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This chapter discusses how, in the course of providing videotestimonies to the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre (JHMRC) in Melbourne, Australia, Jewish victims of Nazi persecution who subsequently migrated to Australia reflect on their lives, before, during and after the Holocaust. How in their videotestimonies do migrants’ memories of Nazi persecution intersect with their experiences of migration? While the effects of Nazi persecution are understandably the focus of these testimonies, survivors also describe their aspirations prior to their migration and settlement in Australia. What is evident in these accounts is a complex interplay between hope for the future and ongoing trauma – the language of the testimonies reveals an interaction between dreams and nightmares that has barely been discussed in the Australian literature and is just beginning to emerge in the American literature.

1 This is a substantially revised version of a paper presented at the Australian Historical Association 12th Biennial Conference, hosted by the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, 5-9 July 2004.
Videotestimonies selected for discussion are taken from the
JHMRC collection and it is important to note that we did not
conduct the interviews or design the interview protocols ourselves.
Instead we have based our observations on the material as it emer­
ges in the stories recounted in the videotestimonies and this means
that coverage of particular themes can be somewhat uneven. In
order to analyse the migration experiences of those suffering Nazi
persecution prior to the war and Jewish victims of subsequent per­
secution, a sample of videotestimonies from German and Austrian
refugees who were able to leave continental Europe prior to the
outbreak of war is compared with and contrasted to a sample of
interviews with Polish survivors who left Europe after the war.2
While the sample cannot be seen as representative of Jewish
migrants as a whole, efforts have been made to consider a broad
range of experiences in terms of journeys taken to Australia, the
process of settlement and of suffering under the Nazis. Beyond the
backgrounds of the respondents, the critical factor influencing the
choice of videotestimonies has been the at times astounding capacity
of respondents to encapsulate in vivid images their hopes and
terrors in the face of events they had never imagined would trans­
form their lives.

THE MIGRATION CONTEXT

Published work on the migration of Jewish refugees to Australia has
concentrated on Australian migration policy or on the extent to
which settlers adjusted to their new country. In terms of migration
policy, distinctions must be made between Australia’s response to
the refugee crisis in the late 1930s in the pre-second world war
period (which was triggered by Jews fleeing heightened persecution
in Germany and German-annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia),
Australian government responses to Jewish refugees seeking entry
during the war and Australian policy after the end of the war when
surviving Jews whose communities had been destroyed sought to
leave Europe. Researchers, with the notable exception of psychi­
atrists and geriatricians interested in the impact of trauma on the

2 Our thanks go to Dr Donna-Lee Frieze and Janette Sato, our research
assistants, for their help in selecting videos.
psychological and physical health of older migrants, have not examined in detail the ongoing effects of persecution on migration and settlement.

In the prewar period the international community responded to the refugee crisis by putting into place a limited series of measures to assist refugees. Despite its initial reluctance, the Australian government agreed in December 1938 to take 15,000 refugees (3,000 of whom were the so-called "non-Aryan" Christians) over the next three years. Historians disagree about whether or not Australia was motivated by generosity, the extent to which the government’s administration of the scheme was hampered by anti-Semitism, and whether prejudices within the leadership group in the Australian-Jewish community, which was responsible for recommending migrants to the government, affected who was selected. Regardless of these controversies, prior to the outbreak of war there was a significant intake of approximately 7,000 predominantly German and Austrian Jews who arrived in Australia from late 1938. These included small groups of unaccompanied Jewish children and adolescents. In addition, following the outbreak of war, further groups of Jewish refugees from Germany, designated as "enemy aliens," arrived from Britain in mid-1940 on the Dunera, from Singapore, and later from Palestine and Iran. Although Jews

3 Recently Charmaine Joffe, Henry Brodaty, Georgina Luscombe, and Frederick Ehrlich, "The Sydney Holocaust Study: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Other Psychosocial Morbidity in an Aged Community Sample," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 16, no. 1 (2003). This comprehensive study concludes that Holocaust survivors experience significantly greater physical and psychological distress than equivalent groups of refugees and migrants. The severity of symptoms is strongly correlated with the severity of Holocaust experience.


7 All were taken to remote camps in Hay, Loveday and Tatura. See Malcolm J. Turnbull, *Safe Haven: Records of the Jewish Experience in Australia*. National
arriving in this period were indisputably victims of Nazi persecution, their situation was in fact not the same as that of post-war arrivals – a distinction often ignored by the Australian literature in this area that tends to place all Jewish arrivals in the same category.

Historiographic debates concerning policy in the postwar period parallel those from the prewar period. Once again there is criticism of Australian government policy especially its administration by the Department of Immigration and National Service after the war. A humanitarian program designed to reunite Holocaust survivors with their families in Australia was initiated by Arthur Calwell in August 1945 and was then extended to Jews stranded in places such as Shanghai and Manila. This program met with significant community hostility and in 1947 resulted in the imposition of a quota such that Jews coming to Australia could comprise only 25 per cent of the passengers on any one ship and later also on planes. In 1948 the quota was raised to fifty per cent as long as the annual intake of Jewish refugees did not exceed 3,000. By 1947 Australia’s policy had


8 Calwell was responding to a request from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Turnbull, Safe Haven, 34.

9 Ibid. See also Peter Y. Medding, From Assimilation to Group Survival. A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community (Melbourne/ Canberra/Sydney: F.W. Cheshire, 1968), 153-7, Blakeney, Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 292, Suzanne D. Rutland, Edge of the

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shifted from one focused on a reluctant humanitarianism to one whose purpose was the recruitment of workers.  

Administered in cooperation with the International Refugee Organisation, the targets of this program were primarily young, non-Jewish displaced persons, who were often refugees from communism. Jewish Holocaust survivors continued to arrive in Australia, but were usually sponsored by the Jewish community; as before the war, the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) played a key role in processing applications and providing support. While the Australian government did not assist with the cost of passage, Jews were also not subject to two years of manual labour (which many were incapable of doing because of the ordeal they had suffered). Suzanne Rutland has documented various examples of what she regards as entrenched administrative anti-Semitism, although Bill Rubinstein responds by arguing that there is little

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Even before the war, there was a specific hierarchy in terms of nationality, age and occupation. Substantial landing money or guarantors were required for entry. National Archives of Australia, Alien Migration, CRS A981, item Migration 52. After the war, the needs of potential Jewish migrants were considered explicitly in the light of the needs of the Commonwealth. In both cases, pre- and postwar, Australia’s humanitarian response was contained within the framework of an existing overall national migration policy. See Medding, From Assimilation, 149-52. Paul Bartrop argues that Australia’s policy after 1938 actually reduced the annual intake of refugees, Paul R. Bartrop, “The Australian Government’s 'Liberalisation' of Refugee Policy In 1938: Fact or Myth?” Menorah 2, no. 1 (June 1988): 70.

