Introduction

Yiddish Social Science and Jewish Immigrant Autobiography

Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer

The life histories in this book are the product of a remarkable collaboration between a scholarly institution and an immigrant community. In 1942, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (known by the acronym YIVO)—which itself had relocated to New York from Vilna, then part of Poland, only two years earlier—called on Jewish immigrants to write their autobiographies. The call took the form of a contest: the writers were to send their manuscripts to YIVO, which would then judge them and award prizes. In response, more than two hundred Jewish immigrants took part in the contest by writing their life stories. These garment workers, shopkeepers, housewives, communal activists, professionals—and even a couple of writers—had come from all parts of Eastern Europe and settled in the cities and towns of the United States and Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Now, as they seized the opportunity to write their stories, they thanked the sponsoring institution for providing them with a forum in which to express themselves. As Minnie Goldstein wrote to Max Weinreich, YIVO’s guiding intellectual light at the time of the contest, “I have lived my whole life with these events in my heart, and many times I thought that if I had someone to tell my life story to my heart would have been less burdened.” Sixty years later, it is clear that YIVO was serving posterity as well as its contemporary public. We too are lucky that these writers had a chance to unburden their hearts and tell us their life stories.

The autobiographies included in this book capture the collective, many-textured experience of a generation that witnessed great upheaval in
Eastern European Jewish life and ushered in a new era in American Jewish history. Presented here as complete stories, these personal narratives offer special insight into the transition between the Old and New Worlds, revealing new perspectives on some well-studied aspects of Jewish immigration history and also opening new areas of inquiry. The autobiographers offer their own views on religion and political revolt; on the struggle for literacy and worldly knowledge beyond traditional Jewish learning; on masculinity and femininity; on family relationships and the domestic sphere; on upward social mobility and the price of success; and on the definition of success itself. Reflecting on these and other themes, the writers struggled to establish a sense of continuity in their lives in the midst of wrenching and fundamental social change. Taken collectively, these autobiographies present a dynamic portrait of an immigrant generation in its encounter with an epic historical moment, and they testify to the power of storytelling as a historical practice.

Weinreich believed that American Jews had much to learn from the immigrant generation, whose members had successfully negotiated the transition from tradition to modernity and from Europe to America. The immigrants, Weinreich believed, formed a living bridge to the Jewish past and its rich cultural resources, without which a creative and vibrant Jewish identity could not survive. This anthology aims to bring that profound legacy to a new audience by presenting just a small selection of the immigrants’ stories to the English-reading public. It hopes to convey some of the immigrants’ strength and the intensity of their struggle not only to forge new lives for themselves in America, but also to construct a modern Jewish identity.

The Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO)

The story of how these autobiographies came to be written begins with YIVO and with the ideas of Max Weinreich (fig. 1). Founded in 1925 and based in Vilna, YIVO was one of the bright lights of Polish Jewish cultural life in the period between the world wars. The institute’s founders, including Weinreich, were dedicated scholars who worked not only on Yiddish, but also in Yiddish, the much-maligned vernacular of Eastern European Jewry. YIVO’s leaders believed that the Jews of Eastern Europe constituted a distinct people, and that this people had a right to develop its national culture in the countries where it lived. Language was central to YIVO’s
conception of Jewish peoplehood. Most Eastern European Jews spoke Yiddish, a language that embodied the history of the Jewish people in Central and Eastern Europe and distinguished its speakers from the surrounding populations. But as the Jews’ everyday language, Yiddish had always had low social status in comparison with Hebrew, the language of Jewish learning and prayer, and with such highly regarded European languages as German and Russian. One of YIVO’s chief aims was to raise the prestige
of the Yiddish language, and therefore of its speakers. The institute also sought to serve the Jewish people by giving them knowledge about themselves. Above all, YIVO’s leaders recognized the urgent need to document all aspects of Jewish life, both in the past and the present.

Weinreich soon emerged as the institute’s leading intellectual. Trained as a linguist, he hoped to construct a new academic field to study the interaction between “personality and culture”—that is, between the individual and his or her social environment. His interest in the developing personality, especially of members of ethnic minority groups, led him to champion the use of life stories in social scientific research. Such documents seemed well suited to the study of the individual’s total development over time, and also more likely to capture the individual’s subjective understanding of his or her life, which was of prime importance to Weinreich. Ultimately, Weinreich intended his research to have practical meaning for the Jewish people. With the decline of traditional Jewish culture in the modern world, Weinreich believed, social science would have to provide the positive group identity, cultural pride, and sense of historical continuity that Jews needed as a minority group.

