

Niels Thorsen

The Economy of Memory: Schindler's List and the Persecution Of European Jews

Thorsen argues that Steven Spielberg's movie Schindler's List reflects a new phase in the collective memory about World War II and Holocaust in a media-dominated world where genocide and other acts of cruelty have become images that compete for the shortening attention span of a contemporary audience. Many commentators have expressed the need to remember Holocaust. Our media-oriented society, however, is based on the assumption that access to information and watching television constitute modern forms of political participation and responsibility, and thus memory of past terrors can only be imagined through a confrontation with images that make the audience identify with the victims. Thorsen contends that modern society conditions you to remember and forget in a certain way. He suggests that Schindler's List is part of a process that has incorporated the memory of genocide into the political process.

Thorsen further argues that it is an economic rather than a moral rationality that prompts Schindler to invest his money in the survival of his Jewish employees. Spielberg identifies Schindler as the "good German", but he asks that his audience suspend their knowledge that when Schindler is ready to leave Cracow with a suitcase full of money and the remark that he has earned more money than he could possibly spend in a life time, money has lost its conventional value. The Red Army was already in Poland and, in fact, there was only a few months left to spend the money in. The Jewish employees became Schindler's insurance that he would have a life when the war was over.

Thorsen contends that this deconstruction of the premises of the movie itself is the result of Spielberg's wish to be taken seriously as a director. As such the movie's significance becomes limited to movie critics who are interested in Spielberg's development as a Hollywood director.

Kenneth H. Ober

Henri Nathansen's indebtedness to Meir Goldschmidt

Henri Nathansen's novel "Af Hugo Davids Liv" has been compared to Meir Goldschmidt's "En Jøde", but the specifics of Nathansen's complex relationship to Goldschmidt have not been explored. Only a close reading of Nathansen's novel with Goldschmidt constantly in mind can provide the basis for such an investigation.

This reading reveals much more than simple influence or indebtedness; Goldschmidt's spirit, as reflected in "En Jøde", "Hjemløs", and "Livs Erindringer og Resultater", is integrated into the very fabric of Nathansen's work, and Goldschmidt as a myth is the central pillar in the supporting its entire structure. Through the use of quotations from Goldschmidt's works placed in the mouths of major characters, as well as allusions - sometimes quite subtle - to his life, Nathansen's novel is constructed as an uninterrupted dialogue with Goldschmidt himself.

Rosa Alcoy i Pedrós

Marginal Illustrations in Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon's "More Nevuchim". (Guide to the Perplexed. Copenhagen Cod.Hebr.XXXVII).

The elaborate miniatures of the Copenhagen manuscript of Maimonides' More Nevuchim were a product of the workshops in Barcelona, of which the most renowned was the "Master of San Marco".

"More Nevuchim" was translated from Arabic into Hebrew by Samuel Tibbon and copied by Levi ben Isaac hijo ("son of") Caro of Salamanca, commissioned by the learned physician Menahem Bezalel of Barcelona, in the year 1348.

The name of the artist does not, however, appear in the colophon.

There has been uncertainty among art historians as to whether the miniaturist of the Copenhagen Maimonides was Arnau Bassa or his father, Ferrer Bassa. But it is generally assumed that the latter, who did most of his work within church altar and wall painting during the years 1324-48, was the main influence. Furthermore, it cannot be entirely discarded, that a Jewish craftsman illuminated the manuscript, due to the fact that there is full harmony between the content of the "More Nevuchim" and the subjects of the miniatures.

Leaving the full page panels aside, the author takes her point of departure in the exuberant flora, fauna and grotesque decorations in the margins of the folios, and tends to be of the opinion, that the craftsman was of Christian origin, and the illuminations possibly executed by Ferrer Bassa himself.