Only 500 of the displaced persons who came to Australia under this program were Jews, Turnbull, Safe Haven, (quoting Rutland) 35. For an early account of the Displaced Persons Program, see Jean Martin, Refugee Settlers. A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965).

Turnbull, Safe Haven, 34.
evidence that such practices prevented would-be migrants from eventually reaching Australia. In any case, according to Rubinstein, the majority of potential migrants to Australia wanted to go to the United States or Israel. Indeed, he contends that after the establishment of Israel in 1948 the pro-Zionist leadership of the Australian Jewish community encouraged migration to Israel rather than to Australia.13

Many of the Jews who arrived from Europe in the postwar period had been directly exposed to Hitler’s attempt to systematically exterminate all Jews – a policy that only took its final shape from late 1941. Poland, with its prewar population of over three million Jews, was the epicentre of this policy. Not surprisingly, a significant proportion of Jews migrating to Australia after the war came from Poland. Their experiences of persecution were qualitatively different from those of German-Jewish refugees who had arrived in Australia in 1939/40 and had escaped from the Reich before the outbreak of war, although undeniably the earlier group of refugees recall horrific moments of persecution.

Of those scholars who have studied the history of the Australian-Jewish community after the second world war, few have considered how this distinction may have affected responses to migration to Australia. Their primary focus has been on the apparent success of both pre- and postwar migrants in contributing to Australian society and the impact of immigration on the structure of the Australian-Jewish community. In keeping with the values of Australian settlement policies until the 1970s, an older study by Ronald Taft examines levels of “assimilation” by Jewish immigrants with a focus on issues of communal identification. His primary analytic category is the background of first generation migrants, that is, whether they came from eastern or central Europe, however, no distinction is made between pre- and post-war Jewish migrants (or between “refugees” and “migrants”). Nor does the study indicate what, if

any, encounter the migrant had with the Holocaust. Taft’s approach exemplifies the lack of academic interest in the 1960s/early 1970s in what today is referred to as the Holocaust. 

Australian scholars are not alone in focusing on the “success” of Jewish migrants (although American scholars do distinguish between the situations of prewar refugees, predominantly from Germany and Austria, and postwar Jewish refugees, mainly survivors from eastern Europe). As in Australia, German and Austrian Jewish migration to the United States peaked in 1938-39 following Kristallnacht. Walter Laqueur makes the interesting observation that crucial factors contributing to the achievement of young male refugees from Germany and Austria were the opportunities to study afforded to them following service in the American armed forces. In the case of postwar Holocaust survivors, William Helmreich’s publications place considerable emphasis on “success.” He concludes that survivors were characterised by their capacity for hard work and their determination to put the past behind them and this was marked by the attainment of financial security, prosperity and integration into local Jewish community life. Although acknowledging that longer term effects of the Holocaust could include transference of anxiety to children and ongoing psychological problems, Helmreich argues that, nonetheless, given the level of trauma they experienced, survivors have coped remarkably well.

15 For example, Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).
17 Walter Laqueur, Generation Exodus. The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 145ff. Laqueur describes how German and Austrian Jewish refugees from Nazism settled in different areas from earlier Jewish immigrants to the United States from eastern Europe. For a sophisticated treatment of the longer term responses of the German-Jewish refugees to Britain see Marion Berghahn, Continental Britons. German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany (Oxford/Hamburg/New York: Berg, 1988).
A significant factor in this “success” story has been the network of support from the broader American Jewish community. In an important new study, Beth Cohen challenges a number of Helmreich’s conclusions. Drawing on a systematic analysis of new settlers’ case files and survivor interviews, she highlights how frequently pressure to ensure that immigrants found employment within a year of arrival meant that there was little sensitivity to or understanding of the extraordinary physical and psychological stress they continued to experience. She notes that agencies believed that once they found work and accommodation, refugees could put the past behind them and:

[T]his bespoke resilience: a will to live and begin again. What they did not see was how brightly these demographics mirrored what the immigrants had endured during the Holocaust and what they lived with after it. They show a rupture of Jewish life vast and deep: a plethora of thirty-year old widowers, couples joined together to replace murdered wives and children, youngsters never reaching adole-


scence, young adults facing life alone. They speak, if we listen closely, about families shattered rather than about those reconstituted, cautioning us to remember the black thread of the Holocaust that continued to weave its way through the immigrants’ lives even as they moved forward.20

Part of the “listening” process is to pay attention to the specificities of the Holocaust experience as it affected refugees. Cohen, unlike Helmreich who uses the umbrella term “camps” as shorthand for any Holocaust setting, pays careful attention to the particular circumstances of each “case” under discussion. Her approach enables the reader to gain insight into the relationship between individual trauma, whether experienced in labour camps, hiding, ghettos, etc, and postwar settlement, as well as the influence of factors such as religious identification (particularly for traditional Jews) and refugees’ prewar socio-economic background.

Both in Australia and the United States, the desire to celebrate the achievement in adversity of Jewish refugees persecuted by the Nazis is understandable. Nonetheless, this general approach leaves much unsaid. For example, our previous research, drawing on oral testimonies by German and Austrian Jews who escaped from Europe before the outbreak of war, indicates that, while their accounts dwelt on incidents of persecution at the hands of the Nazis, other sources of trauma were their sometimes perilous journeys to freedom and their sudden transplantation in Australia.21 Relief at leaving Germany or Austria was counterbalanced by nostalgia for the German or Austrian culture with which they identified.22 Whereas the majority of the first wave of Jewish refugees from Nazism were born in central Europe, most post-war survivors (especially those settling in Melbourne) came from the killing fields of eastern Europe. Did they experience migration and settlement differently

20 Cohen, Case Closed, 27.
22 For an excellent study that indicates that Jewish refugees to Australia who remained in Germany during the war were far less positive in their attitudes towards German culture than those who left prior to the war see Manfred Brusten, “Die ‘zweite Heimat’. Einstellungen von Opfern des Nazi-Terrors zum heutigen Australien,” in Australien auf dem Weg ins 21. Jahrhundert, ed. R. Bader (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 2000).
from those who had left Europe earlier and if so, how? How are their aspirations and disappointments revealed through their dreams and nightmares?

