

Classic Poetry Series

Lily Brett
- poems -

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Lily Brett(5 September 1946 -)

Lily Brett is an award-winning Australian novelist, essayist and poet who now lives in New York City. Much of her writing deals with her Jewish family semi-biographically and with her feelings about the Holocaust.

Biography

During World War II Brett's parents Max and Rose survived six years in the Łódź ghettos in Poland, before being taken to Auschwitz concentration camp where they were eventually separated. It took them six months to find each other again after the war ended in 1945. Brett was born in a displaced persons' camp in Germany in 1946. She was aged two (1948) before her parents were able to leave Germany and emigrate to Melbourne, Australia.

By the mid-1960s, Brett was a young journalist working with Molly Meldrum at Go-Set, Australia's most renowned music magazine of the time, and on Uptight one of the first weekly TV shows devoted to pop music. In the summer of 1967 she traveled to America to cover the Monterey International Pop Festival, then onto the U.K., before returning to Australia.

In 1989 Brett moved to New York City with her second husband, painter David Rankin, and her three children.

In 2006, Lily Brett appeared on ABC's Foreign Correspondent program.

Writing

Her first book, *The Auschwitz Poems*, won the Victorian Premier's Award for poetry in 1987. She has gone on to win several major prizes for her fiction and poetry. Her previous novel, *Too Many Men*, was an international bestseller. Lily Brett is the author of four novels, three books of essays and six volumes of poetry.

Lily Brett has always been struck by the differences between men and women, and the effects of these differences are consistent themes in her books. In *You Gotta Have Balls*, Ruth Rothwax says, "Men are so smart. The average severely depressed, semi-witted, half-lobotomized man is so much smarter than most women." Ruth doesn't hold back on the subject. Men are clear-headed she says. Men know that's it's in their own interests to support each other even though they may hate the other man's guts. Men don't scratch and bitch and claw each

other.

Ruth is dismayed about how aggressive and competitive women are with each other. Men have more straightforward relationships, she says. They don't hang up phones in a huff with each other. They don't feud and not speak for months over insignificant issues. Men don't weep at something another man says. Or hate them for years because of it.

The Sonderkommando

The Sonderkommando
those prisoners
known as
the Death Squad

merely
shuffled
death around

re-arranging
and
re-packaging
the components

they
herded
crowds
into the showers

pulled
them
out
gassed

hosed
them
to get rid of
the crap

hooked
the slippery bodies
with
thongs around the wrists

and
piled
them

into

the
elevators

for
the
ovens.

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