, aided by books borrowed from the public library.

‘We’ll need a piece of cardboard at least a yard square,’ I tell Hedwig. ‘The enormous canopy of the group of animals known as molluscs, the soft-bodied builders of sea shells, is supported by several great trunks, or classes, which are rooted pretty far down in primitive worm-like creatures, who inched their way through the primeval seas on the morning of the Fifth Day, twenty-four hours before God made Adam.’ (I might not have put it quite like that when Willy and I were likewise occupied; he being the star pupil in all subjects, including scripture, at his Anglican primary school)

Hedwig is fascinated in the biblical myth of creation and in the multitude and variety of shells, the concrete leftovers of soft-bodied chitons, bivalves, gastropods that we find on the beach and place on their Mollusc phylum, which spreads like a mature tree over the back of one of Selma’s discarded hardboard canvasses.

‘If we delve no deeper we should keep on the right side of God,’ Hedwig observes dryly.

‘Indeed, for according to our chart, shells are shells forever and a day.’

‘That is until Darwin comes along to upset the apple cart’

‘And, of course, it’s not only men who had a part to play at the dawn of this new Scientific Age.’

I tell Hedwig about my Granny Elizabeth's famous meeting with Mary Anning, the Fossil Girl of Lyme Regis and how she treasured the snakestone necklace that her father bought for her from Mary's Curiosity shop when the family stayed at an inn in Lyme Regis en route from Exeter to Portsmouth from where they sailed to South Africa in 1820.

'Mary Anning was born in 1799 and when she discovered that the curiosities she and her father had chipped from the cliff-face or picked up on the beach below were valuable fossils, she spent her days building up her collection. The great Ichthyosaurus was the first of many great finds that played a part in the new science of evolution eventually leading to Darwin's "Origin of the Species"'

'Then we shan't label her an Eve, for she was patently a force for good.'

'Is that what I need to be if I am to survive in your affections?'

'A Great Temptress will do fine by me; one whose savage heart dreams of tearing my Georgine's tender one to shreds.'

'How do you know?'

'I know; it's how I have survived all these years.'

And she shakes the reins urging our horse along the track that is carrying us through the Fynbos to the other side of the peninsula, so that we can dip a toe into the South Atlantic Ocean (to expose more than that to the icy Benguela Current one needs to have the supposedly cold heart of a Lucretia Borgia, we are told).

And to thank the gods for this mild and sunny day and to counterpoint the jolting of the rutted road we go back to Haydn's Creation and sing Adam and Eve's Love Duet as chirpily as if we were Mozart's Papageno and Papagena

On Kommetjie Beach we offer up our skins to the sun, while the long fronds of olive kelp laze in the shallows of rock-pools and blennies dart below the foamy remains of broken wavelets and, far over the water, white trimmings of sand and cottage edge the coarse sleeves of Hout Bay's 'Monk' Mountain.

'Interesting that you stud your landscape with a Christian image'

'It may be unrealistic, but out here in the wilds I probably feel that I still need a monk's protection.'

'We all need some protection from the ravages of life.'

And Hedwig tells me how disillusionment and discouragement drove the French artist Gauguin to create his ceramic masterpiece Oviri, a Tahitian word meaning savage. Seeing himself as a civilised savage Gauguin rejected Western ideals of grace and beauty, although few of his contemporaries agreed with his vision. His wilfully distorted and

disproportionate deity of death and mourning was perceived to be so ugly that even the usually liberal fine arts salon in Paris refused Oviri admission four years ago.'

'Have you seen her?'

'Yes, I went to the viewing organised by his friend the poet Stéphane Mallarmé and like Gauguin, I believe that Oviri's strangling grasp on a cub she snatched from the dead she-wolf beneath her feet makes her the culmination of his robust and threatening female figures; more powerful than his Black Venus, which shows a woman kneeling over a severed head that resembles La Luxure (Lewdness), a female figure accompanied by a fox, an animal that the artist sometimes associates with himself. But Gauguin has identified so profoundly with his androgynous goddess Oviri that he has asked for her to be placed on his grave.'

Hedwig gives me the closed-palm-sized stone she has picked up on the beach. 'In order to appreciate the awful power of nature we'll have to make do with this miniature head of a Mary-Anning's Ichthyosaurus sculptured smooth over the millennia by the indifferent forces of sand and sea.'

As I rub my thumb along the split bone of my dinosaur's marbled snout, or run a finger from her high cheek to the lost mouth of her skewed jaw, or wipe a speck of glitter from the gouge of his blind eye, Hedwig tells me that the nature of the beast is not to love but to survive.

'How do you survive when your savage heart has learnt to love?'

'It's a difficult question to answer. Gauguin imbued his goddess of death and mourning with the Tahitian spirit of resignation to help him deal with the brutal reality of his world. Christians cope by praying.'

'What happens if your faith fades?'

'Mallarmé, Gauguin's friend wrote poetry.' And Hedwig sings me the poem Mallarmé's friend Ravel set to music for him. She sings it first in French because so much is lost in translation and then the *Sainte's délicate phalange* strums herself to life for me in English.

That was two-and-a-half years ago Martie. My Oviri-heart seeks to sepia the paisley of our rock-pool, but she never bargained on the ability of Hedwig's voice to loosen his savage strangle-hold on our love

Art thou troubled? Music will calm thee,
Art thou weary? Rest shall be thine...

And so we dance the Emperor Waltz, as if Kommetjie beach were the Viennese Woods, before we trot back to our Kalk-Bay cottage, where Hedwig shows me that she is also capable of stirring up a storm by playing Beethoven's (*Tempest*) *Piano Sonata* and she follows this up with Brahms' transcription of his *String Sextet* for the piano. Hedwig tells me that Brahms did this at the behest of Clara, because, like me, there wasn't anything he wouldn't do for his beloved, and I wondered why, after her husband's death, Clara wouldn't marry Brahms; after all he adored her and was a composer, whose music I liked more than her husband's. But apparently Clara chose to differ. She and Robert were very close; having overcome great opposition to marry – in the form of her father – and when he eventually gave his consent Schumann composed his *Fantasiestücke* for her.

When Hedwig plays this thrilling eight-piece fantasy, its magic is powerful enough to transport us to the wooded stream that divides Devil's Peak from the easterly slopes of Table Mountain. Landing on the darker side we try to keep the tone light after venturing into a cave. We encourage our *Così fan tutte*'s Guglielmo and Dorabella to flutter around as joyfully as hawk moths stirred from their afternoon naps by the perfumed blooms of the Fynbos.

GUGLIELMO
This heart is for you, dear...
DORABELLA
I take it with pleasure...

Satisfying desire further, in the soft *kikuyu* on the bountiful slopes of Kirstenbosch, like Xerxes, we serenade our lovely tree, our *Ombra ma fu*. In the last days we stroll through the Cape Town Gardens and my beloved comforts me with Beethoven's *Adelaide*, reassuring me that not even death can part us. Finally, we sit like beached mermaids on the inverted rock-pool of a Camps-Bay boulder and Hedwig waters me

Du bist die Ruh
The mild peace,
You are the longing
And what stills it...

And, as I stroke her and my Oviri, I can also hear the song of my miniature Ichthyosaurus; the song that has been passed up to her through the generations; the song that has not faded as it passes up to me from my snakestone-necklaced Granny Elizabeth

Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly;

blow, bonny breeze, my lover to me...

Is it not sweet to hear the breeze singing,
as lightly it comes o'er the deep rolling sea?
But sweeter and dearer by far 'tis when bringing
the barque of my true love in safety to me.

Martie's Lied to Maude

Schubert/Goethe, *Erlkönig*

You talk about love Maude!

‘What could be more loved than the old *wapad*: wagon road?’ the hardy farmers of the Camdeboo would undoubtedly say.

‘The lone thorn tree,’ I would answer, but no-one would hear me. The old road is their one reliable lifeline, for it cuts through the endless stretches of veld to bring succour in time of need, which was always, in my day, unless you were one of the lucky few in the pay of Government officials.

At best, the stunted *doringboom*: thorn tree, the defiant survivor in the sandy-gravel at the side of the road, a hundred yards from the entrance to our werf, was a dusty milestone as ox-wagons or mule-carts took the Boers and their produce to the markets in Graaff Reinet or Somerset East. These passers-by didn’t know that a fissured tree-trunk, pushed and pulled to one side by the wind and by two of its three left-over branches, had enough slatted leaves to shade me, paired thorns to protect me and fingered pods to play the music of my mother’s stories, as I suffocated in the womb of the sun, slowly strangled, rather than fed, by the umbilical cord of the bloodless wagon road.

The sun, ruling over the worst drought in living memory, was at the height of her fury in February 1878 and finding nothing to drink in our cracked dam, chewed on the dead branches of Pa’s fruit trees and the dry twigs of the Karoo Bushes, as I crouched in the blackened arms of the thorn tree, unable to shut out the screams of my mother who was taking a Devil of a long time to give birth to his child. Or was it his? Could my mother be trusted; was she as *skynheilig*: duplicitous as my father and Ouma said; as *onvertroubaar*: untrustworthy as the sand road?

On that still-born day the beloved road of my childhood became unsafe; it gave life to the Tokoloshes in the burnt-out farmhouse at its side. It was no longer the trusted friend; the one who had helped the first trekker move through this barren region in the hope of finding grazing for his sheep and cattle; the support of those hardy pioneers, who dared to take on the might of the sun and the desolation of the Camdeboo in order to roof their mud-walled cottages and outbuildings with reeds, polish the dung floors of their homes with ox blood, stack stones to enclose their kraals and drag clay on ox-drawn animal skins to dam the occasional cloud-burst, so as to provide water for their families and livestock. The *wapad* also brought salvation when every three months it took the Boere to celebrate Nagmaal in the Dutch Reformed Church in Graaff Reinet.

But by the time I ran down the sandy track for the last time, I knew that the road, was not as secure as the straight and narrow belt of the apron that my *Ouma* ties around her black dress when she carries the candle to light the kitchen lamp at four o'clock every morning; it could float away like the velvet ribbon of my mother's flowered dress.

'The old witch needn't fear staining her dress with mutton fat; it's black enough to hide all the splatterings of her manifold sins', *Moeder* fights back as best she can behind my *Ouma*'s back, for according to her, my mother would do well to wear black, rather than flaunt her shame in unsuitable garments and alluring ostrich feathers.

'Ribbioned lace is the road taken by a Jezebel; it's the road that leads to Perdition', *Ouma* tolerates no other god on her straight-and-narrow Path of Righteousness.

On whose side is her son, my father, Helmut? And on whose side are we; Marie, me Martie, and our youngest brother Lazarus? He was my mother's pet, her *laat lammetjie*: late lamb and my *Ouma* thought he was coloured enough to be the unlawful lamb of the black sheep of our family. He certainly clung to my mother's side, especially after he nearly drowned, but was brought back to life by the quick-thinking of my older sister Marie. She was really the important one, who lived up to her name. Marie was the blessed one chosen to wash our Saviour's feet. Being as pure of mind as she was fair of skin, she always took pride of place in my father's and my *Ouma*'s heart.

This left little place for me in anyone's heart. I was as unworthy as my namesake Martha to sit at the feet of my Lord. I was only fit to cook for him, except that my *Ouma* did all the cooking in our household. After Lazarus was born, I was as unwanted as my mother Leah, also a second-oldest daughter, in the kitchen or anywhere else on our lonely farm.

Maude, I will tell you the tragic story of Leah, my mother. She was the beautiful daughter of Rachel, the orphan, whose German mother Magdalena died when she gave birth in Caledon. No-one knew who Rachel's father was and so, as an act of charity, a German baker and his wife adopted her when, in 1822, these staunch Calvinists and their four children passed through the *dorpie* on their way to Graaff-Reinet.

Believing that punishment was the only way for sinners to enter through the gates of Heaven, Fritz and Hermien daily chastised their adopted daughter. And she sought refuge from affliction in the motherly bosom of her Dutch-Reformed mother church. *Ds.* Andrew Murray heard her cry and let her find rest on a pew and there she listened to the voice of the great master Johannes Christian Bach as the church musicians and choir rehearsed his sacred works for Sunday service. A year later, for the second time, the good *Dominee* heard

her cry when she begged to be taught the violin so that she could play the Partita for sola violin that sang so directly to her heart.

In her seventeenth year another Scotsman brought joy to her life. Although John was a protestant and quoted many a verse from his King James Bible he did not attend service in Ds. Murray Dutch Reformed church. Nevertheless Fritz and Hermien, having fled poverty in Germany twenty years previously, offered shelter and employment to this penniless young man from Glasgow.

But soon they regretted extending their hospitality to one so undeserving; one who preferred to seek comfort for his weary soul in loud song and the telling of unsuitable tales, rather than sitting soberly in the front-room to sing Psalms of praise to the Almighty and pray for forgiveness and salvation before trusting his soul to His Gracious Care and retiring for the night.

And when this blasphemer stole the ungrateful heart of their adopted daughter they cursed him and on the eve of the wedding told the two, who were unworthy of being in receipt of their boundless charity, to be gone from their sight, justly leaving them to fend for themselves in the ungodly world of their own making. And the pious couple never spoke to the newly-weds again. Within a few months they packed their ox-wagon and left Graaff Reinet to follow in Andries Pretorius' footsteps.

Like those determined Voortrekkers, who wished the world at large to believe that they were incapable of severing that sacred tie which binds a Christian to his native soil without the most sufficient reasons, they crossed the Orange River with their gun and *Bybel* despairing of saving the colony those evils, which threaten it by the turbulent and dishonest conduct of vagrants, allowed to infest the country in every part.

Moreover they complained of the severe losses, which they were forced to sustain by the emancipation of their slaves and the continual plunder by the kaffirs and other coloured classes. And further, they resented the false accusation of cruelty when, in fact, they treated their servants like their own children; feeding them on the milk of their cows and honey of their hives and setting them on the Path of Righteousness as they gathered together, on the Day of Rest, in the front room of the farmhouse to honour Him, the Creator of all things.

After Fritz and Hermien had trekked north, John takes over his estranged father-in-law's bakery and Rachel goes back to her violin, learning new pieces as she plays with a growing group of musicians in the church hall. And their four children are left to their own devices. The younger two boys are happy to be with their Hottentot *ousie*, but the eldest

daughter Vera, being of a forceful disposition, steals as much affection as she can lay her hands on and that includes her younger sister Leah's one-and-only school friend.

These two, bored and up to no good, decide to cut a piece out of the precious paisley shawl John gives Rachel for her thirtieth birthday. When Rachel weeps in dismay they concoct a plausible story of how they caught Leah red-handed, but luckily managed, in the nick of time, to stop her making a second stole for her dolls. These two conspirators know what lies in store for the one found guilty of such a devilish deed and they delight when Leah gets a good belting from her father for trying to deny her evil action and is subsequently put first in line when smacking is dished out for bad behaviour.

And while Vera learns to play the piano she manages to stop her 'snot-eating', 'bastard', 'trashy', 'stupid' younger sister from taking up an instrument by telling her how unmusical she is. But Vera can't stop Leah singing the songs of the violin and its friends when she and her dolls perform their stories in the shadows of the churchyard trees.

Seen, but not heard, the second-oldest girl, the unwanted Leah, sits alone making her dolls and their clothes from the scraps of material given to her by the neighbour, the *dorp*'s curtain-maker. And sometimes after supper she enjoys the company of her parents, who entertain their children with fairy stories or the antics of heroes and gods. In their Graaff-Reinet lounge the romantic stories of Sleeping Beauty and Romeo and Juliet or the scary ones about Prometheus and Frankenstein passed on to John in the stormy darkness of his Isle of Skye childhood are brought to life by verse and music. As John spices up his legends and poetry with his fine tenor voice their mother provides the background music with her violin.

After school, friendless Leah takes her dolls to peep through the church-hall window as her mother practises her violin pieces on her own, or rehearses with the other musicians. Then, within earshot Leah sits her characters on her stage of patchwork shade and they begin acting out her thousand and one stories to stop Sultan Schariar from putting his latest bride to death.

In order to become Scheherazade, the Persian Queen, Leah drapes a large off-cut of silver-embossed curtain material over her head and takes centre stage on the shadowed ottoman of a tree stem. She leans against the shaded pillows of the forked branches and lets the violin of her voice blow out the candles of the day so that she can rise, modest as the moon and move the light of her tale up through the dark sky, keeping the cruel king on tenterhooks as she invites a sleeping princess to waken to the love of a handsome prince and so escape the fiendish grasp of evil.

But here my Muse her wing maun cour,
Sic flights are far beyond her power;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood, like ane bewithc'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd...

Scheherazade's favourite piece of music is Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, not only because her mother Rachel loves it, but because her father John is Scottish and loves to scare his children by reciting Tam 'o Shanter. Mendelssohn also loved Ye banks and braes of bonnie Doon and wrote music for Fingel's Cave, which is in the Hebrides, very near to where Leah's father was born on the Isle of Skye. This was not very far from the spot where Frankenstein started creating his Eve, to be a companion for his miserably lonely Adam. That is, until he came to his senses and destroyed his first woman, after realising what an evil race of scary-skinned monsters these two could breed.

Leah feels very sad for the friendless monster. Like her, he was called horrible names; vile insect, abhorred monster, fiend, wretched devil and it. Luckily he was also called Adam, probably because he was the first human being to be created by Frankenstein. But Frankenstein was the real monster because, like the real devil, he forgot how far he had fallen when he thought he was good enough to be God. But he wasn't even good enough to be God's Son. Jesus loves even the least of us, and gave his life to save us from sin, whereas Frankenstein couldn't bear to look upon his giant-sized, yellow-skinned creation and this made Adam very sad, because all he wanted was to be loved.

But Leah won't allow her Adam's heart to break. She knows how he feels; how lonely one is without a friend. And so she decides to change the ending. In her version Adam and Eve will live happily ever after in their Garden of Eden. Here no snakes are ever allowed to come and spoil their bliss.

Trapped in the devil's white-hot womb Maude, and seeking respite from despair in the splintered shade of my thorn tree, I can hear the violin of my mother's voice telling us her story of Frankenstein's Adam and Eve before the fall. It is the happy love story of Leah and Helmut before my mother's temptation is laid bare and she is made to suffer grievously for her sins.

Have mercy upon me, O God...
2 Wash me thoroughly from mine
iniquity, and cleanse me from my
sin.

Thus, according to the Holy Scriptures, my mother Leah teaches her two daughters to pray before Lazarus is born. We are still living in the golden time; the time when we can sit on the *stoep's riempiebanke* as moeder crochets jackets and blankets for our new baby and picks up the stitches I have dropped as I knit a scarf to keep the icicles off Pa's beard, when he wakes up the dark in his usual get-up-and-go *opstaan, koffie drink, inspan, ry*, way.

The sunset is in the year 1873 and Marie is nine, only two years older than me, but old enough to knit her own jerseys and, after labouring for twelve-hours to tame the rearing-and-bucking veld, Pa is tired enough to come and sit beside Ma with the cup of coffee *Ouma* has brewed for him.

But *Ouma* doesn't join us as the black specks of our cranes return from foraging for insects on the vast plains to the south; their V for *Vryheid*: Freedom growing bigger and bluer on the glowing banner of the red sunset as they near the night-time sanctuary of our dam wall. *Ouma* thinks it a *skande* to listen to my mother's misguided stories, for she *desirest truth in the inward parts*; to know the wisdom that is only to be found in the Holy Words of her *Bybel*.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
and in sin did my mother conceive
me.

