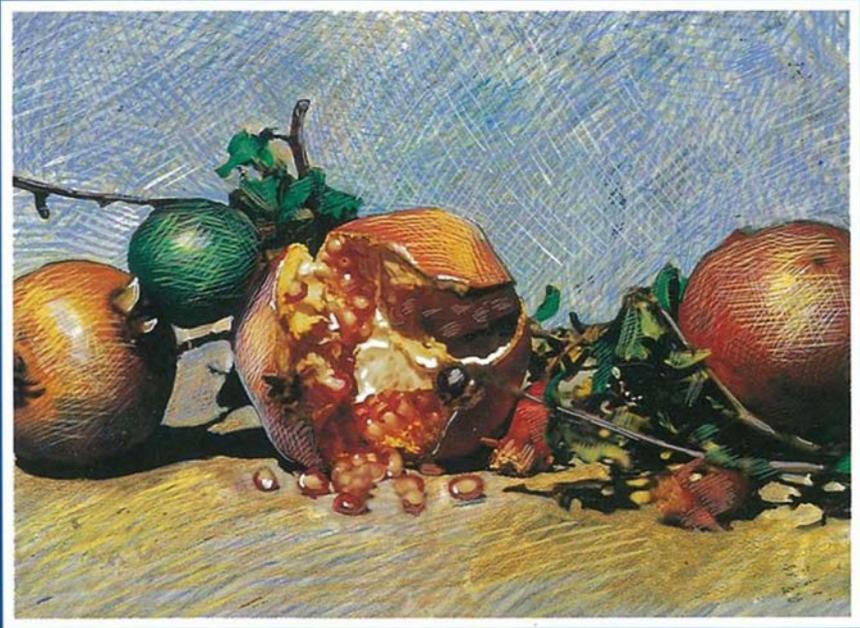


POMEGRANATES

A century of Jewish Australian writing



Compiled by Gael Hammer

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Part 1

1890 – 1930s



Miles Evergood b. Australia (1871-1939) Woman Reading

c. 1932. Pencil on paper 13cm x 17cm.

Reproduced by courtesy Mr Charles Grey.

Miles Evergood was born Myer Blashki in Melbourne, the eleventh of the fourteen Blashki children. Rebecca Blashki was his youngest sister. He studied under Frederick McCubbin at the National Gallery School of Art before leaving Australia for America and England. He did not return for nearly forty years. Today he is acknowledged as a significant Australian impressionist artist.

From

CHAPTERS FROM THE STORY OF MY LIFE

Moritz Michaelis

Moritz Michaelis was born in Hanover, then part of Prussia, in 1820. He studied medicine for a year but because his parents could not afford the tuition fees he was apprenticed to a linen merchant. While working for him, Moritz was sent to Manchester, the world soft-goods centre, but due to continuing ill-health, he decided to try his fortune in Australia. On a farewell visit to see his parents in Hanover, he met and married his bride.

The couple arrived in Melbourne in 1853, at the time of the gold rush. After various successes and failures Moritz entered into a partnership with his nephew, Isaac Hallenstein, to establish a tannery. The firm, Michaelis Hallenstein, prospered, launching the glue industry in Australia as well as making gelatine as a sideline. While not an observant Jew himself Moritz was nevertheless active on several Jewish committees and for many years acted as Honorary Consul for Prussia in Melbourne. He privately published these memoirs in 1899 and died at his St Kilda home in 1902.

We had been married as I have said on the 14th April, and with great regret left our relations and friends in England, on the 23rd May, 1853. On starting, the weather was beautiful, and neither of us felt the least sign of sea-sickness but the next day the cook cut his throat and this affected your mother so much that she became ill and did not recover for fully a month. She would take scarcely anything to eat or drink, so on talking to the captain, he said I must force her to eat a little, and drink as much stout as she could. This had the desired effect and after a time she was able to come on deck and gradually recovered her health and strength.

Amongst our fellow passengers in the first cabin were few with whom we cared to associate, with the exception of Messrs. Dobson, senior and junior who were cultured people. The former not liking Melbourne returned home after a year, or so, the latter obtained employment in some bank. Mr. Reid also an educated man likewise secured an appointment, I believe in the Bank of Australasia, becoming afterwards manager in Bendigo, from which post he retired some five or six years ago since when I have often met him in Melbourne. The only passenger with whom we contracted a real friendship was a Mrs. Hopkins, an Irish lady, who had followed her husband, a lawyer to Melbourne. Before landing we promised that she should stay with us till he met her, she being sure he had gone to the gold diggings.

The *Falcon* proved herself a good and quick sailer and all went well until one Friday evening, the eve of Whitsuntide. We had champagne which we drank in honour of the occasion with three young men with whom we had become acquainted on board. As usual we went to bed at ten o'clock, and had scarcely done so when your mother called out 'For God's sake what is that?' I said 'It is nothing, only the rudder out of the water.' Our cabin was near the stern of the ship. Suddenly came the cry 'Collision! collision!' We jumped out of bed and your mother wanted to rush out of the cabin, but as there was no water coming in, I told her to dress herself and helped her to put on a life belt, and also put on one myself. We found nearly all the passengers gathered in the main cabin. I wanted to go on deck but they told me the captain had given orders that no one should do so. There was a small staircase just outside our state room, leading to the deck, I managed to mount this unobserved and saw a most terrible state of confusion. Our ship had run right into another, and her sails and ours were one entangled mass. Captain Taylor told me there was no immediate danger, unless the ship

which had been stove right in, and into which the water was pouring, should sink and drag us down with her. His endeavours were therefore to disentangle the sails, and gradually work our boat out of her dangerous position. At the end of two hours, our foremast yards and sails being still entwined with those of the other vessel, Captain Taylor gave orders to cut our foremast down, which was quickly done and we drew out immediately from the embrace of our dangerous neighbour.

Long ere this I had told those in the cabin that there was no present danger, but of course we must be prepared for the worst. To their credit be it said that both men and women behaved well in this terrible emergency.

When the collision took place the captain and crew of the other ship, which was much smaller than ours, say about 800 tons measurement jumped on board the *Falcon* as being the safer of the two vessels. Unfortunately it was afterwards found that a midshipman was missing but of course nothing could be done to save him then. On the *Falcon* withdrawing from the Bremen ship the sea poured into the latter through the breach, without any loss of time our captain called for volunteers amongst the passengers to go to the other vessel to assist the crew in throwing the cargo overboard, and any number of hands offered. The cargo consisted of rice, hides and bamboo, the ship coming from Akyab, commanded by an Englishman, though coming from Bremen.

The captain of the Bremen ship seemed to be stunned as we then thought and left everything to Captain Taylor. Later on we believed him to have been under the influence of drink, and the passengers in an address to Captain Taylor ascribed the accident to this cause. There was no doubt that we were equally responsible for this mishap as it came out that the second mate who was the captain's son and supposed at the time to be on duty, was instead, enjoying himself amongst the second class passengers.

The night was beautiful, and though no moon was out the stars shone brightly, so that it was almost as light as day. The ships were making about eight knots an hour, and there was no reason for any accident to have occurred, save through the sheer neglect of those who should have prevented it.

About nine o'clock next morning a Dutch vessel was seen coming towards us as we had hoisted a flag of distress. When her captain came on board we found he did not speak English. Being requested I spoke to him first in German, then French, and as he could not understand either of these languages I tried him with a German patois which at that time I had not quite forgotten. At last we succeeded in understanding one another. Captain Taylor wished him to remain alongside until he could finish writing some despatches home, to which the Dutch skipper replied that he would stay until it could be seen if it would be possible to save the Bremen ship. In pursuance of this he soon also had his hands on board her, working away with a will. Shortly after, another Dutch craft came up to us, and then a third Dutchman. This latter vessel had on board a captain whom they had rescued from off a sinking ship. The crews worked with a will all that day and the following night. Next day we had the pleasure of seeing the damaged part of the Bremen ship above water.

The five captains now met on the *Falcon* and consulted about what was best to be done with the injured ship. They decided that she should go to the nearest African port after being sufficiently repaired to venture on such a voyage, and this she did. The various ships gave her sails, her own being torn into shreds. Her captain took no part in the discussion, probably fearing to inculpate himself. Towards ten o'clock on Sunday evening the three Dutchmen left us, and such a shout of good will as we sent after them, I have never heard before or since.

During these two days some of the passengers caught a quantity of fish and dragged five sharks on board. The largest of these was fourteen feet long and powerful enough to break a man's leg with

one blow of its tail. The sailors cut out certain portions and divided them amongst the different crews as delicacies. The sea meanwhile was like a high-way, vessels passing to and fro.

The collision took place just one degree north of the line, our journey thence was most favourable.

We soon afterwards passed the Cape of Good Hope, with a strong westerly wind blowing. Eighty-four days after leaving Liverpool we arrived at our destination, Port Phillip, on August the 15th, 1853. In those days all the vessels anchored in Hobson's Bay as there was no pier.

Soon after our arrival the captain went off in a boat to his agents and invited me to go ashore with him.

Before leaving this subject I may mention that our fellow passengers determined to go to the gold-fields and 'make their pile' as the saying is, and return as rich men in a year or two. I told them without hesitation that though my prospects were better than any of theirs, I would be quite satisfied to be a well-to-do man in ten years.

We landed at Port Melbourne then known as Le Hardies Beach but soon after called Sandridge, which designation was very appropriate it being nothing but a mass of sand ridges. To our surprise we were asked by the omnibus driver, five shillings each to take us to Melbourne. The captain, one or two of the passengers and I determined to walk the distance rather than pay such an exorbitant charge. The old Prince's Bridge had just been erected and crossing it we came to Swanston Street which as you can imagine was then in a very different condition to what it is now. We then entered a restaurant to have some much needed refreshment. It was situated just where C. and J. Ham's present auction rooms are. We separated and arranged to meet here again at five o'clock to return to the ship.

I found Mr. Boyd and after talking of our respective voyages I began speaking on business matters, but he said we must leave them alone for the present as it would be first necessary to find lodgings for us, which he feared would be rather difficult, a remark which caused me to smile. To my astonishment I soon realised that he had not exaggerated the situation for though we went from one to another of the comparatively few hotels and then to every boarding house, nowhere would they take ladies. They were quite ready to give me a stretcher amongst perhaps some ten or twenty other lodgers in a small dingy and dirty room, and when it was time for me to meet the captain all my endeavours to secure accommodation for Mrs. Hopkins, your mother and myself, had been in vain. Captain Taylor very kindly offered to allow us to live on board for the six weeks he expected to remain in port.

Returning to the ship I found my wife and Mrs. Hopkins in a very excited state as there had been a great disturbance during my absence. Some of the sailors had tried to run away and the mate had shot at them with a revolver. This had frightened the ladies so much that when I informed them of my non success in obtaining apartments and of the captain's offer, they said they would rather go to Melbourne, and if needs be buy a tent and live in it as thousands of others were then doing. Emerald Hill then called Canvas Town and now South Melbourne, was used mostly for this purpose and the tents covering a wide expanse could be seen from our ship.

Next morning we went in a small steamer up the Yarra to the so-called Queen's Wharf, which was still in its natural state and in rainy weather became so soft that many a package of merchandise was engulfed and lost in the mud. On landing Mr. Boyd met us and by his advice we took our belongings to a small office which he had rented. It was on the ground where now stands Stevenson & Sons' splendid warehouse and was divided into two rooms, the walls of which were so damp that the

water actually ran down them into the mire below, the place being built on a kind of swamp. We four, Mrs. Hopkins included, left immediately to search for lodgings. Everywhere they were quite willing to take me in as on the previous day, but not so the ladies to whom they would have had to give a separate room. It was a very hot day in August and we were pretty well worn out. At last Mr. Boyd said I have this moment thought of a nice place where they may accommodate you, the Brunswick Hotel in Brunswick Street which has just been finished, I know the landlord well.' We walked there and on seeing Mrs. Dennis, the landlady, her husband being out, we were told point blank that she could not possibly give us the number of rooms required; so we made up our minds to buy a tent and live in it until we could find a small house to suit us. As we were leaving, we met Mr. Dennis, to whom Mr. Boyd said 'Mr. Dennis I came here with my partner, his wife, and friend, hoping that you would accommodate them and I regret to say Mrs. Dennis has informed us she could not possibly do so.' 'Never mind Mr Boyd, I will manage it, Mr. and Mrs. Michaelis can have a bedroom, and Mrs. Hopkins must sleep with my wife.' We were of course happy to remain, and feeling too tired to go back for our luggage requested Mr. Boyd to send it up. You may ask why we did not take a cab, but they were then so scarce and expensive that we did not feel inclined to squander our money. We found the house very nice though dear, the charges being I think seven guineas each per week. For dinner they gave us mutton, bread and tea, and on the next day tea, bread and mutton, whilst now and then we got beef as a change. The other two meals consisted of tea, with bread and butter, the latter generally uneatable, sometimes jam, and of course as much cold mutton or beef as we liked. Here we remained seven days when we succeeded in finding a small cottage, brick nogged, consisting of two rooms with a narrow entrance and a lean-to for a kitchen. When we secured a servant she slept there. We had brought our own furniture out with us so we managed to fix up a bed for ourselves, Mrs. Hopkins sleeping on the sofa in the sitting-room. Though small we considered our home a palace and lived very happily in it.

One day when I was absent, a man dressed as a digger called and asking for Mrs. Hopkins, to her great joy proved to be her husband. They determined that he should not return to the diggings, and he became a partner in a forwarding business where he remained for some years and then commenced to practice his profession. We always continued on the most friendly terms with them, Mrs. Hopkins being a true and highly educated woman it was ever a pleasure to be in her company.

When we took the cottage from a man named Cuttler who lived next door, the ground in front was baked quite hard but as I had always been used to a garden I determined to cultivate it and bought a pick-axe and shovel for that purpose. In a few days I had the satisfaction of finding that the soil was very fair and it was not long before we had a nice little garden.

I observed on landing in Melbourne that the streets were beautifully laid out, running from north to south and from east to west, crossing each other at regular distances, with large spaces left which were intended to be used later on as public parks. So long as Melbourne stands, the inhabitants should be grateful to Mr. Latrobe the then Governor for these great advantages, the only pity being that neither he nor those who assisted him in planning the city could have had the least idea of the space future Melbourne would occupy. The suburbs were not included in their plan; they arose regardless of order every owner of property built as it pleased him hence that many of the streets are narrow and irregular.

In times of heavy rain, the gutters of Elizabeth and Swanston Streets were so flooded that people could not cross them without paying a fare of sixpence to be driven over. On one such occasion I saw a horse and dray swept away, and the animal drowned. On another, a woman carrying a child tried to cross and one of them was drowned.

The buildings were mainly wooden shanties and iron pot houses as they were called, with a very few of brick and stone; the former were gradually replaced after 1854, since when the Melbourne of the present day has been built. I feel convinced that no one in those days could have had the very faintest notion that it would ever become the fine city it now is.

We had been living in our cottage about a month, when the first shipment of our own goods and a very large quantity of consignments arrived, also a large iron warehouse lined throughout with wood, in the front of which it had been arranged that we should live, but this latter we found impracticable.

We had now nothing to complain of as we were most fortunate in the disposal of our goods and were soon exceeding our expectations. We became very anxious to get fresh supplies and knowing the disposition of our Manchester partners we felt sure that they would send us large instead of small quantities of those goods for which we had obtained almost incredible prices, but which could only be sold in small quantities, instead of filling our requisitions as we had made them out, i.e., for large quantities of goods which had left only the then comparatively small profit of 40 or 50 per cent. We came to the conclusion that it would be absolutely necessary for one of us to go home and it was decided that I should do so. Meanwhile our eldest child a girl was born towards the end of May, and you may imagine how reluctantly I consented to leave your mother so soon after with total strangers. We had already engaged a little Scotch girl and now secured a nurse but only with the greatest difficulty.

The boat which was to leave on the first of June was known to be the last of the regular mail steamers from the colonies for some time, as the English Government had engaged the whole of the P. and O. fleet at the out-break of the Crimean war, and I could not postpone my departure for an uncertain period.

I walked every morning from Richmond to the office through the paddock and grounds now known as the Fitzroy and Treasury Gardens, for I would not pay the half-a-crown charged for the journey and furthermore the road was too rough to be pleasant to drive on. I call it road but road there was none, for the way was one mass of dust in the summer and mud in the winter.

The year we arrived we had an early summer, and of one day, the 26th of October, I have still a vivid recollection. I left our little cottage and crossing Richmond Park, which was fairly green though not fenced, into the Treasury Gardens, I was nearly through the latter opposite Flinders Lane when a strong north wind set in. I was soon so enveloped in clouds of dust that for a time I really did not know where I was, and reaching the office at last quite overcome by the dust and heat, I threw myself on the floor to recover. Few ventured into Melbourne that day. Towards evening the grass in the park that had looked so fresh in the morning was dead and covered with dust, this made me feel so sad and miserable that for a while I wished that I had never left the old country.

THE WATCHMAKER'S STORY

Harold Levinson

Harold Levinson was born in Posen, then part of Russian Poland, in 1834. He initially migrated to England and became apprenticed to a watchmaker in Sheffield. In 1854 he arrived in Ballarat, Victoria, intending to set up a watchmaker's store. Few people could have been unluckier than young Levinson in his choice of day to commence business, for the Thursday when he put up his shutters for the first time, the Commissioners Rede and Johnstone staged the licence hunt which precipitated the violence that culminated at Eureka, the following Sunday morning.

This account was taken from Harold's personal memoirs written in 1901. It was used by Nancy Keesing in her collection Gold Fever (Angus and Robertson, 1967). There are some errors in dates in the original account, made by Harold recollecting the events in his old age. They have been corrected here.

It was a terrible time during those three or four days. On the Saturday there was not a single store open. The diggers used to come into the stores, armed to the teeth, on the pretext that they were looking for firearms, and they would help themselves to anything they fancied. On Saturday [2nd Dec.] the stores were shut. It was like a day of mourning.

When I arrived in Ballarat I brought my tent with me from Melbourne. It took me about a week to find a suitable place for it. There was only one formed road. I selected my spot on the slope of a high hill. A road was being cut there along that hill. On the one side of it the ground was very high, on the other side it was low. One had to come down from the road to my tent. I procured a carpenter to put up the frame for my tent, and on the Wednesday [presumably 29th Nov.] it was finished. On Thursday morning I prepared to start business. I was cleaning the small window, which was a necessary feature for my watchmaking business, about ten o'clock when Charles Dyte came running along, calling out: 'Hyman, put up your shutters!'

'Why?'

'The riot's begun.'

Nothing was to be done. I had my stock of watches in my trouser pocket. I stood and awaited developments. Presently the force came from the camp—a few hundreds of troopers and a number of foot-soldiers. The troopers formed in two lines ready for action. They were on the higher ground. Lying down on the ground they levelled their rifles, as it seemed to me, right in my direction. As I stood at the door of my tent, a digger came. Without saying a word to me, he went past the calico door of my tent inside it. He took out a revolver. I said: 'Hullo, mate. What are you going to do?'

'I'm going to shoot that fellow' and he pointed to Captain Wise, in command of the military.

I objected. 'There'll be a volley, and we'll both be shot.' He persisted. 'Well,' I said, 'I don't want to interfere, but I'll have to go for protection.' He showed no sign of desisting, so I called out to the troopers.

'What is it?' someone called in reply.

'There's a man in here who wants to shoot Captain Wise.'

'Have you any firearms about you?'

'No.'

'Then hold up your hands.'

I did so, and the trooper who had spoken to me rode off. Presently Captain Wise himself galloped up. He asked excitedly what was the matter. He could not come down on horseback for the slope was so steep. He rode about a hundred yards before he could come down. When he reached my tent, of course the digger had gone. It was no time for talking. Captain Wise rode away, and an hour or two later the military had to retire . . . There was no chance of doing business. I stood at my tent watching and waiting.

Presently I saw a number of diggers approaching in 'Chinamen's file'. When they came nearer I recognised my friend at their head. 'That's the fellow,' he exclaimed.

'What did you inform on this man for?' another asked me, I tried to explain, but it was useless. They were all Germans, They all attacked me. I was struck again and again. My window was smashed; my tent pulled down. I ran and they pursued me. I ran to a store where I had bought my provisions, but the situation was too dangerous for its occupants and they turned me out. I ran down the road with my pursuers after me. As I ran I saw my friend Samuels at his door. He happened to know German; so he stopped my pursuers and asked them what was the matter, so as to give me time. A mile or so away from my tent a Manchester friend's shop offered me refuge. I ran inside and hid under a stretcher. There I hid for three days, those fellows hunting for me meanwhile and swearing to kill me if they caught me. Meanwhile all my belongings at my tent were stolen.

My Manchester friend slept in his store on his counter, I on a stretcher. He had blankets for sale, and they made a comfortable couch. The tent door was of boards, closed of course, but there were cracks between the boards. The three days I lay hidden there not a trooper was out. At about five or six in the morning of the next day [Sun. 3rd] both of us were awake and chatting. Presently we heard traffic outside. We wondered, for traffic so early and in such a state of affairs was unusual. Then we heard a tinkle- tinkle. Something was up. We looked through the crevices of the door. Yes, it was the troopers. Something had certainly happened in the night.

I looked out. What a commotion there was! The road seemed full of troopers. On the opposite side two troopers were riding with a prisoner between, each hand strapped to a saddle. The stockade had been attacked and carried.

We began to breathe again. We went to the stockade. We learnt that the military authorities had let a report be circulated on Saturday evening that reinforcements were coming and would arrive next morning. The diggers held a Council-of-war and concluded that they would not allow reinforcements to arrive. It was decided to intercept them on the Melbourne Road. While the greater part of the Diggers' Force was waiting there, before daylight on Sunday morning, the military crept up to the stockade and attacked it.

The diggers were beaten in the fight. That was really the end of the riot. Twenty-one diggers I saw lying dead, and another dying, with a gunshot wound through his head. He was a blacksmith who had made pikes for the diggers. Tents were burnt down all around to prevent the escape of any. Smoke was all about. Soldiers had been killed, but the bodies had already been removed in two carts. The rebel diggers who had escaped were in hiding. One of them, Charlie Ross, was wounded. I saw him brought away on a stretcher, carried on their shoulders by half-a-dozen diggers, to the Star Hotel, where he died. Peter Lalor escaped, but he lost his right arm. General Nichols [sic—Nickle] arrived with reinforcements. He was an old man of seventy, and rode on a white horse at the head of his column. There were with him blue-jackets and guns from the two men-of-war then in Port

Phillip Bay. An hour or two after he arrived he had posters placarded on trees proclaiming martial law. No candles or other lights were permitted after eight o'clock. Not more than three persons were to congregate anywhere under pain of arrest. One poster announced the General's arrival and called on all well-disposed citizens to keep the peace. It was quiet again. I set up a new tent and started my business. The Government had to give in.

What happened when I went to lay an information for assault and robbery against my assailants? The Goldfields Commissioner, Mr Reid [sic—Rede], ordered a warrant to issue, but I could give no names. I was told to point the fellows out to any trooper, who would arrest them. Then I sent word to the principal offender that, if he did not molest me, I would not tell on him, but would at once if he or his fellows troubled me. Afterwards they were among my best customers.

From

THE DIARY OF REBECCA BLASHKI

Rebecca Blashki

Rebecca Blashki was born in Melbourne in 1876, the youngest child of a large family. Her parents, Hannah and Phillip Blashki, had left Eastern Europe and arrived in Australia in 1858, at the time of the gold rush. The people referred to in the diary by their first names are some of Rebecca's siblings. Myer was her brother, who was later known as the artist Miles Evergood. One of his drawings appears on the subtitle page for this part of the collection. Mr Pole was Leon 'Sonny' Pole, one of Myer's colleagues at the National Gallery of Victoria School of Art. Her sister Rose (the pastry teacher) married Lasar Slutzkin, the founder of the garment industry in Flinders Lane who worked with his brother, Shalom Judah Slutzkin, whom Rebecca later married. Rebecca never learnt singing but became a competent pianist, accompanying Shalom as he sang arias by Verdi and other popular songs from opera for the entertainment of family and friends. They had six children before Rebecca died in childbirth in 1920.

June 26th 1894 (morning) I've never kept a diary before but a month ago I decided to do so. I find it hard to know what to put down but I suppose I must begin sometime. Ideas are always coming into my head about what I'd like to be and do, but somehow I can never carry them out perhaps it's because I broke a looking glass about four yrs ago but I'm not very superstitious so I don't believe such things. They have decided to let me learn music, as I've left school and they are looking out for a suitable teacher. Most likely I will start next week, ...

Wednesday night I'm to learn from a Mr. Guenett who is a very good teacher and so rather expensive so I am only to have one lesson a week, which they say is quite enough if I practise. I started to read Tennyson's *Princess* last night. I think it very nice; Tennyson is my favourite poet as yet for I've not read much of the other poets.

Wednesday night (July 4th) Went to my first lesson on Monday but as I am only to have one lesson a week suppose I shall appreciate them. Will not give my opinion of Mr. Guenett as I have only seen him the once. Went in to see a neighbour last night and there were some gentlemen there, it was rather a change though I felt in the dumps. Am at home alone with Father. The girls have gone to a dance and Lou and Mother have escorted them.

Monday morning (July 9th 1894) Yesterday I made my first pastry. Rose was standing over me but though the paste was well made, it was taken too soon from the oven. Lou took me to *Ma Mie Rosette*, a comic opera playing at Princess theatre on Thursday night. It is such a pretty play and so enjoyed myself splendidly. Dave sent me a postal note (10/-) to go to see *Mascotte* as I've only seen two such operas in my life which is a long time. Today is my second music lesson so must practise while I have time.

Wednesday July 11th 1894 Here we are again! as the clown says at Christmas. I went to town yesterday to do some shopping, bought some dark brown undressed kid gloves. Was home alone with Mother in the night and was reading out to her one of Rita's books. I think they're rather light but just felt inclined for something like that. They want me to go to Miss Hyman's dancing class tonight but don't feel much inclined this morning.

Thursday morning July 12th 1894 I did not go after all, it poured last night and we were all ready but Mater would not let us budge. I went to see a Mrs. Levi yesterday afternoon. It was her day Home; her daughters were 'toggled up' but there were very few there.

Wednesday morn I have been staying with Jea last week so could not write before. I don't like staying there much as I seem to clash with Sol, who is not 'bad'. I had a talk with Mother and told her of my desire to go Home to study music. She didn't say much but thought a lot. Today is our day Home. Oh how I hate them, they seem so silly. People come in for half an hour and talk nothing but gossip to which one has to listen. I'm reading Daisy Chain by Yonge and have just finished Knight Errant by Edna Lyle. They are both very pretty books. I'm very anxious to read some of the good new books but can't get them as the library hasn't got them yet. There, a lady has just come in so must stop now.

Monday evening I feel a bit glad because Mr. Gue. said I was on the fair road to improvement although it does not seem that way to me. I still practise regularly so perhaps that has something to do with it. Met Florrie Lillie today. She has improved with her hair up and is coming to give me a game of tennis on Tuesday next.

December 31st 1894 9 p.m. I have not written anything in here for about six months but as the new year is so close at hand I thought I'd start again. I don't seem to get on in music and have not got the heart somehow to practise. I would love to learn singing and harmony and theory of music but wouldn't dare suggest it to Father as he's so good now letting me learn from Mr. Guenett and times are SO bad. I'm very fond of reading and mathematics are the forms of study I'm most fond of.

February 10th 1895. Tho' it's only a month since I last wrote such a lot has happened and such sad events too. The first death in Father's family occurred on Thursday (8th) when dear little Bertie Behrend died. Poor little darling was ill for only a few days when he died, the doctors say of diphtheria. It must be for the best tho' we shall miss the little fellow, he was so good, too, tho' not like the others, as he very seldom would run about and play . . . They have decided to move back to East Melbourne, oh how I will miss the beach and the pier . . . Myer has returned from Sydney. I think he has improved greatly in some ways but has lost some of his freshness of thought and expression and is more practical. He took a sketch of me last night which was rather good. Mr. Pole might come up tonight. Am glad and hope he does as he is one of the nicest boys I know and not a cad. Now there's a boy Hyams who is horrid and sings corny songs. I think he is rather fast but is right enough to make up the number for a dance.

February 27 The last few days have been nothing but confusion and muddle. We arrived at our destination of 144 Clarendon St. East Melbourne. Can't yet realise that we are back in East Melbourne but fancy we are still at St. Kilda. Ettie and I share one room which is nice and large and we have just done it up but none of the other rooms are finished. At present I'm nearly dead tired for this room is on the third storey and of course there is a lot of running up and down. One thing it is nice and quiet and one can get peace. Had an invite to Rossie Young's ball, would like to go in one way and yet should be out of it I think as I don't know all her friends.

Friday 1st. Mr. Pole came for tea last Wednesday evening and caught me frying the fish. It isn't very often I do such things but am generally caught when I do. He was so nice. Read *Lady of the Lake* last night and liked it so much. Am also reading *Sartor Resartus*.

March 9th 1895 Went to Bourke street shool today; felt quite strange in it after St. Kilda. I enjoyed the sermon very much. It was about Mordechai and Esther and he said that if one does good works

and they are not immediately appreciated not to be disheartened as they eventually will be valued and rewarded.

March 27th 1895 Yesterday morning woke up feeling rather ill but was better by afternoon when we went to see Lord Hopetoun off. Collins street and Swanston were packed with people. It was such fun watching the people fighting with the volunteers to try to get in front. The governor went past at about four o'clock with Lady Hopetoun. They were very sad at leaving. Dinners and farewells were given in their honour. She was just stormed with flowers down at the station. Sir John Madden is Acting Governor. Last night we went to an entertainment given by Miss Josephine Samuels. It was very good indeed but I don't think they took much money. Today is Mother's 'At Home'.

Thursday 28th March 1895 Such a crowd came yesterday but I couldn't be bothered going in. - ,

A TEMPERANCE MAN

A TRAGEDY

BRIDGET

Racey Schlank

Racey Schlank lived in Adelaide at the turn of the century and published two volumes of verse. Poems (Bardon and Pritchard, 1895) contains conventional images of Australian flora. In Australian Poems and Ballads (E.S. Wigg & Son, 1902) from which these poems are taken, her verses tilt with gentle satire at such contemporary windmills as the Boer War, the Chinese massacres, Australian federation issues, the domestic servant situation and newspaper headlines. Unfortunately, no additional information could be found about her.

A TEMPERANCE MAN

The doctor looked at his patient,
His patient gazed on him—
The doctor's voice was surly,
His face was stern and grim.

'My orders, sir,' he crossly said, '
You really must obey;
Hot rum and water, if you please,
And taken every day.'

'Oh, doctor! doctor! Your command
Falls on me like a ban;
How can I follow your advice?
I am a temperance man

'Upon the public platform I
Preach always what I think
Must be the consequences of
Intoxicating drink.

'My landlady is most refined;
Alas! what would she say,
On seeing me, a temperance man,
Imbibing every day?'

The doctor took a pinch of snuff;
His chin betrayed a dimple;
'Fudge, man! to do what I prescribe
Is very, very simple.

'Each evening have a steaming jug
Of water brought for shaving

Into your study (who would guess
Your chin you were not laving)?

'Within your desk, sir, keep the rum,
This medicine, remember,
Now lies between your conscience and
The graveyard in September.'

The nervous patient shook his head,
His soul lay 'neath a ban,
He fumed and fretted, cursed and wept;
He was a temperance man.

Time passed. The cheery medico
Was driving out one day,
To call upon this temperance man
In quite a casual way.

The landlady she smiling came,
In answer to the bell;
'Good dame, and how is Mr. X. .
I hope he's pretty well.'

'Oh, doctor, yes! and thanks to you
He never was more bright;
He laughs and jokes, and dines so well;
His heart is strangely light.

'But, doctor, I must tell you this—
'Tis very, very sad,
We sometimes think our master dear
Is just a little mad.

'He orders up hot water, sir—
Yes! harken what I say;
Our master, sir, is shaving, sir,
A dozen times a day!'

A TRAGEDY

He fastened a rope-end on a bough,
A bough that swayed in the wind;
Sighed he, 'I'm only a useless clod,
To whom the world is unkind.

'This work-a-day life, it is drear and sad,
There's too much haste and bustle.
I'll end it here, in the silence deep,
Alone where the gum trees rustle.'

He knotted the rope-end over a bough,
In leisurely mood and slow;
When suddenly out of the brushwood sprang
A man with a face of woe.

'Haste! Haste! Oh, haste!' the stranger gasped.
'Speed! Speed to your home eternal.
Your sad decease is just in time;
In time—for this *Evening Journal*.'

BRIDGET

They sent a message across the sea,
To Erin's daughter of small degree.
'Come sister!' they cried; 'Australia calls
For cooks like you to bake dumpling balls;
To roast the turkey and boil the goose;
So make sweet dishes of Charlotte russe.
To leave your yard of praties and pigs,
And leave the thud of your Irish jigs,
For big policemen and soldiers dear
Await your wonderful cooking here!'
She came! Her bag in her brawny hand.
Her friends, they met her (dressed so grand).
For Austral's door of feathers and flowers
Ope wide to cooks in this land of ours;
And Bridget was taught by them to test
The meek employers who'd suit her best.
She learnt 'cook ladies' are quite as grand
As high-born dames in Austral's land.
For, oh! to bake a turkey and goose,
And stir a muddle of Charlotte russe,
To mix a custard and mould a pie
Might even the law of the land defy.
No longer a maid of low degree,
Now Bridget reigns over the family.
She holds 'At Homes,' and goes to balls,
And Kharki escorts her to music-halls;
In dazzling kitchen she holds her court,
And hears how Africa's war was fought.
Her favorite gardener knows where to dine;
Her sweethearts approve her employers' wine.
When Bridget gazes on her with scorn
Her mistress wishes she'd ne'er been born.
And even the children cease their play,
To hark to Bridget having her say,
And she a maiden of small degree,
Now, Queenlike, rules this land of the free.

THE CALL OF THE WANDERING JEW

Nathan F. Spielvogel

Nathan Spielvogel was born in Ballarat, Victoria in 1874 and remained involved with that city all his life. His father, a Hebrew scholar from Galicia, was a founder of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation. He arrived in Ballarat during the gold rush period.

Nathan was proficient in Hebrew and became a teacher with the Victorian Education Department for fifty years. He served as president of the Ballarat Congregation and wrote histories of the Congregation, the Benevolent Home, the Mechanics Institute, Eureka Stockade and the city of Ballarat itself. His writing was first published in the Bulletin in 1896 and he was a constant contributor thereafter. He became a chess champion in 1926 but gave it up to concentrate on writing.

He wrote one novel, The Cocky Farmer, and several collections including two Gumsucker travel books, and Old Eko's Notebook. He contributed to the Victorian Teachers' Journal, the Westralian Judean, the Australian Jewish Herald and the Hebrew Standard. He died in 1956, acknowledged as being the first Australian-born Jewish writer of note.

This poem was first published in the Bulletin in 1903.

Hot lava flows in my veins to-night,
My nerves are jangling mad,
The Joy of Life is a tinsel gaud,
The sweetest songs sound sad.
I feel the drag of the Wanderlust,
I see the ghosts stream by,
I hear the call of old Ahaswer,
And I must go or die.

A horde of ghosts from the grave tramp past,
And each one turns and stares,
And each one smiles and beckons me
To join with my forbears,
And each one stands and tells his tale,
Then grimly passes by,
Each stops and speaks and beckons me,
And I must go or die.

'A slave, new freed, from the land of Ra
I journeyed the desert on,'
I hung my harp on a willow tree
And wept in Babylon.'
'I saw Him die on the thorn-crowned Cross.'
'I writhed 'neath Roman whips.'
'My blood dyed red the stones of lyre.'
'I groaned in Punic ships.'

I wandered forth when the Holy Flame
Lit torches in Castille.'

'I wore the badge of the Ghetto's shame.'
'I died but would not kneel.'
'I fought the Moor in the streets of Fez.'
'I heard the "HEP" of hate.'
T come afresh out of Muscovy,
But yesternight's Jew bait.'

'I wrote joy songs for the world to sing.'
'I kept a gambling hell.'
'I caught the music the angels love.'
'I lived to buy and sell.'
'I raised the cry of the toilers' woe.'
'A lord of gold was I.'
Now Heine, Mendelssohn, Marx with these,
Are tramping, tramping by.

Begrimed by muck of centuries,
And smoke of holy stakes,
Each bends his head, like the osier,
That bows but never breaks.
The nations rise, the nations war,
The nations fade and die,
They mock, they kill, but the Jew heeds not,
Goes tramping, tramping by.

Alone comes One who had loved all men,
The man of peace and tears;
His eyes meet mine and I rise and stand
Perturbed by doubts and fears.
'Oh! speak the words that would clear the way!
Speak! speak! one word!' I cry;
His eyes are dimmed, but His voice is mute,
And He goes tramping by.

But I was born in this Southland sweet,
In it to manhood grown;
I love this land, as I love my life,
I call this land mine own.
Yet here, to-night, my blood runs mad,
To go with these and roam,
To wander off with these gaunt, grim ghosts
That ever seek a home.

For all the years, like the winds of God,
They seek a resting place,
And though some hide in the world's byways,
They all must join the chase,
Must follow up, like the rains of God,
By mountain, plain, and wave,

And find the bourne, that they ever seek,
Not even in the grave.

And so, to-night, while the gum trees sigh,
I take my staff and go;
I give myself to the Wanderlust
That is both friend and foe.
Hot lava leaps in my blood to-night,
My wandering sires go by;
I hear the call of old Ahaswer,
And I must go or die.

LETTER TO A SON

Abraham de Vahl Davis

Abraham de Vahl Davis was born in Melbourne in 1863. He became a pearl dealer in Broome, Western Australia, where he also had a small apple orchard. His story is told by Ion L. Idriess in Forty Fathoms Deep, Abraham and his wife separated, she returning to her family in London. Their only child, Gerald, was raised by relatives, the Reverend Mr and Mrs Philippstein of the Great Synagogue in Sydney. Abraham had planned to return to Sydney for the bar mitzvah of his son, but in the event was unable to do so. Abraham was drowned off the Western Australian coast in 1912.

Broome W.A.

20.4.1910

My darling old laddie, I suppose you are in a state of joyful excitement on account of your approaching Bar Mitzvah which, P. G. you are to celebrate in a few days. I only wish I could have been with you, and shared in your happiness, but of course we must all do our duty first of all even if we personally suffer by it. Well, dear, I am quite sure you will acquit yourself worthily: and I am proud and thankful that God has blessed me with a good and faithful sonnie, who will do his level best to do all that becomes a Jew.

I hope you have settled down to good steady work at school and now that your Bar Mitzvah is practically accomplished I want you to go in for music, carpentry, physical exercise, drawing (also chocolate eating). I need not tell you once again to be constantly watchful to help dear Aunt and Uncle in every way and not to make their labour of love in looking after you any greater by want of consideration. I hope Aunty Min is a stringent comptroller of your Exchequer and that when I come home next year (P. G.) to Sydney, you will have a huge accumulation of gelt to add to your deposit of £20/-/- in Melbourne Savings Bank. I have an invoice of books, silk Tallis & etc. for you which should arrive this week from London and I will either send them or bring them over when I arrive.

I trust your midday ardour is as hot as ever, and that you will lead your gallant men with frantic signals right into the very jaws of the tuckshop!

Write and let me know all you have been doing since I left. Don't send me such tiny scraps of letters or I shall be compelled to double your income.

I am very busy this week, dear old boy, so will now conclude. Praying God's blessing on you, now and for evermore,

From

Your loving

Father

From

ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE A.I.F.

Dalbert Hallenstein

Dalbert Hallenstein was born in Melbourne about 1896, the son of Reuben and Lucy Hallenstein and the grandson of Moritz Michaelis. During World War I he served as a lieutenant with the 14th Battalion Australian Imperial Forces and saw service at Gallipoli and in France. His aunt and uncle, Rita and Edward Michaelis, lived in London and regularly sent him parcels and newspapers. A much loved family member, as these letters attest, his family and friends were shattered when he was killed in action at Veronne on 2 September 1918. His correspondence, which was kept by those to whom he wrote, was eventually collected and privately published by his family after the war.

France, 28/9/16.

My Dear Parents,

To-day is New Year's Day for us, and the second one I have had on service, though how different for us all from three years ago, and also for me from last year. Then I was in Gallipoli, and you know what that meant. This year I am here, and this afternoon was at a service held by Rev. Freedman in a loft within sound of the guns, and attended by all of us who could in the vicinity, men like myself fortunately out for a few days respite behind the line in reserve, and men who had been allowed to come out of the lines for the occasion, covered by tin helmets and all the dirt and untidiness which goes in its train. I had a bath (hot) this morning, and feel quite happy to-night to think that things for me have gone so well. There were about thirty to fifty at the service, which was well conducted. I had tea afterwards with Alroy Cohen and Rev. Freedman, and he told me he had distributed a parcel of comforts from the J.Y.P.A., sent by Frank, and had been very pleased to do so. There will be another service next week on Yom Kippoor. He held one service in the morning for the other divisions, and then motored down to us. I saw Ivan Blaubaum two days ago, and he was quite fit. I have my own horse, and have been out for some long rides during the last few days, and the unaccustomed exercise has made me very stiff; still I enjoy it. I also saw Orme Pleasants on my ride out to Ivan, and had a nice chat with him. Well, I wish we could have been together just now, but as it can't be I must get to bed and continue some other day. Before I say 'good night,' let me thank you for the parcels I got, which I very much appreciate, and so do the men. The wattle with which they were packed is also a very nice reminder of September at home, Warrantyte on Sunday, etc. I am glad that your fete went off so well, as you deserved every bit you got after all the work put into the preparations. I am glad you sent me the photo, as it is now the only one of you I have with me here, being unable to carry the large group around. Well, good night, and may this time next year see the end appreciably nearer, thus getting us nearer together again, is what we wish both in France and 'Woonsocket.'

30/9/16.—I am sending two postcards of the place I used to visit near where I was billeted when first I came to France, and was in the Cyclists. I was about three miles further away from the line. The Germans just got there in their first rush, and stayed about three days, but very little damage was done outside a levy they made on the mayor. I am also sending one of where I am now, but with the name, perforce, taken out. It is now all torn about by shell fire. Also some other odds and ends, which I know you will keep for me. Things here have been very quiet for the past few days, and I have not been out far since Thursday, when I started this letter, only to Coy. H.Q. for tea last night, which is about one mile from here. They have started a soldier's music hall, run by themselves, costs officers

one franc and men fourpence, so I think I shall go to-morrow evening and see what it is like. It lasts from 6 to 8 so is quite a long performance. That time looks early, but as we have tea at 5 here in the army, you see it is quite late. When one rises at 3 a.m., 9 p.m. is quite late enough for shut-eye, as it is called. It is 8 p.m. now as I write, and almost dark, so different to Australia. By the way, the papers say you have had enormous floods all over Victoria. They seem to have done a terrific amount of damage, and I hope they don't hit you people out in St. Kilda, etc., any harm or get up with the power house at Footscray. However, I suppose I will hear from you about them, but till one gets news it sets you wondering how things are. I always get very nice letters from London with, so far, the best of news concerning all. The Michaelis's are back in town, as also Aunt B., who came back earlier. They all enjoyed their summer holidays, as you doubtless know. I get parcels and papers from them all regularly, and very much appreciate both, the weekly papers from Aunt B. being especially welcome, as also the food and clothing parcels sent by Uncle Ted and Aunt Rit. I am also enclosing a piece out of Fragments from France of a very true incident which I saw occur the other day, and which I have once spoken to you of. First, I saw the side marked 'A', and then walked round to the other side and saw side 'B,' and then we thought it better to move a bit where it was a bit more healthy, but it is quite a common occurrence and absolutely true to life. But if we get it once, we give him ten or even more, and lately he seems to be getting a bit sick, so to make him worse we increase the dose, and hope it has the desired effect. You must excuse this talk of war, but really it is the only subject one is up in here. I don't know if I told you I had my first ride in a London bus the other day, when I went to a Gas School, which was most interesting (both). I hope to have many more before I finish. It is a splendid way of taking troops about, and is used a great deal.—I am, your loving Son,

DALBERT.

France, 18/10/16.

My Dear Parents,

Since I last wrote we have moved our quarters, stayed at one farm house for a couple of days, and am now in another, which I arrived at late last night. I have just finished a breakfast of boiled eggs, milk, and bread and butter (the latter salted with, of course, rock salt), and the whole most delicious, as I had not had a mouthful of food or water since early the morning before, when two sandwiches had to appease my hunger, so you can quite appreciate how I enjoyed the meal. However, now everything is settled and the place is very nice. This I don't expect will be for long, and then into the fray again; but you need not worry, as the lot of the M.G. Corps is quite a good one, and working up from behind all the time we do more strafing than getting strafed. Of course, some times we go up to the front line, but that is only to consolidate. There is a lot of rain all the time now, and I expect by the end of this month winter will have come, but we are getting used to the climate, living so much in the open air, and so I don't think it will give us a very bad time. I have not had letters from you so far this week, but I suppose the move accounts for this, and they are following up. I have had some from London, in one of which Aunt B. described seeing the Zeppelin come down, which must have been a great sight. I have seen aeroplanes brought down, but so far all have been able to land, and none have fallen headlong. I have seen hundreds of our planes go over the enemies' lines, but I don't think more than a dozen Bosche planes over ours, and then they fly very high, as if nervous. We were relieved by troops who have been in the Great Advance, and it's just wonderful what they said about it. The pro rata of casualties has gone down enormously, and they got as many in their three weeks down there as we got in one go in four hours, so you can see things are not too bad. Really I must tell you I am on my way there now, and will be out of it again before you get this letter, as they only keep

us there, as I mentioned above, for about three weeks or less, and we go in the day after to-morrow. Back to the old bully beef and biscuits, and then the English parcels will be doubly welcome if I can only get them in the lines. Fancy to think we shall be in the advance on the next great stronghold, which is to fall to our hands. It's not too bad, is it? I am now near the mouth of the river, and going into the big town there to-day on my horse to have a look around, and, if possible, a hot bath. We had a whole day's train journey yesterday, and although, as I said before, it was a starve, I enjoyed just sitting doing nothing from 7 a.m. till 7 p.m., and having a real good sleep on a nice comfortable carriage seat. We went through very nice country, but it does not appeal to me as the bush does, and houses and crops every few yards, instead of none in sight for miles. There is one advantage of travelling about in this fashion, and that is that we see more of the real life of the people in a day than a tourist would in years. I can get along quite well now with my French, being able to carry on a conversation and get what I want quite easily, and often have to act as interpreter. I will tell you more later, as I am now going off on my trip. You can easily guess where I mean.

19/10/16.—I have had two beautiful and full days, both times having gone into the town I above mentioned. I saw all sorts of funny French habits, and amongst them the market, which took place in the square to-day. Very lucky, as it is only once a week. You will know it, and I thought the way the stalls, etc., are put up in the street was most picturesque. There is a wonderful old abbei (cathedral) in the town, as you will guess by the name. An enormous building, and very old and battered about, having withstood many a pitched battle in the old days. The manner in which the river and canals run through the centre of the town is also very picturesque indeed, some being very torrents, and others a placid calm, and houses on both sides, stacks of soldiers' hospitals, etc., both French and British and Colonial. It is pitiful to see some of the men brought in minus limbs, etc. I walked in to-day, as our horses had gone on, and going through the fresh country on fine well-built roads was quite a treat. Got home for tea and found a roast fowl and potatoes waiting for me, and three of us polished the lot properly, as we only got back at 6.30, and all the others had gone out for the evening. It gets dark at about 5 now, so we have tea about then, and get to bed about 9, so as to be able to rise one hour before daybreak, which is about 4 o'clock. I will drop Aunt Rit. a line to say I am all right, and then get some sleep, as we move again tomorrow. So, till next mail, with best love to you all and best wishes to all our friends for a happy Christmas, which you might wish them for me,—I am, your loving Son,

DALBERT.

From

THE DIARY OF JACOB DANGLOW

Jacob Danglow

Jacob Danglow was born in Surrey, England in 1880, the son of a religious man from Cracow. Jacob attended Jews' College, London, the rabbinical training seminary, and accepted the call to St Kilda Synagogue, Melbourne in 1905. He remained with that congregation till his death in 1962. He married May Baruch in Melbourne in 1909. She was the grand-daughter of Moritz Michaelis and the first cousin of Dalbert Hallenstein, so Jacob had become part of a very large and influential family network. His words to May, 'Your dear people . . .', refer to members of her family who were fighting in France and whom he knew well.

This is an extract from a biography of Rabbi Danglow by Rabbi John Levi, senior minister at the Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne.

The New Year, 8 September, 1918, turned out to be one of the saddest days in Danglow's life. The Service itself 'passed off exceedingly well. There were over 70 present—including Captain Alroy Cohen, Captain Clyde Davis of Sydney, Hubert Marks, Alfred Goldenberg, Harry Mendelsohn, Frank Joseph, John Abrahams of St. Kilda, Lieutenant Gordon Keesing of Napier, New Zealand. We had enough chairs in the large barn and a huge Australian flag hung up behind the improvised platform. The Rev. Evelyn Smith, who was present working behind a curtain, told me he considered it a most impressive service. Some of the men wore their steel helmets as they had come straight from the front line. I can tell you I felt the solemnity of the occasion especially when we all recited the prayer to be said by soldiers before going into battle.'

Danglow noticed that Dalbert Hallenstein was absent and when the Service was over Captain Alroy Cohen took him aside and told him that a few days earlier Dalbert had fallen in battle at Veronne. Danglow wrote to May 'He was such a noble, modest and brave boy—a true soldier. Your dear people have made such terrible sacrifices in this awful war. May God spare us all further sorrow. I must live on cheerfully and work well for your own sakes.' In his diary Danglow wrote, 'I was dumbfounded. My heart became cold. I lost interest in the Service and wanted to get away.'

The next day Danglow's diary reads 'How different this Rosh Hashanah is from all previous ones. Here I am right up against it. Heaps of work to be dealt with straight away. Letters from bereaved relatives, dates and information re dates, grave locations.'

Ten days later on a Sunday evening 15 September, Danglow conducted a Koi Nidre service in his tent for four men. 'How different it was.'

In fact Danglow was still deeply shocked by Dalbert's death and felt the need to reassure May that he would not meet the same fate. I am making a desperate effort to pull myself together so as to do my duty as best as I should. I am some miles behind the front line and it has been pointed out to me that my best work can be done among the soldiers as they come out on rest. They have no time for me when they are actually fighting. I do not intend to visit the front line out of mere curiosity. I will not foolishly and needlessly endanger my life. I will only go where duty calls me ... It looks at present as though the war will not last much longer. If only the present push continues the Germans will soon be crying out for Peace.'

Three weeks later Danglow officiated at a funeral near the town of Peronne and then detoured slightly to visit Dalbert's grave. He found it easily and added a Star of David to the foot of the white cross which stood at the head of the grave and wrote underneath the Hebrew word 'Shalom'. With the aid of his batman he gathered up some wild flowers, separated them into bunches for various members of the family and in pencil wrote who they were from. As he told Dalbert's parents 'It was a sad, sad duty for me to perform when I reflected upon the pathos of it all. And yet, as I stood there, I was confronted, as I hope you now are too by the thought of the glorious exit from this world. Can one die more nobly than in the course of his country, of justice and liberty, of God? You may smile even through your tears to have had such a noble and brave son who placed DUTY above everything else. He did not die in vain, for, for miles around, the country has now been recovered from the enemy. So comfort you, comfort you dear Mr. and Mrs. Hallenstein.'

From

WITH THE JEWISH BATTALIONS IN PALESTINE

Leib Aisack Falk

L.A. Falk was born in Latvia in 1889. He qualified as a minister before going to England where he obtained a post at Plymouth Synagogue. Vladimir Jabotinski, the Zionist leader, heard him preach there and requested his appointment as chaplain to the 38th/40th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (1st Judeans) being formed to fight the Turks in Palestine during World War I.

Leib Aisack was also an active Zionist and as such was called to the Great Synagogue in Sydney in 1923 to foil the existing anti-Zionist politicking. He qualified as a rabbi from Jews' College, London in 1936 and periodically acted as senior minister at the Great Synagogue, Sydney during World War II when he was also chaplain to the Australian Military Forces.

He wrote several articles in this Battalion series which were published in the Maccabean in 1929. Rabbi Falk's personal qualities endeared him to everybody. He had considerable artistic talent and was renowned as a scribe, a silversmith, a woodworker and a bookbinder. His unique collection of rare and interesting books of both Jewish and general interest is now housed in the Falk Library in the Great Synagogue. He died in Sydney in 1957.

