



AND I'M STILL HERE: Memoir (1937 -1972) (THE MEMOIR OF HANJA KOCHANSKY)

hanja kochansky

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My story is a deeply personal journey that casts a new light on the trends - and many of the people - that have shaped our society.

I have witnessed first-hand some of the culture defining events of the 20th century: as a World War II refugee; as an emigrant in apartheid South Africa; as a young actress mingling with film stars during the Dolce Vita era in Rome, where I played one of Elizabeth Taylor's handmaidens in the film Cleopatra. In London I was a Playboy Bunny and an enthusiastic participant in the 60's sex and drugs revolution. Over the years I have been lucky to count among my friends, companions and workmates, Elizabeth Taylor, Christine Keeler, Roman Polanski, Michael Caine, Mick Jagger, and many more - all of whom are revealed in this book through personal anecdotes.

Not that it has been fun all the way. I am also honest about my struggles - as a battered wife, a single mother, a penniless traveller, who at times suffered from that feeling of belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere.

Here is what they say about my memoir: Hanja's memoir reads like a Who's Who of the places and people that shaped modern culture, with fresh and sparky insights into everything from apartheid in South Africa to the Dolce Vita in Rome. She has been a vagabond and a film star, and everything between.

Julie Burchill

Hanja Kochansky's book is essential reading for anyone interested in the 1960s. She was there on the frontline of cultural and social change and brilliantly weaves her personal story with the story of those times so that history and autobiography merge into one fascinating read.

Cosmo Landesman, The Sunday Times.

Poet and playwright, Heathcote Williams, writes:

"She can light your darkest hour" Fran Landesman wrote in a song about Hanja Kochansky, the Croatian writer from Zagreb who cast her spell upon an already magical era: an elfin beauty with a crinkled Medusa frizz of flaming hair, piercing blue eyes framed by kohl, and a smile so potent that Francis Bacon wilted at the thought of trying to paint it.

Light as a butterfly, she shows in this litany of love that it's possible to live on air, to be a luftmensch.

It's a winning tale. Hanja's antennae are finely tuned: she catches seminal events and records them. She's in Rome for the Dolce Vita explosion, she becomes part of Cinecitta's 'Hollywood on the Tiber'; in London she travels with the subversive Christine Keeler, to a hideout on the continent, comically revealing Keeler's dread of foreign food as she stocks up in advance with cans of baked beans and Irish stew before catching the ferry. She's an avatar of the sexual revolution; she's in Amsterdam for the Wet Dream Film Festival. She's capable of thinking "beyond the beyond" like a Passionaria of the alternative, she was at the first Glastonbury. A joyful feminist who knows how to follow the music's beat while knocking on heaven's door; her conscience has her recording the worst aspects of apartheid; her witty powers of observation has her recording the badinage of louche, Rabelaisian and picaresque drunks in the Queen's Elm; her concern for human rights has her embracing Judith Malina and Julian Beck's Living Theatre; her concern for an end to rigid linear thinking has her engaging with alternative psychiatry and Timothy Leary; she believes

passionately in Illich's DeSchooling Society and she educates her child accordingly.
Sometimes the universe conspires to convey good news. It has done so in the form of Hanja Kochansky.

Heathcote Williams

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