Ten Dollars in My Pocket: The American Education of a Holocaust Survivor. A Memoir in Documents by Elizabeth Welt Trahan. New York: Peter Lang. 304 pp. $34.95. In the summer of 1947 Elisabeth Welt, aged 22, arrived in New York, alone, as a Jewish D.P. (a “displaced person”), with one suitcase and ten Dollars. Ten years later she held a Ph.D. from Yale and stood at the beginning of a distinguished academic career. Almost 60 years after the start of her American life, she looks back on that period with some surprise. Fortunately she had maintained a substantial number of documents—letters, essays, diary entries—allowing her to look at her younger self and at her experiences, as well as her new country. She does so with remarkable candor and a critical eye, noting both her shortcomings and her strengths. It is especially the strengths that impress the reader. It is also striking by how much the country has changed, in small as well as in large matters: greeting rituals, food habits and table manners, dating patterns in an elite girls’ college and much else. And yet, much has remained the same. Trahan has previously described her war years (Walking with Ghosts: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Vienna, 1998), experiences that prepared her in special ways for the struggle of adapting herself to a very different world. Having reached New York with a fair knowledge of English, she quickly found an office job and enrolled in night classes at Hunter College. Her observations are fresh and acute, although retrospectively she finds that she sometimes misjudges situations and people. By dint of hard work, intelligence and courage, she received scholarships and encouragement, allowing her to move on to Sarah Lawrence, then to Cornell and finally to Yale for a doctorate. Along the way she met memorable personalities: among her teachers were Erich Kahler, Rudolf Arnheim and Vladimir (and Vera) Nabokov.

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