Weinreich’s research interests coalesced in three autobiography contests that YIVO sponsored in the 1930s for Jewish youths in Poland. Weinreich intended to use the assembled autobiographies to investigate the problems that young Jews faced and to find positive aspects of their experience that could be built upon. Tragically, Jewish youth quite literally had no future in Poland, and neither did YIVO in Vilna. But the institute survived by transferring its center to New York, where Weinreich and several other YIVO scholars had managed to flee. As an immigrant institution, YIVO struggled to find a place for itself in its first couple of years in the United States. Thus, while YIVO continued to research and publish work on Eastern European Jewry, it also took special pains to sponsor projects that focused on American Jewish life.

The Immigrant Autobiography Contest of 1942

One of YIVO’s first major American-centered projects was an autobiography contest patterned after its earlier efforts in Poland. The institute thus turned to a tried-and-true method, but this time applied it to a new constituency with which it had a natural affinity—Eastern European Jewish
immigrants who not only spoke Yiddish, but also sympathized with YIVO’s mission of social research. Weinreich realized that the Jewish Socialist and labor movements built by the immigrants served to reinforce their faith in education, knowledge, and culture. As Weinreich put it, “Among those elements with a connection to Yiddish, we do not find, perhaps, a clear understanding of the meaning of research. But neither is there fear of it. On the contrary, the respect for learning lives on, a respect that combines the old Jewish reverence for Torah study with the Socialist labor movement’s faith in science as a bearer of progress.”

Large-scale immigration to the United States had been cut off, first by World War I and then by a series of restrictive laws enacted in the 1920s, so that by 1942 the immigrant population was an aging one. Although the autobiography contest thus represented a shift in emphasis from youth to middle and old age, it would provide the kinds of material that YIVO wanted. First, immigrant autobiographies would certainly link American Jewry’s present with its past, both in America and in Eastern Europe. Second, they would provide clues about the success and failure of various strategies for adjusting to American conditions and for retaining healthy Jewish identities. They could also be used to preserve cultural memory for current and future generations of American Jews cut off from their Eastern European roots.

In late May 1942, YIVO issued the call for a new autobiography contest on the theme “Why I left Europe and what I have accomplished in America.” The announcement, which appeared in YIVO’s own journal as well as in a number of Yiddish-, English-, and German-language Jewish publications, expressed the organizers’ view that the mass migration of the previous six decades constituted a nearly unprecedented historical revolution in Jewish life. It also stressed their belief in the historical importance of the everyday lives of ordinary people. While historians had described the general contours of the migration, and while some famous immigrant leaders and intellectuals had written their memoirs, the “great masses of immigrants, those who struggled and with their own hands built their personal lives and communal institutions in the New World, have not yet had their say.”

The announcement explained the rules of the contest and advised contestants on how and what to write. The competition was open to any adult Jew who had not been born in the United States or Canada. The top six winners would receive monetary prizes ranging from twenty to one
hundred dollars. Another nineteen writers would win book prizes. Participants were asked to write a minimum of twenty-five notebook-sized pages and to sign their works only with pseudonyms, enclosing their real name in a separate envelope. The announcement suggested a long list of topics that writers could cover, following more or less the life cycle of an individual and stressing issues that had to do with work, social mobility, and aspirations for children. Above all, the call asked that the autobiographies be “detailed,” “precise,” and “sincere.”

The results were gratifying to the organizers. By the end of the contest, more than two hundred autobiographies had been assembled, together with many letters, photographs, diaries, and other personal documents submitted by participants. Analyzing the returns, the YIVO staff found that 176 of the works had been written by men and 47 by women; that just over half had come from New York, while the others had arrived from 62 other places in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, and Cuba; and that the majority of the writers were between 51 and 70 years of age. The writers came from all over Eastern Europe, as well as from Germany and Palestine, and they had arrived in America in every decade from the 1880s to the 1940s, though most had come in the years of mass migration between 1882 and 1924. Ninety percent of the works were written in Yiddish, with the rest in English, German, or Hebrew.