As indicated earlier, to address such questions we compare two sets of videotestimonies, which we have selected from the substantial videotestimony collection held in the JHMRC. In the first set, refugees from Germany describe their lives under the Nazi regime, their escape from Europe prior to or just after the outbreak of war, their voyages to safety and their responses to resettlement in Australia. The second set presents accounts by five postwar Polish-Jewish migrants to Australia who were to a greater or lesser extent directly exposed to a Nazi onslaught on Jewish existence that by 1941 threatened every Jew's survival. Whereas those who left Germany were fleeing to survive, the Polish Jews who emigrated from Europe were more often than not escaping from a cemetery.

**JEWISH REFUGEES FROM GERMANY WHO ESCAPED PRIOR TO THE OUTBREAK OF WAR**

In a case-by-case analysis, this section draws on six videotestimonies by Jewish refugees who experienced persecution in prewar Germany: Paula (whose parents were Polish but who was born in Germany), Harry, Hans, Marianne, Charlotte and Heinz. All came from middle-class backgrounds and identified Kristallnacht as a defining moment in their determination to leave Europe. All left Germany in 1939 but only Paula and Marianne arrived in Australia before the outbreak of war. Charlotte arrived in 1940 as an internee from Singapore, Heinz escaped to Shanghai and moved to Australia in 1947, and Hans and Harry both spent ten years in England before migrating to Australia in 1949.

Many of those who arrived in Australia in the immediate prewar period or early in the war emphasise in their testimonies their migration experiences, especially the problems encountered in escaping from Europe, and their journey to and settlement in Australia at a time of intense anti-German sentiment. After Kristallnacht, Jewish men were allowed out of concentration camps only if they agreed to emigrate. Obtaining the necessary visas, often left to female family members, was a major difficulty as many nations had
already closed their doors to refugees. Following the federal government's reimposition of the system of visas from 1 January 1939, as the months progressed, conditions for entry became increasingly difficult for Jews to meet.

Having obtained the necessary visas, refugees frequently had to cross several borders and many lived for a time in one or more countries before arriving in Australia. Paula was born near Hamburg but her parents were orthodox Jews from Poland. Some fifty years after the war ended, she still regarded the leaving of Germany in mid-1939 at the age of ten as one of the most distressing events of her life. She recalls the danger that constantly surrounded her as a child with no rights. She had to take care on the streets not to provoke anyone or draw attention to herself as a Jew. This sense of danger was constant but rarely vocalised. Her family knew very early that they had to leave Germany. They tried the United States but the quota for Poles was full. Her mother's first cousin lived in Melbourne and her husband, Samuel Wynn, a wine-maker, agreed to sponsor the family to Australia. Paula's greatest nightmare was her memory of the day in October 1938 when her father was taken away. Ironically, a telegram from Australia along with the visa arrived later the same day.

All the Polish citizens ... the Germans decided they wanted to get rid of them. So they rounded them up all over Germany. There were fifteen thousand of them and they dumped them on a border called Zbaszyn and they were not treated very

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24 Farm labourers, domestic servants, skilled tradesmen and those with capital and experience in developing industries not already in existence in Australia were favoured. As more and more applications were processed, greater emphasis was placed on the wealthy and highly skilled, which discriminated against the poor but appeased Australian public opinion. Department of the Interior, Correspondence File, Class 2 (Restricted Immigration), 1939-50, “Refugees - Jewish and Others. General Policy File, 1938-44,” National Archives of Australia, CRS A433, item 43/2/46.

25 See Palmer, Reluctant Refuge, 109, 70.
well at all ... wives, children, whole families. We were fortunate that we were not taken. An aunt who lived very close to us, my mother's sister, and their youngest son who was my age, they were taken and of course they never returned. I don’t know what happened to them. Then my father ... the authorities, because he had evaded the army after the first world war, put him in jail.26

He later escaped to Russia but while he was imprisoned, Paula, her mother and two sisters left for Australia via England in July 1939.

Everyone was leaving, as much as they could possibly get out. We were probably one of the lucky ones. First we went to England. That was quite traumatic because we went from Germany through Holland to catch the boat to England and at the border they would not let us go through because we did not have a permit to stay in England to catch the boat there and the Dutch police wanted to send my mother and the three of us back to Germany. And that was the first time in my life I think that I saw my mother completely break down and cry and become completely hysterical and say there's no way she would go back to Germany. In the end my oldest sister had to go to the nearest town and go to the consul there and get the permit. So I don't know what happened that we did not have that permit to start off with but that was something certainly that stayed with me all my life, that my mother feeling that this would have been death if we had gone back.

Having overcome this setback, they arrived in Australia on 31 August 1939, just four days before the outbreak of war. Paula and her younger sister Frances spent the next eight years in Larino Children's Home in the Melbourne suburb of Balwyn, run by the AJWS.27 Meanwhile, their mother worked as a housekeeper for their sponsor until her father joined them in 1947. These years of separation took their toll on the family. Paula's experience as a Jewish refugee child in Australia during the war was an alienating one, especially since the Larino children were discouraged from speaking German. The admonition from their rabbi to become "one hundred per cent Australian" caused additional anxiety in an already difficult

26 Paula, Interview (Michele Langfield, 2001).
27 After the war, Larino was called the Frances Barkman Home.
period for the family. Paula and her friends from Larino did not integrate at school – a normal state school – nor were they readily accepted into the Australian Jewish community: “We always kept to ourselves, well, Balwyn in those days, Jewish people just did not live there and we were the only Jewish girls at the school.”