ACROSS FRANCE AND ITALY

In the early morning of February 7th, we arrived at Cherbourg.

A drizzling rain was in progress. My first impression of France was thus very disappointing. The men, who had scarcely had any rest for a considerable time, had to march now with full pack on empty stomachs to the rest camp, which was a considerable distance away from the harbour. I did not attempt asking them what their first impressions of France were.

We stayed in Cherbourg only over night. No one was sorry to leave it. The rest camp had a cheerless atmosphere and the arrangements there fell far below the standard of other British rest camps we visited during our crossing of France and Italy...

Mr. Jabotinsky shared the same compartment as myself His company was to me most pleasurable. I greatly benefited from his geographical knowledge of France and Italy and its most interesting history.

One pleasant incident of the journey was the holding of a minyon in one of the carriages. This service was arranged by me at the request of Second Lieut. L.D. Wolffe, an Anglo-Jewish officer who had Yahrzeit after his mother. I officiated, and Lt. Wolffe recited the traditional Kaddish. What a magnificent testimony to the Jewish characteristics of filial piety and reverence!

At frequent intervals the train would pull up for the purpose of issuing rations to the men. At night especially the issue of tea had a fascinating aspect, at least to me. The blazing fires in the vicinity of some forest or village; here and there huge 'dixies' were hanging over the fires, bubbling over with boiling tea and the resounding echo of the disciplinary exhortations of the N.C.O's, in charge of supervising the supply to the men were indeed a most interesting spectacle. They were impressions hard to forget.

Some of the men who were admirers of the Jewish game of 'Sixty-six,' 'Oko,' or 'Klaberyass' passed away the time quite pleasantly.

Two incidents during our journey across France are outstanding in their poignancy pathos. These were as follows: At one place our train happened to stop quite near a prisoner-of-war camp. Whether it was one of the permanent or temporary so-called 'cages' I cannot say. When our train pulled up, my attention was attracted by a German prisoner of war of splendid physique, who came forward to the barbed wire fence with his eyes fixed at the window of my compartment from which a blue and white flag was suspended. His features did not bear any pronounced Semitic characteristics, especially since 'alle Yevonim haben ein panin.' (A Yiddish proverb: 'All soldiers look alike.') I was reluctant to enter into any conversation with him, not only through fear of breaking a disciplinary regulation not to converse with prisoners of war, but simply because my heart was filled with pity. My soul was tortured with the cruel realities of war. My surprise can be imagined when the German soldier addressed me with the following words: 'Sie fahren nach Palestina!' 'Auch ich bin ein Jude.' (You are going to Palestine! Also I am a Jew.) I remained riveted to the ground and before I had a chance to exchange a few words with the German Jewish soldier the signal for entraining was given and to my great disappointment I had to leave him without getting some information about him. He however, remained standing at the barbed wired fence with his eyes steadily fixed on my window from which the small Zionist flag was hanging.

The German Jews were as loyal to their country as the English Jews to theirs and yet what a magic hold Palestine has on the soul of the Jew! The call of the countless martyrs who sanctified the soil of Palestine with their blood found an echo in the heart of these German Jewish prisoners of war. 'Sie fahren nach Palestina!' How sad, how pathetic!

At another place somewhere in France our men got very excited, at their sudden discovery of Russian soldiers in the flesh, working with picks and shovels under the supervision of French soldiers.

RIBONO SHEL OLAM! exclaimed a Leeds fellow. VO SEINEN MIR? (Oh Lord where are we?) As soon as the train stopped a great many made a dash towards their 'Landslente.' The surprise which these Russians got could be easily imagined when our men, British Tommies from head to foot addressed these Russians in fluent Russian with all its peculiar flavour, not omitting the all important Russian 'Misherberach' at every dozen words. I cannot forget to this very day the expression on the face of one of these Russian soldiers as he dropped his pick and shovel at this unexpected surprise.

A general conversation commenced between these Russians and our men. The mystery of their unexpected presence in France was soon explained. When news of the Russian revolution reached these Russian soldiers who were fighting in France they refused to fight and demanded to be sent back to Russia. This demand, however, was not complied with, and instead of sending them back to Russia they were converted into Labor Battalions behind the lines.

This piece of interesting information was a priceless discovery for the semi-bolsheviks in our own battalion whose number, thank heaven, could be counted on the fingers.

Our expectations to have a chance of seeing the beautiful Italian Riviera did not materialise. The route chosen for us was directed towards the Adriatic coast, a poor and uninteresting stretch of country. When we arrived at Faenza we were met with the welcome news that we should stay there in the British Rest Camp till evening.

In the evening the whole battalion to the accompaniment of drum and fife marched through the City. This was a special privilege granted to us as a mark of the Italian G.O.C's appreciation.

I do not know whether there are Jews in Faenza but I am inclined to think that any attempt to sing the Hatikvah would not have made any difference if there had been any Jewish residents in that City.

The Jewish National revival unfortunately found a very faint echo in the hearts of once powerful but now dwindling Italian Jewry.

From

MACCOBBER'S FIRST LOVE

Abraham Samuel Gordon

A.S. Gordon wrote under the pseudonym of 'the Late Hon. Benjamin Schlimm-Mazel (late President of Fiji Islands Federal Senate)'. Mordecai MacCobber, the story of a Scotch Jew in Australia, seems to be his only writing. This compilation of his 'posthumous papers, newspapers, official documents and private family records of His Many Successes and his more Dismal Failures' appears to have been very popular, for it was published in at least four editions by Wellmark Printers between 1925 and 1929.

It was inevitable, of course, but it was none the less a shock to my amour propre to find my dear Mordecai avoid my company for several days, to see him deliberately prefer the company of some young, and I must admit, rather good looking women whose acquaintance had apparently ripened into intimacy.

'All the world loves a lover,' the poets sing, and, for my part, I have always regarded the behaviour of Joseph the Great, in that Pottiphar affair, as sadly lacking in tact and diplomacy ... It was foolish to run away; it was foolish to leave behind him such circumstantial evidence as a ready-to-wear coat; but, to allow the affair to get into print, to turn a petty domestic squabble into a public question, was surely unpardonable in a ruler who must have known that all posterity would canvass his motives, and that all profane historians would doubt them.

In the matter of flirting, too, I may fairly claim to be liberal minded. From my thirtieth birthday until I was well over sixty I cannot recall any occasion on which I failed to promptly make a fool of myself on the least provocation . . . Having now reached and safely passed into the age of discretion I watch with mournful interest the game that is being played all around me by the new generation, wishing, indeed, all good luck to the successful wooers, yet hoping heartily that some at least would escape without having their feathers singed and their wings broken before they had properly grown.

Here is a conversation I overheard yesterday afternoon:

'My name,' said the elder lady, with a giggle, 'is Sara Harkovitz, and my niece's name is Sarah Harkovitz. You see, I was married to her father's brother—he died of apoplexy, a disease that has been in their family for generations, and we are now on our way to another brother, Lechayim, a fruit merchant in Kanberra, there to live with him and help him with the work on his orchard and in his business. Now, tell me about yourself,' she concluded, with another giggle.

'My name is Mordecai MacCobber. I am going out to Australia to try and make my fortune, and if I succeed I shall either return to Russia to help my dear parents and my brothers and sisters, or else send for them to join me.'

'You have, no doubt, left a beautiful Kelah at home?'

'Oh, no, ma'am, not at all,' replies Mordecai, so hastily that I could almost see the arch looks of the ladies as they were quizzing him, and the blushes on his face in consequence.

The ice being thus broken what chance had my dear boy against the common enemy of man in his single state?—the widow, a good looking, bustling, buxom young woman of about 30 years—she owned up to 27—and the niece a handsome girl of about 18, quiet, demure, modest,—surely, on the

principle of the axiom that 'there was safety in numbers,' Mordecai was lucky to fall into such congenial company so early on the voyage.

Several days have passed since the above conversation, and I notice with some concern that my boy very reluctantly comes to his meals, and hardly touches the food placed before him. I notice symptoms of sleepless nights about him, as if he suffered from some disorder that makes him irritable, makes him shun his fellow passengers; above all does he avoid me and his two lady friends. When I try to get him into conversation he looks so pathetically at me—the look of the noble animal so graphically described in his *Sentimental Journey* by the late Rev. Lawrence Sterne—that I have not the heart to cross-question him or to attempt to dissipate the grief to which he seems determined to abandon himself at this period.

'Two ladies from the second saloon to see you, Sir,' announced, the steward.

I was in the state room, smoking my favorite pipe and jotting down some data I had been collecting 'On the Sense of Smell' for a scientific paper I hoped to read on my return, to the share-holders of a certain mining company in which I had lost all interest, when the steward made the above announcement.

It was midnight, the night beautifully calm, the passengers had all gone their several ways, some to sleep, perchance to dream, others lost in various mysterious corners, on pleasure or business or meditation bent, and I had promised myself a long looked-for quiet couple of hours to lick my subject into shape, when I was thus suddenly interrupted. 'Admit them,' I said, curtly.

'I hope you will excuse us, Sir, for disturbing you at such a late hour, but we could not find you before, and we are so anxious about that dear boy of yours, that we thought... you... would...' She could proceed no further for sobbing, so I turned to the niece.

'Tell me all, my dear, and don't be in the least nervous; I won't eat you,' I added, by way of encouragement, 'though you do look sweet and tender enough.'

'Well, Sir, Mr. MacCobber had been very kind and attentive to my auntie and myself, and we were proud and grateful too. He was so different to the young men we had known in the Lane, Spitafields, and Whitechapel; always so respectful and obliging, thinking always of everyone but himself, that we never felt the time pass when in his company.'

Upon my word I could have hugged the girl for her naive description of my boy! Her face was so animated, her manner so sincere and enthusiastic that I was involuntarily carried back to the days of ancient chivalry, to the days when Rebecca the Jewess was harboring an illicit passion for Ivanhoe the Gentile.

Thank heavens, says I to myself, says I, this young Jewish maiden, though foolish like every other maiden to waste a thought on any young men, is at least enthusing over a true-born Jewish lad, and not over a fierce crusader who was ever to be found in the very forefront of battle, instead of staying at home and marrying the high-minded maiden who loved him and whom alone he loved, old Thackeray's sneering sequel notwithstanding.

By this time Mrs. Sara Harkovitz had got the better of her feelings, and took up the thread where her delightful niece had left off.

'It was after we left Naples that we first noticed the change in Mr. MacCobber. We all went on shore together, Sir, as you may remember, and we had a splendid time, visiting the King's Palace, riding in a carriage fit for the Lord Mayor of Sydney, or even Melbourne. We had a native Prince acting as our

guide and interpreter. Monsignor Maccaroni was his title, if I remember rightly. He introduced us to several noblemen at the Bazaars, where we purchased at his advice, several ancient relics of the Roman period, and a number of modern curios which, our guide assured us, would make our fortune if sold by an auctioneer who had studied his profession from a publication edited by Mr. William Makepeace. Mr. MacCobber paid for everything, and promised to get some further curios at Port Said. But on the third day after we left Naples he. . .he.. .he. . .’

She broke down at the second ‘he,’ the last ‘he’ ending in an hysterical wail that brought the steward from the keyhole outside in an instant within.

‘Sham, Sir?’ he said, looking enquiringly at me.

‘Yes,’ I said, promptly, noticing the blush on the niece’s face, ‘bring a large bottle, and three glasses.’

‘Thank you, Sir,’ said he, touching his ear.

Not until this same steward reads this very page will he know how apt was his suggestion when he appeared with such unheard of speed at the psychological moment.

Past question, every joy and every sorrow carries its own counterpart with it. After we each had a glass of the iced champagne, and a sip or two of the second, the ladies’ nervousness vanished. I transcribe herewith the salient particulars from the voluminous information volunteered by my interesting visitors:

1. That they were both fond of young Mordecai and would do anything for him that he asked.
2. That he was more modest than a girl, always blushing, and stammering, and ill at ease when with them or any other ladies.
3. That he had scores of opportunities of ‘playing handies,’ or even k-k-kissing them, but that he was too slow for anything.
4. That Mrs. Sara Harkovitz was twenty-seven years and two and a half months old on the previous Tuesday afternoon, and that her oldest and only boy would be three years and ten weeks at 10 p.m. on the following Thursday.
5. That both ladies had a little money; both expected to find young husbands in Australia, as promised by the gentleman who lectured in the Zion Hall last year.
6. That Mordecai seemed very fond of the niece, and she was quite willing to learn to love him more and more each day if he would but say the word.—So was Auntie, for that matter.

I advised my friends to go to bed and to sleep at once, and to leave the matter in my hands. I was glad when they were gone. I don’t like my hands fondled by a young niece, or a greyish hair removed from my collarbone by a young widow, who must needs press close to you for the purpose. It upsets me. I shan’t sleep a wink to-night, or if I do I’ll have the nightmare, see if I don’t

LAMECH'S LAMENT (after Rashi)

Trevor Rapke

Trevor Rapke was born in Melbourne in 1909. He was admitted to the Victorian Bar in 1935 and was appointed as a judge to the Victorian County court in 1958. During World War II he served as a lieutenant in the Royal Australian Navy.

Always a staunch Zionist, he represented Australia at the 1957 World Jewish Congress and was foundation president of the World Israel Movement. He also served a term as president of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. He died in 1978.

This poem is a work of his student days and was published in the Westralian Judean in 1933.

With sparkling firmament, I see again
The four-way lodge in starry starkness grim;
Abiding Zillah fair to Lamech's whim
Bears brass and iron forging Tubal Cain.
Ere long, she mourns the cutter, himself slain
By that engenderer who slew both him
And sire, with sudden smiting of his limb,
Till vengeance seven-fold has brought its pain.

Premeditation! Ah, no comfort there—
But I, who slew in inadvertent grief
Implore that you return, nor longer mourn
In sorrow for the ill-starred son you bare;
Hidd'n from light, accursed, I had as lief
Be Cain myself, nor live to see the morn.

MY NEIGHBOUR'S STORY

Solomon Stedman

Solomon Stedman was born in Siberia about 1896 to a family of intellectuals. He arrived in Brisbane at the age of nineteen, a qualified watchmaker. After his marriage he moved to Sydney where he became a leather goods manufacturer.

He is credited with being among the first European migrants to write of their experiences in English and as fiction: he was certainly the first Jewish writer to do so. For that reason his papers are housed in the Australian Archives in Canberra. His stories were published in the Bulletin, the Australian Jewish Forum and the Westralian Judean throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This story was written in 1933 and appeared in the Westralian Judean.

The Jew is known as a practical, grasping, "hard as nails" business man. You are told he is always out to make money at any price, ever ready to demand his "pound of flesh". This picture of the Jew is painted either by our enemies or by those who do not know the Jew. But to know him is not easy, because the Jew is always an unknown quantity, a puzzle to the Gentile.

My neighbour moved a little closer and, pulling the rug over his legs, continued:—

'Take a Gentile tradesman, for instance. Once you know he is, say, a watchmaker, you also know approximately his mode of life, his social standing and his intellectual attainments. But if you meet a watchmaker, a Jew, you know nothing of him apart from his trade. He may be a first class musician, a great Hebrew scholar, a profound thinker and certainly a dreamer. His trade is the result of his immediate surroundings, his intellect the repository of the accumulated knowledge and experience of his marvellous race. So there is really a double personality in every Jew and to know him well one must know the two sides of him.'

He adjusted himself in his chair and for some time remained silent, staring into the night, or probably listening to the sounds of the water lapping against the sides of the ship. Then he spoke ; again:

'You have no doubt heard of Joe Pitt?'

'I have,' I answered.'

'I happen to know him very well,' said my neighbour. In fact I knew him when he was Joseph Pitkovsky.' I thought I could hear my neighbour chuckle quietly to himself. 'But I can tell you that this man too was not known properly by anyone save myself and he was entirely different from the man you heard of. To the outside world he was Joe Pitt, the shrewd business man, the exploiter of labour, the worshipper of gold, the mean, unscrupulous 'shop-keeper. But they did not know that money was of no real ; importance to him. His business was but an outlet for his restless nature, for his unbounded energy. And if some of the things said of him were true, then they were only true of Joe Pitt and were false where it concerned Joseph Pitkovsky. But I am the only man who knows the two, all others know the one only.

'You have, of course, heard of the sensational collapse of the Joe Pitt business. This collapse was the topic of conversation in every city of the Commonwealth. Strange, nay fantastic stories were related about it, but I know the truth. I am the only one that knew it, and I can assure you that there was no

collapse. On the contrary, he accomplished one of the greatest successes of his life, but again, the world remained ignorant of it.

'I remember the day Joseph Pitkovsky left his native town in Russia to come to Australia. He was then but a youth. I can still see the people who came to see him off, but most of all do I remember a young girl, Myra, her name was. She stood there, crying silently, her large black eyes full of tears, looking pathetically . at Joseph. They loved each other, and she promised to wait for him. "Two years," said Joseph, "two years and I shall take you to Australia." Two years he considered enough time to make good in the new land, and two years were quite sufficient had Joseph not become Joe Pitt. The only wealth he brought to the new land were his youth and his determination. In two years he had established a small business, and had learned enough English to transact his business.

'On his arrival here he perceived that Joseph Pitkovsky, as he was, could not be as successful as he would wish. He possessed too much sentiment, was full of old customs, traditions and beliefs. He had to create a new personality to achieve his object. So he changed his name to Joe Pitt. What was impossible to Joseph became easy for Joe. What he would not say as Joseph Pitkovsky, he could shout as Joe Pitt. His nature split in two, and it was a matter of time as to which of the two would come out victorious. Very often Joseph would raise his voice in protest against the actions of Joe, but the latter only laughed scornfully. He extended his business by leaps and bounds, absorbing his competitors, sending them bankrupt, ruining many. Now and again Joseph would remember Myra. He would recollect her large black eyes, and something within him would begin to cry, to demand justice but Joe Pitt would look on unconcerned, or advance convincing arguments against her. Myra was a wonderful, most desirable bride for Joseph, but quite unsuitable for Joe. She would bring with her the old Jewish life and the things that go with it, the very things Joe Pitt tried so hard to suppress in Joseph. In order not to be reminded too often of his old life, he kept apart from his fellow Jews. He never visited their gatherings, did not belong to their organisations, nor were they anxious to associate with him once they learned of his views. On rare occasions, when the voice of Joseph was too insistent, Joe Pitt made small concessions and sent some money home to his relatives. Thus the years went by and Joe Pitt became the business man you heard of. His wealth opened for him the doors of the best houses. Once there he held his own by the strength of his mind, his great ability. With every passing year the voice of Joseph grew fainter until Joe thought he was the undisputed victor. To put the final seal to this victory, he became engaged to a young lady not of his faith.

'When everything he dreamed of became a reality, when everything he set out to accomplish had become a fact,—then the thing that people called the collapse, happened. While Joe Pitt read the commercial columns in the papers, Joseph Pitkovsky studied the news of Jewish persecutions in Germany. While the former concerned himself with foreign exchanges and prices of commodities, the latter suffered pain and humiliation. Joseph, who had remained so quiet and submissive for so long, had suddenly become restless and articulate. He could not remain silent while his brethren were being tortured and starved. In vain did Joe Pitt try to assert his authority, but Joseph Pitkovsky refused to be subdued. As a compromise, Joe subscribed a large sum of money to the German Jews' Refugee Fund—that subscription was anonymous. But Joseph was not satisfied, in fact, he felt his humiliation even more deeply. In the midst of Joe's business activities, Joseph would call his attention to some forgotten scene, or resurrect in his memory the girl Myra. When Joe Pitt embraced his bride-to-be, through her eyes he thought Myra was looking at him. Even in his dreams he heard voices calling to him and he knew they were the voices of millions of Jewish martyrs who had died for their people, for their faith, and who called upon him to come to the aid of the suffering Jews, even as they had helped in the past.

'As the days went by, Joseph saw that he was gaining ground in his struggle against Joe. He grew bolder, more argumentative and when he read in the papers the announcement of a protest meeting to be held, he insisted upon going to the meeting. "Impossible," exclaimed Joe, but Joseph did not hear the usual notes of determination in that voice, and seizing the opportunity, pressed his point. Joseph had won, and Joe Pitt came to the meeting. While Joe Pitt sat in a corner afraid to be seen, Joseph studied the people around him. Thousands of Jews had come to the meeting. There were Jews from every country of the world, speaking different languages, brought up in different surroundings and representing every class of the vast community. These people who had very little in common with each other in their daily life, came there all actuated by the same motive, all eager to assert their Jewishness. Joseph felt happy, though this happiness was mixed with sorrow, while Joe remained silent, thoughtful. It seemed to Joseph that Joe was feeling ashamed, that he was embarrassed. He seemed to have suddenly realised that he belonged neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, that he was a pariah, a homeless, friendless stranger. Joseph's thoughts were with the people who were now the victims of the new persecutors. Men of letters and men of science, men who had helped to make Germany famous, men who had contributed to mankind's knowledge and well being, these men were his brothers. He felt glad at the thought of being associated with them. Within him he felt a deep scorn, a burning contempt for the oppressors of the Jews who still live on and continue on their way of progress to happiness. It was a triumphant Joseph that left the Town Hall, a Joseph full of vigour, of determination.

'After the meeting Joe Pitt found himself standing on the footpath outside his emporium, staring at the electric signs. In letters of fire the signs proclaimed to the world the greatness and the wealth of Joe Pitt. They hung there in space like some magnificent monuments to the living Joe Pitt and like mocking tombstones to the memory of Joseph Pitkovsky. It suddenly occurred to him that after all this name and the man who bore it were strangers to him, that he experienced no real pleasure in the glitter of the fiery signs. It was something like the reading of poetry in a foreign tongue, one understands the meaning of the words, but does not feel the music in them. Entering his luxurious office, he remained for a long time sitting at the desk immersed in thought. Joseph rose as from a heavy sleep and stretching out his hand, pressed a button which extinguished the signs. Joe Pitt had died that night.'

My neighbour ceased speaking. The moon came out from behind the clouds, building a silvery path across the restless sea. In the distance I saw a steamer going in the opposite direction to ours. From the lounge room came the sounds of music, then somebody commenced singing 'Home Sweet Home.'

'What actually did happen to Joe Pitt?' I asked.

My neighbour turned his head and I saw his burning eyes.

'Joe Pitt vanished,' he said. 'It was Joseph Pitkovsky who liquidated the business and it was he who broke the engagement.'

It was also Joseph who bought a piece of land in Palestine and who hopes some day to settle there with Myra, if she is still waiting. '

He rose from his chair and for some time remained motionless, looking into the darkness. Then he bade me goodnight and was gone.

I picked up a book he left on the chair. It was *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, and on the fly leaf I saw the initials J.P. I wondered who was reading the book, Joe Pitt or Joseph Pitkovsky.

PART 2

1940s and 1950s



Yosl Bergner b Austria 1920 Father and Son c. 1943. Pen and ink and wash over pencil

11.1cm x 9.0cm.

Presented through the Art Foundation of Victoria by Mr Yosli Bergner, Founder Benefactor,
1984.

Reproduced by courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria.

Vladimir Yosef (Yosl) Bergner was born in Vienna in 1920 and arrived in Australia in 1937 after graduating as a teacher of traditional Jewish art in Warsaw. He is the nephew of Herz Bergner and they both come from a family with strong literary and artistic talent. Yosli's work shows his love for humanity and his anguish for those who suffered in the Holocaust. In 1950 he migrated to Israel where he is regarded as an important abstract symbolist painter.

I AM A JEW

David Martin

David Martin was born in Budapest in 1915. He was educated in Germany and he fought in the Spanish Civil War. At various times he has lived in Holland, Israel, Britain and India. His writing has appeared in many newspapers both in Australia and overseas. He has published over thirty books—including novels, children's stories and collections of poetry. He has also written articles of social comment, his concern for the displaced person always coming to the fore.

This poem was published in Poems of David Martin 1938—1958 (Edwards & Shaw, 1960).

I am a Jew,
I walk
The streets of each city.
You see my shadow
Falling on your door
As it fell before
On Jerusalem,
On Granada.

I am a Jew,
I gave David
A sword and a harp.
I taught Mohamed
And set to the West
The heart of Columbus.

I am a Jew
I walk
The streets of each city.
I marched with the legions
Of Alexander.

I am a Jew,
I lie entombed
In the caves of the East,
In Western trenches.
Dig deep, dig deep,
You will find my bones.

I am a Jew,
I carry with me
Through torture vaults
The spirit of man.

THE MINYON

Solomon Stedman

This short story appeared in the Australian Jewish Forum in 1942. It is set during World War I and illustrates Stedman's powerful story-telling ability. He never returned to Europe after 1913.

This happened during the Russian retreat from East Prussia, when many thousands perished in the Mazurian Lakes, tens of thousands were captured prisoners, and the remnants of the armies fled before the Germans.

How our little company managed to keep together is a mystery or a miracle, but when we entered the deserted farm house we were all there—three Jews and eight Christians.

We were all tired and hungry, and after searching in vain about the house for something edible, we decided to rest a while and then go on under cover of the night until we could get some food.

The house seemed to have been but recently evacuated.

On the wall hung a calendar, which attracted the attention of Shmuel.

'I have Yorzait to-day after my mother,' he murmured, still gazing at the calendar.

I looked at his boyish face and saw tears in his eyes.

He was only a lad, a son of a rabbi in a small township in Poland.

His dirty uniform seemed several sizes too big for him, and the cap drawn well over his ears, gave one the impression as though Shmuel endeavoured to hide himself and nearly succeeded.

'Yorzait,' queried Markov, a tall, well-built Jew from Odessa, 'I suppose you would like to have a Minyon?' he asked contemptuously.

'Yes I would,' answered Shmuel earnestly.

'A lot of good your Kaddish would do for your Mother,' Markov spoke again. 'Going about shooting Jews who are fighting in the enemy armies, breaking God's command which says, "Thou shalt not kill," and then he wants to say Kaddish!'

There was bitterness in Markov's voice. He spoke as though glad of the opportunity to give expression to the thoughts that oppressed him.

There was silence for a while.

Then Markov said: 'Who is going to say Kaddish after you if you get killed?'

Shmuel turned pale.

'Don't, Markov,' I begged, him, feeling sorry for the boy.

Suddenly Markov laughed. 'Don't worry, Shmuel, I'll say Kaddish after you if anything happens.'

'Will you really?' the boy asked eagerly, and laughing, Markov assured him that he would.

We were waiting for the night to spread its black mantle. In the meantime some of the men were sleeping soundly.

From the distance came the booming of heavy guns.

Twilight came and the house was filled with strange shadows.

They crept along the bare walls, crawled about the earthen floor as though searching for something.

The air was calm and a feeling of loneliness and vague longing seemed to seize the hearts of the hungry men.

They whispered to each other as though fearing to speak aloud lest they disturb the tranquility of the place.

I fell asleep.

A terrific scream awakened me, and when I opened my eyes, I could see the skies through a large hole in the roof and heard the low drone of the engine of the aeroplane which had just dropped some bombs.

There was a wild rush outside, for we feared the planes might return.

Markov came to me. He was pale and trembling.

'Did you see Shmuel?' he said, and his voice betrayed a deep fear. We went inside, and striking a match saw Shmuel.

He was dead.

A fragment of steel struck him on the head, splitting it almost in two.

The top of his cap was torn off, and it slid down on to his neck.

The other soldiers entered and stood there in the dark.

Nobody uttered a sound, and the stillness was almost audible.

Markov struck a match and let his eyes travel from face to face as though counting us.

Then we heard him whisper: 'I promised to say Kaddish after him.' He stood irresolute for some time.

Suddenly the oppressive silence was broken by the first notes of the Memorial Prayer. Pure and clear came the melody cutting through the night.

Before me rose visions of a Synagogue filled with worshippers, their white taleisim moving to and fro while the Cantor chants the prayer.

'Isgadal ve Iskadash,' sang Markov, his voice rising in earnest supplication, then falling almost to a whisper as though he were telling some secret to his God and did not wish anyone to hear it.

The soldiers stood listening, though not understanding the words. These Russians must have felt the sacredness of the moment, must have realised that the Jew Markov was praying for his co-religionist.

Suddenly the voice rose, as if in a desire to make himself heard in Heaven Markov shouted, 'Shmei Rabo.'

Quietly I answered, 'Omein,' and eight Christians repeated solemnly, 'Amen.'

TO A COUNTRY TOWN

Judah Waten

Judah Waten was born in Odessa in 1911. His family migrated to Australia and settled in Perth when he was still an infant. He was educated at Christian Brothers College, Perth and at University High School in Melbourne. He travelled throughout Australia, India, the USSR and Europe, working as a teacher, a cook, a journalist and even as a railway porter. His cultural and political loyalties were strongly Yiddish and decidedly left-wing in the Russian tradition instilled in him by his mother, who always felt alienated in Australia. His friendship with Pinchas Goldhar prompted him to write his own childhood memoirs as fiction and these were published as short stories in the Bulletin, Meanjin and Coast to Coast. They were later published as a collection under the title Alien Son. This story originally appeared in Meanjin in 1952.

Waten translated much of Goldhar and Herz Bergner's writings, from Yiddish into English. He later wrote novels that dealt with such issues as crime, politics and the injustice of capitalist economies. He also wrote book reviews and with Stephen Murray-Smith edited Classic Australian Short Stories.

Father said we should have to leave the city. It was soon after we came to the new land that he had been told of a town where he was sure to make money if he opened a drapery shop. He had tried to find something in the city but failed, and he was anxious to make money. The possession of money, he said, would compensate us for the trials of living in a strange land. He had ambitious plans and to have listened to him one might have believed that nature had cut him out to be a millionaire.

But Mother said that he was a cripple when it came to the real job, though others with lesser flights of fancy who had come out with us on the same boat were now well on the way to making their fortunes.

'Talk, talk,' she said.

No, Mother wouldn't go into the wilderness; she wouldn't leave the coast. Ever since we had come to this country she had lived with her bags packed. We should lose everything we possessed; our customs, our traditions; we should be swallowed up in this strange, foreign land. She had often wheeled my sister and me to shipping offices to inquire for ships leaving for home. And once she almost bought passages for us but she didn't have quite enough money.

Father roared and stamped out of the house, slamming each door as he strode down the long, dark passage. But soon he came back, his arms laden with fruit and other foodstuffs. His pale-blue eyes blinked innocently and his stiff, red moustache shook with good humour. He was very subdued and remained uncommunicative for quite a while. Then he began to talk as if to himself.

'The country would do the children a lot of good, now wouldn't it? Say only for a year or two. The children would grow strong and healthy there.'

He saw a little smile flutter on Mother's lips and then disappear into the creases round her mouth. Her sallow face was serious again and her dark-brown eyes troubled. For as long as I remembered she had always looked as if she expected nothing but sorrow and hardship from life. I somehow imagined that Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, must have looked just like my mother, with her long, straight nose and her mass of jet-black hair combed back above her hollow cheeks, deep-set eyes and high forehead.

When she spoke Father knew we were going to the country. For a little while it would be good for the children, she agreed. It was always like this; she wanted nothing for herself, only a great future for us. We were to serve our oppressed people. I was to be at least another David and my sister a modern Esther. But how could those plans be furthered out there in the wilderness? Well, after all, a year would pass quickly.

One day a covered wagon drew up outside our house. Mother stared in amazement when she saw Father perched in the driver's seat. She had never expected to see him like this. What would he be doing next? How much better would it be if we were on our way from this country.

But Father was far too busy to listen to any talk. He was piling our few belongings on to the wagon until it looked like a second-hand shop on wheels. There were rust-coloured iron Russian beds with pictures embossed in gold, boxes of kitchen utensils with large silver spoons and knives engraved with the name of their Russian maker, a four-wheeled baby carriage with a large black hood, enlarged pictures of grandfathers and grandmothers, and even a green faded samovar from Tula. All lay in a disorderly pile on top of the boxes of dresses, skirts, and coats that were to bring us that fortune which my father was so certain was surely our lot in this new land.

Mother sat next to Father on the driver's seat and we sat on boxes covered with pillows stuffed with goose feathers just behind them. Immediately next to Mother rested a polished wooden box and a large black bag. Of Mother's black bag there is little to be said. Food for the journey, a purse, all sorts of knick-knacks for my little sister, a bottle of castor oil, and a thermometer were all stuffed in there.

But the red, silk-lined box was my father's treasure chest which he had clung to all his life. All the written history of the pair, the marriage certificate, passport, birth certificates, letters from Father's parents, photos, even gold links and studs and an old-fashioned pocket watch with a blue cover studded with small pink stones, a prayer shawl, and phylacteries reposed in neat order between the silk lining around which clung the smell of moth-balls. Father said there would always be something in that box 'to fall back on.

Father was then a young man of twenty-seven, with light-brown hair and a fine red moustache. He had been tall and slim, but he was beginning to grow fat round the stomach. But even while driving the horses he looked neat and smart. By contrast Mother always looked ragged and even her long association with Father never made her interested in her appearance.

Father bellowed and cursed at the horses as we drove along the grey, sandy road. He was in a terrible rage, but he was really shouting at his own helplessness. It was one of my first impressions of Father that whenever he was in a tight corner, in a muddle, he would shout angrily at the top of his voice. When I was very little I had looked for something to happen when Father shouted, as the walls of the city fell at the last of the ram's horn blown at Jericho. But now I knew better; Father's rages came on swiftly and disappeared just as suddenly.

While he was roaring at the horses, his greyish, pale face a deep crimson, Father shook a long whip that flicked the air menacingly. If the expression on his face meant anything he was about to thrash the horses to within an inch of their lives. But the whip never fell on their broad haunches; he just held it aloft, his hand paralysed by uncertainty. Mother settled the matter. She snatched the whip out of his hand and threw it under the seat. What was he trying to do? Kill us?

But Father's rage had disappeared and the horses continued in their own sweet, plodding way. They were the masters and Father was the man who held the reins. I think the horses must have been laughing at him on that journey. They stopped when they wanted to and drank at the trough outside

every hotel. And the white mare kept moving to the centre of the road, which was one cause of Father's rage.

The wagon trundled on through low, scraggy, dry scrub and dejected gums while the sun, now directly overhead, seemed like a fiery disk suspended from the high, pale sky. It was very hot for all of us and the light on the sandy road was hard for Father's eyes. Suddenly low blue hills appeared above the horizon and Father said we'd be there before night fell.

We kept well to the edge of the shadeless, sandy road and often the wagon threatened to turn turtle as the wheels dropped into a culvert. Mother was afraid of the road and, secretly, so was Father. The sight of a sulky drawn by a speedy horse and coming towards us would throw her into a paroxysm of fear and she would clutch Father's arm. He ineffectively tried to steer the white mare away from the centre of the road, and finally with a great effort he stopped the horses altogether while the sulky whisked by with yards between us. Then to celebrate our deliverance from such danger Mother produced fruit and sweets from the black bag.

We arrived at our new home long after the sun had sunk beneath the hills, which had become mysteriously black with odd lights that blinked forlornly as if signalling messages of distress.

In the dying light Mother stood gazing at the dingy, brown wooden cottage and while she stood, she seemed to age and her narrow shoulders to grow more stooped., Her sad eyes wandered hopelessly over the broken picket fence and the neglected fruit- trees with their naked limbs outstretched.

Suddenly Mother was startled out of her deep musing by a merry clamour that sprang round us like a wind springing up from nowhere. The street which had been deserted was now alive. Men in shirt-sleeves and women in aprons stood behind fences and from open doorways flickered the yellow light of kerosene lamps. Children appeared from all the dark corners of the street, clustering round the wagon, chattering in a language of which we understood not a word. Mother seized my sister and me by our hands and bundled us into the house. And, disconsolate and weary, we sat on chairs in a room that smelt musty with dampness and disuse. By the light of a spluttering candle our parents walked silently to and fro and emptied the bulging wagon.

Early next morning I ran into the street while Mother was scrubbing one of the rooms. I was impatient to join the children whom I had seen the previous night. But as soon as they saw me they burst out laughing and pointed to my buttoned-up shoes and white silk socks. I was overcome with shame and ran back into the house where I removed my shoes and socks and threw them into one of the empty rooms. I would walk barefooted like the other boys. And when I heard Mother calling to me from the kitchen to play in the back-yard and not to go into the street, I pretended I didn't hear.

I tacked myself on to the tail end of a group of boys who were prancing down the street. It was really more a track than a street, petering out a few yards from our gate in a gentle rise that merged with the horizon so that Mother could be pardoned for thinking we lived on the very edge of the world.

I could barely stand the gravel and the hot sand on my bare feet and the short, dry grass of the paddock gave little relief. But I was proud of my own courage and of the attention the boys paid me, though I didn't know a word of what they were saying.

We came to a shed at the back of the general store that was almost directly opposite the railway station and next to a group of wooden, ramshackle buildings that housed a baker, a bootmaker and a newsagent. Farther down the street stood, in solitary splendour, a two-storied wooden hotel with a wide veranda running the width of the building.

I clambered up a high, picket fence with the rest of the boys and held on for dear life while they chattered and screeched like magpies. We were watching a short, elderly man backing a black horse into a cart.

To my surprise the man kept looking at me curiously from under heavy lids which sagged and were covered in a maze of creases. He carried a big leather bag slung over his shoulder like a Sam Browne belt and he wore a marine dealer's badge on his arm. His broad-brimmed hat with its sweat-stained band sat as flat as a pancake on his head. The boys mimicked him in a childish gibberish as he mumbled to his horse in the only language I knew.

But the old man wasn't angry with the boys. He smiled back at them like a deaf and dumb uncle and his eyes lingered a little longer over me. As he jumped up on the cart he nodded his head and stroked his little straggly brown beard and waved his long whip at me. Then with a loud cry he drove out of the yard.

Late that afternoon we were playing on the railway station. It was deserted, although a train was expected within an hour, so that we had the run of some empty trucks. A solitary cart appeared on the horizon and soon we recognized the old man perched on top of a heap of bags. We ran to meet him. He was urging his horse on and the sweaty, velvety hide of the animal quivered as the old man flicked his long whip over its mane. We chased the cart and the boys called loudly, 'Bottle-oh! Bottle-oh! Any bottles today?'

But as soon as we followed him into the yard he jumped off the cart and chased us out, cracking his whip over our heads. Again he was looking closely at me, but this time there was a sly expression in his beady, half-closed eyes that made me feel distinctly uncomfortable. It was as though he had caught me out.

From the high picket fence we watched him unload his cart, stacking bottles in pyramids according to their size and shape. Then he carried a great bundle of bags piled high on his strong shoulders into a shed, where dark doors opened like the mouth of a cave. He curried and brushed his horse and carefully mixed chaff and bran into a bin, gently pushing its soft nose aside. Then he disappeared into the shed and closed the door.

When I returned home Mother complained bitterly that I had run away twice in one day; that I had thrown my shoes and socks away and would catch cold. I would get lost; all her gloomiest premonitions would come true. Father was always blunt-spoken and he said that if I disobeyed Mother again he would take to me in no uncertain way.

It was at that stage that I judged it wise to bring out my bit of news. I said that I had only gone to the shed to find out if the old man was really a Jew. Mother was overwhelmed.

'There you are, you find our people in the farthest corners of the world. Perhaps this place is after all not the end of everything. We might have a community here yet.'

All my misdeeds were forgotten and even Father smiled.

'Bring him home,' he said, cheerfully. 'Let's have a look at him.'

It was not until sundown the next day that I saw the old man again. I was in the street with the neighbour's boy looking into shop windows and watching the men go into the hotel, when I saw the old man pacing up and down on the opposite side of the street outside the railway station. The train had just gone and was climbing into the hills that rose beyond the township. Escaping smoke still hung in grey masses against a purple sky, blotting out the stars which had just appeared.

When he caught sight of me the old man hurried towards me. Spacing his words slowly he asked me in a wheedling, high-pitched, sing-song voice if I was a Jewish boy. Immediately I spoke in Yiddish his voice changed; every trace of hesitancy disappeared. He pinched my cheeks and ruffled my hair with his strong, callused palms.

‘Why haven’t I seen your father and mother? Where are they hiding? I’ll have someone to talk to at last. I’ll be able to free my heart.’

Then his voice changed and in a wheedling tone, his half-closed eyes blinking innocently, he asked, ‘And for instance, what does your father do?’

He seemed relieved when I answered that he was a draper.

From that day old Hirsh was a regular visitor to our house. Mother’s hope had been realized and we had the beginnings of a community. Every day at six we would see the old man hastening towards the house, his short body erect and his quick stride soldierly. His appearance never altered except on wet days when he wore a long shabby overcoat over his faded blue waistcoat and the bulging leather bag that he never parted from. He no longer lingered over his horse of an evening; he made the horse comfortable and left without even an affectionate glance.

Even after we had sat down to our meal he remained standing with his back to the fire, often without speaking, his hat still on his head, his eyes almost closed.

Father, drinking his soup noisily, would grunt, ‘And how is business, Hirsh?’

And Hirsh invariably answered with the same words, ‘No good.’

‘Always no good! What sort of a business is this?’ Father would retort sceptically breaking great hunks of bread off the loaf for all of us.

Mother, to hide her embarrassment, would invite Hirsh to take a bite with us. But he would pretend that he hadn’t heard her until Father would lean towards him and say in an emphatic tone, ‘Sit down.’

When he sat down, always at the corner of the table, Hirsh would decline the soup and meat, contenting himself with great quantities of bread and grated radish or cucumber. His manner was apologetic and he noiselessly nibbled the bread in contrast with Father’s eager, noisy performance at the table.

After the meal Hirsh would push his chair into the corner, a glass of tea in his hand, and for a long while he would stare silently at the fire, until he rose with an apologetic good night and disappeared into the night. But if Father was in good talking form Hirsh would join in the conversation, respectfully waiting for Father to finish, and then telling long stories of the past that drove Father to distraction by their disjointed loquacity. He had been a coachman of a wealthy man in Russia, but he had fled to evade military service. He heartily cursed Czar Alexander III, who was now rotting in the ground. He had come a long, hard, way and his dearest wish was to be buried in the Holy Land. All his family had gone to Palestine after the death of his wife, and he was going to join them there soon, he hoped, with his younger son.

Father tried hard to bring the conversation around to business.

‘Never mind the past, we live in the present. Tell me something about the bottles. How, for instance, do you sell them?’

Father was anxious to try his hand at something new. He hadn't yet opened the drapery shop which was to make our fortune. He was still selling drapery to scattered houses in the near-by hills and his faith in drapery was waning. Father looked almost accusingly at Hirsh.

'You would think from what we heard in the city that everyone in the country bathed in gold. What rubbish! I have seen such poverty in the hills and even in this town that it would make your hair stand on end.'

Yes, Father's fortune seemed to be swimming farther and farther away. Perhaps bottles were better than dresses? But Hirsh, in a whining voice, insisted that this bottle business was terrible. Nothing but hard work and no return to show for it.

'Believe me, this is a very hard, foreign, inhospitable land for a Jew to live in.'

Mother looked up from her sewing. Hirsh was right, it was a foreign country. How could we ever learn to know the people here? At least in Russia we knew where we stood, pogroms and all. The devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

Father rose suddenly from the table. Pointing to Mother, he said that when we were in Russia it was she who pestered him to leave. He had never wanted to shift in all his life. Now it was starting all over again. He was going to bed; it was late.

Several days later, very early in the morning before sunrise, I climbed the high picket fence and, creeping softly towards Hirsh's shed, opened the door and peered into the murkiness within. Through cracks and holes in the wall the grey light cast strange shadows over the mountain of bags, neatly sorted according to their size, which in places reached to the corrugated-iron ceiling. A smell of damp earth pervaded the shed. On one of the lower layers of bags nearest to the door old Hirsh had made his bed. Later I was to discover that his bed went up and down in the most remarkable fashion. Sometimes he slept on the ground and at other times almost touching the ceiling. It depended on the stacks in the shed.

As soon as he saw my head he jumped up, blinking his eyes in amazement and yawning deeply. He had cast aside the ragged overcoats that had covered him and they now lay in a heap at the foot of his bed of bags. To my surprise he was still wearing his faded waistcoat, and he looked very old in his thick, creamy underpants that enclosed his withered backside and legs.

With a growl he quickly ran to the wall where his trousers and leggings hung from a nail, not forgetting to pick up his leather bag, which he had used as his pillow.

There was a row of big nails in the wall from which hung stiff, white, flour bags, old coats, an old horse collar, harness and whip.

'How did you get in, you young urchin?'

I had never seen him so severe, but as soon as he had hitched his trousers up and put his leggings and boots on he softened.

'Eat something with me. You will see how a poor old Jew has his morning meal.'

He walked to the tap outside the shed, washed his face and spattered some drops of water over his short, brown hair like parched, dry grass and then he went to a flour bag on the wall. He extracted a lump of bread and several onions which he peeled, passing one to me. He chewed his food slowly and after each morsel opened his mouth with satisfaction, revealing a row of strong little yellowish

teeth. He slowly picked the crumbs out of his beard and rolling them into a ball thrust them back into his mouth.

‘What an urchin!’ He shook his finger at me. ‘He has to hear and know everything.’

But never mind. When his youngest son was my age he was just as curious and cheeky. What a clever boy he was then! He, Hirsh, hadn’t always lived like this. When his boy was my age they lived in a big house and they ate white bread, herrings, and olives for breakfast every morning. But now he had to save every penny. Suddenly he pointed to several butter boxes that stood apart from the bags and were close to an array of weirdly shaped green bottles. There he kept silk shirts and many, many other good things for his son. He would give them to him soon when they left for Palestine together.

I was depressed by the thought of Hirsh’s departure and I ran all the way home. I was fairly bursting with information and as soon as I reached the kitchen where Father was sitting, a solitary figure at the table, and Mother was crouching over the fire cooking scrambled eggs for him, I began to relate my adventure with Hirsh.

Mother became very gloomy.

‘What a terrible life for a Jew in his old age! So far from his homeland and his family.’

Father was blunt and testy.

‘Not so terrible! You can rest assured that he’s got more than we have. A hoarder is a hoarder, a miser is a miser, and that is all there is to it.’

Father smiled smugly as if he had settled the matter beyond all doubt.

‘Let’s see if he ever brings anything to our children,’ he added.

But Mother was afraid at the thought that Hirsh might leave. Apart from him she hardly ever saw another strange person. With him she talked in Yiddish of Russia and the life they had left. She could still not understand one word of English and she said she had no intention of ever learning the language; she would not become a part of the new land. And when she heard me chattering in the new language, or Father breaking his tongue over strange words she became alarmed as if both of us had made our peace with enemies and were about to desert our faith.

Mother hardly ever peered out of the house. But whenever she walked into the back-yard Mrs McDougall, a Scotch widow who lived next door, would begin to talk to her in a deep, booming voice. No matter how friendly our stout, high-bosomed neighbour tried to be, Mother became more suspicious and said that Mrs McDougall merely wanted to patronize her. Mother tried to avoid going out into the yard in the daytime and only my prolonged absence would tempt her to go on to the veranda to call for me.

Father tried to reason with her, but she only replied that she could see where we were going and that she would remain what she was even in this desolate spot. There was tension in the house and Mother kept on urging Father to return to the city. Often I heard them talking angrily in bed in the next room.

Then something happened that dispelled the ominous atmosphere. Jews began to appear at the house after a journey Father made into the hills, where he had met some Jewish bottle-ohs and hawkers.

First, Mr Segal arrived. He was a dark, thick-set man who had only recently shaved off his long black beard at the urgent behest of his sons. He had been in the country for some years now, but despite his sons his face represented something of a compromise, for it was covered with a dense, silky, unshaven stubble. He drove two horses in an open lorry which, on his journeys from the city, was packed with suits and dresses for lonely timber camps and the new settlements in the hills. On his return to the city the lorry was heaped with bags and bottles tied with stout rope.

Tethering his horses to the fence, he entered our house with great self-assurance. He was no longer a newcomer as we were, but quite an authority on the new country. What didn't he know? He knew every Jew and almost every non-Jew. He travelled all over the State and from time to time he visited Jews in the loneliest places. He often carried messages to them from friends and from the Rabbi in the city. The Rabbi had entrusted him with a message for old Hirsh.

Mr Segal had known Hirsh for a long time. The old man's family had gone back to Palestine. But his youngest, son had been in jail even when he, Mr Segal, came to this country and would stay there for a long time yet. Hirsh lived for the day when his son would be released. Hirsh could neither read nor write, so his son had no way of getting in touch with him. The Rabbi, who visited the jail every three months, sent verbal messages to Hirsh through Mr Segal.

He knew the Rabbi quite well. A very distinguished man from London, but a little weak in the scriptures and piety. Still—good enough for this country. He visited people in jail, though, thank God, there was only one Jew there—Hirsh's son. And he was a real thief! But when he came out of jail, if he ever did, he would be worth a fortune. Old Hirsh was making it for him. He, Mr Segal, knew that he had untold sums in his leather bag, in his waistcoat pockets, and buried in the earth.

After Mr Segal had finished his recital he began to rock to and fro on his chair, well satisfied with the impression he had made.

Father snorted through his thick, wide nostrils, 'I thought there was some dog hidden in that manger. I know my guests. Like son, like father.'

He would hazard a guess that Hirsh robbed the farmers right and left, the old miser.

That night, after Mr Segal's departure, Mother came into our bedroom and sat down on my bed. Talking passionately, she said I must think of Hirsh only as a hero, a man of devotion and courage. He belonged to our imperishable people. Surrounded by foes who frequently desired our blood, our people had always triumphed in the end through courage and devotion.

Our house was now often full of people. Jewish bottle-ohs, hawkers, travellers in drapery, opticians, travelling tailors, all drove to our township from remote spots to spend a few hours together. Now Mother had to remind Father to attend to his business, for the kitchen so often buzzed with reminiscences and plans for the future. Thousands of pounds were made, journeys planned, children's futures mapped out—all in our kitchen.

And Hirsh was always present in the evenings, always telling the same stories of his days as a coachman or how he ran away from the Czar's army. In his presence no one mentioned the whereabouts of his son, but Hirsh constantly referred to their future journey to the Holy Land where he would find his last resting-place and his son everlasting happiness.

About this time we had another regular caller, a Russian by the name of Mr Osipov. A gaunt, tight-skinned, sallow-faced man, he would call about lunch-time and stay until he had to go to work on the railways. Mother became very fond of him. Although he was not a Jew he represented

everything in the old country that was familiar and dear to her. He was in exile, too. He had fled after the 1905 revolution, after taking part in the great uprising in St Petersburg. Like Mother, he always talked of the day when he could leave for the homeland. Anxiously he waited for the revolution that he said was soon to come. Mother always said he was a man you could always really talk to; he could understand her. He was a victim of persecution, an idealist.

I loved this gaunt man. He was so different from the others I knew and he told such different stories—of strikes and battles against our great oppressor, the Czar. And at the party Father arranged, Osipov sang and danced, happy in the company of men who hated and feared Russians. And they felt that he was something of that Russia they only vaguely knew about and loved.

Father had arranged a party to celebrate, God knows what and he invited all our new acquaintances. It was on a winter's night and our dining-room, which was rarely used, was full of happy men. A driving rain was pelting against the window but the room was warm and full of the odours of chaff, horses, and bottles. Mother had covered the round dining-table with a red plush table-cloth with golden tassels that dangled near the floor. A large pink lamp burnt in the middle of the table and every corner of the room shone with a bright, soft light. Even the Tula samovar came out for an airing. Mother polished it until it gleamed brilliantly.

Mother rushed back and forth with delicacies—cakes, pancakes with white cheese, pickled cucumber, and plates of olives. Everyone was gay at our party. Even Hirsh sat in a corner and quietly murmured a song which consisted of very few words, and a bleak, tight smile hovered over his face. He listened to the animated conversation as he sang. I was rushing about falling over feet and wild with delight at so much attention. When I passed Hirsh he suddenly grabbed me and sat me on his knees. Then he furtively pulled out of his overcoat pocket some grimy boiled sweets which he placed in my hand.

Father was immersed in talk about business and he suddenly-shouted across the table to Hirsh, 'And how is business? Still terrible?' And as the other Jews laughed aloud, Hirsh tried to avert their impudent gaze by burying his face and beard in my hair.

The laughter continued until Mother suggested to Mr Silver that he give us a song. Everybody knew that Mr Silver had been trained as a cantor but had come to this country to seek a living. He was a pink-faced, chubby young man who sang on every possible occasion; on holy days he had sung in the synagogue in the city. He cleared his throat noisily and sang an old folk-song with an endless series of verses.