According to Genesis, Chapter 2, Eve was taken from the rib of Adam, and according to Frankenstein, Eve was taken from a pauper's grave. But Leah wants her Eve to wake up and dance like Sleeping Beauty in her creeper-enclosed palace until her prince, out hunting with his henchmen, abandons the pursuit of his buck in favour of this doe-eyed creature. But, as there are no overgrown palaces in Graaff-Reinet, Leah has Eve waking up on a ferned bank of the Sundays River.

When, twenty years later, Ma's lovely contralto hums Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, her princess doesn't awake like a dawn lily from a bower of soft green leaves. Our story is not set at sunrise, or on the leafy banks of the Sundays River. Our farm lies many miles to the south-east on the parched plains of the Camdeboo and the best time to enjoy its wonders is at the end of the day. For only when all the work is done does the stern sun-father allow his beaming children to muddle up the rainbow as they play their light games on the swept yard of the sky.

When our Eve lands on the clay wall Pa has built to dam some of the *Platrivier*'s water, the curtain of reeds on either side opens and she steps down onto the mirrored stage. But unlike Salome, who danced for the head of John the Baptist, she is without sin as the sunset hands her the first of the seven veils and the glass slippers of her delicate feet dance the fine mist of turquoise into the shiny surface of the water, saying that the sky will always be blue. On that happy note, Andante soars upwards on fairy wings to grasp the second colour from the outstretched hands of the rays, inviting them to ripple with her, as she floats down to overlay her sheet of shimmering blue with the silk of her green voile, promising that seeds will follow the winter and grow out of the earth after the rain. And again and again and again and twice more she rises up and trills as she take the gold of the long grass and then the orange of the sweet fruit and then the red of the perfumed rose and thereafter the violet of the distant hills and the indigo of the mid-summer shade before drifting down to layer her gifts of light until darkness is upon her and upon her stage and, becoming like as to the gossamer of the tumble weed, she rises and floats in the orbit of the moon.

To allow more voices to speak of the day when Eve enters the Garden of Eden to be with the man, whom the Lord God hath formed from the dust of the ground, Ma changes her tune. Now she must sing the opening melodies of Mozart's sinfonia concertante, which she loves as much as she loves the Andante of her Scottish Father's Mendelssohn. Leah had watched her mother practising with the orchestra and on the evening of the grand concert, when she hid in the pillared courtyard of the Drosdy, she could hum along as her mother's violin sang a duet with Herr Leopold's viola to the accompaniment of two horns, two oboes and strings and the applause of the elegant guests.

When Ma sets her scene as we sit in the criss-cross shade of the ripening grapevine that weaves through the wire and poles of the *stoelasie* Pa has constructed over our veranda to give us shade, the lonely thorn tree's podding mother and father, round as French horns, also sing of abundance as their roots sip from the side of the dam and their fruiting branches stir to the breath of the south-easterlies.

Nearby, on the mud wall, stand two cranes, elongated as oboes. These large, long-legged, greyish birds with a paler head and long drooping tail call to mind a courting dance with outstretched wings before they cry out together with the two rustled trees and a stringed veld-chorus of *langasempies*, frogs, geese, heron, kingfishers and a wakeful eagle owl.

And the rib, which the LORD
God had taken from man, made he
a woman, and brought her unto the

man.

After which time the chorus becomes subdued, so as to give voice to the greeting of the man, into whose nostrils the Lord God had breathed the breath of life, so to become a living soul, and of his help-meet woman.

‘We are both naked,’ the voice of the viola and the violin sing.

‘We are man and wife,’ they continue. ‘We are not ashamed.’

‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,’ sigheth the woman.

‘He shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,’ man gives firm answer, to which the living creatures that the water brought forth abundantly lend their voice, and also to the voice of his wife when, once more, she speaks.

‘The farm that the Lord God has given unto you my husband, to be named Bethel, according to the place where those, who loved his Only Begotten Son, dwelt in the time before his crucifixion and death, is pleasing to my sight.’

‘Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, let me show you the ground out of which the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food and in the midst whereof is also the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.’

‘And I can see that He helps you to keep His Garden green and living, *my man?*’

‘As it is written, “there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground”.’

And the strings of the chorus repeat the Blessed words and the cranes flutter their wings and the breeze moves through the shuttered leaves of the thorn trees and Adam tells his Eve how, in its season, the *Platrivier* fills with water. And she sighs with pleasure. And he breaks through her delightful bowing and through the rejoicing of the trees, birds and insects, to tell her of the time when, together with his father and his mother, he came unto Bethel and saw the goodness of the river flowing over the earth. But Adam also saw that within the strength of the water lay its weakness.

For not being satisfied with the rewards of soaking into the ground and giving to the seeds of the earth so that they might send forth their roots and rise into the air and stir with the sunlight and by so doing bring colour to their flowers and fullness to their fruit, the water tears off the precious topsoil and runs away with it to the sea, leaving the dried-up dongas to tear-drop a land held in the ruthless grip of the unrelenting sun.

And a darkening of sound passes over veld until Adam speaks.

‘*n Boer maak 'n plan*. If the water can't control itself, man will.’

‘And a woman respects her man for honouring the first principles as laid down in the First Book of Moses.’

And together with all the company of musicians they sing of the wonder of God’s creation

And the earth was without form and
void; and darkness was upon
the face of the deep. And the spirit
of God moved upon the face of the
waters.
And God said let there be light:
and there was light

‘And God saw the light, that it *was* good,’ the viola sings.

‘And woman sees the decisiveness of her man in a time of adversity, that it *is* good,’ Leah gives answer to her husband.

And Helmut speaks of the days when he and his father together with their loyal servant, Nonzima build a dam. And like unto the river of Eden four channels went from that dam to water the garden of their farm; one to irrigate the mielie field; one to the fill the sheep and cattle troughs; one to bring water to the kitchen; one to wet the fruit trees and vegetables.

And all sing of the rightness of the dam.

And Leah asks who Nonzima is and Helmut answers her.

Nonzima, the name which means *it went badly*, was their servant. He had the strength of the *Platrivier*; his blood flowing into him was from his father Kwane, the councillor and executioner of the great Xhosa chief Tshiwo. But Kwane used his power wisely. He saved the lives of the condemned, taking them to hide in a place known as Gqunuqwas. It was the place where the few from the great tribe once known to themselves as the Khoikhoi had settled. These Man-of-Man people lost both their name and their land when the white settlers arrived at the Cape and called those they thought to be no better than fat-smeared savages, Hottentots, and moreover deemed it right to take away the fields where the stinking heathen grazed their cattle.

Nonzima’s mother was from this ancient tribe of the Khoikhoi and as was the tradition of her people she carried her baby son on her back when she went with her husband Kwane to live at Nojoli near to the white settlement of Somerset East. But when the boy was five years old their small tribe was driven from their kraal by the Xhosas

warriors adorned in blue crane feathers, who came streaming over the Great Fish River to plunder and murder.

Before Nonzima's mother was found and assagaied to death near Eselkop she hid her son in a crumbling ant hill. It was here that Helmut's father found the waiting child and his youngest son being of a similar age and his heart having being touched by the love of his Saviour Jesus Christ, he took pity on the abandoned boy, as he would to a motherless lamb; his young features being noble and his colour being much lighter than that of his enemy, the marauding Xhosas, who were seeking to burn his home, steal his cattle and murder his wife and children.

Nonzima was the boy that was brought to live in the midst of a white family, but not to dwell within their mud-walled farmstead, but rather to have his kaross laid on the dung floor of the *buitekamer*, knowing full well, from the tone of his skin that he was of the line of Ham, the father of Canaan; of the seed of the son whom Noah had cursed for looking upon his nakedness, rather than going in backwards and covering his parent with a garment like his two brothers had, when he began to be a husbandman and planted a vineyard and drank of the wine and was drunken.

25 And he said, Cursed be Canaan:
a servant of servants shall he be
unto his brethren.

Although Nonzima is a servant, he is like a brother to Helmut. As boys they play like sunbeams on the werf after the day's work is done. And like sunbeams they run away together to hide in the donga'd veld when his father covers them in the darkness of his *riempies'* lashes, his fists' blows and his *veldskoen*-kicks. And like the dawn rays they rise together to start a new day. And they become young men together and go off hunting. And when Helmut's gun backfires and he is blinded in the left eye, Nonzima stops the bleeding with the dung of a kudu and he finds a *gifbol*: poison bulb and places its scales over the wound to prevent infection, as is the way of his people, and then he lifts his concussed brother and carries him to the farmhouse, as he was carried by his mother when she took her baby to the safety of their Nojoli hut.

And after Eve and her chorus agree that such a friendship is blessed, for it speaks of true brotherhood and love and Helmut's viola continues, telling them about the *droogte* after his father had died and his brothers had trekked with Piet Retief's men and were massacred in Dingaan's kraal and his mother's heart was near to breaking and she cried out to the Lord in her affliction and he would not comfort her, but sent a drought to test her

sinful heart. Her mielie-fields withered, her cattle and sheep grew skeletal and died, her fruit withered with the tree and her vegetable garden lay fallow.

But Helmut would not let his mother's heart crack like the flaked floor of the dried-up clay dam as she prayed for mercy after toiling all day; rising before dawn to kneed her dough and cover it in an eiderdown until the glowing coals of mimosa wood were ready to be scraped out of the Dutch oven Helmut had built for her; and the loaves of bread were left to bake in a cooling oven till the men returned from the land.

Helmut was a Boer and he knew how to make a plan and called in a water-diviner. Holding one prong of a forked willow twig in either hand *Oom* Bertie lifted the single end upwards and marched up and down on the patch of veld near the dam where he believed an underground stream flowed. When the twig snapped round and pointed to the earth he knew he had found it and brought his drilling machine. Within a month a windmill was drawing up water by the gallon and filling the cement dam Pa and Nonzima had built near the animal trough.

Pa planted lucerne and sold his fat cattle on the market square in Graaff-Reinet and made enough money to drill a second time. The flow wasn't as strong, but there was enough water to fill the second concrete dam near the house and enable them to replant the fruit trees and vegetables. *Ouma* was satisfied and being provident wanted no more expense; no more drilling or windmills. For now, even in the dry seasons, she could make her apricot jam-tarts and bottle her peaches and pears and serve four vegetables for her son's midday meal so as to keep up his strength. And there was plenty of food left over for Nonzima and the Hottentot *outa* Piet and his wife Mina, the housemaid, and their three children.

Ouma said Pa was ready to look for a wife and she hoped he would favour the *opreg*: upright daughter of *Oom* Fanie, a *deaken* of their church. But Pa had other ideas. He couldn't keep his eyes off Leah on Easter Friday, when she stood in the front row of the church choir singing choruses from *St John's Passion*. And he was so moved by the final Choral, *O Jesus when I come to die* that he remained in his pew when the rest of the congregation went out to greet the *Dominee* and to congratulate the singers.

Leah also liked the silence of the shadowed interior and came and sat beside Helmut and told him how she loved listening to Bach's music. She had been deeply moved, four months ago, when her mother played the last part of his Partita for single violin, as she laid the arums and ferns that she had picked by the river on her father's freshly dug grave.

Leah told Helmut she wasn't good enough to play a musical instrument, but if he would like her to, she could sing the last part of the Partita for him. She explained that, like

crocheting, this chaconne starts with a simple pattern of eight notes, but as the hook of your voice pulls the thread of the wool through its loops, its D D C# D Bb G A D swirl up and out and into new patterns to become three separate parts, called a triptych, which is like the two fronts and the back of a jersey.

And Leah warmed Helmut's heart with the loops of her contralto voice and afterwards she told him that she knew another piece that was even more suitable for a day of sorrow. She always felt very lonely and sad when she listened to her mother and Herr Leopold and their friends playing the Adagio section of Mozart's String Quintet in G minor. But Leah couldn't sing this movement to Helmut because it was made up of five parts, two violins, two violas and a cello.

As I stifle through the long afternoon beside my thorn tree in Satan's womb I also can't sing Mozart's String Quintet, but I can try to keep my singed companion's mind off her own unequal struggle. So, like my mother, I pretend to be Scheherazade and keep my thorn tree amused with the sad story of two violins, the voices of my two Mama's, one wearing a black dress like my *Ouma's* and the other a ragdoll-Mama slumped in her flower dress beside her barren other-half; two violas, the deeper voice of Pa and his servant Nonzima – *it went badly*; and the darkest voice of all, a cello, the voice of a lost paradise, of empty flowerbeds.

When Lazarus was born my Pa and Ouma thought that his dark skin colour was due to his difficult birth and then the doctor came and said it was a bad case of jaundice and that it might take a month or two for his normal colour to return. But three months later, towards the end of September when the south-easterlies were less bitter and the sunlit stoep was warm enough for Mama to sit and crochet beside her sleeping infant son, Pa's patience had worn thin.

And *Ouma* read to us from Chapter three of Genesis, beginning at the first verse

Now the serpent was more subtil
than any beast of the field which
the Lord God had made...

And *Ouma* remembering how the satanic dance of a Salome tempted a Xhosa warrior to put on his crane feathers and stamp towards the farms of the God-fearing Boers, reminded her son of the curse of Noah and the temptation of Eve.

And Helmut was sore afraid, his heart greatly afflicted when he understood his mother's meaning, having delighted in the remembrance of a September sunset the previous

year when Leah enhanced her beauty, circling within her wave of ostrich feathers and Nonzima, sitting with them, rose up to fetch his feathers so that he could speak of the triumph of his tribe; and later that evening when he and his wife were circled within the wave of moonlight streaming over them through the open bedroom window.

‘*Die Droogte; die droogte*; Know ye children of God that the drought is the curse of God for the sins of Eve,’ Our *Dominee* thundered from his pulpit, the black mantel of his outstretched arms hovering before his congregation like a bird of prey. ‘The Lord cursed the ground when Adam was tempted by his wife; in sorrow shall thou eat of it all the days of thy life.’

When we returned home *Ouma* reinforced our *Dominee*’s *Nagmaal* message. ‘Having brought evil into the world a woman must ever be mindful of her shame. It will be to her eternal damnation if she fails to cover her shame as the Lord has commanded her to do, or to forget that her desire shall only be to her husband and he shall rule over her.’

Although his desire was for his wife Leah, his joy, his spring, and also for his brother Nonzima, his other help meet and saviour, Pa remembered his mother’s words. He knew that in order for man to gain the paradise of life eternal, he must put aside all earthly bliss.

Those beloved to him had sinned and a master’s obligation is to punish the wife and servant who have betrayed him, for how else could the colour of Lazarus’ skin be explained other than that Leah had lain with Nonzima?

And Helmut turned his back on Leah and she ceased to sing and so put on a widow’s weeds and withdrew to the shadows of the outside room, whence she was banished after Nonzima was driven from it and his body was come upon when the vultures had picked the flesh from his bones and no cause could determine why he should die alone on the veld.

But it took more than Nonzima’s death to appease the wrath of God. The enmity that he had put between the beguiling serpent and his seed, and the woman who had eaten of the forbidden fruit and her seed, allowed the cobra to bruise the heel of Marie when she and I had walked barefoot to a cave near Rooikop, in search of more of the stone-age tools that Dr Atherstone, visiting our region on his mule cart a few years ago, had told us were very valuable. We could sell them in Graaff-Reinet and we could buy ourselves a new dress.

‘I’d like some imported German shoes too; and some knitted stockings’ Marie said.

‘And, if there is any money left over, I’d like to buy a yard-and-a-half of blue velvet to wrap around me when I blow out my candle and pretend that I live in a world where the sky is always blue and that the stony werf where I draw the circles and squares of my hopscotch is as soft to touch as the grass growing around the outlet pipe of the concrete dam that waters the fruit trees.’

But although I was ten I didn’t use my head and find a sharp stone to cut open the wound and let it bleed. Like Nonzima I looked for a gifbol to save my sister and took off my *broek*: knickers, to keep the leaves in place over the bite to stop it getting infected. And I sat in the cool cave with Marie who was crying and only ran home when the shadows warned me that the afternoon was moving on. It was a long way and when I got there no-one could help me. Ouma was too old to ride a horse and Mina too frightened and the brandy had made Ma fall asleep and Pa and Outa Piet and his sons had driven some cattle to market. So I saddled up and raced back, but by the time I got to Marie she was too feverish to know me or to climb onto my horse.

Eventually Ma was able to come with me and bring Marie home to die in her arms before Pa returned. The *Dominee* came to bless the ground and my sister was laid beside our *Oupa*. And Ma sat beside her dead daughter and sang lamenting Cantatas her mother Rachel had played on her violin. And Pa standing near to Ma found comfort in her sorrow and she returned to lie with him. And Lazarus rose from the dead and found the place in his father’s heart where Marie had sat. But my head of black hair found no rest there, it not being as quick of thought as Marie’s fair one that saved Lazarus from drowning, while I was foolishly stalking the geese across the dam.

Nor did I find a place in my *Ouma*’s kitchen. She deemed me lazy and ungracious for favouring to sit with my mother and learn how to crochet the triptych of a jersey and listen to her chaconne. Ma and I both loved that winter-time song for it held within it the seed of re-birth.

‘The Lord has seen fit to strangle the bastard with the umbilical cord of her Jezebel mother. From this day forward there can be no resurrection in my heart for the evil spawn of Satan,’ I heard Pa yell when Ma ceased to scream with the pain of giving birth to my stillborn sister.

I felt I couldn’t breathe, but I didn’t want to be strangled by the umbilical cord of the evil sun. So I took a seed from the split pod of my sapped thorn tree, knowing that there was no escape for my friend from the furnace of this womb, and I tried to run from the

talons of the hovering Satan. But his vulture eyes saw me and the raw wrinkles of his snake-scaled neck shook as his hooked beak struck at my flesh and tore open my *skande*.

I was bleeding as I ran down the road with the naked little girl I had taken from the *buitekamer* where Pa had dumped her on one of the little blankets Ma had crocheted for our new baby. When I tried to find some water at the burnt-out farmhouse near the *Melkrivier* I was driven away by the howls of the unquiet spirits of the *Tokoloshes* that stream over the dark veld gleaming with the eyes of the hyena.

I drank from a spring near Tandjiesberg, but I kept on walking along the treacherous wagon road, brandishing a stout stick to ward off foxes and wild cats. I was expecting to hear the shoed hooves of my father's horse clattering on the stones of the *wapad*. But I should have known that he would be in the arms of the *brandewyn* that night and only begin his search for his lost daughters the following morning, after Naomi had sheltered me from his wrath in the safety of her home.

The next day, before dawn, Naomi and I carry the warmly wrapped baby over the river and climb the slope until it levels out and we can dig a grave and place some heavy stones over my sister's second blanket of gravelly sand to stop the scavengers eating the unbaptised child. But we leave a small crevasse in the middle of the mound and fill it with some soft soil and there we plant the seed I took from the pod of my dying thorn tree so that the arms of a friend can take the unwanted child to her bosom and in the font of her roots she will be named. And we add our tears to the watering of our seed.

Then we sit on a boulder and look over the large stretch of the Sunday's River that is dammed to the north-west of the dorp. And we see the slowly rising sun redden the voile mist drifting eastwards from the slowly setting full moon and Naomi speaks:

'Veiled in brightness Sultan Schariar lies beside his bride Scheherazade on the crimson ottoman of the horizon. He waits to see if another of her mysterious tales can keep his present rapture alive.' (Naomi begins her story like my mother Leah did when she sang her tales to the tunes that her mother Rachel played on her violin. Being very frightened on the day after my escape I can't stop talking and by the time I fall asleep next to her with the candle burning Naomi knows much about Bethel's Garden of Eden and our fall from Grace.)