Paula dreamt of becoming an actress after the war and achieved this through her involvement with the Yiddish theatre. Ultimately, she opened an art gallery and bookshop selling Holocaust literature. Being Jewish has been a crucial part of her identity. While Australia eventually became her home, during the war years she felt quite apart from the rest of the community.

None of us remember being invited out ... we certainly were not accepted into the ordinary Australian Jewish community. We were the refugee children ... we formed a small community for ourselves to start off with. They felt they did not really belong in Australia, at school or wherever they went. That feeling only changed for Paula many years later, when she married and began mixing with non-Jewish people.

Harry was born in 1928 in Upper Silesia, then part of Germany but now Poland. Like many German Jews, his father had an Iron Cross from the first world war, so he felt no harm would come to him. When the 1935 Nuremberg Laws began to take effect the family moved to Berlin where they would be less conspicuous. They had considered immigrating to Palestine and tried Kenya without success. Shanghai was a possibility but considered as a last resort. They finally decided upon Cuba and managed to obtain a visa. Then on Kristallnacht Harry’s father was arrested and he disappeared for five days during which time he was interviewed and harassed. While his Iron Cross did indeed save him on that occasion, he knew it was unlikely to happen again.

28 Paula and Frances attended Balwyn State School then East Camberwell Girls’ School which became Canterbury High School. The oldest sister stayed with their mother, attended school then started working. As well as the videotestimony see Palmer, Reluctant Refuge for a variety of other personal accounts, 108-09.

29 The group of children at Larino remained close and a fifty-year reunion was held in 1989 attended by nearly all.
The family left from Hamburg on their fateful journey to Cuba on the SS *St Louis* on Saturday 13 May 1939. Harry, aged eleven at the time, remembers his father throwing his Iron Cross overboard. Their major concerns on leaving were the economic conditions in Cuba – they accepted that they might have to learn new trades – but they dreamt of the freedom that awaited them. 30

On arrival in Havana ten days later, they were told: “Tomorrow you will get off the ship.” The delay was attributed to health checks and technical difficulties. Meanwhile the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint) tried unsuccessfully to get permits for them. As they were prohibited from landing, there was no choice but to return to Europe. While the *St Louis* incident made headlines around the world, Harry remembers that for his father, it constituted a period of intense despair. A few of the passengers attempted suicide. Cuba itself was regarded merely as a stop-off place before going to the United States, although the passengers understood that they might have to wait some time. They feared that on return to Germany they would be sent to concentration camps or deported, but had no knowledge of the policies of total annihilation to be implemented in 1941. 31


31 For the story of the *St Louis*, bearing over 900 mostly German-Jewish refugees, which was refused embarkation anywhere in South and North America, see Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1993), 56-60. “The line must be drawn somewhere,” declared a senior Canadian immigration official as the *St Louis* returned its human cargo to Europe, Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy since Confederation. Canada’s Ethnic Groups* (Ottawa: Canadian
Following disembarkation, Harry's family was fortunate to be able to take refuge in England where they lived for the next decade. Despite his relative poverty, he began to see himself as a "Pom" and had dreams of becoming a cabinetmaker. As the result of a family decision, however, he migrated to Australia under sufferance in 1949 at the age of twenty-one. His experience of leaving Europe on the St Louis comprises a considerable portion of his testimony. Not only does he relate these events in great detail chronologically in his life story, but he also returns to them towards the end to reflect upon their lingering impact on his later life.

In Australia in the 1950s, Harry felt like an outsider because of his German/English accent. Parts of his testimony reveal a degree of cynicism, even despair, and he appears insecure and pessimistic. He became an agnostic whose greatest hope was that there would be no Jews, Christians or Muslims in the future, but only humanitarians who would go their own way. He acknowledged, however, that this hope would never be realised.

**Hans,** another German-Jewish youth born in Upper Silesia, also left Germany in 1939 and spent ten years in England before reluctantly immigrating to Australia. Hans was born in 1921, so was older than Harry and the circumstances of his leaving Germany were quite different. Before 1933, Hans' father was a well-respected academic, prominent in both the university and school systems. He was a German nationalist but at the same time part of a cultured, flourishing Jewish community. After 1933, when the situation for Jews deteriorated, Hans' parents quarrelled about leaving, his father rationalising that only those who were politically active against the

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Historical Society, 1991), 13. This story was later documented in the book and film of the same name, Thomas and Witts, *Voyage.*

32The Joint negotiated with several countries to take the refugees. Great Britain took 228, the Netherlands 181, France 224, and Belgium 214. Refugees disembarked in Antwerp between 16 and 20 June 1939, just months before the outbreak of war. Harry's family was fortunate in being chosen for England – they had befriended a Pole on the ship and included him in their family group. England was the only country that would accept Poles, a factor which ultimately saved their lives. The remaining three-quarters of the passengers went to Europe, many of whom were later sent east to their deaths. Jewish Virtual Library, "The Tragedy of the SS St Louis."
Nazis were being interned. By 1936, however, his father was barred from teaching "Aryans." Seeking anonymity like Harry's family, they moved first to Breslau, then to Berlin in 1937. Hans' uncle had left for Shanghai, a cousin was already in Australia, and they themselves were on a waiting list for the United States. The problem was not so much getting out of Germany, but who would take them.33

Hans' sister, Marianne, one year his senior, records in detail the events of Kristallnacht which indirectly led to their father's death and precipitated their escape:

We were sent home from school at midday. My father, teacher of mathematics, physics and chemistry, was at school. My mother told us not to go out but to stay at home. There was rumour that a private action was to take place. Against my parents' wishes my brother and I went to our local synagogue where a jeering mob had assembled. Looking at the burning synagogue, our house of prayer, the mob swore and screamed and we made our way home. We saw in Berlin windows broken, Jewish men beaten, synagogues all over Berlin burnt, most Jewish men arrested, sent to concentration camps in Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

My father was warned by non-Jewish colleagues not to stay at home on that night, so my mother, father and brother went from one widowed aunt's place to the next as only houses where there was no husband were safe to stay. They walked all through the night, a bitter cold November night. Finally they stayed at an aunt's flat. She was a widow. I was left at our flat with our maid, a woman over forty-five. Every evening at eleven, every morning at six, two huge Gestapo men came, searched our flat and asked for my father. They questioned me and when I told them "I don't know where my parents are," they said "You cheeky brat, you tell your father to stay home or we take you."