Our guests stood up and formed a circle round him and sang and danced as if, Father said, at an ancient Jewish wedding. Even Mr Osipov joined in and hummed the tune, clapping his hands and stamping around. The weary floorboards groaned as each new verse sent the guests into a new fit of dancing. After everyone fell back exhausted in his chair, Mr Silver, who secretly aspired to become an opera singer in the new country, announced that he would sing, *La Donna e Mobile*. The excitement had subsided and he was listened to with a mixture of cynicism and boredom. Then to cap his efforts he proposed to sing something in English. And everybody listened with astonishment to 'Mother Machree', and declared that Mr Silver's knowledge of English was truly remarkable.

Mr Osipov gave us a Russian song in a high-pitched tenor voice and Mother beseeched me to recite a Hebrew poem by Bialik, which I had painfully learnt from her. Old Hirsh was delighted with my performance and, knowing no more about the poem than I did, believed it was a piece from the Holy Book.

The great din and noise brought our neighbour, Mrs McDougall, into the house. Driven by curiosity and loneliness, she couldn't resist the merriment that had broken the silence of the street. How it came about that she sang her song I don't know to this day. She sang 'Auld Lang Syne' in a deep, throaty voice and curiously enough everyone in the room was deeply stirred. She sang with so much longing and pathos that for a few brief moments all differences and distances seemed to be bridged.

The babble broke loose again. All cares had vanished. Everybody looked gay and well-satisfied as Mother handed cups of tea round, assisted by Mrs McDougall, who was now trying hard to talk to her. Mrs McDougall seemed to have broken through Mother's reserve and cautiously picked at all the delicacies as Mother urged her to try everything.

Then Mr Segal arrived. His silky face wore a very sombre expression and he beckoned Father into the kitchen, whispering to him in an important voice. He had very, very grave news for old Hirsh. His son was dead. The Rabbi had just informed him that morning and he had hurried out from the city in the blinding rain.

They called Hirsh to the kitchen and Mr Segal broke the news to him. At first Hirsh looked incredulous, but as Mr Segal's words sank into his brain an inhuman cry was torn from his throat which set my sister in the bedroom whimpering and cast an uneasy silence over the guests. A moment later he began to cry like a small child and tear at his straggly beard. And I, carried away by his grief and terrified at the sight of an old man crying, cried with him. Both of us filled the room with our wailing until Father angrily pushed me out of the kitchen.

Hirsh stopped crying suddenly. There was a half-insane light in his over-clouded, tiny eyes as, without another word, he shoved Father and Mr Segal aside and ran into the darkness. He shot glances of hate at both of them as he crossed the doorstep.

They followed him. Holding hurricane-lamps they stumbled across the paddock to Hirsh's shed. They pleaded with him, tried to console him, but he didn't answer them. Quickly he harnessed his horse and, bellowing half-articulate curses, he drove away towards the city.

Our guests disappeared overnight, scattered in search of their livelihood. When I came to breakfast next morning I found my parents sitting disconsolately at the table. I sat quiet and somewhat afraid as they talked sadly and wearily.

'This is the end of our community,' Mother said. 'Comes the first puff of wind and it blows away. How can we build on shifting sands? If we can't go back home immediately we must shift to a big city. I can't bear to think we inherit old Hirsh's place.'

And somehow Father was too weary to continue the struggle with her and he agreed that soon we would leave the township. His business wasn't going too well, anyhow, and he was beginning to think anxiously of the treasures in his polished wooden box.

DRUMMOND STREET

Pinchas Goldhar

Pinchas Goldhar was born in Lodz in 1901 to a highly intellectual family. He graduated in German and French literature from Warsaw University and worked at translating stories and plays into Yiddish. He arrived in Australia in 1926 with his father, brothers and sister. Father and sons set up a dyeing business in Melbourne, the comparative cultural desert and the need to earn a living temporarily stilling Goldhar's pen. Between 1931 and 1933 he edited the first Yiddish newspaper in Australia, Australier Leben. He then began writing stories about migrants trying to assimilate into society. This developed into Stories About Australia (1939), the second Yiddish book to be published in Australia. He translated several Australian stories into Yiddish including works by Henry Lawson and Katherine Susannah Pritchard and these were published overseas. His own stories, now translated into English, are considered classics of the migrant genre. He died in Melbourne in 1947.

This story was published in Pinchas Goldhar: (1901—1907): an Assessment by H. Brezniak in 1968.

Drummond Street, a poor, working-class street close to the centre of the prosperous, noisy city of Melbourne, absorbed many Jewish migrants. The houses in Drummond Street are poor and old with rusty, galvanised-iron roofs and peeling walls. From the open doors exudes the smell of sweaty bedding and the odour of poor food. The low windows, covered with cheap, old-fashioned hangings and drab and tattered blinds look blankly but patiently on to silent sidewalks. Drummond Street is empty all day with seldom any passers-by to break the monotony. From the police station which is half obscured by ailing trees there occasionally sidles out a dark-uniformed policeman who disappears immediately like a secret shadow in one of the side streets. At the opposite end of the street is a bar half-clad in polished red tiles.

A dreary, sleepy buzzing can be heard from inside this pub and from time to time the half-closed glass doors spew out a drunkard. The pattern is constant. These men have crumpled clothing and sickly red cheeks. Eyes screw up against the glare of the sun as they scrutinize the street in blinking surprise; with lurching movements and staggering steps they seem to shy away in ponderous fashion from the silence of the street.

An elderly, sweating woman sits on the step of a house and peels green peas and half-rotten cabbage into a dish. Her face is liquor-swollen and her head is covered with scraps of old newspapers into which are rolled her dirty grey hair. These primitive and home-made undulations make her hair resemble a bunch of black and white bananas. A hungry cat arches itself against her legs and, from time to time, pushes its wet nose into the basin of peas.

In the middle of the street, spreadeagled rump uppermost, sprawls a somnolent dog. The whole street seems to be attuned to the warming peace of the long tropic day.

At sunset Drummond Street takes on new life. Motor-bikes roar past and bicycles make soft swishing news in the half-melted asphalt of the road. Housewives, parcels in hand, hurry to prepare a quick meal for their home-coming husbands; children, with sweets clutched in their dirty hands chase each other noisily in the street. Italian ice-cream vendors make the street resound to the sound of the copper bells fixed to their red-painted, gold-lettered barrows. Through a window rasps out the sound of a worn recording of an old waltz, whilst the bar echoes with laughter and the sound of fun. The glass door is never still: fanning backwards and forwards with the constant movement of people

in and out of the pub it wafts a heavy smell of beer into the street. On the steps of the houses tired working-men suck peacefully at pipes or chatter and horse around with their women-folk, or, half-undressed, hairy chests and brown muscles showing in the dusk cool themselves in the evening breeze. A procession clatters down the street; the Salvation Army, hymn on lips and band following disappears into the small Salvation church.

The street lamps flicker to life their electric glow darkening the short, tropic sunset. Youngsters gather outside the now-closed bar, laugh and flirt and play mouth-organs. Girls in light, short, summer dresses wiggle their hips to the sound of the music and their passionate moist eyes shine out of heavily powdered faces. The young men, chests thrust forward strut about and ape their elders by dragging at cigarettes and bumping into the girls. Soon they pair off and disappear into dark corners and the shadowed narrow passageways between the houses and damp, passionate whispers break into the late evening silence. The heavy tropical night clothes Drummond Street in silence and a soft silky darkness.

So lived Drummond Street for many years; a monotonous, hard-working, beer swilling, earthy yet romantic life.

There was a time when Drummond Street looked different. Many years back when gold fever gripped the country adventurers from all over the world stormed to Australia. In those days Drummond Street was a Jewish street. The first Jewish migrants to settle there were from England and Germany, then they were followed by newcomers from Sfat and Jerusalem. Nikolaievsky soldiers who deserted from the army escaped exile here with Jews from Rumania, Hungary, Poland and Galicia. Drummond Street echoed to the sounds of many spoken languages. Jewish shops and small clothing factories were opened. The street was alive. The Jews worked hard, noisily. They and their wives and children worked and saved, had no rest and little sleep and saved penny upon penny. Good times came. The small businesses became large department stores and the little workshops, factories. The Jewish women added flesh and their dark, large eyes became harder and more tired with success.

Drummond Street became too constricted and the Jews began to spread out to other streets in Carlton; later they moved to respectable St. Kilda which had grown up, a suburb of clean villas at the shore of the sea. The little factories and the shops began to move to the city itself and Drummond Street began to die, as factory windows were boarded up and large 'To Let' notices sprouted at every yard.

Then the empty houses were sold to the new poor, to Syrian shirt makers and Indian hawkers. From a rumbustious Jewish life were left only a few poor Jewish market stall-holders and dealers in old clothes. Like an orphan stood a little old house with a dirty window in which an all but erased sign read Hattchija Zionist Organization. Yet, who knows, this half erased sign may have been the thing which drew a new wave of migrants to Drummond Street after the war.

After the war Drummond Street came to life again. After a gap of many years people could again be seen with sad eyes and suffering faces—Jews. They wandered in groups, with searching eyes, down Drummond Street, dressed in new suits from which could be smelled mothballs and on which numerous creases betrayed their fresh unpacking from suitcases. They greet each other with 'Shalom Aleichem', ask about each other's livelihood and joke about the Golden Country, Australia. From the curtained windows and half-open doors suspicious eyes assess the new arrivals and over Drummond Street can be heard the quiet buzz, 'Jews'.

(Translated by R.Z. Schreiber)

LET THOSE WHO FRET

IN MEMORIAM

George Rapp

George Rapp was a passenger on the prison ship Dunera, commandeered by Britain to bring to Australia those men suddenly arrested as 'friendly enemy aliens' after the Allies' defeat at Dunkirk. The change in their conditions, from being allowed to move about freely to being imprisoned and sent to Australia, has never been adequately explained. Australia had no idea what to do with the men and so set up barbed wire encampments in Hay, New South Wales and Tatura, Victoria and hoped the problem would eventually go away. For fifteen months the strangest collection of Europeans became camp mates, trying to adjust to the inhospitable climate and prison conditions. Many were angry, some were able to joke about it. It was unquestionably an enormous bureaucratic bungle on the part of Britain. The injustice of the situation upset most camp inmates. George Rapp, who was imprisoned at Hay was able to see the matter in a somewhat larger perspective.

LET THOSE WHO FRET

Let those who fret in petty discontent,
Of grievances and wrongs, of stale mishap
Be petulant in pain nor see the gap
Between injustice done and justice meant.

I cannot witness the approaching death
Of a whole world and still bewail my fate,
While circling overhead already wait
The silent vultures of the aftermath.

IN MEMORIAM

Have you heard my story most brave
of the thousand dead without grave
in that wonderful town
with the moon upside down
and the wires in need of a shave?

Each man is a corpse, as he sits
decaying and doubting his wits
whilst far, far away, where the night is the day
his world is breaking to bits.

They remember the books they have read
and eat and go tired to bed
and—gruesome to tell—
though they frolic in hell
not one of them knows he is dead.

On a stage where the scene is abstract
and the gestures, the shadow of fact,
their time to beguile,
they quarrel and smile
and believe that they are what they act.

And at times when the distant parade
of life sends the laugh of a maid
or the sound of a bell
deep down into hell
they ponder and are afraid.

So the months and the years go by
and the sands of the deserts that fly
heap a merciless brown
on that wonderful town
of the dead refusing to die.

POEM

Oswald Volkmann

Oswald Volkmann was a pilot in the German Air Force in World War I. Though he was not Jewish his wife was, and he therefore persuaded the firm for which he worked as a commercial traveller in the 1930s to send them to England. After the fall of Dunkirk, Oswald was interned as a 'friendly enemy alien' and sent to Australia aboard the Dunera. His wife remained in Britain. He was sent to Tatura, in Victoria. It was here that he discovered he had a talent for rhyming, which he did mostly in German for the amusement and entertainment of his fellow prisoners. When the camps were finally closed he returned to England.

You have been in Australia for more than a year;
I am sure you can tell me a lot.
As you know I am always desirous to hear
From the man who has been on the spot.

I am eager to listen to your report
Of the harbours and cities there.
Of the beautiful girls, of the cricket sport,
Of the kangaroo, koala bear.

I am sorry I cannot fulfil your desire.
I don't know how Australia looks.
I have been in Tatura behind barbed wire,
So you better enquire at Cook's.

FRAGMENT

Bern Brent

Bern Brent was born in Zagreb in 1922. In London at the beginning of World War II, he was interned as a friendly enemy alien, his parents being of German-Jewish extraction. He was sent to Australia aboard the infamous Dunera and was sent to the camp at Tatura. He served in the Australian defence forces and then took a war service degree in economics and mathematics with a master's degree in education. He joined the Commonwealth Public Service as a teacher-educator, worked in South- East Asia and was a shipboard education officer on migrant ships during the 1950s.

His poems and articles have appeared in many professional and literary journals. Bern is retired and lives in Canberra.

Don't talk aloud in public, never praise

The Continent. Agree at any price:

The English have so many diff'rent ways—

Drink tea with milk. You must assimilate.

Time marches on and on; months fade away;

You understand this new society,

Its language, habits, many a curious way,

Its constitution and mentality.

So when the country is in mortal danger

And everybody's asking: 'Foe or friend?'

Glancing suspiciously at every stranger—

You are interned. At first you understand.

Your case will be reviewed. 'Tis but an error,

A week or two until they set you free.

But they, completely blind and struck with terror

Think otherwise, and ship you 'cross the sea.

There you may scream aloud, appeal for justice,

Lodge your protests in triplicate or pairs,

Type letters, statements, the infernal fact is:

Nobody hears you. Anyhow, who cares?

When you're allowed to wear the rising sun,

The whole procedure proves to be a fake.

You suddenly have ceased to be a Hun.

Two years barbed wire?—Sorry, a mistake.

I HAVE STOLEN A DAY FROM GOD

Benjamin Newman Jubal

B.N. Jubal was born in Vienna in 1901 where he trained as a theatre director. He arrived in Australia in 1939 and was obliged to find work as a factory hand and a cook. He produced some plays in Yiddish at the Kadimah Theatre in Melbourne, and wrote one book, The Smile of Herschale Handle (Currawong 1947), from which this story is taken.

He died in Sydney in 1961.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I herewith denounce myself: I have stolen a day from God.

One morning as I got out of bed and glanced through the window of the 'Mimosa' into the world, an irresistible urge to do something extravagant overwhelmed me. Sky, sun and air seemed to have gone to my head. I decided to steal a day from God.

I sprang out of bed as if I were not myself (usually I hardly drag myself out of bed) as if I were not a forced pleasure-tourist, as if there were no cast-off clothes discarded by fine, wealthy people and as if there were no fine, wealthy people at all.

I whistled ... Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, I whistled. I unearthed from my collection of cast-off clothes a so-called weekend suit (check coat and plain trousers) and put it on. As headgear I chose a green hat with a feather a la Tyrol. I took a blanket and rolled it up like a sausage, fastened its ends together so that it formed a circle and threw it smartly over my shoulder, like an old time infantryman. I packed food, lots of food, bread, cream-cheese and sour pickled cucumber (in Australia, called Jewish cucumber) all 'Made in Carlton.'

After having completed all these preparations for my journey, I glanced round my room, not without a certain malicious joy, smiled at the cast-off clothes, bowed politely, and with dignity, said, 'Ta-ta,' and went.

On the stairs of the 'Mimosa' I bumped into my landlord, who has the characteristic that one bumps into him at all times and at every corner.

'Good morning! Good morning! Good morning!' I greeted him, half singing. 'How are you? How do you do? Nice day to-day!'

The landlord of the 'Mimosa' looked at me as if he thought I was not quite normal.

'Where...' I said, 'where...' I repeated, 'where is fresh air?' I at last managed to say. 'Mountains, sir, I want mountains!' I shouted, drawing mountain ranges in the air with my hands.

My landlord, who since time immemorial has resided in Carlton and who possesses ears trained to cosmopolitan sounds, soon realised what I meant and suggested a place which started with 'Mount.'

I repeated the name several times to engrave it on my memory, said 'Cheerio, Cheerio!' and left.

On the way to the station to which I travelled by foot I behaved as if I were not myself. I did not call out: 'Handle! Old Clothes!' but passed by other people as if I were their equal. After all, one does not steal a day from God for nothing.

On reaching the station, I immediately proceeded to the ticket office. Out of my moneybag which I carefully wore between myself and my shirt, I extracted a brand new pound note and deposited it with a nonchalant gesture of my hand on the counter (from where on earth did I get this Rothschild-like gesture?), mentioned the place recommended by the landlord and said 'Ticket, please!'

Ladies and Gentlemen, I don't know, but I sometimes have the impression that the Australians don't understand English. At any rate, they don't understand my English, because the man in the ticket office said that no such place existed.

'What do you mean, it doesn't exist!' I grew righteously indignant in English. 'Nice state of affairs it doesn't exist! My landlord, Mr. ...' (I could not pronounce the name for excitement) 'Mr. Mimosa told me himself—'

I can't recall the rest of my outburst. Anyhow I assure you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that on a day which I'd stolen from God, I wasn't in a state of mind to give in easily, which, by the way, the man soon realised, too. He issued me a ticket, not merely a ticket, but one which started with the word 'Mount. ..' 'Thank you,' said I. 'Thank you,' said he and we smiled at each other in a friendly fashion as if our opinions had never differed over the 'Mount' of the landlord of the 'Mimosa.'

At the station several trains were waiting. I got into the train which appeared the most likeable and which was not overcrowded. On a day which I have stolen from God, neither will I elbow my way in, nor do I want to be pushed. I immediately took possession of a window seat and stretched my legs out like an Englishman in the state of 'relaxing.' Some of my fellow-passengers seemed to smile at me. Generally I mistrust this kind of smile, but on a day like this, I did not care. 'Herschale,' I said to myself, 'never mind! Take it easy.'

Soon the train started. A train starts gaily on a day which one has stolen from God. I looked out of the window. The world rushed away in the opposite direction and trees and meadows were just thrown behind us. 'Ojoj! What a dear, beautiful world!' What else could I think...

The train stopped at various stations with unpronounceable names, everywhere people got in and out, and I would not have noticed that I had been left alone in the compartment with a lady if she had not spoken to me. The lady addressed me—I wish to stress this point—for I would on no account address an unknown lady. As I smiled from time to time but did not utter a word, she talked the whole time by herself, which didn't seem to disturb her in the least. Eventually she took my hand which made me feel somehow hot (as a matter of fact, I suffer from high blood pressure) and from that moment I stopped hearing anything at all...

When I awakened from my 'high blood pressure,' the train was just pulling into a station whose name started with the word 'Mount.' I jumped up, grabbed my pack, donned my green hat with the feather a la Tyrol, said to the lady who was still talking, 'Madame, the pleasure was mine!' and got out.

At the station exit, the porter who collected the tickets, stopped me.

'That's not your destination!' he said.

'How do you know,' I retorted without understanding him properly.

'O.K.!' he said, 'please yourself.'

'O.K.!' I said, 'I will.'

Soon it dawned on me that the name of the station did not correspond with that on my ticket, that is, the 'Mount—' was right, only the appendix was different. On other days I would have been God knows how furious. To-day, however, I was lenient towards myself.

Outside the station lay the town of the place 'Mount—' with the appendix I had neither chosen nor desired. In the middle of the town stood a monument to commemorate its heroes fallen in war. I lifted my green hat with the feather a la Tyrol and thought ... No, on a day I had stolen from God I forbade myself reflections of any kind.

On the opposite side to the station stood the so-called shopping centre, consisting of a store selling every type of merchandise, and housing at the same time the Post Office, a Savings Bank Branch and the 'Club for Progress and Beauty.' Besides, there were two churches—you'll find competition everywhere—a State School and a Dance Hall. The cafe 'Toddle Inn' was closed, so that I could not toddle in, which I probably would not have done in any case, as I was carrying my own provisions.

The 'Club for Progress and Beauty' seemed to be extremely active, as witness the broken bench which stood in the centre of the town, carrying the name of the club. I would have liked to sit down on it, but a horse was standing nearby. 'Pardon me,' I said to the horse. But the horse did not stir from the spot. As I avoid the neighbourhood of horses on principle, I did not sit down.

I left the town and proceeded in the direction which I liked best. As a matter of fact, all directions were beautiful. The world was full of sun and colour. My God, what a painter God is! I walked between trees and flowers and mountains came towards me, 'How do you do!' I shouted. 'Nice day, to-day!' Tiny houses popped up here and there. Nature seemed to have absorbed them into her life. Horses and cows were lazing in the paddocks. 'How do you do!' I shouted to them. 'I have stolen a day from God!' 'Mooooooo,' answered a cow. 'Hihihih,' neighed a horse. 'Moooo,' I replied, 'Hihih.''

All my life I had longed to be at liberty to imitate animals. Somewhere, deep down, I am a comedian. And now I could afford it. Funny, it sometimes takes a lifetime till one has the chance to be a boy...

The farther I went, the wilder and more natural became Nature and traces of human interference became less. Trees grew according to their own will. Flowers blossomed according to their own moods. Animals, insects and birds walked, crept and flew wherever and in whatever direction they wished. I shouted something aloud. It was a cry which I had to release; not a word—but a naked sound which had wings and carried a melody. It was a cry of joy over the beauty of a day which I had stolen from God...

Eventually I came to water. You know, Ladies and Gentlemen, that wanderers always prefer to camp at the water's edge. I fancied myself as a happy, voluntary wanderer.

'Hersch,' I said to myself (I felt so strong that I addressed myself as 'Hersch'), 'make yourself comfortable.'

I put my equipment down, took my shoes off and put my feet in water. Imagine taking a pair of sixty-year-old, tired feet and soaking them in a clear mountain stream. No, you can't describe a feeling like that! I pulled my feet out of the water and started running over the grass. The earth was warm. The cold earth was warm ... Then I sat down to eat manna. My bread, cheese and cucumber tasted like manna. They had every imaginable taste. Suddenly I heard a voice calling: 'How are you, brother?' I looked round and saw a man coming towards me. He was big and gnarled like an old tree, and he had a long, grey beard and young eyes. He was clad in innumerable rags. He was followed by a rotund black-and-white dog.

'Meet my friend,' he said, pointing to the dog, sat down beside me and began to eat.

'Swaggie?' he asked me.

'Hm-hm,' I replied, without understanding what he meant.

He ate with enormous appetite and told me various stories. I did not understand him, and yet I did. He told me about the country and about the roads. About the bush.

We stretched out and slept.

Then we woke up and walked on. The 'friend' followed us.

He was singing and so was I.

'Traralala ... Tidliampampam ... Tralalala ...' The world was magnificent.

'Brother,' I cried, 'look.'

The sun was aflame over the mountains.

The world was singing.

We arrived at a station. We said good-bye and I left to travel home.

I was silent. I was afraid of the days ahead which, so to speak, I would not steal from God.

On my return to the 'Mimosa' my landlord hurried towards me.

'Mr. Herschale,' he said, trembling with excitement, 'a burglar ... a thief ... he broke ... A thief in your room!'

I ran up the stairs to my room. Great disorder reigned everywhere. All the things not worth stealing were lying on the floor.

The clothes which I would not have sold for any money in the world had not been stolen—Thank God!

This was the fate of a man who had stolen a day from God.

STARTING SCHOOL

MASTERING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Fannia Goldberg Rudkowski

Fannia Goldberg Rudkowski (Weingartner) was born in Danzig in 1929 and arrived in Sydney with her parents in 1938, assisted by Australian Jewish Welfare who stipulated that they settle in a rural area. Her father, an academic in Poland, became an orange orchardist at Lake Wyangan. Fannia attended Griffith High School and after graduating with a high distinction in English from Sydney University, won a scholarship to study literature at Bryn Mawr University, in Pennsylvania. She married in America and has lived there ever since, working as a freelance editor, specialising in museum publications. These two stories were written when she was eleven years old and appeared in Oasis, the Griffith High School magazine, in 1941.

STARTING SCHOOL

I awoke at six o'clock with the feeling that something was going to happen. It was then that it came to me—I was going to begin school at last, and a real school at that. At the age of six I thought I had done many remarkable things: I had been lost about four times, slept opposite a house which had been burned to the ground, and ridden through a forest covered in snow in a sleigh; but school . . . Ah, that was something really exciting. Proudly I inspected the new leather bag, on which lay a large shiny black slate, complete with sponge and chalk. I could not sleep any more, and when at seven o'clock mother came to waken me I was sitting on the bed drawing on my slate.

At breakfast I could do nothing but talk about school. How long mother seemed to take in getting ready! Half an hour later we were both standing in the large crowded hall of the Danzig School, waiting with many others to be interviewed. Every minute seemed like an hour until I was enrolled and we were all placed in the different forms. When the time came to say good-bye, I still felt very confident, and looked scornfully down on those who had burst into tears; but when I came to the top of the stairs and could not see mother any more, my confidence began to fade.

However, at the end of the school day, I left the large buildings in a very happy frame of mind, for, having found old friends and made new ones, I felt that I must have been attending school all my life. I found mother near the entrance, waiting for me and holding a gaily decorated dunce's cap upside down and filled with sweets, fruit and toys. Most of the other children were holding similar ones, for it is the custom to give them to the children on their first school day.

Then I had my photograph taken. I have it now: a small shy girl I was, with small black boots (for it was winter), and the ribbon to my collar was bigger than my head. My new case and the dunce's cap completed a gay little picture. So my first school day was very happy, and I hope that my last will be equally so.

MASTERING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

When, in 1938, we boarded the Oronsay, en route for Australia, we had not the slightest idea of the English language, but were comforted by the knowledge that we had obtained the best dictionaries

available. However, we did not have to wait long before our hopes were sadly disappointed. That very first night, having taken our places at the table, we watched father take out the valued dictionary and pore over it. Having referred to it for a long time, he proudly ordered dinner. Poor father, how helpless he felt the next instant when he saw the puzzled look that crept across the waiter's face, and he was very relieved when a kind neighbour came to the rescue. It was this same person who later drew our attention to the fact that father had, as is done in many languages, pronounced the words as they are spelt, making them unrecognisable.

Many other such humorous incidents occurred. This is one of them: A friend of ours, having told us that he could speak English fluently, offered to show us how well he was understood, and as he had laughed loudly at father's mistakes we were all eager to hear him. That night, sitting at our table, he ordered his dinner. 'Some meat for myself and my husband, please!' (meaning his wife).

The waiter's face contorted into the most ridiculous grimace as he strove in vain to conceal his merriment, while the other diners coughed to cover their laughter. We, blissfully unaware of any great error our friend had made, thought the waiter had a private joke, and looked admiringly at our clever friend. It was not till a few days later that the joke in its true light reached our ears. We laughed as heartily as ever, and now, whenever any one of us mention this incident, I say, 'Pride before fall!' and mother adds, 'Poor husband! He did have a bad time of it after all!'

WHERE A MAN BELONGS

David Martin

This story first appeared in Unity magazine in 1951.

Mr. Cowen sat up in bed and was aware of a stale taste in his mouth. He had been drinking the night before; moderately, but he was unused to beer and had done it only to be matey. The hard sun of the wheat country, glaring already at this hour, fell on to his face and hurt his eyes. Groaning, he threw back the blanket and put his feet down on the uncovered floor.

In the corner of the room—a clean, bare swept room in a commercial hotel—stood the heavy case that contained his sample range: medium priced cotton frocks manufactured in Melbourne. It was a good range, but Mr. Cowen had little hope of doing business; what he had seen of the town the evening before had discouraged him. This was the first time that he had come so far west, and already he regretted his curiosity.

Dressing slowly, he gazed out from behind the yellowing net curtains. Across the road there was another hotel, an identical twin to the one where he was staying. The railway line passed it close by, trailing away into the hazy plain that lay flat and empty until wheat and sky met at the horizon. It was a long, meandering township, its entrance guarded by the two pubs, with the wheat investing it closely. Mr. Cowen thought of wheat as 'corn,' not because he was an Englishman (he was a Hungarian when last he had a passport), but because to his modern language master in Budapest any grain that went into a loaf was corn. Mr. Cowen had no energy left for these small adjustments. At his age the big ones were tiring enough.

He could see into the yard of the hotel opposite, shaded by a generous Moreton Bay fig. An Aviary stood in the sun. A grey parrot clung expectantly to the wire netting and small, multi-coloured song birds were flashing from side to side. A girl came out to empty the slops; a red-haired young person, who whistled like a man. Up the street the newspaper boy came cycling. Mr. Cowen watched him throwing his bundles over fences and low walls. One paper was caught in the branches of a tree and Mr. Cowen, with a little spurt of interest, waited to see if the boy would dismount to retrieve it. The boy however, merely turned to gaze back at the paper over his shoulder and cycled on cheerfully. For a moment amusement struggled with irritation in Mr. Cowen's mind. Irritation won; he felt that if the paper had been his, he would have liked to slap the lad's supercilious face. Next, the postman came cycling along the footpath, as carefree as the newsboy and the girl with the slops. 'There'll be mail today,' Mr. Cowen thought, turning away from the window.

'It's going to be a scorcher,' the shirt-sleeved landlord remarked as Mr. Cowen entered the breakfast room. 'My oath!' Mr. Cowen replied with assumed jauntiness, walking across to his table, from where a blue envelope beckoned. He sensed the landlord's astonishment at the back of his head and inwardly cursed himself for being a fool to use slang terms without being able to pronounce them properly. But the proprietor was not astonished; he had been unable to place Mr. Cowen's exact origin and decided that he was probably a new chum, a Londoner.

The contents of the letter did not improve Mr. Cowen's humour. It was from Hungary, had followed him all over the State and was addressed to Mr. Jack Cohen. His brother was a slow learner; it had taken him three months to comprehend that Jacob had given way to Jack and it would take three more before he understood what had happened to the family name. There was nothing startling in

the letter. Mr. Cowen's claims for compensation from the German Government for the robbery of his old business were collecting dust in Bonn. A big sum was involved, but his brother wrote that there was no hope of his getting a visa for Germany to stir matters up.

Mr. Cowen munched his lamb's fry and listened to the conversation at the next table, where two of his drinking companions from last night had settled down. One was a traveller, the other a local farmer in town to buy a new tractor. They had waved their napkins at him and resumed their talk where they had left off last night. They were arguing about the town's racecourse and what official rating it deserved. He found their talk strange and soothing, pleasant like the fan that gently hummed beneath the ceiling and the homely clatter of dishes from the kitchen. He made a mental note not to buy a paper, but to give the news and all its bother a miss.

The traveller leant over: 'I say ... I saw that letter on your table. Mind if I have the stamp? My little bloke collects 'em ...' Mr. Cowen handed over the empty envelope and promised to see whether he had more stamps in his suit-case. He realised too late that the letter was addressed to Mr. Cohen, but refused to let it worry him. After all, it was only for the sake of convenience.

When he went out the landlord called from the tap room that he had a registered letter for him. It was lying athwart an ashtray on the beer-stained bar, to be safe from the sticky moisture. The shutters of the room were fastened, and still imprisoned the smell and fumes of last night's easy hours. In the half gloom the landlord waved the docket on which Mr. Cowen had to sign. As he saw his name spelled out in the large letters of his lawyer's old-fashioned typewriter his stomach muscles contracted and saliva gathered in his mouth. He had to lean hard on the pen to affix his name without trembling.

He was still shaking when he emerged into the street. It was too early to call on his only two possible customers, but he wanted to be in the open, away from the lonely confine of his room. 'Open the letter,' he said to himself, 'what is the matter with you? Why fall into a panic? What does it dignify now? Even if you haven't got it—they won't do anything to you. You're all right either way.' But his heart was beating fast and he had walked the distance of two blocks before he stopped and once more drew the letter from his pocket. It, too, had been forwarded after him. 'Risky, risky,' he thought, 'it could have been lost.'

Suddenly he had a surpassingly clear vision of the detective who had questioned him. What a face! It was impossible to say whether it was hostile or friendly. Mr. Cowen had a nervous aversion to all policemen, which was natural after years of shuffling in and out of police stations for permits and registrations. A sordid business. But that detective! And the waiting. The running, the begging and the waiting. And now!

He had stopped outside a milk bar, still closed, and his face looked back at him from the plate-glass window. 'Do I look old?' he wondered. 'Is this a middle-aged or an old face? What's happening to us all—what am I doing here?' He turned and looked up and down the street. Two-storeyed houses, the cold spirals of neon signs, buffoonish and stupid in this dusty rurality, a petrol station in the far end where the road, having vaulted a bridge, became country again. And he in the middle of it all. With the same sharp clearness with which the security officer's face had come back to him he remembered that, as a child, he had sometimes tried to memorise a scene, an occasion such as when he had taken leave from the ocean after his first seaside holiday. Here I am, he thought, in Australia. I look at my face.

He tore open the letter. Only a few lines in a cautious lawyers' English: *We beg to inform you. . .you have been notified. . .prepared to grant you a certificate of naturalisation.*

Carefully, he folded the letter and put it in his pocket. It's over, he thought. I am still the same man. My God! After so much wandering, so much dying. Prepared to grant you. He tried to calm himself and to be philosophical, but it was too difficult. He would have liked to go and tell somebody, perhaps that big landlord of his hotel with the strong forearms. But instead he walked on, smiling to himself and sighing. He would tell the owner of the frock shop. They would have a drink on it, whether or not he booked an order.

So that detective who had interviewed him had not been hostile. He had merely asked his questions in the way of business. Naturally. There would be no more questions. No waiting with a dozen other silent aliens on chairs along the walls of drab police stations. No longer that feeling of guilty innocence. He remembered the day when he had not paid his tram fare and when he had been summoned, and the silly, fear-inspired letter he had sent to the tram people. A whole night he had lain awake, imagining what the magistrate would say to him—*you come here, we show you hospitality, and then you go and cheat us*—but the magistrate had not spoken to him at all and he felt degraded as a coward. Of course, even now things could never be as they were in the old days. That was not possible; the old days were dead, they had been killed. But still! 'An Australian,' he said, 'fair dinkum!'

The heat became more intense. He began to enjoy the splendid, nourishing warmth that made the country fruitful, held the town in a baker's grip, and made the people free and careless. The farmer who was buying a tractor was driving down the middle of the road in a sulky and by his side sat a red-cheeked, bald-headed man, hale and of his own age. The bald-headed man held the reins; he moved his lips and dipped his whip as he passed. A countryman of mine, thought Mr. Cowen. He's my countryman and I am his. Well!

Happily excited, he pursued his way along the High Street past the school. Through open windows came the chirruping of a hundred voices. A woman sang out, 'Ow.. .Owl!' And back came the high-pitched, eager echo, 'Owl.' Somewhere in the building a piano was tinkling the scales; up and down, up and down, up and down. Mr. Cowen walked on swiftly until he reached the bridge and crossed over.

A little way down on the far bank of the sluggish creek, pulled into the reluctant shade of a withered tree, stood a little humpy made of two sheets of corrugated iron and a slab of stringy bark. In the entrance to this refuge, surrounded by two kangaroo dogs and a heap of old cooking utensils and rusty tins, sat a black-fellow sucking at an empty pipe. He sat as if he had been waiting there a long time for Mr. Cowen to come along.

He was a full-blood of undetermined age, the first of his race whom Mr. Cowen, city bound these five years, had encountered. His face was shrivelled and bony, with wisps of white hair growing out from the chin. He was dressed in a torn old khaki shirt that hung down over a pair of greasy drill trousers and his feet were unshod. A pair of boots, however, lay by his side. The old man had been trying to stitch them with a piece of wire but had apparently given up the task, and now, was just taking his ease.

Mr. Cowen gazed at him from the bridge.

The old man leaned forward and called out, 'Got a bit tobacco, Mister?'

Mr. Cowen fumbled for a packet of cigarettes and, ducking through a fence, went round where the old man was waiting for him. He handed over the full packet of cigarettes, which was accepted with a military salute. A feeling as of pity welled up in Mr. Cowen. Also a consciousness of the strangeness

of their meeting; here were they, the oldest and the newest Australian, and the new one had a right to be sorry for the old one. A right to be sorry! What good was it to the black man to be an Australian? What good indeed? Only to be left, rotting and abandoned, with a slum all to himself at the edge of the town.

The aborigine crumbled two cigarettes into his cupped hand and deftly filled his pipe with the golden tobacco. He lit up and began to smoke. An expression of great joy spread over his dark, taut features. After a few moments he took the pipe out of his mouth and addressed Mr. Cowen:

'You belong this place?'

Mr. Cowen shook his head. The desire for communication was still strong in him, though he did not know how he could explain to this native ancient.

'Yes, I belong here,' he said smilingly, looking down on the questioner. 'But I've come a long way. I am a Jew. You don't know what that is, I suppose?'

The old man put his pipe back and thought for a moment, his bushy brows, long like two ears of wheat, contracting. At last, he removed the pipe again and scratched his teeth with the stem.

'Jew,' he said, nodding his head with sober deliberation. 'I know Jew. Jew, him belong fellas kill Jesus?'

Mr. Cowen turned and walked quickly back to the fence and the bridge.

From

BETWEEN SKY AND SEA

Herz Bergner

Herz Bergner was born in Radinmo, Poland in 1907 to a family of writers and painters. From 1928 he had various short stories written in Yiddish published in periodicals in Europe, Israel (then Palestine) and America. He arrived in Melbourne with his wife in 1937. Between Sky and Sea (Dolphin, 1946) is a novel about migrants who never arrive at their destination. It was translated from the Yiddish by Judah Waten and won the Australian Literature Society gold medal award in 1946, an enormous achievement for a non-Anglo-Saxon writer. Many of his stories, all of which were written in Yiddish, concentrate on the post-war migrant experience. He published five collections of short stories and three novels. He died in Melbourne in 1970.

For five weeks the dirty, old Greek tramp steamer had drifted painfully over stormy waters without sighting land. She creaked with age as she allowed herself to be tossed by the green waves which played with her like young children tormenting a senile old man. It seemed as though the ship had lost its way and would forever trudge across the seas. Nothing had been seen but sky and sea and the people on deck were weary of gazing into the distance, hoping that a fragment of land would swim into their vision. They were now accustomed to the steely glare of the sun during the day when they could not keep their eyes open, and to blackness of night when they could not recognize each other. The order that no light was to be shown at night, not even a match was to be struck, had been given as soon as the ship sailed into the open sea.

On dark nights, when no moon shone, a solid tarry darkness surrounded the ship. She moved slowly like a black hearse and the Jews moved about aimlessly on the deck and the narrow, slippery, worn steps of the spiral staircase. In the darkness they groped blindly with their hands as they stumbled against each other, unable to find a resting place. Men looked for their wives and wives for their husbands. Children who had lost their mothers screamed in the black night and their frightened cries spread fear.

'Muma! Mu-ma! Where are you, Muma?'

Good friends who had talked for hours during the day passed each other like strangers. Suspiciously they allowed everybody to pass, recognizing friends only by their voices. A familiar voice brought warmth and friendliness and drew them together as if in a new-found joy.

'That's Fabyash, isn't it?' One man stopped another, touching him with his hands and peering at him short-sightedly.

'Am I right? Hah?'

'Yes, Yes, that's right. It's me, Fabyash. Why should a man be crawling around so late in the dark? It's too terrible to believe. You can feel the blackness with your hands.'

Although the Captain had ordered them to stay in their cabins and to go to bed early, they could not stay still; every-one was drawn outside. How could they go to sleep so early? From day to day things became worse. Overnight new orders were born. Pasted on the rotting, greasy walls of the boat, notices screamed in strange, big letters, crudely written. Then, one bright day, they found a new placard on the wall. It was cut from ordinary packing paper and still smelt of fresh ink, and it ordered

that water was to be used only in an emergency for drinking purposes. Food had been supplied twice daily, but the dismal stew was shrinking from day to day, getting thinner and less plentiful. And the notices warned the crowd to remain quiet and not to become alarmed.

Instead of calming the passengers, these last words cast a shadow of fear, and people began to say that things must be bad. They won't admit how bad things are! The passengers purposely avoided the walls on which the notices were posted, afraid of new menaces. And in order to quieten their fears, uninvited, they began to creep into each other's cabins. They talked about the countries they had wandered through since they had been driven from their homes, and they outdid each other in knowledge of the new country for which they were bound—Australia. Although no one knew much, or had even heard much, about this new land, each one had a great deal to say about the country, its people and their customs...

Fabyash knew for certain that the country was surrounded by water on all sides and the people lived by catching fish, which they exported to the rest of the world. He was a small, energetic young man who always knew more than anyone else and nothing in the world could surprise him. He always knew everything in advance, and he had a bellyful of knowledge about Australia . . . But Zainval Rockman never could stand Fabyash's boastings and with a wave of the hand he rejected this information. He was always looking for an excuse to show that Fabyash knew nothing and was nothing but a blatherskite. This time he really did talk Fabyash down and make him look small. He said that in the new country people lived by timber. The country is still wild and has plenty of forests, so the people export timber to the rest of the world...

Hearing this, Mrs. Hudess, a Warsaw woman, who was proud that she came from a big city, rose from her place. She said neither Fabyash nor Rockman knew what they were talking about. The country lives neither on fish nor timber. Australia is a country like any other country, with many big cities. Let Rockman and Fabyash stop talking nonsense and making Australia into a desert.

In order to support her words she called her two little daughters, who had gone to school and learned something about the matter. She loved to show her children off, whether it was the right time or not. She thought very highly of their talents...

But the daughters took no notice of their mother, and they didn't come to her. As usual they were busy with their doll which they carried about with them from morning till night. This doll was the only thing they had saved from the terrible holocaust which had destroyed their home. Everyone had grabbed something, just whatever he could, and they had barely escaped with their lives. The girls had rescued the doll and now they wouldn't part with her; they slept with her and took her walking, holding her hands as if she were a little child. Now the doll was old and worn and couldn't close its eyes when it fell asleep, nor could it utter the old fearful cry when pressed in the stomach. The younger child spoke to the doll in exactly the same way as her mother spoke to her, whenever she saw her, and was overjoyed anew that she had left behind all the horrors and now found herself in a safe place.

'My treasure.. .my precious.' The child caressed the doll just like her mother fondled her.

'Bless you. My heart swells when I look at you, and I saved you just by a hair's breadth. But where is your father? Where is my bread-giver? God in Heaven save him!' And the little child clasped her hands, rolling her eyes to Heaven, and pretended to wipe away her tears with her handkerchief, just like her mother did.

All day the children were busy, running around the deck, immersed in their own world. They had become so accustomed to the ship, the everlasting sea and sky, that they could hardly remember the land. But the adults searched for the shore on the far horizons, in the sky and in the water, so that everything swam before their eyes. They suffered from seasickness, vomiting green gall until they hardly had strength to bear any more. Reb Lazar, the grocer, recited the psalms, intoned prayers from the sacred book, studied the Talmud, and argued loudly that a Jew must never lose his beliefs so long as life remained. A man must have faith, must trust in the Almighty! He told himself that he was not afraid of death if that was the Almighty's wish, if it was written in Heaven so. But it is a pity for a Jew not to be buried in sanctified earth according to the custom.

And Fabyash shouted that it was his fate to die at sea instead of in his home which had been destroyed. He had been robbed of all his belongings, trodden down and left with only the shirt on his back. His heart bled every time he looked at his children.

'Me—well—never mind me! But what have the children done?'

He didn't believe the sea was safe and the Greek captain didn't look like a Greek to him. He could hardly bear to say it, but the captain looked like a German, an enemy of the Jews! It seemed to him that the Gentile went about his ship silent and angry.

One day Fabyash ran down to the cabins, shouting:

'It's a story without an end! I swear the ship has turned back!... With my own eyes I saw the ship turn round! I always said we'd have to watch the Captain. Heaven knows where the Gentile will take us yet. All he wants is to get rid of us few Jews, I will bet anything that he is a German!... He is as much a Greek as I am a Turk.'

The passengers had been wandering about the ship trying to give each other courage and they had been unable to understand why the ship moved so slowly. Fabyash's words alarmed them for a moment, but they soon began to disagree with him, especially the women.

'Hold your tongue! . . they shouted. 'The man has taken giggle-water and goes about babbling like an old woman. Look at the hero!... A fine man you are! Fancy calling you a man!'

Fabyash couldn't escape from the women, nor could he say any more, so he kept his thoughts locked up inside him. He even refused to answer the distinguished Warsaw doctor who kept on pestering him. The doctor was half senile and wore long hair, and a thick, grey, aristocratic moustache. He had been reminded of his Jewish ancestry by Nazi soldiers who had called him 'Hund kerl!' and 'Sau-judge!' and had hanged his only son in his own home and before his father's eyes. Ever since then the doctor had refused to wash himself or to comb his long hair. He wandered around unkempt and dishevelled, his trousers unbuttoned and a half senile smile on his face. His wife followed him with a wet towel, as a mother follows her child, to wash its face and hands. On board ship the doctor tried all the time to get closer to the other Jews. He stroked the children's heads and patiently listened to the women telling him about their illnesses. And always he made the same bitter joke to Fabyash.

'You don't feel like diving into the sea just now, Pan Fabyash, heh? The water must be wet.'

The doctor never left Fabyash alone; he was always peering into his face with his foolish, good-natured smile and talking about his son as if he were still alive. But at the same time he had noticed, with a passionate fire in his tear-filled old eyes, a couple who never mixed with anyone else and were completely taken up with each other. The whole ship talked about them, amazed that a man

and his wife, who were no longer young, were never seen apart, and that they looked as lovingly into each other's eyes as on the day after the wedding.

Nathan and Ida were absorbed in each other and nursed the great sorrow that had overtaken them so suddenly. Perhaps their sorrow was forgotten so long as they could sit so closely together for, deeply hidden, some joy lived within them. But they buried their happiness and cursed themselves for their evil thoughts. They clung to each other, always with the ready excuse that now, in their great sorrow, they had to take care of each other. Right from that time in Greece when the Jewish merchant had received them so hospitably and almost forcibly put them on the ship, they had been inseparable. They had stuck together while the ship floated, rusty bowels creaking, tossed like a broken box on the frothing waters. Nathan was afraid to leave Ida for a single moment; she might do something terrible. In her agony she must always be able to turn to him, and he felt better sitting near her with only one wish in his mind, that the ship should never reach the shore, where he would be forced to crawl back into life again. Better that the ship should remain eternally at sea...

On moonlight nights they would sit together looking at the water and watching the moonlight break over the waves like fragments of white glass, then pour its molten silver into the depths of the sea. Even when the sea was stormy and raged and roared, opening great chasms, tossing the ship from side to side and covering it with foaming water, they would not retire to their cabins. They would remain in a corner and watch how it became suddenly dark. A mist spread over the sea, joining it to the sky in one blanket of haze. Then lightning, in tongues of fire, split the heavy bulging sky, like squirming fiery whips, lighting up the darkness and leaving the world for a moment in a blaze of light. The sea boomed and thundered with a thousand voices. Thunder reverberated across the sky as though iron-hooped barrels were being rolled, until it seemed that the whole world was quivering and breaking...

Nathan and Ida liked to stand in a corner and watch this wild game until their heads swam and everything danced and turned before their eyes. They stood behind the rope barrier which kept the passengers from that part of the deck that the waves flooded. Everyone else suffered from seasickness and went around half dead, but Ida and Nathan didn't feel so bad and looked every danger in the eye.

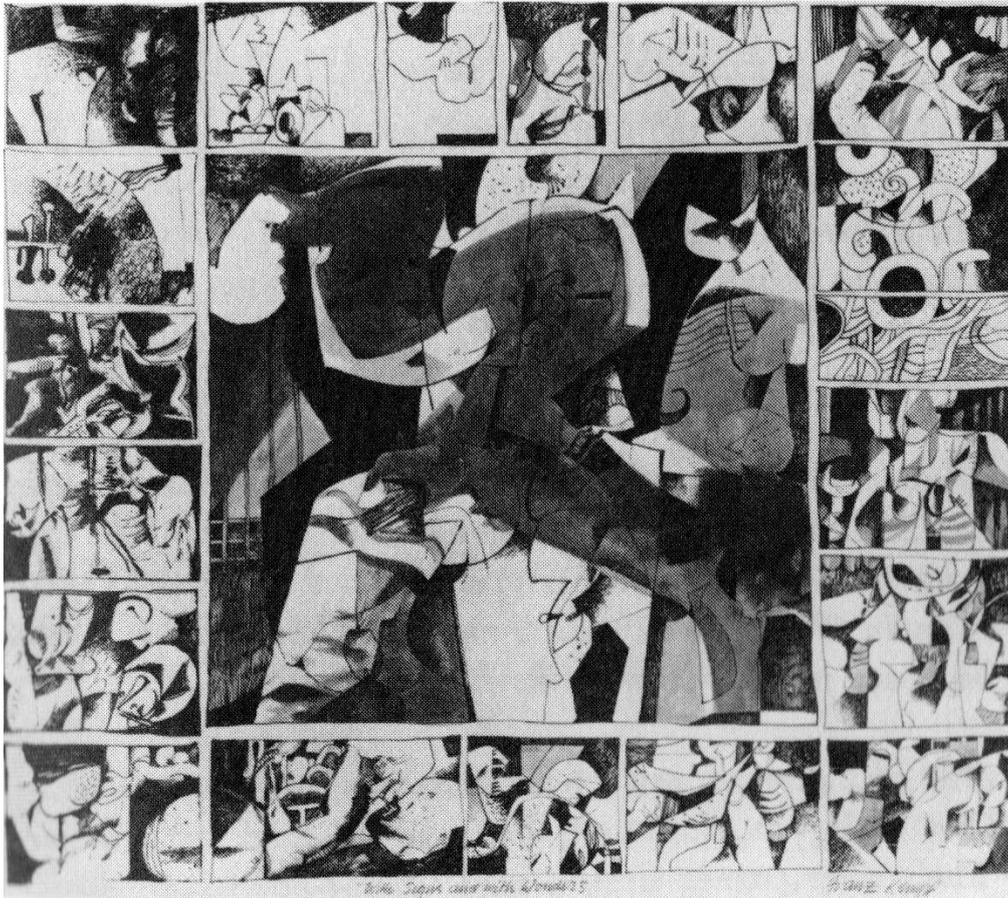
Every time a wave washed over the deck as if to swallow the ship, Ida nestled closer to Nathan. He embraced her gently, with the same emotion that he had felt years ago when he had comforted her after her father had struck her. Then he had stroked her disordered hair and felt her soft, quivering, girlish shoulders. Her hot tears scalded his fingers, a tremor had passed through him and he had been overcome with passion. Ida then discovered that she was not indifferent to him. Although Nathan was her eldest sister's husband, she nestled closer to him and wished that his caresses would go on for ever. They so sweetly healed the pain and shame that her father had caused by striking her, a girl old enough to be a bride, in front of Nathan.

Even now on the ship, where fate had brought them together, as if on purpose, Ida felt happier by Nathan's side, although she would not admit it to herself, trying to stifle the truth. Just as Ida reminded Nathan of his home and his wife and child, so Nathan reminded Ida of her husband and child. They had very little to do with the other people on the boat and they always sat apart, absorbed in their own great sorrow. Although Ida sometimes did not want to see Nathan, and sat alone in her cabin, he tried to keep her always under his eye, for he felt that he must not leave her now. And whenever the seas raged Nathan particularly wanted Ida by his side on the deck, hoping that she would forget her troubles. In the presence of danger, he now felt how close she was to him, and she reminded him of his wife and child who were lost somewhere on the way when they fled

from their home. And more than ever she reminded him of the years when she was a girl and lived like a stranger in her father's home, which had already been disintegrating greatly and had been finally destroyed by the Germans...

PART3

1960s and 1970s



Franz Kempf b. Australia 1926

With Signs and With Wonders 1970.

Drawing in black ink on craft paper. Image 530mm x 620mm.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

Franz Kempf was born in Melbourne in 1926 and studied at the National Gallery School of Art. He studied in Europe with Donati and Kokoshka and now lives in Adelaide where he lectures at the South Australian School of Art. He is a painter and printmaker, his special interest being in volume and spatial perspective.

WANDERING JEWS

Nancy Keesing

Nancy Keesing was born in Sydney in 1923. She was educated at Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, Frensham, and Sydney University, graduating with a degree in social studies. She has worked as a freelance writer since 1951 and has a number of books to her credit. Her publications include books of poetry, literary criticism, children's books, a memoir, anthologies in which her work appears or which she compiled, a biography and much more. She has been chairperson of the Literature Board of the Australia Council and has been on the management committee of the Australian Society of Authors and editor of the Society's journal, the Australian Author. She has been an active member of the English Association (publishers of Southerly,) and a board member of Overland magazine. In 1979 she was made a member of the Order of Australia.

