

relevance to the encyclopedia's audience, when this Eastern European Jewish audience itself is both geographically and ideologically in constant flux and turmoil? And, finally, how to square the im/explicit biases of the producers – all socialists and diaspora nationalists fighting for Jewish self-determination primarily through citizenship in Yiddishland, when, for many, other Jewish national movements had increasingly more convincing agendas?

Trachtenberg expertly ties the encyclopedia's shifting formats, aesthetics, and multiple thematic trajectories to the historical and social conditions and conflicting ideologies of which they were a product. He situates the Dubnow Fund's "encyclopedic impulse" firmly within the encyclopedic "arms race" (7) and following American-, Russian-, and German-Jewish successful ventures in "foreign [meaning non-Jewish] language[s]" (14), early Zionist quasi-encyclopedias in Hebrew, and failed Yiddish ones. Since the Enlightenment, encyclopedias have been a vehicle of nation-building for imperial powers, national minorities, and colonized people alike, often tailored to readers as condensed educational tools for the sake of class mobility and/or assimilation into new societies in the globalizing capitalist world. Trachtenberg thereby opens new avenues for future comparative research into both the modern Eastern European Jewish historiographical *zeitgeist* and the interrelated Yiddish scholarship of the Holocaust (*khurbn-forschung*), often portrayed as insular Jewish phenomena. Both might be connected in complex ways to the efforts of the oppressed and colonized everywhere to undertake documentary resistance in projects of self-determination and self-empowerment.

Three-time Nobel Prize nominee for literature Karl Kraus once had a terrible vision: he saw an encyclopedia walk up to a polymath and open him up. In the case of Barry Trachtenberg, this vision loses its terror. In *The Holocaust & the Exile of Yiddish: A History of the Algemeyne Entsiklopedye*, he looks the encyclopedia straight in the eyes. His book is recommended reading for both an educated lay and an academic audience interested in Jewish, Yiddish, and Holocaust studies, material culture, nationalism, racism, and antisemitism, as well as the enduring legacies of the Enlightenment. Trachtenberg introduces the *Algemeyne Entsiklopedye* itself as a valuable resource for future studies of the Jewish workers' movements, radical socialist and anarchist traditions, early Holocaust scholarship, and more. This text calls for further investigation of how Jewish understandings of, for instance, "race" and antisemitism truly are historically contingent, and how exactly, apart from the Holocaust, the Cold War shaped Yiddish culture in the U.S.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000948

Ein Drama in Akten. Die Restitution der Sammlungen des Wilnaer YIVO

By Bilha Shilo. Translated from the Hebrew by David Ajchenrand. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022. Pp. 152. Paperback €23.00. ISBN: 978-3525351284.

Kalman Weiser

York University

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research made news in early 2022 with the digital reunification of its pre-World War II collections that were divided for some eighty years between New York City and Vilnius. Thanks to a multiyear project, millions of scanned documents

and books whose originals remain in both cities are now available to researchers and the general public via the institute's website. This remarkable achievement is but the latest chapter, however, in the dramatic story of the restitution of YIVO's surviving prewar collections. Bilha Shilo offers us a careful and detailed reconstruction of this protracted process and offers reflections on its greater meaning for postwar Jewish life. Her account is based on a mixture of recent scholarship about YIVO's history and fresh research conducted in archives in Europe, the United States, and Israel.

YIVO, a Yiddish acronym for the Yiddish Scientific Institute, began its history in 1925 as a private institution dedicated to fulfilling the Yiddishist ambition for a national library, language academy, and university for a global Yiddish-speaking Jewish people. While its interwar headquarters lay in Vilna, Poland, it had branches in Warsaw and throughout the Yiddish-speaking Jewish diaspora, including in New York City. Its diaspora nationalist ideology contrasted with that of the Hebrew University, which was established the same year in Jerusalem as part of a Zionist nation-building project in Palestine.

Shilo aptly divides the drama into "acts," each corresponding to a phase and site in the plunder and restitution of YIVO's collections. The first, "Vilna," tells how members of the notorious Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce arrived in Vilna in 1941 and forced Jewish workers to sort Jewish books and archival materials for German use. Some 70% were meant for destruction, while 30% were to be sent to the Institute for Research on the Jewish Question in Frankfurt and other Nazi institutes. Workers in the "Paper Brigade," as intellectuals committed to the clandestine rescue of Jewish cultural treasures were dubbed, concealed thousands of books and documents in the Vilna Ghetto and outside it at great peril to their lives. The few surviving members retrieved what they could after the war and entrusted items to the world's first Holocaust museum, which they established in now-Soviet Lithuanian Vilnius. But they risked their lives again to smuggle out as much as possible, chiefly to YIVO's American branch, as it became clear that authorities planned to close the museum and likely destroy Jewish cultural treasures. Remarkably, a portion of YIVO's collections was hidden by a Lithuanian librarian in a Vilnius church converted into a book depository. Since the discovery of YIVO materials in 1989, more have been found, making possible the recent virtual unification of surviving materials in YIVO collections through an agreement between YIVO and the post-communist Lithuanian government.