After they left, I became very frightened. The next day they arrived again, this time in the afternoon. They made me phone my relatives to find out if my parents were there. My

33 Hans, Videotestimony, No. 836 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1996). All subsequent references to Hans come from this videotestimony.
aunt answered the phone. When I asked auntie “I’m so worried, don’t you know where my parents are?” she said, “They’re here, they have coffee” but as I was watched I answered, “Auntie, don’t you really know where they are?” I had to play act as the Gestapo was four feet away from me. After that they left the flat. I could not stand it any longer. I left the flat and joined my parents.34

After a week, their father could no longer cope and gave himself up to the Charlottenburg police who interrogated him then allowed him to return home. Already suffering from a recurring stomach ulcer, he caught pneumonia from which he died a month later. This episode left both Hans and Marianne traumatised. Owing to their reduced economic circumstances, they were forced to sell their possessions including Hans’ bicycle, for little return, and move into two small rooms. Marianne comments: “The Polish Jews never thought the German Jews suffered. I saw it with my own eyes.”

Their mother did everything she could to save them, arranging for Hans to go to England on one of the Kindertransporte on 3 May 1939, organised by the Orthodox Jewish Committee in London. Juveniles up to the age of seventeen were selected if they were orphans or half orphans. In his testimony Hans describes the journey by train to Holland and by ship to London, the distress he felt on leaving his mother and his loneliness on arrival. Marianne left for Melbourne later the same month:

I was very fortunate. I have a second cousin who visited my parents in Berlin … and they stayed with us for a couple of days and I gave this lady my photograph … and I said if you can get me a permit, I don’t care how hard I work I will come to Australia. I don’t mind if I’m helping in a household or being a nanny … but I want to get out of Germany. And she found somebody to guarantee for me and find me a job … and I got my permit and that’s how I got out of Berlin.

Hans was desperately unhappy in England during the war when his concern for his mother’s safety was uppermost. However, because he wanted to stay with his girlfriend from the transport, he twice

34 Marianne, Videotestimony, No. 791 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1996). All subsequent references to Marianne come from this videotestimony.
managed to avoid being shipped elsewhere by asking friends to tell the police he was not in when they came for him.\textsuperscript{35}

Hans remained over a year in a refugee hostel, was interned on the Isle of Man as a "friendly enemy alien," and in 1941 was released on war work, grinding lenses in an optical factory in London and studying optometry at night. Later, he became a volunteer fire fighter and British citizen, grateful to the British for saving his life. He expected to return to Germany after the war but, being the only one of the family to survive in Europe, was persuaded by Marianne in 1949 to join her in Australia. Once there, however, he felt lonely and vulnerable, wracked by guilt, believing that his mother had died horribly in the Warsaw ghetto after twice attempting suicide in Berlin. Initially, he hated Melbourne, finding it too provincial after London. Despite having left Europe before Jews were systematically murdered, it took him years to adjust to the Holocaust's adverse effects on his life.

When Marianne arrived in Australia in 1939, she first worked in a market stall in Camberwell for the lady who signed her permit, then as a nanny and cook. She resented the fact that at the same time her non-Jewish friends in Germany were at university. As she left Berlin before completing her matriculation, tertiary education was temporarily denied her. In her testimony, she confides:

I was a very sad little refugee girl. The Australian Jewish people had no understanding of any kind towards us. We were there to take their jobs away. We were regarded with such antagonism. All Rabbi [...] could do for us was inviting us for a cup of tea that was carefully balanced on one's hand or knee and no hope of any social gathering or introduction or even helping us. Don't forget the Jewish Welfare Society was

\textsuperscript{35}In hindsight, he was lucky to miss two ships. The first was the \textit{Arandora Star}, bound for Canada with approximately 1,200 internees, 86 Prisoners of War and 200 troops on board, of whom 805 lost their lives when the ship was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine on 2 July 1940. See http://blog.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/MaritimeTalesTragedyOfTheArandoraStar.aspx; http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=SS_Arandora_Star, The second was the \textit{Dunera}, which would have led to his internship in New South Wales for the duration of the war.
really in its infancy in those days and it was very hard ... They were very frightened, very antagonistic towards all foreigners and refugees. Jobs were not many. Only the worst jobs possible were available and they were cautious and worried, the average Australians, and not very helpful and neither were the Jewish people that were living in Australia for centuries ... [They] felt more English than the English and had no sympathy for what the refugees’ needs were and how frustrated and how unhappy we were. But gradually that improved and I think we found solace amongst our own refugees. There were little gatherings I recall, there was occasionally something socially on at the Kadimah in Carlton but it was too far for me to go because I was working in East St Kilda and the moment the war broke out ... we had to have a police permit to go from one suburb to the next. I was fingerprinted!

The only sympathy I think we did get occasionally was from Polish Jews, yes, because they knew what it's like to be a refugee, and the Russian Jews too ... They were some of the intelligentsia from Russia ... who lifted the music scene here tremendously.

Sometime after the war, Marianne finally managed to fulfil the dream of her youth to resume her studies, complete her qualifications, and teach art in Australia.

Charlotte had a similar background to those described above but her journey to Australia took a rather different course. She was born in Breslau in 1917 into a German middle-class family, Jewish but well integrated.36 Her father, a wealthy grain merchant, was flung into turmoil in the mid-1930s when he was no longer able to work at the grain store or employ “Aryan” staff. He moved to Vienna where he could establish an office without having to learn another language. Charlotte, aged nineteen, her mother and younger sister Stephanie later joined him there where Charlotte learnt millinery

36 Charlotte, Videotestimony, No. 1060 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 2000). All subsequent references to Charlotte come from this videotestimony.
and went to trade school. Soon afterwards they witnessed the *Anschluss*:37

I can still hear the planes coming when the Germans came to Vienna ... I still dream about it ... I saw people in the street with their bare hands [Jews] washing the pavements and Nazis standing there mocking them. That was a terrible sight. And then the planes came, and waves of planes came in. I can still hear this.

