EDITORIAL

When the topic of Jewish museums in Europe arose we became aware of a wealth of opportunities. Through her work as Founder and Executive Director of the Hidden Legacy Foundation, Evelyn Friedlander has connections with many curators and scholars; Edward van Voolen, one of our correspondents, and curator of the Jewish Museum of Amsterdam, supplied further lists. What we had not anticipated was the enthusiasm with which so many of those we approached responded, and, what alas is a rarer quality in the experience of journal editors, actually delivered on time! And what unexpected doors they opened for us as each author demonstrated the way his or her museum reflected the different cultural assumptions, contexts and challenges faced by the local Jewish community.

In a wide-ranging survey of Jewish museums in Europe, David Clark traces the history of their development, beginning with private collections of art which entered the public domain in the late nineteenth century. This reflected a particular stage in the process of emancipation and the felt need to demonstrate the contribution Jews had made to European history and the way they 'fitted' into society. Shifts in power relations in society in more recent decades have changed the focus to reflect the pluralism and multicultural awareness of today.

Rickie Burman describes the history and development of the London and Manchester Jewish museums in which she herself has played major roles. She suggests that a Jewish museum, as well as illustrating its religious traditions, will see as its task to set that religion within the context of history and social life of the community. This is borne out by the contributions from different European communities.

Nicholas Stavroulakis describes the attempts after the war to locate any artefacts of Jewish life not destroyed, looted or sold at auction. The near obliteration of the Jewish community of Salonika (over 70,000 in 1941, some 3,000 after the war) meant that an entire five hundred years of Jewish culture had virtually disappeared. Today's museum seeks to locate the Jewish presence within the history, economic and social life of Salonika and their fate during the Second World War. A companion piece by Zanet Battinou on the Jewish Museum of Greece echoes the role of the museum in educating the wider community and challenging enduring stereotypes and ignorance. But it is particularly concerned at creating programmes aimed at the Jewish population of Greece, especially those with little formal Jewish education, as well as being a hospitable venue for private celebrations and the exploration of Jewish culture.

Particularly moving is Milica Mihailovic's account of the struggle to create and develop a Jewish museum in Belgrade in a situation when 'all cultural institutions in the country are starting again from the beginning'.

In contrast to other countries where a Jewish museum plays a role in the life of the Jewish community, Richard Schneider argues that Jewish museums in Germany 'have little to do with Jews, but much to do with the non-Jewish majority' and that majority's problems of facing the German past. The empty spaces, 'the voids', in Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin, and the empty rear courtyard of the Oranienburger Synagogue are true metaphors for the absence of Jewish life. Conversely, a Jew living in Germany is likely to be viewed as 'a living exhibition object'. This sense of 'emptiness' is similarly conveyed in Susanne Urban's account of the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt/Main and also the significant role played by the Museum in educating the non-Jewish world about the reality of Jewish life. She takes us on a step-by-step trip through the Rothschild-Palais in which it is located, itself a journey through stages in the history of the Jewish community. The small Judengasse Museum records the history of the Jewish ghetto. It includes a 'Börne Gallery', named after the democrat Ludwig Börne whom we will encounter again in this issue.

While still in Germany we are sad to record the death of Rabbi Ady Assabi, a graduate of Leo Baeck College – Centre for Jewish Education (class of 1971) who served in Britain, Germany, South Africa and Israel, and most recently in Berlin.

Daniel Libeskind is also associated with the new Jewish museum in Denmark, planned to open in spring 2004. Mirjam Gelfer describes the reasons why it has taken so long for this to be realised.

Still in the cultural domain, two articles examine particular Jewish groups and the ways in which they perceive the world and are perceived. Simeon Baumel explores the inner world of British *haredim* (ultra-orthodox) through their language and culture; Robin Ostow examines the way the new community of former Soviet Jews now finding their place in Germany are viewed by the wider society.

It is our particular privilege to offer a translation of the lecture given by George Steiner in Frankfurt in May 2003 on the occasion of receiving the Börne Prize. Not content with translating it for us, Albert Friedlander graphically describes the context and gives us extracts from the *laudatio* by the German Foreign Minister Joschke Fischer, picking up all the underlying irony of the event.

Professor Graham Zellick, Vice-Chancellor of London University, was this year's distinguished Van der Zyl Memorial Lecturer. He ranges over a number of examples where private conscience comes into potential conflict with public duties.

We rarely publish fiction, but are happy once again to include a short story by Mike Lipstock, whose childhood memoirs capture the essence of a Yiddish-speaking world in America that has all but vanished.

Amongst the poetry selected by Ruth Fainlight for this edition are translations of the celebrated Israeli poet Admiel Kosman, recently appointed as Academic Director of the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, Berlin.

We complete this edition with a book review.

Jonathan Magonet