

siderable kindness from Anglo-Celtic Australians. The period from 1946 through 1960 emerges here, as in so many other accounts, as a golden age of tranquillity and growing prosperity after the indescribable traumas of Europe.

*Mietek Gringlas* obviously has much in common with the other very distinguished account of a Polish Jewish migrant reviewed here, *A Life to Live . . .*, by Gringlas' exact contemporary Israel Kipen. Both distinguished themselves by their equally memorable accounts of life in Europe and Australia, and their inclusion of apparently petty details normally eschewed in works of this kind, which are extremely valuable to the historian. Kipen and Moshinsky have set an extremely high standard for others to follow.

*Mietek Gringlas* is available from the Gringlas Family (13-17 Molan Street, Ringwood, Victoria 3134); payment should consist of a fifty dollar donation to the Technion Institute, Haifa, Israel.

Professor W. D. Rubinstein

## THE NOT SO FABULOUS FIFTIES: IMAGES OF A MIGRANT CHILDHOOD

*Paul Kraus (Sydney, Kangaroo Press, 1985, 79pp)*

The image of newcomers coming to an alien place with a mere suitcase has become something of a cliché; but many readers, whether come from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, or elsewhere as part of a vigorous immigration tide set in motion by a much revered Minister for Immigration in Arthur Calwell, will certainly remember landing in Fremantle, Melbourne or Sydney with little more.

The Krauses — Hungarian Jews — were, perhaps a little more fortunate than others. They — Father and Mother Kraus and their two sons, Janos and Laszlo, aged ten and eight respectively — disembarked from their eight-week trans-oceanic journey in 1949 with *two* suitcases, as well as a travel bag and £300 in cash, while a crate bringing clothes, crockery, cutlery, tapestries, rugs, crystal and other personal effects arrived later. Along with most other immigrants, they had come under the sponsorship of the International Organisation which operated from Europe and Australia (and, of course, other places as well) at the time.

While heading for Sydney, they had had, because of ship's engine problems, to disembark in Melbourne. Within forty-eight hours of arrival, they were introduced to key features of Australian life: the city-stopping Melbourne Cup, Tuesday, 6 November, being their day of arrival; an engine-drivers' strike which delayed their *Spirit of Progress* transfer to Sydney for a full day; and the midnight transfer at Albury on the Victoria-New South Wales border on account of the different railway gauges of the two states.

These, then, were the beginnings of the Kraus family in Australia as described some thirty-seven years later by a much older Laszlo, by now having long borne the name Paul (against his brother Janos' John), in his slender memoir of a mere 79 pages, *The Not So Fabulous Fifties*.

In straightforward narrative, Paul Kraus effectively evokes the era. For some, the 'fifties were, of course, fabulous, made all the more so by nostalgia which, filtering out the unpleasant, leaves behind a more gilded picture of a headier age. After all,

this was the age of radio serials, John Dease's *Quiz Kids*, Jack Davey's *Dulux Show*, and Bob Dyer's *Pick-a-Box* before it moved on to TV; it was also the age when Australia's own Holden car was tops, when the lore of the Bush had not yet vanished, when the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne secured for Australia a place on the international map, and when football, cricket and even horse-racing were still pure, not yet having succumbed to the present-day mercenary buck. The 'fifties were all of these, and more besides.

For the uprooted, however, for the immigrant come out of Auschwitz, or surviving in hiding, or escaping the post-War pall of Communism engulfing his home — however thankful he might have been to escape to a land of relative peace and security, he found that even that place was scarcely paradisiac.

After all, a survivor one may have been, but one had to *continue* to survive. To survive, one had to work. And to meet that primary imperative, no work could be considered too menial, too dull, too soul-oppressing. For many, choice of employment was a luxury. Like Paul Kraus's father, they took what they could and spent many years, if not their whole lives, in the same occupation. Father Kraus proved, in the end, to be among the more fortunate. Though not spared the drudgery that consumed his energies and poise over several years rooted in a wearisome job, his work had fallen at least within a reasonable range of his pre-War expertise, out of which, after successive years of seven-day working weeks, he developed a field, anti-corrosives, that for a long time became very much his own.

Material possessions, however, and physical security and the firming of one's place as contributory citizen did not necessarily mean easy passage into the central core of one's adopted society. Language, customs, religion, even the food brought to school in one's lunch-box at a time, to quote Phillip Adams, when bread was white and cheese was Kraft, and the shoes and non-Stamina shorts one wore set one apart from one's peers.

