

Off Haverstock Hill

Short, plump, elderly

German Jewish woman

Wandering into the shared kitchen,

Sniffing at my cooking

Saying “how can you eat such food Herr Schaufeld?

Come, have some of my good chicken.”

Mrs Brietman, marching into our small rented room

Changing the light bulb to a lower wattage

Turning off the electric fire

Shouting “I can’t afford this waste,”

Leaving me chilled

Marking exercise books in the semi darkness.

Taking a long holiday

trusting us to manage her flat

returning, only to mutter accusingly

“What have you done with my dressing gown, Herr Schaufeld?”

Before seeing it through bleary eyes

Hanging on its accustomed hook.

Playing bridge half the night

Sustained by endless cups of strong black coffee

One cigarette lit from another

A lone survivor planted in England’s Lane.