Charlotte wanted to go to England and obtained a visa as a servant. Returning to Breslau to say goodbye to friends, she met her future husband, Gunther, who with his two brothers had applied to go to Australia. At the time, only one application was approved. On *Kristallnacht* Gunther was arrested and sent to Buchenwald. “Everybody in Germany had someone who was taken on 9 November ... It was a very eerie, uncomfortable feeling.” Like other Jewish men in his situation, in order to be released, Gunther needed a visa and boat tickets to a foreign country.

My uncle who lived in Berlin was a company director and had dealings with the Minister for Supplies in Thailand, Siam,38 and he wired him that he should send us a permit ... When I had the permit I went to Berlin and got tickets from the shipping company and with all these papers I went to the Gestapo. That I dream about still. I can still see that staircase in the Gestapo. It must have made an enormous impression on me.

Gunther was released on condition that he left within six weeks. They married in Breslau and, with his extended family, left on a ship carrying (among others) fifty-nine refugees to Malaya, then a British Protectorate. While in Penang overnight, they went ashore and decided to stay. They were allowed to remain for a month to look for jobs until the next ship arrived and with the help of the Jewish community found a hotel to lease. While they felt nostalgia for Germany and missed the cultural life they had left behind, they did well until war broke out. “Then all of a sudden we were Germans

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37 German troops crossed the Austrian border on 12 March 1938 and the *Anschluss* was enacted on 13 March.
38 Siam became Thailand on 11 May 1949.
and nobody would enter our hotel anymore. The English couldn’t tell the difference.” Business only improved when the British Navy stationed officers in their hotel.

Soon afterwards, however, they were classified as enemy aliens and informed that all refugees in Malaya would be interned in Australia. At the time Australia would not take migrants but as part of the British Empire, was obliged to take internees. Charlotte, Gunther and their four-month old son travelled from Penang to Singapore by train, with only what they could carry. They were interned for twenty-four hours on St. John’s Island in Singapore harbour with 200 others including their extended family who had spent the last year in Singapore. From there they were taken by barge to the Queen Mary “which appeared out of the fog,” and zigzagged to Australia in September 1940. After a dream trip “in the lap of luxury,” they were met in Sydney by policemen with guns, put into trains with locked doors and taken to Tatura, an internment camp near Shepparton, Victoria.

After their release two years later, Charlotte and her family settled in Melbourne. Her husband joined the army and later ran a number of businesses, including a bakery and women’s clothing shops. When asked if she felt part of the Australian community, Charlotte declared:

Completely. I worked in the tuck shop. You know I think if you’ve got children here ... and you mustn’t forget I’ve never had dreadful experiences. I knew I didn’t want to live in Germany ... But here I had children growing up. They felt very Australian. I felt Australian. But I think one thing that Hitler has robbed me of, I will never, ever say I’m German, I’m Austrian, or I’m Australian. I am Australian today. But you know, I’m nothing ... I do want [my family] to remember where they came from. We were German, we are now Australian. We live in Australia. We are Jews ... I wouldn’t have dreamt of going anywhere but staying in Breslau and being happily married and living a normal life. But, if I had to go anywhere else, Australia is wonderful. It gives everybody a chance. We came here with absolutely nothing but we had two children, we had parents who had nothing and it gives you a chance to establish yourself, to make something of you,
to get back to a normal life, at least where you were if not better. Australia gives you a chance to do this ... I was one of the lucky ones. I had my immediate family. They were all saved.

When Charlotte acquired the necessary visas and tickets to initiate the escape of her fiancé Gunther, she also did the same for his two brothers and second cousin, Heinz. Unlike the rest of the party, Heinz did not stay in Malaya or Singapore but became one of 18,000 German-Jewish refugees who went to Shanghai before the outbreak of war. According to Heinz, immigrants had arrived there in trickles since 1934 and were doing well; it was the only port in the world where one could land without a visa. The mass immigration of Jews began with Austrians in 1938 and by the time Heinz arrived was considerable. Born in Breslau in 1912 into a comfortable middle-class Jewish family, Heinz too had been picked up on Kristallnacht, taken to Buchenwald on the same transport as Gunther and badly treated. On his arrival in Singapore, a local committee boarded the ship arguing that it was impossible to go to Bangkok because they would simply perish there. As a bachelor, Heinz was advised to go to Shanghai, while his two married cousins were told to remain in Singapore.

I was all of a sudden alone. That was very demoralising for me. A close group that had grown up together and all of a sudden I was all by myself and of course I couldn’t persuade them to use this marvellous opportunity.

As explained, once war broke out, his cousins were interned as German nationals and deported to Australia as prisoners of war. Heinz subsequently learnt that his parents and younger sister, a diabetic from childhood, had died on a transport to Auschwitz.

More than half of Heinz’s three and a half hour testimony consists of a detailed and intriguing account of his eight years in a refugee camp and “ghetto” in Shanghai, including his work as administrator for the Joint. These years encompassed several political changes in a city of great diversity, even within the Jewish population. His migration to Australia (after first choosing the

39 Heinz, Videotestimony, No. 483 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1993). All references to Heinz are sourced from this videotestimony.
United States) and later life occupy barely ten minutes. He did remark upon the anti-Jewish, anti-foreign propaganda on his arrival in Sydney on Australia Day 1947.

To recapitulate, the key distinction in this chapter is between the migration experiences of Jews from Germany who fled from Nazi-controlled areas prior to the outbreak of war and Polish Jews who left Europe after the war, having directly witnessed the mass murder of Jews. For the refugees in this first group, their nightmares arose principally from the horrors of Kristallnacht, the difficulties of obtaining the means to escape and their experiences of internment and anti-Semitism during the war, whether in Australia or Britain. Their prewar persecution and sometimes tortuous journeys to freedom occupy much of their testimonies.

None found the early resettlement process easy. Australia was not their first choice and like many who came before or during the war they resented Australians for their treatment on arrival, particularly their attitudes to foreigners. With the exception of Charlotte, these refugees experienced problems of integration and many continue to feel immense guilt for having escaped without being able to rescue their loved ones. Nonetheless, while acknowledging Marianne's earlier point that German Jews did suffer dreadfully, Jews who were trapped in Europe during the war were subjected to an escalating process of murderous persecution whose effects far exceeded those of Kristallnacht in scale and intensity. As will be seen, these horrors formed the stuff of nightmares that tended to overwhelm memories of resettlement in Australia.