'The Queen of the harem does not wish to feel how well her cruel husband has sharpened his scimitar,' Naomi continues. 'So when she see the rays of her Sultan shine on the spiked steeple of the Dutch Reformed Church, she thinks of the chaconne that was woven into a triptych by the maestro Bach for last part of his violin Partita, and sung by a

sorrowful Leah to win the heart of her hopeful Helmut. And the lovely Scheherazade casts on her stitches, D D C# D Bb G A D, so as to begin crocheting the right front panel of her silken jersey.'

'At the end of the row she returns to embroider the loop of the last D with the lamentation of Jeremiah. But deeming the loss of the temple of Jerusalem and the taking over of Judea by the followers of the god Baal, too dark a thread on which to hang her life, she moves to a more moonlit place where she has witnessed the lamentations of a princess transformed by age into a frog that no-one wishes to kiss.'

Having set the scene Naomi passes her story on to Scheherazade.

"Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

'The cello'd cry comes from the frog. The deep-throated one knows that he, for whom she has hopped ever since the moon rose at the sun's retreat, is dancing to the tune of a more agile and eligible bride; one whose high thighs delight him as they advance, carrying the eggs that will sparkle with his markings.'

'Realising that she is no longer a bride worth bartering for, the frog weeps; the folds around her neck shaking at the thought that her purpose for being is no more; that her life is at an end and the only thing left for her dimpling arms to do, is to tidy up her affairs, lie down and die.'

At this point Naomi urges Scheherazade to cut down on the number of her crocheting's swirls.

'My dear, it is better that you reach a conclusion before the light-of-your-life decides to span in his oxen and move on. And moreover Herr Bach will run out of variations by the time you describe how the light filtering through the seasonal canopy that covers the aging frog's pool changes every hour of the day, or how it comes about that the drought can intensify the velvety look of its emptying eye.

And if you were to persist and trace the graceful coupling of the dragonflies, or the feathery touch of the asparagus fern and the mossy tickle of the willow tip, who but a Goliath would desire the right-front panel of such a cardigan?

Surely, it is wiser to cut a long story short; to raglan the front panel; be provident and cast off a stitch at the end of every second row and let your Sultan go about his daily business. It is written that all you need to do if you wish to see the light of another day is to make sure that you hook Schariar on the final D at the end of your yarn.'

Having waited patiently for the second narrator to finish interrupting, the moon resumes her tale in the gravelly voice of him who lies on the sidelines of the tormented frog's pool.

“It’s best to stick to the facts rather than becoming too fanciful.”

“Covering eggs is all good and well; but there is much more to life than that,” another reject frog pipes up.

“No time to rest on our laurels then,” a third croaks.

‘Who are these interlopers, you might ask, my Darling?’ Scheherazade strokes the head that is lying on her sequined lap. ‘They are none other than the battalions of the overlooked; their sweet love calls unable to piece the armour-plate of the beloved; but let me resume.

Her confrere’s call to arms cheers our despondent heroine. “I come from a hardy breed whose motto is ‘A frog makes a plan.’”

“Our ruthless one-hundred-and-one child policy has led to a shortage of girls; boys being the gender of choice,” the luckless frog continues. “We oldies don’t stand a chance. If our passion is to find any outlet it would go better for us if we changed our tune and danced to it.’

‘That can be done; the surface of my pool is well-sprung and I know of another dance beside that of the chaconne, which has survived the ravishes of time ever since the sixteenth-century Froggies called it a Gavotte. I will teach you the steps and then you can chance your bodies to my husky voice as it seeks out the depths hidden by the versatile maestro Bach in his suite number six for solo cello.

‘The watery eyes around the pool blink and with a gulp the legions of the reinvigorated shake out their creased skins as they hop onto the dance floor and stand as instructed in a circle, their long fingers interlacing. When their dance mistress tells them to plié they bend their knees and they rise onto the balls of their feet when she croaks, *élévé*, then pausing for two beats, the company of dancers step crossways to the right pointing the toe, one, two; then one, hold, two-and-three, four; then one and hold for three beats before turning to the left on the heels and repeat.

“Good, now we can let go of one other and introduce the *pas de deux* of the arms, one arm to the waist and the other accompanying the movement of the body. *Voilà*, now you are ready for the head and the hands to swing you into your first variation.”

The ballet troupe is a hop-away success and by the time it has worked its way down and around the crook of the Sunday’s River and is straightening out to take on the waterside communities of the Camdeboo plains the sultan is sweating heavily.

‘Fortunately release is at hand’ Naomi, the first narrator, continues and brings the story to a happy conclusion. ‘The lamentation of a Spanish infanta threading through the

eye of the final D of the chaconne's right-front panel provides the hook that will guarantee Scheherazade a twenty-four-hour stay of execution.'

"Same time, same place," his majesty commands rising to let his sleepy queen retire to powder her face and pleasure him at least once more.

At the same time next morning, we climb the hillside and water our thorn-tree seed before sitting on our north-facing boulder. The moon is lagging behind as the sun majesties the east and Naomi begins her second story.

"She's late," the sultan glares, but remembering the sweet-meats of her Turkish delight shrugs, "*Le droit de la femme, n'est ce pas?*"

Scheherazade knows that she must make up for this lapse by crocheting the left-front panel of her chaconne with an exotic tale. But that is not so easy when her heroine is a dead princess, for although a pearl, the gorgeous Isabella, being beaded at the end of the Nasrid Dynasty, was too frail to carry the weight of her Muslim heritage and too easily stripped from her long lineage when in 1527 the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, inserted his palace, together with his loving son, within the Alhambra, the red Moorish fortress occupying the top of the hill of the Assabica.

So Scheherazade gives full reign to the beauty and purity of her jewel; makes her flower like the myrtle, lets the petals of her skirt breathe and the laced bodice of her sepals sparkle with the gold-tipped threads of her stamens as the step hold, step hold, step, step, step, hold, of her Pavane leads her sultan through the quadrangular rooms and courtyards so that he can delight in the way she and her *corps de ballet* flow as freely as the sun and the breeze through the columned arcades and as stately as the calligraphy overlaying the rhythmic arabesque of scrolling and interlacing lines that foliage the tiles colouring the floors, walls and ceilings of her sumptuous abode.

Scheherazade knows that after all this splendour her lord Schariar will wish to follow the merry band out into the park, overgrown with wild flowers and grass, before stepping into the symmetry of her Garden of Eden, there to stroll along oblongs hemmed with rose bushes and squares bright with orange trees, down avenues spired by cyprus and around circles sparkled by fountains, past walls cascading with running water and rivulets of bougainvillea and on through the arches smelling of jasmine to look into the depths of a reflecting pool.'

"Hundreds of years ago the face that looked back at Isabella from this pool was not her own, but that of a handsome Andalusian prince," Scheherazade ventures to break into Naomi's narrative.

“With a voice as soothing as the summer breeze and a hand as open as a spring day he invites his Persian princess to walk along the paved paths with him and teaches her a dance of his people and when she tires he sits her down in the shade of a pomegranate tree and as she eats of its fruit and is filled by the sweetness of its juice and by the filigreed counterpoint of the birdsong, she becomes drowsy and when she awakes she is alone, but for the song of a nightingale.”

“It sings of a Catholic monarch, one who has snuffed out the flame of his son for giving light to their Moorish enemy. And the sad princess rises and dances her Spanish Pavane, forever holding out her hand for her beloved to take, but the power of the evil-one is too strong.”

‘Feeling upstaged by the luscious Isabella and her unequalled surrounds and unsettled by the unsatisfactory ending of her story and by the rumour that the next one could be even worse, the company of frogs decide to meander southwards with their river,’ Naomi informs us.

‘They are in no mood to head out into the dust of the arid plains as the support act for a prima-donna; a Jezebel decked out in all her finery and thrown to the hyenas by her eunuchs at the express command of her son Jehu, chosen by the prophet Elisha to slay his mother and rid Israel of the monster, the power behind the throne, who persuaded good king Ahab to build temples to her god Baal. The frogs think that it might be altogether better to leave the sultan’s queen to deal with the tricky situation of trying to save her life with the blasphemous story of a bitter-aloe.’

“‘I’ll give you one more chance,” the sultan warns Scheherazade. If your next story doesn’t please me, I’ll smash up your light and the ghostly shards of your former self will drift aimlessly through the kingdom of my day.”’

‘Naturally, as is the wont of the waning moon, she is over an hour late on the third morning and by the time a pale Scheherazade has crocheted the third row of her chaconne’s back-panel, the sultan doesn’t want to hear another word about a bound and disfigured Jezebel standing up when friendly ants build a nest around her, and dancing when cockroaches eat away her leg bindings, and delighting when wasps winter in her dry petticoat and ladybirds clean her wounds and praying mantids guard her leaves and the red-faced mousebirds waft their tail-feathers as they whistle a soft chee-ree-ree in thanks for a winter feed.’

“Fancy a bitter-aloe skirt trying to get the better of the sun with her flaming torches,” the sultan sun cries out in a rage. “It is pure heresy, that’s what it is! I’ve never heard the likes. But I’ll show them who is boss. I’ll drain the light from this fanciful moon

and ensure that the hook rising out of her story's last D is no less charred than the fallen head lying on the leeward shoulder of an upstart thorn tree.”

And the echo of my mother's Aria *Es ist vollbracht* wisps in the dry air.

Naomi and I water our seed and, a month later, when the full moon rises, we climb our *koppie* to get as close as is possible to our friend and tell her we are sorry about the way she has been pushed aside and feel very sad for her suffering. She mustn't be frightened; she will never walk alone through the dark sky; we will always be there for her.

We tell her that we think her story about Jezebel should have been heard, not cut short. And so we have made up a *Dance of the Hours* and spent the past few weeks learning the counterpoint of its light and dark steps. We think that if we can act out the five parts, *Sunrise, Day, Sunset, Night* and *New Dawn* it will not be so hard for our friend Jezebel to accept her bitterness, knowing that she is not to blame for the loss of her good self, a devout and loving wife and mother, who is reviled in the court of her husband for being an evil seductress, one who is unabashed to use the wiles of her finery to lead the followers of Yahweh, the true God, astray. And maybe the sun will stop and have a re-think and be more loving to his Scheherazade and a little less unfair to Jezebel.

The moon is obviously delighted with our proposal and happy to pour her golden light on our stage, for as long as we like. Luckily it is April and the Jezebel is decked out in all her bitter-aloe candelabra and happy for Naomi and me to cut off a flaming flower-head to hold in our right hands as we begin the flamenco of the first dance called *sunrise*, or denial.

Jezebel will begin her dance by proclaiming to all who care to watch (there are surprisingly large number of eyes in our seemingly deserted corner of the world who would wish to do so) that despite being thrown from her kingdom to the mercy of the cruel veld she is not afraid.

“What terrible loss have I suffered when life is so good; when all I can see lying before me is day and I have so many little friends out here on the arid plain to care for me?”

The lightening of Jezebel's fiery attack at grief's storm-clouds flows from her brandished flower-heads, down through her succulent skirt and into the thunderous stamp of her foot that grumbles off into the west. But the curved beak of her overhead adversary is not deterred and Jezebel has to flash at him again and again until his vulture eyes look elsewhere and spotting the carcass of the Camdeboo Mountains he moves towards his new prey, the grey cloak of his wings spreading over the parched veld, leaving the gold-orange of Jezebel's up-stretched arms to flutter like a monarch butterfly in the flurry and hush of

the advancing and retreating breeze, as she reels in delight to the melody of the raindrops and the rhythms of the air. Life is good.

“So, what can possibly go wrong as my day fills with light?” Jezebel wants to know.

Before Naomi and I can answer her question we need a rest and as we sit down on our north-facing boulder we feel the moon’s gentle stroking. She tells us that she knows how easy it is to shy away from the difficulty of looking loss in the face, but that we mustn’t fear, for the one quality she doesn’t lack is resilience in the face of adversity. Neither does Jezebel’s aloe; her leaves have not succumbed to the flattery of the fine or the feathery, but looking to a future, are fleshy, thick, bitter and covered in thorns.

Day is Jezebel’s second dance. Like Prometheus and Nonzima its anger takes time to build into the furious heat of the afternoon and in order to give us enough energy to finish Jezebel’s last three dances we have divided *Day* into two parts. Naomi knows about Prometheus because her husband recites a German poem that rages about the terrible way the Greek gods treated their friend the Titan, who shaped man out of clay and cared enough about his shivering creations to steal some of Zeus’ fire for them. But Zeus wasn’t too happy about sharing his gifts and when he saw man’s fires twinkling like the stars of heaven on the ground below he punished the thief by chaining him to the Caucasus Mountains.

Naomi’s Graaff-Reinet neighbour shows her how the steps of a Greek dance build-up and become stronger and faster. By the time Prometheus rattles his chains at Zeus for letting the vultures eat his liver every night Jezebel is pretty fiery and adds an English translation of Goethe’s poem to the spin of her defiance

I honour you? What for?
Have you ever eased the suffering
Of him who is oppressed?
Have you ever dried the tears
of him who is troubled?

Here I sit, forming men
In my own image,
A race that shall be like me,
That shall suffer, weep,
Enjoy and rejoice,
And ignore you,
As I do!

And as I begin my part of the angry dance, I think about the bones of Nonzima being picked clean by the vultures near the ant heap where he died at the hand of the brother, whose father had saved him when he waited for the mother, who hid him before

she was stabbed by the Xhosa crossing the Great Fish River to plunder and murder the Boer and English Settlers, who had taken the land that lay to the west of the Kei River, before stamping onwards to steal the land that belonged to the Bushman and to the Khoi people, who had moved their cattle to graze in the dry, cold spaces of the Sneeuberge that were safe from the white man's fire and the *impi*'s of the Xhosa chiefs.

Jezebel holds her assegai above her head and stamps over her stage stabbing at the sun. All she sees around her is desolation; the work of a cruel master, a Frankenstein, who cares little about the creatures his light has brought to life, or about their endless struggle to repair the devastation he lays on their heat-oppressed plains. She stamps like Nonzima, who wore the blue crane feathers of his warrior father Kwane, the councillor and executioner of the great Xhosa chief Tshiwo; telling how Kwane used his power wisely and saved the lives of the condemned.

But I sit down when Jezebel thinks of how Leah followed Nonzima's story with the beautiful story of her ostrich feathers that soothed the brow of her sleeping Adam, her beloved Helmut, in their Garden of Eden and how afterwards, heeding the warning of his mother, Helmut rose up against Leah. My mother's anger cannot be danced. It is as lifeless as the black daisies she branded into the scraps of her calico and muslin *lappies* with her embroidery needle in the time of her disgrace.

We base our third dance *sunset* on the joyful scene hanging in Naomi's living room wall. It was embroidered by her dying mother five years after her family left their beloved Prague.

'My mother never let go of her dream of returning to her desired city, so that she could be with her parents and her dead son,' Naomi tells me.

'Perhaps Jezebel also longs to have her loved ones back.' I say.

'Well, we must help her if she doesn't want to give up her dream of returning to the time when the murderous heart her daughter Athalia was still overflowing with love for her beautiful mother, as they sit in shade of cedars in her palace gardens. We can make her steps as bright and lively as the stitches that polka over the Charles Bridge and join the spring carnival in the lingering sunset on the grassy slopes of the Vltava.'

'And then on the tailored wings of blue cranes and in the green skirts of the thorn trees, to the chorus of the frogs, langasempies and birds she can waltz around Bethel's full dam,' I add

Naomi and I are still too full of dancing to stop, so she shows me how to hop, slide and kick my heels together so that our mazurka can bring the arid slopes of our southern land to life with gypsy flames.

But of course we can't keep being as bright as this forever and Naomi leads us into *night*, the forth Dance of the Hours.

'As the colour fades from the sky, Jezebel must step into the approaching cave of the night where the cobra sleeps, having bruised the heel of fallen woman; for it is written that she who was beguiled by the serpent must return unto the ground:

for dust thou art, and unto
dust shalt thou return.

But Jezebel, not wanting to enter so forbidding a place, falls into an exhausted heap and cries out:

"I cannot go to a place of darkness. I cannot go from the light. I cannot go forward without the hand of the one I love. I shall be lost forever in such a dark place. I shall never find my way back to the light. I shall never wish to come away from that place of darkness if my beloved is not by my side."

And her little friends, the insects, those who know of hardship, hear her cry and they come to her. And the ants raise her up, and the touch of cockroaches, wasps and ladybirds and the protection of praying mantids comfort her. But they cannot go with her into the cave, save for the sorrowing moth that drinks from the flowering thorn tree, for having lost her source of nourishment, she can bring her nocturnal eyes to serve as a means for Jezebel to see as she enters into the cave of grief and steps like the Andalusian princess in stately pavane along the unlit paths of her desolate garden; a place devoid of all caress, fragrance or sound, where the seasons have ceased offering their cycle of hope.

Alone, Jezebel weeps, but her tears cannot water the seeds, for nothing can grow out of this winter; no spikenard send forth her smell; no bundle of myrrh, or cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi is her well-beloved unto her; her bed is not green, neither are the beams of her house cedar, or her rafters of fir and his shadow cannot delight her, nor his fruit be sweet to her taste, nor his left hand be under her head, while his right hand doth embrace her.

In the cave of the dead there is no time for flowers to appear on the land; for the singing of birds to come; the voice of the turtle to be heard; for the fig tree to put forth her figs; vines with the tender grape to give a good smell; for the rose of Sharon to feed with her among the lilies and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

And Jezebel cries out unto her beloved, "Arise my love, my fair one and come away..."

But no answering voice is heard, no echo returns to her, who loves, from this place of silence.'

At the beginning of our last dance, *New Dawn*, the morning star leads us from our pavane to the edge of the koppie to see the moon being draped in rosy hues of voile as she prepares to lie beside her sultan, who rises onto their scarlet ottoman saying:

"I've been doing a lot of thinking in the past month, but all that I can come up with is what your stories have been telling me all along. 'Love must be suffered, but never forbidden.' So let us not lose another precious moment."

But Naomi says it's getting cold and it's time for bed. 'Scheherazade's next story can wait for another night.'

She reaches into the bag in which we carry the water for our seed and takes out a piece of material.

'A yard-and-a-half of blue velvet should keep you happy and warm.'

After wishing our bitter aloe goodnight, we kneel to say a prayer for my little sister and when we open our eyes the moonlight shows us the first green shoot of our new thorn tree. And I hear Mendelssohn's Andante warming up on the breeze.

Maude's last Lied to Martie

Brahms/Bible, 3 Ernten Gesäng

I don't think I sorted out Kenny's problems when he died last week Martie. I know how much he longed to be the perfect one, and how much he despised himself for falling so short of the mark. But disembowelling him and mummifying him in salt and bandages for sixty days before laying him in the wooden sarcophagus of the disused donkey cart's *wakis*, stored at the back of the shed, was never an option; and Kenny knew it, even when he was sober, which was seldom in the last three months.

And to think I was to blame for all his suffering; that my uncontrolled nature was the ruin of him. Of course, he didn't blame me when he told me his dark secret three months ago. He was clutching desperately at any straw that might bring ever-lasting peace to his tormented soul.

'You know as well as I do Maudie that the path to my Afterlife is strewn with obstacles and if the funerary rituals are not scrupulously observed I can never become Osiris Kenneth, let alone ensure that Albert is not fed to *Ammit* the Devourer.'

