

BOOK REVIEWS

ENOUGH ALREADY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF AUSTRALIAN-JEWISH WRITING

edited by Alan Jacobs, St.Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1999

This new collection of writing by Australian Jewish writers is unusual in many ways and contrasts with earlier collections such as *Shalom* and *Pomegranates*. It is, as it claims, a collection of contemporary writing by postwar-born authors. The collection is almost at odds with itself as each piece stirs the emotions in differing ways. Some are heart wrenching insights into identity; others are glaring confrontations. In some cases, the pieces are extracts from larger works. Jacobs states in his foreword (Four Words): 'Jewish writers have always held a mirror up to our collective Jewish soul, monitoring it and providing constant, if sometimes unpleasant, feedback' and his choice of extracts clearly aims to provide this mirror of Australian Jewish life.

Alan Jacobs has chosen to include writers from Melbourne and Sydney and some whose base is the USA. Included are Andrea Goldsmith, Ramona Koval, Bernard Cohen, Elizabeth Wynhausen, Joseph Zaresky, Doris Brett, Brian Castro, Alan Jacobs, Dorothy Porter, Rosa Safransky, Judy Horacek, Sandra Goldbloom, Mark Baker, Tobsha Learner, Lily Brett, Arnold Zable, Ron Elisha, Alex Skovron and Matthew Karpin. Their reminiscences, stories and poems travel from Europe to Australia and back again as they follow the threads of ancestry and identity along the way.

I particularly liked Goldsmith's 'Only Connect', a very personal piece exploring her identity as the 'hyphenate Jew' and Ramona Koval's haunting conversation with her dead mother in 'Samovar' as well as Alex Skovron's Dylan Thomas-like poem 'The Violin maker, the Forest and the Clock'. I was disturbed by Jacobs' own piece 'The Bar Mitzvah of a Nazi' and confronted on many occasions by unconventional characters and themes in some of the writing.

Incredibly, in this age of spell-checkers, two glaring and unforgivable errors appear in Tobsha Learner's 'My Grandfathers' Graves' — Asekaiyi and Serphadic!

I am not sure if the anthology's title *Enough Already* is a *crie de coeur* upon finishing the whole book or simply a trite Jewish expression. However, like a good meal, even though you are replete, it is not long before you start all over again.

Helen Bersten

THE SEARCH FOR AN AUSTRALIAN PARADISE

by Bill Hornadge, Bondi Junction, Imprint, 1999

Bill Hornadge likes to document quirky parts of Australia's past in his easy to read writing style. In this book he traces three centuries of searches for the perfect paradise while making his own social and political comments along the way.

His acknowledgments and bibliographic notes attest to careful research on the forays from his home town of Dubbo. For his chapter on the Kimberley scheme called 'The Israel of Oz', he acknowledges Gettler's *Unpromised Land*, Rubinstein's *Chosen*, Rutland's *Edge of the Diaspora*, Mossenson's *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew* and Medding's *From Assimilation to Group Survival*. Unfortunately his careful research is not always mirrored in his proof reading and niggling errors have crept into this chapter. He spells Herzl as Herz twice.

As background to Steinberg's Australian scheme, he also discusses the Jewish settlement of Birobidzhan in Siberia on the border of Manchuria which had 20,000 Jews in 1914 and 30,000 in 1948. The Jewish episode in Australia will make interesting reading for those who do not know the story and sits well with the other multi-cultural paradises outlined by Hornadge. He follows this chapter by 'Bob's Kibbutzim Plan' about Bob Hawke's ideas to solve youth unemployment in the 1970s.

An unfortunate omission in an otherwise fascinating book is an index which would have been very useful.

Helen Bersten