The participants were both eager to write and uneasy about undertaking so daunting a task. Some reported that they had felt “inspired” after reading about the contest, but they still sometimes hesitated to write, fearing that they were not up to the task. Weinreich responded patiently to many inquiries about technical matters, and he encouraged the writers to persevere. In some cases, he corresponded with participants even after they had submitted manuscripts, urging them to flesh out their narrative and posing specific questions for them to answer. Above all, he reassured the contestants that their lives really did matter and that they had much to contribute to scholarship. “There is no human life,” he told one nervous autobiographer, “that is not interesting to science.”

What ultimately motivated the participants to write? Many of the autobiographers were entering late middle and old age, when it is common for people to take stock of their lives. They felt a need to assess for themselves the very question that the contest theme posed: What, indeed, had they accomplished in America? Writing their autobiographies also gave them the opportunity to link their childhoods in Europe with their adulthoods.
in America. The act of writing itself proved a deeply emotional experience, as autobiographers explored memories long buried. As first-prize-winner Ben Reisman (fig. 2) put it,

When I sat myself down at my desk, my God! No exaggeration. Not as in a dream, but as if in reality, I once again became that baby watching his sister
make noodles as I played with the toys. And there sits the teacher, Simkha, instructing us children with his beautiful sorrowful voice. . . . And I cry as I write about it, as I cried then when I was learning Bible. . . . As I wrote I involuntarily opened my mouth and then clenched my teeth. And when I was at the train station about to leave for America, I burst into tears as I parted from my young wife and my sister. And, remarkably, while I wrote that I was saying goodbye, I cried so hard that I had to wait quite a while until I calmed down enough to resume writing.

Writing thus had a cathartic effect for some writers. They were finally able to “unburden their hearts.”

This desire to unburden their hearts to people who they thought would understand helped to motivate the writers. They would have liked their children and grandchildren to know more about their lives, but some doubted that this was possible because of their different historical experiences and, in some cases, because of a language barrier.

It is hard to know what role World War II played in prompting people to write. The autobiographers responded to the war in various ways. Some maintained such close emotional attachments to their places of origin that they worried openly about the fate of loved ones left behind and pictured vividly to themselves their hometowns under Nazi occupation. Others combined Jewish concern with American patriotism by closing their narratives with their hopes for the defeat of the Nazis and the victory of the Allies. Many do not mention the war at all, perhaps feeling that it was not part of their own lives and therefore not part of the assignment. A few mention explicitly that the knowledge, however vague, that something terrible was happening to the Jews of Europe spurred a desire to describe a vanishing way of life that they had known. At the same time, the war confirmed the writers’ good fortune in having become American and validated their decision to emigrate decades earlier.

The contest also offered the writers a chance to gain recognition and honor, and some had high hopes that their manuscripts would win prizes and even be published. But, winner or not, most contestants found it very gratifying to hear that their lives had significance for history. On September 15, 1943, YIVO distributed the awards at a gala ceremony with several hundred people in attendance. All of the writers received certificates (fig. 3), which delighted them. A number indicated their intention to frame these “diplomas” and hang them on the wall. As several contestants put it,
writing their autobiographies was itself one of their most important accomplishments in America.

In the end, only a few works saw publication, in whole or in part. In the six decades since the contest, the autobiographies have resided in the YIVO archives, consulted occasionally by scholars. But this “eternal treasury of Jewish studies and Jewish culture,” as Weinreich called it, remained largely unknown and inaccessible to the wider public.

Fig. 3. All participants in the 1942 contest received a certificate like this one. It recognizes that the participant has “taken part in the contest of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, ‘Why I Left the Old Country and What I Have Accomplished in America,’ and has submitted an account on this theme. The contest jury has decided to acknowledge the account as a document that conveys important material on the history of Jews in recent times. The account has been permanently entered into the store of scientific materials at Yivo and will be used by historians and social psychologists in research and publications. Yivo expresses gratitude to the writer of the account and appreciation for his contribution to Yiddish science.” Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
Weinreich and the writers all agreed that the autobiographies made compelling reading. As Minnie Goldstein told Weinreich, she had never expected to win a prize, “but I knew one thing, that if I had read such a history written by someone else . . . it would have really sparked my interest.” They still fascinate today. True, not all of the autobiographies are equally engaging, but each and every one of them has something essential to say about one or another aspect of the Jewish experience. Most importantly, how the authors wrote and structured their narratives reflects how they understood their lives.