'You'll need a pretty good spell if you aim on getting past your first obstacle, Maude the Refuser.'

'I know Maudie, Forgive me. When your life has been as useless as mine you have to justify its emptiness and brevity by bargaining on something more substantial and permanent in the next.'

'Can't you believe in heaven? You were a choir boy once and you sang so beautifully.'

'Until I got polio and couldn't forgive God, or Father for that matter.'

'So why do you think Osiris will be any better at resolving your problems?'

'Because he is far less exacting; he doesn't expect you to go on your knees and blurt out false contrition in the vain hope of redemption.'

And Kenny recites a Chapter (Spell) from the Book of the Dead. 'Praise be to Ra when he setteth in the western part of heaven. I am a perfected soul; I have sailed forth on the mighty boat over the waters of the Lake that I may come unto the cities thereof; I have been crowned in the House of *Shu*, his starry abode hath renewed my youth. I have power over my mouth, being furnished with charms; let not the fiends get mastery over me; let them not have dominion over me. May I be equipped in thy Fields of Peace.'

'How do you know all this?'

‘Before Albert rode off to open up a path to the rich pickings of Africa he had written to his friend at the British Museum about my interest in the Ancient Egyptians. A few months after he died, I received Wallis Budge’s translation of their funerary texts, used from the beginning of the New Kingdom (around 1550 BC) to around 50 BC. *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* was the original name for the 186 Chapters or Spells that could help the blessed spirit, the *akh*, of the deceased pass through the *Duat*, or underworld, into the desired afterlife.

Albert told me these Chapters were his ticket to salvation. As far as the God of the Dead and Ruler of the Netherworld is concerned, silence is the ticket that gets the dicey soul past the terrible Weighing of the Heart ritual.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Of course you can’t know; you were not around my bedside once Albert had finished playing his cello around yours and getting you into trouble and getting me into far worse trouble. At least you could recover by getting married, but I never recovered from my chill when father flew into one of his rages, because of your shameful condition, and kicked me out into the freezing rain for not knowing better than to leave the sheep-pen’s gate open; and he didn’t want to hear when I told him I hadn’t even been there. If mother hadn’t heard my sobs I might have been left out there all night. That probably would have been better. I would have died right there and then and never have known how terrible it is to be crippled and unable to do anything and always to be at everyone else’s mercy.

Being at Albert’s mercy wasn’t too bad. When visitors weren’t allowed he’d sneak into the isolation ward and tell me about being lonely in London and how he enjoyed going to the British Museum and meeting Wallis Budge who worked in the department of Egyptian Antiquities and invited him to become a member of his Savile Club because Jews weren’t blackballed there.

Albert and I became founding members of the Prometheus Club. Our patron was Osiris and the first applicants to be blackballed were God and our autocratic fathers, who only cared about their own feelings and couldn’t give a hoot about their son’s turmoil.’

‘I knew father treated you badly when he got into a rage, but Albert never spoke badly about his.’

‘That’s because all our members know how to keep secrets. And they also know that a child who breaks any of the Ten Commandments cannot go to heaven.’

‘What Commandment did Albert break?’

‘After his mother died he couldn’t honour his father for depriving him of his birthright. And that was at the same age that I stopped looking up to our bad-tempered

parent. I was twelve when I got polio and Albert was twelve when his mother died and was buried in the wrong grave.'

'What do you mean buried in the wrong grave?'

'I mean that Albert's father persuaded his mother to be buried in the Lutheran churchyard rather than in the Jewish cemetery, which his mother called the "good place" for the peace of the dead is sacred to the Jews and no one could expel them from their own cemetery.'

'But she had converted to Christianity.'

'Only for her children's sake; to protect them from the indignities and inequalities suffered by her people, but on her deathbed she implored her son to be true to his forefathers. He was a Cohn and must return his priestly tribe, no matter the consequences; and they were grave, for after a brief respite anti-Jewish sentiment was taking hold across the country, even in liberal institutions like the University of Berlin. His mother's last words were the *Shema Yisrael*, the opening verse of the daily prayer; "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; *shema yisrael Adonai eloheinu Adonai echad* (silently) *Baruch Shem kavod malchuto le'olam vaed*".'

'That's very sad.'

'Yes, and it gets sadder because poor Albert failed his mother. He conceded that he was as weak as his father; he never could live up to his sister's expectations of being a Daniel Deronda, but then of course he never enjoyed any aristocratic support. Uppity England, set in its intolerant ways, was no place for a German Jew seeking advancement. Perhaps in his last days he thought that his best chance of salvaging his botched attempt of finding that elusive Promised Land was by going from Cape to Cairo.'

When everyone has retired for the night after Kenny's funeral, I go back to the piano, for the spirit of my dead husband has need to talk with me, as we talked in the first months of our marriage, when the womb, feeding the seed he has found, is as sustaining as the soft waters of a river mouth infused by a rich residue of leaves and the spread of my lagoon-skin ripples in a rain-forested valley while the moonlight of Albert's bow eases his Bach Suites for solo cello into the flow of my tiding body.

Albert also has a soft spot for Beethoven. Because I have passed my licentiate piano exam with honours he knows that I am capable of learning the piano part of Beethoven's Cello Sonata No. 3 in A. In the first few years of our marriage we charm our guests by playing it for them after dinner. But as Albert's prowess grows in both the political and

business arenas, he spends more and more time away from home smoking cigars in men's clubs as far away as Cape Town and the Rand.

So I put away the music until last week when Kenny goes into a coma. As I try to deal with the horror of losing my poor brother, it brings to mind those terrible months after Albert's death. Of course, at that time, I was too angry to get near to any good memories of him, but now I am ready to go back. The suffering of an abandoned widow seems trivial after all that has come to pass in the last five years, all the wretchedness and loss of war, compounded by my brother's terrors.

'I told you the discovery of Nature's Valley would outweigh the discomfort of getting there.' I begin the first movement, Allegro, *ma non tanto* of Beethoven's Cello Sonata and after all these years I can still hear the restraint of Albert's opening bars as I wait for thirteen seconds before quavering into the nascent cumulous of the absent cello's delight.

'Look how big the lagoon is and how it shimmers; and look at the sand dunes, they sparkle like the waves; and look at the leaves, look how they sequin the dark slopes enclosing the mouth of the Great River.' (We have emerged from the Tsitsikamma Forest to stand on the high ridge overlooking Nature's Valley, after two days of winding down and up perilous river gorges and bumping along wood-choppers' tracks.)

Having warmed to the splendour of our surroundings, Albert's silent interplay weaves a shadow of pauses into the melodic expanse of our twinkling theme as we recount the highpoint of our 'explorer honeymoon'; when we camped alone at the edge of the lagoon in the time of the gibbous moon; when its waxing light moves over the horse-shoe of mountains in the west, leaving the eastern horizon to draw a line under the sky and give Albert free reign to move his focus upwards and ring the galaxies on the blackboard of the stars.

What can be more blissful than walking in the rain forest and, like a vine, sucker into my yellowwood giant listening as he tells me about the young princess Sophie Charlotte, who at the tender age of seventeen left the tiny German principality of Mecklenburg-Strelitz to marry the young British King George III of the House of Hanover.

'She wasn't a beauty but she had been well-taught and her knowledge of languages, fine arts, religion and basic sciences delighted her husband and her British subjects gave her the honorary title 'Queen of Botany' because of her longstanding interest in the enlargement and support of the Royal botanical gardens at Kew. In 1773 its director honoured his Queen by naming the Cape of Good Hope's exotic 'Bird of Paradise', *Strelitzia Reginae*.'

Albert is very proud of his home town and delighted that its entrance onto the world's botanical stage is as an incomparable flower consisting of three brilliant orange sepals and three bright blue petals that emerge from a hard, beak-like sheath called the spathe, which is placed at right angles to the stem and looks like a bird's head.

'Did you know you would find it here?' I ask.

'Of course, I knew it grew wild in the Eastern Cape along river banks and in clearing in the coastal bush, but until now I knew nothing about the delicious bloom that thrives in its midst.'

'Strange, for it comes from a well-known cultivar called The English.'

'Ah, but in the cooler latitudes of their natural habitat, this inventive bunch have adapted to living indoors. However, Darwin's Laws of Variation give colour to those that venture into a sea breeze.'

Now we are in meaty territory and it's time to move on to the Sonata's Scherzo, *Allegro molto*; a magical time when Albert skips like the notes of my piano beside the more weighty strides of his father's cello, as he hangs on every word of this wise and knowledgeable parent, when they explore the wonders of the woods and lakes around the mill on the Domjüchsee. According to an inherited lease contract with Adolph Friedrich IV Count of Mecklenburg (Queen Sophie Charlotte of England's oldest brother) dated 1772 Albert's great grandfather, Carl Adolph Albert became the owner of the mills of Alt-Strelitz and was given the title of Master Miller and Merchant Prince.

When I ask Albert why his father wanted to sell these mills eighty-four years later, he tells me that his father gave his life to the cause of freedom, especially for the Jews, because he had married a Jewess and his good friend Daniel Saunders was a Jew. Emancipation and enlightenment were the banners he marched behind. He dreamt of eradicating all forms of social injustice; doing away with the privilege of patronage which his family enjoyed; restoring rights to persecuted Jews, so that they didn't think it better to give up their faith and convert to Christianity.

He doesn't reply when I ask if, in order to the gain the milling concessions, his great-grand father converted to Christianity, like many Jews had – Felix Mendelssohn's father included – for economic and political reasons or, like his mother when she married his father, to try and escape from the outdated traditional Jewish systems of education and upbringing.

But he is happy to tell me that his father thought him special, because he was born at the time of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural*

Selection and took him for long walks to wonder at the great variety of plants; at their tenacity to survive and their ingenuity to excel. A shining example was the Lombardy poplar; a veritable Daniel Saunders of the arboreal world:

‘To think the smallest of winged seeds can grow to that great height! Of course it wouldn’t reach its goal unless it set off with a bunch of like-minded seeds.’

What would Albert think if he saw the look of defeat and confusion on the face of this frail old man? I wonder, as I begin the slow, *Adagio cantabile*, of the Sonata’s third movement. I am looking at the framed photo that Hedwig brought us. It was taken when her venerable father turned eighty, a year after Albert died, and thirteen years after his eldest son Robert Adolph had died in Ospadeletti, and twenty nine years after his beloved Sophie, whose inclination towards everything Good, True and Just was tested by orthodox Judaism on her death-bed.

And Hedwig told me that only seventeen years previously her father’s great friend Dr Daniel Saunders, the renowned educator and liberal reformer, who had dedicated his life to the service of humanity, progress and democracy, had admitted, after the parliamentary debate in November 1880, ‘In vain have I lived and laboured’.

Would seeing his father’s sorrowful eyes and snow-white beard bring to mind the day (but dull its excitement) when he and his father sat on the sofa in the living room reading Darwin’s *Laws of Variation*, while his mother knitted by the fire,

If under changed conditions of life a structure before useful
becomes less useful, any diminution, however slight, in its
development, will be seized on by natural selection, for it will
profit the individual not to have its nutriment wasted in building
up an useless structure

Did Albert see the writing on the wall for his parent’s way of life? Was liberty worth fighting for in a country, and indeed a continent, where intolerance, hatred, prejudice, greed and xenophobia are the dominant forces? Did he secretly question his decision to impose his dominant force on Africa instead of braving it out to carry forward the baton for his oppressed people?

I’ll never know the answers; Albert kept them to himself, as did his fellow Mecklenburger, Queen Charlotte, who wrote to her brother,

Prudence imposes silence,
& that little dear word Silence

has so often been my friend in necessity,
that I make it my constant companion.

And so I proceed to play the *Allegro vivace* of My Cello Sonata's third movement, listening as Albert tells me about those heady days in 1848 when hope reigned supreme and the enlightened citizens of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, men and woman, inspired by Mary Wollstonecraft's vision of equal rights for both sexes, supported a liberal press and signed a petition calling for freedom and democracy.

Following the 7 September 1848 demonstration before the Neustrelitzer Castle demanding the herzog's resignation, the Constituent Members Assembly in Schwerin (Albert's father being the MP for the 5th Constituency of Wesenberg) drew up a Mecklenburg State Constitution to implement fundamental rights. This only lasted a year, for the democracy movement declined. In August 1849 the Großherzog of Strelitz put an end to the work of the reformers and sent the Strelitz members of the Schwerin parliament home, but he could not break their will. They continued the unequal struggle to improve the social and political position of the Jews and have them accepted as equals in a Christian society.

Perhaps, what lay at the root of Albert's autocratic stance was the belief that he could never live up to his father's high standards; that at heart he was a cripple and like Kenny the best he could do was to blame his father for the wrongs he suffered, rather than admit to being a weaker specimen, one unable to rise to the forest's canopy like his Lombardy-poplar father, who had the wit, wisdom and courage to uphold the motto of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, Society of Friends; 'Realise the truth. Love beauty. Wish for good. Do the best'.

To give vent to Albert's anger, allow him to rage openly at his loss of stature, I play the last movement of Beethoven's *Appassionato*; a piece he composed as he tried to come to terms with his deafness. So as not to wake the weary household I play it *pianissimo*, rather than *forte*, like I did four years ago when I wanted to smash the piano as I contemplated the devastation of my life.

But time has moved on and I can now allow my departed husband to express his great love and admiration for his abandoned parent. So I play and sing *O my beloved father* as Kenny and I do, in the good times, before he contracts polio; when Granny Elizabeth bends forward to draw in the scent of her beloved gardenias until we go inside, to avoid the mosquitoes, and join the rest of the clan in the lounge and sing some old favourites and liven things up with a step or two of country dancing.

And I cry for being responsible for Kenny's wasted life. And then I weep for luring my poor Albert into my arms. As I told you previously Martie, I can't pass the buck and put the blame for our unhappy marriage squarely on his shoulders. I ensnared the swash-buckling stranger with what he took to be the allure of a rose, when in truth I drew my perfume from the well of a bitter aloe; miraculously this scent was good enough for one I couldn't fool, and can't do without, his sister Hedwig.

Me, a bad girl! If Hedwig were here she wouldn't allow me to curtsy to such received notions of femininity. How I miss the strengthening tonic of her emancipated vision this evening. So I allow Schubert's impromptu no 3 to take me back to the time when we slow-stepped past rock pools ruffling the sequined hem of Kommetjie's isolated bay.

'We can but wonder what stirs in the deep folds of the ocean's skirt,' Hedwig says, inviting me to recall the pleasures of the previous evening; the intimacy of our heads and hands as we played duets on the parlour piano of our Kalk Bay cottage, before she ended our recital with Debussy's reminder that *streams turn pink in the setting sun*.

And we step over the anchor of the sand road, past an outline of fishermen...

'Beau Soir,' Hedwig whispers, snuggling into the curve of my neck, her eyes dreamy, as the support of her outstretched right arm turns me to face the turquoise breathing of a moon-shawled sea and the tips of her fingers spark life into mine, urging me to lead us onto the glittering dance-floor and weave loving patterns through breeze-strummed strings, silvering the muslin wrap of the ocean. 'Let us live and be glad while young life is before us.'

'But Hedwig don't you see I am alone, a dead princess, as in stately pavane, we glaze over tiles that do not smell of the earth; the facets of their icy geometry shed no leaf-mould for us to lavender; drape no ferned streams to wet our lips.'

'My darling you are not alone in our vaulted ballroom. And I will draw you even closer, till you are one with me and the warm swell of our calligraphy loops in Chopin-waltz through constellations of starred archways; glides swanlike in Saint-Saëns-cello-concerto through cosmic courtyards and fountains murmuring Liszt's Liebestraum: love for as long as you can, before in Debussy-Arabesque we return to earth...

'And find ourselves in an avenue of bare trees, where khaki berries lace the twigs lacing the branches that lace the clear, blue, winter sky and the sentinels of cedrus, standing to attention at the side of the road, like the Lombardy poplars my father planted in the curve of the driveway, as a memento to his childhood, rather than to shade the path that leads through their spires, past the heart-shaped fish-pond my mother covers in chicken wire to stop my little sister from drowning, and onward through the lower garden serving as a

border between the sloping kikuyu lawn and the raked terrace where, to the south of the leafless liquidambar, the syringa tree throws its mat of filigree shadow onto the crazy-paved strip skirting the seemingly-soft tamarisk and the plumed pampas grass, nesting the adder from the cold, before ending up at the entrance to the thatched-roof garden flat where a glossy flower arrangement of pomegranate leaves and red-peeling flowers of pearling fruit in their season welcomes visiting family and friends.'

'They're syringa trees; their berries are deadly,' I tell her.

'But beautiful like the notes of *Ave, ave verum corpus*: Hail, hail true body; the notes Mozart tiered for four voices in the spirit of *agape*: Plato's ideal of *Good*, which he places outside time, when D major-D minor, as one, became the new modality of his creation. So let us move beyond our times,' Hedwig continues. 'Let us use the musical memory gifted to us by Mozart now that we have arrived at the gates of the Alhambra Garden – scholars believe its design was based on the Garden of Eden that lay on a mount outside Jerusalem – for who knows what we might discover when we go back in time from the *agape* of the future.'

'And seeing that we're on a mount, what about continuing our music with the fourth part, the top section of Brahms's arching seven-part German Requiem? My mother loved Brahms, especially towards the end of her life. At my father's funeral she asked the choir to sing the verses that Brahms had taken from Psalm 84 for his 'People's Requiem': How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ...'

And so, with bated breath, in reverend search of the apple tree, we enter our winter Garden, its cathedral-entrance lit by a double-saucer of candled water keeping vigil on a geometrically-patterned pebbled floor that leads through an arch of trimmed yew into a dim nave of neatly clipped buxus pews with conifered backs clipped tall to screen the stacked stones of the shadowed north wall, and direct our aisle to sunnier chapels where pruned standard roses metre out the box hedges edging the reflective waterways and cobbled pathways flowering in interlinked circles and a tree of life that slopes upwards to give a view over cyprus battlements and junipers spearing distant Muslim and Christian towers, redirecting our gaze onto the lone orange tree.

'Is this what we are looking for?'

'It must be; it's the only fruit tree in the garden.'

'The small oranges may be the brightest thing around, but they're certainly not very tempting.'

'No, but look what lies before us, below these few stairs ... How amiable are Thy tabernacles...'

On the opposite wall, a double layer of sunlit alcoves lights the threads of white rainbow arching over yards of shot-taffeta water rolled out in rectangle to mirror the shape of this heavenly courtyard.

‘Spiegel im Spiegel,’ Hedwig whispers.

