

Marianne Gilbert Finnegan
Memories of a Mischling

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**Marianne
Gilbert**
***Das gab's nur
einmal***
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und New York*
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Book factsheet

Biographies, Contemporary Literature
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Praise

Memories of a Mischling

»An unpretentious, sincere autobiography. A beautiful and historically interesting reading.«
– BuchMarkt, Meerbusch

»Marianne Gilbert has written down her autobiography in a wordly-wise and humorous style.« – Der Spiegel, Hamburg

»Enthralling.« – Augsburger Allgemeine, Augsburg

Children sometimes imagine themselves waking up one day to find that they are all alone. The school is closed, their parents have disappeared, the world is empty and everyone – apart from themselves – has been wiped out. For Marianne Gilbert, 8 years old when the novel begins, this childish nightmare comes true in 1939. With her Jewish origins, she has been excluded from school. Her mother Elke, an up-and-coming singer from a strictly Lutheran family, whose marriage little Marianne cannot patch up, often leaves the child alone in a never-ending string of apartments in Berlin and Paris. Her Jewish father, Robert Gilbert, since the 1920s recognised as the lyricist and arranger of popular songs and musical films (such as *Once in a Lifetime*, *Three Good Friends* and *The White Horse Inn*), has an affair and is then forced to flee abroad – a private catastrophe in the midst of a political one. Elke does not want to give Robert up and, with the help of their little daughter – who, as a »mischling«, is in as much danger as her father – she catches up with him and ships the »family« off to New York. The Gilberts may have been saved, but are ill prepared for life in the new world. From their tiny apartment in the Bronx, surrounded by other German-Jewish refugees (like Hannah Ahrendt and Heinrich Blücher), they plan to continue on Broadway the success they had enjoyed in Berlin. But to be successful in America, they must first learn how to assimilate. How to become an American when, although one may be intellectually brilliant, one cannot express one's complex ideas in English? Marianne, the lonely only child, shows them how it's done...



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Marianne Gilbert was born in Berlin in 1931 and emigrated to New York in 1939. Having worked as a college professor, a social worker and bookshop owner, she now teaches creative writing at a university for seniors in Saratoga Springs, where she also resides. Following the end of the war, her parents returned to Europe, where Robert began a second career as a lyricist of world-famous tunes such as *Oh! My Pa-Pa!* and as a translator of musicals like *My Fair Lady*, *Hello Dolly* and *Annie Get Your Gun*. Her mother Elisabeth (Elke) Gilbert was one of the most renowned translators from English into German; authors whose works she has translated include Carson McCullers, Dashiell Hammett, Harold Brodkey, Muriel Spark, Virginia Woolf and W.B. Yeats.