Jane Mink Rossen

Performances of Traditional Jewish Music in Denmark

Although Jewish immigrants have lived in Denmark for 300 years, very little material has been collected to illuminate their song tradition and nothing concerning it has been published. To document Jewish musical traditions in Denmark, Jane Mink Rossen conducted research at two points in time, separated by 20 years. Informed by the methods of the anthropology of music, which addresses oral traditions, this research included the recording of musical performances - the singers and their songs - using a tape recorder,

This article documents the collections for the purpose of making them known to interested persons in Denmark and elsewhere, and it treats the differences between the two collections. While the recordings from 1969-71 contained predominantly religious songs, those from 1992-93 focused upon the musical content of social situations and interviews with the performers. Secular musical activities had increased markedly in the second period, due both to the worldwide interest of many groups in finding their cultural roots, and to the large number of Polish Jews who immigrated to Denmark between 1968 and 1970.

Conclusions drawn concern the close relationship of songs and singing to cultural identity in social activities that include music-making, attitudes of the performers towards the songs, and the conditions necessary for more comprehensive research on Jewish music in Denmark.

May Salomon

Proposal for a Danish-Jewish Museum

May Salomon's proposal for a Danish-Jewish Museum is based on her Master's thesis in architecture and includes museum plans and photographs of a model of the proposed museum. Salomon has placed the museum at the now defunct 300 year old Jewish cemetery centrally located in Copenhagen. She argues that the interplay between the artifacts of past generations of Jews in the form of headstones, on the one hand, and present day Danish life outside the cemetery walls, on the other, is ideally suited to demonstrate the tensions in Danish Jewish life between assimilation and ethnic identity. Salomon discusses the museum's objective, audience, location, design, materials and exhibitions.

Julian Ilicki

The Bergman-affair five years later. An attempted summing up

In the autumn of 1989 the director of a Swedish local radio station, Radio Islam, in Stockholm was convicted of conducting a smear campaign against an ethnic group -Jews -and sentenced to six months of prison. The case led to a very intensive debate in Sweden, which five years later finally seems to draw to a close.

Called as an expert witness, Professor of Religious History Jan Bergman of the Theological Department of Uppsala University made a series of sensational allegations about Judaism. Some of these belonged to the classic anti-Semitic repertory. Asserting for example that Judaism should contain certain commandments requiring Jews to kill non-Jews (especially non-Jewish children) in certain situations. Bergman claimed that these commandments are followed even today.

Julian Ilicki believes that the most disquieting aspect of the case is the reaction -or rather lack of reaction - of the Uppsala University establishment. Prof. Bergman's main supporter, Sigbert Axelson, is in fact the chair of the Theological Institution of Uppsala University. Axelson issued several statements that supported and amplified Bergman's testimony. Additionally, he attacked Bergman's critics. In the article, Julian Ilicki points to a number of personal attacks by Axelson on Ilicki himself and on the Israeli religious historian Prof. Zwi Werblowsky, who publicly opposed Bergman's statements.

As the case continued to attract considerable attention from the media and the international academic world, the Dean of the Theological Faculty of Uppsala, Carl Fredrik Hallencreutz sought an independent assessment. He contacted the Norwegian theologian and former chancellor of Oslo University Prof. Inge Lønning, in 1993 to write an impartial and independent report. In 1994 Lønning concluded that Bergman had been an irresponsible expert-witness. He also found that theological faculty of Uppsala, especially Sigbert Axelson, had not behaved incorrectly.

The publication of the report led the board of the theological faculty to publicly comment on the controversy for the first time. They criticised Bergman, Axelson, the general faculty and overall university indifference. As a consequence Axelson and Hallencreutz are leaving their posts as head of the Theological Faculty and Prefect of the Theological Institution in 1995, although they are being retained on the university staff.

Theodor Katz

David Katz, My Father

Theodor Katz, the son of the internationally recognized psychologist David Katz, has written a biographical sketch of his father's life from his birth in Kassel, Germany to his death in Sweden 68 years later. The article emphasizes the family's flight from Nazi Germany to Sweden and the presence of anti-Semitism in Sweden. In the late 1930s when David Katz was appointed a professor in Stockholm, Åke Berglund published an anti-Semitic book entitled: "The Scandalous Katz Appointment: Contributions to the History of the Jewish Infiltration of Swedish Culture", that directly attacked Katz.