

ALBERT-REINER GLAAP
ROBERT CHRISTIAN THOMSEN

Resistance, National Identity and Social Norms – *The Danish Play* by Sonja Mills

Zusammenfassung

The Danish Play ist ein Bühnenstück aus der Feder von Sonja Mills, die im Alter von fünf Jahren nach Kanada kam. Es basiert auf den Tagebüchern ihrer Großtante Agnete Ottosen. Hintergrund ist der dänische Widerstand gegen die deutsche Besatzung in den 1940er Jahren. Die Handlung beginnt 1962 und führt dann in Rückblenden zurück in die Zeit, in der sich Ottosen der Widerstandsbewegung anschloss. *The Danish Play* ist ein Ensemble-Stück, das sich mit dem Schicksal einer mutigen Frau auseinandersetzt, die unerschrocken gegen Unterdrückung und Behinderung von Meinungsfreiheit aufbegehrt. Mills stellt Fragen zur Identität in nationalen und internationalen Kontexten, die heute an Aktualität nichts verloren haben. Sie ruft dazu auf, nicht zu ruhen, wenn es um die Verteidigung der Freiheit des Einzelnen geht. Sie schreibt als Kanadierin über eine wichtige Zeit in dem Land, das sie mit fünf Jahren verließ. *The Danish Play* ist ein Beitrag, der, mit manchen anderen unterschiedlicher ethnischer und kultureller Provenienz, verstehen lässt, was Kanada zu dem macht, was dieses Land heute ist.

Résumé

The Danish Play est une pièce de théâtre de la plume de Sonja Mills, qui est arrivée au Canada à l'âge de cinq ans. Le texte est basé sur les journaux de sa grand-tante Agnete Ottosen. L'arrière-plan est la résistance danoise contre l'occupation allemande, dans les années 1940. L'action commence en 1962 et mène, par des retours en arrière, jusqu'à l'époque où Ottosen se rallia à la résistance. *The Danish Play* expose le sort d'une femme intrépide qui se révolta courageusement contre l'oppression de l'occupant et la suppression de la liberté d'opinion. Les questions que pose Mills sur le problème de l'identité de la personne dans des contextes nationaux et internationaux n'ont rien perdu de leur actualité. Elle fait appel à nous tous de ne pas faire de compromis lorsqu'il s'agit de défendre la liberté de chacun. Elle écrit en tant que Canadienne sur une époque dramatique du Danemark qu'elle a quitté à l'âge de cinq ans. Ainsi, *The Danish Play* contribue – avec d'autres contributions de provenances ethniques et culturelles différentes – à comprendre ce qui a fait du Canada le pays que nous connaissons aujourd'hui.

“A True Tale of Resistance”

None of us in Canada, unless we are of First Nations descent, came from here. Not one of us. We emigrated here from elsewhere, or our parents did, or our grandparents did, and we brought our stories with us and made them Canadian stories. That’s what being Canadian means to me.¹

These are the words of the author of a stage play titled *The Danish Play*, which was first produced by Nightwood Theatre in 2002 and, in 2007, at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto.² The playwright is Sonja Mills, who came to Canada at the age of 5. She remembers Denmark as her quaint childhood home. “I grew up with a romantic picture of the place: beautiful, clean, liberal, really good cheese and sweets, the fairytale place of the tourist posters,” she writes. She heard the fantastic tale of a heroine in her own family, that of her great-aunt Agnete Ottosen, who had died the same year Mills was born. Her mother brought Ottosen’s diaries from Denmark, and Sonja Mills inherited them. When reading the horrible details about Nazi-run labour camps, her great-aunt’s work as a Resistance fighter and her internment in concentration camps as disclosed in these diaries, it dawned on her that she should write a play, which turned out to be *The Danish Play*. Mills travelled to Denmark several times to get some more information about Ottosen’s life, talked to distant relatives and former Resistance fighters, and went to two concentration camps that Ottosen survived.