This poem first appeared in the Bridge in 1966.

Out of Palestine, out of Babylon,
Out of Egypt, Persia, Arabia,
Their trees turned desert, hills to rock,
Forsaken by rain, grown desolation
From dark rain of blood...
Scholars? Teachers? Peasants? Artisans?
Out of arched stone synagogues, carrying
Lore in narrow heads, law on careful parchment,
They wandered, furrowing the face of centuries
With shod foot, hoof beat, cart, litter, river barge...
And tramped again—road, camel, and caique
Into Spain. Into song, into court of Caliph...

Breeding, across the face of centuries
Boys like hawks and girls like glittering
Fruit-eating birds that peck in orange groves,
And stern old turbanned men with magic,
Algebra and music, surging, casketed
Behind subtle eyes and faces like rock...

And Spain, the golden, opulent, fruitful
Split like an over-ripe citron to spew them
Across grey oceans... Some to Holland
To peer out of paintings; where
Thin, long, beaky

Semitic faces ponder astrolabes;
Dissected animal cadavers; manuscripts;
Or lurk as foils—the fine-boned, dark-skinned
Contrast beside the portly housewife
Who plucks her partridges in profusion
Of nuts, grapes, peaches, fish, and wine-skins...

Beckoned by Cromwell, warts, Bible, money-bags.
Lore in their hawk heads, law on parchment
Ladino in their mouths and into England. ..

Seven tall brothers spurned the hungry forties,
Sailed from England out to New Zealand
Clean round the Horn. They braced to sloping
Decks sleet-slippery, jutted fierce beards
At sheer green ice-cliffs depending over
Spars and masts and topsails, dwarfing
Lore and Law. While rime made brittle
Seven long, lean enduring faces
That, gratefuller than any who stumbled on Sabatyon
Turned to the Land of the Long White Cloud
And found the Maoris, locked in legend
Living by myths of the world's creation
In cool and fruitful rain-filled forests
And regions of sulphur and soil thin as skin,
A land recalling first chapter of Torah...

And found the Maoris (locked in legend
Wrapped like hawks in pride and feathers,
Stout and warrior-muscled, but breeding
Beaky, thin, fair sons of chieftains)
Strangely familiar, as if known somewhere,
And dimly remembered, despite their features
Scored and cauterized into patterns
Peculiarly atavistic, allusive
Of Egyptian? Indian? Persian? Akkadian?
In Eighteen-hundred-and-forty-three.

From

UNICORN AMONG THE WATTLES

Harry Marks

Harry Marks was a fourth-generation Australian, born in Melbourne in 1932. He served in the defence forces during World War II and lived for a year in England. He worked as editor of Concern and Australian New Writing as well as serving on the executive committee of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and of the Athenaeum Club. He also wrote many articles and radio scripts. His biography of Alan Marshall, I Can Jump Oceans, won the 1977 Weikhart Award. Harry died in Melbourne the same year.

Unicorn Among the Wattles was published posthumously by Hyland House in 1979.

He had put off this day. The day when he would have to face working for one man, for one wage, for one, God forbid, lifetime. And, whether he worked in them or not, he needed some decent clothes. He hated the thought of wearing a tie. No, he wouldn't wear one. At all costs he must get a job where they would let him have his shirt open at the neck. Still, he needed a properly fitting suit. To go out in. He needed shorts, too. Come to think of it, he needed most of the trappings in which a city of propriety clothes its men. But he hesitated. He didn't fancy the haughty, nose-in-the-air stare he knew he'd get from sales people in the stores. And not a damned thing of Stumpy's was big enough to borrow.

'Tell you what,' said Stumpy, lighting up with the idea, 'I'll take you to the Vic. Market. Me Mum always took us when we were kids, every week, to get the fruit and vegies.'

'Who do you think I am—Adam? It's getting too cold for cabbage leaves.'

'Take my tip, Mike, you'll get everything you need there, a darned sight cheaper than in the shops. . '

' . . Now these, for instance. How about these?' And, pulling the elastic to its limits, Stumpy held up a pair of outsize peach- coloured bloomers.

'No, wouldn't suit me,' laughed Michael. 'Besides, they're not my size.'

They were wandering down the narrow market lanes crowded on each side with stalls, trestle-to-trestle, crammed with clothes old and new, for every occasion from birth to death. Clothes piled, hung and boxed; around and in front of them the vendors stood shouting the virtues of their wares and the value of their prices. Their voices set a succession of booby traps to trip the unwary. And one had only to stop momentarily to look at a garment, to have loom alongside a rugged-up figure bulging with layers of clothing beneath the coat—and a 'Very good quality, very cheap', while chill winds ran up and down the lanes.

Michael and Stumpy, several parcels under their arms, stood examining neck-to-knee combinations. A young woman with her hair in a bun and her cheeks pinched by the cold was attending to an elderly man, but she called to them, 'Won't be a mo.'

'I dunno.' The old man shook his head again and again. 'I dunno. I mean, I can't afford to make no mistake. They look all right—yes, they feel all right—but do they wear well?'

'Do they wear well?' she echoed. 'Do they?', and she undid her coat and lifted her skirt to above the knees. 'See, I wear 'em myself. You would, too, if you worked in this freezing hole.'

She turned sharply as Stumpy and Michael dissolved into laughter, having seen more than the customer's worn-out eyes were capable of. She glared at them as she very deliberately buttoned her coat. It was as though a shutter had clicked and she had captured them instantly, for all time, in the lens of her mind.

'You look better in yours,' offered Michael, 'than I do in mine.' 'Little hope there'd be for me if I didn't,' she shot at him.

'Look,' she said, having wrapped the purchase and touching the old man's arm, 'I wouldn't take you for your money. If you're not happy with these after a fair trial I'll talk to my Dad about giving you another pair. But you will be. Everybody's satisfied with our stuff. That's why they keep coming back for more.' She watched as he shuffled away. 'Well,' she said, staring at Michael. 'What's for you?'

'Gutkas.'

She automatically leaned toward the pile of combinations, then, on a rebound, straightened up. 'Are you having a dig at me?'

'Gutkas,' he said again, taking a pair so that there could be no mistake, 'that's what we call them where I come from.'

Glaring at him she said, 'You think you're smart, don't you, with your one word of Yiddish? Well, as far as I'm concerned, mister, they're combinations—and pure wool at that.'

He laughed into her scornful eyes, and noticed the gold Star of David dangling on a thin chain from her neck. Not that, with her eyes, her hair, her expression, he needed the aid of a Star of David.

'You're Yiddish, aren't you?' He hadn't meant to say it so bluntly. It just came out.

'Why?' she answered. 'Want to make something of it?' 'Sure.'

'What?' belligerently.

'Conversation.'

She gazed at him, puzzled, her anger ebbing. 'What's it to you, anyway?'

'I'm Jewish myself.'

'Well, ring up the flag.'

'I haven't met anyone who's Jewish before.'

'Gawd, where've you been all your life?'

'Here, I mean—in Australia.'

'Sorry, we're right out,' she said, breaking off to talk with a woman who had manoeuvred between them and the counter, 'but I'll get them in for you. No trouble. Ask next week. Another time then. Sorry.' Turning once more to Michael she said, 'Today you're making up for lost opportunities. We're all Jewish round here. Feast your eyes on the Cohens, the Herzbergs, the Spicers, the Myersons, the Malones—yes, they're Jewish, too.' And then, 'Look, what are you trying to do? Make a fool of me? You Jewish? Don't give me that. You've lived somewhere among them, got a smattering of the things

to say. You Jewish? You're too tall to be a Jew. And who ever saw a Jew with such fair hair and blue eyes? Next thing you'll be telling me your little mate's one of the Chosen People, too. Come off it. I'm not a dill.'

'Honest. I'm Jewish.' And he thought, what do I have to do to convince her, pull my pants down?

'He is,' piped in Stumpy. It was itching to come out of his mouth—'circumcised and all—but he thought better of it. 'I know for a fact.'

'Dad,' she called. Warning bells rang for both men. It's on. We're in for it. It's always the same when they start yelling for help. Stumpy was ready to run.

'What's the matter, love?' The voice came from behind a rack of men's overcoats.

'Here's a Yok who say's he's a Yid. What do you think?'

Two hands parted the coats wide enough to fit a face that bristled for want of a shave. 'Which one? Tiny Tim or Long John?'

'Him,' she said, pointing. 'The long streak.'

For a moment the man was silent. 'If you're a Jew, son,' he said at last, 'I'm Lloyd George.' Then he was gone. But immediately he rose again from that sea of coats, his heavy coat buttoned tightly across a protesting stomach, a knitted scarf—the longest Michael had ever seen—entwined round his throat and falling in front almost to the ground. 'On second thoughts,' he muttered, 'maybe you are.'

'What made you change your mind?' asked Michael.

'Any man who says he's a Jew probably is.'

'Why?'

'Anyone can say he's a Christian. That's easy. There's no risk of getting kicked in the guts for admitting that. But to be a Jew, and to admit it, that takes courage. Three and six, madam. Very well then, three and three. So I'm a robber. Shop around. Then come back. I won't hold it against you.'

Stumpy wanted to know, 'What the hell's going on?' and, in an aside, 'I'm bloody well freezing standing here.'

'I saw a bloke down there selling hot pies,' said Michael. 'Why don't you go and get one. I'll join you shortly.'

'Good-oh. Don't be all day.'

'There's one sure way to settle this,' the father announced, and he started talking to Michael in Yiddish. Michael looked at him with amused eyes. 'Well, come on,' the man added, slipping back into English, 'what did I say?'

'I don't know. I think it was something to do with a bar-mitzvah.'

'Think? You only think? I thought you said you were Jewish.'

'I only know the odd word or two. From my gran. When I was a kid. But there's been no Yiddish spoken at our place since. What'd be the use? We all speak English.'

'All right, I'll ask you in English. How old was your sister when she had her bar-mitzvah?'

'Which sister?' asked Michael. 'I've got two.'

A malicious silence united father and daughter.

Michael couldn't hold on to his laugh any longer. It burst out of him. 'Come off it,' he chuckled, 'girls don't have bar-mitzvahs.'

'He's smart, too,' the girl observed, sarcastically. 'It's no use, Dad,' she said, shaking her head, 'he's a Yid. We're stuck with him.'

The father leaned forward proffering a pouchy hand. 'Welcome, fellow Jew. What can we do for you?'

Michael saw the opportunity and took it. 'You can let me take your daughter out.' He noticed she wasn't wearing a ring.

'That's up to her,' he announced, showing no surprise at the unexpected request. 'She's got a mind of her own.'

He submerged behind the coats where, before the interruption, Mike guessed, he'd been enjoying a quiet drink.

'Well?' asked Michael.

'Well what?' she countered.

'Will you?'

'Will I what?'

'Go out with me.'

She gave a shrug.

'What does that mean, yes or no?'

'It means I think you're meshuggah, that's what it means.' 'It takes all sorts...'

'.. .and I've met all sorts but you've got nerve,'

'Seriously,' he persisted, 'will you?'

'You're assuming a lot, aren't you? What makes you think I'd go with you even if I was available?'

'Are you?'

'What are you trying to do, get my life story onto the head of a pin? I don't know why I'm standing here supplying you with information. I don't even know you.'

'And you never will unless you give yourself the chance. I'm nice. Believe me I am.'

'I'll bet you write your own references,' she remarked, weakening. 'Yes, madam,' she addressed a buxom woman, 'what size? I'm sure we can fit you.' She turned away to whisper to Michael, 'Look, you can't stay, you'll embarrass her. Here,' and she tore a strip of newspaper, scribbling a number along the edge in pencil, 'telephone me.'

'You'll come then?'

'I didn't say that. Telephone and I'll think about it.'

He rang her early that evening. 'What, you already?' Unable to hide the surprise in her voice she added, not unkindly, 'Are you at a loose end or something?'

'You said to ring, remember?'

I know I did. You don't waste any time.'

'I didn't want you to forget me.'

'Not much chance of that. Look, I don't want to seem rude but I've had a long day. What is it you want?'

'I want you to go out with me.'

'When?'

'Now. Tonight.'

'Tonight!'

'It's short notice but...'

'Short notice! Listen. You want to know what I'm doing tonight? I'm going to have a hot bath and I'm going to bed.'

'Thought you might like to go to a dance.'

'Some other time, maybe.'

'Dancing too energetic? How about the flicks?'

'Don't you ever give up?'

'You're the only Jewish girl I've talked to in Australia.'

'What does that entitle me to? A prize. Don't tell me you're the prize?'

'I mean it. I'm not joking. I would like to see you again.'

'When did you have a decent meal last?'

'I eat all right. I'm staying with Stumpy. You know, the bloke I was with today. His sister cooks for us.'

'Call that eating? I mean a decent meal, a Jewish meal.'

'Not for years. The last time I was on leave, in London, back in '17.'

'You haven't been home in all that time?'

'Decided to come here instead.'

'Could you have tea with us Sunday night?'

'Could I? Could I! I'd like that.'

'Hold on. I'll check with Mum.' She returned with, 'Come early. After we've eaten we'll have a sing-song round the pianola. Hope you've got a good pedalling foot. We can play rummy if you'd rather.'

'I haven't much of a voice,' he warned.

'Who has? Look, I've got to go. I'm standing in the hall with bare feet and if you keep me standing much longer I won't last till Sunday. See you then.'

'Thanks, thanks ever so much.'

'Sunday,' she repeated, 'early.' She waited for him to go.

'Hey!'

'What now?'

'You haven't told me your name.'

'You haven't told me yours.'

'I'm Michael.'

'I'm Rosa.'

'I like Rosa. It's a pretty name.'

'I'm glad you approve, but tell me Sunday. I'm going now,' and she hung up.

Someone was waiting to use the telephone. But Michael, his bubble of elation bursting, had realised he didn't know where she lived. He fossicked in his pocket for coins. A man's voice, which he recognised as her father's, answered.

'Yes?'

'I was speaking to Rosa a few minutes ago...'

'Oh, it's you.'

'I'm sorry, I forgot to ask where you live.'

'Same place we've always lived. Middle Park.' He gave Michael the number and street. 'Is that the lot?' he asked impatiently. 'I'm in the middle of a game of Patience.'

THE NIGHT THE WAR BEGAN

Max Teichman

Max Teichman was born in Melbourne in 1924. His parents were not Jewish but the family lived in Carlton, an area where many Jews had settled and some boarded in the Teitchman house. He served with the Australian Imperial Forces in New Guinea and took a war service degree in philosophy at the University of Melbourne. He won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford, to read philosophy with Isaiah Berlin and stayed in England for nine years. Today he is senior lecturer in politics at Monash University. He has co-authored and edited numerous academic books and articles and is a frequent news-commentator on ABC Radio. His eloquence and high-profile support of Israel has won him the Government of the State of Israel's Knesset Prize.

This story appeared in The Bridge in 1971.

I was barely 15 when it all started, and I don't suppose many people here imagined it would go for six long years. I certainly didn't, and the thought that I would be in it, still in uniform, seven years later, was a piece of fore-knowledge I wouldn't have cared to possess.

Most people in my district were taken completely by surprise. We'd had our share of crisis and war scares over the past year or two, and anyway, who wanted to go to war over the Poles if we'd decided to leave the Czechs in the lurch?

Our local papers hadn't helped either. Trade was slack, especially in the rag trade, from which they got most of their adverts. With spring sales about to take off, and a decline in our so-called economic recovery, our papers played the crisis by ear. There wasn't going to be a war, at least not until after the Australian spring sales. Herr Hitler was a reasonable man, no matter what a few lefties were saying. People who had been to Germany, respectable people anyway, said so. There'd been terrific progress.

So, we were all pretty staggered when it came over the radio that places like Cracow and Katowice had been bombed, and that the Germans were marching into Poland. What's more, they, the Germans, were being opposed. Everybody was unusually quiet— still baffled, but something in the air told us all that the game was really on this time.

My parents, remembering the First War, were silent. My father paced restlessly around, obviously thinking of many things. One of them, certainly, was not 'what is my old regiment doing tonight?' He could be pretty sure that they'd be behaving efficiently, and badly, somewhere on the Eastern Front. Later on, I found out that he was already working out how long the war would have to go before I was in it. Pessimistic man.

I think I'd expected some patriotic sentiments from my mother. After all, she'd sung and whistled songs like 'Sons of the Sea', 'Keep your eye on Germany', 'Comrades' (bourgeois version), 'All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor', ever since I could remember. Not to forget my favourite candidate for the domestic ambivalence stakes. 'We Don't Want to Lose You, But We Think You Ought to Go.' Now that the time had come, I don't think she wanted anyone to go-

There had been no chance for the cheer squads to organise themselves, or the propaganda stories to start a'coming in. The local Nawabs still didn't know for sure whether we were in or out, so for the

first day or two, after the Germans marched, people were left to their own devices. As a result, things were quiet, with people trying to discover what they felt about it all. Later on of course, there were people appointed to tell them.

The evening paper brought out a special edition, and the newspaper shops re-opened especially. I'd never seen this happen before, and it made me realise, more than anything else, that something momentous was occurring.

As I came back reading the paper, I noticed a number of our tenants also walking slowly home and talking quietly among themselves. They too held copies of the special edition.

Most of our tenants were Jews from Poland, who had come ahead of their families, to earn some money so as to be able to bring their people out. All of a sudden, I realised that this affected them, perhaps more than anyone else. They used to wait on the postman for letters from home, and after they had read them—no doubt many times—they would give me the stamps.

When there was a long gap between letters, they'd start to look old. Some of them would hang around my mother—for she was a perennial optimist on such matters. One or two would talk quietly and seriously to my father, whom they thought might know what the Germans were likely to do next. Of course, he was as much in the dark as anyone else. But he always feared the worst.

Now it had happened, these men came silently back into the house, went up to their rooms and closed the doors. I suppose if some of them had known what was going to happen to their families and friends during the next six years they would have turned the lights out then and there. But they didn't know, so they lived on hopes and memories.

During the days which followed, friends started dropping in to talk about the news. The general feeling was that it would be good for business. There'd be more money about, and more jobs. A few younger chaps said they'd join up and go to see the world if they got the chance. Some of them were unemployed. Most people thought that it would be all over in 12 months. We'd win by starving the Germans out. My mother looked relieved, and started whistling away happily. Only my father and the Jewish tenants looked unconvinced.

One of our visitors, a little English ex-public school boy, impressed upon me that I should save the Special Edition. He had quite a collection by now—mainly deaths of Kings, and so forth. But this one was important too, so I should start collecting as well. The next one to watch for would be the edition announcing the end of the war. I didn't collect any more specials—but he was right. It was a great time. . .to live through.

MEMORIES OF A JEWISH BOYHOOD

Sam Lipski

Sam Lipski was born in Carlton, Victoria in 1938. As a person and as a journalist he has always been proud of his Jewish identity and for over twenty years has written a column unashamedly called Partisan, At twenty-four he was appointed editor of the Melbourne-based Australian Jewish Herald and later accepted a position in Sydney with Frank Packer's Daily Telegraph group of papers. At that time he also wrote for the Sydney-based Australian Jewish Times. He was then posted to Washington DC as a correspondent for the Australian and at the same time he wrote for the Jerusalem Post. He stayed in America for several years. On returning to Melbourne he took up the position of foreign editor for the Channel Nine network.

He has recently been appointed publisher of the Australian Jewish News, and also writes a column for the Bulletin.

The earliest memories are incongruous...the ABC News at seven o'clock and the face of King George VI. What have they to do with my Jewish boyhood? Listening to the news was as much a ritual as the lighting of the candles on the Sabbath Eve. For the news told us how the war was going. To be more exact, the news told us if the Allies were coming close to defeating the Nazis. And if that happened soon enough, there was the hope, illogical and remote, that the families my parents and their neighbours had left behind in Europe would still be alive.

On summer nights the Jews of Drummond Street, Carlton, would sit outside in the deckchairs they had brought from Biyalestock and Lodz, from Czenstechow and Lublin, and talk about the war. It overshadowed all.

The sounds of my earliest Jewish boyhood were mainly Yiddish sounds. I spoke Yiddish before I learnt English and although both my parents and their friends could speak Polish they were not keen to do so. Polish was the language of a country which held generally unpleasant memories for them. If the sounds were Yiddish, then; the sights were unmistakably Australian. The map of my world, at the age of six, was bounded by Lee Street at one end, where I attended school, and Princess Street at the other, where I went to get bread and onion rolls—the unforgettable pletzlach—from Berland's the baker. Fishel's kosher restaurant was on the corner of Lee Street and Rathdowne Street and Mr Fishel, stoop-shouldered and moustached like the faded photograph of an unknown French writer he kept in his office, could be seen regularly on my way to school carrying the innumerable empty crates of soda-water bottles out into the lane at the back of his restaurant...

The news is tied to my memory of boyhood Jewishness in another way. As soon as the broadcast was over at 7.15 my father would take out a Hebrew primer and teach me to read.

Learning to read Hebrew, with the strange letters of the alphabet which spilled across the page back to front to English, was not a chore but a special treat. It was like playing with a puzzle and besides it was a secret game that I alone among my friends could play. For although there were a number of Jewish families among our closest neighbours, none had children my age and my immediate friends were then all from school or from other non-Jewish families in the neighbourhood.

My learning to read Hebrew also explains the memory of King George VI. As I learned to read more fluently I was expected to begin saying prayers—the brief *Modeh Ani* on rising and the *Kriyat Shmah*

before retiring. In translating both of these prayers for me my father had to answer my first barrage of questions about the nature of God. For until the age of six I had not prayed, Jews who follow the Orthodox rituals pray only in Hebrew, formally at least. God, therefore, was only a word to me until I found myself thanking him every morning in Hebrew for 'having returned my soul to me with loving kindness'. My father was uncompromisingly strict in his refusal to give God any human attributes or shape and tried to answer my questions by the citing of Talmudic authorities. It was not much help to me because all I wanted to know was what God looked like.

But, as my father explained, not even Moses could look upon God's face and hope to stay alive. My solution to the mystery was simple. I decided that God looked just like King George VI—a head like on the penny, no arms and no body but a head in the clouds.

When I had learned to read it was time to go to cheder—Hebrew school. My first cheder was 'Stones' Shool' in Pitt Street, Carlton, next to the Chevra Kadisha, the Jewish funeral parlors. Called 'Stones' Shool' because it was founded and kept alive by the remarkable Melbourne family of Stone brothers, this was a small synagogue which flourished for two generations before it began to decline when suburban migration overtook it.

But in 1945 it was a thriving centre. It was open daily for prayers as well as on the Sabbath and the holy days. There were two Hebrew classes daily from Sunday to Thursday. During the week we would come after school—ten of us in the 'small boys' class and half a dozen in the 'older boys'—to learn the Bible in Hebrew, how to translate the prayers and something about Jewish history and customs. Lessons lasted for an hour and a half in what was not really a school but the front pews of the synagogue. With a lectern in front of him our teacher struggled with us, and a struggle it was. A round waddler of a man with a small black skull-cap which used to slide precariously all over his nearly bald head, he was not up to the finer points of Genesis, our main study. His English was bad and, with the cruelty of childhood, we made him feel that it was far worse. In any case he did not have his heart in it after a day of trying to make his living at a clothing stall in the Victoria Market and slaughtering chickens at the kosher butchers.

He was short on temper and shorter still on understanding of children. We baited him mercilessly and, in a half-Yiddish half-English, his warnings would come spluttering forth, a score of times every lesson, 'I'll gib you such a frusk in de face, you hooligan, di einer'.

My father felt that I was wasting my time and enrolled me in another afternoon school. Here at Bialik School, named after the great poet laureate of the modern Hebrew language revival, I found a new world. The teachers were either kindly ladies or pleasant young men and instead of going every night after school we came only twice a week and Sunday mornings. And there were parties; parties to celebrate the festivals, parties every Sabbath morning after the service, parties before the summer holidays and parties afterwards, all replete with butter-cake, lemonade and honey biscuits.

To my father 'learning' meant the Bible with its commentaries and eventually the encyclopaedic Talmud—the expositor of Jewish lore and law. So I went to my third Hebrew school, this time in Rathdowne Street, Carlton, the 'Hascolah', which means Enlightenment. More commonly we knew it was the 'Tummo'—short for Talmud Torah. Here the atmosphere was much more like that of Stones'—Orthodox, Ashkenazi, East European rather than the modern Hebrew flavor of Bialik School. But there were many more pupils—130 when I started at the age of eight.

In the early months I found myself in a class which was even more disorganised than that of the hapless fat man at Stones'. Our teacher was a young lady, a daughter of one of Melbourne's leading

Orthodox families, who was pleasant enough but found it difficult to maintain even the remotest semblance of order for very long despite frequent recourse to a ruler across the backside.

To make matters worse, and at one stage almost chaotic, our teacher was being courted by another teacher, an earnest young gentleman who would send her notes during class, to our endless glee and to the blushing teacher's discomfiture. In the circumstances it was surprising that we learnt anything at all. But we did, and I think this was largely due to the 'Tummo' headmaster, Rabbi Silver. He was able to put the fear of God into us, literally. Some years later I was to study the Talmud with him and find him one of the best pedagogues and most charming men I have ever known. But in the junior classes he was feared. Appearing when our lady of the furtive notes was in her greatest moment of distress he would silence the class with a whack of his stick on the door. He hardly ever used the stick on us but ran the school with the threat hanging over all.

For the boys at the school the most feared question from Rabbi Silver was, 'Are you wearing your *tsitsis*'? Orthodox Jews are required to wear a small four-cornered undergarment with tasselled fringes known as *tsitsis*, and Rabbi Silver made this one of his special projects. The traditional answer for not wearing the *tsitsis* (because it was hot, or cumbersome, or because we had forgotten) was 'My mother's washing them'. This sort of excuse never satisfied Rabbi Silver. With great determination he would look hard at us and ask 'And where is your spare pair?'

I recall only one pupil at the school ever standing up to Rabbi Silver. It happened after a number of us had been called out in front of the class to explain why we had been singing in the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation's choir. Rabbi Silver was concerned on two counts. He knew that all of us who were singing lived a long way from the synagogue and that therefore we would have to break the Sabbath and travel to get there. He also knew that we did not go to pray but only to sing when required and to play hand-cricket for the rest of the time.

So he insisted that we should stop travelling to East Melbourne and start attending the Sabbath services at the Hebrew school conducted by him and his eventual successor, Rabbi Rudzki. Most of us were too frightened to do anything but say we would do what he wanted. But the one dissenting voice came from a choirboy who said that he was still going to continue to travel to the choir. There was an awful silence as Rabbi Silver demanded, 'Tell me why'. 'Because,' said the rebel, I pay twopence for my fares to get there and I get two-and-six for singing each week. Two-and-six for twopence—I think it's worth it.' Rabbi Silver was speechless. If he reads this his only consolation might be that the rebel took his non-conformism as far as becoming an active worker for the anti-fluoride cause.

The dominating figure at East Melbourne Synagogue in the 'forties was the great Chazan Rechter, a cantor of international repute. East Melbourne was my father's 'special' synagogue where he went on the high holy days—to hear Rechter'.

We came from Carlton which was relatively close. But others came from all over Melbourne to hear Rechter. In the tradition of the great cantors of Eastern Europe he had a powerful tenor voice and the manner to go with it. On the eve of the Day of Atonement, when the synagogue would be crowded for the Koi Nidre service, he would wait until the aisles were so blocked that he could barely pass. Then he would enter dramatically from the rear of the synagogue, pushing his way through, his voice ringing out with the first prayers before he had even reached the altar. When every other synagogue would finish the Koi Nidre prayers by 8.30 in the evening, East Melbourne would rarely be through until 9.30. The melodies and tunes of Eastern Europe's Judaism, together with its food, were, and still are, the most lasting memories for many Jews who no longer expressed

their Jewishness in any other way, Rechter was a living reminder of what they could only hear on scratchy recordings: Kussevitsky, Yossele Rosenblatt, Sarota and the other great names of the cantorial pantheon.

In much the same way as the war had determined much of the talk about and around the Jews of my early boyhood, the emergence of Israel affected much of my later childhood. I joined Habonim, the first of the Zionist youth movements to be established in Australia.

It was an exciting time to join such a movement. At every meeting there was passionate talk about the events in Palestine, about the coming of independence and about the realisation of historic dreams. It was quite overwhelming for a boy of nine and I took it all terribly seriously, as did my friends. Saturday afternoon, when we would meet in a crumbling old factory turned into clubrooms at the top of Drummond Street, became the focal point of the week. The blue uniform with its dark blue scarf was the one item of clothing I cared for through the week and the songs of the Zionist pioneers crowded out all others.

Added to this fervor was that which my father expressed by his long lectures after the daily news. One of the first settlers of Tel Aviv in the period immediately after the First World War, he saw the coming of a Jewish State in a religious way. For him it was the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. Nevertheless he was a strong supporter of the 'terrorist' liberation movement because, as he said, 'God needs help sometimes'. The word 'terrorist' angered him and he dismissed the ideas of 'self-restrain' I brought home from my youth movement which was ideologically aligned with Ben-Gurion's political party in Israel—the Mapai, opponents of the 'terrorists'. In later years I was to join a Zionist youth movement which was fundamentally religious. Habonim was irreligious (rather than anti-religious although its leadership then included some outspoken Marxists). But in my boyhood Habonim was my first love.

In the year before my bar-mitzvah, the ceremony of confirmation at the age of thirteen which introduces the Jewish boy into the company of adults and makes him liable for his own sins in the religious sense, a number of things happened which changed much of the previous pattern of my Jewish boyhood. They happened as coincidences which make them stand out even more.

The major change was that we shifted house from Drummond Street to Palmerston Street, two doors away from the Carlton Synagogue. It was a major change because of the idiosyncratic nature of my father's attachment to Orthodox Judaism. He came from a devoutly Chassidic family in Warsaw which prided itself on its *yichuss*—its family tree. On both sides there were famous rabbis and on my grandmother's side of the tree he was a direct descendant of the great Rabbi Joseph Karo, the medieval author of the Shulchan Aruch, the basic text of Jewish religious law.

My grandmother even had a family tree which traced us all back to King David. This my father used to say good-humoredly thereby ensured that the Messiah would come from our family or one of the 100,000 or so other Jewish families in Warsaw whose mothers had family trees showing 'quite clearly' their descent from the House of David.

Yet although my father had had a strong Orthodox education, even to the point of completing the required amount of study for the rabbinate by the time he settled in Australia, he was not strictly Orthodox in any of the more important matters. He did not observe the Sabbath, going instead to Victoria Market to buy fruit and vegetables for the week; he did not observe the dietary laws strictly, allowing my mother to mix milk and meat dishes together; he did not pray regularly except on the holy days when he did not carry on his work as a painter and carpenter. On the other hand he did insist on candles being lit in the house every Friday night, he did bless the wine and sit down to a

special meal, he doggedly if inconsistently demanded that I should be observant even if he was not, and he emphasised the importance of Jewish learning above all else.

When we shifted to the house two doors away from a synagogue he changed his whole way of life overnight. On the very first night in the new house there came a telegram from Jerusalem telling us of my grandfather's death at the age of 94. It was as if that had been a long-awaited sign. From that day onwards the Sabbath in our house was observed strictly, the dietary laws were kept, and my father attended synagogue three times every day to pray. In fact his whole life began to revolve around the synagogue. At weddings he was an official witness, at the morning prayers he would often act as cantor, in his reading he began to turn once more to the classic Talmudic literature which he had not studied for 40 years, and a wish expressed in my grandfather's will that if they observed nothing else his children should hold the Sabbath Day sacred had made a deep impression on him.

At this time also I began to study the special readings from the Bible which I would chant in the synagogue on the day of my bar-mitzvah. My teacher was the late Leon Gurewicz. One of his proudest possessions was a long poem of praise to his culinary skills by A.D. Hope. Outside a few friends of his family, however, he was less well-known for his great fund of Jewish learning and his delight in the aesthetic qualities of the Hebrew liturgy well sung in the synagogue. My study with him, which also meant talking to his father, came at the time when religion began to emerge as an everyday factor in my life.

The late Rabbi Gurewicz was very much a part of this life—at least on the Sabbath. Blind for much of his later years he would walk down Rathdowne Street every Saturday morning on the arm of one of his sons, a straight-backed figure in an Edwardian coat with a wide-brimmed black hat. His long, grey beard framed a face which was always beamed with kindness.

In the late afternoon quiet of Saturdays, a quiet broken only by the dissonant shouts from the beery SP shop in the lane at the back of the synagogue, he would sit at the head of the traditional Shalosh Seudoth table—the table of the Sabbatical Third Meal— and softly tell his parables based on the Bible readings of the week. Then he would lead the singing of Psalm 23, which precedes the grace at that meal.

On my bar-mitzvah day, a hot January Saturday, it was Rabbi Gurewicz who farewelled my Jewish boyhood with his priestly blessing of 'May the Lord bless you and keep you'.

STILL LIFE

Maria Lewitt

Maria Lewitt was born in Lodz, Poland in 1924 and arrived in Australia in 1949. She has had four books published, including one in England, and several of her stories have appeared in literary magazines. Her book Come Spring won an Alan Marshall Award and No Snow in December was awarded the NSW Premier's Literary Award. She lives in Melbourne and works as a freelance writer.

This story appeared in the Melbourne Chronicle in 1978.

The leaves trembled above me as if a shiver went through the whole tree. Blotches of the sky played hide and seek, exposing bluest of blue among the clusters of green. And the sun sent its rays down, a spotlight in the theatre bringing the whole scenery to life.

I screwed my eyes up and rocked in my hammock encircled by colours and the appeasing hum of Nature around me.

If you shut your eyes tight you can feel the dancing shadows, if you open them ever so slightly you are surrounded by a rainbow, shut them again and the multitude of coloured circles swim in front of you.

Stillness of the late summer, pregnant with all the right sounds and smells, rich in shades, kind in warmth.

And there I was, half hypnotised by continuous rocking, voices and colours. A bird flew up the tree and chirped, twisting and lifting its tail up, wiping its beak in a jerky way, ignoring my presence. The wind, or rather a suggestion, swayed the cornfield in the multitude of waves. The shadows of the clouds moved slowly, followed by the beam of sun rays.

The light chasing the gloom away.

The single words came from a distance, fading and gaining in strength. . lazy, don't know ... disaster... worries... selfish,...' I knew my mother discussed me and some of her words hit me dead centre. It was true that I spent most of my time on the hammock, or walking around the fields and the forest. She was concerned with my lack of communication and selfishness. I was moody because I wanted to be with my friends and my parents decided to send my sister and me for a summer holiday near our home town. They were waiting for 'the political situation to clarify', as they explained to us.

But I was not concerned with the political situation and was sick and tired of hearing it discussed at our home. I was fifteen and wanted to live, to experience, to know. My parents didn't even listen to my plea and planted us in that forsaken hole. My main company, my elder sister, beautiful though freckled. She looked at me from above which irritated me to no end. She spent all the time sun baking, probably hoping to tan evenly all the spaces between her freckles. The result was devastating and made her unapproachable.

There was a boy of seventeen, my one and only hope for romance. Not bad to look at. My mother said 'very intelligent, brilliant student.' She was right too. He was brilliant and intelligent, always

starting a sentence with: 'as you probably know', which most of the time I didn't and felt awful getting entangled with my nonchalant replies: 'of course I know!'

He quoted from Latin which I detested and didn't know very well, he had a beautiful, chocolate tan while I looked like a boiled beetroot.

There was one thing I knew better: poetry. So I recited to him whenever he would allow me. It wasn't easy, it wasn't easy at all. He knew exactly what he wanted to say, precise in every word, preaching all the time about obligations and self discipline. Expert in every field, calling poetry—escapism, and memorising—a waste of time.

So we drifted apart; he on his Latin quotations, I on my ignorance.

Romance and companionship unfulfilled.

I wanted something to happen during that summer, something to carry me from everyday's boredom, but nothing did happen.

What my mother called 'laziness' wasn't really laziness. It was some peculiar search for values and answers. What she called 'lack of concern and selfishness' was really looking at myself and trying to sort out what was going around me.

I wasn't happy, I wasn't unhappy. I was there, at that time, and that was all. I didn't involve myself in any philosophical reflections, but my mind was like a camera, imprinting forever the idyllic beauty of the European summer of 1939.

My father is dead. We are going to his funeral. All of us dressed in black, my mother's face hidden by a veil, her hands in black gloves lay lifeless on her lap. The only sound the rhythmic clip-clop of horses' hoofs and my sister's restrained sobs.

The carriage was going slowly, the coachman hits the horses, urging them to trot. Why is he hitting them? My father is dead. They hit him too, they hit him till he lost consciousness and died. My father is dead and the sky is blue, the sun shines and I wish I had a black veil—it would deaden the day too bright and too beautiful for a burial.

I look around; people walk, trams pass by. The sound of the city hits me, grows in volume, reaches a piercing, intolerable crescendo. My city is real and alive, my conquered home town, coming back to reality, learning how to live under German rules. People mingle together, brush their bodies with uniformed conquerors.

Is my father's killer among them?

It all happened so quickly. Our holiday had been cut short by the War. My father left home to defend Warsaw and we were left alone.

He returned home less than two weeks ago. He came at night, dirty, thin and strangely silent. Sick with exhaustion, full of unexplained worries, his eyes still blue but dull and sad. He bathed and he ate, he asked questions and listened to us.

He was home again and we almost forgot that outside, German flags hung from every door, German soldiers marched through our streets, and every day brought some new decrees.

I showed him my new school books and as usual he looked through them and I promised to work really hard this coming year. My sister kept on asking whether she would be allowed to continue her

studies in France, and my mother sat with us, just looking at father, until he grew very tired and went to bed. We stayed up, the three of us, very late, keeping our voices as low as our excitement allowed us. My father was back home, home with us, home to stay. Happiness at war, joy at war?

The next day I went to school and ignored the flags, the soldiers and the queues. As long as we were all together it didn't matter so much any more. I entered our school. Uniformed Germans walked up and down. I passed them without thinking, or looking. And then I was told that the 4th floor of our school had been requisitioned by the army and must be vacant by lunchtime. All the teachers and the girls went to work immediately. We shifted desks, tables, school equipment, books.

On the following day our 4th floor has been returned to us. Our joy helped in speeding up the whole relocation of school inventory. It was a Quixotic task and we loved it. Our school was ours again, we built all our hopes in the air.

The next day, the 1st floor fell victim to the army requisition.

The foreign language and uniforms, the military transports and flags frightened me once more. New decrees reached an epidemic stage with printed bills posted all over the city.

'Achtung. Achtung. The Jews are not allowed to live or walk on the main street.'

I arrived home, my father in bed, my mother frantic trying to get the doctor.

My father asked me about the school and whether we have enjoyed the return to the 4th floor.

'Oh yes, it was terrific', I think, it was the first time I consciously lied to him.

'We are heading for hard times,' he said. 'But we should always keep on hoping, no matter what. You see, that school business, yesterday it seemed the school was to be taken over and today it was given back to you. One should never despair.' He stopped for a moment. 'They might try to take everything from us, they may succeed. But remember, nobody could ever take from us what we had experienced, what we know.' Maybe he wanted to say something else, but all of a sudden I felt uneasy, didn't know what to say, how to react, and left his room.

In the evening my father was much better. His friend dropped in. They discussed all kind of things, they entangled themselves in the political situation. As a result, the friend had missed the curfew hour and stayed overnight. I went to sleep peacefully listening to the familiar voices I loved so much.

Next day, during maths lesson, I was summoned to our headmistress. 'What have I done?' I remember wondering. The school corridor seemed to stretch out in front of me.

My mother was waiting for me and she looked all stiff. I sat next to her. The squarish coldness of our high-back pewish benches made me feel even more uneasy.

'Your father is gravely ill' my mother said, her face throbbing.

'How come' I thought, 'it's impossible, he was better last night, he told me about values and I left his room.' What is it my mother is saying. My father beaten up? I must be dreaming. SS men came him away, accused him of being a lazy, dirty Jew?

'Mother, mother what are you trying to say. I don't believe you. It can't be true!'

She turned her head towards the window and I knew she was crying.

'I tried to stop them, I told them your father is sick... "Sick?", they mocked. We are experts in Jewish sickness, there is no better remedy than work. Work is the answer... They kept on shouting and kicking; coldly, they knew how and where. ' My mother sat next to me, got up again. The headmistress asked 'Can I be of any help to you?'

'No, thank you, we have to hurry home. We have to go.' It was strange to leave the school at such an early hour without books. How would I do my homework, I thought, and then realised that it wouldn't matter. My mother kept on talking in some new, detached, disjointed way.

'One of them asked me if I was Jewish. I am his wife, I told him. Over and over and over and . . . You shouldn't really be living with a Jew, he said. He was young. I tried. I really tried. They laughed, they pushed me away and left when your father collapsed. '

We went home trespassing the Aryan grounds.

My father died on the following morning.

All mirrors covered up, hushed voices around, sounds of weeping and black stockings and dresses for three of us.

I sat in my room alone wondering where our mourning garments came from. People kept on coming. 'Will you please accept my most sincere expressions' etcetera. I couldn't distinguish faces any more. I could only remember my great-aunt. She shook me, tears streaming down her wrinkles. 'Why don't you cry, child? Your father is dead, don't you understand?' she lamented.

My father is dead and I can't cry. My father is dead and the world is alive. Our carriage turns towards the Jewish Cemetery. Once upon a time, or was it just a few weeks ago, the entrance led through an avenue lined with old trees, their branches meeting, forming a green roof. Once upon a time. Now all the branches chopped down, the trunks stripped and naked. And the groups of young people stand between them, shouting, bending down, straightening up, waving hands.

'Down with the Jews! One less, good riddance, hurray!'

Something hit our carriage. Stones. My mother lifts her black gloved hand to her face. My father is dead, the sky is blue, merciless bright sun. The sky should be black, with a threat of downpour to make the stone throwers stand still, wash their sardonic grins away and leave their faces wet, as a sign of sorrow for a man who died.

THE WEDDING

June Factor

June Factor was born in Lodz, Poland before World War II and arrived in Australia when she was three years old. She has degrees from Melbourne and London Universities and is a noted academic. She has written and co-authored twenty books for and about children. She has had numerous articles published and broadcast in educational forums. She lives in Melbourne and is senior lecturer in English at the Institute of Early Childhood Studies.

This story was first published in Meanjin in 1960.

At the very end table—the furthest from the bridal group sit Mr and Mrs Mukulsky. Even there they are conspicuous among the well-dressed guests, and the bride's mother, pecking nervously at her hors d'oeuvres, regrets once more her husband's obstinacy—Leonie's great day, and he should go and spoil it by inviting such misfits! Not a word against the reception, the delustred satin wedding-dress, the studio photographs by the most expensive 'artist'—and suddenly he insists on inviting his 'relatives'—vague cousins of his mother, newly-arrived, greenhorns, so out-of-place!

Mr and Mrs Mukulsky are fortunately unaware of the arguments and tears which preceded their invitation to the wedding. They sit placidly side by side, enjoying the superabundance of rich food, not understanding a word of the loud English spoken by their neighbours. They have been in Australia only three weeks, and have not yet learnt how commonplace new arrivals have become. It seems to them only fitting that Mr Greel (anglicized, of course) should want his dear departed mother's second cousin and her husband present on such a joyous occasion. Dear Nathan, he seems to have done very well indeed in this new country—just look at his guests, how imposing they are! Remarkable how few of them speak their mother tongue—nothing but English. Mr Mukulsky has twice attempted to start a conversation with his neighbour ('You remember me, Mrs Rubin, I used to act together with your husband in the amateur theatricals back home'), but both times that lady stared at him blankly, and murmured that she had forgotten what little Yiddish she had ever known, 'I'm sorry, I speak only English, if you will excuse me, Ophelia, pass me that plate of chulent please.'

This is an upper-class wedding, a wedding of assimilated Jews. The Liberal rabbi wears a modern suit, and no beard, and fraternises easily with the wedding guests. When speech-time comes he refers to the bride and groom as his dear children, dear Leonie and Leonard, their souls, like their names, now linked together for ever, the parents so kind, so generous, such a beautiful atmosphere, such certainty of happiness. . . Mr and Mrs Mukulsky do not understand a word, but they have attended many weddings in their lifetime, and would probably be able to give a remarkably accurate account of what the rabbi says.

They are a little surprised at the brevity of the blessing, and a little shocked that so few of the men wear hats. (Mrs Mukulsky is also privately of the opinion that the décolletage of some of the ladies is hardly becoming to pious Jewish matrons, but keeps this to herself.) They are bewildered by the noise and laughter, by the long, unintelligible speeches, by the cigarette smoke and the smell of wines and beer. Dear Nathan's friends seem quite foreign, really.

There is an accordionist who walks up and down between the tables, playing popular melodies and old Jewish folk songs. Some of the guests nostalgically hum the tunes, remembering the little village back home, the old Jewish school, and the pearly-white teeth of the girls long since dead.

Mr and Mrs Mukulsky welcome the music as a balm to their loneliness. Oh what a song that is, remember when they played it at that little cafe on the corner between the synagogue and the bakery? You were cross with me that day, Sarah, but the music won you over! Listen now, Sarah— Oh Jewish maiden, how beautiful you are, how good and fine and tender.

Everyone else falls silent. The bride's mother blushes, and tears of shame and rage come to her eyes. The bride giggles, the bridegroom frowns, the in-laws look down at their plates. At a better-class wedding one does not sing until much later in the evening, when the guests have mellowed a little. Even then, it is done decorously, not bellowed across the hall!

Mrs Mukulsky, thinking the silence is in honour of her husband's deep baritone voice (he was for a time the cantor of the synagogue in their home town), beams at the shrivelled old man next to her. He's always singing—even in the midst of trouble, God protect us, he sings. Even in the ghetto, when we had eaten our last crust of bread, he would sit on the bench and sing and sing; praise the Lord, he said, and he will protect us as he did the Israelites of old. She sighs—perhaps God wanted more than song, that time. The old man does not reply. He understands, but is too tired to speak. He feels a certain sympathy for these greenhorns—his own early days, thirty years back, are still vivid in his memory. They will suffer, he thinks, as I suffered, as we all have suffered. God will not help them, and man is too selfish. Suffering and suffering—such is a Jew's fate.

Mr Mukulsky has stopped singing, and the accordionist is playing at another table. The atmosphere is normal again—laughter, jokes, wise-cracks, business troubles aired to uncaring friends. The bride and groom take the floor for the wedding waltz. Such a handsome couple, thinks Mrs Mukulsky, God grant them a peaceful life and many children. Leonard whispers something to Leonie, and she laughs, happy as a bride, happy in her beautiful frock, slim straight figure, rubies glowing at her ears and throat. A blessing on them, sighs Mrs Mukulsky, a blessing on their hearth and home.

Nathan Greel was at the wedding of Mr and Mrs Mukulsky, many years ago. He thinks of it now as he watches his daughter and new son-in-law waltz gracefully round the polished wooden floor of the reception hall. The dancing he remembers took place in the smallish room of a private house, where the men danced together on one side, and the women together on the other. The tables were spread with home-made delicacies, and he, a bar-mitzvah boy 13 years old—a real man—tried unsuccessfully to appear grown-up, at the same time handing down pieces of cheesecake to his younger brother Morry, who sat contentedly under the table. He remembers how his mother caught them, and scolded them, and pushed them both into the next room, reserved for children. He smiles now, recalling how angry he was at being treated like a child.

He looks at the Mukulskys, and wonders again at the passing of time. Deceiving memory pictures a dark, slim girl and a handsome, bearded young man; reality—two middle-aged people, with grey hair and faces wrinkled, lined, like the faces of the very old. No other sign of their tragedy, no yellow star, no capital letters spelling out the word DEATH—death in ghetto, death in murder camp, death in agony—death of five loved children.

Mr Mukulsky nudges Sarah and points to Miriam, Nathan's wife. What a lady he has there! Would you believe that when she was a child she used to run barefoot in the streets? Her mother, God rest her soul, never had enough food on the table for seven hungry children—widowed and struggling to earn a crust. But look at Miriam now—this is truly the promised land!

My friend, says the old man next to Mrs Mukulsky, you are mistaken. The streets here are not paved with gold, and milk and honey are bought in shops, not provided free by God. Wait, wait till your back breaks over a machine, till you sweat in summer and freeze in winter; wait till you are spurned

in the street for a Jew and a foreigner, and your children laugh at you for your broken English. This is no promised land! Here we eat the bitter fruit of exile!

Mr Mukulsky is amazed, but not shaken. God will provide, he says. We are not afraid of work, and we seek no gold, only peace in our remaining years.

There is no peace on earth, says the old man.

Bah, such talk! Mrs Mukulsky is flushed from anger. Look at those two, the newly-weds. What are you speaking—a curse on their wedding-day? If there is no peace here, then where in God's name, can we live at rest? Our children have been murdered, our house destroyed, our whole past burnt away, and now you tell us that there is more suffering to come! May your words turn bitter in your mouth, for such a prophecy.

Sarah, Sarah! Mr Mukulsky is quieter. Friend, let us not disturb the harmony of this day. We have come here seeking new life, and we shall find it. Listen to the music—it is full of God's grace. Sarah, celebrate this night with me—dance the wedding dance!

And Mr and Mrs Mukulsky, hands joined by a cloth, as is proper, step onto the polished floor and dance.

RUTH ‘

Ruthie, is it time for tea?’ ‘

Not yet, Ma, ..’

‘Ruthie! come and sit with me.’

‘I’m busy, Pa...’

the edge of the sink

cut across where

the baby rested—heavily today—

outside the window

morning foot-prints in the yard

baked in the afternoon heat

a drooping oleander shaded five

spread-winged hens,

Ruth looked beyond

to the tree-lined lane

striped with black

rung-shadows

seeing again the

six-month-old picture

of the set of Joe’s shoulders

as he climbed this ladder—

over his prison wall.

STRENGTH

Marjorie Pizer

Marjorie Pizer was born in Melbourne in 1920, a third-generation Australian. After graduating from the University of Melbourne, she went to live in Sydney. She has published ten books of poetry, edited four collections of Australian poems and co-authored a book on self help psychology with her friend and colleague, Anne Spencer Parry. She now works as a psychotherapist in private practice, as well as writing for her own publishing house, Pinchgut Press.

This poem first appeared in Tides Flow (1972).

Inside,

I am making myself strong.

I am weaving bands of steel

To bind my soul.

I am knitting stitches of suffering

Into my hands

To make them strong.

I am strengthening my mind

With the warp and weft

Of weariness and endurance.

I am binding my faith

With the bonds of psalms and songs

Of all who have suffered.

In time,

I will be tempered like fine steel

To bend, but not to break.

ST KILDA JUNCTION

John C. Sandler

John Sandler and Joe Serwetarz were Leaving Certificate students at Mt Scopus College, Melbourne in 1963. Their English teacher, Frank Rogan, encouraged them to compile a collection of poems which the school roneoed as an in-house publication. John now lives on the Mornington Peninsula near Melbourne.

Flashing neons, twinkling lights
around the rooftops glow;
buzz of traffic, roar of engine,
screech of brake, burp of horn,
permeate the Junction basin.

Trams rumble through the frenzied night
toward unknown ends,
but here all is known;
life is pleasure:
cafes full of motley men
hum with the sounds of foreign tongues.

Expectant taxis stand in line;
reeking garbage nearby too.
Life flicks on and off behind closed shades;
whispering, laughing, crying voices
flit in waves along the streets.

Onward, ever onward, rushing madly to and fro,
so exist the cars and beings
in the Junction that I know.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Joseph Serwetarz

Joe Serwetarz was born in 1942 of Polish-born parents. He and his friend, John Sandler, were encouraged by their English teacher at Mt Scopus College to write a collection of poems for a small volume, Selected Poems, which was published by and for the school in 1963. Joe is a teacher at Mt Scopus in Melbourne and still writes poetry.

The ship ploughs proudly through the waves,
its bows sending white foam-flecked wavelets
to caress the ancient wooden hull.
The gentle breath of the wind billowing the sails,
adds a beauty still not mastered by modern vessels of the deep.

The clumsy, rusty, wide-mouthed, out-moded cannon,
the crow's nest perched high in the wind
away from the deck and angry sea, are yours
where you, alone, not Captain nor high Admirals, are master of the ship
and the fate of the crew and yourself included.

Gulls are shrieking and fighting over a piece
of fish thrown to them by a sailor,
or squabbling about which perches here.

What does it matter?
This fight over a place of rest, or a mass of wood?
This is the veritable island of most adventurous men.