JEWISH REFUGEES FROM POLAND WHO REMAINED IN EUROPE DURING THE WAR

This section focuses on five videotestimonies recounting the experiences of respondents from four major Polish cities. Germany occupied Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow following the invasion of

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western Poland in September 1939, and Lemberg (which had been under Soviet rule after the 1939 partition of Poland) in the wake of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Four of the interviewees are women, with one man who came from Lodz. The period of their arrival in Australia extended over eight years from 1947-55. The decision to leave was motivated by the realisation that it was unrealistic to try to reconstruct lives in Poland and difficulties settling in other parts of Europe and Israel after the war. Sudden flight from an immediate threat was not the motivating factor to emigrate. At war’s end several returned to their family homes from hiding or from Nazi imprisonment to find that not only had none of their family survived, but all remnants of what had been a thriving Jewish community were destroyed. As Pinek said on his return to Lodz, “I didn’t want to stay in Poland. No Jewish life.”

Polish Jews also had to contend with continuing anti-Semitism in Poland, not to mention the emergence of a restrictive communist regime. Even so, apart from Maria (from Warsaw) whose sister had managed to reach Australia with her husband in 1941, as for the German refugees, Australia was a destination of last resort and not necessarily the first stopping-off place. This may account for a sometimes ambivalent attitude of some respondents to Australia.

For instance Cesia (from Krakow) and Doris (from Lemberg) identify strongly with Israel. Indeed Doris lived for nine years in Israel but was forced to emigrate to Melbourne, Australia, where her husband’s in-laws lived because the climate did not suit him. Cesia, who during the Holocaust had suffered extreme physical deprivations while in hiding in the Slovakian forests, felt she was too ill to cope with the demands of Israel in its early years. In any case, in the wake of a resurgence of communist-inspired anti-Semitism, she and her husband escaped from Czechoslovakia, abandoning the successful business they had established immediately after the war. The couple fled from their Slovakian town to Prague, and then to an Italian Displaced Persons camp with the help of

41 Pinek, Videotestimony, No. 1099 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 2002). This videotestimony is the source of all subsequent information on Pinek.
42 Maria, Videotestimony, No. 277 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1993). This videotestimony is the source of all subsequent information on Maria.
43 Doris, Videotestimony, No. 671 (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1996). This videotestimony is the source of all subsequent information on Doris.
a forged Roumanian passport. Intriguingly, Cesia remembers that
Australia was one of the few countries (including Israel) that was
prepared to admit "Roumanians" without closely examining their
passports.\textsuperscript{44}

Both Doris and Cesia retain their links to Israel through their
involvement in The Women’s International Zionist Organization
(WIZO). After the war Pinek found himself in Paris with his
surviving extended family. In prewar Lodz Pinek was immersed in
Yiddishist youth organisations and in postwar Paris continued this
interest by publishing a Yiddish-French newspaper. He reluctantly
agreed to leave Europe because his new wife was pregnant and she
and her family had tickets for Australia. Once in Australia Pinek
became a central figure in the Melbourne-Yiddish cultural insti-
tution, the Kadimah, which was closely linked with the Jewish left-
wing organisation, the Bund. Pinek observes that in Australia the
Bund’s primary function was to counter assimilation (unlike in
prewar Poland where its main objective was to promote democracy).
Pinek retained his primary identification with the ideals of Jewish
cultural nationalism. Australian cultural values did not seem to
impinge on his consciousness.

Neither Maria nor Saba\textsuperscript{45} (who like Pinek originally lived in
Lodz) indicate attachment to any place in particular, although both
seemed reasonably happy at the time of their departure with
Australia as a destination. Unusually, Maria’s sister, who having
married into a wealthy family was able to escape from Poland in the
wake of the Nazi invasion, arrived in Sydney in 1941 via the Soviet
Union and Japan. She went to great lengths to support Maria’s
migration application and her actions constituted the single example
among this group of interviewees of an immediate relative spon-
soring the informant’s journey. Unfortunately, the reunion proved
disappointing because of her sister’s failing marriage and Maria
soon found a husband in order (it seems) to gain her independence.

\textsuperscript{44} Cesia, \textit{Videotestimony, No. 703} (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1995). This video-
testimony is the source of all subsequent information on Cesia. While all
the earlier German respondents expressed their support for Israel, they do
not seem to have contemplated emigrating there.

\textsuperscript{45} Saba, \textit{Videotestimony, No. 261} (Melbourne: JHMRC, 1993). This video-
testimony is the source of all subsequent information on Saba.
quickly moving to Melbourne where he lived. Like Cesia, Saba came to Australia via an Italian Displaced Persons camp. Although she located relatives in the United States, they were not prepared to sponsor her migration so, with the assistance of the AJWS, she came to Australia. Saba comments that she was young and strong and fitted well into Australia’s immigration program (which seems strange because she originally went to Italy to recover in a sanatorium from tuberculosis). Both Saba and Cesia refer to themselves as “migrants” not “refugees.”

Unlike some of the German-Jewish refugees discussed earlier, none of the Polish-Jewish postwar migrants reflect nostalgically about the Polish secular culture they left behind, nor do they dwell on the details of their voyage to Australia. The most notable travel incident mentioned was the midnight flight from Adelaide to Sydney that Maria’s sister organised when Maria missed her original connection. Instead, (apart from the anti-Semitic attacks on Cesia in Slovakia and Maria’s postwar encounter with anti-Semitism in Warsaw), the worst traumas affecting these postwar refugees were, understandably, a consequence of Nazi genocidal policies.

One did not have to be in a ghetto or camp to experience trauma. Simply observing the torment of others while in hiding, induced nightmares, whether for Maria watching the Warsaw ghetto go up in flames during the 1943 uprising from the relative safety of a clandestine existence on the “Aryan” side, or Saba suffering the consequences of her decision to persuade her two aunts to give up their hiding places in the last days of the Lodz ghetto in 1944, rather than waiting for Russian liberation. One aunt was sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz and the other succumbed to hunger and disease in the Stutthof camp. Hiding afforded protection from the Nazis, but not hunger. Cesia is overpowered by memories of hunger experienced during her period in hiding in the Slovakian forest, as is Pínek who recalls his privations in the Soviet Union in the initial period of Soviet entry into the war.