At first we can only hear the repeated three notes of our duet as the white piano droplets curve over the aqueous satin to carve the petals of our conscious quest, quest, quest to know more about life’s secrets into the mirrored path as the splash, splash, splash of our questions slip between the spaces of the drip, drip, drip; form, form, form, and dissolve until, at last, the violin of our duet rises up in unconscious answer to prism the white light of our music by threading her silken strands through the warp of the piano’s insistent sepalling; the voile of our interweaving pouring its colour over and into the mirroring surface, draping, silking the flowers formed by the shape, shape, shape, as their sheening dissolves into peaceful dreaming, soothing, yearning, returning, bringing new strands, new threads of colour, as our viola rises on gauze wing to bloom the walls with tufts of bougainvillea tulle and cluster the air with wafts of wisteria, mirroring, tranquil, sensuous, eternal, dissolving, rising, giving voice to our cello we become the movement of the water, the ripple of the light, as our Rhapsody in Blue threads through the blades of the clarinet, trombone and horn sanded in depths where red seaweeds cave shelter for porcelain crabs and cling to strings of violin, viola and cello fronding up to the piano’s sepia canopy as our kelp orchestra sways in opening melody, until the cymbal of a blenny-tail flicks on the chandelier of white-and-black notes to shimmer in lilting lyricism on oystered shells as anemones begin to stir and the pulse of our rock pool heightens and sparkles in shafts of sapphire as right hand crosses over left hand and left hand crosses over right and we silver in, around, through shining facets of opal above the playing kelp, braiding, criss-cross interweaving, trellised cascading, tingling, subsiding, strumming, idly intertwining, sighing, submitting, spiralling, floating; rolling and unrolling in lengths of Ravel; in aquamarine, topaz brocade and azure velveteen, lacing between drapes of amethyst organza, amber lawn, magenta gingham and lilac gabardine; bubbling up *Eragrostis Curvulva* past the horizon to flower the ecliptic equator of the night sky with a posy of weeping love grass as we slow-step with the moon and planets along their path through the stars and water the heavens with our tears of corn and their promise of harvest.

Good is to be found in the fire of committing to the cleansing of the water; remember Hedwig, as roses from the dark hedge we plucked at night?

How deep is the night, now that you've gone for good! No moon tonight. And I give way to my *tristesse* by playing Chopin's Etude No 3 in E Major. Granny Elizabeth always resorted to its charms when confronted with the trials of life. 'Such fine music breathes gentle serenity,' she said.

But how will I ever find its comforts? My sorrow crescendos; I trip over obstacles, stumble about trying to find a way out of the dark... I should have known I could trust my Granny; that rewards would be there, ready and waiting, in the closing lyricism of this delicate little masterpiece.

Why, of course, the morning star is become the sun's caress of the milking shed as fingers of light wrap round the quartz-stone northern edge and over the corrugated roof to polish overnight raindrops clinging to wintery threads of birch filigree on the pale blue broach of sky, pinned to the wind-shield bodice of the farmyard's evergreen gums.

From the eggs of autumn, the chrysalis of spring emerges in the east. Up and down the scales, shadow into light, the notes, the chords, the trills, the base and treble clef fantasy in F minor of our duet rises and falls as the touching white petals of paired butterflies float, spiral, submit to the sun-dappled wings of lilac cosmos; sighing, idly intertwining with the summer breeze between bronze spikelets lighting the branched inflorescences of the gold-culmed *Eragrostis Capensis*: Heart-seed Love Grass.

Two Cape sugarbirds are begat from the sweetness of our yellow and red eggs. The strings of our long tails bowed by the dzzzreeee-zreeeu-dzeu of our song interlace like a Bach Cello Suite as we beak protea nectar and Gigue on the pincushion flares of starry *Leucospermum* in the Milky-Way cloak of fynbos enfolding the morning slope of Table Mountain.

'*Noch einen schritt*', you say and I see the love in your dreamy eyes pleading: 'Don't send me in dark despair from all that I hunger for.'

We take another step, as in Gliding Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens we open our arms to the stranger in paradise and float over the reef of rocks breaking up a moon-shawled sea, and let a turquoise-silvered path lead us to the sequined shallows of Mermaid Beach.

There to lie in limpid sands raked, this way and that, by uncertain currents seeking to open their treasure; offering unto the transfigurative waters their wavelets of light; their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

There to lie in the Spirit of Schubert:

*Du bist die Ruh,
Der Friede mild,
Die Sehnsucht du,
Und was sie stillt.*

You are the peace,
The mild peace,
You are the longing
And what stills it.

Martie's last lied to Maude:

Brahms/Bible, 4 Ernten Gesäng

Ich habe genug: it is enough
I have held the Saviour, the hope of all peoples,
In the warm embrace of my arms.
It is enough.

I have seen him,
My faith has impressed Jesus on my heart;
Now I wish this very day
To depart from here with joy.

As the camp's congregation sing Bach's uplifting cantata I lie in snowy-white, disinfected sheets. Each of the twenty one beds lining either side of our long corrugated-iron hospital ward is similarly draped and a small table between patients allows us to have a sip of water when the heat of a summer's night is stifling and the coughs rasping from the throats of those afflicted with bronchitis and pneumonia prevent your calls from reaching the night-nurse, who is comforting a dying child.

But we don't complain, because ever since new measures have been introduced to keep germs at bay and to provide us with more food and better accommodation, fewer of us are dying. The improved nursing standards encourage our sick to come to the hospital rather than to hide away under a heap of blankets, or in a *wakis*: wagon-kist. And the freshly-starched matron and her team of qualified nurses no longer see us as the enemy, but rather, as one of those who long to be spared, in order to meet up with their men-folk again and, now that there is talk of an end to this devastating war, to begin rebuilding a future for their *volk*.

I am not such a one; I can do no more than leave the hope of my people and the welfare of my children in the loving hands of our heavenly father, for my time has come to give up this earthly struggle. Last week, in a state of great weakness, due to my constant nausea, caused by the daily swelling of my stomach, I tripped on a wooden peg and when the doctor visited my tent he told me that I had a broken hip and advanced liver cancer. There was no hope of a cure for my ailments; the best he could do was to make me as comfortable as was possible. And to do that it was necessary for me to leave my four children in the able care of their eldest sister Anna and come and spend my last days being nursed in the camp's hospital. The good doctor would make sure that I lay in the bed closest to the ward's door so that my children could come and sit on the outside step and tell me what they had learnt at school.

Nettie plays her new violin piece for me and Sarie encourages Dou to play a duet with her on their recorders. He agrees as long as he can show me his collection of *doppies* afterwards. 'Not even Gerry has found fifty-four, and everyone knows that he is the best collector of spent cartridges, because his eyes are as sharp as an owl's when it comes to spotting things hiding under a twig, even at night.'

Nettie brings us a map that shows what her teacher says South Africa will look like after the war when all four provinces will be joined together and become one nation under British rule.

'What does he know?' Dou is indignant. 'The *rooinekke* will run out of bullets long before that happens. If you count my *doppies* and times that by all the boys in the camp you will know how many they have wasted in artillery practise in our camp alone.'

'The trains deliver new cases of ammunition every week.'

'But Pa and Harry are busy blowing them all up.'

'No they're not, Dou. You know they are prisoners of war in Green Point,' Anna corrects him.

'Didn't you know that '*n Boer maak 'n plan* and that they're busy making plans to escape and when they do, the Tommies better be on the look-out for trouble.'

'It is time for this war to end my child and for the Boere to get back to their lands,' I say.

'Will we go back to our farm?' Sarie asks.

'No *my skat*; the Lord has not seen fit for us to do so. We have no money to rebuild our farm. But the Lord is merciful; Pa has an uncle who lives in the district of Montague and the *dorp* needs a municipal gardener and his Oom Wynand will be happy for our family to move into his town house.

'I don't see Montague on my map.'

'No, it is a small place near Swellendam, but it has a hot spring, so you need never be cold in winter.'

'We can't go there at midnight because the *spoke* will catch us.'

'You don't need to go there at midnight Dou, because you'll be as warm as rising *beskuit*: rusks under your *donskometers*: eiderdown,' Sarie adds.

'Swellendam is not near Bloemfontein,' Nettie says. 'We won't be able to put flowers on your grave.'

'No, but because Bloemfontein is in the middle of the country I'll never be too far away from you, no matter where you are.'

Anna, like her brother Harry, is a keen student and helps to teach the younger children. At the moment they are learning about Italy, but other than their text books there is nothing else on the subject in the camp school's library. Fortunately, a girl who tends a vegetable garden with her goes to Eunice Girls School in Bloemfontein because she, Minnie, is the daughter of the late General Ferreira. He was the Kommandant of the Ladybrand Kommando, but was promoted to General on the day before the battle of Magersfontein. Then in January 1900 he became the Kommandant of the Boer forces on the Western front during the siege of Kimberly and Commander-in-Chief of the Boer forces of the Orange Free State. Sadly he was accidentally killed by one of his men the following month whilst he was inspecting the guards at night during the battle of Paardeberg.

Minnie offers to borrow a book from Eunice's library for Anna, who brings it with her after school to show her sisters, brother and me the beautiful mountains and lakes of northern Italy. The top of an island in one of the lakes is covered by a maze that encloses a central platform. 'It would be fun trying to find a way through all those hedges so as to stand on the platform,' Anna says.

'I imagine the view from up there would be as good as the one Naomi and I enjoyed when we stood at the top of our Graaff-Reinet koppie,' I answer, never realising how the image of this maze and the map of the new South Africa and the gift of music given to me by Nettie, Sarie and Dou would shape the dream I recall for my children as they sit near me the following afternoon.

'I've had the best dream yet,' I say and seeing their eagerness to know all about it, I continue.

'I am standing on the top of a koppie and as I look at the veld around me I wonder where I am. In a way it feels like I am on the koppie where my little sister lies buried, because a flowering thorn tree grows beside me, but there is no Sunday's River to flow around Graaff-Reinet; no *dorp* in a basin of mountains, but the veld stretches as far as the eye can see in all directions, level as the Plains of Camdeboo.

'In a strange way it feels like I am standing on the koppie where Naomi lies buried, because the tree now looks like a Witolienhout, the yellow pom-poms of the acacia having changed into a fountain of sweet-smelling white flowers lacing down from the tips of the Olive Sagewood's branches. But I can't see our farmhouse or our mielie-fields...'

'What about our *windpomp*: windmill?' Dou interrupts.

'No it isn't there either.'

‘Perhaps because your Witolienhout looked like a flower-fountain you were probably standing on a Bloemfontein koppie,’ says Nettie.

‘It’s clever of you to see it that way,’ Anna praises her sister.

‘It is difficult to know,’ I say in answer to Nettie’s understanding. ‘But perhaps I was, because as I look more closely I do see roads leading off in all directions through the veld, like the paths in the Italian maze we looked at yesterday.’

‘But the veld isn’t made up of green hedges, it’s too dry,’ Sarie objects.

‘You are right; but the funniest things happen in dreams; in mine the veld rises up and covers the whole of South Africa in a khaki maze. And the *koppie* in its midst rises up also and the Olienhout rises accordingly and becomes a fountain of music, the spray of which spreads over the whole country.’

‘I think we need Joseph to come and tell us what your dream means. And I hope it isn’t bad news like it was for Potiphar’s prisoner, the chief of the bakers.’

‘Without God’s help Joseph could never have interpreted the Pharaoh’s dream,’ Anna tells Dou, and she quotes the relevant verses from Genesis, Chapter 41:

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh,
saying, It is not me: God shall
give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’

22 And I saw in my dream, and,
behold, seven years came up in one
stalk, full and good:

23 And behold, seven ears
withered, thin, and blasted with
the east wind, sprung up after them:

24 And the thin ears devoured the
seven good ears: and behold I told this
unto the magicians; but there was
none that could declare it to me.

‘Luckily our war is over and we must make the best of the seven good years that Our Lord will grant to our country.’

‘Will he dry out your fountain of music in the seven lean years?’

‘Only if we stop listening to its voice; my fountain is the fountain of love and like a mother’s arms it will never stop reaching out to touch you wherever you are.’

‘But what happens if you are too far away and we can’t hear your music?’ Sarie asks. ‘My friend whose tent is on the edge of the camp says she never hears a sound when the doctors and nurses make merry in their corrugated-iron quarters.’

‘Where there is light, my silence will always sing to you for, like the colour white, it is filled with a rainbow of voices. When I listened to Nettie and you and Dou yesterday it awakened the voices of the violin and the two recorders that played a Brandenburg Concerto on the evening Naomi and I sat on the steps outside the Drosdy. Those silenced voices pouring from music’s fountain bring my Naomi back to me.

And hopefully, when my voice is silenced in death, a spray of love will reach over the veld’s maze and we can talk things over just as we did at our tent flap before the long grass of peace waves its seed-heads over the dongas of our land.’

‘And my new Wagter will lie beside me, his ears *orent*: upright as he listens to us.’

‘*Ja, natuurlik my skat*: yes, of course my darling, won’t that be lovely?’

Tribute

Schubert/von Schober, *An die Musik*

An die Musik

Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden,
wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt,
hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb
entzunden,
hast mich in eine besrer Welt entrückt!

Oft hat ein Seufzer deiner Harf entflossen,
ein süßer, heiliger Akkord von dir
den Himmel besrer Zeiten mir erschlossen,

du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!

To Music

O blessed art, how often in dark hours,
when the savage ring of life tightens round
me,
have you kindled warm love in my heart,
have transported me to a better world.

Often a sigh has escaped from your harp,
a sweet, sacred harmony of yours
has disclosed the heaven of better times for
me.

You blessed art, I thank you for that!

The Huguenots

Finding their Voices

by

Louise Planting

Submitted: September, 2011

A thesis submitted to Kingston University in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Part Two of Two Parts

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The Huguenots

The Historical background to the part the Huguenots play in the Afrikaans strand of *Arumlily Spathe of Voices*

Like the double helix which underpins the image of *Arumlily*, so the Huguenots' spirit flows through the spathe of Afrikaner, and indeed English, voices as they tell of the double-stranded flowering, in four Acts, of South Africa's White Tribe.

Although the French Huguenots made a valuable contribution during the early years of white settlement at the Cape of Good Hope, they did not continue to exist as a separate and clearly defined group for more than fifty years after their arrival in 1688. Because of the policy pursued by the Dutch authorities (The Dutch East India Company) at that time and because the Huguenots were a minority group, they had by the early eighteenth century become integrated with the population at the Cape.

'Hendrik Bribouw, the first Afrikaner?' Hermann Giliomee poses this question in his book *The Afrikaners*. Although the term was applied to indigenous people in the early eighteenth century, Bribouw was the first European to name himself thus. In 1707, when rebuked by the Landdrost of Stellenbosch for unruly behaviour, this son of a German father and Dutch mother shouted, 'I shall not leave, I am an Afrikaander'.¹

The Huguenot's tangible contribution to life in South Africa is important, but what is of greater importance, and is still celebrated by their descendants today, is the nobility of spirit which these Calvinist refugees brought with them to their new homeland. The Huguenot Monument was erected in Franschhoek in 1948. Central to this monument is the figure of a woman with a Bible in her right hand and a broken chain in her left. Personifying the spirit of religious freedom, she stands on top of her world in front of three arches symbolising the Trinity. Under the cross of Christ, reflected from on high in the water-lilied pool stretching before her like an ocean, she throws off the cloak of Catholic oppression; her eyes fixed on a vision of the great things to come.

A Huguenot plaque measuring 9 by 1.8 metres was unveiled on a high wall outside the Stellenbosch town library in 1942; the Stellenbosch congregation had also been a Huguenot congregation for three years before their Drakenstein congregation was established in 1691. The story of the French Huguenots is depicted on the three

¹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 22.

sections of this plaque – persecution and flight, the voyage to the Cape, settlement in freedom.

Persecution and Flight

1 The Reformation

October 31, 1517 is generally accepted as the date on which the Reformation began. It is the day that Martin Luther attached his famous ninety-five statements or theses to the Castle Church doors in Wittenberg. The Reformation did not, however, suddenly become manifest as a new creation on that day. There were many precursors who had paved the way by calling for change and a return to a lifestyle based on the Bible and the early Christian church. Also, everywhere in Europe nationalisms were emerging to challenge the insistence on centralization in the Roman Catholic Church as the supreme institution and to reform the corrupt practices of the papacy and the spiritual shallowness and superstitions of priests and monks who often had little knowledge of the Bible.

The slowly declining feudal economy of The Middle Ages had led to the steady economic and social emancipation of the subjugated peasantry. They were able to look critically on their church when their Bible was translated into the vernacular by Lefèvre d' Etaples in 1536. Under the protection of Renaissance monarch King Francis I art and science flourished. He founded the French National Library and his attractive offers induced several humanist scholars, including Martin Luther to come to France.

Martin Luther's influence on the Reformation in France

The Reformation in France, and everywhere else, had its origins in the new awareness of the Bible. While Calvin is thought of in terms of the Reformation in France and Switzerland, Luther's name is coupled with the Reformation in Germany, but in fact, from 1519 to 1543, his influence in France was much stronger than Calvin's. Luther's writings were freely circulated in Paris and so reform-minded people, known as Lutherans during that period, were well aware of what was happening in Germany.

In support of Protestants who found that they could not maintain a single identity Luther drew up fourteen articles proclaiming the doctrine of justification by faith that all reformers saw as central to their understanding of Christianity. A fellow reformer Melanchthon used Luther's fourteen articles of doctrine to formulate a statement which he hoped would be acceptable to moderate Catholics. This document known as the

Augsburg Confession became the cornerstone of a new branch of Christendom and was referred to by its enemies as 'Lutheranism'.²

In his Program Notes for a performance of Mendelssohn's Reformation Symphony³ Dr Eric Hanson writes that in 1829 Mendelssohn desired to honour the 300th anniversary of Luther's Augsburg Confession of 1530.

'The joy of the second movement is opposed by the pathos of the recitative-like third movement. Out of the stillness a lone flute intones Luther's great chorale tune, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*: a mighty fortress is our God. More layers are added, leading to a fast section, the sole purpose of which is to manoeuvre the finale into the right key and a majestic Chorale Fantasy. Above the internecine struggle of the counterpoint soars the chorale tune until it stands alone in triumph!'

Despite the suppressive measures used against the reformers Luther's influence could not be curbed. He instituted a renaissance in church song. The singing of psalms was an important part of the religious practice and because he preferred the congregation to sing in the vernacular he translated some hymns from Latin into German and composed some himself. The best known of his songs is the immortal battle hymn *Ein Feste Burg*. It is based on the words of Psalm 46 'God is our refuge and our strength'.

John Calvin

Although Luther's influence declined when Francis I began a savage persecution of the Protestants after the *Affaire des Placards* in 1534, his ideas and work did bear fruit. In all parts of France there were regular meetings of groups of believers who endeavoured to live strictly in accordance with the Bible. The welding of these groups into a unified organization would be the work of John Calvin.

When forced to leave his French homeland because of this persecution Calvin fled to Strassburg before settling in Geneva in 1541. It is from here that he guided the Huguenots, giving the French Reformed Church its own administration, its own form of worship and its own liturgy. The structure of his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* is based on the New Testament's four functions of ministry. Pastors carried out the general ministry of care of the laity exercised by medieval parish priests and bishops; doctors were

² MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 - 1700*, p. 173.

³ This was performed by the Thalia Symphony Orchestra in residence at Seattle Pacific University. See selective Bibliography for website details.

responsible for teaching at all levels. Elders bore the disciplinary work of the church, and deacons, practising Christian love, were the fourth order of biblical ministry.⁴

Diarmaid MacCulloch, the author of *Reformation*, believes that it is a mistake to see predestination as the dominant idea in Calvin's theology. Rather it was part of Calvin's growing conviction that he must proclaim the all-embracing providence of God in every aspect of human life and experience, so just as affirmation of a double predestination grew in Calvin's successive remoulding of *Institutes*, so did his positive and comforting discussion of providence.