OLD WOMAN

Jennifer Ungar

In visiting the old woman, Jennifer Ungar was performing a mitzvah. Literally a 'commandment' it has a colloquial and quintessential Jewish meaning of doing something noble for little or no personal gain. This poem was published in Neon Signs to the Mutes, a school children's anthology published in 1977.

Skin obscenely folded
Into waves of muddy yellow
Eyes sunken in blood-streaked grey
A world confined to
A chair with wheels
From which you gaze aimlessly
Into a distant reality you cannot comprehend.

In the graveyards of your past
Lie buried dreams
What could have been but...
Wasted days bearing useless weeks
You left ecstasy and hope for a stagnant dying twilight.

A fleeting moment where your gaze
Rests upon my countenance
The merest suggestion of a smile
Fluttering uncertainly around that tired mouth?
Lips parted for breathing
No more romantic a purpose.

A past crowded with such joys and disillusionment,
Could that ancient mind possess
Answers to sadness
That hangs like lead upon our shoulders?
Or simpler explanations to why
I choose to remain
Conversing with a vegetable.

CHAOS!

Jolanda Wajntraub

Jolanda Wajntraub has an acute eye for the adolescent environment in which she lives, and it appears, a very good relationship with her Creator! This poem appeared in Neon Signs to the Mutes (Reed, 1977).

The ManUp there peeked through a cloud
and looked at the world He'd created:
A baby screamed
and mother rushed in with a dummy
while
the man next door sat watching his idiot box
which told him to put some zing into his
hum-drum -mid - town -mid- status
existence
with the after-shave that couldn't miss
and
while he quietly fell
asleep
his daughter was two blocks away shooting herself full of
the magical-fix-it-all-golden-feeling liquid
building a glass castle
banning all stones
even the Rolling Stones who at that very moment
sent a wave of mass hysteria through an
overpacked hall full of
every-day-all-australian-money-conscious
teenagers
who responded by crushing themselves closer
while one teenager only two streets away lay bleeding on
the footpath
watching a couple of
society-pressured-stocking-faced men fly
past
in a red white and blue Holden utility
and wondering where his girl friend was
who just happened to be

the girl crying for help
from a father who sat
watching his idiot box
falling asleep to the sound
of the baby next door screaming for the
love-replaced-mother-replaced-all-in-one
dummy.

The Man Upthere shook His head
and asked Himself whatever possessed Him
to create that!

DRIFTWORDS

Carolyn Blank

Carolyn Blank was born in Perth, a fourth-generation Jewish Australian. She qualified as a textile designer from the Western Australian Institute of Technology and now works as a fashion consultant. This poem was published in Youth Writes No. 7 (Longman Cheshire, 1980).

Imagine

on the shoreline of an ocean

of words

one piece of driftwood

gnarled and ugly at first;

yet the wanderer of pages

glimpses the grains of sand,

the salty encrustations

and, beneath the mask

of grain lines,

verse lines.

Slowly, gradually,

and then all at once,

he perceives its meaning,

and the words become a poem.

MY FATHER: A SELECTED LISTING OF HIS FAULTS

Morris Lurie

Morris Lurie was born in Melbourne in 1938. His parents left Poland and migrated to Australia in the early 1930s. He was educated at University High School and then spent seven years in London, during which time he travelled extensively. He has published five novels and six collections of stories including Inside the Wardrobe (Outback, 1975) from which this story is taken. His stories have appeared in journals in both America and Britain. He works as a freelance writer in Melbourne.

He steals. I don't mean in shops, stores, at the super- markets, or anywhere like that. He's not that sort of person. But invite him to a wedding, engagement party, barmitzvah or briss, and the first thing he'll do is pocket a bottle of Scotch. Sometimes two. My father is a small, round man (sloping shoulders, broad back), who walks with a side-to-side roll, hands deep in the pockets of his unbelievably shapeless gaberdine coat. That coat! He wears it summer and winter. I don't think it's ever been cleaned. His most recent exploit was three weeks ago, at the big Slonim wedding (the cream of Melbourne society, and us), where he not only slipped a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label into the left- hand pocket of his famous coat, but then, before everyone sat down, proceeded to swipe about sixty cigarettes from the tables, where they had been put out in little glasses for the guests to enjoy after their meal. And as if that wasn't enough, he then had to present himself, bulging and clinking, to *de alte* Mr Slonim, and accept not one but two fine Havana cigars. My father neither drinks, smokes, nor plays the host at home.

2. He picks his teeth. At the table. With wooden household matches which he first sharpens to points with one or another of his many pocket knives. He has a knife shaped like a lady's leg, another like a fish, a third that's square with four blades, one on each side. He has nearly twenty knives, each one of which he made himself. He makes them at work, during spare moments. Currently, he's experimenting with glues, for a knife that's going to have pictures cut out of magazines on the handle, sealed in and protected by thick, clear plastic or glass. I covet the fish, but he won't even let me touch it. Or any of them, for that matter. He says they're too sharp, 'They're not for little pishers,' he growls. (I'm practically sixteen, for God's sake.) My father's knives are his pride and joy. No one is allowed to touch them. So I sit and study them from a distance, after dinner at the kitchen table, coveting madly, while he rudely picks his teeth.

3. He snores. Like a buzz saw. Like an electric motor. Like a pneumatic drill. My parents' bedroom is at one end of the house and mine is at the other, but the distance means nothing. Down the passage they come, around the corner, under my closed door. *Ah-ah-ah-ah... chrrrop! Ah-ah-ah-ah... chrrrop!* The whole house rattles and shakes and throbs. I ask my mother (married eighteen years) how she copes. 'Ssh,' she says. 'He's your father.' Well, O.K., maybe he can't help it. He had pneumonia when he was young—there's a deep, frightening scar on his back. He suffers from kidney stones. Forget the snoring.

4. Another *personal habit*. Upon which I won't elaborate, but you know what I mean. And I'm talking about in public places, too. In front of strangers.

5. His clothes. His taste. What taste? He wears anything with anything, layer upon layer, and then that coat on top. He's a balloon. He's a walking secondhand shop. He's a disgrace. It's embarrassing to go down the street with him. He wipes his shoes on the backs of his trousers. He rips off his tie without undoing the knot. He wears the same shirt for a week, and would probably

wear it for ever if my mother didn't finally steal it away. O.K., how he looks is his business, I suppose, but let me come into the house with a new jacket or tie and straight away there he is with his sarcasm. 'A prince,' he mocks. 'A real gentleman.'

6. My father is a master scoffer. Three examples will do. (a) I go out to work in the garden. You should see our garden. My father is a destroyer. His pleasure is in pulling things up. Which is why I rarely go out there, but when I do, he stands behind me, criticizing my every move. 'Don't pull that one!' he shouts. 'Leave it! A beautiful flower, what are you pulling? And look where you're standing with your big feet!' (b) He doesn't like the way I shave. I use razor blades. He uses a straight-edge cut-throat. Which I tried, just once, thinking it would please him. I cut myself on both cheeks, came into the kitchen swathed in toilet paper, and instead of sympathy got a clout. 'You've ruined the edge!' he shouted, banging me on the back of the head, (c) He says I study too much. I don't go out enough. I'm always sitting down with a book. '*Gelernte mensch*' he calls me, employing a brand of sarcasm I can't even describe.

7. Well, where's his ambition? Doesn't he want to better himself, improve his circumstances? No. Absolutely not. He still works in the same factory where he worked before he met my mother—he's a kind of mechanic, earning not very much. If it wasn't for my mother, we'd still be living in the house where I was born—a sunless little place with a tiny yard in the back and nothing in front. He didn't want to move. I was young, but I can still remember the fights. However. My mother dreams of getting him out of that factory and opening up a kiosk or a little shop. He won't hear of it. The surest way to get him annoyed is to bring that up.

8. He doesn't want to own things. 'What do they bring you?' he says. 'Troubles!' He refuses to buy a car. He can't even drive one. This is another subject it's better not to bring up in his presence. 'Any time I decide,' he roars, 'it will take me exactly two lessons!' But he doesn't, he can't, he won't. I think he's frightened.

9. I mean, he's even frightened of the telephone. The second it starts to ring he looks uneasy. 'Dora!' he calls out to my mother. 'Can't you hear it? It's the telephone!' He has this perverse thing that if he sees me coming he grabs it first. 'Hello?' he whispers, holding the phone about a foot from his ear. He looks worried, serious, can't wait to put the phone down. 'Who was it?' I ask. 'I couldn't hear a word,' he grumbles. 'Why don't they speak properly?' And then, to cover his discomfort, 'If it's so important, they can ring back.' And, still grumbling, he shuffles away, not sure what to do with himself.

10. Yet he fancies himself as a master repairer. The toaster. The iron. The kitchen clock. Which don't necessarily have to be broken for him to get to work. Out come the knives. The screwdriver (with the broken handle). The pliers. He takes up the whole kitchen table, sweeping everything else on it aside. Delicate twists, sensitive adjustments and touches are beyond him (he has big, heavy fingers, the nails rimmed with black), and—'Oh!—there goes a wire, a connection, a spring. 'Sam!' cries my mother. 'Ssh!' he hisses, but he's not concerned. Now he's really got something to repair. He can sit for hours and hours, fiddling, squinting, opening and closing his knives (that beautiful fish), giving contented moans and groans, and the price we pay for all this is a clock that'll never work properly again, and a huge bill at the electrician's. He's a non-smoker, as I think I've mentioned, but the things he likes to fiddle with best are cigarette lighters. They fascinate him. He owns, at the moment, five—three hopelessly broken, one on its last legs, the fifth (a costly Ronson, which he claims to have found), still operating magnificently. But for how long? What a clicker! What a fiddler! But look how his eyes spark with pleasure each time the flame magically appears. He's busy, he's happy, and it's my fault, I suppose, when I foolishly let him get his hands on one of my things. (My

fountain pen, my mechanical pencil sharpener, the pop-up spring-operated desk calendar I won at school.)

11. Newspapers. He mangles them. Try reading one after he's been at it.

12. The same with books. He bends back the covers. He folds over the corners to mark his place. Luckily, all he reads are Westerns, which I get for him from the lending library down the street. He reads two a week. I thought there was going to be a crisis about a year ago when the librarian told me my father had read every Western in the place. I took him home two he'd read before and didn't say a word. He didn't seem to notice. Some of them he's read three times, the corners of the pages limp with folding, every now and then one of them actually falling off. Does he know? Would it make any difference to him if he did?

13. My father's idea of a night out is front stalls in the cinema round the corner, a huge, drafty barn of a place. He goes with my mother. The Saturday night treat. With the exception of Walter Pidgeon (who she calls Pidgeon Walter) and Leslie Howard in *Gone With The Wind*, my mother's interest in films is minimal. My father likes Westerns. Loves them. Can't see enough. To my mother, they're incomprehensible. Also they give her headaches, all that shooting and shouting and the horses galloping around. Her idea of a night out is a visit to a sister or a brother, visits from which my father always comes home in a bad mood. They're not his family. He refuses to go. 'Where's the pleasure?' he shouts. 'What do you do there? Sit, talk, smoke, play cards. Feh! Not for me.' So forty times a year at least he drags my mother around the corner to those same front stalls to watch 'The Cowboys,' and then home they come, my father looking pleased in his gaberdine coat, probably fancying himself as a sheriff or an outlaw, my mother not saying a word.

14. She doesn't say a word about our holidays either. We go to Hepburn Springs. Every year. 'For the mineral water,' says my father, which he claims is good for his kidney stones, and maybe it is, but that's not the real reason we go there. He goes there (always staying in the same guest house) to talk in Hebrew—*Ivrit*—with people he knew when he lived in Palestine, twenty years ago, old *chaverim*. He worked in a quarry there, hewing out stones. He helped build the old King David Hotel. I'm not sure if these people he talks to are real old friends, or friends of friends, or what exactly. I think anyone who can speak in *Ivrit* my father considers a friend. He sits with these people for hours, talking and joking, sometimes becoming so animated that he even tries a cigarette. And while he talks, he carves. The first day of every holiday he goes out and finds a good, stout stick, and after cleaning it up properly, stripping off the bark, smoothing out the bumps, he starts to carve, at the top, with one of his pocket knives, a hard, craggy-featured head with a nose like a beak and a brow like a huge diamond, all angles and edges, and then he works down the length of the stick, a long, curling snake, and at the bottom he puts a design. While my mother, who never went to Palestine and doesn't understand a word of *Ivrit*, or know a single person in Hepburn Springs, just sits. With me.

15. Does he want to go back to Palestine, to Israel? He says not. 'What's there?' he says. 'It's all changed.' He doesn't believe in Zionism. 'If all the Jews in the world went to Israel,' he says, 'the whole country would fall apart in two minutes.' He's not religious. He eats on Yom Kippur. Boastfully. Makes a big thing of it, a performance. The one day of the year when you're supposed to fast, he eats a double breakfast. Then strolls around outside the synagogue in his baggy gaberdine coat, picking his teeth with a sharpened match. 'I had six pieces of toast!' he yells at some minor acquaintance, and to total strangers too. 'And I'm going home for lunch!' 'Dad,' I say to him. 'Ssh. You might not believe in it but some people do.' 'What are you talking about?' he snaps, turning on me. 'You know who they were, the Jews? Wild people! Savages! Killers and thieves! What's it got to

do with life today? Huh, *gelernte mensch*? Do me a favour, study a little history. Read a proper book.'

16. What else should I mention? His jokes? Better not. The kidney stone in ajar which he rattles in the face of everyone who comes into the house? 'Take a look at the size! I shot it right out, didn't feel a thing!' The way he handles records, his fingers all over them? It's impossible for him to put one on without making a scratch. I keep my records out of his way, in the bottom of my wardrobe. Not that he'd ever play them. My records are mostly jazz, which my father refers to as 'His music.' 'Listen,' he says, whenever I happen to be playing one. 'He's playing his music.' You can't imagine the sarcasm. I try never to play them when he's home. My father has three records—Mario Lanza singing 'The Student Prince,' the soundtrack from *The King And I*, and a record of someone telling Yiddish stories and jokes. About once a month he will decide to play them. Everyone has to be quiet. He turns the volume up really loud, sits down, smiles, grunts, nods his head, closing his eyes. 'Hear that?' he says to me. 'That's music! That's real music!' The whole house booms with it. And then, just like that, right in the middle, he will leap up and switch the record off. Savagely. 'What's the matter with you?' he shouts at me. 'What are you sitting here for? Do something! Get outside!' What's happening? I retreat to my room.

17. So I sit at this table, writing these lists. My room swims with paper, pages and pages, covering the table, covering the floor. These foolish lists. And they're all wrong, My father is not like that. I have written lies, nothing but lies. I try, but I can't write the truth about him. I don't know what it is. I'm sorry. My father stands in the doorway. I smile at him. He stares at me blankly. He must know what I'm doing in here. He walks away. Doesn't he care?

TRENDS

Nancy Keesing

Nancy Keesing is a third-generation Australian and a leader in the new tradition of Australian indigenous writing. Her life has spanned the Depression and World War II, the rise of the women's movement, the euphoria of the 1970s and the introspection of the 1980s. All this has been a lode which she has made rich with her pen, while still incorporating her own historic past. Trends looks with affection and equanimity at the generation gap.

It was first published in Hails and Farewells (Edwards & Shaw, 1977).

You often say 'Shut up!' my very rude
And very dear young friend. Today I'll shrill
My lucubrations—please yourself, piss off
Or listen, as you will.

Long Hair and Whiskers

Surely the world's least sterile, most boring topic.
When locks obscure your eyes you look myopic,
But otherwise it's your hot head, not mine.
Your great-great-grandad pictured in my locket
Long haired and bush bearded, filled his pocket
With gold and pioneering; he did fine
And raised an interesting breed of men—
Musicians, artists, an actor—but not again
(Though they've spread fatly over Australian earth)
In all its generations, have his tribes
Responded quite to such propitious vibes.
Abilities, not symbols, count for worth.

Sex and Filthy Jokes

At the old Tiv I first heard that from Mo.
He told it somewhat better.
Love, lust and rape are equally four letter
Expressions of nothing much as bang and fuck.
It's how and when and who and why that matter
I wish you luck.

Permissiveness

My mother used to say, 'Barnyard behaviour'.

My generation spoke of 'Sleeping around'.

Whatever phrase, whatever girls, be careful.

Sooner or later someone's hurt, a wound

That bleeds no less for being a stab of fashion.

The vast millennia have not altered passion.

YIDDISH PROVERBS

Marc Radzyner

Marc Radzyner was born in Switzerland in 1944, following his parents' escape from Poland during World War II. The family migrated to Australia in 1950 and settled in Melbourne. He attended the University of Melbourne, where he studied English and psychology, taking a master's degree in contemporary American and Australian poetry. His poetry has appeared in Overland, Poetry Magazine and the Melbourne Chronicle. He moved to Israel in 1980 and now lives with his family on Kfar K'lil, the same moshav as Allen Afterman.

This poem appeared in The Drunken Tram (Stockland, 1972).

there's too much talk,
there's too much talk:
my friends spend more time
talking about women
than making them;
and me,
with my poetry?

don't touch me with your
blonde eyes, examining
every gesture I make as though
the future of the universe hung
on which way I point my finger,
shrug, or say: leave me alone;
and don't say I think too much:
I think just the right amount.

there's too much talk? there's
too much misery. The Jews say,
Lord of the Universe, glance
down out of your sky
and take a look at your world;
the Jews say, be sure to send a lazy man
for the Angel of Death.

A MACCABEAN REVIEWS HIS WAR

Richard Flantz

Richard Flantz was known in Melbourne throughout the 1960s and 1970s when he was actively involved in the Zionist Youth movement. He travelled to Israel in the 1970s and was last heard to be living on a kibbutz. This poem appeared in his collection Promises (Jacaranda, 1968).

So we won. We wondered once whether we
Would win. It was wonderful to fight then,
Wild and wanting, the wicked enemy
All around us. We walked with the lion,
And raged and burned with a holy brand
That would flame in an eight-day wonder.

Now it is winter, and the lavish land
Is ours; only lamps burn. We? I wander
Wordless in the night, in the peaceful streets
Where once we died and dreamed, my enemies
Nameless ghosts that write within me—defeats
Not dead that nibble at the rage—reveries
That daily trouble me. More trivial day
By day. Pray? Be gay? I wanted God to stay.

PART 4

1980s



David Rankin b. England 1946 The Family.

Brush and ink on paper. 18cm x 14cm.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

David Rankin was born in Plymouth in 1946 and came to Australia at the age of two. A self taught artist, he is as competent at abstract expressionist oils as he is in the poignant graphite or pen and wash illustrations of the Holocaust poems of his wife, Lily Brett. He has won several significant prizes in Australia including the University of NSW Art Prize and the Wynne Prize. He is represented in the collections of the Queensland, Tasmanian, NSW and Australian National galleries, as well as in the Adelaide Festival Hall, the High Court of Australia, the Victorian Arts Centre and in private collections in Philadelphia and Washington.

THE EARLY YEARS

Yetta Rothberg

Yetta Rothberg was born in Carlton in 1919 of Russian emigres. She was educated at University High School, Melbourne and has degrees from Melbourne and La Trobe Universities. Her experiences include acting in and producing plays, working as a research assistant and managing an art gallery. She has performed at the Union and National Theatres in Melbourne and was awarded the Melbourne University Murray-Smith Award for Dramatic Art. This is an extract from her first published work, Thousands of Years Through the Eyes of a Child, part of the Cleveland Bay New Writing series, from James Cook University, North Queensland, Foundation for Australian Literary Studies, 1980.

The time is about the 1920s.

The setting is Carlton. The broad wide main streets crisscrossed narrow lanes or side streets which cocooned people in their box-like, one-sided passaged houses. Rathdowne Street swept up majestically to the Exhibition Gardens, topped by the imperial dome of the Exhibition Building. The gardens, often a long way from home, yet became a centre for young and old. The old folk fed their meagre crumbs to galleon-like swans. Lovers retreated and twisted in the shadows of the grand oaks. Children played wildly or were sick from the smell of the tan of the play area. It was the era of the juggernauting cable tram, the horse and buggy, and the big open Buicks, Studebakers, and the silver stick!

Into this area came a particular type of migrant, from Russia, Poland, often via England, picking up a little of the language en route, They came unheralded, unwelcomed. Often their boldness and motivation were unknown. One heard fragments of their background, childhood dreams, poetry read under a remote tree, stories of village weddings. Unheralded they came, their boldness and optimism often unrecorded.

They brought their families here, they augmented their families in the new environment. Slogged away at their work, maintaining their dignity and love of their religion. They picked up the crumbs of friendship and were accustomed to the barbs of persecution. They carried a strange, noble optimism and dignity in their work, dress, and dedication to their own group and to the new land around them. Many of their ideas and dreams they projected on to their children. An extension of themselves, often the latter suffered from the ambivalence of their own personalities, the expectations demanded of them, and the guilt of failure.

The first image then of this area, the first stepping stone in this promising free country, was Drummond Street, bounded by Elgin and Faraday Streets. It held many areas of wonder, excitement and terror, especially for the children who lived nearby.

The corner shop of Elgin and Drummond Streets was something of a haberdashery, something of a dressmaker's place. Little was visible through the delicate curtains, as most articles were produced, stitched, embroidered, and made to order by the two elderly ladies, the identical sisters. Velvet bows around their necks, dry fized hair, powdered in a Chaillot fashion, they seemed to match their two small snappy Pomeranian dogs, bowed with ribbons and bells. There was also a yeast smelling cake and bread shop and further down a lolly shop. If you were lucky, you could help serve behind the counter, which also meant importance and pinching for yourself. The landmark of that side of

the street was the Salvation Army Hall, a place for gatherings, free packets of Weeties, music and general activities. The square red brick building next door was the Police Station, separated from the Army Hall by an out of time, out of place rose-covered cottage. The picture glazier attracted less the children's curiosity, welcomed less their entrance. Odd shops and houses of little interest finished the street.

On the opposite corner was a carpenter's shop; monotonous rhythmic threatening saws and odors dominated all day. All the trades and residences blended alongside each other. Separating the two main factories of the street from the carpenter's was a bluestone cobbled lane. Poorly lit, a constant source of fear for those who entered their own houses by this route. Rats ran rabidly across the lane. Shadows fell threateningly. The baker's backyard from Faraday Street held another phantom of terror because of the possible snakes that were hidden in the big log piles which fed the baker's oven. The chaff and grain yard with its heavy iron weights, and grim calloused men, helped also to infest the area with vermin. Factories of clothing wear, knitters stood next to the big stables. Beautiful big draft horses gave off their manured smells. Fearful and fascinating. A wide variety of chariots, horse-drawn vehicles, drays, decorated picnic carts, where the children often played their erotic games. At the back was the more elegant residence of the friendly Freemans. The Law Courts, where the Black Maria pulled up and victims were shoved in to receive their portion of justice. Or men stood tentatively outside in the street, biting their nails and listening to their astute lawyers. Somewhere the barber's shop, with its coloured poles and fresh clean soapy smells, was shoved in between the buildings. And finally there was the ever popular but must-be-avoided pub on the corner.

The factory, four gargoyles and a verandah, marked it for prominence in the street; its twin building ran alongside the deep lane, the back entrance to both buildings and residences. Through the double door entrance to the factory, bolts of material were brought in and the finished garments taken away. Inside, across the back, ran the large cutting table spread across the western wall. This dominated the whole area. Brown paper patterns hung on the nails of the wall at the back, a rack received the finished garments, skirts and frocks, after the machinists and the pressers handed on the articles. The humming of the girls, the whirl of the machines created a hive-like atmosphere. Five steps led to the door separating the domestic area from the factory. The family used the front entrance only in weekends. The lane was the main entrance. The house at the back boasted a lounge room, covered with large rose-patterned lino, a piano, and several wooden framed leather armchairs. The dining room next door, with its large solid table nearly always covered with a cloth, its simple bentwood chairs, was the main centre of activity, fed from the not-so-large kitchen alongside. There was always an aroma of food and cooking coming from the kitchen. Upstairs were sleeping rooms. As the family grew, there were curtained-off passages for the two girls to use as a bedroom.

The family came with their six children, four boys and two girls spanned equally over time. The two younger children were born in the new country of their adoption and future.

They played within access or call of the house. Occasionally the children attempted to play the brazen or the bully and joined in the chase of some necessary victim. Into a narrow side street they ran heated in flight. 'What you want, luv?'

'Want to get your tits pulled?'

Stopped. The leaning sagging bulbous woman over the fence called from a small verandah house. She leered and spoke in a foreign tongue.

They learnt the dangers of the short homeward journey from school. They watched in fear, lest the two bully girls waited to fulfil the vague threat of 'We'll get yer, you wait and see, we'll get yer.'

Pinned against the wall, the child uncomprehending her crime waited her punishment.

'Jew-girl, that's what you are. Ain't yer?'

The father and brother appeared from around the corner. No one knew the man had such spirit and fight in him!

The Family

The large oval sepia photograph with its heavy assertive gold frame showed clearly the distinct beauty of the two parents. She, with clear dark chiselled small features. Her dark clear, almost almond-shaped eyes, quick and animated, almost darted out of the portrait. The dark curly hair tightly parted in the middle, tightly rolled into a large halo, framed the small sculptured face. When she took out the numerous hidden hairpins, the hair cascaded into shiny brown-black velvety texture, almost covering her shoulders. The whole body was small, neat and shapely except for her small breasts, which were well padded out. When other women spread after childbirth or at middle-age, she somehow always stayed distinctive in her small youthful body. Her vanity manifested itself later more and more in her senile years. Her thin and sparse hair was then plaited and tied always with a small ribbon. She fretted over her pigmented skin. There was always present the past coquette! Her spirit, her homespun philosophy, sound and wholesome, was often overlooked.

In the oval frame his hair was parted in the middle, smooth as the fashion of his time. The shape of the face was Slavonic, a round straight nose, high cheek bones, the eyes deepset but clear and blue. They were the indicator to his family. They twinkled when he was happy, humming, his sense of humour sardonic, sometimes bubbling. His outward tranquillity belied the temper which could rock and instil fear throughout the household. His anger, his frustrations, he could vent in cruel punishments. His attitudes, ideals were Victorian. His mind questioning, he devoured in his reading whatever he could lay his hands on, Marx, the Talmud, Shakespeare. After he had finished his day at his craft, hard slogging and earning a living for his large family and hard times, he found refuge in his word by word whispering of the undiscovered world of knowledge and ideas. By day his deft hands pleated the brown paper into various shapes and forms. The children were always well dressed, new outfits were always made for the festive seasons. He made for his relatives' children at the same time...

The Army

The boom of the drums resounded triumphantly as it turned the corner, leading the procession back to its home base. Drums, tambourines and singing, clear, clean faces uncomplicated in their mission, joyfully beaming from under their bonnets or caps. Followed by many weathered, cruelly-lined faces, the Salvation Army swings along followed by its Sunday supporters. The procession is made up of all ages, as it beats its way back to the main hall in Drummond Street.

The two children, Max and Deborah, stand hand in hand awaiting the nearness of the Army. The boy's face is wide and happy with excitement, the girl copies the clapping of her brother. They run over and join in the procession, happy to belong. To the singing of 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem', the whole procession enters the Salvation Hall. Amidst the scraping of seats, the band leaders unstrap their

drums and instruments, help the people to take their places in the hall, whilst the leader goes to the rostrum, her prayer book in her hand. ‘ “Come now, let us reason together!” saith the Lord, “and you shall eat the good of the land!” ’ she reads. Quietly the strains of ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem’ are sung in one of the corners. The speaker closes her book and speaks now more colloquially to her attentive audience. ‘Children, look up, up and the Angel of Heaven will always be there...’ The two children, Max and Deborah, remain enthralled, looking up at the roof which has an open skylight. They remain looking expectantly, hopefully. Deborah’s eyes remain fascinated in that one direction, Max’s attention has gone back to the speaker. ‘Hands up those who are Catholics,’ she asks. A few hands shoot up. ‘Right, let’s give a hoorah for the Catholics.’

‘Hands up those who are Church of England, Hoorah for the Church of England. Hands up those who are Jews.’ The two children timidly put up their hands. ‘Hoorah for the Jews.’

At the back of the hall stands a man dressed in his vest and shirt sleeves. He has entered quietly, stands looking around the hall, finally he identifies his children, he tiptoes down the passage and beckons to them to come. They leave the hall, one on each side of him and return to the factory across the road.

A DIFFERENT CATTLE OF FISH

Amirah Inglis

Amirah Gutstadt was born in Poland in 1927. Her family arrived in Australia when she was two years old and settled in Melbourne. She attended the predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Princes Hill School in Carlton. Despite the tribulations it caused her, she kept her first name but had her surname abbreviated to 'Gust'. That also created difficulties although it was, at least, a mercifully short name. This extract from her autobiography Amirah: an Un-Australian Childhood (Heineman, 1983) describes the move out of Carlton to the more salubrious suburb of St Kilda. A sociologist, Amirah has written a book on sexual anxiety and politics in New Guinea and another on the life of a Papuan.

Although we had moved south across the Yarra, it was not to one of the old leafy, eastern suburbs, but to a salt-sprayed, sea-smelling place along the bay, next to St Kilda, whose beach I already knew from our summer Sunday outings. We had moved to one of the ugliest streets in the ugliest part of that southern suburb, Barkly Street, Elwood, and close by was the depressing little stream of the Elwood canal. But, happily, it was tidal at our end and a short walk led to a grassy knoll of Point Ormond with Elwood beach below. Though our new surroundings were mainly ugly, we had moved into a brand new block of flats.

My mother wanted something streamlined, with modern conveniences. She was still European enough to prefer a new flat to a house and still had no interest in gardening. The flats, built of red brick and white plaster trim, had the rounded corners then most fashionable, large windows, good-sized rooms and all modern conveniences, which included much that was 'built in'. Our flat, on the top right-hand side of the block of four, was quite palatial to my eyes and I was delighted that everything was sparkling new. It had a lounge room from which double glass doors opened on to a tiny verandah which looked uselessly on to Barkly Street, a dining-room, my parents' bedroom, my bedroom, a large kitchen with another room which opened off for Ruby who had made the move with us. But the bathroom was my special delight.

In Park Street, our bath, old, white and tinny, had stood on legs and its nasty tap—too close to the bath for your hands to get under—produced only cold water. Hot water was heated out the back in the copper and brought inside to the bathroom until my parents had a chip heater installed. In Barkly Street, the bathroom was all tiled. The green enamelled bath was 'built in' with tiles which, like the walls, were green and decorated across the top row with a water motif. The floor was terrazzo. A separate shower recess, closed off by a frosted glass door, was built alongside the bath and next to it on the other side stood a green porcelain pedestal basin with two taps, one for hot water and one for cold, with one outlet through which you could produce a nice mixture of the two. Above this was a mirror. The lavatory, also in green porcelain with a bakelite seat and cover, was in a room of its own off the bathroom. It was altogether like something out of a magazine and although living in a flat, I discovered, was not very Australian (since none of my Elwood Central friends did), the bathroom seemed exactly right. Our lavatory in Park Street, a wooden seat with a hole cut in it, had stood in its little wooden house 'out the back—cold, frightening in the dark and prone to spiders, 'Out the back' now began with a small back porch which held a wood box large enough for me to lie on and survey the neighbouring back yards, then went down a flight of wooden steps and led out into the back yard edged with a row of wash-houses and garages. In our garage sat our first car. This was a navy blue 'Chevrolet' which my father had first bought in the city then was taught to

drive by our friend Paul Vardy, who took him around the streets of Parkville, just before we left them for Elwood.

It was here at Barkly Street that my Australianisation really began; here that the un-Australian features of my childhood both became more apparent and began to press on me. Our lives changed in so many ways when we moved from the cottage opposite the railway line in Park Street that I wonder how we had the nerve and whether my parents had any misgivings about leaving the familiar world of Brunswick. But that's a second-generation wonder; people who have left their small towns for four new countries are not afraid to cross the Yarra. So we made our change in the middle of the school year, as soon as my mother had seen the flat she wanted. On 15 April 1936, I was transferred from Princes Hill and enrolled by the headmaster, Mr White, into the fifth grade at Elwood Central School, another red-brick building in the style of Princes Hill Infants. I was led into a classroom to confront thirty unfamiliar faces sitting in pairs at familiar wooden desks and was welcomed by another kindly lady with her hair in a bun. This one, unlike Miss Whitbourne, was comfortably dumpy with a weather-beaten brown face and smiling eyes but, like her, was a class teacher to be remembered forever.

My parents' handbag factory was flourishing and my mother worked full time as well as taking shorthand and typing courses at Zercho Business College, so Ruby did the cleaning and weekly cooking. When she left soon after to be married, Mrs Martin arrived in our lives, and she was an altogether different 'cattle' of fish.

She was a very large woman who spoke in a more authoritative and more 'English' voice than Ruby. She was much older and more exalted. 'Mrs Martin has been very well off,' my mother told me. 'She is not used to working in other people's houses. She has a large house in Hawthorn and a son at Scotch College.' This was strange. Hawthorn was one of the old, respectable, leafy suburbs where you wouldn't find one European Jew and scarcely one of those old established Australian ones who couldn't be told from non-Jews. 'Her husband was a lawyer.

'Why does she have to work as a housekeeper?'

'Because,' my mother explained, 'her husband has left her and she needs the money.'

There was also a suggestion in her tone of things better not discussed with children; so I bided my time, got to know Mrs Martin and her lavish, even extravagant style of catering, kept my eyes and ears open and eventually discovered that she had a drink problem.

My parents didn't get home from work until after six o'clock at night and as both Mrs Martin and I liked to talk, her world was open to me, and I heard of a life of luncheons, afternoon teas, tennis parties and visits in the leafy suburbs, and all about her son at Scotch College.

Her world of women's magazines and films was open to me too, each day after school, and her cuisine introduced a new range of Australian dishes, some of which came from the magazines. Her *pièce de résistance* was a delicious dessert constructed with tinned pineapple rings, each hole filled with dried fruit then covered with meringue and baked in the oven.

Mrs Martin prepared the meals from provisions bought by my mother and father at the Victoria Market during Friday expeditions on their way home from the factory. I waited with pleasant expectation for these nights, for often something good would appear for me. One night a grey Persian kitten poked its head out of my father's coat pocket.

We all ate together and only English was spoken at the table, unless there was some private topic, when my mother and father slipped into Polish while I was out in the kitchen helping Mrs Martin with the dishes. In general, there was more English spoken in our house now than in the Brunswick days. There was more travelling too. Australian-style Sunday outings, picnics to Sherbrook Forest in the Dandenong ranges, a day spent at Cowes on Phillip Island where the Workers' Sports Federation had a camp and we saw, through a telescope, seals slopping about on the rocks, and our first live koalas on the fence posts along the road. On these outings, the talk was all in English, the sights and sounds I took in were all Australian.

In the 'Chevrolet' we were more European, as in its new leather privacy Itzhak and Manka and their friends often spoke Polish; but again the sights were all Australian: a day trip to the snow at Mount Donna Buang; Sunday afternoon drives into 'the hills', with a Devonshire tea somewhere on the way and, most memorable, a journey 'interstate' to Sydney, which was another world. The drive was thrilling: we stayed overnight at the Globe Hotel in Albury, where the lounge held writing desks stacked with headed notepaper and other signs of opulence I had never encountered; we stopped to photograph the dog on the tuckerbox at Gundagai. What a name! In Sydney at our hotel opposite the beach at Coogee—again, what a name!—I tasted and smelt a new sort of life: summery and sandy, with outdoor eating, heat, beer, noise and sunburn. The shark-proof net protecting the beach coloured my whole idea of Sydney. What if a shark bit a hole in the net? Wasn't that section rather ragged? Surely a small shark could wriggle through?

The sand of Sydney was fine and white, quite different from the coarse, gritty, yellow sand of the bay at home and the water was full of danger. I was never carefree in the Sydney surf and returned with relief to the flat water of our bay beach at Elwood. It seemed to me to be the only water fit for humans to swim in; though I doubt we could swim in those days.

At Elwood, the other inhabitants of the block of flats, our neighbours, were all Australians. As there were only four flats we saw a lot of each other and when, in 1937, the infantile paralysis epidemic closed our school and kept the children at home for weeks, some of us were forced into intimacy. Upstairs left was a family called Millington, a mother with three or four very beautiful and glamorous grown-up daughters; downstairs left lived Percy Bentley and his wife, and their daughter Joan. I didn't call him 'Percy' of course, as it wasn't done then, outside our family and friends, to call adults by their first name. I called him Mr Bentley. To me he was the big, handsome man from the downstairs flat who had a leather goods shop, the man from whom I got my school bag and my first basketball; to everyone else he was the famous Percy Bentley, captain of the Richmond Football Club. We still were not interested in football and to us it was more exciting to hear Mr Bentley tell how his wife burnt the takings than to know whether he had won his match.

The President of the Club had called one Sunday morning for a drink, bringing the takings which he and Mr Bentley hid in the ash pan of the grate under an already-set fire. They told no one, so when Mrs Bentley put a match to the fire she put an end to the takings. Mr Bentley later moved to the Carlton Football Club in time to be there when my Australian brother came to football age and thus won our family as Carlton supporters for the first time, although we now lived far out of earshot of the roar from the Carlton ground and spent Saturday afternoons at the Elwood beach.

Downstairs on the right, underneath us, lived the McNab family. He was a barrister and solicitor, and a brass plate proclaiming this fact was screwed on to the front wall of their flat. He was a gentle, handsome man, she a sharp faced, good-looking woman; and their two children, Eric, about my age and Lois, a few years younger, became my constant and sole companions in the months of 1937 when the paralysis epidemic closed our school and Mrs Bentley kept her daughter inside the walls of

the flat. We three were allowed out into the backyard, though no further, and thus penned in together against the infantile paralysis outside we became prone to different infections. Eric and I had very little in common. We were not so much friends as fellow prisoners. He was a boy and I was scared of them; he despised girls. He had showed his colours earlier when I strolled down the back steps one day to find him and a friend admiring a new bike. I admired it too, with its gleaming dark-blue enamel and shiny mudguards, then, eager to be part of the group, I read out its name printed on the cross bar: GRAND PRIX. My baby French had all disappeared and I read it as it was written. They both roared with coarse laughter. I was flustered and felt ignorant. 'What's wrong with Grand Prix?' They roared again, and the tone of that superior laughter told me that I'd said something 'rude', so blushing again, I fled upstairs, feeling ignorant, offended and furious.

Eric also had that easy-going 'Aussie' anti-semitism which I feared and didn't know how to cope with, and which got me into trouble with my father. He talked about Jew-boys; he said Jews were 'ikey' and repeated stories about Jews taking over houses, jobs, shops. And when I foolishly and tearfully repeated Eric's remarks, I suppose in the hope that my parents would feel some sympathy for me and join me in attacking him, Itzhak turned instead on me!

'And did you answer him?' I had to admit that I'd been a coward, and said nothing. I didn't say that I had blushed and become silent, that tears had come to my eyes, that I was full of shame; a shame composed in part of being one of those creatures that Eric jeered at and in part of not standing up to him, not defending Jews against his attacks.

It was always a problem: what to say when a school friend or companion talked sneering of 'Jew-boys' or 'reffos'. I was embarrassed to hear the very word Jew because it was always said with a nasty or derisive tone, or I felt sure that it would be. Itzhak would have had me repeat some reasoned argument, with figures, to show that all Jews were not in fact mean and money grubbing.

'Tell them about poor Jews in Europe, in America, in England,' he would say. 'Let them read Mike Gold.'

And I would burst into tears compounded of anger and shame, for I felt sure that reason was no use in this case, that they wouldn't read Mike Gold—that Mike Gold wrote of New York, not Melbourne—but I could see his point. I should at least have tried *something*. But what?

There never seemed, at that time, to be any sense in saying: 'But I am Jewish,' All that did was embarrass the speaker and silence him without in any way changing his views. Like the old Italian woman my Uncle Henryk would meet in 1943 when he landed with the colonial forces from Palestine, a member of the British Army, on the beach at Salerno and with them fought his way to Naples. The old woman came toward him, carrying holy medals and pictures.

'Buy one, signore, I am hungry.'

'But I am a Jew,' he replied, 'I don't want your holy medals.' 'Now don't make fun of an old woman, you're not a Jew, you're British; the Tedeschi (Germans) are Jews!' she snorted and hobbled off. He found a packet of biscuits from the canteen and went after her.

'You see, I knew you weren't a Jew!' she cried in triumph as he handed her the biscuits.

The story exactly fitted the picture of Jews in the heads of many of my school mates in Melbourne. If, exasperated, I would say, 'But look, I'm a Jew!' they would answer, 'Oh, you're *different*.' What was the use of reason? But I would never convince my father of that, so I blushed, my pulse running

faster, whenever I heard the word, fearing trouble and fearing also that I would not be brave enough to deal with it. Which was too often the case.

I had spent much time alone, reading, and felt myself different from those around me. Marsie, Lily and Zipporah were gone; in their place were Eric, Lois and Joan in the flats and new school- fellows who were at first only strange faces. My most trustworthy, best known and most solid companion was myself, my easiest world a fantasy one. I often walked to school alone and loved it because then I slipped into this world. I had talked to myself as long as I can remember and morning and afternoon, along Mitford Street, across Brighton Road and along Scott Street, I became Josephine who lived in one of the flats I fancied along the way. I raced along in fast cars, my elbow out the open window, a scarf at my neck like the girl in the 'Plume' advertisement. I travelled. Men saw me and fell in love with me from afar; I raced on.

I carefully raked each block with a practised eye for pedestrians close enough to hear me, but sometimes, engrossed, I would come to a corner hidden by a hedge and hadn't had time to see the person who looked bewildered as I chattered ardently along to myself.

A turbid mixture, my romanticism ran deep, fed by such varied streams as myths and legends of many lands from the pages of the *Herald* privilege *Children's Annuals*; the historical novels of Geoffrey Trease; the modern revolutionary stories of the communist annuals; the School Paper and the School Reader; and my mother's stories of her life in Europe.

While both parents provided me with a European environment and a political education which were un-Australian, my mother was concerned to provide me with the cultivated middle-class education which was available to Melbourne children in the thirties; but even this, I discovered, was unusual in its musical and theatrical bias and wide span of interests. My mother took me to every theatrical occasion which she thought suitable. We dressed up in our city clothes—which included for my mother a hat, gloves and handbag—and we rode by bus and tram to the Collins Street picture theatres, the Regent or Plaza, to see a film she had read about. Now we were going to the pictures like everyone around us but I learnt from my mother that you chose the picture you cared to see, after reading reviews, and never 'went to the pictures' because it was the thing to do on Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening. We always went to the pantomime at His Majesty's, only once to the Tivoli; we went to 'Peter Pan' at the Princess; to Wirth's Circus; to the Ice Show; to the Russian Ballet of Colonel De Basil; to the ABC Celebrity Concerts to which my mother subscribed and during which we occupied the same two seats in the Melbourne Town Hall every season.

None of my Australian school friends experienced such a range of cultural activities; none shared them with her mother. As we both had a taste for sentiment, romance and heroism and as these were the dominant cultural tastes of the time, my mother and I enjoyed our outings and were never short of films, theatrical performances or concert programmes to feed these tastes.

THE 'PARALISIS'

Jean Holkner

Jean Holkner was born in Perth but when very young moved to Melbourne. Her family settled in Carlton which at the time (the 1930s and 1940s) was the centre for Jewish life. She initially worked as a primary school teacher but later decided to attend university as a 'mature age' student. She now teaches adults in the workplace.

This extract from her book Taking the Chook (Puffin Books, 1987), her first book for children, vividly recalls what it was like to be growing up Jewish in Carlton in the 1930s.

Baron Rothschild!' said my father. 'That's who you should have married! He's the only one who can afford a wife who keeps buying him dressing-gowns.'

It was Saturday afternoon and my father had just come home from the market to find he was the owner of a new dressing-gown.

My mother specialised in dressing-gowns. For her they were a symbol of warmth and security along with flannel pyjamas and woollen bedsocks.

My father was not pleased with his new dressing-gown. 'What's the matter with the old one, eh? It's still as good as new. Wait, I'll show you.' And he started off in the direction of the bedroom.

'It's no good looking!' my mother called after him. 'I gave it to the Salvation Army already. A disgrace it was, with egg-stains and cigarette-burns all over it.'

'You gave away my dressing-gown?' asked my father incredulously, and I don't know what might have happened next if Uncle Harry and Auntie Olga hadn't arrived at that moment.

Uncle Harry and Auntie Olga always came to our place on Saturday afternoon to play a game of rummy.

They lived at the back of their Bicycle-Repairs and Second- Hand Goods Shop in Brunswick and on Saturday, they would walk all the way. Even if the Bible didn't specifically rule out trams, Uncle Harry thought it would have done so had they been invented in time. 'God doesn't want us to travel on anything but our own legs on the Sabbath,' he would say. Because it was against the Jewish law to touch money on the Sabbath everybody would sit at the kitchen table with a box of matches beside them. They would use these for chips, and it wasn't till the first star appeared in the evening sky that Uncle Harry allowed everyone to cash in their matches.

My father thought it was all a lot of nonsense, but he dearly loved a game of cards so he went along with it.

But on this Saturday afternoon, cards had to be postponed as Uncle Harry had something very important to communicate. 'Send the girls away,' he said, nodding in our direction. 'I've got some bad news.'

My mother turned pale and motioned Lily and me inside.

We went as far as the wash-house and hid behind the door.

‘There’s a terrible disease going round,’ said Uncle Harry.

‘We know about it already,’ said my father impatiently. ‘You think we don’t read the papers? It’s called the Paralysis.’

‘It’s called the Infantile Paralysis,’ said Uncle Harry. He always enjoyed correcting my father. ‘It’s mostly children who catch it, and I just heard on the lunch-time news that it is now an epidemic and more and more children are going to get it. Some get paralysed; some are not so lucky and they die.’

By this time my mother was clutching her heart and had to be helped to a chair.

‘I’ll get the brandy,’ said my father.

‘The man on the wireless said we shouldn’t worry,’ said Aunty Olga, ‘but just go on living like normal.’

‘They can all go on living like normal,’ said my mother waving her arms towards the rest of the world, ‘but my girls are staying home from school till this terrible thing is over.’

Staying home from school! Lily and I did a quiet little dance of delight behind the wash-house door.

My father came back with the bottle and some glasses and after everyone had had a drink and was feeling better, it became like a normal Saturday afternoon. Lily and I helped to carry the card-table and chairs out into the sunshine, and soon my mother was going back and forth with cups of black tea with lemon, and plates of cheese-bagel and honey-cake.

Lily and I spent most of the afternoon planning what we would do instead of going to school.

My mother soon brought us back to earth.

That night, after everyone had gone, she sat listening to Lily talking about how she would save her pocket-money and go to Luna Park.

‘Stop!’ said my mother. ‘There will be no leaving the house at any time! You think I’m going to let everybody breathe their paralysis germs over you after all my years of suffering to bring you up healthy?’

We were very disappointed to hear this, but, as Lily said, even staying home was sure to be more interesting than school.

On the following Monday I stood at the window looking out on the street. At this time there were usually lots of kids going past on their way to school, but today the street was nearly deserted.

‘Looks like everyone is scared of the paralysis,’ I thought.

Later, my father came in with the paper.

News of the epidemic was on the front page. ‘Four New Cases Today,’ said the headlines in big black letters.

From then on there was no more talk about people trying to live ‘normally’.

Nobody came to our house except Aunty Olga who didn’t have any children yet, so she wasn’t ‘dangerous’.

We weren’t even allowed to talk to Irene McLeod next door through the hole in the fence because, as my mother said, ‘She could be breathing the germs straight through the hole into your mouth.’

The papers were now reporting large numbers of new cases every day—sometimes as many as eleven, even up to sixteen.

A dark fear settled over Melbourne.

As soon as a case appeared in a district, the local primary school closed 'till further notice'.

By now the Education Department was posting arithmetic and grammar papers to everyone. Our school hadn't closed and there were still a few children going there every day.

'It's because their mothers have to go to work, poor things,' said my mother.

Notices were now appearing in the papers about the symptoms to 'watch out for'.

A pain at the back of the neck seemed to be the most definite sign, although ear-ache, cough, and 'weakness of limbs' were also to be considered gravely.

My mother watched over us anxiously.

We'd now been home from school for nearly a month and the epidemic was at its height. One morning I woke up quite late to hear Lily's voice calling me.

'Come on,' she was saying. 'It's nearly nine o'clock. I've been up for ages.'

I went to turn my head in her direction and found I couldn't.

'God,' I thought, 'the paralysis has got me at last.'

I lay staring at the ceiling not daring to move an inch. 'Lily,' I managed to whisper. 'I think my neck is broken or else I've got the paralysis. I can't move.'

Lily's voice sounded frightened. 'I'll get Mum.'

In a moment my mother was standing over the bed. 'Don't try to move,' she said. 'I'm going for Dr Asch.'

I lay quietly reviewing my life. It didn't take long, as I was only eleven years old at the time.

'What will happen to me?' I thought.

Some people recovered from the disease, but many were left crippled. A few had to spend the rest of their lives in a respirator.

Lily was tip-toeing around the room. 'Can I get you anything?' she asked.

I was too scared even to open my mouth in reply.

Dr Asch must have dropped everything—and everyone. In minutes he was there, tapping my chest, listening to my heart and shaking his head gravely the whole time.

My mother and Lily hovered behind him.

'Get the other girl out of the room,' he said sharply. 'Don't you know how catching it is?'

'Hmmm. No temperature. That's good. Can you move your legs?'

Carefully I wriggled my toes then shifted one leg slightly. So far all right. I moved the other leg.

'I think it's only my neck...' I began, when the doctor suddenly interrupted. 'Have you had that window open all night?' and before I could answer he'd pulled it down with a bang.

'Lying under a draught has given you a stiff neck. That's all.'

'Thank God,' said my mother and in the same breath began to shout at me. 'How many times have I told you about lying under an open window? You've frightened us all to death!'

'Rub this cream on your neck three times a day,' said Dr Asch. 'And remember you can have too much of anything— even fresh air.'

So I was cured of the paralysis.

In the outside world the epidemic grew worse.

Every night after we'd finished tea my father would spread the paper out on the table and read the latest news. Doctors and other experts were now writing articles about where the epidemic might have started.

'Cats' shouted my father one evening, suddenly leaping out of his chair and throwing the paper to the floor. 'They think that cats are the cause of Infantile Paralysis.'

He caught sight of Penny who had made the mistake of wandering into the dining-room at that very moment. 'OUT! OUT! OUT! You demm bladdy cat.' (I think he pronounced it 'bladdy' because he didn't want us to take up swearing.)

The poor cat, unused to such a violent greeting fled out of the back door into the street.

By the time she reappeared three days later, cats had been ruled out as the cause of paralysis, but Penny never trusted my father again and would twitch nervously whenever he came by.

And then when everything looked its blackest, a faint wave of hope came over the city. Fewer cases were being reported; sometimes there wasn't a single case for two or three days. But my mother still refused to listen to our pleas to be 'allowed out',

'When all the schools are open again,' she said, 'you can go out and play.'

Meanwhile a clever young doctor had written to the papers saying that since the paralysis started in the nose, all we had to do to protect ourselves was to 'block the nasal passages with cotton-wool'.

This appealed to my mother's scientific turn of mind. 'It makes sense you know,' she said.

The cotton-wool, the young doctor suggested, should be soaked in 'some suitable preparation such as glycerine'.

'Maybe we could go to the pictures one night,' I suggested daringly, 'if we have plenty of cotton-wool in our noses of course.'

My mother remained surprisingly calm at the idea. 'We'll see,' she said.

Lily and I rushed to the paper to see what was on. We were in luck. Deanna Durbin. 'The twelve-year-old singing sensation of Hollywood' in her first film, *Three Smart Girls*. Lily had read all about it.

'It's very suitable for children,' she explained to my mother. 'It's about a young girl who sings beautifully and brings her parents together after they've been separated for many years.'

So the next day my mother bought a bottle of glycerine from the chemist and after tea that night the three of us gathered in the bathroom. Here, under my mother's strict supervision, we dunked great wads of cotton-wool into a basin filled with the glycerine.

Then, our noses stuffed thickly with this terrible concoction we walked to the Empire.

There were very few people at the theatre and we sat right at the back near the door.

'If anybody comes to sit near us we'll move straight away,' said my mother. At least I think that's what she said. It was difficult to be certain owing to the cotton-wool.

The lights went out, the film started and for the next two hours the outside world disappeared. Not once did I think about what it would be like to be paralysed or to walk on crutches, or maybe even to die. I didn't even feel the back of my neck to see if I had a pain there.