As they wrote, the participants consciously or unconsciously followed several distinct European and American autobiographical traditions. One of these traditions emerged out of the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, which began in Germany in the late eighteenth century and spread to Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. Just as the general European Enlightenment gave rise to the autobiographical form for which Rousseau’s *Confessions*, written in the late eighteenth century, served as the paradigm, the Haskalah gave rise to a new tradition of Jewish autobiography. In the maskilic autobiography as it developed in Eastern Europe, the story details the writer’s education and coming into worldly knowledge beyond or in opposition to traditional Judaism. The figure of the yeshiva student secretly reading “forbidden literature” under threat of punishment is perhaps most emblematic of the excitement, danger, and appeal of the Haskalah to the youth of the elite eager to quench their thirst for knowledge of the world beyond the yeshiva walls.

Although the writers of the YIVO autobiographies all came of age after the Haskalah had lost momentum in the 1880s, the maskilic theme of the pious youth’s loss of faith and cultural reorientation through the secret study of heretical literature remained common at the turn of the twentieth century and beyond. The difference was that youths were now likely to be attracted to one of the political movements that succeeded the Haskalah as vehicles for the modernization of Eastern European Jewry.

Indeed, the maskilic story of individual enlightenment blends well with what might be called a genre of Socialist autobiography. Many of the writers of the YIVO autobiographies were, in fact, profoundly influenced by the Socialist movement both in Eastern Europe and in the United States. The Socialist autobiography, as it developed in Europe, is the story of the young worker who remains oblivious to the ruthless, impersonal forces of
capitalist exploitation at work in his or her life, until an encounter with the Socialist message inspires “conversion” to Socialism and a lifelong commitment to Socialist principles.\textsuperscript{12}

The Socialist autobiographical genre is strongly represented in the YIVO collection in large part because the Workmen’s Circle, a Socialist-oriented Jewish labor fraternal order, enthusiastically endorsed the contest. Bertha Fox could not have been alone in first reading about the contest in the Workmen’s Circle organ, Der fraynd, “after a day of housework.”\textsuperscript{13} The stories of Workmen’s Circle members fit well into the Socialist genre of autobiography. Many of them write about their encounter with Socialism as a form of conversion, during which the Socialist message penetrates their soul and precipitates an immediate shift in their worldview and priorities. Most importantly, the Workmen’s Circle endorsement offered writers an alternative interpretation of the contest’s problematic theme of “accomplishment,” which may otherwise have discouraged those whose lives did not reflect conventional notions of success. The order’s members could judge their success in life not only by their upward mobility, but also by their roles in helping to lift up the masses of Jewish workers by building the movement’s impressive network of working-class institutions.

The struggle to achieve basic literacy, especially in the case of some of the women, or to acquire worldly knowledge and understanding, as in the case of some of the men who had been deeply embedded in the traditional world of the yeshiva, was another important aspect of the writers’ lives. Rose Silverman describes how she painstakingly taught herself to read and write Yiddish, using a prayer book and a published letter-writing manual. Minnie Goldstein taught herself to read Yiddish as an adult, using the Yiddish daily newspaper Forward’s famous advice column, the Bintl brief (Bundle of Letters). Her pride—mixed with surprise—in having won a prize in an essay contest is moving testimony to the strength of her desire for both literacy and recognition. By contrast, Aaron Domnitz, who had a solid education in the traditional Jewish texts, describes his growing interest in modern literature and natural science—an interest that gradually helped lead him out of the traditional milieu.

The Socialist autobiographies also highlight the importance of organizations in the lives of the authors. In both Europe and America, the Socialist movement infused the lives of many of the writers not only with structure, but also with meaning. As these participants describe their youths in Europe, they chronicle daily life in an underground movement
that met their dual needs for political activism and social interaction in equal measure. Socialist organizing in the United States was not nearly so romantic. Not only was it legal, but it also tended to focus on such mundane tasks as winning local elections and gathering subscriptions for the party press. Indeed, disappointment in the American movement’s lack of passion is a characteristic theme in the autobiographies of radicals. Nevertheless, after an initial period of adjustment, immigrant radicals transferred their allegiances. Some joined the Socialist Party, but the organization that really won the loyalty of many writers was the Workmen’s Circle.