The play is about Agnete Ottosen in the 1940s, but it is not a dramatised biography; its subtitle reads *A True Tale of Resistance*. “A true tale,” writes the playwright, “seemed to me the perfect thing to call a story which is both a parable and based on true events.” But *The Danish Play* is not just one more wartime play that uncovers the past, but a play “guiding us into the future. How do free-thinking citizens organize themselves and fight the rising tide of political conservatism and governing by fear?” (Al-Solaylee 2007). It is also a play dealing with gender and sexuality. Its background being the Danish Resistance and Denmark’s efforts to thwart Hitler’s big plans, some background information about this period may help towards a better understanding of the historical context of this play, seen from a Danish point of view.³

The mythology of resistance

The following brief historical account is meant to contextualise the play rather than continue any historical debate with regard to the period. Therefore, we have

1 This and all other quotes from Sonja Mills that are not referenced go back to e-mails exchanged with Albert-Reiner Glaap in 2003-05.

2 This theatre is dedicated to all forms of performance art and education.

3 This essay is a collaboration of two authors – one a Dane, the other a German – which, in a nutshell, reflects the close cooperation of the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies and its counterpart in German-speaking countries.

deliberately kept clear of the most disputed interpretations to focus on historical accounts which are generally accepted. Still, in order to illustrate the continued relevance of Mills' play, this section also makes references to the contemporary Danish debate about resistance – and the lack of resistance.

The German occupation of Denmark – at one time referred to as 'The Five Cursed Years'; these days more often simply as 'The Occupation' – has probably been the subject of more analysis and debate than any other period in Danish history. Positive myths and awe, however, have always surrounded the deeds of the *frihedskæmpere* ('freedom fighters') of the resistance movement. As the grandson of an active freedom fighter (after whom Robert Christian Thomsen was named), he was brought up with the sometimes fantastic tales of bravery and loyalty to king and country. One of his favourite anecdotes, which also serves to illustrate the common perception of the resistance as a case of a Danish David versus a German Goliath, concerns the quick-witted, close shave escape of one particular member of the resistance: having just left the flat of Thomsen's grandparents in Aarhus, in which he had been hiding for a period of time, this man was stopped by a German patrol for a routine check. Wanted for sabotage by the *Gestapo*, he would certainly have been seized, perhaps tortured and shot had the soldiers discovered his identity or the pistol he was carrying. He was, however, also carrying a bicycle pump, and this he produced with a wry smile, explaining: "Luftwaffe!" (air force) According to the anecdote, the soldiers were so amused they let him go without any further investigation of his person or his identity.

Many Danes will be able to tell similar stories, which together continue to keep the national resistance mythology alive. As any other collection of myths, the mythology of resistance to the occupation is not only an expression of the imagination of its users, but a set of historically based narratives which serve a social and educational purpose. An important element of the mythology is the inherent idea that Danes *as such* supported the resistance movement or at least found their own small ways in which to resist. This, however, is a part of the mythology which contemporary historical analysis has frequently exposed as a rather selective use of history. The official policy of Danish cooperation with the German occupation army and the acceptance until 1943 of Hitler's argument that German troops had arrived to protect Denmark from invasion by Germany's enemies illustrate that at least during the first three years of occupation there was little official Danish resistance to be traced.

The fact remains, however, that not only acts of sabotage, but also mass strikes and other popular expressions of resistance were officially condemned by changing Danish governments (broad wartime coalitions) and the King himself. In a radio broadcast in May 1943, the King thus characterised sabotage as "despicable activities" (qtd. in Kaarsted 1991, 237). Doubtless, the policies of negotiation and cooperation spared the lives of many Danes and might as such be understandable, even excusable; certainly, most Danes felt this way until 1943. However, it contradicts the picture that is drawn by the mythology of an early active and collective rejection of

the German occupation. Certain elements, albeit a small minority, even welcomed the Nazi regime; such as the Danish National-Socialist Labour Party and the *Frikorps Danmark*, a military unit raised to fight under German command on the Eastern Front.

Resistance

Denmark remained Hitler's *mønsterprotektorat* ('ideal protectorate') well into 1943. Inconveniences to the broad Danish population amounted to blackout measures, the presence and accommodation of German troops, increased unemployment rates during the early years of occupation, and the rationing of fuel, food-stuffs, textiles and other conveniences.⁴ Perhaps because occupation was felt less heavily than elsewhere in German-occupied countries, resistance was scarcer.

During 1942, however, resistance was gradually organised, predominantly by the then illegal Danish Communist Party. By 28 August 1943, sabotage and resistance in the form of public disobedience and the printing of illegal newspapers had produced an atmosphere in which the German occupiers saw themselves forced to declare a state of emergency and significantly limit the individual freedom of citizens and the powers of democracy. Finally, the government had had its fill, and refused to implement the German measures in its name. It thus effectively, although not legally, abolished itself. As the government was deposed by the German administration it came to fighting between the Danish military and the Germans, in which 23 Danish soldiers were killed and 56 were wounded.