'That Deanna Durbin,' said my mother on the way home, 'she sings like an angel.'

Halfway through the film she'd taken the cotton-wool out of her nose so that she could cry properly.

The sky was full of stars that night and a warm Spring breeze blew gently as we walked home.

'Just as well we don't have to get up early and go to school tomorrow,' said Lily with a sigh of deep satisfaction.

'What do you mean we don't have to get up early?' said my mother. 'Have you forgotten that tomorrow is Friday and we have to clean the house from top to bottom and finish cooking the chook and change the linen on all the beds?'

TEDDY

Fay Zwicky

Fay Zwicky was born in Melbourne in 1933 and graduated from the University of Melbourne. Her poetry was first published while she was still at university. She has edited literary magazines and anthologies and is currently a lecturer in English at the University of Western Australia.

She has published three collections of poetry, Isaac Babel's Fiddle (Maximus, 1975), Kaddish and Other Poems (U.Q.P., 1982) which won the 1982 NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry and The Lyre in the Pawnshop (U.Q.P., 1987) for which she won the 1987 NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry.

This story is taken from Hostages (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1983), her first collection of short stories.

He came back to my parents' house with Miss Hallam after the races two Saturdays running. She was employed during the war as companion to my mother and general help. I must have been at least twenty before I realized she was absurd, having before then thought her the most graceful woman alive. Her golden-brown overcoat, old though it was, flared out from a tiny nipped-in waist with the arrogant swish of a cossack tunic. A lush dome of violets fresh in her lapel, a whiff of sherry round her head, elegant narrow feet thrust outwards like a dancer, she would set off for the races on the tram.

We children would sometimes be allowed to accompany her to the tram stop to wish her luck. I just know today's my day,' she would say. 'With Breasley up, Kintore's got to win.' And fired by her prophetic certainty I asked her to put half a crown on Kintore for me, for I badly needed money for chocolate frogs. Most of all I was impressed by her sly smile, fine bones and sudden enigmatic silences. My feet were already two sizes larger than hers and I was not yet eleven. My voice was loud and ragged.

I used to ask myself how such a family as ours came to house such an aristocrat. We were so noisy, so unruly. We laughed and cried too loudly for the outside world. And besides, we were Jews. She came from an old Tasmanian family, had blown her inheritance on the horses at twenty-one and subsequently fallen, as they said, on hard times. According to my mother, she had been an inspiration to two renowned portrait painters and had lived for a time with a famous conductor. 'Did she have to cook for him too?' I asked. 'Of course. What else would she be doing?' My mother tucked in her top lip.

I marvelled at the romance of her life, her grey-streaked hair knotted nonchalantly at the base of the slender neck at a time when most women of her age had 'perms', and I hung on whatever she said, tasting opalescent colours in my mind. To please her, I studied lists of horses, memorized their names, weights, jockeys, and the colours of the riders' silks. Breasley was in green and purple the day I put money on Kintore.

I do not know exactly how old she was when she came to us. Probably fiftyish. She described the house she grew up in—a Georgian mansion with pillars out the front and a grand central staircase sweeping into the hallway. She would come down dressed for a ball in white lace with silver shoes and violets in her hair. 'White, of course, dear. Everyone wore white when I was young.' At the foot of the stairs there was always a tall, fair grazier ready to marry her if only she'd known then what

she knew now. 'Well, my day will come when the right horse comes home,' she would add after another fair-haired Jim or Peter had made his final farewell. At the time I took this as a testament to her accomplished and restrained optimism. Above all, her voice betrayed nothing excessive. 'No matter what she's done in her time, she carries herself like a lady,' my mother would say. 'What has she done?' I asked. 'Never you mind,' said my grandmother with a fidgety look in my mother's direction.

I remember Teddy first at dinner with the family the night Miss Hallam brought him back after the races. It had been raining nearly all day, most of which I'd spent reading *Jane Eyre* and getting very worked up about Mr Rochester. The track was a mud hole, they said, but they didn't seem to mind. They laughed a lot during the meal, which was only lamb chops and peas. Miss Hallam's face was flushed and her blue eyes crinkled and glittered. They were always on Teddy when they weren't on my mother.

Teddy wore a brown checked suit with a red tie, and his shoes, which my mother kept staring at, were half brown and half white and had a large fringed flap that hung over the laces. His nose was a little crooked and rather flat at the bridge. I liked the way his side-parted black hair was slicked down flat across his head with a bit that sometimes fell into his right eye, and was disappointed when my grandmother said he used 'too much stuff' on it. It was fine with me. He had a rough, untidy sort of face and a curly mouth, and sometimes he gave me a wink during the meal when Miss Hallam's voice rose higher than usual and her words stopped and started, sometimes more clearly than others.

At this time I remember being sent off to my grandmother's when the noise level rose at home. I liked the small house with its gleaming emerald lino in the kitchen, the glinting iceberg in the wooden ice-chest, and the little jewel-like beads dangling over the net covers my grandmother had placed over jellies and cream specially prepared for the visit. We didn't have dessert at home— 'A piece of fruit is much better for your teeth,' said mother, taut with conviction. Only much later did I learn that it was she who had introduced the Oslo lunch to my school canteen, and for years I mourned the disappearance of white bread, hurling crumbling wholemeal sandwiches into the bin along with the raw carrots and sultanas. To hell with India and Afghanistan! Anyway, our white refrigerator with its rounded corners looked pretty dead beside an ice-box.

At the side of my grandmother's house grew a spray of lily-of-the-valley, protected by a hive-shaped spiral of wire. I remember longing to release the delicate plant from its cage but the wire was thick and firmly grounded in the earth. When I mentioned it to my grandmother, she told me to leave it alone or my grandfather would be angry. He was often sick, and my grandmother would mutter something in the kitchen: 'There goes Will again! Always fending and proving!' 'What does that mean?' 'It means he's his own worst enemy, that's what it means. Always cutting off his nose to spite his face!' Very mysterious, but I thought it best to ask no further, for my grandmother's face had shut down for the day.

'She's gone now. Can I play the pianola?' Raising the lace curtain, I'd watched my mother's little black and cream box of a car disappear down the street. I was supposed to be in training to become a classical pianist, but the magical paper rolls that poured out the *Wedding March* from Tannhauser and *Fair Hands I Love Beside the Shalimar* over a range of four octaves had more appeal than *Sonata Facile* by Mozart. It might have been easy for him but it certainly wasn't for me. Tum. Tum tum. Tum-ta-ta-tum.

'I don't know why your mother keeps that woman around. Those dreadful men she takes up with!' My grandmother put a bowl of jelly in front of me, so firmly that the jelly shook for several seconds. 'Who are you talking about?' 'Never you mind. I was just thinking aloud.' 'Do you mean Mrs Heaney?' That was our laundress who presided over two vast tubs and a mangle on Mondays. Her husband was a garbo and an alcoholic too. I knew my grandmother's views on drunkenness: from her I learnt that Jews never drank or got divorced. 'No, I don't mean Mrs Heaney! Now just you put your head down to that jelly and forget about my nonsense.' That was part of the trouble. I couldn't forget anything, yet nothing made sense.

Once when my father came home on leave from Darwin he brought me and my sisters a bird-bath apiece. Odd, because none of us took much interest in bird life. One evening, after a perilous day at school, we'd all flapped helplessly round an injured dove on the front lawn, scaring the poor thing to death with our uproar and finishing up with a tearful burial service. Anyway, each was ornamented with a crude plaster replica of an Australian bird or reptile. Mine had a lizard whose tail circled the uneven line of the bowl. I was a little surprised by this present for another reason: garden ornaments were in other people's gardens, not ours. And then they were either pink and green gnomes and flamingoes or restful stone lions and naked ladies with no arms.

That night I was wakened by what sounded like my parents having an argument. Could one be sure? Grown-ups never shouted, we were told. Through a semi-conscious haze, my mother's voice cut across the brooding shadows of the big gum tree in front of my window: 'I saw the way you looked at her... passed her the sherry...' My father's mumble lulled me off for a while. Then: 'What have you and Tom been up to till this hour... in this state... worried out of my mind... why... bring back those hideous bird-baths for the children... disappointed in you...' I sat up, rigid. Yes, it was an argument all right and these grown-ups were shouting now. The shadows swayed on the blind as the north wind freshened outside. It would be hot again tomorrow. I had begun to feel for the thirsty birds and had religiously filled the bath with fresh water every day since my father came home.

I strained to catch more but a door was slammed and I slumped back into a shallow sleep. I remember dreaming about Miss Hallam in an apron, descending a vast staircase under a huge chandelier. At the foot of the stairs waited a strange creature with my father's face, a human trunk, but, instead of legs, he had a long long tail which wound itself around the banisters. At each step she took Miss Hallam paused to stroke the scaly surface, and when she reached the bottom she took a bottle from one pocket in the apron and a glass from the other and, in her best county tones, asked my reptilian parent if he would care for a sherry.

He grabbed the glass which suddenly grew enormous in his hand and filled it to the brim. With a defiant shrug, he tossed it down at a gulp, at which point my mother's voice rang out (and to this day I don't know whether she actually called or whether I only dreamed it) 'If your father could only see you now!' I awoke feeling very cold. The trees were making a racket outside and the milkman's horse was clapping away down the street at a great bat. It must have been about six, time to get back, to the scales. But I shivered under the blanket and took my time getting up, It seemed no time at all before my father had to go back up north and the scrupulous one-and-a-half-page letters arrived with the familiar message: Talk Costs Lives.

Things settled down for a while till Miss Hallam brought Teddy home from the races for the third time. His hair had fallen across his eye more rakishly than ever, and his red tie was crooked. She was flushed and talked in a kind of furry voice that moved up and down the scale like my sister playing the violin. It wasn't sherry I could smell this time either.

We had a roast that night, with Yorkshire pudding, which Teddy said was better than his mother used to make. My mother went pink because she'd done the cooking that night and wanted us all to know about it. While Miss Hallam bumbled on about the horse she'd backed that broke down because he had too much weight up for the heavy track. Teddy gave me a consoling wink. For whatever reason he reminded me of my father yet he didn't look anything like him. My mother bristled, 'I think it's time you children left the table.' 'Why? I wanted to hear about the horses.' 'We've had enough horses for one day, I think.' Mother was rather red around the neck. 'Mrs Freeman, if you're referring to Kintore's break-down, I'll pay the half-crown,' cried Miss Hallam, her eyes misting over. As she went to pick up her glass, her hand shook so that the red wine spilt, spreading swiftly across the white cloth. My grandmother grabbed the salt and poured a great heap on the stain. 'That'll fix it.' And turning to me, 'Now off you go!'

But I was transfixed by everything and everyone—Teddy, Miss Hallam, my mother, who was rising to her feet with very tight lips: 'You know it's not the money I care about, Jean. It's the principle of the thing. She's only a child!' 'Are you talking about me by any chance?' I was cool on top but burning with impatience underneath. 'Will you please leave the table if you, by any chance, have finished your meal!' 'No.' 'Wait till your father comes home, my girl!' 'I'm waiting. And I won't leave the table!'

At this point Teddy got up and went round behind my mother's chair. With another curly look in my direction he put his arm round her shoulders and said, 'Come on now, Mrs Freeman! Jean meant no harm. A bit of fun for the kid, that's all.' My mother shrank from his touch, but I wished it had been me instead. While I was wishing, he said to my mother in a tone that made me catch my breath, 'You know you're the prettiest woman imaginable when you're cross.' Brushing Teddy aside, my mother got up and left the room and I started breathing again. My grandmother, with a warning look at me, got up and followed her into the kitchen.

'Now you've upset Mrs Freeman and I shall lose my place,' said Miss Hallam. A tear rolled down her cheek into the salt-heap. 'No, you won't! I'll see that you don't!' I shouted passionately, anxious to impress Teddy with my feeling. 'You're a good girl. Pretty too. Just like your mum.' 'That's enough for today isn't it?' wept Jean Hallam, looking at me as if seeing me for the first time. 'My mother nags,' I said. 'Only my father understands.' 'You're jealous of your mother,' said Miss Hallam, pulling herself together with menacing speed. 'That's what's wrong with you!' Jealous? How could an eleven-year-old girl be jealous of a woman 'in her prime'? For that's what Miss Hallam often called my mother to cheer up her 'down days': 'It'll soon be over, Mrs Freeman. He'll come home and find you still in your prime.'

Teddy came over, kissed my cheek and ruffled my hair. I caught a whiff of my father's shaving cream and nearly passed out. 'Maybe it's time for me to be going, old girl. See you soon.' Miss Hallam had staggered to her feet and was moving awkwardly towards the door. On the way she twisted and slipped. Teddy caught her from behind and steadied her. As he did so, her hand reached out to stroke the switch of black hair fallen out of place. 'I'll see you out,' she said. Then they were gone, and I heard the front door shut. I just sat with my hand pressed against my cheek, which burned like fire.

Soon! I couldn't wait. Didn't want to. 'You're wearing me out with your fussy ways,' said my grandmother when I didn't finish my jelly for the second time in a week. 'What's the matter?'

'Pins and needles, I think.'

'Hm.'

'Well ... you know.'

'No. I *don't* know. Your dress needs letting out a bit even if your appetite isn't what it ought to be.'

'I think I'll go for a walk.'

'Where are you going?'

'Nowhere in particular. To the shop maybe.'

'And into all the rubbish, I'll be bound. By the way, here's half a crown for the money you lost on the horse—what's the matter this time?'

I was looking in the direction of the lily-of-the-valley but couldn't see it from where I stood. She went on, 'You've had your chocolate ration for this week. *And* your sister's by the looks of things!'

'Oh?'

'Oh, my! Oh, my! Lost our clever tongue, have we?' I shifted uneasily from one foot to another.

'What about the pianola? Your mother won't be back for an hour or more and you can have a nice long turn.'

'No, thanks. I feel like a walk right now.'

'Please yourself. A pity your father isn't here to handle you. You're getting too much for me. And for your poor mother too!'

'That's why Miss Hallam's with us. To help,' I said feeling ashamed. Too much for her? For my 'poor' mother? I was too much for myself. 'About time your mother got rid of her lame ducks, isn't it? She's just like Will used to be. Always trying to prove something, but what it was, I never did find out. That woman'll bring nothing but bad luck!'

I set off for my walk but wasn't just going nowhere. Oh, no. I was off to visit Teddy. Something was happening that I didn't understand, and for years afterwards I remembered the great lurch in my belly when, for the first time in my life, I clammed up on my grandmother and refused the pianola and the jelly. I had started picking out pop tunes on the piano, to my mother's chagrin, and the sadder they were, the better I liked them. Mozart at home was as remote as Caesar and his boring wars at school: they got you nowhere and I had to go somewhere.

I kept on walking down past the corner shop with its cheap candy walking sticks, into streets and lanes I'd never seen before. I passed stores with sausages and cheese in the windows, crusty high loaves and long French loaves. I remember the sawdust on the floor of the butcher's shop, the uneven surface of the blood-stained chopping block, the glint of the cleaver high in the butcher's hand. And the pigs and calves hanging, still in their skins, from silver hooks.

It was getting hotter and my dress gripped me uncomfortably. I remember clutching my arms against my sides to hide the dark spread of sweat on the pale blue cotton. One of my sandal straps had come loose, and the sole flapped against the footpath as I walked. I paced twice round the block before stopping in front of a tall grey building. Flats! Masses of them. Which one was his? Dingy curtains fluttered in some of the open windows and a smell of cabbage drifted from somewhere. I ran my eye slowly from the lowest balcony to the highest till I'd counted at least six storeys. There wasn't a soul in sight.

His name was on one of at least forty letter-boxes in the lobby. E. Rossiter. Edward, Teddy. Teddy Bear. King Edward the Eighth. Your Highness—meet Miss Helen Freeman. She would like you to answer a few questions in your own royal time. Amidst the jumble in my head, I wanted to ask him what a de facto wife was, because Mrs Heaney said that's all she was and would never be any different, and did he feel—

'Heh, young lady! What brings you here? How on earth did you find me?' There he was, the door half-open.

'Nothing, really. Miss Hallam told mother where you lived and I wrote it down. I just happened to be passing and thought I'd say hello.'

'Well, hello indeed!'

He had on a dressing-gown made of shiny dark green material and black leather slippers. There were dark shadows round his mouth and chin, and his eye-lids looked puffy.

'Who is it, Ted?' A woman's voice came from another room. I jumped.

'Don't worry about old Rita,' he said with a wink and, turning in the direction of whoever it was, called out, 'Just a friend of Jean Hallam's, honey. I won't be long.'

'What's a friend of that old bag doing here?' came the voice again. It sounded very angry. Teddy smiled a funny kind of smile and shrugged. 'Women, you know. They're all the same.'

'Are they?' My voice was shaky, 'Well, I just called to say hello and I'd better be going now.'

'If you must you must. Good to see you again. Give my love to old Jean and tell her I've got to lie low for a while. Back trouble and all that.'

'Shagger's back, you mean.' The voice was very close now. I was too frightened to speak. Teddy stretched out his hand through the half-closed door and touched my arm, smiling feebly: 'Look, kid, tell her I'm sorry, will you?' I said, 'Please take your hand off my arm. I hate anyone touching me,' and moved away from him down the many grey stairs like a sleep-walker.

'Well!' said my grandmother, smiling in spite of me, 'how are the pins and needles now?'

'Fine,' I said, 'just fine.' And I shut the door of my bedroom firmly behind me.

CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

Michèle Nayman

Michèle Nayman was born in London in 1956 and came to Melbourne from Johannesburg with her family in the early 1960s. She graduated in town and regional planning from the University of Melbourne and later did a master of science degree at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, New York.

In 1977, Neptune Press published her first book, a collection of poems called What You Love You Are. Neptune Press published a book of her short stories, Faces You Can't Find Again, in 1980. One of the stories, The House on Lafayette Street, was read on ABC Radio and anthologised. Michèle lives in Sydney and works as a freelance writer. She is working on her second collection of short stories, to be called Somewhere Else.

Children of Immigrants was published in the Jewish literary magazine Menorah in 1987.

There is a mournful warning knell
some children of immigrants tell
a heart's confused magnetic pole.
I know I'm Russian in my soul.

In this despair without a name,
there is a tendency to blame
things outside our own control.
I know I'm Russian in my soul.

When shadows stalk the afternoon
and night obscures them far too soon
to understand where they belong,
each way we turn is wrong.

This, then, is the circumstance,
perhaps, of all this faceless angst.
The Id conducts its private poll:
I know I'm Russian in my soul.

So we get married, start to teach
our children what is out of reach.
Displacement takes its wrenching toll.
I know I'm Russian in my soul.

CAGED IN THE DESERT

Peter Huppert

Peter Huppert was born in Vienna in 1914. He was one of a group of Jewish Viennese university students granted visas to England in 1938 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, though they were unaware that they were intended to be trained for the Anglican ministry. Desirous of entering the medical profession he spent a year attempting to get into the 'closed shop' British medical schools.

Following the outbreak of war, Peter was sent before a British military tribunal and classified a 'friendly enemy alien', without restrictions. After the fall of Dunkirk however he was arrested and imprisoned. Shortly thereafter he was transported aboard the Dunera to Sydney, then to Hay in New South Wales, where he spent the next fifteen months as an internee. He was later freed and returned to England conditional on his enlistment in the British Army.

On demobilisation, he completed his medical degree at Zurich University and subsequently qualified as a psychiatrist with a British diploma in psychiatric medicine. In 1962 he migrated to Hobart with his wife and two infant daughters. They later moved to Sydney where he worked for the Repatriation Department before he set up a private practice. He was a foundation member of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War. He died in Sydney in 1987.

This story first appeared in the Dunera News in 1985, an occasional newsletter published by Henry Lipman, a Dunera survivor.

At Hay, according to our guards, they had had insufficient warning of our arrival, and so all that was ready was the wire enclosure and watch towers. Bleak despair and incredulity with these bungling arrangements overcame us and bitter resentment for being railroaded out into the 'desert'.

They told us next that our bunch would be divided and gave us the option to choose Camp 7 or 8. This was immediate food for our frustrated, agile minds and one could see self-appointed leaders of men busily recruiting like-minded and congenial company. It was here, sad to record, that the coherence of our hostel group broke down: I must say, quite a blow to my own leadership aspirations within the group. But the choice as we saw it was to join the 'super loyalists' with their motto 'the British know what they're doing' or the critics and opponents of Albion—represented at this stage mainly by the Sudeten-German Communists. It seems to me that people divided roughly along this emotional line and so Camp 7 eventually was made up largely of younger men who had assimilated to British culture and ideas and transferred their loyalties entirely in this direction, as well as, curious to report, the Orthodox Jewish group who feared the agnostic Communists.

Ernest and myself, after some agonising weighing of the pros and cons, eventually opted for the 'Communists Camp'. It was a bewildering blow to my self-esteem that my authority, until then pretty well unquestioned amongst my hostel colleagues, failed to hold our group together. We did at first have some illusory hopes that we might be able to visit one another as the camps were only separated by a few hundred yards and sometimes father had chosen 7 and son 8, expecting free communication but as far as I can recall little of this was later on allowed.

And so they marched us into Enclosure 'B' where the cook-house and dining hut had been completed, and possibly the ablutions, but only a start had been made on the dormitory huts. We camped under the unfamiliar southern sky with its few stars and the upside down moon sickle.

The next few days were spent idly watching workmen erect the army huts in which we were to dwell for the next year. We looked on in amazement as these lean, bronzed, taciturn men worked throughout the day in the blazing sun, apparently not even perspiring. A number of our youngsters volunteered to assist but their offers were ignored. Maybe a union matter? We soon learned that everything was union-dominated in Australia.

We must have numbered a few professional Central European cooks amongst our lot because memory recalls many delicious meals—particularly cakes and tarts. Food was ample in this camp and we made up for the weeks of starvation on the boat. Meat, particularly mutton, was so abundant that the cooks soon had to burn it and I can to this day recall the smell of incinerated mutton as it hung over the camp for weeks...

From the beginning it had been made clear to us that we could have self-government, provided we could show that we could run our affairs in an orderly manner. I never saw an armed guard inside the camp and recall mainly the appearance of a tall, self-possessed, bronzed Aussie Sergeant-Major who treated us as equals and impressed on us as soon as the huts had been erected, the need for a creative occupation in view of the approaching summer. 'It will be 110 in the shade,' he predicted, 'and will drive you crazy unless you find something to do.. .'

Demands from my hut-crew were mainly for sports equipment and smokes. It took a while before these items were provided and remember only too clearly the almost crazed condition in which several fellows walked around for a time!—true nicotine addicts in a state of withdrawal. They were agitated, tremulous, aggressive and bent on laying their hands on a smoke—however they could obtain it. It is only in recent times that I myself, having become a smoker and at some stage having tried to abandon smoking altogether, have experienced moderate withdrawal symptoms and can now understand the plight of men in this condition.

People continued for a while to sort themselves out and join congenial company by moving from hut to hut. No. X was known as the Businessmen's Club occupied mainly by middle aged and elderly, often paunchy, fellows—and ex-directors of Berlin department stores and suchlike. No. Y was the Artists' Abode, crammed to overflowing by professional stage actors, journalists, painters and variety artists. No. Z was full of adolescents who provided the kitchen hands, exercising their bulging muscles by splitting the Australian hardwood—the source of kitchen fuel—and forever out on the playing field practising soccer.

So a natural stratification of the twelve hundred or so inhabitants originated all of its own—it was not very long before the camp authorities let us have newspapers, educational and artistic material. All this frustrated talent in the camp started to work furiously with the means available. Astonishing to relate, they instituted a camp school soon running matriculation courses and talked of having it recognised by the University of London. They found a specialist to teach almost any subject. A bunch of journalists soon put out a camp newspaper, unfortunately entirely dominated by a few fanatical Communists vituperating the camp authorities. This rag was posted day after day in the mess hut, exasperating our feelings and making us fear the worst consequences from the side of the powers that be. I don't know how many weeks it took us and how many resolutions of our parliament before we were able to dislodge the self-appointed leader of this camp-rag.

As summer moved over Hay the huts became almost unbearable to live in during day time, the wooden walls becoming so hot as to be impossible to touch. For some time one literally gasped for breath in this dry atmosphere, wondering how to survive the next day. Water from under the shower was lukewarm, a mere trickle and barely refreshing. Sandstorms blanketed everything for 48

hours and made food inedible as sand penetrated bread, soup and everything. A particularly alarming experience here—the sandstorms of the electric variety with lightning and thunder enlivening the reduced visibility. For many months there wasn't a cloud in the sky and it was extraordinary how we craved for the sight of a cloud. When the clouds did come, the downpour was such that the camp was two feet under water before long.

There were a dozen professional medicos amongst us lording it in the hospital of the camp—all top-notch specialists of course, so much so that when it came to an emergency operation or an appendix they had to call in the Australian camp doctor to perform the operation. An epidemic of impetigo was followed by one of rheumatic fever, which affected mainly our youngsters. They converted my hut into a temporary recovery unit and it was my job to look after a couple of dozen physically fit fellows condemned to many weeks of inactivity, so as to prevent the onset of valvular heart trouble which often follows rheumatic fever. Outside the crowd was cheering on the favourite football club, so I locked the doors trying to confine them. When I turned round they had got out by the windows. Some of them behind my back even participated at soccer practice during the period of absolute rest prescribed by the doctors. I thought I had authority over young people, but I soon learned better.

Sad to record, even the criminal element raised its ugly head amongst us. As soon as a camp canteen had been established and camp money had become available, theft was reported and in one of the outlying huts a veritable little gang of toughs organised themselves and started terrorising the more prosperous and elderly people. Parliament thought I was the man to exercise authority over them and I felt confident I could. It was one of the more deflating experiences of my life to find that I cut no ice with them at all. They sneered and mocked me, eventually producing a couple of large flick knives and invited me to taste the edge of them unless I vanished. We did not wish to lose our self-administration and turn to the Australian authorities to keep that bunch under control, so we disbanded the hut and spread these potential gangsters amongst the peaceful inhabitants. As can be imagined, this was fiercely objected to at first but worked out well in practice eventually.

London was burning from end to end the newspapers reported, due to the Nazi blitz, but the fate of our relatives in the U.K. remained unknown to us for many months before letter communication was at last allowed and established. It was distressing to know oneself safe from immediate Nazi attack whilst mothers, wives and sisters lived under front-line conditions. The day came when we learned of Hitler's invasion of Russia—one of the more ecstatic days of my life. I knew instinctively that he had taken on superior odds and could at last be beaten. Hitler met his Waterloo in Russia.

Organised entertainment soon appeared on the scene, given the talent available. There were variety shows, popular songs were specially composed, amongst them the absurd lyrics: 'Hay days, play days, make them happy and gay days—unforgettable in their fatuity. Given the primitive stage conditions and materials available, the shows were a roaring success, so much so that army personnel were reported to flock to our shows from a radius of several hundred miles.

Chess and bridge tournaments were frequent and lectures could be heard on many and varied topics.

The months dragged on. News reached us that fellow internees in the U.K. had been freed by then. The case of the Dunera had been raised in the House of Commons—Churchill supposedly had called it 'a monstrous injustice' and full restitution was to be granted to us. But we remained the forgotten lost in the heart of Australia—marooned indefinitely it seemed. And so we continued to eat our sumptuous meals in the Mess Hall, walk the perimeter of the camp in the cool of evening and wait

for the bugle from the watch-tower sounding the last post, unforgettably beautiful, signalling 'lights out' in the camp.

Never have I had time to watch sunsets like at Hay ... never have I seen any more glorious. We had plenty of time to reflect, not only on our uncertain fate, but on life in general. My personal philosopher/friend was an old Viennese professor who, chance had it, had known my father and esteemed him as a great artist. This is about as high praise as one Viennese will accord another. Vienna, of course, is the town where not the man of action, not the man of business acumen, but the creative artist is held in highest regard...

Australian newspapers made interesting reading, unfamiliar as we were with conditions in the country. Menzies was Prime Minister and when I returned to take up residence in Australia 20 years later, why, he was still there! As unassailable as ever.

Hay I would regard as an educational experience for myself. I saw men of the world weightily deliberate their affairs in a democratic forum. I saw the tactics of a small fanatical well-organised minority group like the Communists occupy at the first opportunity positions of strategic importance like the Press and the cook-house. I witnessed the outflow of creative energy from these agile Central European minds, irrepressible it seemed and eventually undaunted by all adversity. I suppose there were periods of gloom and hopelessness for some of us, but do not recall a suicide attempt in camp. I would say morale on the whole was astonishingly high. No doubt the camaraderie between [us] made up for deprivation of freedom, family life and other normal activity.

Happiest were the artists—making music, painting pictures and having such a hilarious time in their hut, which some had long suspected as tinged with homosexual practices, that one fine night our hooligans stormed the hut, threw out all the equipment and bashed up the inmates. It was a critical day for us as the authorities threatened armed guards to every hut in future. The camp leadership smoothed it out somehow and we retained our self-administration.

Lengthy telegrams were dispatched to the Home Office in London demanding our repatriation or freedom on Australian soil, facilities for transfer to America for such as desired it, etc. Rumours abounded and after about a year the great day arrived, A Major Layton, reputedly Jewish, representing the Home Office, was announced and was to address us in the Mess Hall. It had been over a year that we had been mistakenly and unjustly interned, deprived of our liberty, dumped in the 'desert' of Australia and generally forgotten and abandoned. We marvelled I what news the man might bring us, anticipated suave apologies and regrets on behalf of H.M. Government and little action. I felt so angry and bitter about it all I could not even get myself to attend the meeting. However, trust the British to come up with surprises when needed! The soothing apologies were duly delivered and promises of restitution firmly given. However, such was the state of transport at sea, said Major Layton, that shipping for repatriation was simply not available. As to liberating us on Australian soil, this was technically impossible unfortunately as we were British internees enjoying Australian hospitality only. However, the war was proceeding relentlessly, he assured us, and more manpower was always needed. There was just a possibility for such of us as would wish to volunteer to serve with the British forces, to join a transport as free men.

I had always admired the British mind for its flexibility but the suggestion to transform enemy alien internees, throughout treated as POWs, from one day to the next into serving members of H.M. Britannic Forces, was so ironical as to be beyond conceding. By us, that is, but not by the British Home Office.

The effect of Major Layton's speech was dumbfounding. People just couldn't believe that any one lot could be visited by such ill luck as we had experienced. Indefinite internment in the Australian desert for the duration of a war, the end of which no one could foresee, appeared to be in store for us.

Soldiering, regimentation, armed violence had ever been furthest from my nature. Then I began to wonder whether I could not see myself in uniform after all. Imprisonment was driving me 'barmy' and Richard and I came to the quick decision that military service and return to the U.K., braving the U-boat danger once more, was preferable to languishing in Hay indefinitely. It meant the severance of my last link with the hostel fellows because Ernest decided he was going to stick it out in Australia. I believe about twenty per cent of our camp youngsters signed on the dotted line and before long it was goodbye to friends and comrades at Hay and on to a marshalling camp, as we thought. However, it meant many days of train journeying, months of languishing in different camps before at last we boarded a big passenger liner under the fateful old coathanger of Sydney—not before they had completely equipped us with clothing from Sydney's leading store, David Jones, and so restored to us our civilian identity.

For a few weeks they railed us off at Barmeera, which is in the Murray Irrigation Area in South Australia, and there we lived practically in the middle of an orange plantation. To us who had never seen an orange tree it was quite a revelation. I remember how they shovelled heaps of oranges on to army trucks using coal shovels, such was the abundance of the fruit. We saw the same soldiers cold-bloodedly kill a couple of snakes using the same shovels not many minutes later and shuddered. A most intriguing little animal is the so-called Sleepy Lizard lying motionless on the ground—actually a meat-eater and miniature dragon with all its features. One of our chaps captured it and intended taking it to England.

I remember feeling absurdly triumphant as I sailed out of Sydney Harbour a free man ... a soldier in the British army waving goodbye to Sydney from the top deck of this majestic passenger liner...

ARBEIT MACHT FREI!

BIRKENAU

NEEDLE POINT

Ibi Keri

Ibi Keri was born in Hungary in 1925. While still attending high school in Hungary she won a prize for literature. She came to Australia in 1957, following the Hungarian uprising and worked as a dress designer before taking up writing. In 1980 she won the Ku-ring-gai College of Advanced Education Prize for Poetry. Her poems have been read on radio and to groups. These stories, which tell of her experiences in the Nazi death camps, are taken from her first book, I've Been Chosen, which she published in 1985.

ARBEIT MACHT FREI!

Everyone marched silently. We did not know where the next step would lead. We were very much afraid—our hearts pounded heavily, almost as loud as the 'SS' footsteps tramping in the mud.

Constant shouting—'Los—Los', broke the monotony.

Fences were everywhere, electrically charged fences, the SS officers with dogs.

We arrived at a huge iron gate. Big letters proclaimed the cliché 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (Work Liberates). Surely, there never was a statement more deceitful!

As we were led into a building, we were told to remove our clothes along with all personal belongings, and make them into one bundle, which we would be able to collect later.

Lies again—the exit was situated at the rear of the bath-block.

Before we entered the shower, the last 'Gold-Call' was announced. If anybody had kept some gold, he should deposit it at once.

Most of us had parted from our jewellery long ago. Harsh punishment had been promised so often that none would take the risk of holding back a single piece, even for sentimental value.

Inside my handbag were a few documents: my school reports and some photographs, useless to others, dear to me.

Stripped of my last remnants of clothing and sentiment. I was humiliated and hurt ... angry at the injustice that one man can do to another.

I stood there, stark naked, with my head shaven. I had nothing. Then and there I understood what my mother had meant when she used to ask: 'Did you do your homework?' checking up on me. 'You are not studying for anybody else you know, you are learning for yourself.'

I realised at that moment that I had nothing less than I had ever had before, because the only value one can call one's own is 'knowledge', something intangible. Its ownership cannot be shifted by changeable man-made laws. It is not materialistic. It is untouchable by thieves.

The sole value I had, was my eighteen years experience, my 'knowledge', as little as it was. That was mine.

The love and pain that I felt then was mine, it exists still in my heart. Nobody can take that away. It will stay with me as long as I live.

Deep in my heart I have always believed in life and survival. I have never given up hope.

BIRKENAU

After the bath, we were outfitted with strange rags that did not fit very well at all.

The comical side of the distribution of clothing was that often a tall person would get a very short dress. I myself, being shortish got a long warm knitted skirt, with a blouse.

Then, for about twenty minutes, we were marched to our future 'residence' B III Vernichtungslager. 'B' for Birkenau, No. 3, Vernichtungslager, 'annihilating camp', also means a storage place, a kind of supplier of the crematoriums.

What we found there was beyond our wildest imagination. We saw moving skinny bone-collections, balded creatures in dirty rags—men or women? we could not figure out.

Everything was earth coloured. The people, the barracks, the ground. There was no sign of life. Nowhere a green leaf or a blade of green grass to rest the eyes, just mud and bare earth.

To our surprise most of the inhabitants spoke Hungarian, and as we soon found out, for several weeks they had been arriving continually from Hungary.

We were accommodated in Block 7, The Revier Hospital was Block No. 8. This building had glass windows. In a short time, when I saw my reflection in the window of Block No. 8, to my amazement I looked the same as those people who had arrived a few weeks earlier.

Later we found friends among the old and newcomers. They taught us how the system in the Lager worked. The hierarchy was made up of the Capo, the Lagerälteste, the Blockälteste, and Stubendienst. All were prisoners, hardened by time and weather; suffering from famine and torture. Often they had had to kill their parents in order to save their own lives.

We were told about 'Zahl-Appell—the 'roll call' that occurred twice daily: in the early hours of the morning when it was freezing cold, and in the early hours of the afternoon when the sun was unbearable.

We had to stand five in a row, till the counting tallied. We had to be quick to make up the line, otherwise we were slapped, struck either by bare hands or leather straps, or with lashes on our faces or any other part which they could reach. We expected 'roll call' to occur at any hour of the day.

If the result of counting did not match with the number of occupants, the panic and loud shouting indicated that we were in trouble. Everyone had to blame a subordinate in the hierarchy. Occasionally the 'SS' shot into the crowd: someone took a bullet just to set an example.

Once a person was made to run into the electrified fence. He was left hanging there for days, to set an example.

We heard about the prisoner, the only one who ever escaped from Auschwitz in an 'SS' uniform. She was an old inmate who belonged to the elite crew. She was well known and helped by many others in the plot. Unfortunately she was caught in Holland and brought back to be executed.

We were sometimes fed with stories which were partly rumours. After a while we were unable to distinguish rumours from the real events. It was cruel, unbelievable and obscure.

Slowly we developed our own smoke screen as a kind of protector. What was happening in front of our eyes we did not always believe as reality.

NEEDLE POINT

After a few hours of being a resident in Lager B.III the clouds above dispersed and the naked sun flooded us with scorching heat.

My long knitted skirt stored the heat, therefore it seemed a good idea to cut my skirt shorter and use the piece to cover my head.

I was walking along and playing with my thoughts. I saw two women, one sewing, the other with a familiar face. Hesitantly, I asked the woman sewing if she would lend me the needle.

The familiar face straight away supported my case with the remark that she knew me from the 'ghetto'. As soon as I heard her voice I remembered seeing her there also.

Later I learned they were sisters, Anna and Gitta. They had escaped from Michalovce (Czechoslovakia) when the Jews were taken to Auschwitz. They were hidden in Debrecen for four years. Now there were only a handful of survivors from their hometown. One of their old friends had presented them with the needle and a small knife.

They lent me the needle and left it with me. Soon after they left, a school friend of mine with her mother appeared and wanted to borrow it. At first I refused: 'It is not mine,' I said, but I could not resist their beggings.

I handed the precious implement to my friend, on the condition that I would stay with them, until their work was done. Just before they finished the job, I heard a faint 'Aah', and realised that the needle had broken.

My friend and her mother were really sorry, apologised and walked away.

I stayed there, sitting on the rock by myself with the heavy burden. How would I be able to repay the sisters for the kindness and trust that they had shown me?

'Here is the little girl' Anna said with a boisterous voice. Then as she looked into my face, she changed to a more sober tone.

'You lost the needle.'

'No. I did not lose it. It has broken. But I ... I will buy one.

Perhaps for one portion of bread...' Then Anna, boisterous again, 'No way. We won't let you give up your one day's bread for a needle. We'll try to get another one.'

'Would you like to join us as a permanent fifth?' they asked.

By that time we had experienced what 'Zahl-Appell' meant.

It had become common to form a permanent five. The fives stayed together day and night. If any unexpected 'Appell' occurred, they were always ready.

The least I could do was to join them. They became my family, and I was not alone any more. Anna, the older one, was a mother figure, she protected me and I was grateful.

I never forgot the humanitarian gesture of these two generous people who had lived for years as escapees before I was deported. I believe that in the hard and inhuman conditions under which we lived the 'negatives' become more pronounced in many personalities. But in the case of Anna and Gitta the good inclinations came to the fore.

Fortunately, I stayed with the sisters right through our internment and we were only parted when the Slovaks were transported back at an earlier date. I only knew that they left Hungary. I did not know their whereabouts until two years ago, when my brother met them in Israel.

Now—after all these years—I can hardly wait to see them again.

POSSESSIONS

CHILDREN I

Lily Brett

Lily Brett was born in Germany in 1946. Her parents were the sole members of their respective families to survive the Holocaust. The family migrated to Australia in 1948. She and her sister Doris Brett, are both freelance writers.

Lily's works include Poland and Other Poems which won the 1986 Mattara Poetry Prize and The Auschwitz Poems (Scribe, 1986) for which she won the 1987 Victorian Premier's Literary Award and from which these poems are taken.

Her writing is especially significant as the expression of a second- generation survivor of the Holocaust, who writes of the experiences and feelings that could not be expressed by her parents.

Her husband is the artist David Rankin.

POSSESSIONS

A bowl

was a life-saving

piece of equipment

any bit of bent metal

rusted tin

worn enamel

without

a

bowl

you

couldn't

eat soup

had

to

make do

with

sawdust-soaked

mud board

that
passed
for bread

a spoon
meant
good fortune

dignity
and
humanity.

CHILDREN I

You
Mother
would have

like
all
the other
mothers

gone
with
the
children

held
their
hands

hushed
their
cries

smoothed
their
hair

pulled

a pullover
into place

jammed
in

they
held
their children
high

to
breathe
the last air

the
gas
burst
from the ceiling

hitting
them
first.

THE RED DANUBE

Jacob Hillman

Jacob Hillman was born in Hungary in 1932. In 1944 he and members of his family were taken as prisoners by the Nazis to slave labour camps in Austria. Being a small boy, he was worked as a pit pony in a stone quarry. After the war he graduated in science from Budapest University. Following the Hungarian uprising in 1957, the family moved to Australia. Jacob Hillman is presently a senior lecturer at Sydney University; he has had many academic papers published and has written two books. He is now writing his memoirs of the war for the sake of the children.

This story was written for the Australian Literary Quarterly 1987 fifty-word story competition.

In 1944 by the Danube, three Nazis with machine-guns are yelling at 200 souls, men and women, old and young.

They are herded into line.

The Nazis empty their guns: 200 fall into the water.

Everything is quiet again. The murderers leave...

And lo, one rose from the bloodied river.

BOX OF BISCUITS

Gary Gray

Gary Gray was born in Poland in 1929. His parents and all his immediate family were liquidated in Auschwitz during World War II.

As a teenager, Gary was imprisoned by the Nazis but survived, being sent to several slave-labour and concentration camps. In 1959 he arrived in Australia and settled in Melbourne where he has had an outstanding sales record with the Chrysler Motor Company with innumerable awards for his ability. In 1986 he began recording his war experiences as a legacy for his three daughters.

I saw you, I saw you taking it,' said Janine, my boss's secretary, laughingly. 'I thought you were on a diet.'

She always kept some biscuits hidden away for special occasions. They were kept, I had discovered, in the middle drawer of a Brownbuilt steel cabinet, and covered with several manila folders. Knocking one off had to be done quietly, secretly, hoping that no one would notice one or two missing.

It wasn't the first time that I had surreptitiously taken a biscuit or two.

For me, the Summer of '42 wasn't a summer of lazing around, looking at girls or trying to buy condoms from the local drugstore. Maybe it was the right age to be thinking about girls with the naive lack of sexual knowledge of a thirteen-year-old boy in those no-TV, no-porno days.

In fact, there was only one thing on my mind, food, food and more food.

I wasn't really starving in the sense of the starvation which I was to experience in later years. After all, I had only been imprisoned for a couple of months and our Lager, Birkenheim, not to be confused with Birkenau near Auschwitz, wasn't that bad, compared with other camps. We actually belonged to the German Railways—Deutsche Reichbahn, they called it—and as such, we were not guarded by S.S. but by uniformed railway guards, who were comparatively decent fellows.

We were laying railway tracks on some important stretch of line. You see, the Eastern Front had been open for almost a year and the German invasion of Russia was in full swing. The Germans had begun to realise that the Russian war wasn't such an easy *Blitzkrieg*-type of nut to crack. The speed of the German supply lines was of utmost importance, as was the railway line we were about to complete.

It was all Pythagoras' fault. Our line was to join a place called Cheladz to another called Beuten, forming the hypotenuse of a three-town triangle, and as we all know the Pythagorean theory, David Kaczka, who knew everything, worked it out that a German military train travelling via our new line would save approximately five minutes of travelling time.

'For those lousy five minutes,' he complained, 'a few hundred of us have to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning, work twelve hours a day, on an empty stomach, freezing in Winter and sweating in Summer, day by day and month by month. It doesn't make sense!' he said.

'It makes sense to me,' said old Pilzer, who was well-known for his pessimism. 'They run day and night, every hour. Work it out you fool. Twenty-four trains a day, that means one hundred and

twenty minutes a day, sixty hours a month and seven hundred and twenty hours a year. In five years they will save three thousand six hundred hours.'

Tn five years, you stupid bastard! Do you really believe that this war will last another five years?'

David was ready for a fight, and rightly so. The only thing that kept people like us alive and sane in those days was the hope, not just the hope, but the belief, the certainty, that the war would finish soon. Remove that hope and you may as well jump under the nearest military train.

Krauskopf, the Talmudist, stepped in with his scholastic tones.

'Kodem kol (first of all), the end of the war is just around the corner. I know it for a fact. I just received a coded letter from my brother-in-law, Shulem, who quotes the Lubavitcher Rebbe as saying that the kelef (dog) meaning Hitler, will have a tragic end, just after Tammuz, which is July, the hottest month of the year. Can there be a better source of information than the Lubavitcher Rebbe? Of course not.'

'Then,' Krauskopf continued, 'David's whole calculation, the twenty-four trains, and the one hundred and twenty minutes a day only means that more and more Germans will be sent to the front, and as you know, the quicker they get there, the quicker they will perish!'

'Amen!' we all exclaimed.

Discussions like this were usually interrupted by someone shouting 'Zex, zex,' which was a code call to warn us of the approach of a guard or the boss.

Herr Backman, our foreman, wasn't really all that bad. Big, and bulky, with a face which reminded me of Spencer Tracy whom I saw before the war in a film called *Boys' Town*, he came from Hamburg. Two missing fingers from his right hand had saved him from having to go to the front.

His Hamburger dialect sounded worse to us than Eliza Dolittle's English to Professor Higgins, yet somehow, he understood our German-Yiddish jargon.

He lived not far from our building site, in a barrack about ten kilometres from our camp. Being our boss, and the foreman, he didn't have to work, but he did work, he worked like a Belgian draught horse. His only entertainment was a Sunday outing to the local cinema or an occasional screw with one of the lonely housewives in the nearby town which had a catastrophic shortage of men.

'I only pray "das Ich kein tripper nichte gekauft habe," that I didn't catch the clap,' he sometimes confided in us.

I knew he was very clean. I had the privilege of cleaning his barrack room, twice a week. It's hard to explain how much I was looking forward to those Tuesdays and Fridays. The few hours I spent in his place were to me like an oasis on some desert of hard work and misery. He used to send me away from my normal work, at 9 in the morning to clean his place till midday. In those few hours I was a normal person in a normal room with a bed, a chair, and a small desk on top of which was pulled a photograph of a normal family.

It was in my third week when washing the floor under his bed that I saw a parcel still wrapped in paper, with string around it. It was quite large. I took it out and placed it on the desk. I could see that it had come from Hamburg. The sender's name was 'Frau Backman'. It was obviously a food parcel, I said to myself, one of those that soldiers got from their families for Weinachten (Christmas) or Easter. Probably 'mit chokolade und Kuchen', I concluded.

I shook it and could hear a rattling noise coming from it. I wondered if they could be loose biscuits. My hands were shivering as I pushed two fingers through the bottom of the box, and there it was. I pulled out a biscuit. I swallowed it in one go and carefully placed the box back under the bed.

On my next cleaning visit I found the box in the same place where I had put it last time.

'Why doesn't he open it?' I asked myself. 'Maybe he has completely forgotten about it?'

That conclusion gave me the courage to pull out another biscuit.

'Even if he opens it now,' I said to myself, 'he wouldn't notice a biscuit or two missing, and he probably won't see the split in the bottom of the box?'

The thrill of the whole exercise made the biscuit which I ate, slowly this time, taste better than the most exotic dish in the Ritz Restaurant in our home town, where my parents used to take us from time to time.

Two or three weeks passed and I had by then consumed quite a few. Then, one day, when I took the box out, I could hear by the sound, to my horror, that there were only about two biscuits left in the box. The box was still intact, obviously untouched by Herr Backman.

I could feel a cold sweat covering my body. What will I do now, what will I do? What will he, Herr Backman, do, when he discovers my secret? I don't remember ever being so scared in my life.

I couldn't sleep all night and had nightmares in those few minutes when I did sleep. After all, I had seen Herr Backman shouting and occasionally hitting some of my fellow prisoners for some small and trivial negligence at work, and here was I, a young Jew, stealing biscuits that his wife had sent him. What will he do to me?

The next day was not a Tuesday or Friday. It was simply a normal working day. I prayed to God (I wasn't really sure that God existed), that I would survive that day.

'G-u-s-t-a-v!!!' shouted Backman when he saw me with a group of fellow prisoners, approaching the bungalow where we kept our tools overnight.

'Here it comes,' I said to myself. My knees felt very weak. 'There is no God.'

'Gustav, come here!' he shouted. He sounded angry. He had some sort of paper in his hand. Was it a letter? Maybe some document transferring me to a concentration camp. Maybe Auschwitz! Would I have enough time to notify my parents?

'Here it is,' he told me when I ran over to him. 'Eine brief fun meine frau! A letter from my wife. Hamburg was bombed in an air raid the other day. Our house is ruined, my father in hospital, injured. I have to leave now and will be back in two or three weeks. You, Gustav, keep my room clean. I told the guard to give you time twice a week.'

'By the way,' he added. 'There is one thing more. In my room under my bed' (I felt weak again) 'there is a parcel from my wife I had forgotten about. There are probably some cakes in it. Keep it for yourself, otherwise it will get mouldy.'

'There is a God,' I said to myself with a sigh of relief and joined the others to start my day's work.

MORNING NOON AND NIGHT

THE REAL IS NOT ENOUGH

Allen Aiterman

Allen Afterman was born in Los Angeles in 1941 of Russian parents. He graduated in law from Harvard University and came to Australia in 1966 where he lectured in legal studies at Melbourne University. He began writing in 1969. Some of his poems were published in The Drunken Tram (Stockland, 1972) and he has had two anthologies published, The Maze Rose (Sun Books, 1974) and Purple Adam (Angus and Robertson, 1980) from which these two poems are taken. In 1980 he migrated to Israel with his wife, the poet Susan Whiting, and their family. They live in moshav Kfar K'lil.

MORNING NOON AND NIGHT

Months pass, Hungary pumps like an artery

judenfrei.

Eden has put the proposal to the Secretary of Air:

the Jews are being deported, the Nazis defeated,
in retreat (this is 1944)—

when will they bomb the camps and its railways?

Each week the B.B.C. broadcasts atrocities,
a half-million lives are at stake.

Months pass...

the wretches look to the sky each night:

the commandants plan their escape—

intelligence flows in—timetables,

targets, detailed plans (pilots volunteer)

each morning noon and night

in a frenzy of a last meal, the ovens are gorged.

One prayer drifts over the camps-

Stalin Churchill Roosevelt

THE REAL IS NOT ENOUGH

*The real is not enough: through
its disguise
Tell us the truth
which fills the mind with light.*

Jozsef Attila.

No one
is here.
Not even at the gate.

Squinting, I keep going
mind reeling ...
Liebe Mutter! if my eyes had seen these buildings,
if they had seen this place *then*.

As far as the eye can see
fences, towers, barracks

in glare.
Hot grey haze
vast—
hopeless—

my head lowers.

* * *

A narrow mud path
mown from one barrack
to the next—

I walk up
down

Hour
upon hour

... the women's section
the families' section

the gipsies' section
floating in weeds.

Trains hoot, shunt:

a railroad track leads straight
to a mass of rubble.

I look for blood droplets,
scratch marks.

* * *

... Somewhere
a group is laughing, they are shouting a girl's name—

A family passes, they read
a guide-book out loud, like a lecture—

Every word carries like a shot—

I want to scream: are you *crazy*?
I rip out a handful of flowering weeds.

...anyhow,
I've seen enough.
I won't be the keeper of this place.

The teenagers scramble up into a guard tower—

Someone loudly translates the crematorium sign—

I break a strand of rusted barbed wire,
hide it in my sleeve.
In my pocket, dried rotten straw
from a bunk in the women's section.

Others are coming, a group is leaving their bus ...

I walk out
with no thoughts, feet hurting

along the desolate main camp road—

What is the truth which fills the mind with light?

Birkenau, 1977

GREETINGS, AUSTRALIA! TO YOU HAVE I COME

Serge Liberman

Serge Liberman was born in Russia in 1942 and arrived in Melbourne with his parents in 1951. He graduated in medicine from the University of Melbourne but finds writing an increasingly absorbing second career. He has had three collections of short stories published, On Firmer Shores (1981), A Universe of Clowns (1983) from which this story is taken and The Life That I Have Led (1987), all of which have won Alan Marshall Awards. He has been editor of the Melbourne Chronicle and is currently literary editor of Menorah. In 1987 he published the definitive Bibliography of Australian Judaica edited by Jay Young (Mandelbaum Trust, University of Sydney), a comprehensive resource which took nine years to research.

I am the first to catch sight of land!

Prancing about the uppermost deck in pursuit of a quoit grown black, ragged and greasy from exposure and overuse, I came to a necessary halt at the rails beneath which the tattered ring rolls, trembles and spins into the frothy swirl below to disappear into the waters that fan out greenly turbulent behind the ship.

