

Reclaim the Name

David Bleiman

Five perfect smoke rings scudding out the door,
granny is coughing and shouts to the wall:
"Adolf, I vont a glass of vater!"
"Gretl, I'm coming" sounds soft down the hall.
I was five years old. What's in a name?

Franz and Joseph topped the list of names
for boys where grandfather was born.
In that empire of the nationalities,
he learned to master many tongues:
German at high school in Lemberg,
Hebrew in his grandpa's shul in the shtetl,
Yiddish with the girls in momme's kitchen,
Polish bringing in the harvest on father's farm
and facing pistols in the pogrom's spoil,
Russian as the land changed hands,
English for banking and exile in Cape Town,
patrolling on Boyes Drive above the cliffs,
scanning the ocean for U-boats.

No grandson now can bear your name of shame
but here you are in uniform, stooped and proud:
the only Jewish Adolf
in the Muizenberg Home Guard.

First published in This Kilt of Many Colours, Dempsey & Windle, 2021.

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#### A Word about me:

David Bleiman, lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, started writing poetry in his sixties and is now widely published. Sample poems and a biography can be found in the Scottish Poetry online guide to poets in Scotland at <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poet/david-bleiman/> and David's pamphlets are available direct for international purchase from <https://poetrykilt.bigcartel.com/>

**Posted on the CHOL "Share Your Story" Website in April, 2024**