All these events produced a more widespread notion of anger and resistance to Nazism among the populace, and many Danes took part in harbouring and actively assisting Jews to escape by a broad assortment of boats to neutral, unoccupied Sweden. The escape was largely successful: of an estimated 7-8,000 Danish Jews, all but 475 avoided the concentration camps (cf. Bisgaard 1986, 18). Also, sabotage against factories and railroads utilised by the German army became more common in the final years of the war, and illegal papers that called on the Danes to unite and resist became much more widespread. The Danish resistance movement thus became a more efficient underground army, and eventually earned Field Marshal Montgomery's praise as 'second to none.'

As sabotage and other forms of resistance increased in number and effect, the anti-resistance measures were also stepped up. An estimated 6,000 men and women were arrested, tortured and sent to concentration camps in Germany, while many others were imprisoned in Denmark. 193 people were executed by the Germans for resistance activities (cf. Mørkvig 2002, 81). By the summer of 1944, a general perception of the need for more open resistance seems to have been felt among the Danes: Copenhageners protested by lighting fires and building barri-

4 The quantities of *snaps* and beer consumed by the characters in *The Danish Play* would certainly have been difficult to come by.

cedes in the streets, and the police, after refusing to cooperate with the occupation administration, were imprisoned. At this late point, resistance reached a level of popular support that would actually support the resistance mythology. Historians generally agree that the effect of resistance with regard to seriously halting the German war machine was limited. However, as regards repairing wounded Danish national self-esteem and not least Denmark's international image – and thus providing for acceptance into the group of victorious allies – resistance was crucial.

The Danish Play – Structure, Characters and Topics

The following analysis of, and the comments on, the play are based on the published text and draw on interviews and correspondence with Sonja Mills. The play consists of 27 scenes in two acts – acts which, however, are not marked as such in the print edition. The first is about the war years, when Ottosen joined the Resistance, helped to organise the smuggling of 7,000 Jews out of Denmark to Sweden, wrote both articles for an underground newspaper and poems, was tortured by the *Gestapo*, but never betrayed her comrades. In the second act, the story of Ottosen unfolds in a non-linear way with poems scrawling throughout the diaries. The war is over, when Agnete becomes a single mother by choice, but decides not to have a husband, much to the alarm of the Danish authorities, who will not let her identify the father as 'anonymous.' "The second act," writes reviewer Kamal Al-Solaylee, "picks up Agnete's story from a dramaturgical point that the first only tangentially establishes. She is now a recluse whose attempts at becoming a mother without marriage or a partner give Mills a chance to rev up the feminist slant of the story" (Al-Solaylee 2007).

The story is set in several time frames. It begins in 1962, at Christmas, when a group of former Resistance fighters are gathering together for an annual toast. They reminisce about the old days and draw the audience's attention to the courage and sufferings of Agnete Ottosen, who is not present. Flashbacks take us to World War II, when Germany put an end to the non-aggression pact with Denmark and occupied the country, and Ottosen joined the Resistance. Moreover, the action is interspersed with scenes from the immediate post-war time until 1962/63.

The fictional characters created by Mills are Mads, the leader of the Resistance in Aalborg; Michael, who used to work with Mads (a would-be playwright); Helga, Michael's sister, who runs a sandwich shop; and Bente, who used to work with Helga. Agnete Ottosen is the only real character. Mads is based on the man who was Agnete's boss in the Resistance. The characters experienced and now remember their active times in the Resistance in different ways. Mads, the then publisher of an underground newspaper, suffered emotionally, not physically, whereas Agnete and Bente and others ended up in labour camps. We know that Ottosen survived, and it is in Act II that we get to know about what she went through. Mills, in her play, focuses on the subtleties that come along with the action rather than on the war as such. There are, for instance, Michael's comments and anti-German jokes. He talks

about 'the line' that makes trouble for everyone. His new play is about boundaries and borders between countries.