Of course, the worst nightmares are associated with the direct experience of the Nazi Holocaust. Saba was subjected to dehumanisation in Auschwitz, debilitating illness in Stutthof and the final horror of being dragged offshore in a barge with other camp prisoners and POWs on the last day of the war. With the allies just
hours away, the Nazis continued to shoot at the prisoners swimming to shore, and Saba describes how the sea turned red from the blood of those who failed to escape.

Doris recalls the horror of jumping out of the window of a cattle car taking her and her sister to Belzec extermination camp. This is Doris’ second escape from a cattle car, hence her reference to her previous “experience”:

Doris: Next to me was sitting a mother with a baby and I think she killed the baby. She (she) choked her. So my sister noticed this. She asked, “Will you do the same to me?” So I said, “No, I will do everything I can to be alive together. I will throw you through the window and I will jump after you and we will be alive.”

And that’s happened. We’re going with the train moves (starts to move) a bit longer than before. And (we) I threw her.

Interviewer: And could you reach the window?

Doris: Yes. They open – I told people what to do – I was experienced.

Interviewer: It wasn’t high, the window?

Doris: You know when you go into a “cattle” you can see and if not someone can reach. I pushed her and she was flying and I looked and I thought that the train cut her feet and I lost my interest to jump and I talked to myself. What to do? What to do? She needs me. Yes I jumped and I went to jump only very far. I jumped, somebody pushed me.

Interviewer: Again with the legs first?

Doris: Yeah, I don’t remember. I jumped. I flying and I jumped. And I couldn’t walk because my knee got hurt ...

The Germans was shooting. A lot of noises.

Once the train had continued on Doris was rescued by Jewish police who returned her to a Jewish family in the ghetto. Sadly, her injured sister was shot dead by the Nazi guards. The Chagall-like image of flying Jews reinforces the nightmarish quality of Doris’ story and the medium of the video reveals the pain in her eyes in a way not possible in writing.
The dreams of German-Jewish refugees often seemed to revolve around return to the secure world of lost middle-class childhoods embedded within German culture. By contrast the five Polish Jews discussed here were fully aware of their Jewish identity, even Maria who comments that her father felt so Polish that he did not try to escape when the Nazis invaded. Their childhoods in Poland were lived in the shadow of anti-Semitism, which was, in fact, far more explicit in Poland during the interwar period, than it was in Germany until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. For all but Saba, whose camp experiences left her seemingly impervious to dreams, the immediate postwar period in Europe or Israel offered some glimmers of hope. As mentioned earlier, Cesia’s husband’s business acumen enabled her to live in a luxurious villa in Czechoslovakia, complete with piano. Doris thrived in the atmosphere of communal sharing evident in the communist “pioneer” youth movements established under Soviet rule, and found life in the early Israeli Kibbutzim exhilarating. Pinek looks back fondly on his postwar involvement in French Yiddishist youth movements. Maria thought she had realised her dream when, after the war, she and her non-Jewish friend opened a childcare centre in a town on the outskirts of Poland:

Maria: I felt anti-Semitism after the war.
Interviewer: What happened?
Maria: It was the worst. My girlfriend and I being childcare workers decided to open a kindergarten and that was a wealthy resort. People still had money, the people that lived there lived in big houses still, however they survived. And we got a permission, I got a permission from a county office to open that kindergarten and we had lots and lots of children. And we had lots and lots of children and we started earning money and working from day to night, scrubbing, doing cooking for these children, looking after them and being paid for it. And, aah, slowly, the children started to fall off and they said, “she is Jewish,” meaning me. My girlfriend wasn’t Jewish. And they found out I was Jewish because in that part of, aah, Warsaw (or Polish resort like Frankston) they knew me. We used to have a house there and somebody recognised me. “Oh, this is Miss S. [initial of maiden name].” So from
mouth to mouth it became known that I've come back. Some people signed for me when I changed my identity but some apparently objected to me coming back and we had to wind up the kindergarten because nobody came.

Once she was recognised as a Jew, however, the recurring nightmare of anti-Semitism surfaced. To resume life in Poland, despite the defeat of Nazism, was highly problematic. For Saba, who is only now beginning to come to explore her trauma through creative writing, it was life in Australia that after decades afforded her the opportunity to start healing her pain.

These Holocaust survivors may have attained financial security and have been actively involved in the community, however, such conventional markers of "success" do not signify the realisation of dreams or the suppression of nightmares.

CONCLUSION

What emerges from this comparison between the two sets of video-testimonies is the different emphases placed by respondents on various aspects of their lives and the balance of description in their accounts. For the pre-war refugees the terror of Kristallnacht was extreme and the trauma of organising their departure under pressure was much more of an issue than for the post-war Polish migrants. The actual journey to Australia and the transplantation from an intermediary migration destination is in most cases vividly described. For others, their alienation in Australia during the war (an interesting contrast to post-war Poles who seem less worried by prejudicial attitudes in Australia) is highlighted. This differs from what happened in the United States where there seemed to be much more pressure on post-war Holocaust survivors to find work. For the post-war migrants, who had witnessed the Holocaust firsthand, leaving their homelands was not as distressing, although giving up re-established lives in post-war Europe or Israel could be difficult. For many, there was no reason to stay, no homes, no families; the aim was to get as far away from Europe as possible and start a new life. This relocation, together with the actual journey, is often glossed over in their testimonies. It was shorter by plane and less dangerous after the war. For both groups, where violence was witnessed or
experienced either before, during or after the war, this is usually remembered and recorded in great detail.

Videotestimonies give an insight into dreams and nightmares that have previously lain dormant. As Penny Summerfield has noted, we all draw upon generalised and public understandings of past events in order to explain our own place in them. We engage in continual reconstruction and reflexivity in relation to our personal lives in the light of knowledge acquired in later years.46 However, as Roberta Culbertson observes, for those who have encountered violence and trauma, there is often no wish to recall and listeners would often rather not hear or believe. “If you were not there, it is difficult to describe or say how it was ... I don’t know if there is a word to describe the nightmare one goes through ... It is the paradox of a known and felt truth that unfortunately obeys the logic of dreams.”47