Calvin believed that 'Israel was the Old Testament equivalent of the true church; it had been a covenanted, chosen nation. Everyone in Israel was elect: they enjoyed a "general election". But not all Israelites followed God's commandments and so "we must now add a second, more limited degree of election... when from the same race of Abraham, God rejected some but showed that he kept others among his sons by cherishing them in the Church". So because Israel had been a mixed Church, so was the New Testament Church of Christ.'⁵

Church Music in France

Like Luther, the French reformers also emphasised singing during worship. Calvin, impressed by the value of the German Chorale as a church song, made an arrangement of six psalms. These were added to thirteen translated into French by Clément Marot and became the first Reformed hymn book. This Psalter was to be used during church services, which was why the melody was printed with the first verse of each psalm.

The first complete book of 150 French psalms was published in 1652. Calvin instructed Louis Bourgeois to revise the psalm tunes. He composed a number of new ones, but his attempts to harmonize the psalms for four voices, like Bach did to Lutheran music three-quarters of a century later, met with stern disapproval. However the metrical form of this Genevan Psalter did successfully articulate the hope, fear, joy and fury of the new movement. It was so popular that it went into sixty-two editions and was translated into twenty-two languages, including into Dutch by Petrus Dathenus.

Psalm 68 was as important to the Huguenots as *Ein Feste Burg* was to the Germans. It became known as the Huguenot psalm and started with the words *Que Dieu se montre suelement Et on verra sondainement Abandonner la place*. Of this psalm one

⁴ MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 - 1700*, p. 239.

⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

of the Catholic officers who fought against the Huguenots said: ‘When those animals sang their satanic song “let God arise, let his enemies be scattered”, we lost all command over our troops and they fled as if all demons were set upon them.’⁶

From early community to Huguenot congregation

Two of the first Protestant martyrs were named Leclerc – a name of great significance in *Arumilly’s* Spathe of Huguenot voices. The pastor of the first Calvinist community founded in Meaux in 1546 was Pierre Leclerc. He suffered the same fate as Jean Leclerc, who died at the stake for preaching the gospel twenty years earlier.⁷

Despite Henry II’s brutal persecutions, communities of the Reformed church were established all over France. In order to bring unity to these isolated congregations their ministers decided to compile a confession of faith and a church ordinance. It is estimated that seventy-two Reformed churches were represented at the first synod, known as the Synod of Paris, in 1559.⁸

There is much controversy about the derivation of the name Huguenot which came into general usage after the Synod of Paris in 1558. It was originally intended as a derogatory name but soon became honourable and was used by French Reformed church members themselves. It is interesting to note that during the early years at the Cape the French were not referred to as Huguenots. Early documents and travel books mention French Refugees, or French Reformed Refugees. In a letter informing the authorities at the Cape of the sailing of the French refugees in the *Oosterland*, they are spoken of as ‘the free French settlers of Drakenstein.’⁹

Church music at the Cape

Jan van Riebeeck brought his Dutch Datheen Hymnal with him when he came to the Cape in 1652. Thirty six years later the Huguenots used this Hymnal alongside their French version. Since the melodies were the same it served to hasten the acceptance of Dutch by the Huguenots. But at the same time Pierre Simond, the first Huguenot preacher at the Cape, wrote new metrical versions of the psalms where he lived among the Drakenstein farmers at the foot of Simonsberg Mountain, far away from *Die Roomse gevaar*: the Catholic danger. An Afrikaans translation of one of these, Psalm

⁶ Malan, *The Bible, the Psalms and the Reformers*, p. 19.

⁷ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 14.

⁸ Ibid. p. 15.

⁹ Benjamin, *France and the Huguenots*, p. 1.

46: 1, *God is 'n toevlug in die nood*: God is our refuge in need, was sung at the funeral of Johanna Gustava, born on September 23, 1889 and died on May 8, 1982. She was a steadfast descendant of Simond's Huguenot congregation.

The Huguenot voices of *Arumlily* found in their church music

Va-der, onder heil en smarte
Va-der, as U ons be – straf –
U, die ken – ner van die har – te,
Lei ons deur die dood en graf.
Wat ver – an – der op die aar – de
U ver – bond hou e – wig stand.
E – wig rus ek in U vre – de,
Vei – lig in U va – der – hand.

Fa – ther, in blessings and troubles
Fa – ther, when you pun – ish us
You the know – er of our heart – s
Lead us through our death and grave.
What – ever chan – ges in this worl – d
Your cove – nant holds ever true.
E – ternally I rest in your pea – ce,
Sa – fe in your fa – ther – hand.

How similar were the Dutch Reformed mourners at Johanna Gustava's funeral to Pierre Simond's first Cape Huguenot Congregation (Act Two's **Chorus of Huguenots**) when they sang this first verse, and the second, from hymn 26 of their revised Hymnal?

Johanna's grandfather Pieter Engelbertus Du Preez adhered to the confession of faith and church ordinances as drawn up by the first Synod of the French Reformed congregation in 1559. His Huguenot forebears, isolated at the Cape since 1680, had been cut off from any later scriptural refinements in Europe. Like the Elect Pieter, they put their trust in the covenant made with their Lord. In exchange for keeping His Commandments and honouring the Holy Sacrament of Jesus Christ, He would keep them safe from all harm.

Fearlessly, believing in a *Boer's* God-given ability to make a plan, Pieter ventured from his English masters' nepotism, rife in the Cape coastal communities in 1864, to establish his own farm on the rugged mountains of the Stormberg. Rewarded by his God for his faithful service to the newly-established Dutch Reformed Church in his region, he prospered, as did the mile-long avenue of tall poplars. He planted them in honour of his resolute forebears, who carried over their merciless attack of the antichrist in France onto the shores of their Chosen Land; as demonstrated in *Arumlily's* Cape of Good Hope Passion, when the Huguenot murderess and fornicator Marie (the evil in their midst), who knowingly chose to break His Holy Commandments, was rightly, according to the just Laws of God and the Netherlands, strangled and impaled beside her heathen, decapitated lover and their godless, broken-limbed accomplice.

And Pieter Engelbertus Du Preez' seed was blessed to carry forward his good works. His eldest son, also Pieter Engelbertus, married another Huguenot descendant, Susanna Carolina (nee de Klerk – Dutch for Leclerc). He became a member of the church, school, municipal and district councils. Devoutly modest and charitable, yet filled with a worldly determination to succeed, his eldest daughter Johanna Gustava, adhered to the tenets of her faith as she helped her mother prepare meals for her father, six brothers and two sisters and assisted her father in spreading the word of her Lord to the farm's heathen servants. She read to them from her Bible, taught them the Ten Commandments and how to sing hymns and psalms and say daily prayers.

These farm labourers, the cursed seed of Canaan, not eligible to receive the substance of Christ's body through the mystery of the Eucharist, were left on the farm when the De Klerk/Du Preez clan came together at the quarterly *saamtrek*: gathering of the Dutch Reformed congregation to celebrate Holy Communion and take part in *Volkspeler*: folk dancing. Following in the austere footsteps of Calvin they believed that only decorous folk-dancing was seemly enough to dampen the unquenched ardour of the unwed faithful.¹⁰

In order to serve her community after she matriculated, Johanna trained as a teacher at Victoria College (later Stellenbosch University) and was duly rewarded for her strict adherence to her Dutch Reformed faith and for her dedication in furthering the primary education of her *volk*; the Israelites of the Old Testament. She was elected to chair her local branch of the Calvinist *Vrouefederasie*: federation of women.

During all those years of sacrifice and service she stood dutifully beside her stern German/Dutch husband; good-humouredly tending to all his *fratse*: fussiness cause by an exaggerated fear of germs. In his teens her Harry had survived the horrors of a Boer-War concentration camp, laboured on a fruit farm for the money to train as a high school Afrikaans teacher in Paarl. (Until he died, aged ninety-nine, he chuckled as he peeled an Alberta peach.) A dutiful husband and father he also gave loyal assistance to his *Dominee* by serving as a deacon and then as elder of his Germiston congregation.

These more gentle, generous and compassionate qualities of Johanna and Harry, together with Calvin's belief that the words of hymns and Psalms should reflect the

¹⁰ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 15. The articles drawn up for the Synod of Paris contain various severe prohibitions against dancing, masquerades, sermonizing, masks quacks, games and other licentious activities, taverns, cabarets and idleness.

Bible text as nearly as possible¹¹ found their way into the individual voices of ‘The Cape of Good Hope Passion, 1714’. And the ridged conformity to the unbending rules of a religion stripped of all its idolatrous trappings fed into the single-voice harmony of the **Chorus of Huguenots**. (As noted previously in Church music of France, Calvin disapproved of the decorative and distracting harmonizing of psalms.)

Finding the voices of the first Cape Huguenots in Bach’s St John’s Passion

Although Calvinist and Lutheran church music of the early eighteen century differed in some respects, both groups were Protestants. Their Reformed confession of faith that dealt ‘with God, his revelation, man and his sinfulness, Jesus Christ, the way of salvation, the sacraments and secular authority’¹² was essentially the same. Bach’s *Passion*, written in 1724, can therefore serve as a reliable framework for the 1714 ‘Cape of Good Hope Passion’ of Act Two.¹³

The one-voice of the opening **Chorus of Huguenot** reflects the universal feeling of respect that the French Reformers felt for Almighty God their Heavenly Father, who through his untold mercies, freed them from the iniquities of their Catholic oppressors. The horrors suffered by their forebears in the Wars of Religion, the blessings bestowed by a loving Father on His Elect, as just reward for their courageous stand against the forces of Satan, was part of their folk-lore.¹⁴

¹¹ Malan, *The Bible, the Psalms and the Reformers*, p. 21.

¹² Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p.16.

¹³ J. S. Bach *St. John’s Passion*.

¹⁴ The *Memoirs of Isaac Dumont De Bostaquet a Gentleman of Normandy – before and after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, together with details of Protestant persecution in Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988* and Meyer, *Galleys* provided the details of the atrocities voiced in Act Two’s first **Chorus of Huguenots**.

2 Wars of Religion

The French Protestants were cruelly persecuted during the entire reign of Henry II. A special court for heretics, the *chamber ardente* was set up in October 1547 and the persecution was taken a step further in 1557 with an attempt by the Pope and the king to set up the inquisition, an ecclesiastical court, in France.

At this time the Huguenots published their first confession of faith, the *Apology*. It caused many nobles to openly side with the Protestants and they began to emerge as leaders of the Huguenots, the most notable was Gaspard de Coligny, an admiral of France and governor of Picardy. When Henry II died unexpectedly from wounds, his widow escalated the struggle between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. On 1st March, 1562 1,200 Huguenots were overwhelmed during a religious gathering in Vassy, killing thirty and wounding about two hundred. The eight major Wars of Religion which followed were as a direct consequence of these Vassy murders.

The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day 1572

The nationwide massacre of Huguenots by Catholics was sparked by the wedding of Catherine de Medici's daughter Marguerite de Valois to young Protestant Henri King of Navarre, later to become Henry IV.

The massacre began in the early hours of Sunday, August 24, St Bartholomew's Day. When news of the killings of de Coligny and his supporters spread, a bloodbath ensued as Catholics, who loathed everything that Protestantism stood for, took up the example of their superiors. Over the next few weeks the most savage killings and mutilations of known Protestants followed. Estimates of how many were murdered range from 5,000¹⁵ to 100,000.¹⁶

The effect of the massacres on the Protestant population was devastating. The excitement and self-confidence that had led to the dramatic growth of their movement in the previous decade deserted the Reformed communities. Many Protestants chose to emigrate.

Another important consequence of the massacres was the publishing of three books known as the Trilogy of Freedom. One of these, the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, states that subjects may disobey a prince who oppresses them, whether in the field of

¹⁵ MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 - 1700*, p. 338.

¹⁶ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 24.

religion or in any other way. This work was very popular and had a wide-ranging influence.

‘It is probable that the thoughts contained in the *Vindiciae* form, inter alia, the background against which we should see the French Huguenots’ request in 1689 for their own congregation at the Cape and the subsequent permission given by the Dutch East India Company.’¹⁷ No doubt this independent attitude played a role in the *Groot Trek* of 1836, when the staunchly Calvinistic Boers (depicted in several sections of *Arumilly’s* Act Four), under the elected leadership of men such as Andries Pretorius and Piet Retief, took to their ox wagons and crossed the Orange River, in an attempt to free themselves from the oppressive yolk of the usurping British Empire.

The Edict of Nantes

Henri IV declared the Edict of Nantes on 13 April 1598 in an attempt to reconcile the opposing religious parties. The king having converted to Roman Catholicism specified that this would be the state religion, but that the Reformers would have rights that would be determined and guaranteed by the state. Protestants were required to adhere to Roman Catholic festivals, tithe obligations and marriage laws. Except in a few cities Protestants were allowed to practise their religion freely and were allowed to build temples. They were able to hold public posts, were granted reasonable legal rights and could trade freely and send their children to their schools and their sick to their hospitals and have their scripts printed in certain cities and erect four academies for scientific and theological training.

Despite vehement protests by the Pope and Roman Catholic churchmen the most peaceful and prosperous years during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France were between the declaration of the Edict of Nantes and the death of Henri IV. He was murdered on 14 May 1610 by a fanatical Catholic. This was a terrible blow for the Huguenots and although the rights granted to them were slowly eradicated during the reign of Louis XIII and his Prime Minister Cardinal Richelieu, it was not until the reign of Louis XIV that the Edict of Nantes was revoked.

¹⁷ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 26.

Louis XIV and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes

After his accession to the throne Louis XIV quickly realised that it would be politically advantageous for him to show that he was a good Roman Catholic. This attitude of the king made the clergy even more determined to rid France of the Huguenots who were financially bribed to convert. Despite recording 10,000 such conversions in Languedoc in 1679 it became evident that there was no large-scale return to the Roman Catholic Church.

The remaining possibility was to make the measures more severe and to use violence. As a result of the ensuing persecutions Huguenots began to emigrate in such numbers that the king promulgated an edict in 1681 forbidding his subjects to live in foreign countries and ordering those who had already emigrated to return to France.

In his determination to enforce his religious policy the king implemented a system of dragonnades. Soldiers were stationed in the houses of Protestants, who had to provide food and drink for these 'spies' and, in addition, pay them for the maltreatment of their families. Many Protestants converted in order to avoid accommodating these dragoons. Another form of punishment meted out to the Huguenots who refused to renounce their religion, or tried to flee, was enforced service on board a galley: an almost certain death sentence.

When it became clear that in spite of all the measures against the Huguenots many remained loyal to their faith, the Edict of Nantes was revoked. The eleven articles of the Edict of Fontainebleau, promulgated on 18 October 1685 stipulate, amongst many other things, that all reformed churches must be demolished without delay; Reformed Church members are forbidden to hold any meetings; their children are prohibited from attending private schools, or from being christened in the Reformed faith; Huguenots are forbidden from leaving the kingdom or taking anything with them.

3 Flight from France

How many Protestants fled the country? Estimates vary from between 400,000 to 800,000 between the years 1680 to 1760. The majority of the refugees came from areas close to the borders of France. The proximity of the Calvinist Netherlands to the northern parts of the country is clearly the reason why many Huguenot refugees in the Netherlands came from the north of France. Another choice was to cross the channel to England from the harbours of *Normande* and *Picarde* and it was for this reason that their coastlines were so well guarded.

The Huguenots who left France (ten percent of the total number of Protestants) were mostly from the middle and lower classes. Of these three quarters were people with professional qualifications, capital and business experience. This group settled mainly in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Europe.

A second group of refugees was made up of well-trained, skilled artisans with plenty of enterprise, but little money. Many of them borrowed capital and emigrated to the Dutch and British colonies. Members of the third group were people without any particular training, professional qualifications or capital who went as soldiers and clerks to the colonies. The Huguenots who came to the Cape were drawn from all three categories.

The voyage to the Cape

The Netherlands

It is from this place of refuge that the French Huguenots set sail for their new homeland in 1688. There are many reasons why the Huguenots chose to flee to the Netherlands before and after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes: they could feel safe in a country protective of its public religion, the Reformed faith; and at home in the Walloon communities; and accepted by a nation that showed tolerance and sympathy towards refugees; and they were hopeful of sharing in the economic prosperity of the Dutch 'Golden Age'.

Probably the most important characteristic of the Reformed church in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century was its commitment to the Bible. Its translation into Dutch began in 1625 in Leyden. This so-called state Bible was particularly liked for its marginal notes and was studied and read in every Reformed household.

The metrical Psalms of Datheen was another important book in the religious life of the Protestants. He was influenced by Calvin; the most ecumenical of reformers. In order to promote uniformity amongst the Reformed of the two nations Datheen followed as closely as possible, both the French manner of singing Psalms and their language.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Serooskerke

The Huguenot forebears of Susanna Carolina (nee de Klerk), the mother of Johanna Gustava du Preez, came from Serooskerke on the island of Walcheren in Zeeland, a southern state of the Netherlands. In 1983 the Reformed congregation of Serooskerke commemorated their four-hundredth anniversary by publishing a history of their church. Travellers through the ages have used its tower as an orientation point to gain self-knowledge, a sense of community and to hear from God, like Barendt who returns to his home village in Act One of *Arumlily*. This historical publication names the minister, Mattheüs Gargon, the two Bible passages, and the dates they were taken as texts for the sermons that changed the course of Barendt's life.¹⁸

Before the Reformation the Hollanders were Roman Catholic and every town and even village had a church or chapel attended by pastor and chaplain who said mass

¹⁸ Driest and van Winkelen, *Beknopte Geschiedenis van de Hervormde Gemeente te Serooskerke*, pp. 13, 14.

and administered the Holy Sacraments. It is assumed that because the church was consecrated in the name of the evangelist John it would have a statue of him as well as one of the Holy Mary. The first pastor to be named died in 1489 and the last one left in 1565. During that time there was also an Augustinian convent on the outskirts of Serooskerke. But, as in France these holy institutions couldn't quell the unrest felt by the Christian community over the malpractices of the powerful and wealthy clergy and their sale of indulgences.

As a consequence they were drawn to follow reformers like Luther and Calvin, the latter being the greatest influence in their country. After plundering and smashing Christian statues in the convent and church of Serooskerke in August 1566 this local Calvinist flock had to face the torture metered out by the troops of Charles V, led by the bloodthirsty Alva and the inquisition of Philip II. Traitors could expect no mercy and many from the Serooskerke Church were exposed by a member of their own congregation.

In 1567 the rentmaster of Western-Schelde, Philibert of Serooskerke bought himself the title of *ambachtsheerlijkheid*: Lord of the Manor. More than likely, he paid for this high position of rank from the proceeds he received reporting anyone he suspected of being disloyal to the Roman Catholic Church. His grandson, also Philibert, erected a tombstone for his wife Magdalena van Swieten in the Serooskerke Church in 1629.¹⁹ Ironically it was these traitors to the reformed cause of his people that Barendt wished to emulate when, as a child, he had envied them their coat of arms placed beside the gravestone of the Lord of the Manor.