- Michael: Do you ever go to Tønder?
 Bente: Yes, I go once or twice a year. There's a good fabric shop in the square.
 Helga: It's good. And cheap!
 Michael: Do you speak Danish when you're there?
 Bente: German mostly.
 Michael: Why?
 Bente: Well, because.
 Michael: Because it's a German town? Do you bring your passport?
 Bente: No, of course not.
 Helga: It only seems like a German town.
 Mads: So? It's a Danish town near the border. That line's changed many times. All borders are like that.
 Michael: What's it for then? The line?
 Bente: It's just a line really.
 Michael: That's right. (Mills 2002, 108)

The Danish Play is, indeed, about borders, and Sonja Mills comments on her play as being about borders: "Germany is smack in the middle of Europe and has been responsible for much of the moving of those 'lines' that Michael talks about in the play," and she adds: "I hope I manage to relate the message that I think those lines are altogether silly."

Another example of the subtleties in *The Danish Play* is the verbal exchange between Helga and Mads:

- Helga: (*indicates her glass is also empty*) Ahem!
 Mads: You drink like a Swede, Helga.
 Helga: You drink like a Czech (87).

By ironic stereotyping of this kind Mills wants to point out "the silliness of these arbitrary designations. One is no better than the other, despite what side of the line they were born on."

In this play, war and genocide do not need any further dramatisation. They speak for themselves. There is, however, the image of flag-waving, as an expression of patriotic feelings in an exaggerated way, which conveys the playwright's feelings about war (cf. 106). *The Danish Play*, in her eyes, is "about the fact that flag-waving leads to war, and war leads to flag-waving, which leads to more war, which leads to ... War is not the answer."

The Danish Play is, for much of the time, an ensemble piece. Agnete Ottosen's life and inner struggle are placed in the context of a circle of friends who reveal details about her and bring out facets of what the play is about. An audience may come to see this play and expect "to meet [...] some political activists and [...] leave having gotten to know some all-too-fragile human beings," writes Richard Ouzounian (2007), and continues: "It's a change of heart (and mind) that you won't soon forget." A most chilling example is Scene 16 when Agnete is in a hospital, where she is being asked questions about her time in the prison camp of Ravensbrück and, in particular, about the experimental gynaecological surgery she had to undergo, to which she had not consented. Her life was ruined. "You are lucky, Miss," the hospital worker tells her. "The doctor says you aren't completely ruined" (68). Ottosen is healed by Danish doctors, and she has a son.

The diaries and poems in *The Danish Play* tell a lot about Ottosen's states of mind before and after the war. "In Act I she is loud, proud and defiant," writes Mills, "in Act II she is quite defeated in spirit and sickened by much of what she sees around her in the world." Early in the play, in Scene 4, Sophie enters, whose job it is to see those newly arrived in the camp and register their personal details. Agnete is limping, her leg looks infected, and Bente asks Sophie for medicine – only to hear that there is none. Thereupon, Agnete gets up from her working table, limping, and recites:

Rising up from every hut and house and home before us,
 All believers burning prayers combine in mighty chorus.
 One proffers to Krishna, another prays to Christ,
 One praises Jehovah, one says Allah is right.
 [...]
 A thousand souls, a thousand tongues, a thousand different prayers,
 Imploring each their almighty God for an end to their despair.
 Buddha, protect us! Grace us, Madonna! And see to us in our stead.
 One asks for luck, another for glory, another for daily bread.
 [...]
 I ask for only this:
 Through suffering will I find my true wish.
 My pain do not spare me, and end to grieve don't give.
 My wretched burdens do not take, just let me with sorrow live (25).

Only small bits of Ottosen's poetry, loosely translated by the playwright, are included in the play. Theatre critic Kate Taylor quotes Mills' own comment: "I think translating the poetry was the best way to write the play for me, but I didn't want too much of it in the play. Nobody wants to sit and watch a poetry play" (Taylor 2002).

Last but by no means least, *The Danish Play* is also about gender and social norms. Ottosen spoke up in a world in which women were cast in the mould of wives and

mothers only: "There's not a thing a woman can't do," she says in the play. Her wit and sarcasm comes to the fore when she is on the playhouse stage, reading from her notebook commenting on the "Mrs. and Miss" column in the daily newspaper:

It's said that one lunatic can ask more than ten of the country's wisest trolls can answer, and I can see that old truth still applies in the "Mrs. and Miss" column in the daily newspaper. Can a woman walk home alone when she lives at the Magdalena home? And can she hold her head high if she prefers to nurse her own children? And will she have the same luck in love as her mother who was divorced as late as last year? Answer, reader: in all the hours of the day and night she can swing her hips and even if she has turned 100 and still prefers to have a boy's haircut and she wears dresses that barely reach the knee though her ankles are as big as an elephant's thigh, there isn't a thing a woman can't do. (38-39)

Indeed, but Agnete knows very well that there is much she has been kept from doing. Mills' favourite lines in the play are when the Judge (in Scene 22), looking at Ottosen's incomplete birth certificate, asks her: "Is it Miss? It is Miss, isn't it?" (91). In this context, Sonja Mills mentions that she "didn't want to write a big flag-waving feminist play and, in fact tried hard to deal with that issue as subtly as possible."

