

Semel, Nava. *And The Rat Laughed*. Translated from the Hebrew by Miriam Shelsinger. Melbourne, Australia: Hybrid Publishers, 2008. 232 p. \$25.00 (ISBN 978-1-87646-265-9).

Nava Semel is a prolific writer of prose, poetry, and fantasy. *And the Rat Laughed*, published in Israel in 2001, followed *Flying Jews*, a fantastic story of a child that attempts to fly as a way to control remembering, and the ways in which Israeli identity is shaped in the shadow of the Shoah. *And The Rat Laughed* adds a penetrating treatment of remembering, documenting, and the impossibility of forgetting, through a meta-narrative of a child's school assignment to interview a survivor—her grandmother. The telling, initiated by the child, forces the grandmother to remember her reality and the unthinkable horrors she endured as a child, compelled to hide in a farm during the Holocaust. The account is presented through multiple genres: story, legend, poems, dream, and diary viewed/read in a 2099 post-ecological-disaster society. The varied genres and time periods reveal powerful and disturbing images that guide the reader toward the meaning of a rat that sought laughter. Recommended for all libraries collecting Holocaust literature, with a cautionary note to school librarians that although it is a child survivor's story, the book itself is not for children.

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