Behind me then I hear footsteps ringing on metal. Quick, firm, angry, resolute steps. Surely the captain loping forward to admonish me for the loss.

To stay rooted in one place? To wait for fury, shame, retribution?

I run towards the bow where innocence might be the easier to feign.

The steps pass—a purse-lipped sailor on some private errand—but it is there, in that corner, while whistling in the wind, that I see it—a shape, something swelling, something broad, amorphous, grey, creeping legend-like out of the eastern horizon.

‘Father! Mother!’

Electricity charges my feet. All clatter and clangour, I clamber down the stairs. I pound along the gangway, torment the passage with echo and find the deck where Father and Mother sit, two bodies side by side sunken into canvas chairs, each huddled, curled against the wind.

‘Australia!’ I shout. ‘Look! There!’

Excitement? Tumult? Surprise?

None of it to greet my discovery. Only a few passengers passing by pausing to look, one man, blind in one eye, saying ‘So it is,’ and another rummaging through my hair declaring ‘Isn’t he a clever boy?’

‘Father! Mother! Look!’ I shout on, leaping in turn to the rail and back to my parents.

Father sighs, shuts the Yiddish book he has been reading. Mother, marble-cheeked, rolls her knitting into her bag. Together, a mechanised pair, they rise. At the rail, they stand stiffly, squint as with their gaze they try to slice through the harbour’s gathering mist. The wind, devious and persistent, probes under Mother’s handkerchief, from there to prise out a coil of black hair, a coil which falls like a question mark upon her brow. Her exposed cheeks freeze to violet and she pinches them to restore colour and warmth, herself the while shivering within her heavy grey worsted coat, her legacy of an

abandoned Paris. She presses Father's arm. He, adrift, it seems, on another vessel, does not appear to respond to her touch.

'We have done the right thing, haven't we?' Mother asks, yet again, as so often before.

And as so often before, fugitive creases flit from the corners of Father's mouth and eyes.

'God alone can judge,' he says with an upturning of the hands. God. Again God—for five weeks past, Father's guide, support, judge. Even though it is Spinoza that he has been reading and Sholom Aleichem, Peretz and Sholem Asch.

I squeeze between them, wonder again where is that God that Father has lately so often invoked.

To the west, now behind us, the sun is drowning beneath a crown of flame. Inland, harder, sharper edges emerge, chiselled out of stone, not blue, not grey, yet both, as first the pier appears and then the derricks, the sheds, towers, trucks and gates and, then too, the lattice of rails along which little red carriages crawl in sluggish motion. From the water below rises a tang of sea-weed while with the taste of the sea-salt and bitterness all about, there merges something more rancid, of grease, decay and sulphur that bring sour bile vaulting to the throat. On the lower deck, a sailor is imperiously shouting orders in Italian and on looking down I see crushed against the rails a host of folk leaning over, dozens of them waving—hands, handkerchiefs, shawls—as though to tell the new land of their arrival. But only the sea-gulls, squealing in their circuits, seem to respond at all.

Nearby stands a sparrow, a small woman, undernourished and dull-eyed. Her companion beside her is more of an owl, heavy-jowled and beaked. Her eyes flit and flicker, large black spheres oscillating in gluttonous startled motion.

'Australia,' murmurs the sparrow dismally into her scarf.

'May we find better fortunes here than over there,' says the owl.

To which Father—if he were a bird he might in that moment be a rooster—draws himself up, pouts his chest, brightens as he sees solid structures usurp the shape of smoky fantasy, and feels impelled to utter into surrounding space a spirited 'Amen.'

How close now that solidity, that firmness. After five weeks, an end to pitching and rolling, an end to reeling stomachs and searing bile, an end, also, to the ceaseless circuitous talk whereby Father with the Sosnowskis and Kalbsteins in tow have been prosperous in the new land. Millions of words have they sprayed into the spray of the sea about them, together, from Genoa to Fremantle, have they set up partnerships, in wisdom have they bought and sold and made fortunes hand over fist and come to own half the streets in Melbourne without yet having set foot in it.

How close that solidity, that firmness. How immaculate the fantasy spun by the grown-ups, a fantasy illustrious and sublime that touches all, all except Mother who has sat, day after day, knitting her memories quietly into a cardigan or a shawl, her lips pressed pale between her teeth. Somehow, the ocean, the inescapable vastness of green water and foam, the bitter air and the impenetrable darkness of night at sea have cowed her into inordinate submission. She cannot rise, she cannot fly. Wherever she moves, reality chains her to itself and reality for her is the limbo of the present and the harshness of the past, a chastening past that clips any wings she might care to flutter when Father or her friends confront her with the future. But there are moments, precious because rare, when she does bow to what might pass for hope, when, drawing me to her side, she whispers secretly into my ear, 'For you, my child, for you have we left Europe.'

Now, stiff before the rail, Mother bites her lips again, with palpable distaste honing her nose to sharp severity.

But Father, with Joel Sosnowski on his other side, actually begins to laugh. To laugh, so that all his amalgamed molars show. To laugh, as though the first hundred pounds were already in his pocket.

His hair prances in the wind. His jacket lapel flaps wildly.

'It's not Poland,' he says, 'it's not Paris, but it's soil under our feet. It's home.'

'Home,' Mother huffs.

'Home,' I murmur, catching shafts of Father's gaiety.

Home. I gulp the sea-air in draughts, knowing these to be the last, taste the new now-expanding country to which a tugboat, brown, rusted and rickety, is towing us in a narrowing arc. I break away, clatter up and down the gangway, fore and aft, root out whatever is solid before me, trying to gorge myself upon the whole fringe of coastline with ravenous bites, returning to report, trusted scout, every new particular that rises from the growing giant that is Australia.

'Look, Mother! Houses, Father! Trees, sand, cars, lamps, people!'

I glow. Burn. Touch me and be burned.

'He is a clever boy,' said Joel Sosnowski. His fingers pinching my cheeks sting with scorpion's pincers. May his own fingers touching my cheek be consumed by their fire.

And then comes the first touch with Australia. Steel against timber—I hold my breath—the ship gliding into port, bumping once, twice, three times against the wharf, quivering with jerky jolts, rocking to rest as weary wavelets of murky water lap around her stern. All about there is a hubbub now—sirens, whistles, creaking wheels, scraping steel, clattering feet, but more than anything voices, voices—laughter, greetings, exclamations, squealing—voices escalating to a chaos of sound that wraps around the whole milling mass of sailors, officials, passengers and visitors as they hurry, scurry and seek, each to his own purpose, each to his own design.

On the port side, the gangwalk is lowered.

I tug at Father's elbow.

'Let's go down now, let's go down!'

'Wait,' he says, holding me back. He scours the swarming platform for a waiting face. 'Another minute. Two.'

A minute now is an age, two a millennium. Beside him, I stand, wait, watch, my feet at the same time ready to run, to spring, to soar. Nearby, hoists whirr into motion. Crates rise, touch the clouds, swing, glide, dive. A breath away, trolleys scuttle. Beyond, carriages shuttle along ringing rails. Successions of cars arrive, depart near iron gates. And in the ears, the wind whistles, seagulls screech, men in overalls gesture and scream. And then the first of the passengers descend. Descend, stumble, fall into the embrace of ecstasy, fervour, delirium. For Joel Sosnowski the clasp of a brother, for Lea Kalbstein the tears of a sister, for the sparrow a cousin, for the owl a friend. A profusion of kisses down below, cascades of laughter, brisk passionate little dances, arms about shoulders, fingers to cheeks.

For a while longer, we watch. Two millennia now. Father. Mother. I. Father, hair in wind-lashed chaos, still rooting out the faces in the throng. Mother frosty. And I—I...

I...

Young heart. Plaything of the maudlin and of mawkish passions. Victim to others' pleasures and tears. I watch. The throat of its own accord constricting—ecstasy, grief. Tremor through every pore. Goosepimples along the arms. And yet heat, inner heat, prickling, tingling, as a sense of brittleness—or is it vulnerability, exclusion?—fixes me to immobility, steeled by an awareness, acute and sour, that there is joy below which we, Father, Mother, I, do not share.

For we are orphans, a huddled self-contained isolated group as, with Father in front and Mother behind me, we take the first steps down the gangway to the firmer steadier ground that is Australia.

We are orphans. No relative, no friend awaits us. Only Reuven Altman from the Welfare Society, an ox, huge, florid, beaming, his shoulders humped from stooping, his hands the hands of a giant as he extends one to Father—

'Welcome to Australia, my suffering brother!'

—then to Mother—

'May this become your home, my sister!'

—then to me, doubling over, all glow and golden canines, with a buoyant bellow to ask my name.

I tell him, feel the moisture, warmth, force of his clasp.

'Another member of the work-force,' he booms loudly and laughs. 'New blood, young blood, a gift to the land.—Now come with me, I shall take your bags.'

The pier, as he strides along its length, is all his. We tread quickly to keep pace with him.

'This is Melbourne,' he says, the very horizon falling within the arc described by his sweeping arm. 'There is Queenscliff and opposite—no, you can't see it—there is Portsea. But that is for the rich, for them,' he says, 'not for us,' then turning his massive face squarely upon us, he pouts ample lips, raises his brow and adds, tone of mellow tenderness, 'my children.'

Then he is off again, pace and patter again swift and vigorous.

'A golden land this, some say. No, it's not gold. But opportunity, yes, and work, if you are willing to accept. Here is no Vilna nor Warsaw nor Lodz. Here, a Yiddish word is a pearl, something rare. We have a Yiddish theatre, a newspaper, a choir. But there is more, much more that needs still to be done. You, my brother, you, my sister, you survived. By God's will, it must have been for some purpose.'

By the gates, he bundles us into a black Vanguard, starts the motor twice, releases the handbrake and—oh delight, delight— we are away, behind us the sea, the ship, the pier, the emptiness of weeks as we drive through streets growing grey with drizzle and evening, through streets spacious and narrow, straight and tortuous, flat and rising, trams down the middle, tall buildings by the sides, and houses, milk-bars and recessed churches and bill-boards, signs and flashing lights, and bustling women scurrying in all directions and paper boys crying out outside hotels— through all these streets and through quieter, darker, gloomier ones, turning finally into a drab rough-surfaced bumpy

road to stop outside an ill-lit cottage—an ancient terrace in the heart of Carlton—where a single room has been prepared.

And here we bundle out again. Jaded by weeks of ocean and empty scenes, my legs discover freedom. No rails, ropes, banisters now to limit my caprice. No tilting, reeling, keeling to shuttle me, a quoit, across the deck. Liberated, I leap about, seek out, explore, even in the rain, eyes, hands, feet, taking in the garage, the factories, gardens, shops and potholes, everything, everything in one vast ravenous grasp. Father, ever-practised, makes straight for the door, while Mother, standing slightly hunched and huddled at the gate, adrift, still drifting, between the Vanguard and the house, falters, struggles visibly with her will and enters only after the soldering of some mighty unspoken resolve.

‘No, it’s not Paradise,’ says Reuven Altman touching her arm, a giant beside her, ‘but for three months, six months— people have known worse.’

No palace our room, A mere box. Cracked green walls cobwebbed in the corners, a single dull unhooded bulb, bare table, scarred chairs, two double beds, mattresses sagging, ragged perforations in the roller blind half-drawn and askew across the grimy rain-peppered window, and the smell of mothballs, damp and mould. All drab, spare, oppressive. Oppressing Mother; Father, I know, as he opens a suitcase, feeling the accusing bitterness of her silence and seeing it in the oval mirror above the fireplace from which, when their eyes meet, Mother looks away.

‘Patience, calm, we shall manage,’ he says in an offering of placation. But he, too, then turns away, words alone, he knows, unable to shake the impact of lostness and tedium wrought by the surroundings.

Reuven Altman, out of the room at that moment, returns with, towering over, Luba Fleischer, a comical pop-eyed goose wiping her hands in a red chequered apron.

‘Well, then, I can trust you, Luba mine, to be good to them,’ Reuven Altman booms as ever, bending over and bracing her shoulders with his huge all-encompassing arm. ‘For you, too, were slaves in Egypt, eh?’

‘But of course,’ Luba Fleischer says, clicking her tongue. A mole sits on her cheek, a cyst with hairs over an eyebrow. Still young, she has the makings of a double chin. ‘There is soup on the stove and brisket that just needs warming.’

Talk of food. My tongue, palate, lips grow moist.

‘That is more than good of you,’ Father says.

‘Psha,’ Luba Fleischer bursts out with a little explosion. ‘It is nothing. After Europe—if we can’t show a little charity towards one another, who will?’

‘The words of an angel,’ says Reuven Altman, his own words resounding in every corner as, laughing, the gold of his canines glint even under the dull light of the globe. ‘You two,’ he adds, bowing first to Mother, then to Luba Fleischer, ‘should become good friends.’

Mother promises nothing. Still dressed in her coat, although unbuttoned now, she raises her chin towards Father and says, ‘You go and eat. And take the child. I shall stay here, I’m not hungry.’

‘Just a little soup,’ coaxes Luba Fleischer.

‘I’m not hungry,’ Mother says again.

Reuven Altman, with a flourish—have I ever seen anyone so massive, so huge, so florid?—looks at his watch.

‘You are in good hands,’ he says, nodding in tribute to Luba Fleischer.

Then, lifting my chin with his hand which is enormous yet soft and tender, his eyes, the black of their pupils ringed with grey, root out mine.

‘You have the whole world before you, my young man. Watch. Grow. Listen. Learn. Do your lessons. Think no foolishness. Make your blessed father and your dear mother ever proud of you.’

Then he releases my chin but the tenderness remains. I float on feathers, soar on the ringing resonance of his voice, ready to promise anything, anything, as, retreating, he leaves, huge, luminous, golden, bowing in tribute as he passes through the door.

Shortly after, Father breaks bread in the new land and drinks a glass of wine poured for him by Victor Kopecnik. The little kitchen—if it seats seven, it can seat seventy—smells of garlic, matzo balls, fried onion, kasha, simmering oil. Not the grease and detergent of the ship penetrating every mouthful or the salt and sea-weed odours of the relentless sea, but something homely, distant, in memory belonging to Paris where Mother, preparing for dinner the Esperanto of a Jewish recipe, manufactured smells as savoury, tantalising, sturdy as these. But now it is Luba Fleischer at the stove, salting, stirring, smelling, tasting, while Arnold Fleischer and the Kopecniks sit with us—with Father and Mother who has relented and with me—at the table.

‘To the future in a free land,’ Father says, the laughter tinkling like the glasses he clinks with Victor Kopecnik and Arnold Fleischer.

‘To health,’ says Victor Kopecnik.

‘To prosperity,’ says Arnold Fleischer.

To which Mother, not drinking, but witness, mutters a curt ‘Amen.’

In time, we eat. Mother concedes to a glass of tea. Conversation sprouts wings, flies. Alights like butterflies, now on one leaf, now on another, aloft again in scintillating circuits which I sense even if I cannot fully comprehend. Names, dates, places whirl around the dusty bulb, impinge upon the walls, touch the ceiling. Each person has a story to tell, an observation to stress, an opinion to express. Fingers probe the void, hands gesticulate, words, words, words spray the air like the spray at sea. Victor Kopecnik, dribbling soup down his chin, talks hurriedly, with a lisp. It is not in Slawa Kopecnik’s nature to speak softly. Arnold Fleischer insists on trifles. Words revolve, as on the ship, recurring circuits of things that were, that are, will be. Warsaw, Hitler, ‘thirty-nine, Auschwitz, ‘forty-two, the Kopecniks to Paris, ‘forty-seven, Kaplan to Canada, Frankel Brazil, Sosnowski, Kalbstein, Menzies, the Communist Party, Russia, the Internationale, Australia, security, fortune, future. Europe is behind you. Here, you are safe. Here, you are free. Find work, be patient. Your young one will thrive here, he’ll be whatever you want him to be. Time. Time. He’ll be whatever he wants to be.

And remembering Reuven Altman, I watch, I listen, I try to learn, sucking at the words with delirious delight.

The meal over, I leave the table, drift—exploring—down the passage. Behind me, Slawa Kopecnik’s high-pitched shrill shrills on; her husband soars on the crests of his own sibilant ardour. Fountains of words continue to gush. Paris, Warsaw, Siberia; bunkers, barracks, brigades; Melbourne, Carlton, Home.

I step outside, confront an evening that is alien, but moist, cool, redolent with the neighbour's flowers—orphans in this street of concrete and brick—their odours mingled with the acridity of compost in the gutters and the tarriness of rubber and grease. Opposite, in silence its stagnation, stands a garage; near the corner, a huddle of factories, graffitied grated gates concealing interiors, stark script—peculiar names, words, numbers— straddles across whitewashed stone, playground for quicksilver shadows cast by bilious yellow lamps pitching before capering capricious breezes.

Memory burgeons. Fleeting. Touching with flickering breath. Receding. Andre, Gerard, Jacques. The school of Rue Rodin, lemon meringues at midday, prize-giving, the first tooth lost in bodily somersault down a flight of stairs. And feet ringing on stone around Bastille on Quatorze Juillet, across Place de la Republique, along Belleville. And solidity and sunshine and snow, under skies, between edifices different and remote, separated now by time and by oceans into which a tattered quoit has tumbled and disappeared, flight in fear leading to a glimpse, then a vision of land arising grey, amorphous and creeping, a growing gentle beast stretching upward, gliding closer out of a long and mute horizon.

Australia!

Australia!

Beyond the end of the street are other horizons, opaque cyanic blue settling over the Indian black of low houses, pealed rooftops and sluggish traffic, all obscuring that vision, mine, that would reach out to it even now, no matter the hour, and ferret out the sheep and the hopping creatures and those furry bear-like animals I have read about in my French Larousse under the heading 'Australie', and in my chase glimpse the world, that world out there promised to me by Reuven Altman. But shadow, unfamiliarity, timidity —the ultimate blight of adventure—keep me rooted to the gateway, the cold of its iron rails against my back, the creaking of its hinges yielding kind comfort against the unknown.

Out of the unknown but close at hand emerge crowing noises, punctuated by screeches, cackles, yelps and caterwauls. Not animals these, neither dogs, cats, parrots, nor fowl, but three boys, running, whirling, reeling, sundering vaporous air apart with the cacophony of a menagerie. One is a reed, the other round, the third neither tall nor short, nor slender nor broad, forgettable against his companions were he not the one with a stick striking avidly at lace-iron railings and swishing whipingly at void. From around the corner they have come, turning from Canning into Pitt Street, careering between footpath and roadway in heedless abandon, while against the gate I lean and from that quiet station watch and ogle and stare.

It is the squat round one who brakes to a halt before me. Even lightning is slower than he. Scarcely can I blink before his pudgy palm clamps my shoulder as with the other and with a raucous "ey 'ere!" he beckons to his fellows who, in turn, come running, the one with long strides, the other with smaller steps, that stick of his still lashing at air. They may be freckled, pimpled, beginning—all of them about twelve already, perhaps thirteen— to sprout whiskers. Evening's shadows, the darker kin of those gloomy swinging overhead yellow lights, wish in fever across their faces, their fluid shapes cavorting wilfully, out of their formlessness the boys' eyes with the light falling upon them gaining life, flickering, shining, now playfully, now curiously, now menacingly.

'Whoa!' draws the tall one, drawing up on an imaginary horse.

'Wheel' cries the second, cracking the void yet once again. The vibrations of his stick reach my ear.

The little fat one holds up his free hand. The leader, he is obeyed. Silence waits for him to speak, which he does, with words coming between hard-set teeth, their tone that of questions, searching, lip-skewed camaraderie.

But go understand him! What words are they that for all his smile are coated with marble hardness? 'Reffo.' "Nover ov'em bastids.' 'Nuboy.' 'Juboy.'

Pressing for anchorage against the gate, I feel its moist ' coldness in my back, together with another, clammy, moistness—of perspiration and vague dread.

The leader claps me on the back, shouts 'Yipes' in peculiar triumph, winks in mischief bent to his fellows.

He seizes me by an arm. His companions enclose my other side. Space becomes a cage. The steam of their breaths laps at me with unwelcome warmth. The tall one, the horseman, now so close, smells of rancid soap. The middle one sports a sicklier smell. First, he farts, then sniffs, clears his throat, and spits. A thick blob of spittle appears on his lips. There it hangs, clings and swings, finally finding its liberation, dropping, heavily, to land on his shoe. The leader laughs. The horseman bursts out 'Bewdy!' The spitter, himself laughing, threatens them jocularly with his stick, then more menacingly turns to me. His eyes are mice, flitting schemingly between me and the blob on his shoe,

I would cry out, but with that weapon swaying before me, I smile instead, making sounds in efforts to form comprehensible speech.

'Je . . . Je ne . . . I try. 'Ich bin . . . arrive aujourd'hui . . . fun Paris . . . de Pari . . . France . . . oif a shif..

'Wow,' says the horseman.

'Getim,' says the fat one. Once again, turning to his fellows, he crooks a finger and winks.

Babel has come to Carlton. I reach with words; with other words do they respond; but nowhere lie the crossroads where they may meet. The phrases I have learned, knotting my tongue and breaking my teeth over them upon the boat—'Thank you,' 'Good morning,' 'How do you do?'—of what good are they to me here as first the fat one, then the horseman, and, last, the farter grab my arms more tightly still, burn my wrists with Chinese twists, and have me squat, then kneel, then bow, pressing my face towards the farter's spittled shoe, they the while laughing, hissing, snorting with some brutal frenzied passion as over and over they shriek 'Lickit! Lickit! Lickit!'

Perhaps it is the result of their own clamorous merriment, perhaps I have myself screamed out, but arising in confusion from that ever-more-tightly constricting cage are other noises, an anarchy of voices and of shuffling, scraping, clattering and stridency as, one after the other, my arms are released, the pressure on my head is leavened away, and there follows the ringing of feet on asphalt and a high-pitched refrain piercing the thin moist air: 'Kikies! Buggers! Bastids! Pricks! Kikies! Buggers! Bastids! Pricks!'

In a huddle they surround me now. Father, Mother, the Kopecniks, the Fleischers. Arnold Fleischer has chased the boys around the Rathdowne Street corner and returned; Luba Fleischer, all solicitude, repeating 'What did they want, the shkotzim? Did they hurt you? What did they want?', taps my head, my shoulders, my waist; while the Kopecniks, Victor Kopecnik clinging to Father, Slawa Kopecnik to Mother, try to succour, console, and subdue, saying, 'They mean nothing. They're only shkotzim, hooligans. They have nothing else to do.'

Perhaps Father listens. With his 'Yes, I understand, they are everywhere,' he is prepared to believe. Troubled by doubt, he will ever turn his face to that which he can more readily accept as comforting fact. But it is Mother who trembles for them both, for us all, who fears, grieves, sees black in the whitest cloud, in pearl, in snow, and apprehends with palpitation every deviation, uncertainty and change. Never mind that humiliation has nearly reduced me to burning tears. Never mind that, for me, what began as expectation and adventure has crumbled into hateful chaos. Never mind that Reuven Altman's gentle marvellous words have suddenly fractured into open lies. Never mind that...Never mind anything as Mother, snorting venom, grabs my hand, pushes past Father and the Kopecniks and the Fleischers, and tows me behind her into the gloomy corridor of the drab ill-lit cottage, murmuring, hissing, seething, 'Even here?! For this have we come?! For this have we bled?! For this?! Everything for this!'

DEAD FLOWERS

Janka Abrami

*Janka Abrami was born in Poland in 1921. Her father was a professional musician. Janka qualified in accountancy in 1937 before the Nazis captured her and all her family. All except two brothers perished in Auschwitz. After the war she travelled to Israel where she married, then migrated to Australia in 1955 with her husband and son. Although she has been writing since childhood, she only began to write in English in the 1970s. A second son was born in Australia, but the older one died under tragic circumstances. Janka now works as a full-time writer, contributing short stories and poems to many literary magazines. Her book *Zat lzz Apples, Sir* was published in 1986. She has completed a collection of short stories and is currently working on a novel.*

This poem was published in the Melbourne Chronicle in 1985.

They brought him from the bunker
back hunched, skin shrivelled
sunken eyes squinting
limbs dry;
an old man-survivor
at the full age of twelve.

A drink of water dulled his hunger
stilled his thirst
reassured him.
He lifted his bony hand to shade his sight
and in a crackling voice he asked:
'Didn't all the flowers die?

Now at fifty he is young
skin smooth
muscles tight eyes
are sparkling
as he laughs and frolics
with the children of his son.

Only flowers make him cry

BONJOUR BRUNSWICK!

Rosa Safransky

Rosa Safransky was born in Paris in 1948 and came to Australia when she was two. She graduated as a textile designer from the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, where she lived as a student for several years. Her writing has appeared in many Australian newspapers and literary magazines. She was editor of a migrant perspective published in 1987, Caught In Between. She works as a professional writer and teacher and is currently completing her first novel. This story first appeared in Australian Short Stories No. 11 (Pascoe Publishing 1987).

When my father arrived in Melbourne in the European suit with the narrow lapels, he had his first vision: he would starve.

‘How do you make a living, tell me that my learned philosopher? All she does is read and think. She’ll give herself pains in the head. Any fool can read, but how do you put bread on the table? How do you survive? What good was philosophy in the camps?’

Torrents of words pour over my head.

If he spends any more time talking, the business will sink and we will all starve!

He rushes out the door. A black cloud hovers over his head, my mother’s bees. Insects in the house were the property of my mother. In summer the walls buzzed and the rooms smelt of honey.

I put a Polish tango on the radiogram. Scratchy music fills the room. I glide over to the window with the lace curtains.

‘What are you doing in there?’ my mother frowns. The music stops. Another lecture starts on responsibility, obligation, on the cares of the world, which weigh so heavily on my mother’s shoulders they stoop.

‘What would happen if we were all like you? You know how hard everyone works, I haven’t even got time to sit down and have a cup of tea. All you know is how to be lazy, how to do nothing, P-R-I-N-C-E-S-S M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T!

Princess Margaret is the patron saint of the idle and the lazy. The final insult she saves till last.

‘You’re just like your father!’

My parents hadn’t planned to come to Australia. They hadn’t planned to go anywhere. My father lived on the Russian Polish border. The Revolution swept over him, hardly making a dent in his cynicism and my mother lived in a high ceilinged apartment, next to a concert flautist. She heard music through walls which were paper thin. My mother lived near the old marketplace, my father near the new. Lubicz was a small town, everyone knew everyone else, but it was not till after the War that my parents met.

‘But where did you meet?’

‘I met your mother in a room. Your uncle Emil was with her.

It was after the War, they had nowhere to go.’

A room? He met her in a room? Poland was full of rooms. There must have been something to distinguish that room from all the other rooms. A dark street with an open doorway or my uncle Emil in a cloth cap, chain smoking on a doorstep while my mother sits on a chair on a bare wooden floor inside that 'room', waiting for my father to come in and marry her and carry her off to a backstreet in the Antipodes behind a butcher's shop, a shoemaker's shop, a papershop. And here we are in front of the weatherboard in Watson street.

But let's go back further. The wedding present. A suitcase with cans of Tom Piper and a jar of vegemite arrive in Poland. My father sniffs the vegemite. Why would his friends send him shoepolish? They know there is no food.

And now the wedding. An American G.I. jacket. My mother is married in it. Her passport shows its astrakhan collar. And now me. Where? When did they have me? In a Chagall landscape in bed, the Eiffel Tower leaning through an open window. The stork brings me in Spring.

'Tell me about Paris, about what we did there?'

'We went for walks in Montmartre. It was quiet, everyone was in the Metro.' Only two people on the street, my mother and me.

'And then what happened?'

'The wheel fell off your pram and half a dozen people ran out from nowhere and chased it.'

'But where was my father?'

'On a transport ship to Melbourne from Marseille with six shillings in his pocket.'

On the back of a postcard of the Longchamp Palace, a masterpiece designed by the architect Esperandieu, he writes, 'The ship is big. Don't write yet, I'll send my address when I know it.'

My father and uncle Leon arrive in Melbourne, two weeks apart. Neither knows the other is still alive. One night there is a knock on the door. His friends crowd into the room.

Who was your father?

Who was your mother?

Which town were you born in?

He tells them.

'Get in the car, you've won the lottery!'

'But I didn't buy a ticket.'

They push him into a car and drive to a house in Mozart street. Inside, he finds his brother Leon. They embrace and cry. They tell and retell their odysseys, Auschwitz, Belsen, and UNRAU refugee camp in Italy.

'You don't have to live here, come and stay with me.' My father puts a deposit on a house and awaits our arrival.

My mother arrives in Melbourne with a bag of goosefeathers, a tapestry of a lion, my uncle Emil and me. I meet my father, the face smiling at me in photographs. He picks me up and hurls me in the air. I howl louder than a ship's horn, turn redder than a field of beetroots.

'Europe will explode,' my mother warns and he puts me down. How did we all fit? Emil has the front room, I sleep in the same room as my parents, Leon sleeps in the spare room and the living room doubles as a workroom.

My father found his vocation at fourteen. The way Fred Astaire sings and dances. Tailoring, you either have it or you don't. My father had it. He threw a final plate of his grandmother's hated noodles behind the stove and walked into his first sweatshop.

Au revoir Europe, bonjour Brunswick! 'Brunswick Creations', a two-storey shopfront stands next to a surgical appliance store with a dismembered leg in its window. The doorbell rings and Emil's patterns jump from the wall but we go straight through to the back where my father stands ironing. My mother puts saucepans of food down on the sink, near the cracked Solvol soap in the wire rack. My father sets the iron down hard on the ironing board and holds the dress up to the light. He tests the zipper to see if it works. It does. Good, now he can eat! I go out into the backyard to look for the cats.

'Have you forgotten your father? What about a kiss?' he calls out and points to his cheek.

The backyard is a concrete path bounded by a high corrugated fence. A fuchsia tree stands in the corner and every few months the butcher's cat gives birth to a new litter of kittens in its shade. The toilet stands just behind the fuchsia tree so my father and Emil often cross paths out the back, my father clutching his newspaper, Emil a saucer of milk. My father glares at Emil caught red handed feeding the wild cats. The exhausted butcher's cat is a savage Bengal Tiger, waiting for me to open the door of the lavatory and run back into the factory. I peer through a crack in the wall and when everything seems safe, I throw open the door and run for my life, reaching the factory just in time to slam the door in its face.

Emil works in the cutting room upstairs and on the living room table at home. He is always surrounded by clouds of smoke.

'We live in a Turkish steambath,' my mother complains. Emil shrugs, throws a switch and rips through a mountain of sleeves. Emil the 'shneider' the cutter; pin stripe suit, slick backed hair, gangster looks, a 'papyross' in the corner of his mouth; his pale green complexion can be attributed to a diet of cigarettes and Coca Cola. Emil's coughing spasms and chain smoking provoke a worse reaction than the wild cats.

'If you want to kill yourself, kill yourself! You know what you're doing, but we need air!'

It was called 'the beach', the 'fresh air'. There was only one beach, St. Kilda. A train starts, billboards move backwards. 'Huttons is best!' A man in a bowler hat pushes his hand into another man's face. Pink faced children smile, wrapped in Dickie's towels. The train stops. We stroll past Luna Park filling our lungs with 'fresh air', my father, mother, Emil and me. This is not St. Kilda but the Black Sea, a Chekhov summer. We are dressed for it, my mother's jet black hair and classical European profile, my father in his panama hat and open toed shoes, me in a pink nylon frock with pearl buttons down the front.

'Hold on tight,' my mother whispers gripping my hand, 'or the wind will blow you away.'

A breeze wraps itself around me, goose bumps appear on my arms and legs.

'Rozi is cold,' my mother's watchfulness has been rewarded.

'What do you want from her? You can't leave her alone for one minute. You think this is still Poland?'

Yes, my mother thinks that and worse. I find myself weighed down by my father's jacket. At last, we go inside. Luna Park! What I've been waiting for. My mother and Emil are not excited. The great slide, dark tunnels, the mirrors in the giggle palace, the floor falls beneath our feet. My mother turns pale when she sees it. Amid gasps of horror, my father and I get on the ferris wheel. I look down and then up. The beach stretches for miles and I can almost touch the stars.

THE TROUBLE WITH MARIANNA

Alan Collins

Alan Collins was born in Sydney in 1928. His parents died when he was young and most of his formative years were spent in a home for children. His experiences there were fictionalised in The Boys from Bondi (U.Q.P., 1987). He has also written a play entitled Shabbatai.

This story is taken from Tsorres (Kingfisher, 1983), a collection of short stories, often autobiographical, about post-war adolescence in Sydney. Alan lives in Melbourne and is an advertising agent.

The Sachs family was already poised for its second decline when I met them, or specifically, their eldest daughter Marianna. I hung around on the edge of the student world, being no more than an apprentice carpenter; through an interlocking network of student and communist political youth movements, I got to know Marianna. She valued me highly for the one genuine worker she knew and for my part I exploited it gleefully. The rewards could be a dependable sexual outlet and the occasional home cooked meal. It was hope of the latter that gave me my first experience of life among the uprooted European Jewish intellectuals of the 1950's.

Being Jewish *and* a manual worker increased my shock value to Marianna. As a second year Arts student she flaunted me at parties where the philosophy was Andersonian, the wine rough and beer decidedly plebian. It was all a dreadful pose but if you lived in dreary boarding houses as I did, it was a splendid relief. It was something like going to a different stage play twice a week and sleeping with the leading lady.

In the third month of my adoption by Marianna, she sat up in my lumpy bed and said, 'Ben, you've got to meet Party and Muttie.'

'Can't stand dogs and cats, Marianna.

'They are my parents, you bastard.'

I then realised she had dropped her Australian accent in favour of some European way of speaking, a bit like war movie Germans. 'Party' with a throaty R was not the same word as in common English parlance; 'Muttie' which rhymed with bookie was a new one on me so my response to Marianna's statement was excusable.

'You're kidding Marianna,' I said, 'you know bloody well what that would mean in the unwritten laws of Jewish society. We'd be doomed, done for, condemned to a life of Shabbat lunches, Sunday visits to relatives and God knows what else.'

I paused and looked at her, sitting naked and cross legged in my room surrounded by Eureka Youth league posters depicting the young Komsomols devoted to their tractors and scythes. My tool bag lay in the corner and her clothes were draped across it, the personification of the class struggle!

With an arm around her, I said, 'Seriously, Marianna, you really don't want me to meet your parents do you? If I know anything about them, I'm not the sort of bloke any good Jewish daughter ought to be seen with, let alone take home and,' I mocked her, 'God forbid should consider marriage to.'

She made several attempts to stem my theatrical outburst but I was well away.

'A communist *and* a carpenter, no family to speak of: 'Und vair duss he liff, ziss Ben? In a room in Darlinghurst. I can hear 'em now Marianna. Struth, it's just not on. You'd be locked up until you graduated and I'd get arsed out firmly but politely.'

I was warming to my flagellation role when Marianna screamed, 'Will you for Christ sake shut up a minute? They are not like that at all. Father is a Doctor of Laws from Vienna and mummy is a—darling.' She finished lamely.

The fight went out of her and she pulled the blankets over her head and sobbed. After a while from under the clothes, she whispered, 'I only asked you Ben because I'm terribly proud of you. It's been ages since I took any boys home and not for the reasons you think. Honestly, Ben, I didn't think they were worthy of meeting Farty.' She sighed heavily. 'Oh Ben, I don't want to get married, not to you and certainly not to any of those Bellevue Hill creeps with their. . .' But my hand was gently over her mouth and we slid down beneath the grey army blankets.

A few days later, Marianna renewed her request, was prepared to put a not too subtle pressure on me and was surprised when I agreed. We took the tram on the long, lovely ride around Sydney's harbour shoreline, looked down on the yachts glimpsed between the gardens and crenellated roof tops of the Darling Point nob's until her tug at my sleeve indicated her tram stop.

From that moment, I was on the defensive, even to the point of not walking hand in hand with her but lagging purposefully behind. Up the winding hilly road we went in that odd little pocket of houses between Double Bay and Vaucluse—houses that were better than Bondi but definitely not in the same class as the squattocracy of the 1900's.

The house she finally chose was on the high side of the road, sitting in all its dark brick ugliness among enormous hydrangea bushes whose dying flowers scattered their petals over the path. A few steps led up to a tiled verandah and as we got to the front door Marianna said to me, 'My sisters will probably be at home too, Ben. And Ben, I know it sounds silly but please, would you address Farty as Doctor— Doctor Sachs. OK Ben?'

I nodded and attempted a kiss before we entered but she had her key out and opened the door.

After the glare of the afternoon sun, the cool air that came from the gloom of the passageway was both welcome and disturbing. Marianna led the way calling softly, 'Mutt, Farty, where are you?' And in a stronger voice, 'Isobel, Renate, I'm home.'

My eyes were everywhere looking for clues that would alert me to what sort of behavioural pose I should adopt. The doors leading off the hall were closed and nothing helped until we came to the enormous kitchen dominated by an Early Kooka stove, a massive pine table with a worked runner on it and a pottery vase of trailing wisteria. On the wall was a framed tract of some kind; the Gothic text told me it was something serious, a statement perhaps, meant to inspire the family.

I was trying to decipher the German when Marianna took my hand and said, 'They must be in the back garden.'

Desperate to find out what I was getting into, I pointed to the framed text and asked her what it said.

'Oh, it's an old German proverb or something. I think it means that father is the head of the household, that he is wise and a good provider and,' she finished lamely, 'that he must be obeyed.' She took my hand, furtively I thought, and we went out into the sunshine again.

If I had ever seen a Renoir painting I would have said the scene in front of me was a dead ringer for it. Grouped around a wooden table and seated in those hard, angular slatted garden lounges were people I presumed to be Muttie, Farty and Marianna's sisters. Despite the beauty of the girls and the dolly-like prettiness of their mother, one had to look first at Doctor Sachs. There was no alternative.

The stature of the man even half reclining was enough to isolate him from the others and from his surroundings. He sat as at the head of a triangle, on a higher piece of ground, his chair at a more acute angle. His heavy body appeared to resist the natural inclination to relax. I thought that approaching him would be like entering a mine field. From where I stood, the book in his hands obscured his face from just below the mouth, leaving me to interpret a high tanned forehead, straight nose, a cheek with a thin scar across it and a mouth as thin as the scar. Below the book his body looked strong and his hands were steady.

I was unnerved. The man frightened me. He reminded me of a timber joist that once fixed into place would never move. Marianna, too, seemed a totally different person. She melted into her family circle and the mannerisms of her student life fell away leaving a much reduced young woman who had a place in this hierarchy. Just where, I was yet to find out. Any idea I had of role playing was quashed by her opening words.

'Farty, this is Ben. He's a carpenter, well an apprentice, and he lives in Potts Point.'

Potts Point? What was she saying? I lived in Darlington Road among the pros and sly grog shops in a room next door to a crippled newspaper seller.

'Ben, I'd like you to meet my father, Doctor Sachs.' She added with gathering momentum, 'Father is a lawyer but he doesn't practice here. In Vienna he was like a ... a King's Counsel, weren't you Farty?'

I stepped forward with a conventional outstretched hand and the right responses; he only lowered the book an inch or two to acknowledge my presence. Marianna did not seem to find this odd. She rushed on introducing me to 'Muttie' and kissing her at the same time, then to her sisters who merely smiled and tucked their legs tightly beneath them.

I turned to Mrs. Sachs and remarked, 'Great garden you've got here, Mrs. Sachs, all those trees and things.' I waved my arms around stupidly and said to the obelisk, 'Do you keep it going Doc? I mean it must be hard yakka.'

The book came down an inch or two, his eyes moved to the right and in a careful, clipped voice he said to his wife, 'I think it is time for tea Muttie. Shall we go in?'

A procession began as well ordered as a ranking military ceremony. First Doctor Sachs then his wife, the two girls, Marianna, and myself well to the rear and wishing myself a thousand miles away. Into the big shadowy kitchen we filed. One girl removed the flowers, another the runner; Marianna took the afternoon tea paraphernalia from a dresser while her mother quickly filled a kettle. All this time Doctor Sachs stood stiffly at the end of the table, waiting, waiting. For what, I wondered from the other end.

Then as if by silent commands the women re-assembled around the table, their eyes on the father who finally withdrew his chair and sat down. The others followed in descending order with only fractions of a second between them but still enough to maintain the ritual. I sank into my chair in an ungainly fashion only to see Doctor Sachs looking down the table at me. I straightened up and fooled about pretending to hand the plates and cups around. It was all quite unnecessary; everything was done with precision and an ordained orderliness.

What followed around the table was a nightmare for me. My tea slopped into the saucer, the neatly cut piece of cake broke in my hand and my attempts to respond to Marianna's efforts to include me in the family smalltalk failed dismally.

Did I say smalltalk? It was more like court room procedure. Only after Doctor Sachs had been served, indeed only when he had actually completed drinking one cup of tea and eating one piece of cake, did any sort of conversation ensue. He did not ask for anything to be passed to him. Mrs. Sachs anticipated his needs and he accepted it as a right. Having reached this point, he said, 'I am very fond of good furniture Mister Ben. From Vienna I have brought my family bureau but ach, it looks not good in these small rooms. Still, so many books I have, they must be protected.'

And that was all he said to me. To Marianna he turned accusingly, 'You are home so late so many nights, are you with your books all the time? Examinations are soon, are they not?'

Marianna replied in German. I had a feeling that what she said was not entirely concerned with study because at one point his eyes shifted to me and he cut her off curtly. 'Nein, nein mein leibschchen.'

With the same orderliness that marked its beginning, afternoon tea came to an abrupt end by Doctor Sachs simply getting up and leaving the kitchen to return to the garden. Mrs. Sachs was left with the tidying up, the two girls disappeared I don't know where and Marianna by a series of signals, made it clear we should leave. She told her mother she had to go back to the library in town.

'Ben likes to sit with me while I read. Isn't that nice, Muttty?'

Our fingers touched in a distant farewell and I left Mrs. Sachs to her dishes. Marianna steered me out once more into the garden where Doctor Sachs looked as though he had never moved.

'We are going back to town now Farty,' she said, 'Perhaps I shall see you later tonight?' She kissed him on the cheeks but he did not move,

I said, 'Nice to have met you Doctor Sachs and thanks for the tea.' As I spoke I was already backing away as though from some important personage. Realising what I was doing I defiantly turned my back on him, squared my shoulders and marched off with Marianna hurrying after me.

It was not just the steep road down the hill to the tram stop that made me hurry. I was anxious to be rid of Doctor Sachs, his obsequious wife and, I had a feeling of foreboding, maybe even his daughter. Marianna caught up with me and held my hand tightly.

'Ben, there's something, a lot of things you ought to know about Farty,' she said.

'Please Marianna, will you quit calling him Farty, couldn't you just say Dad or Daddy or Pop or if you think that doesn't square with the old bugger's dignity, just settle for father. All this Farty rubbish is giving me the shits.'

The tram came, only this time I didn't look at the harbour. I sat hunched up, confused and angry. Had I lost a battle with the upper classes or was it with her kind of people? Were they my people too? That's the trouble with Jews, I told myself, they popped up on both sides of the class struggle, confusing simple artisans like me.

The tram trundled up to the top of Macquarie Street and we got off and walked in silence to the Mitchell Library. The last rays of the sun bathed the pompous building in golden light. I hesitated at the top of the steps; I'd had enough for one day and really would like to have been alone for a while. Marianna pulled me down on the steps beside her and snuggled into my side.

She began softly. 'Ben, do you know that in 1939 he was about to be made a judge in Austria? He was the leading lawyer in civil jurisprudence. He believed in the law and in justice and in people and countries behaving in a civilized way to each other.'

'Comes the revolution,' I muttered.

'Don't be such a smart arse with your hack party dogma,' she snapped.

'I'm trying to explain father to you, if you've bloody manners enough to listen. In those days, Austria wasn't Germany. It was a country of decent people he'd grown with, studied with—even defended in court. Look, I don't have to tell you of all people how the nice little Austrians couldn't turn their Jewish neighbours in quickly enough once Hitler got going.'

'Yeah, I've heard about that sort of thing,' I said, 'but is he a solicitor or something now? Honest, Marianna I didn't take to him much. All that palaver at tea this afternoon—too rich for my blood. Still I suppose he's a big wheel at his work.'

Marianna turned away from me and stared over the Woolloomooloo chimney pots. 'He doesn't work Ben. He hasn't worked since we arrived in Sydney and that's oh, twenty years ago.'

'Well how does he—how do you...?' I stumbled.

'You wonder how the hell we live Ben? How we come to have a decent house in a good suburb? How my sisters and I got a private school education and all the bloody trimmings? My father stopped growing as a man a few months after we got here. The law stunted his growth Ben, the law that he lived for. The Law Institute said to him: "Now Herr Doktor Alfred Sachs, if you want to practice here you'll have to go back to University and get our degree."

'Oh I know he wasn't the only refugee in that predicament but he thought it was below his dignity.'

I stood up and shouted at her. 'Do you call all that kowtowing and treating him as though he was the bloody Pope, dignified? Look at me, look at my hands—there's no shame in work.' I shut up suddenly, realising that what I had said sounded awfully like a Party line speech.

Marianna knuckled the corners of her eyes but it wasn't the setting sun that made them wet.

'I thought you'd understand Ben; I told myself you were different to the others, that's why I brought you home.'

A long silence followed and the sun dropped behind the palm trees. The southerly wind was more noticeable now, chilling the perspiration on our bodies. I put my arm around her as much for her warmth as for my own; she shrugged it off.

'It was my mother Ben, who kept us going. You wouldn't believe it—my stupid little coffee-and-cake mother who knew not much more than how to bake a cheese cake and sew a straight seam. I'm not going to give you the whole rags-to-riches story but I'll tell you this Ben: all the time she was building up a clothing factory she had to pretend that he was still the head of the household, still the one to make decisions and, oh I know you think it's comical...

'He could still have taken a job,' I said doggedly.

She stood up and marched down a few steps then turned and shouted at me through her tears.

'Farty was a great man and we love him.' She ran blindly down the steps and through the big iron gates into the Botanical Gardens.

Maybe I should have taken off after her. I don't know. When you work all day with your hands as I do and the job grows slowly, acting impetuously is not your style. You turn the wood this way and that, consider its grain and if it's a knotty piece that's going to give you trouble, you throw it away and select another bit.

That's how I reasoned it out about Marianna and her father. Throw it away.

LINES FROM THE HORIZON

Alex Skovron

Alex Skovron was born in Poland in 1948 and arrived in Sydney ten years later, after spending fifteen months in Israel. Since the early 1970s he has worked as a book editor, and presently lives in Melbourne with his wife and two children. His poems have been widely published in Australia, and in 1983 he was awarded the Wesley Michel Wright Prize for Poetry. The Rearrangement, his first collection of poetry, is being published by Melbourne University Press in 1988.

This poem first appeared in Lines from the Horizon and Other Poems (1982 Mattara Prize Anthology, University of Newcastle).

I.

Next door they were burying Stalin.

I pencilled swastikas on awkward bombers tongue
between my teeth. I am speaking loosely but
this was crime: so flagrant an abuse

of kindergarten privilege wrenched my parents
to the scene of it, where clean-day custodians
flourished the evidence. I suppose mum and dad
pleaded bemusement, smiled excuses

and as the strange irony floated before them
like icing on waves barely now receding, slowly
ebbing back to outline the dozen incomprehensible years
of murdered families and smashed lives

the reprimand must have rankled a good deal more
than mine. Poland 1953 and Adolf Hitler lay
unburied: not for my public elucidation these
twisted symbols glimpsed in forbidden books.

★ ★ ★

I am speaking loosely.

If Germany remained the black sign, grey glinting
square head of steel, Russia was crimson banners
and gold echo of sad brass dulled by static.

We heard the funeral live from Moscow:
I hogg'd the wireless by the armchair corner
listening keen, for though I understood little enough
of the world I knew the great leader

from First of May parades and tabloid portraits.
My father for that matter had forged his own
passing acquaintance: idealist up to the close
of those dim thirties he fled to Utopia for a brief

quick comedown as the other vision sprawled east
to enweb him and history. Years later he recalled
a friend from the clamorous decade who'd invested
generously in Polish jails for professing Marx,

had stumbled at length across the promised border
to redeem his prize—retired on it too, ended
his days proverbially: a dead 'counterrevolutionary'
in Siberia. My father was luckier at Mauthausen.

History keeps doing it to us doesn't it!
A faith becomes a tourniquet—sallow believers
choke on lean principles, time sniggering ... Well,
petrol bombs and Sputniks soon made up for Stalin.

★ ★ ★

America? Colourless; also red-and-white
tins of Carnation milk. I loved to stack and clatter
and roll them on the cool floor, precious
from brown parcels and faraway benefactors.

They needn't have come from America. Canada then?
Or maybe even Australia ...

★ ★ ★

Australia was simply vague distant relatives, and
Olympics. Melbourne and 1956. I remember
tank pictures—but another image: from stamp album
afternoons survives the green chunky lushness of

Collins Street, trammed, treelined, dense
with colour boldly printed. I'd never seen this
vividness in stamps; even the Hungarian were
pastels by comparison. Special stamp,

like the special tablecloth I watched my mother
embroider with special songs, happy patterns
of flower and paisley while dad quizzed me with maps
and capitals, foreign letterheads on stamps.

★ ★ ★

No such colours in the steelworks
of my steel city's environs or in the coalmines,
in the black pits of my and not-my soil. I must admit
they belonged to me for a time:

when the coalminers came to kindergarten to sell
Poland, their black-and-red ceremonial uniforms
stunned me with golden buttons, plumed caps,
looming strength—granite, heroism, and

a dignity so persuasive I determined
to shovel coal when I grew up and for close hours
we laboured with clag and scissors, black card
and red tissue assembling cylindrical hats

young patience fired, novel patriotism fed
by smallness and the will to height, to meaning.
I brought mine home, it fell apart and left my life
for other shades to fuel preoccupation.

★ ★ ★

And other colours we had in abundance: chimneys
of steel and soot were never near enough
to stain our days. We had parks with statues,
flowers in my city, tones and scents that inscribed

on memory forever. Katowice was fresh
as Olympic Melbourne on Sunday park excursions ...

★ ★ ★

In Park Kościuszko—no,
not your Snowy Mountains upstart size of all Poland
but a tract of the native genus in white Katowice—

we toboggan, dad and I, scraping
the mad slopes and chill morning swirls our breath
asperging laughter. Then the bathos of short stopping

or noisy glee of rude wreckage, and the trudge
upward again, and again. Beyond see-through trees
and slightly adrift in cloud

winters the dim parachute tower, hardly today
the cynosure of Junes and towering summers, solitary
cold in its private public clearing.

★ ★ ★

In Park Kościuszko, then,
on a summer's dogtail day I waggle my fresh bicycle
not entirely steady on my first bicycle day.

Concluding homeward out of park my confidence
grown more reckless now and caution thrown dozing
(there is no wind) I can wobble alone,

soon jettison my father's jogging saddle hand
to thread him and mum proudly out behind and wheel
solo into the downhill Sunday promenade

alongside park perimeters. Downslope, gathering pace,
freewheel and hair teeming ... down—till the sudden
query dawns: how do you stop? But weaving

through strollers, defeating cars now that cruise
safe on the parallel way I panic stopless,
any brakes forgotten or unlearnt, bear down, cross

with a bump the promenade finish, run the car-strung
intersecting street handlebar stiff and held
only by miracle and terror from spilling or being

collected, jump the far footpath, burst
a gateway at thirty or so, and in an utterly
unheard-of manner vault up a flight of stairs my bike

still under me, pale parents closing. I sit there
unseated and unscathed. I'm recollecting loosely:
except for landing up the stairs it is all true.

II.

But I was going to speak of Australia.
These random isolated crests of reminiscence ebb
slowly back now to outline the irreplaceable decade,
sufficient setting. It was my first childhood,

kaleidoscope I'd need more than poems and pages
to review. For the moment let me find myself
in my tenth year on the Rose Bay Public doorstep
days post arrival with nor bike nor tongue

for buttress, classified Alexander: fair translation.
It is 1958 with kindly classmates but weeks
before I glean sense in their mannered declamations
from *School Magazine* or can frownlessly decipher

the laws of Mister Jones. At playtime, lunch and
of a morning you can venture marbles: 'Hit one
win four!' and variants are among my first English
songs in the raucous bazaar of gleaming teeth

and taws. Forget your parallelograms
of economic forces: *here* the nerve-roots of capital,
education. Arrive mornings modest pouches clicking
investment, go home packed pockets bulging

or downcast broke. And so the solemn frenzy
is thick until the bell, or till the proud bass drum
and keen recorders fall in for the daily march,
then the Lord's Prayer en masse. And as for me

I am small, not unsheltered, bespectacled, foreign:
already I am weaving private fantasies.