In addition, the 'fifties were still years (even today not totally exorcised of their demons) in which graffiti telling 'reffos' to go home because Australia was for Australians could be seen on many walls; they were still years when the White Australia Policy reigned supreme and when non-English migrants were definitely second-class *personae non gratae*; and they were years, too, when England, Empire and Crown were still objects of veneration and loyalty supreme, so clearly evidenced by the nation's spontaneous outpourings on Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in 1953 and her visit with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, in 1954 — in all these instances leaving the newly-arrived immigrant, uprooted from natural home, family and the very font of memory, however bitter-sweet, very much on the periphery of Australian society.

Further detracting from any illusions that the migrant may have held that the 'fifties were in fact fabulous were other, deeper, concerns that affected the spirit. The pre-occupation with making a life of sorts in one's new surrounds; the need to educate one's children at a time when Jewish day-schools in Sydney may still have been nesting in someone's fancies but scarcely in actualities; the fact that one's neighbours were gentiles, some suspicious, to be sure, but others hospitable beyond comfort and genuine, almost welcoming embodiments of the Christian spirit; the constant pressures, internal no less than external, to conform — all these led to ever-assailing ambivalence of identity in both parents and children, to cultural and religious dissonance, the moral and spiritual uncertainties, and to situations of having almost consciously to choose between adhering to one's own practices, as in the case of Paul Kraus' father continuing to attend Sydney's Great Synagogue on

the major Holy Days and Festivals, to adaptation, as reflected by his mother's attendance at the local church with her two sons, and to faceless assimilation.

The remarkable thing was that so many who had come with the proverbial single suitcase subsequently 'made it' as well as they did. No less remarkable is the fact that the Jewish communities, particularly, though not exclusively, of Sydney and Melbourne have evolved so mightily from seeds so randomly cast and, in many instances, so poorly watered as to develop an intricate network of educational, religious, cultural, social, communal and philanthropic institutions. Seen as a memoir — and as an observation — of a place and an era still basically raw by present-day standards (as our own age will, in turn, be deemed raw to our successors), Paul Kraus' volume, though slender, serves as a telling description of 'life as she was lived' during a period till now explored primarily through more formal, more issue- and more community- and institution-oriented records and studies of, say, Hans Kimmel's contemporaneous (1950s) two-volume *Sydney's Jewish Community*, Peter Medding's later *From Assimilation to Group Survival* and *Jews in Australian Society*, and the respective histories of Bill and Hilary Rubinstein, viz., *The Jews in Australia*, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* and *Chosen: The Jews in Australia*, and Suzanne Rutland's *Edge of the Diaspora*.

In short, this is history with the human touch. It joins, among others, Moritz Michaelis' *Chapters From the Story of my Life*, Malka Fisher's *Goodbye Takmuk*, Amira Inglis' *Amirah: an unAustralian Childhood*, Maria Lewitt's *No Snow in December*, Barbara Falk's *No Other Home*, and Israel Kipen's *A Life to Live*, all of which offer personal and very individual views both of Australia and of the Jewish experience in it at different times traversing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It leads one also to hope that there are today others who are recording their experiences as still later arrivals from post-1956 Hungary and Poland, say, or, not to be overshadowed by Australia's predominantly Ashkenazi Jewry, from Baghdad, Egypt, Morocco and India, or from present-day Russia or South Africa. It leads one still further to hope that some archival storehouse is currently in operation to document these latter-day waves of immigration and the communal, social, cultural, religious and educational effects brought in their train, for research by others who will, in their time, expand upon the exemplarily evolving Australian Jewish experience.

Dr. Serge Liberman

## MANLY GIRLS

*Elisabeth Wynhausen (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1989; 179 pp.)*

**M**anly Girls is an autobiographical account of a childhood and youth in Sydney which, at first glance, may well be taken as a tribute to those Dutch immigrants of the 1950s and early 1960s who, fleeing European post-war austerity, settled in so easily along the coastal suburbs of the Warringah peninsula that they are almost never meant when anyone refers to 'New Australians' or to 'ethnics'.

According to a recent study, Jews were specifically excluded from the recruitment campaign by Australian immigration officers in Holland,<sup>1</sup> yet a score or so Jewish families, among them the Berkelouws of rare books and cheap furs fame, the Van