In "Offenbach," we learn how YIVO's agents managed to reclaim tens of thousands of the institute's own books – as well as to take hold of some collections belonging to other Vilna Jewish institutions, to which YIVO had no readily demonstrable pre-war claim– that were discovered by the American army in a cave near Frankfurt. The key to YIVO's success, the author explains, lies above all in the early efforts of its research director Max Weinreich, who had arrived as a refugee in New York in 1940, to lobby American officials. Weinreich correctly anticipated that European countries would invoke the territorial principle and demand the postwar restitution of cultural property deemed heirless. Given Jews' lack of territorial concentration, this would mean the return of materials to countries whose Jewish communities had been destroyed and where future access to them for scholars was unlikely. Weinreich made the case to American officials before war's end that YIVO had transferred its world centre from Vilna to New York by 1940. Moreover, American citizens had founded the New York branch in 1925 and supplied much of YIVO's global budget for years. Hence, YIVO was, he argued, an American organization. Even before the US had determined a general restitution policy, American authorities were thus inclined to treat YIVO as a special case and afford it their legal, diplomatic, and logistical assistance, making possible the arrival of hundreds of crates of books in 1947. The United States' refusal to recognize the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states only reinforced the confluence of YIVO's and American interests.

In contrast, "Prag" relates how growing communist influence meant that YIVO's American association worked against it in Czechoslovakia. YIVO was unable to dispatch representatives there and had to rely on assistance from local Jewish communities and emissaries of the Hebrew University, which sought to claim Jewish cultural property for its own

collections (why university representatives from Palestine were granted greater freedom of action here is a question that requires further elucidation). The Hebrew University's final agent in Prague, Shilo argues, deliberately misled YIVO about his operations. Through a mixture of political dexterity, deception, and bribery, he managed to have materials delivered to Jerusalem, including some belonging to YIVO. What ultimately became of YIVO's large press collection remains, however, a mystery. Shilo speculates that it was either sold, possibly to the Hebrew University, or integrated into the Czechoslovak national library as the country "nationalized" German property, including – ironically – property seized by the Nazis.

In the final chapter, "Epilog: New York-Jerusalem," Shilo frames the competition between YIVO and the Hebrew University for possession of YIVO's and other collections as part of the competition to determine who was the rightful heir of a murdered Eastern European Jewry. Supported by Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., the organization recognized in 1949 as the legal trustee for heirless Jewish cultural property, Zionists saw the Jewish community in Palestine (and later Israel) as its natural inheritor and the collective address for world Jewry. The Hebrew University even had ambitions to absorb YIVO. YIVO, in contrast, remained resolutely committed not only to maintaining the cultural legacy of Eastern European Jewry but to a Yiddish-speaking future in the diaspora. Astutely, the author points to YIVO's identification with the United States as contributing to its great success in reclaiming property in the American Zone of occupied Germany and its dismal lack of success in the pro-Soviet sphere.

Bilha Shilo adds a layer of depth to our understanding of post-World War II Jewish cultural restitution. With admirable concision and clarity, she depicts a complicated and contested process that unfolded within a few intense years in the context of the legal and political indeterminacy of the immediate postwar era, the competition between rival visions for the Jewish future, and the rising tensions of the emerging Cold War. I disagree, however, with her assessment of failure in Czechoslovakia representing a "harbinger of [YIVO's] subsequent decline in importance in the United States" (118). I view the still-unfolding American chapter in YIVO's history, which remains largely unwritten, as one of creative adaptation to postwar realities rather than, as she maintains, of decline as a now territorially rooted, increasingly English-speaking American institution. Max Weinreich's expressions of pessimism about the future of Yiddish and YIVO's mission in America notwithstanding, he remained active in the institute until his death in 1969. And YIVO remained very much engaged in research and scholarship in Yiddish, as well as to some extent active outside the US, for decades after World War II – even longer than the roughly fifteen years it called Vilna home.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923001206

A Nazi Camp near Danzig: Perspectives on Shame and on the Holocaust from Stutthof

By Ruth Schwertfeger. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. 225. Hardcover \$115.00. ISBN: 978-1350274037.

Ingo Loose

Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History, Munich-Berlin

One would think that almost eighty years after the end of the war, research on the history of the National Socialist concentration camps has developed so far that there is not only more