The Danish Play is about events in the life of a remarkable woman, Agnete Ottosen. At another level, it asks questions about resistance, identity in the national and international context and the politics of gender – topics also relevant in our time. Mills' intention was never to document anything, actually. She writes:

My interest was to honour Agnete and those like her. My interest was to show, though it is a brutal truth, that one is not necessarily rewarded for good deeds. And I am not reflecting on that time in history even, but using it as a context so that I might reflect on that whole flag-waving issue in general.

Mills' Play as a Canadian Play

What makes *The Danish Play* a Canadian play? It is a play written by a Canadian of Danish descent whose ancestors played an important role in a difficult time. It is an illustrative example of what is often termed "departure literature," as opposed to "arrival literature." In other words, Mills, who came to Canada at the age of five, has not written her play as a newly arrived immigrant reflecting on what lingers on in her mind with reference to the country she has left behind. *The Danish Play* departs from its author's Canadian context, which has been part and parcel of her life for some decades. She writes:

I am a Danish-Canadian. And I have the great good fortune to live in Toronto. My most immediate neighbours are Portuguese-Canadian, Trinidadian-Canadian, and Filipino-Canadian. I'd have to guess that no fewer than thirty countries are represented just in the tiny west-end neighbourhood I live in, yet there is absolutely no doubt that we're all 100% Canadian.

I am honoured to add this play to the roster of stories told by Canadian artists about how this country came to be what it is today. If every Canadian were to tell a story, his or her own story, the resulting anthology would be a rich tapestry of stories from every corner of the globe, and it would be very Canadian indeed.

The Danish Play also touches on borders and boundaries – a topic dealt with by other Canadian playwrights. *Bordertown Café* by Kelly Rebar and *Fronteras Americanas* by Guillermo Verdecchia are but two examples which try to find answers as to how one can 'live *the* border' rather than live *on* the border (in these cases the border between Canada and the USA).

Moreover, *The Danish Play*, as mentioned earlier in this essay, is about "political conservatism and governing by fear," as Kamal Al-Solaylee writes. He goes on:

We in Canada are not as exempt from the debate as we like to think: Just follow the debate around the provisions in Ottawa's Anti-Terrorism Act that gives police and judges unprecedented powers [...]. Mills has done her civic duty to keep us engaged and on guard for our liberties. (Al-Solaylee 2007)

What did Canadian theatre critics say about the productions of *The Danish Play*? Headlines of and a few brief excerpts from reviews of the Toronto productions in 2002 and 2007 give an idea of the impact that the different facets of this play made on critics. Kate Taylor's review is titled "Playwright strikes gold in her family story" (*The Globe and Mail*, November 29, 2002). She articulates the "affinity between the frank dramatist and the wartime heroine of her play," and quotes Mills who admits that the hint to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in her own play is purposeful: "It's a play about Denmark and its future; here's a great tragic hero, and there is nothing but death in the final scene." Robert Crew, in his review "Great *Danish Play* tells tragic war story" (*Toronto Star*, November 25, 2002), points to the tragic side of Ottosen's life which makes Mills' play "a stirring and moving work." Richard Ouzounian also stresses the emotional facet of the play, as mentioned earlier in this essay. "Play wins the war for hearts and minds" reads the heading of his review (*Toronto Star*, February 27, 2007) of the recent production of *The Danish Play*. To Kamal Al-Solaylee, this play is a "postwar story that thrills a younger generation" (*The Globe and Mail*, March 01, 2007), and Robert Ormsby accentuates "*The Danish Play's* Disturbing Resonance"

(www.drama.ca, November 26, 2002). The play, he writes, “draws a portrait of Agnete’s anguished decline. At the same time it suggests unsettling parallels between past and current nationalism.”

Mills’ play is, indeed, a true tale based on true events, but the story is also a parable.