Barendt had to mind his p's and q's. He was, after all, nothing more than a Protestant l'Clercq; the poor great-grandson of Huguenot refugees. These forebears had to rely on the goodwill of their host nation and adjusted their surname from Leclerc to le Clercq to De Clercq to De Clerck to De Klerck²⁰ after they fled to Holland in the sixteenth century when Henry III ordered Reformed church members to convert to Roman Catholicism. Barendt's father Pieter was Christened in 1643. He was the son of Abraham de Clercq, son of Pieter de Clerck and Claeseine Cordie who moved some ten miles from West-Souburg to Serooskerke in 1634. He was a registered blacksmith, but could not write his name.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 4, 5. Also Zuurveen, *Een Vaste Burcht*

²⁰ Blom, *Drie generaties De Clerck in Serooskerke*

²¹ Ibid

The Dutch Reformed Church in Souberg

Barendt's mother Sara Cochet, also the child of Huguenot refugees, was born in Souberg in 1650.²² *Een Vaste Burcht* (Dutch for Luther's *Ein Feste Burg*) is the title of the chronicle of the historical church of Souberg. It records that after the *Beeldstorm*, the smashing of all Roman Catholic symbols of tyranny in 1566 and the siege of neighbouring Middleburg, only the tower with its great bell remained intact amongst the rubble of the burned-out church.²³ This 'mighty fortress', an orienting landmark in the flatlands of the island of Walcheren, would have been well-known to, and well-beloved by Barendt and his family as they walked for less than two hours to get from Serooskerke to Souberg to visit his grandparents and give thanks with them to their Saviour.

In the church chronicle there is a photograph of this church bell that was welded in 1511 by the famous Moer family of bell makers.²⁴ When Barendt ended his opening poem in Act One of *Arumlily* with the line: 'Your bell will set for my Heer', he was thinking of the magnificent shape and ring of this homeland bell. To him heavenly love-making (both carnal and spiritual) was indeed analogous to the life-giving act of forging steel beside his beloved and God-fearing father. He would have been well-acquainted with the practices of a blacksmith. He would have known about the heat of a forge; the curl of metal on the horn of an anvil; the use of the chisel to pierce the metal; the bucket of water needed to set the molten steel.

But how can Barendt equate his evil deeds, the abduction and rape of Tulp, to those of an intrepid saviour, a loving brother, a protector of beauty and chastity, a comforter and an unfailing guide through life's storms to the safe harbour of salvation? While Psalm 23 gives an understanding of Barendt's reliance on the Word of his Lord, Simon Schama in book *The Embarrassment of Riches* offers an insight into the 'collective memory' of Barendt's people.

Schama takes his reader down the *Heiligeweg*: The Holy Way, past the grim hostels that were founded at the end of the sixteenth century on the sites of dissolved religious orders in order to reform sinners. In Act One of *Arumlily* the Chorus opens

²² Church records held on microfiche in Zeeuws Archief. On the Christening entry for her sons Abraham and Barendt she is named Sara Barendts Casset and for those of her two younger children as Sara Barens Kachet

²³ Zuurveen, *Een Vaste Burcht*, pp. 38-44.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

with the motto that is carved above the 17th Century entrance of one of these Houses of Correction, the *Tugthuis*: 'It is a virtue to subdue those before whom all go in dread'.²⁵ By seeing his ship as a house of correction, Barendt could justify the abduction of Tulp. For five years, ever since the death of his *meester* and lover, who had helped him work his way from cabin boy to captain, Barendt's Christian mission had been to save the souls of the damned. Barendt would, according to Schama, believe his act to be humanitarian; one of Christian compassion based on the alleged material and spiritual salvation of the individual slave's body and soul.

Evangelical Barendt was determined to provide his infidel 'prisoner' Tulp with incentives for rehabilitation through work and moral teaching. By teaching her to read his Bible and to *naai* (an Afrikaans word that has two meanings; to stitch or to have sex) the tapestry that he had specially designed for the spiritual edification of his beloved sister Claertje, he hoped to earn deliverance in this world as well as salvation in the next. Barendt needed his mission to succeed. It was his *beproeving*; his 'trial by water' for he and his meester had committed a heinous crime against the family, the unnatural crime of sodomy, for which they had not been punished, as Dutch morality deemed they should have been, by hanging before being thrown overboard so that the cleansing extirpation might be duly completed.

Vlissingen a place of refuge and departure

In a chapter on Patriotic Scripture, Schama writes how the eminence of their *burgerlijk*: citizen virtues of modesty and humility resulted in the inevitable rupture of the Netherlands from the *hoogmoed*, pride or haughtiness, of Spanish culture. The Dutch histories of the time portrayed their stock heroes of revolt 'as painfully forbearing men goaded by Spanish obtuseness and brutality'.²⁶ These chronicles were enhanced by oral testimony that spoke of indiscriminate massacre and routine torture being applied by the Catholics to terrorize civilian populations into absolute submission, and they were taken up as Patriotic Scripture by the Dutch Reform *predikante*: ministers.²⁷

The Calvinists of Flanders (Johanna Gustava Du Preez' Huguenot forebears) fled to the most militant centres of resistance to the Spanish, to Zeeland and South Holland, and from there set sail with fellow Protestants (a re-enactment of Exodus) to

²⁵Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, p. 16.

²⁶Ibid., p. 83.

²⁷Ibid., p. 91.

the relative safety of the Cape of Good Hope, where the righteous refugees, the Huguenots, could lay claim to being God's Chosen People. This was the banner these hardy new Israelites marched behind as they headed through war, drought, pestilence and isolation to their Promised Land. 'If the foe to be confronted was so evil that extermination was called for [Zulu and Xhosa Impi's], they became the Amalekites whom it was forbidden to spare. If they happened to occupy a piece of territory plainly designated by the Lord for the people of His covenant [Hottentots, Bushmen, and other native tribes] then their obstruction was thought of as Canaanite or Midianite. If their sins were so loathsome that they positively invited destruction, they were, of course, Sodomites, or less damnably, Philistines [slaves, coloureds and barbarians and heathens of all descriptions]. If reinforcements were depressingly sparse, Gideon was usually invoked – his story bearing the morale-boosting message that victory was likely to go to small battalions, supposing [as in the Kaffir and Boer Wars] that they combined guile and faith in equal measure'.²⁸

As one of the first ports of call for fleeing Huguenots, Vlissingen offered refuge and a means of livelihood. Barendt's grandfather had most likely been a member of the guild of Blacksmiths in Vlissingen. Their oldest recorded ordinance is dated 27 June, 1590.²⁹ Vlissingen is less than a thirty-minute walk from Souberg.

Like the Du Preez who fled Courtrai after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Barendt's people found safety in the Walloon community of Vlissingen a century earlier. But who were these Walloons and why did the Huguenots leave this safe harbour of the Elect to embark on a hazardous journey over perilous seas to an unknown future in an alien world?

Walloon Communities

These French-speaking Netherlanders had fled from the Low Countries, now known as Belgium, during the religious persecution of the previous century, when the inhumanity of Philip II's Spanish Inquisition and the Catholic forces of the Duke of Alba threatened to annihilate Protestantism.

The Walloons were integrated initially with the church structure of the Dutch-speaking communities, but in 1578 they were granted administrative autonomy at congregational, classis and provincial synod levels within the Dutch Reformed

²⁸ Ibid., p. 95.

²⁹ De Ridder, *De Geschiedenis van Vlissingen en haar Ambachtsgilden*, pp. 97-100.

denomination. There was thus a separate Walloon Church in the Netherlands and it became an important haven for French Reformed refugees.

Johanna Gustava's ancestral mother, Cecilia d'Athis des Prez du Mont, died at the age of seventy, in November 1720, on her farm Den Zoeten Inval (allocated to Hercule des Prez in Drakenstein on 24 October 1688). She left behind the French family Bible and a small box of family papers, including the certificate of membership of the Walloon Church in Vlissingen. This eventually turned up in the Cape Archives, the only one of its kind to survive in South Africa.³⁰

The pious and well-informed burghers of the United Provinces of the Netherlands showed great compassion and understanding to fellow Protestants and did much to help the Huguenots. And when a country with a population of two and a half million gives shelter to approximately sixty thousand refugees it must expect to feel their influence. Agriculture benefitted greatly and the religious life of the host nation was strengthened by the staunch Calvinism of the refugees.

It would however be incorrect to assume that all the Frenchmen were enthusiastically welcomed and that everyone felt positive about the refugees' influence on the national life of the Netherlands. In addition there was resentment in the field of economics. Perhaps stiff competition amongst Vlissingen's Guild of *Smeden* drove Abraham le Clercq to find work as a blacksmith in Serooskerke in 1630. And hostilities within the Guild of *Kleermakers* may have been a reason why, in 1687, French Huguenot Hercules des Prez, a linen worker from Courtrai, chose to leave the newly-found spiritual home of his protective Walloon community. Keeping covenant with his God he trusted that he and his family would be delivered of a safer future as they helped establish His word at the Cape of Good Hope.

The Dutch East India Company

The Calvinist character of the seventeenth century Netherlands is reflected in the actions of the Dutch East India Company, which was founded in 1602 by the associated chambers of commerce. The company was governed by a council of seventeen members known as the Here XVII: Lords XVII. The Amsterdam chamber of commerce nominated eight of the members; Zeeland came next with four.

³⁰ Du Pré, *Hercules Des Prez and Cecilia D'Athis*, pp. 6, 14.

In the Golden Age of the Netherlands, a commercial enterprise of this nature regarded the spreading of the true faith as part of its task. Company fleets almost always sailed with sick-comforter on board. In Act One of *Arumlily* a *ziekentrooster* brings comfort to the ship's men by leading them in prayer as they commend the soul of their departed captain to his maker. He is also there to pray for the souls of stricken sailors who have succumbed to the temptations of the flesh by heeding the voice of Satan.

The urge not only to colonise, but also to evangelise is reflected in the formal prayer drawn up to be said at meetings of the Council of Policy which reads in part as follows: '... and to spread and proclaim Your true Reformed Christian doctrine among these wild and brutal people (as they possibly are) to the glory and praise of your Holy Name and the welfare of our principles'.³¹

This reforming zeal is taken up by Barendt after his conversion, and also by the Governor and Huguenot congregation at the trial of Marie and Salomon in Act Two of *Arumlily*: Cape of Good Hope Passion. However the maintenance of law and order took precedence over the spreading of religion in their trading stations, reflecting the ethos of a commercial organization such as the Dutch East India Company where colonization and the establishment of churches went hand in hand.

But colonization was not initially part of the company's policy. When Commissioner Van Rhee de of Drakenstein visited the Cape in May 1685 he believed that it should be kept as a refreshment station merely to replenish their company's ships as they voyaged to and from the East. This conclusion conflicted with the general feeling at the Cape. But Simon van der Stel's request for Dutch farmers, ruined by war, to be sent to assist local farmers was ignored by the Lords XVII.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes the situation changed dramatically in the Netherlands as the result of the growing stream of Huguenots refugees. Early in October 1685 the Lords XVII resolved to send a number of colonists to the Cape. One of the few willing to go on the VOC (Dutch East India Company) ship *Vrijheijt* was the future husband of Sara Cochet. Sometime after her husband Pieter le Clercq died (the date is unrecorded) she became engaged to Guillaume du Toit. He had fled with his brother from Ryssel in Flanders and had found refuge amongst the Walloons of Walcheren. But according to an article held in the Zeeuws Archief and written in 2003

³¹ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 68.

when the ex-president of South Africa F. W. de Klerk was researching his roots on the Island of Walcheren, she and her four children only went to the Cape in 1688.³²

Although they sailed on one of the seven ships designated to transport the one-hundred-and-fifty plus French Huguenots who had volunteered to emigrate in 1688, it would appear that this family was not given assisted passage when they set sail on the *Oosterland* from Wielingen (the strait leading from the docks of Vlissingen into the North Sea) on 29 January 1688.³³ This ship belonged to the Zeeland chamber of commerce and beside Sara, her four children, and a number of refugees, there were also 165 sailors and 168 soldiers on board.

Sara had sold the family home and used the proceeds to pay for her fare and for those of her two youngest children, eleven-year-old Jannetje and Joos who was nine. But according to a document found in the VOC archives her two older boys, sixteen-year-old Abraham Pieterszoon de Clerck (the forefather of the South African de Klerks) and Barendt, two years younger, Christened on 14 January 1674, were engaged as deckhands for the *scheepsloon*: ships loan of 25 gulden.

Barendt's name is not listed in the book *Huguenots who came to the Cape* and neither is he mentioned when Pieter Coertzen³⁴ provides details of the *Oosterland*. 'The voyage was without incident, with no deaths on board and nobody sick when the ship arrived in Table Bay. The time taken for the voyage was also a record for those days – 2 months and 22 days according to the *Dagregister*: ships diary.'

So what happened to Barendt? Fact becomes fiction in Act One of *Arumlily*. Barendt stayed on board, worked himself up to the position of captain and went down with his ship in Table Bay in 1708. The *Oosterland* sank in Table Bay on 17 February 1697.³⁵

³² The Zeeuwsarchief website, De Klerk vindt wortels in Zeeuws Archief, by Peter Blom.

³³ De VOCsite: gegevens VOC-schip Oosterland 1685; see the VOCsite.nl website

³⁴ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688-1988*, p. 79.

³⁵ According to a synopsis of the book *Een bedroefd en beclaaglijck ongeval*, Dr. Bruno Werz writes about the wreck of the *Oosterland* and also describes the first scientific maritime-archaeological project undertaken in Southern Africa.

Settlement in freedom

Mouton Court Case of 1714

The character of Marie in Act Two of *Arumlily* is based on Marie Mouton, a French Huguenot who, as a young girl, fled with her father Jacques and her sister Madeleine from Steenwerck in Flanders to Middleburg in Zeeland. He was a farmer and as these were the skills most prized in the VOC's new settlement he was encouraged after a few years to emigrate. Consequently he and his two motherless daughters sailed to the Cape on the company's ship *Donkervliet* in 1699.³⁶

By the time Jacques Mouton arrived the need for more land had resulted in the distribution of new farms to the 1688 Huguenot settlers and their grown up children. Mouton's farm, which he named Steenwerck, lay north of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein in Land van Waveren, the area known as Tulbagh today, near to the farm *Vogel Valleij*: bird valley. This farm was allocated to the young Abraham le Clerck by Governor Jan de la Fontaine who, when on his way to Mossel Bay, felt great pity for the impoverished young man that he came across scrounging for a living in the area.³⁷

It is not so strange that neighbours in this remote settlement of refugees, Madeleine Mouton and Abraham, the eldest son of Sara Cochet, were married on 12 May 1709. Their union produced ten children and gave rise to the De Klerk clan in South Africa. The marriage of Madeleine's seventeen-year-old sister Marie to the Dutchman Frans Jooste in 1706, ended in tragedy. On 30 August 1714 she and her lover Titus of Bengal, about thirty, and their accomplice Fortuyn of Angola, about twenty, were sentenced to death, by strangling, impaling and dismembering for the murder of Marie's husband.

In the Arias and Recitativos of Act Two we hear the agonised voice of Madeleine, and also the compassionate one of her mother-in-law Sara (the fictional Anna), and the equivocal Dutch Reformed Dominee, dutifully guiding his endangered flock, yet sorrowing for their frailty. These individual Huguenot voices show the merciful side, the strands of gold threading through the uncompromising, judgemental massed voice of a Calvinist congregation; the Body of the Elect, whose salvation lies in keeping strictly to the letter of God's Law, His Ten Commandments.

Marie and her slave lover Salomon break many of these Commandments and must therefore be punished as deemed fit by the law-enforcers; in this case the governor

³⁶ Malan & Malherbe, *Huguenots who came to the Cape*, p. 34.

³⁷ Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688 - 1988*, p. 89.

at the Cape. Their poetic lovemaking is as heinous a crime as the poetic lovemaking of Barendt and his meester, when seen from the moral and spiritual perspective of a Christian Dutch Society.

Paradoxes of being Dutch

In his book of essays, Simon Schama attempts to explore the paradoxes of being Dutch in terms of social beliefs and behaviour. It seems that when the Dutch felt less threatened by external forces, they were more tolerant of these marginal groups. Schama credits this to the elasticity of the retaining membrane holding Dutch culture together. In 1731, after a massive collapse of the sea dikes, there was a hysterical persecution of homosexuals in a culture where normally few of those found guilty were put through the rites of extirpation and purification by being strangled, burned and drowned. After this deluge the *predikante*, ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, preached that the punishing flood had been sent as chastisement for the flood of iniquity that had swept the land. Water, was thought of in the rhetoric of the flood culture as purifying and differentiating. 'It could set apart the righteous from the wicked, wash away the filth and idolatry, and bring the stiff-necked to repentance. And once the waters had receded, the covenant that had been tarnished and broken could be renewed.'³⁸

This cultural paradox could explain why the inherently tolerant Dutch governors, *predikante* and their staunchly Calvinist flock, when trying to civilize a barbaric world, allowed the inhospitable conditions at the Cape to influence their judgement. The actual sentence of Marie Mouton is held in the archival group of the VOC at the Cape 1652-1795, which is in the custody of the Cape Town Archives Repository, TANAP.

In shameful silence, 'savage' Samson of Act Three, records this inhumane sentencing of his part-Huguenot great-grandparents in his diary. And to emphasise its wickedness he does so after recounting the celebration of civilized guests, as they bless the union of young lovers with the divine words of Purcell's 'Song of Songs'.

Justice

Was justice done when Marie and Salomon were sentenced to death in 1714?

A twice-widowed father, struggling to make ends meet in an isolated and harsh environment, would have felt that the marriage of his daughter to a humble Dutchman

³⁸Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, p. 601.

was a heaven-sent opportunity of easing the heavy burden of his life. Did Marie feel the same? Was hers a love match, or simply a means of escaping from her unhappy past? From the age of five she had been subjected to the tragic death of her mother, the horrifying escape from France to Middleburg; the unwelcome upheaval from a close-knit Walloon community, the terrifying three-month ordeal on a storm-ridden, pirate-scoured ocean. In addition she might have been resentful of her second stepmother and of her more privileged siblings.

Was her marriage one of convenience, not to her, but to her small Huguenot community seeking to increase their numbers? In his article on 'The 'White' Population of South Africa in the Eighteenth Century', Robert Ross attempts to elucidate the character and mechanics of population growth of this group. On the subject of marriage he writes that 'by their middle teens girls seem to have been considered ready to marry'. 'After that age, however, women were married quickly. Of the 279 women in his sample; those whose ages at marriage could be determined, 147 (53 per cent) were married before they were twenty.'³⁹

According to official records Marie was twenty five when she was sentenced to death in 1714. If she was married to Frans Jooste in 1706⁴⁰ she was seventeen, the age when only twenty-to-thirty per cent of the 'white' girls were married. Marie was a young and therefore a more vulnerable bride. But she was not as inexperienced as Jannetje le Clercq, the sister-in-law of her sister Madeleine. Jannetje was only fifteen when she married the Huguenot André Gouch. And she was also embroiled in murder. Her second husband Pieter Becker, suspected of murdering her first husband, was convicted of murdering two of his slaves in 1710.

Unlike Marie, he was not sentenced to death, but only to four-year's hard-labour on Robben Island. The injustice of the law; of men being deemed more worthy of clemency than women and slaves' lives being of little worth, must have added to Marie's bitterness and anguish when, four years later, she was sentenced to an unimaginably gruesome death as the assumed accomplice to the murder of her husband.

Fynbosch giving voice to a 'fallen woman'

How is it possible for abused Marie to weave the tender shoot of a loving, gentle voice through the icy accusations and stony judgements of her almighty accusers?

³⁹ Ross, 'The "White" Population of South Africa in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 223, 224.

⁴⁰ Malan & Malherbe, *Huguenots who came to the Cape*, p. 34.

Was she promiscuous? Was she of the same mould as temptress Eve who brought humanity to its knees; a Jezebel, a corruptor of the sexes; a fornicator who, for decency's sake, had to get married?