★ ★ ★

When I say foreign (and I am speaking loosely)
I mean the time between arrival and the shedding
of doubt face to face. With facility for language
and youth on side I proceeded briskly:

harder for my parents—whole cultures to unlearn,
unravel, beyond the jawbreak diction, perversities
of mad spelling, impossible grammar. This,
and then communicate. It's an art to inhabit

the vernacular Australia from within; finer art
if you've abandoned much more than a decade
anchored elsewhere. Key, unlocker of open gates
to the great anonymous society, this dialect is

world: not the fighting earthiness of Polish yards
or the urgent grit of Israel I managed to assume
in a year-long interlude, second childhood of
another day's tale. No, I am speaking of Australian:

the virile easy gambit, a calm logistics of dialogue,
something precious and tacit, cool as choreography
and warm as dance. Found in taxis, gloomed corridors
of swish Glebe terraces, Toorak rose gardens

no less than in dim bistros or obstreperous pubs
on steep corners, deafening factory floors. For me
there was Rose Bay—I don't mean the school.
My authentic introduction was in company

of a retired widower cop who took our rent while we
shared his house and his ways ...

★ ★ ★

It was Bill Cullen first taught me Australia:
grey slouch hat I shadowed along backyard tomato
jungles, on Cracker Night watching lights together,
amid cows and fridges at the Show, showbags,

the woodchoppers, and the jingling handful of old
RAS badges he bestowed on me, all I can touch
of him now. His gruff good humour, the methodical air,
mischief, dignity, sometimes a crustiness—as when

we'd mention him in Polish within earshot—a good man
I was fond of. But he died before the full fruits
of his easy teaching could reflect in a teacup
across a mutual Saturday table.

III.

To what end these sounds and impressions?
I've allowed a few images to take hold, let them
worry and taunt recollection for what might clatter
out; permitted them to lead me, push me along.

And now they have pushed past a man of Australia,
man of the quiet land and level suburban lawns,
man of plain sense born of Dubbo and innocent
of irrelevant histories, though I am speaking loosely.

I mean the Old World histories, those from which Old
and New alike weave ever fresh histories of never
learning. For whatever the robust ethic or sunburnt
splendid illusion the centuries of Poland

belong as much to the playgrounds, sands and cottages
of diametrical vicinities, as much as Australia
springs from those crowded ages of zeal and
ramification, the continental epic.

Yet the people of the sands and cottages, lulled and
too many clinging, have learnt to muddle gratitude
with pride, scotch doubt with dull contentment,
reproof with sleep. Not for them the gentle challenge ...

★ ★ ★

*From a sun-drenched corner by the radio
you have listened to the world: no dead tyrants
of steel hammer or crooked cross are amix with your soil.*

*So you gave birth to no forbidden symbols,
carry no stinging scars underskin: at worst a blood
of forgotten twilights buried deep in your veins.*

*The empty cornucopia days you insulate
with papers that start backwards, bland in the face
of flickering clichés of pain.*

*Uttering silence, quietly you avert
your pale eyes from the darker eyes, the brooding eyes
of your hidden inland ...*

★ ★ ★

I don't know what became of the listening boy,
the park-corner boy flying his first hectic bike,
speechless double expatriate curling shy marbles,
raw recruit who knew an old man.

I don't and I do: nothing really changes.
Next door they are burying Hitler.
I pencil ruminations on awkward pages lines
under my eyes. Cullen's house is long built over

and I have heard a procession of smashed leaders
banish perhaps a few complacencies. Maybe not.
When did we not ignore the telltale shudders
of history changing gears? So it merely shrugs,

uncoils more faiths and failures, triumphs, frenzied
orchestrations into common form—the endless flat
ongoing printed page, documentary evidence
just of continuity. Ancient design ...

The myths and ideologies soon regroup, cluster,
collide on this crammed platform like gravid clouds
claiming a patch to pour into. But the inhabitants:
The Same. History keeps doing it to us ... doesn't it?

★ ★ ★

*And quietly you avert your pale, pale eyes,
uttering silence ...*

★ ★ ★

Poland is different now, a generation gulfs us.
From new corners I listen to the inexhaustible fifties.
I think of my mother, my father, I leaf the lost pages
of a hidden album lodged in secluded gardens

and though I understand little enough of the world
I think also of time, and time floats before me
like icing on waves ebbing back slowly to outline—
death. I begin to believe in time, the old swindler ...

I do and I don't,
for I am speaking loosely ...

MRS BOW

Lily Brett

Forty-five years after the Holocaust, a generation of children of survivors has grown up. They are known as 'second-generation survivors'. The horrors of the Nazi extermination camps were inexpressible to many of those who survived them and unbelievable to those not there. Sometimes survivors' children born after the event were able to understand: to write what their parents could not themselves express. Lily Brett encompasses compassion and powerful understatement in her poems. She can also be bitingly satirical of the values upheld by the Mrs Bows of Melbourne and the world.

This story was first published in Southerly, September 1986.

Her hair was slightly bouffant and stylishly cut short.

Blonde, with coppery highlights glinting through. A colour that was very popular in Caulfield that year.

Laid out on the bed were a grey herringbone light wool tailored suit, and a black and white spotted silk blouse with a once-again fashionable Peter-Pan collar. The sheer, fifteen-denier Smoky Nights pantyhose screamed 'High Leg. Sheer to the Waist'.

Before she packed her breasts into the 36 C padded with extra uplift bra, they looked like empty bags of skin hanging from her chest. She smoothed the pleats out of her skin and tucked them into the front of the bra.

The herringbone suit sat smoothly on her. She patted her tummy with pleasure. It was always flat. Even when she sat down there was no bulge. All their friends admired her figure.

At the dinner parties she hosted every fifth Sunday night, she never sat down. All night she rushed between the dining room and the kitchen. Every fifth Sunday she served gefilte fish which everyone agreed was just right, not too sweet. Then came hot, fried flounder in an onion, tomato and dill sauce, followed by an entree of chopped liver. The secret of Mrs Bow's smoother, lighter chopped liver was simply an extra egg. One kilo of chicken livers, two large onions and five boiled eggs was the recipe she guarded with her life. The main course was a roast shoulder of veal, with large, hot, boiled potatoes. If, when she went shopping in Acland Street, she could find a duck lean enough, she served roast duck.

The meal ended with Mrs Bow's sponge cake. Mrs Bow was famous all over Melbourne for her sponge cake. She told anyone who wanted to hear, that her sponge cake was not fattening, it had only a tiny bit of sugar and hardly any flour. No one was quite sure what held it together, but they ate it in large slices, with relish, secure in the knowledge that it wasn't fattening.

Later in the evening when the men settled down to play cards, usually gin rummy, and the women nestled in groups whispering, usually about their husbands, Mrs Bow cleared the table, put out the chocolates, and washed the dishes.

On the other Sunday nights when it was either Mrs Glick's or Mrs Blatman's or Mrs Feiglin's or Mrs Popov's turn to have dinner, Mrs Bow helped. They could rely on her to serve the latkes straight

from the frying pan, before the grated potato mixture became cold. Mrs Bow would swiftly spoon out generous portions of chulent and kishke. Before anyone could say they were on a diet, the oxtail, baked for twenty-four hours in a glue of chicken fat, onions, garlic, lima beans, barley and potatoes, was on their plate.

Very few of the group had ever seen Mrs Bow have a meal. For that matter neither had her family. They had watched her chew a crust of toast while she prepared dinner, or have a bowl of semolina to soothe her nerves.

Six nights a week Mrs Bow served grilled baby lamb chops with salad, grilled calf's liver with salad, grilled whiting with salad or a lean roast chicken with salad. The helpings always came in under five hundred calories. Mrs Bow washed the dishes loudly while her family ate.

She often told her eldest daughter, the fat one, how she herself had no tolerance for sweets. 'Do you ever see me with a chocolate? I can't eat them. They taste something terrible to me.' While she said this she glowed and looked even more beautiful.

Mr Bow and the girls were quite self-sufficient. They didn't really need her meals. Mr Bow kept a large supply of Toblerone bars in the glove-box of his new Fairlane with its electronically fuel injected motor. He did messages for Mrs Bow willingly, some minced chicken from Rushinek's, some chalah from Monarch's. Whenever she said 'Adek, can you pick up.. .?' he rose from his armchair. 'No trouble, Lubinka.' On the way he stopped at Leo's for a triple chocolate gelato.

Lola, the elder daughter, fed herself at Pellegrini's in Bourke Street, on her way home from school, and Dora, the baby of the family, had a fast and accurate aim in and out of the fridge. She could remove and digest a cheese blintze in ten seconds.

Mrs Bow stepped into her shoes. Light grey suede, pointy-toed and soaring on six-inch stiletto heels, they were Maud Frizon of Paris, from Miss Louise. At Miss Louise's winter sale, Mrs Bow paid ninety dollars for these three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar shoes. Mrs Bow had a real eye for a bargain. She saved hundreds of dollars a week. The Jewish line 'I can get it for you wholesale' originated from Mrs Bow. Mrs Bow personally knew every manufacturer of swimwear, evening wear, hosiery, overcoats, underwear, knitwear, furs, suits and sportswear within a ten- kilometre radius of Flinders Street.

She walked briskly into the bathroom, relishing the feeling of power that came with the extra height. Searching in the lipstick drawer, she decided that Unspiced Rose by Estee Lauder was the right shade for today. First she outlined her lips with brown eyeliner pencil. This gave them the definition that they'd lost ten years earlier. Then she applied a thick, glossy coat of Unspiced Rose. Pleased with the result, she blew herself a kiss in the mirror.

The bathroom had twenty metres of mirror attached to sliding doors around three of its walls. These doors concealed two kilometres of shelves. Shelves crammed with cleansers, toners, exfoliating creams, neck, chin and eye creams, thigh creams, day creams and night creams, clay and mud and apricot masks, ampoules for firming your skin and lifting your breasts, cell extract treatments to remove wrinkles and dimples and chimiozymolsat of yeast, which favourably affects the oxygen balance of epidermal tissue.

When Mr Bow had built this oversized bathroom, he'd had high hopes of being able to shave in peace. Eventually, in despair, he'd removed his Phillips HP 1328 re-chargeable with nine different cutting blade selections and automatic overseas conversions to the small cupboard in the toilet next to the bathroom, and there he found his peace.

Mr Bow spent two hours a day in the toilet. Between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m., and again from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. The seemingly endless stream of volcanic farts erupting from him in there was the source of excruciating embarrassment for Lola Bow, whose bedroom was across the hallway. If she had a girlfriend staying overnight, Lola set the alarm clock for 6.30 a.m. Five minutes before 7 o'clock she nonchalantly turned her transistor on to full volume. Johnny O'Keefe screaming 'Shout' at the top of his lungs on 3UZ was barely a match for Mr Bow's early morning evacuation.

Touching up her eyelashes, already lengthened and strengthened by Fabulash, Mrs Bow reminded herself that it was their turn to pay for the pictures this Saturday. She looked up the phone number of the Rivoli, and rang straight away, because it wasn't always easy to get seventeen seats on a Saturday, night.

The gang, as Lola called them, the Bows, the Glicks, the Blatmans, the Popovs and the Feiglins were joined by the Cukiermans, the Sterns, the Bergers and poor divorced Mr Eisen, for their regular Saturday night excursion to the pictures.

They'd seen almost every film shown in Melbourne since 1952. Mrs Bow thought of herself as the intellectual of the group. She liked *Zelig* and *Gorky Park*, while others enjoyed *Yentl* and *Educating Rita*.

At interval, Mr Bow liked to be the one to buy the snacks. He could get as much as he needed and it was dizzyingly satisfying for him to buy scorched almonds for seventeen people. Seventeen people could eat a lot of scorched almonds and Mr Bow liked to make sure that nobody missed out.

Sometimes after the movie they went to a supper-dance at the Top Hat cabaret, Mr Popov, who with his lean figure and cornflour blue eyes, was unanimously recognized as the most handsome man in the group, danced with Mrs Bow. The knowledge that they made a stunning couple swept them through the quickstep with even greater grace.

Mrs Blatman danced with Mr Bow, who could be relied upon to have a few leftover scorched almonds in his jacket pocket. They ate them, with a furtive happiness, while they foxtrotted in the far corner of the dance floor.

Mrs Glick and Mrs Popov and Mrs Blatman and Mrs Feiglin and Mrs Bow took it in turns to dance with Mr Eisen, In the last few years Mr Eisen had become even more nervous and distant. He hadn't gone out with a woman since his disastrous affair with Mrs McKenzie ended in 1962. Their affair had thrown the whole group into turmoil.

They had all made sure that their children had grown up understanding the importance of and the necessity for a Jewish partner. Now, here was one of their close friends infatuated with a shikse, holding her hand in Carlisle Street and grinning like a fifteen-year-old. Mrs Glick and Mrs Feiglin decided that she was after his money. They visited her privately. They offered her five thousand dollars to stop seeing Mr Eisen. Mrs McKenzie offered the women tea and biscuits. Ten days later she was gone. She'd moved to Moe to be closer to her mother, a broken Mr Eisen told the group.

The phone rang. Mrs Bow, who was just about to put the final coat of Imbi's Mellow Mauve on her nails, shook her head in annoyance. It was probably Mr Bow calling from Myers to say that there was no white Tissus Michel material left. She should have bought it when she saw it there last week, she admonished herself. She knew she looked good in white, and could wear it without any worry about its fattening effect.

She answered the phone. It was Mrs Popov. Mrs Bow cradled the phone on her shoulder with her upper arm. She swung her nails to and fro to catch the dry breeze of the air conditioning. 'Lubinka darling, I don't think we will go to the pictures tomorrow darling. Herschel has a terrible cold. I asked him to go to the doctor because I'm sure he has got a virus, but you know Herschel, stubborn like an ox. Me, myself, I've got a sore throat already. So Lubinka darling, make it fifteen tickets.'

Mrs Bow nurtured a not so secret dislike of Mrs Popov. Mrs Bow knew that Mrs Popov thought of herself as highly intelligent and very beautiful. Mrs Bow reassured herself that anyone could see that Mrs Popov was no beauty. The fact that 'Popov Creations' had one hundred and seventy-eight retail outlets around Australia did not mean that Mrs Popov was intelligent. Mrs Bow bit her lip thinking about the many very stupid people she knew who were good at business.

Mrs Bow toasted herself a slice of black rye bread. It was so black it could have passed for pumpernickel. Mrs Bow liked peace and quiet when she ate. She was comforted by the warm density of the thick toast.

Mrs Bow hadn't always been Mrs Bow. Like her friends the Silberbergs, the Rotkleins, the Mokruschkis, the Pierkarskis and the Minofskis, who became the Silvers, the Rotes, the Mocks, the Pikes and the Mints, Mrs Bow used to be Mrs Boshevsky. When making holiday bookings the group sounded like a gathering of good Presbyterians.

When Mr and Mrs Bow arrived in Australia in 1948, Mr Bow had wanted to abbreviate their name to Bosh, but Mrs Bow chose Bow because she thought it sounded dignified and elegant.

As Lubinka Kindler of Lodz and then Lubinka Boshevsky, Mrs Bow had been the most beautiful girl in the town, some said in the whole of Poland. Her brown hair was waist-length and flowed behind her like a dark curtain, framing her high pink cheekbones and intense eyes.

Even though she was one of the poorer families in Lodz, with no dowry to speak of, she was constantly pursued by fervent admirers.

She was also very clever. In later years Mrs Bow never tired of telling her two daughters 'I gave maths tuitions,' which she always pronounced choosons, 'to pay for my schooling, from when I was eight. I was always very good at mathematics. I was the only Jewish girl to finish high school in Lodz and be offered a place at University.'

As Mrs Bow was about to begin first year Medicine at the University of Vienna, the war broke out, and instead, six years later, Mrs Bow graduated from Auschwitz.

Mr Bow was a good husband. He'd always been grateful to Mrs Bow for marrying him. His family were displeased by the marriage, for they were timber merchants and one of the wealthiest Jewish families in Lodz. Mr Bow still felt upset when he remembered the hysteria he'd caused in the family when he'd married Mrs Bow. All that fuss and all that heartache, and all for nothing, because soon they were all in concentration camps and equally poor.

To give Mrs Bow a break, Mr Bow took Dora and Lola out on Saturday afternoons. When the girls were smaller they would go to the zoo. Mr Bow enjoyed those afternoons. He would sit in the small park next to the bandstand and read the latest Perry Mason thriller. Dora and Lola would wave to him from the top of the elephant which walked round and round the track circling the park. Dora and Lola liked to buy ten tickets each. That way they stayed on the elephant for exactly an hour. This suited Mr Bow. When the hour was up the three of them walked to the kiosk and bought six Eskimo

Pies. Then they strolled around looking at the animals. When she was older, Lola looked back on these afternoons as the nicest part of her childhood. Dora still visited the zoo regularly.

If there was a new show on at the Tivoli, Mr Bow took the ' girls there on Saturday afternoons. They all loved that. They saw acts from all over the world. Sexy dancers and all sorts of singers, acrobats and jugglers, exotic striptease artists, a blonde underwater stripper whom Lola fell in love with, comedians and performing dogs, magicians and evil-looking hypnotists. Hundreds of semi-nude, beautiful showgirls decorated the stage. The showgirls wore high heels and high-cut fishnet tights.

On their heads they balanced spectacular soaring head-dresses made from hundreds of brightly coloured and sequined feathers. By law the showgirls had to stand perfectly still. They were not allowed to move at all. From their front row seats, Mr Bow and the girls had a very good view.

The comedians were Mr Bow's favourites. He laughed at their jokes so heartily that other people in the theatre stood up to see who was laughing like that. Sometimes he laughed so hard, his shirt buttons popped and tears ran down his face. Sometimes Lola worried that he would burst with happiness. At intervals they always shared a packet of Jaffas, a packet of Fantales and a packet of Columbines.

Mr Bow applauded each act vigorously and was the first to leap on to the stage if a juggler, hypnotist, comedian or magician asked for volunteers from the audience to assist him.

Mrs Bow started to feel edgy. A faint headache hovered at the back of her head. Mr Bow should have been home by now. She'd told him that the photographer was due at two o'clock.

She parted the plushly piled gold velvet curtains in the family room. Outside it was sunny. Mrs Bow was pleased for that meant that later on she could lie out on the grass for half an hour or so.

Mrs Bow had a deep golden tan all year round. She managed this by spending August in Surfers Paradise, and sunbaking in a sheltered spot in her garden during the rest of the year. Mrs Bow took great care of her tan. She never sunbaked for more than twenty minutes on each side, and at night she plied her body with vitamin-enriched moisturising lotions. She saw her suntan as public evidence of her energy, vitality and youthful spirit.

The only time Mrs Bow felt completely relaxed and at peace was when she lay in the sun. She could think about her daughters without anxiety. In the sun, she could forget about Lola's weight and not worry about whether Dora would ever find a boyfriend. Sometimes a ray of pleasure crept through Mrs Bow's thoughts about her daughters as she savoured the fact that neither Dora nor Lola had ever had an abortion or experimented with drugs.

Mrs Bow liked to sunbathe in solitude. At home this was easy, for Mr Bow loathed the sun. Even on his summer holidays he spent his time indoors reading Raymond Chandler. Dora had blue-white skin which blistered if she crossed Collins Street in the sun, and Lola was too embarrassed to put her flesh, olive though it was, into a bathing suit.

There was a loud knock at the front door. 'Lubinka, Lubinka darling, it's Adek.' Mrs Bow switched off the indoor and outdoor burglar alarms and Mr Bow unlocked the mortice lock and the Lockwood 001 deadlock. He was beaming. 'Darling, I went to Buckleys and I went to Georges and I had no luck. And then I had a very good idea. I went to Yanek at the top of Bourke Street and Yanek had two and a half metres of white Tissus Michel.' Mrs Bow looked at him, 'Adek, you know I need three metres for a dress.' Mr Bow lost his beam.

Mrs Bow had prepared Mr Bow's lunch of four slices of Pariser sausage, a tomato quartered, two radishes, a spring onion, some lettuce and three Vita Wheat biscuits. On their bed she'd spread Mr Bow's new white shirt, a finely striped maroon and gold tie, and Mr Bow's cream flecked, grey Simon Ackerman suit. Mr Bow ate and got dressed.

At exactly two o'clock, Michael Beets, the most successful and talented Jewish photographer in Melbourne, arrived with his assistant. Every year Michael Beets photographed the Bow family. Mrs Bow chose the photograph she liked best and ordered a twenty-by-thirty-inch copy, which she put into an ornate gilt-edged frame, and displayed with great pride in the lounge room.

'Good afternoon, Mrs Bow. You look wonderful. You're getting younger every day. It's true, you look more beautiful every year. It's a pleasure to see you.'

'Oh Mr Beets, I look terrible. I've got a headache and I've had sinus trouble for three weeks. I've taken Amoxil and Abocillin and Moxacin and nothing helps. Look at how my nose is swollen.'

Dora and Lola arrived separately, at the same time. Mr Bow kissed Dora hello. Dora had a habit of averting her head when she was kissed, so that the kisser came in contact with a mouthful of hair and the back of her head. She was wearing a tomato-red tracksuit and looked anorexically thin. Her cheekbones jutted out as though they were about to burst through her skin, which was deathly pale and dotted with red spots from her recently developed allergy to food.

Lola picked up the book that Dora had bought her parents as a gift. It was inscribed 'To the best mum and dad in the world'. Lola felt nauseous with disgust.

'Lola darling,' her mother was speaking to her. Lola looked up, still feeling sick. 'Maybe you'd like to put on a little bit of mascara?' Mrs Bow trilled. 'No thanks, mum.' Lola walked away smoothing down her dress which had bat-wing sleeves, was gathered at the yoke and was made out of satiny, black crushed velvet. The dress flew fluently past Lola's hips, the part of Lola that against all odds Lola tried to hide.

'Okay, okay, okay everybody,' Mr Beets called, as he shepherded them into the dining room. The dining room was low-ceilinged and rectangular. The bottom panels of the windows, which overlooked the garden, were made of opaque blue glass, a trend that was stylish in Caulfield and East St Kilda in the 1960s. Lola called it Jewish-Chinese architecture.

The Bow family stood in a row. Mr Bow patted a block of Small's Energy chocolate in his pocket. Dora blinked rapidly, her face twisted with tension. Lola arranged herself so that she stood between but slightly behind Mr and Mrs Bow, a position that she hoped would cut her hips down a bit. Mrs Bow glowed. Her eyes were luminous. A soft expression of serenity lit her face. Everything was ready. One, two, three, click. They smiled for the camera.

A BITTER LOVE

Ann Granat

Ann Granat was born in Hungary and arrived in Australia with her parents in 1957 after the Hungarian uprising. She graduated as a teacher from Monash University with a post-graduate diploma in careers. She has won three literary awards for her short stories, including the Rolf Boldrewood Award for A Bitter Love, which was entered under the title Victims and was originally published in Westerly in 1984. She has also published a recipe book and an anthology of short stories. Ann works as a journalist with the Victorian Ministry of Education.

She did not take the lift but walked. The room was on the third floor. At the second floor level she noticed that the picture on the landing had been changed. From greenish blue watercolour it transformed itself into a large sunflower made up of tiny plastic mosaics. Its oranges and yellows shouted angrily at the uniform grey walls. It was dinner time, around 5.30 and she could smell the fish and burnt fat slowly attacking the stairs. Her stomach responded with a sharp turn of revulsion, almost pain, as she hurried upstairs. She paused in front of the room for a second, noticing with pleasure that she was not out of breath. At 42, after three flights of stairs, it was not too bad. (Yet, what an inappropriate thought this was.)

She knocked and went inside. Only the bedside light was on, creating a strange pink glow on the face of the nurse whose soft dark features spread out in sleep. The room was peaceful; she could feel its tranquility, its stillness.

Her mother lay dead under the pink eiderdown. She was wearing a pink nightgown with white lace around the throat. Her face was smooth and ageless, the wrinkles taken away by death, the ultimate beautician. Suddenly Nina remembered one of her mother's stories. It was about childbirth. 'When I was just about to have you and the pains were getting stronger'—her mother would say, 'I held up a mirror so I could see my face and neck. I kept my face tight all the time. Having a child was not going to give me any wrinkles.'

The nurse was on her feet now, smoothing out the skirt of her uniform, looking at Nina with unease. (Is it because I caught her sleeping?) Her small accented voice droned on as she offered the chair at the bedside together with her condolences...'...she went quickly ... did not suffer ... heart attack ... at her age to be expected!' The words were softly punctuated by her departing footsteps.

And one more time Nina was alone with her mother. She lowered herself into the large chintz-covered armchair and looked at the bed. She felt nothing.

The comfortable contours of the old chair were like secure, strong arms around her body. She could not prevent a large yawn. 'This is my mother, she is dead,' she said to herself. 'My mother has just died.' But still no feelings came, not guilt nor grief.

She rocked back and forth in the chair, fighting the temptation of sleep. On the bedside table, next to a crumpled pink tissue, she noticed half a packet of cigarettes. She did not usually smoke, but she took one now and lit it with her mother's thin silver lighter, a leftover still from the Hungarian days. She did not inhale, but blew the smoke through her mouth. Like strands of grey hair the smoke rose, fluttering uncertainly above her mother's face for a second, then dissolved into a stale, lingering smell.

On their Saturday afternoons together, her mother sometimes smoked a whole packet. 'This is my only pleasure in life, tell me, what else have I?'—she used to say as she dug into the packet with her long red fingernails. They curled downwards like the talons of some tropical bird. The hands were white with beautiful long fingers, the hands of a young girl, having somehow avoided the ageing process.

On those Saturday afternoons, Nina always seemed to miss every traffic light on the way. When the large cream building became visible in the distance, she began to arrange her face. She added thick layers of imaginary flesh to the cheekbones against the small attacks to come.

She would park her car next to the hospital, a low yellow building overshadowed by the tall residential block. She would walk across the concreted square leading to the main entrance of the Mount Vale Home for the Aged. In spring, purple buds would emerge from the scruffy green bushes surrounding the entrance. Each year she would wait for these buds to flower, but in a few days they would wither and droop, leaving the foliage with a mutilated look.

She would pass through the automatic sliding doors, past the old women and men sitting in the foyer, waiting for visitors or afternoon tea.

Her mother usually waited for her in her room on the third floor. The room, like the others in the building, was cheerful and light in appearance. Here on the half-lowered Holland blind, multi-coloured flowers bloomed unstintingly. The brown brocade bedspread, the chintz-covered armchairs, other bits of furniture and bric-a-brac came from the old flat in Elwood, where her mother and father used to live. Most noticeable were the photographs. They hung on the walls in metal frames, they squatted on the small tables, they obscenely exposed themselves on the bookshelf.

The black and white enlargement above her mother's bed showed a double-storey villa with large windows and round balustrades. 'My husband rebuilt it for me after the war. It was in the most exclusive part of Budapest, that is why the communists appropriated it so quickly'—her mother would explain to visitors.

With one other exception, the rest of the photographs were of Nina. Nina, a child in Hungary, all thick glasses and protruding teeth, holding a small dog. Saved from the complete lack of grace by long, shiny hair twisted into heavy plaits.

Nina, at seventeen in Australia. Dressed in fifties finery bought from her first pay packet. All clumsy motion, the wide black skirt swirling, coyly revealing several white tulle petticoats with edges ribboned in red,

Nina a bride, Nina with peeling nose holidaying in Bali. Nina, a mother herself, pushing a pram in a light summer dress, sweat stains clearly revealed under the arms. Her face caught in quiet despair.

How she hated to come into this room and be confronted by these fragments of self captured without pity. She knew this was unreasonable, even irrational. Her mother had every right to display pictures of her only daughter, her only child. ('You are all I have,' the voice demanded, growing louder day by day, without mercy.)

There was only one photo of her father, taken about a year before his death. Sitting in a chair, staring in unblinking indifference. The blue eyes with a washed-out vague quality, the mouth set in a thin, hard line. His face unwrinkled, the skin tightly stretched, as if any excess flesh had already been disposed of.

She could not look at the photo. It was inconceivable to her that her slight, humorous father with his child-like optimism would finally admit defeat.

Sometimes on their Saturday afternoons she and her mother went to Toorak Road and sat in the Deli. They sipped their short black coffees and nibbled on continental cakes. To the outside world they must have given a highly satisfactory impression. As they entered, the upturned faces acknowledged them with sentimental approval. Mother and daughter, close and together, the one frail and elderly, but still with that lively continental charm, the other, a younger version, holding the chair out for her mother, so protective, so caring.

People would often comment on the family resemblance. 'Gee, you look alike,' or 'Look more like sisters,' they would say. Her mother seemed pleased, but Nina wanted to shout her denial at these well-meaning strangers. The physical similarity implied other likenesses more fundamental, more threatening, crouching inside her, patiently waiting, contemptuous of her will.

'I am prepared to make sacrifices,' her mother used to say in their early days in Australia. This phrase hung heavily in the air, dominating their everyday lives in its many different manifestations. Her mother, spoiled by servants even in communist Hungary, now spent the hot summer weekends dusting, sweeping, vacuuming their rented flat. She cooked meals so unfamiliar in appearance that they could almost be called exotic, were it not for the sameness in taste: a combination of tomato sauce and plastic.

Other sacrifices took the shape of large boxes, full of furry pink material. Twice a week they were delivered to the door of their ground floor flat by a morose Greek, who rang the bell then disappeared with such magical speed that no matter how quickly you rushed out, you could catch only a fast-departing glimpse of his thick-necked, heavily moustached profile, a cigarette hanging from the mouth, in the window of his dirty-green truck.

In the afternoons when Nina came home from MacRobertson Chocolates where she was a junior clerk, she could hear from quite a distance the humming of the old Singer sewing machine. When she came closer, she could see through the open window her mother's back bent over bits of fuzzy material. Some mornings on the way to the tram stop, Nina thought she recognised a pair of these pink, fluffy slippers her mother made, gracing the feet of a housewife in a quilted dressing gown, out collecting the milk and papers.

Later the slippers gave way to knitted pieces to be worked into dreary pastel-coloured cardigans. This was done on a special machine bought from Myers on a four-year easy terms arrangement. All these labours were to be temporary, 'only until my husband establish business,' Nina's mother told the neighbours in her particular brand of English. Unlike Nina's father, she took to English like the proverbial duck to water. She dived without fear, never noticing the dangerous and intricate currents. She had a talent for the sound of languages, and if you heard her speaking English from a distance, you could have sworn that she was a true Aussie. But this illusion was quickly shattered when you came close. She strung the words together like unmatched beads, creating a unique effect. In those early days she would speak to anyone, shopkeepers, neighbours. She loved chatting to people who sat next to her on the tram when she and Nina went shopping. It was she who would start the conversation, while Nina pretended to be invisible, cringing with embarrassment. She thought that the people in the tram, even the ones behind their polite newspapers, were listening and laughing at this funny little woman with her stories about Hungary which she delivered with such self-assurance.

It was Nina's responsibility to put the weekly ads in the local papers. 'Handyman wants work. Any job, anytime.' For a while it seemed to work. She went along with her father as the interpreter in the evenings or Saturday mornings when the jobs came through.

Her father repainted old weatherboard houses, replaced tiles on roofs, put down lino on kitchen floors and repaired ancient verandahs. He avoided speaking English whenever possible. His visits to the timberyard or hardware store were memorable for their almost ritualistic flavour. He would produce pad and pencil from his overalls pocket and present the salesman with a quick sketch of a doorknob. 'Doorknobs?' the salesman would ask. 'What kind? How many?' They would then engage in an intercourse of delicate hand gestures, deliberations and displays until the right items were located. All finished, her father would offer his hand to the salesman. They would shake hands and smile at each other with a great deal of mutual satisfaction. Her father would say then in his quiet voice, 'Thank you, thank you so much.'

Nina wondered if the salesman ever noticed that these were the only words her father said in English during the whole exchange. She guessed even these took a lot of effort. He was very shy and did not like to be an object of curiosity or pity.

He was also a perfectionist. This is probably why his 'business' did not last. He loved his work, each job was a pleasure in itself. Like a good meal, it could not be rushed. You had to take your time over it. Each small problem had to be carefully considered, until the very best way of doing it was arrived at. It did not matter how long it took. 'Haven't you finished that job in Bentleigh? You shouldn't spend so much time on it,' her mother would remonstrate. Or 'Why do you have to buy the most expensive paint?' But he could not compromise, it was simply not in him to do it any other way. The jobs, when finally completed were perfect, works of art. That was what mattered, not the money, which in any case, often did not arrive when promised. When it did come, it frequently didn't cover even the cost of the materials. The hire purchase people phoned and wrote letters threatening to repossess the secondhand Ford utility used for the 'business'.

Nina took a sick day to help her father look for a job. They spent the hot late-spring morning driving around the streets of Moorabbin, from factory to factory. By midday her father had a job. It was a labouring job with a company which made rulers and pencil cases. The foreman reminded them that this was the best they could hope for, 'what without speaking the language and proper trade papers. And don't forget, your father is no youngster.' (He worked there for fifteen years, packing rulers and pencil cases into cartons. Nina still had the gold embossed black leather wallet the company gave him when he retired and went on the pension.)

Nina decided to find a job in Sydney. Since her father 'gave up' his business the flat in Elwood closed in on them.

The flat was suffocatingly hot during the winter. Her mother kept the windows shut and all the radiators going. The smell of dead potplants and half-full ashtrays was overpowering. She insisted that she was cold. Some days she didn't get out of bed at all and when Nina arrived home from work, she found that her father had already shopped for groceries and was preparing the evening meal. (He liked making his own version of lecco, a spicy mixture of green capsicums, tomatoes and onions.) When he finished, he would make up a tray with a small lace cloth and in the crockery they used for visitors and would take this in to the bedroom where the television blared loudly so as to block out everything else.

Always immaculately groomed in the past, her mother now took to wearing her faded, purple dressing-gown during the day. Nina noticed that the two top buttons were missing and had not been replaced.

'Why don't you visit Mrs. Kovacs tomorrow?' her father would suggest in his mild voice. She would stare at him hard with her red rimmed eyes and bloated white face (as if newly drowned, Nina thought). 'Why should I visit Mrs. Kovacs?' she would start off in a small voice, like a child's. 'What can I talk to her about? I don't want to hear about her latest trip to Europe, when I can't even afford to go to Warburton for a week. What else can we talk about?' her voice would lose its childish pleading tone to rise to a hysterical crescendo. 'Maybe we can talk about my husband who can't make a decent living, or my daughter who runs around with men who won't marry her? Why don't you go and talk to her yourself? Maybe you could ask her how her husband made enough money to have a house fully paid for. And a flat for investment. She never had to work since they came to Australia.' She would storm out of the kitchen then, slamming the door hard. Nina and her father avoided looking at each other while they did the dishes in silence. More and more lately, her father would walk down in the evenings to Elwood beach. He liked to feed the seagulls before it got dark. They hovered around him like attendant knights in their impressive grey-white circle. 'It is so peaceful there,' he would say without irony when he returned. Then, gesturing towards the closed bedroom door, 'Don't take it too much to heart. She doesn't mean it. Just tired. It has not been easy for her.' 'Don't excuse her. Don't forgive her,' Nina wanted to scream, but she knew it was no use. He always would ... he couldn't help it.

Years later, married and a mother herself, Nina came to a kind of understanding, but it was not in her to forgive. One evening in the bathroom, splashing her face with cold water, she caught a glimpse of the puffy pale face, the red, swollen eyes, the mouth etched in discontent. She was exhausted from the words, the nightly accusations that came pouring out of her. She knew their son could hear every word in his bathroom, but she could not stop. Her husband never defended himself, this was the worst part. Her voice shrill and coarse hit at him relentlessly: 'How many jobs do you think you will lose? I am sick of being responsible for everything. You are weak, .. you are useless.' She saw herself with sudden recognition. That night when her husband was asleep she quickly packed a couple of suitcases. Then she woke her son.

Nina's mother, in the Mount Vale Home for the Aged, became once more the gracious lady she used to be in the Hungarian days. She received visitors and went out for coffee wearing a hat and kid gloves. Her photo featured in the Home's monthly magazine, captioned 'One of our youngest and most charming residents.' 'She is so funny, she has us in stitches,' the social workers said. But whenever she was alone with Nina a metamorphosis took place. Her face paled, her body shrank visibly. She became a helpless old woman under the weight of an unbearable burden. 'I can't sleep at night,' she would say in her little girl voice. 'I can't be happy until I see your life in order. I want to see your future secured, before it's too late,' she would plead. (Her small universe was peopled with 'secure' other daughters whose lives were 'in order'. They had husbands, houses and swimming pools. They did not work but travelled overseas every year. Their sons had good jobs and behaved with decorum.) There was no point in arguing. It was useless to say to her mother I am happy. I love my job. I like being independent.' Her mother would not hear, she would not believe. 'Do you want to struggle all your life as I had to?' she would go on.

Nothing Nina could say would ever console her mother. The strength of her grief was such that it could consume them both. No matter how hard she tried, Nina could not ignore these weekly monologues. She knew they were pitiful and ridiculous, ravings of an old woman, but she could not block them out. They eroded her will, they mauled her fragile tranquility. They left her with fear.

Fear that her mother knew her as no-one else did. Her mother could see those secret thoughts whose existence Nina would only suspect and would always deny.

Sitting now in the large chintz armchair on the third floor, Nina knew it was time to go. She looked at her dead mother again, but did not see her. For a second she was a child, at Lake Balaton back in Hungary. She felt the hot sun on her peeling shoulders, as the water shimmered green around the small blue boat. Her mother stood on the shore in her yellow-polka-dotted sundress. Her hair was tied back with a white scarf. The red hair sparkled against the white like jewels. She smiled and waved to Nina, calling out in her lovely deep voice—'Nina, Ninacska, come quickly, hurry!' Nina jumped into the shallow water and ran towards the shore as fast as she could.

MOOD

Kim Baker

Kim Baker was a schoolgirl when she submitted this poem to the Melbourne Chronicle It was published in 1982.

Lately, like a wave
Rise and abate
This mood
Has me covered,
Won't shake off.
Sweeps through
Carries,
Awhile remains.
I say, it doesn't matter.

I'm Australian.
'So what',
You mutter,
Impatient.
Its significance I wear,
Not patriotism
As seeming
For each Olympics.

There, they were shot
Cameras, television,
And I,
Distant.
God
It hurt!

I, only young
Understood
Flags in peace
Blood,
Pain.

I remember.
A proud heritage
Of strength
Conviction

Convicted!
For what?
Chosen,
For what!

And I'm Australian.
The old history
Timeless,
Flows,
Saturates the new
Seeps its strength
And pain.

My people
Have no monopoly on suffering
Though they may seem . . .
Are
Proud.
Who are they?
I'm Australian,
I am a Jew,
Am I not?
Proud.

My heritage.
What's for dinner?
I wash.
'Blessed art Thou, O Lord ...
King of the Universe'
Mashed potato and chops.

You couldn't tell?
No big nose,

But I wear the star
White, not yellow,
Metal, not cloth,
Free, not stitched,
On chain and soul
Proudly.
(Though
Sometimes with disgust
I turn away from those
Feeble
Bobbing
Men
Dark and dying.
My Exodus.)

You can accuse
I chose this wave
Wallowing;
The pain, not my own,
Surging in my veins,
Melancholy flowing in the tide.

You could be right.
It doesn't matter,
I can sift through
The photos,
Books and files,
Reminders become memories
Vivid as if,
As if I had lived them
Myself.

I'm Australian.
I only sleep the nightmare
The tattoo glares
From the fabric dealer's arm
At the market.

Born Australian
Jewish.
Four generations
Isolated.

My mother's line
My inheritance.
I must learn Hebrew,
Cross the waters
Travel this foreign country
Thought and ways
Of a rich heritage.
Not lose the way.

The Menorah stands.
My grandfather's.
He
Always stern and quiet
Respect.
Persevered,
Ate only kosher,
Encouraged curiosity,
Even of Christian ways;
The Australian way of life.
Forget the past,
History.
Now I'm muttering

You are right.
Past:
Second war, pogroms,
Slaughters, exiles ...
And the Law.
Shabbas and football
I'm muttering again.
The Australian Jew;
Few live both dreams.

We belong here
This Island.
Not the madness of
Cramped, crushed
Europe;
The delirium of
Deserts,
Thirsting power.
Australian.
Isolated.

Sea of my heritage
Floods.
You accuse
I drown in its depths,
Past,
Beyond my horizon.

My mother within me
And channels of the past,
Torment;
The surface beckons
To breathe
Sensing air.

The Nazi,
Politicians,
National Front, Ku Klux Klan
And terrorism
Flood T.V.
'Past,' you say.
You accuse.

Optimism, life in action,
Help tread the current
So that I may continue.
She'll be right,
All will be well

My friend.

My mood,

A wave,

Ebbs and flows.

'Good News For Modern Man'

The newspapers, T.V.

Pessimists!

Will have none of it.

Thank God, I feel this surge

Of warmth,

For deep wine,

For this cosy room.

What's for dinner?

once father and god

Mal Morgan

Mal Morgan was born in London and came to Australia in 1948. He is a pharmacist at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. He has published three collections of poetry with Abalone, Poemstones (1916), Statues Don't Bleed (1984) and A Handshake with the Moon (1987), from which this poem is taken. He and his wife live with their family in Warrandyte, just outside Melbourne, and he runs and participates in group poetry readings at La Mama Theatre in Carlton.

once

father and god

were almost the same

father stood

on god's shoulders

and directed things

my father the director

could make the rain fall

on wednesdays

the sun come out

for long weekends

and hears sleep

during winter

now only father remains

grey and lined

the way god always was

I murdered god

one night when i was high

higher than father

my head out of the sky

as i stabbed and bludgeoned

it was i who bled

and ached in freedom

PASSOVER CHILD

Marjorie Pizer

Marjorie Pizer's poetry has an immediacy in keeping with her profession as a psychotherapist. She values the sights and sounds and smells which are usually taken for granted. In later years she has acknowledged the importance of her own past in the context of a 'web of the world' in her expression. This poem plumbs her personal well of experience.

Pesach, or Passover, is an annual eight-day festival which commemorates the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage and with it the birth of the Jews as a nation. In Israel it is a springtime celebration. It commences with a festive meal called Seder (order) where special foods are eaten and special prayers and passages are recited. The youngest person present asks four questions, the first of which is, 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' The service concludes with a prayer of hope, 'Next year in Jerusalem.' This poem is from The Sixtieth Spring (Pinchgut Press, 1982).

How favoured by the stars was I at birth!
More favoured than I knew
For I was born on Pesach, a Seder child,
Born on the feast of freedom
Remembered by my people for three thousand years
In whatever lands they have found themselves;
And now, in my lifetime once more, in the land of Israel.
'Next year in Jerusalem—
How many times in anguish
Have these words been cried out over the centuries,
From Babylon and Rome,
From York and Spain,
From Russia and Poland,
From the death camps and from the Soviets.
'Marnish taino harlaryelow harzay?'
'Why is this night different from all other nights?'
On this night we remember our slavery and our bitterness,
Our exodus and our freeing.
'Marnish tarno harlaryelow harzay?'
'Why is this night different from all other nights?'

On this night I was born.

I remember my own personal enslavement,

My own walls of fear and sour aloneness.

I, too, have eaten herbs of bitterness

And shed salt tears for many years.

On this night I remember my own hard road to freedom.

The long unlocking of shackles

Until I, too, have reached my own land of milk and honey and poetry

On this, my sixtieth birthday, and my sixty-first Pesach.

I give special thanks for my birth and my life,

My journey and my freeing.

MRS NOAH SPEAKS

Fay Zwicky

Kaddish and Other Poems; from which this is taken, was published by the University of Queensland Press in 1982 and was awarded the 1982 NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry.

Lord, the cleaning's nothing.

What's a pen or two?

Even if the tapir's urine

Takes the paint clean off

There's nothing easier.

But sire, the care!

I used to dream perpetually

About a boat I had to push

(yes, push) through a stony town

without water.

There was no river and no sea and yet

I pushed a boat against a tide.

It wouldn't float although I pulled and

hailed, my flesh eddying,

drifting with the strain of it.

Is *this* a dream?

Fibre my blood, sir.

The speckled pigeon and the tawny owl

swoop by.

They coax me to the edge.

To save to save merely-no matter

what or whom-to save.

Sweep and push of waves against the sides.

Our raft is delicate and our fire

turns wood to ashes.

He takes it well

and Shem and Ham *do* help-you can't expect

too much of anyone can you and
Japhet's still a kid. Their wives are
young and tremble in the rain
their wits astray.

As soon as we're born
we're all astray-at least
You seem to think it's so or else
why this?

I know you promised us a landing but
what a price!

We're dashed from side to side
we strike through spray
the foam blinds Noah till he
cannot steer.

Even the mightiest creature cowers in his
stall panting, snorting in the welter,
bursting prayers upon your path
of righteousness.

Comfort enough I'm not.
To feed and clothe, to bind a scratch I can.

We once moved quiet in our lives
Looked steadily ahead. When I was small
there were no roads across the mountains
no boats or bridges over water.
We farmed, lived simple, circumscribed.

Our birds and beasts delivered their young
in peace.

The trees grew tall and now and
then I pocketed a speckled egg, could climb
and peer into the nests of starlings.
Height and blossom.

Then we lived neighbourly with our birds.
Creation, your handiwork, was one.

No good and bad-just men and women.
But with your sages came the rub.

We tripped
over our charity. Duty-fettered, love
tumbled like a lightning-stricken tower.

Noah is incorruptible and good, a large
sweet soul.

Sir, I have tried to be!
But does the frog whose home was in a well
assail an ocean?
How does the summer gnat approach the ice?
The flood in which you throne us is to the
universe a puddle in a marsh.

Of all the myriad
creatures you have made, man is but one, the
merest tip of hair upon a stallion's rump.

Noah looks into space.
He sees the small as small
The great as great.
He sees, goes fearless at the sight.
I see the small as too little
the great as too much.
Does this diminish me?

He looks back to the past
grieves not over what is distant.

I mourn the wrack, the rock under the
blue sea, our old wound, the
dismantling storm and cannot
thank you.

Helpless with what I am
what can I do? This pitted flesh and
madness in my heart, rage at my fear
of you. Am I thus harmless?

Strangers in this ark, this one small 'Yes'
afloat on a vast 'No', your watery negative.

Noah stares impassive through the foam.
I trust in him although our woe, the
trap of my young body, cracked his trust
in me.

I bend but do not break under your
chilling stars.

Even the wolves, the tigers must be fed
in these deep-laden waters. Else we are
all drowned bones.

Intercede with him
for me, speechless and unspoken to, the
comic keeper of his house.

My sons are fraught with wives, have
waded into deep waters.

A full ship and homeward bound-Yes,
I'm just about to lance the horse's leg.

A large sweet soul and incorruptible
I said. Or have I seen the great as
too much yet again?

The speckled pigeon
and the tawny owl have drawn me to the edge.

The drowned folk call to me:

Deliver us from harm!

Deliver, sir, deliver them

and all of us...

GLOSSARY

bar mitzvah	Boy's confirmation service. On a suitable day after his thirteenth birthday, usually the Sabbath, a boy is called upon to stand before the congregation to recite blessings over the Torah (q.v.) and to read from it. The event can involve a year or more of preparatory lessons as everything is spoken in Hebrew. Following the bar mitzvah there is usually a large celebration for family and friends.
briss or brit mi'lah	Covenant of circumcision. At eight days of age if he is well enough, every Jewish boy is circumcised into the faith of Abraham. Men converting to Judaism must also undergo circumcision. The operation is performed by a mohel (q.v.) who is a man qualified both medically and religiously. A quorum of ten men (minyan) should be present at the ceremony, which is followed by a celebratory meal.
chaverim	Companions, colleagues.
chazan, chazzonas	The cantor or chazan leads the synagogue prayers by singing traditional Hebrew and other tunes in special musical arrangements, called chazzonas.
Chevra Kadisha	Jewish burial society.
chulent	Traditional Jewish recipe usually served at lunch on Sabbath as it is kept on a warmer for twenty-four hours. Also served on festive occasions. Meat, vegetables and hard beans are simmered with a dumpling browning on the top.
de alte	Literally, the old lady. In this text used for an old man.
gefilte fish	Traditional Jewish recipe served particularly on the Sabbath and festivals. Minced raw fish is mixed with eggs, onions, breadcrumbs, sugar and seasoning. It is rolled into balls and poached in a fish stock.
gelernte mensch	Cultured gentleman.
gelt	Money.
gutkas	Long underpants.
Hatikvah	National anthem of Israel.
Kaddish	Short prayer to be recited by a mourner at all daily communal prayers for eleven months after the death of a close relation and thereafter on the anniversary of the death (see yarzeit). It is recited as a dialogue with response from the quorum (minyan) necessary to be present for the recitation. The text of the Christian Lord's Prayer is very similar to the Kaddish which begins, 'Magnified and sanctified is his great name in the world which he has created...' and concludes, 'He who makes peace in his high places, may he make peace for us and for all Israel.'
kelah	Bride.

Kol Nidra/Nidre	The opening solemn prayer on the evening before the Day of Atonement (see Yom Kippur).
kosher	Ritually permitted foods.
Kriyat Shmah	Recitation of nightly prayer. Also recited at morning and evening services.
landsleite	People from the same country of origin.
Lubavitcher Rebbe	The leader of a sect of chassidic followers with a strong outreach movement.
mazaltov	Congratulations.
menorah	Multi-branched candle holder. A seven-branched menorah was used in the Temple in Jerusalem. An eight-branched menorah is lit in Jewish homes annually to commemorate the festival of Chanukah.
meshuggah	Crazy.
minyan/minyon	A quorum of ten men over bar mitzvah age which is necessary before Kaddish (q.v.) can be recited by a mourner. It is also necessary for other prayers when a minimum congregation is required.
misherberach	A blessing which can be given by a person called to the Torah (q.v.) in the presence of the congregation.
Mishna	The oldest collection of Jewish legislative writings. It was known orally for thousands of years until about the year 200 when it was written down by Rabbi Yehuda the Prince and his students.
Modeh Ani	Prayer on waking, taught to children from the earliest age.
mohel	A man ritually learned and qualified to perform circumcisions.
pishers	Slang word for youngsters.
Rashi	Rabbi Shlomo son of Isaac (RA-SH-I) (1040-1105). The greatest Jewish commentator of the Bible and other Jewish books.
Rosh Hashana	Jewish New Year, occurring about September.
Shabbes/Shabbat	Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.
shammes	The synagogue beadle.
shochet	A man qualified by many years of study and practice to become a ritual slaughterer of kosher animals.
shule/shool	Synagogue.
Simchat Torah	The day after the festival of Succot (q.v.). A joyful event when all the Sifrey Torahs (q.v.) are taken from their ark to be carried around the synagogue seven times, accompanied by singing and dancing.

Succah	A booth erected as a temporary gazebo as the household abode for the week of the Succot festival. Its special feature is its open roof decorated with palm leaves and tree branches.
Succot	The autumn harvest festival when a Succah is built. The synagogue builds a Succah which can be used by those who are unable to build their own.
tallis (sing.) tallesim (pl.)	A rectangular shawl of silk or wool worn by married men during prayer. On the four corners are specially knotted strings called tsitsit.
Talmud	An encyclopedic work containing the biblical studies, ancient traditions and legal decisions of colleges in Babylon and Palestine; final compilation in the 3rd and 6th centuries.
Torah	The five books of Moses. The Sefer Torah is the scroll containing the Torah written in Hebrew on parchment and used in synagogue services.
tsitsis	See tallis. From a very young age, religious boys wear a singlet-type of undergarment with a fringe or knotted string at each of the four corners.
yarzeit/ yahrzeit/ yorzeit	The anniversary date of the death of a near relation, when Kaddish (q.v.) must be recited in the presence of a quorum.
yichuss	Distinguished family connections.
Yid	A Jew.
yisha co'ach	Your strength should remain (lit.). Good upon you (colloq.). Said by the congregation to the rabbi after a good sermon; to the chazan after some fine chazonas (q.v.) and to a person reading from the Torah (q.v.) on behalf of the whole congregation.
Yok	Non-Jew.
Yom Kippur/Kipoor	Day of Atonement, the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar when Jews abstain from all food or drink for twenty-five hours and spend the time in prayer and repentance.