The Danish Play in context

The neutral state of Denmark was invaded by Germany on 9 April 1940 and liberated on 4 May 1945. In Sonja Mills’ *The Danish Play* the scene is mostly set in German-occupied Denmark in this period. Although set in a past of which a decreasing number of Danes have personal remembrance, the play remains highly relevant: it raises ever-important questions about national identity, nationalism, oppression and social norms, and it provides a personal interpretation of a period which in Denmark continues to stir emotions.

“A true tale of resistance” is an interesting subtitle because so much of what happened during those years continues to be debated in academic and political circles. Perhaps Mills, in basing her tale on Agnete Ottosen’s diaries and poems, has more of a claim to a subjective kind of truth pertaining to the experiences of her main character than most historians aiming for objectivity have when trying to capture processes and events of the period seen as a whole. To be sure, it remains difficult to arrive at any commonly accepted ‘true’ version of the history of Danish resistance during World War II because the period has been so heavily mythified. Because national self-perception, as Mills also indicates, is so intricately weaved into these events, the national mythology often resists critical analysis.

Among the populace the occupation was generally accepted – grudgingly by most, but nevertheless passively (cf. Kaarsted 1991, 218-219). Mills captures well the moods in different sections of the population when (on page 29 of the play) she lets Agnete and Michael discuss the invasion and the (lack of) reaction to it. Michael makes the point that the Danish defence had little to throw at the invaders, which is correct. *The Danish Play* also makes frequent references to ‘The Old Man,’ King Christian X, and illustrates the popular perception of him as a patriarchal uniting symbol. The *Kongemærke* (‘King’s pin’), introduced in connection with the celebration of the King’s 70th birthday two years earlier, would be worn by many during the entire war as a subtle expression of anti-German, Danish nationalism.⁵

The number of freedom fighters in 1943 has been estimated at between 3,000 and 4,000. By the end of the war the number had increased to about 50,000 (cf. Bisgaard 1986, 20); clearly, a sort of ‘awakening’ had taken place. Still, even after 1943 organised resistance was left to the few, and the Agnetes, Mads’, Michaels, Helgas and Bentes of the resistance would not represent a wide selection of the

5 Some, like Thomsen’s grandfather, would produce their own pin with the royal monogram from a finely drilled and sawn-out two-øre brass coin.

social strata. The resistance movement saw the unlikely cooperation between the radical left and the conservative right of the political spectrum, while parties of the centre took little part.

Occupation and resistance today

The late 1990s and early 2000s have seen a vigorous debate between traditionalist and revisionist historians and politicians, re-opening the debate about the German occupation. At the 4 May 2005 commemoration ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Denmark by allied troops, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen praised, as would be expected, the freedom fighters for their courage and determination. But he also lambasted and distanced himself from the policies of cooperation during the first years of occupation by changing Danish wartime governments – including the deportation to Germany of refugees from the Nazi regime. Most of the effects of these policies, for which the Danish government now officially apologises and refers to as “shameful,” have only recently surfaced after historical archives were opened to the public.

Also present at the ceremony was Queen Margrethe II, and it is clear that the close connection between resistance, the monarchy, and Danish values persists. The solemn observance by ‘official Denmark’ would seem to indicate a public obligation to remember and to ensure that there will never again be a 9 April. This period in Danish history has, for most of the past sixty years, been very much a part of the Danish national psyche. References to the cooperation policies for instance would therefore quickly be drowned in loud praise of the brave saboteurs of the resistance movement, the rescue of Jews to Sweden, or the 5,000 sailors who enlisted in British services. In recent years, however, the tone and emphasis of accounts have changed.

As the candles that used to light up every window on the night of 4 May are becoming rarer, and as fewer and fewer of those who either experienced or partook actively in resistance against the German occupation of Denmark survive to tell the story, the debate becomes increasingly academic. Both in the sense that ‘truth’ increasingly becomes a matter of interpretation of written sources, and in the sense that this interpretation is increasingly carried out in the minds and books of historians of a different generation removed from the events they debate. Being emotionally removed from events can be seen to be of benefit to the historian, but it also entails the risk of ‘not quite getting’ the thought-world – the concerns, desires etc. – of those involved. A personal account like Agnete Ottosen’s dramatised by Mills therefore becomes a valuable contribution to the ongoing attempt at coming to terms with ‘The Occupation’ and the resistance it produced.

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