The duty-bound, of-one-voice **Chorus** of *Huguenots* had no doubts about her guilt, unable, in their God-given dread of Satan and his works and self-righteousness of the Elect, to make allowance for any extenuating facts. Of course, being fellow sufferers, they knew that Marie was a fearful, lonely girl and then a dutiful, impoverished, weary mother, aching to soothe the heart-sore of losing loved ones. And did that include a Heavenly Father found wanting? (Hell-fire was too real to think of asking such a question.)

On the other hand, abducted Salomon, nurtured back to the celebration of life by the love of a fellow slave, not only knew Marie's heart, but he cared to heal it. He knew that the secret lay in her seeing the sixth and smallest (0.04%) floral kingdom of the world: the Cape Kingdom: *Capensis*⁴¹ through fresh eyes, and consequently discovering the myriad blessings to be found in the *Proteoid*, *Ericoid* and *Restoid* elements of its scrubby vegetation.

Peace would be hers if she could believe in the uniqueness, rather than the irksomeness of tall bushes with hard leaves and dull surface, shrubs with small, narrow and often rolled leaves and tufted plants with near leafless, tubular or wiry non-woody stems;⁴² if she could know that from the smallest *Iris* to the largest *Leucadendron* each plant was a blessing, a gift to be revered, rather than a weed to be hand-ploughed in order to make way for vegetables, vines and lucerne.

And Salomon's wisdom helped Marie to let go of her suffering. Embraced in his wholesome love and in the spirituality of the *fynbosch*, the reverence of her humble arias took on the stature of a Bach chorale; a tender harmony of supplicant voices giving praise to the almighty creator of all things bright and beautiful.

The reformed voices of Anna, Tulp and Claertje in Act Two

Why was the only information published by the Huguenot Society of South Africa on the De Klerk clan to be found in a booklet by J. E Malherbe titled *Jannetje de Klerk, Stammoeder van die Gouws en Bekker Families: Ancestral Mother of the Gouws and*

⁴¹ Meyer & Benjamin, *Fynbos*, p. 1

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 9. Also illustrations and descriptions found in Manning's Field Guide to *Fynbos*.

Bekker Families? And why after its initial reading was it a relief to know that Jannetje De Klerk was not head of Johanna Gustava's mother's clan?

But of course, like the murderess Marie Mouton, Jannetje was related to all the De Klerks; she was the wayward sister of Abraham de Clercq, the husband of Marie's sister Madeleine, the progenitors of the Family De Klerk. Jannetje was the daughter of Sara Cochet; Anna of the 'Cape of Good Hope Passion'. Because of Anna's real suffering as the mother of Jannetje (Claertje of Act Two) her arias are full of compassion rather than condemnation for the motherless Marie whose trials had been more horrific than her daughter's hardships. Instead of getting drunk with a violent, sadistic husband and joining him to pull the flesh from the buttocks of their slave (Tulp) with hot tongs, as Jannetje did, Marie had loved her slave (Salomon). It is true, both women had illegitimate children, but perhaps Jannetje could also be excused for loving another. Her second husband, the murderer Pieter Becker, was locked up on Robben Island at the time.

And Sara Cochet (Anna) knew what it was like to love another. No record of her husband's death remains. Was she the lover of Guillaume du Toit before Pieter Abrahamsen de Clerck died in Serooskerke? Was their illicit relationship the reason why he went to the Cape two years before she and her four children did?

These questions will remain unanswered and unfortunately Barendt went down with his ship before his mother's abhorrence of homosexuality was tempered by the difficulties and heartache as she, her children and her husband battled to survive in their new homeland. Happily, Tulp and Claertje fared better in the affections of their *miesies*, madam and mother.

Guillaume died, in 1710, as a result of his imprisonment for defying the corrupt practices of Governor W. A. van der Stel. (Hercule des Prez the younger along with another eight burgers were fellow-rebels.)⁴³ His widow bought a block of land on the Eerste River in Stellenbosch. The house Sara built on was typical of the houses built at the time. The site was near water as they had to carry all the water they needed. The floor-plan was oblong; Anna's was trapezium-shaped with two-rooms built on shallow

⁴³ R. H. Du Pré, *Hercule des Prez and Cecilia d'Athis: Founders of the Du Preez Family in South Africa*, p. 11.

foundations of river stones. The floors and walls were of clay and the roof was made from Cape reed (*Restionaceae*).⁴⁴

Sara brought the tortured Tulp from her daughter Jannetje's farm to this house and gave her sanctuary and made her a free slave. The confidence gained by her new status allows her to protest about the injustice of the Court of Justice at Marie's trial.

The horror felt when the Governor pronounces sentence on the condemned and the reality of Marie's imminent death galvanises the thoughts and feelings of her family and *volk*. Their humanity gives shape to the final Recitativo.

The voice of the narrator in the Interlude of Act Two

In part, the narrator's anger springs from an understanding of the defiance felt by Claertje, who is driven to do deeds that, as a child of devout Huguenots, she would have been brought up to abhor. But, because of her youthful trust in the goodness of people, she is drawn into a life of unmanageable horror. She has defiled her Christian principles, but equally, she resents the hypocrisy of her sermonising congregation. Accused and excluded for the sins of others she will from now on, in the spirit of her forebears, fight the enemy of injustice as best she can.

In a similar spirit, the present-day narrator wants to lash out at the descendants of Claertje's judgemental Elect. For as a result of their suffering in the Boer War, they felt justified in excluding and humiliating her English mother. 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' She knows the Beatitudes and that her *Ouma* Johanna Gustava Du Preez's high-handed treatment of her vulnerable mother does not make her pure of heart. But then, neither is the narrator's heart pure. But does that matter when she does not believe in a god? But she does believe in the sacred; in the sacredness of life. Like her Huguenot forbears she believes that betrayal of the sacred leads to death. But death without faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the loss of light, life; darkness.

Her dilemma is this: she wants justice for her mother. Can this be achieved? Can she empty out the sacred, Bach's St. John Passion, and fill its framework with the voices of her forebears without profaning the sacred? Perhaps if they sing truthfully, she can.

⁴⁴ Malherbe, *Jannetje de Klerk: Stammoeder van die Gouws en Bekker Families*, pp. 2, 3. Also Malherbe, *Cape Vernacular Architecture (1680-1750)*, pp. 7-10.

The Historical background to the part the Huguenots play in the English strand of *Arumlily Spathe of Voices*

The character of Elizabeth in Act Three of *Arumlily* was based on the daughter of the Lord of Lammas, a true English Gentleman. She and her husband John Atherstone and their five living children came out to South Africa in 1820 as a member of a party of English Settlers under the leadership of Elizabeth's brother Captain Edward Damant.

Is it possible to argue that the noble spirit of the Huguenots, still revered by the Afrikaners today, flows through the spathe of these English voices in the double-stranded flowering of South Africa's White Tribe?

The Vellum Diaries

Fortunately, in 1920, a relative, Violet Willets, made a copy of Volume II, the *1806-1811 Diaries, Elizabeth Damant of Lammas*, with two *Retrospectives* and two *Letters of 1819 and 1824*. These are in safe-keeping with another relative, and one of the original Diaries is in the Cory Library in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. Fortunately, the original home, which Elizabeth's husband bought in 1835, has also been preserved. This house and garden provide the setting for the final passionate embraces of Samson and Elizabeth.

In her Introductory notes on the diaries Violet Willet writes that after Elizabeth's death in 1839 her daughter Bliss tore out the last pages of her mother's diary. She also says that they were written 114 years earlier at the picturesque old Manor House of Lammas, beside the River Bure in Norfolk; and that the diarist belonged to the fourth generation of the Damant family, who had forsaken Suffolk for Norfolk when Robert of Wilby Manor married the heiress of the last of the Eyres of Lammas.

According to Willets, after this marriage in 1730, the Damants had no connection with the county they adopted when Alba drove them from the Spanish Netherlands in Queen Elizabeth's days. It seems that the Damants, like Johanna Gustava's Afrikaans forbears, were Huguenots, but not of humble birth. Robert of Wilby Manor was surely of noble birth like Isaac Dumont De Bostaquet a Gentleman of Normandy, who's published Memoirs, kept in the library of the Huguenot Society of Great Britain, record his trials and escape before and after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The Dutiful, Soul-searching, Evangelistic, Protestant daughter.

Elizabeth had kept a journal for many years before 1806. A daughter of her youngest brother remembers with what deep feeling her father read to his children from these lost volumes 'full of gaiety, accounts of hunting and balls, crowds of visitors filling the old house, young men brought by her brothers and the girls of neighbouring houses'.

In the surviving Volume, Retrospectives and Letters these high-spirited descriptions are replaced by a more sombre tone. Elizabeth reveals a nature more in accord with Johanna Gustava's as she records the pleasures and pains of her last four years at Lammas. Attending to her many duties, supervising five servants, managing the poultry and the dairy, preparing for her dinner and supper guests, keeping her needle employed as she sews shirts for her brothers and gowns for her sister and herself, dispels her gloom and eases her spirits. Serenity is restored when chatting agreeably as she rambles with friends, or rides out, or goes on the water or to Norwich with her family, or gardens in the shrubbery or at the Grotto, with Catherine (her disabled sister) and her brothers.

In the afternoons her Soul is prompted to Harmony when occupied by the more sedentary pursuits of painting, reading, or being read to, writing letters and poetry. And being gay at dinner and during the agreeable evening entertainments of chat and cards (sometimes a trial when conversation is tiresome or when 'the insipid Silence of the Whist-Players provok'd my Petulance') exhilarates her spirits, as do the merry songs shared with family and guests.

But when, as too often it did, uncontrolled passion undermined virtue, thus disposing her to sinfulness and rendering her unworthy of love, Elizabeth devoted many an hour to self-examination and prayer as she looked to Him, who is the Creator of all Things, for Mercy and Forgiveness. Elizabeth could never make light of her fiery relationship with her father. On one occasion she blames 'the weakness of her heart' for 'a Parent's apparent Estrangement from his children's Pleasures and his Disapproving Silence towards me'.

'Hurt in Mind, - with a bursting Heart and, overflowing Eyes' she seeks the comfort of a brother ('All are good, and I love them dearly, but Castell has been oftenest the "Witness of my Sorrow") when 'To the Request of riding to Norwich with our Friends my Father answer'd with unusual Severity and Harshness. I could ill bear his Assertion that I was always studying to gratify my own unsatisfied Love of Pleasure at other People's Expense'.

The famous antiquary Walter Rye told Violet Willets that by 1806 the fast-aging squire was already feeling the pinch of hard times and that the Lubbocks held mortgages on some of his lands. When he died his remaining lands and manor house were sold and Elizabeth, aged twenty-seven, was left to the care of her brothers. Moving between the homes of her eldest brother, a stockbroker in London and those of her two brothers who were surgeons in Norfolk, Elizabeth educated her nieces and nephews and nursed two of these little ones as they died. At the same time she endured the agony of a protracted, but doomed love affair, blaming her uncontrolled passion for its ultimate failure, rather than on the interference of a disapproving father and over-protective brothers.

Elizabeth knew what value lay in being of service to others. Her mother died when she was eight and her older sister was an invalid, who suffered daily seizures that not only prevented her from offering any assistance, but added to Elizabeth's responsibilities as mistress of the manor house. Despite her trials and troubles, she derived a great deal of satisfaction from caring for her loving family, while developing a deep compassion for the suffering of others.

The imaginative rewards of missionary zeal and shared suffering

How is it possible for this Elizabeth, the 'good' daughter of the Lord of Lammas to step out of character as fundamentally as she does in Act 3? How could she change from being a woman weary of life; from one who at the end of her life writes: 'An awful and trying Period has elapsed since it [her vellum diary] was discontinued, but thro' the Mercy of God I have been preserv'd in all my trials. And now, – with a truly penitent Heart, – I implore Pardon for all my Sins?'

How can she become the Elizabeth whose penitent Christian heart, having reached out to a fellow sufferer, is able to entice her Samson into her bed weeks before she dies, trusting that he, in return, will give her the strength to move beyond the paradigm of female virtue prescribed by her Bible and polite society?

What qualities made it possible for a 'Radical' – one of those who came from gentry families in Britain and wished to retain, or better, their social position in the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century – to satisfy her desire for earthly bliss, not within the confines of her marriage, religion or Englishness, but, rather, with a man whose status and respectability as a coloured servant in polite society reduced him to silence and invisibility?

Fortunately, family legend has it that Elizabeth's daughter Bliss tore out the last shameful pages of her mother's diary. This destructive act of her daughter gave her an opportunity to reveal what the observant, passionate and defiant diarist was really capable of doing. Imbued with that Huguenot spirit that drove her forebears to shake off the shackles of religious persecution, courageous Elizabeth could, at last, be creative with her reality; give wing to her iconoclastic nature; let her imagination soar above her permitted landscape of sacrifice and service and float in the sublimity of illegal harmonies.

On closer reading of her diary one can see that it would not be out of character for the vulnerable but gutsy Elizabeth, well-acquainted with heartache and rejection, to stray from the path of feminine decorum, especially at times of heightened emotion, like in her courting days, when she sits beside, or a few pews away, from a pious suitor and gets the giggles inappropriately; or many years later at her daughter Emily's birthday celebration when she challenges the cowardly statements of the arrogant, ignorant and prejudiced; or at the end her days when she enjoys the unexpected pleasure of some renewed flowering with her *Herzensfreund*: beloved.

A woman, who agonised over moral and spiritual principles, would recognise Samson's nobility, even if her 'tribe' branded him a bastard Hottentot. She knew they were ignorant of the fact that the first people living at the Cape called themselves the Khoikhoi, man of man, and were dismissive of the insult felt by a proud people. Hottentot was a derogatory name given to the natives by the early Dutch settlers and like them, most of the English settlers considered Samson to be little more than a savage, unredeemed by the refinements of idealism, knowledge, respect and compassion.

By taking the trouble to listen to Samson's sad story when she met him for the first time at Genadendal, Elizabeth knew better. She heard how he worked to improve his community; what wisdom he gained from his Khoi grandmother and the Moravian brethren; how he saw value in the ways and beliefs of both the Khoikhoi and the Europeans and honoured the suffering of his multi-national forbears.

As a result of her suffering Elizabeth could understand Samson's respect for the anger of the stones; it was the anger he suffered for the humiliation endured by his Khoi forbears, who were uprooted from their ancestral lands, deprived of their pastoral traditions and forced into servitude by the colonists. She would also understand his

despair when the Moravian Brethren ruled that the son of heathens, slaves and murderers was unworthy of their Magdalena's love.

A Lady makes a spirited plan

Elizabeth was as strong-willed and thoughtful as the Huguenot Boer, Pieter Engelbertus Du Preez, who made a god-given plan when he braved the dangers of South Africa's high interior in order to escape the nepotism of British rule. Heeding her Damant ancestral voices, Elizabeth also took on the injustices of her establishment, for unlike many white South Africans today, unhappy with the privilege they enjoy at the expense of the natives, she could not emigrate. She had no choice but to stay and make the most of her restrictive environment during the draconian era of nineteenth-century Apartheid in the Cape Colony.

The only difference between the segregation (the separating of groups according to their colour, language, customs, and religion) and racial hatred of her day and the 1950-1985 Immorality Act was one of legality. Taking a page out of the rule book of their colonial bosses, the incoming Nationalist Government was prepared to venture one step further. The centuries-old practice of forbidding all sexual relations between whites and non-whites was formalised into law.

Before the nineteenth century when the ideology of British superiority (taken over by what was to become Afrikaner nationalism in the next century) was imposed on Cape Colonial society, the wealthy and powerful Calvinist Governors of the Dutch East India Company imposed their ideas of respectability on the wide range of existing and interconnected statuses. Second in the hierarchy of social standing were the *dominees*: ministers, synods and members of their Dutch Reformed Churches.

According to Robert Ross in *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1870* skin colour determined a person's status and respectability. British gentry were at the top of the social pyramid, while bastards were at the bottom and the twain would meet only as master and servant. So if Elizabeth and Samson had any chance of falling in love they would have to get to know and respect one another. How was this possible?

Until Elizabeth visited Genadendal and heard the spirits of Samson and his people, her understanding of the Khoikhoi was no better than that of the mid-twentieth century white population. School children were taught that a tribe of people called the Hottentots lived at the Cape when Jan van Riebeeck landed there in 1652. They were not expected to memorise trivial facts, or find their national heroes in the few

paragraphs where their history books dealt with these inconsequential heathens. As a result next-to-nothing was known about an extinct race called the Hottentots.

Informative books on the subject might have helped well-read Elizabeth to escape the ignorance and prejudice of her time. But those that offered to improve understanding of the cultural practices, language and beliefs of this ancient and noble tribe were not in print at the time. *Tsuni-Ilgoam, The Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* by Theophilus Hahn, the authoritative text on comparative mythology, ethnology and anthropology was published in 1881, four decades after her death. *Khoisan Healings: Understandings, Ideas and Practices* was another important source that gives insight into a lost tribe's advanced ways of dealing with each other and their African and colonised environment. This D. Phil Thesis by Chris Low was only published in 2004.

Genadendal – Vale of Grace

When Elizabeth spends a week at the Moravian Mission Station in Genadendal en route to Cape Town in 1823 she has no need of books. She opens her heart to the voices that dwell in the church, school, river, stones and *kloof*. She sits beside Samson where The Pear Tree Blossoms⁴⁵ and hears the voices of Moravian missionary George Schmidt at his first baptism in Baviaanskloof when the Khoi Wilhelm (Samson's grandfather) is given the Christian name Josua; and then, two weeks later, when his wife Lena is given a bible and the first converts gather to hear the teachings of their Saviour and to be baptised.

And she hears Samson when he tells her that 'every inhabitant [including his beloved grandmother] had a vegetable garden adjoining his dwelling. The houses in the village were built of clay, some still in the shape of a beehive, with an opening at the top for smoke, others square with a thatched roof'.⁴⁶ And later, she listens intently when the young coloured man speaks of the diarised deliberations (made available to him as he learnt to read) of the three ordained brethren from Herrnhut after missionary work was resumed at Baviaanskloof in 1793:⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *The Pear Tree Flowers* is the title of the book Bernhard Krüger wrote on The History of The Moravian Church in South Africa 1737 – 1869.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁷ Volume II, *The Genadendal Diaries 1795-1796*. The description comes from the Diary kept by the three missionaries H. Marsveld, D. Schwinn and J. C. Kühnel and dated 7 December 1795. The Biblical text is taken from Zechariah 6, verse 15. (p. 113).

‘As Brother Marsveld had received permission to fell trees at the river our first considerations were how big we wanted the house of meeting to be. We decided to build the hall 60 feet long, 18 wide with two rooms on the one side, each sixteen feet square... A start was made with digging the foundations. Today’s watchword was remarkable: “And they that are far off shall come and build a temple of the Lord”’

This first temple became the schoolhouse where Samson and his Magdalena taught before she dies in childbirth and he is excluded from the Moravian community. Elizabeth and her children walk past this hallowed place and the past the mill, now the solitary abode of the shamed Samson. Then they go down to the river and sit with the heart-sore man-of-man beside his slow-moving stream. And Samson tells them the story of his people’s downfall and Elizabeth feels the wind sighing over the pooling water, as the Ancestral Spirits of *Tsuni-Ilgoam* the Supreme Being of the KhoiKhoi move in and out of the kloof from whose dark walls the stacks of silent stones are being torn. And French-Huguenot/English-Elizabeth knows the providence of her merciful God by the words of His Psalms:

Thou sendest forth thy spirit,
they are created: and thou renewest
the face of the earth.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ King James Holy Bible, Psalm 104: 30.

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