

## Arnold Zable

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Arnold Zable (<http://www.arnoldzable.com.au>) is an award winning Australian writer, novelist, and human rights advocate. His memoir *Jewels and Ashes*, an account of his travels to the Poland of his parents, was published in 1991, and was recently reissued in a Special 25th anniversary edition. The diasporic imagination fuelled by his Jewish roots has instilled in him a deep understanding of the condition of travellers, migrants and refugees, as evidenced in his novels *Café Scheherazade* (2001), *Scraps of Heaven* (2004), *Sea of Many Returns* (2008) and the recent *The Fighter* (2016). His short story collections are *Wanderers and Dreamers* (1998), *The Fig Tree* (2002) and *Violin Lessons* (2011). He is the author of numerous essays, columns, feature articles, essays, and co-author of *Kan Yama Kan*, a play in which asylum seekers share their stories. He has lectured extensively on creative writing, storytelling (“the art of the specific”, as he calls it), human rights issues, and immigrant and refugee policy. He has conducted workshops for groups including asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, the homeless, the deaf, problem gamblers and the aged. Zable is a former president of PEN International Melbourne, and he is the recipient of many awards, including the 2013 Voltaire prize for human rights advocacy and the advancement of freedom of expression.

In 2014, Zable spent four weeks in Venice as writer in residence at Ca' Foscari University's International College, where he worked with students across disciplines on life writing. He was also invited by Beit Venezia-The Home for Jewish Culture to participate in the project 'Reimagining the Ghetto of Venice for the 21st Century', aimed at celebrating the literary legacy of the Jewish quarter that has given the world the term and concept of 'Ghetto' in the year of its quincentennial (1516-2016). Having already set a short story from *Violin Lessons* in the Ghetto of Venice, Zable (along with other writers including Amitav Ghosh, Rita Dove, Daniel Mendelsohn, Meena Alexander, Nicole Krauss, Doron Rabinovici and others) was asked to reflect on the topicality of ghettos today starting from the eponymous site. The ensuing text, part of which was read at a special session of Venice international literary festival *Incroci di civiltà* in 2015, is published here for the first time.