Coexisting uneasily with the Socialist autobiographical approach was yet another model: the uniquely American story of the poor immigrant of any nationality who “pulled himself up by his bootstraps” and “worked his way up” from humble origins to achieve unprecedented economic success. This narrative is often associated with the popular nineteenth-century novelist Horatio Alger, whose protagonists overcome great obstacles through their strength of character to cross class barriers. Real-life figures such as the Scottish immigrant turned steel magnate Andrew Carnegie gave this legend of democratic opportunity a new focus for the significant immigrant population only then shedding its “greenhorn” status.

This immigrant “bootstraps” narrative resonated strongly with a number of the YIVO autobiography writers (perhaps abetted by the official theme of the contest, which focused on “accomplishment”). Many of those who started out in the workshop eventually came to the conclusion that working “for someone else” was no good. Business was the surest way up, though it could mean almost anything from peddling to owning a factory. By the 1920s, many of the writers were “successful” by their own estimation. Not only did they own their own businesses and homes, but many had also begun to invest heavily in real estate. Reflecting the emergent consumer culture in which they lived, these autobiographers report the purchase of increasingly expensive consumer goods, houses, and home furnishings as they work their way up the income ladder. Strikingly, authors often combined the story of their upward mobility with that of their continued commitment to the Socialist cause.

As the writers in this anthology navigated their way across the borders of class and culture, they engaged the various narrative forms discussed above in creative tension. They learned these ways of approaching autobiography from a range of sources: from their extensive reading of modern Jewish literature; from the political movements in which they participated;
from the American Yiddish press; and from the sophisticated new media of consumer culture, including advertising, film, and radio.

**Jewish Immigrant Autobiography**

The stories told by the YIVO writers contrast sharply with the better-known immigrant memoir literature in a number of ways. For the most part, for example, the YIVO writers were adults when they arrived in the United States and their perspectives and experiences therefore differ from those of better-known writers who came as children. Perhaps most significantly, the YIVO collection includes the life stories of a number of “immigrant mothers”—women who had already married and given birth to children in the Old Country. Many of these women lacked the ability to write in English (or even Yiddish) and were not as conspicuous in the public sphere as were young, unmarried women. When immigrant women’s voices have found their way into the historical record—either through published autobiographies or, later, through oral history projects—they have tended to be those of the “immigrant daughters” who arrived in the United States as young girls and subsequently mastered the English language.

Among the most famous Jewish immigrant autobiographies are those by Mary Antin and Rose Cohen. Antin’s *The Promised Land*, published in 1912, focuses on the early recognition and cultivation of the author’s literary talents in public school and serves as a song of praise for her adopted country. Antin’s story is one of near-complete assimilation, as she marries a Gentile and immerses herself in “American” life. Rose Cohen’s *Out of the Shadow*, published in 1918, begins as a matter-of-fact account of sweatshop life that more closely resembles the stories in this collection in its lack of self-conscious reflection—at least until the point when she enters the sphere of the settlement house and comes under the powerful influence of Protestant philanthropic endeavors. Cohen’s radical assimilation is less complete and more conflicted than Antin’s, but the assimilationist thrust of her autobiography is nonetheless clear.

Both Antin and Cohen wrote for an English-speaking, gentile audience as cultural brokers, with the goal of giving outsiders an “authentic” perspective on Jewish immigrant life. The result is a flattening out of the historical narrative and a loss of cultural specificity as unfamiliar terms,
events, and concepts are either translated loosely into rough Anglo-American equivalents or omitted altogether. By contrast, the YIVO autobiographers, writing in Yiddish for a Yiddish-speaking audience of fellow immigrants, relate stories about the past rich in detail concerning the culture and history from which they emerged.

Perhaps most importantly, unlike writers such as Antin and Cohen, with their explicitly assimilationist message, the YIVO autobiographers assert continuity between past and present within their own lives. They would never have proclaimed, as Antin did in her foreword, that their past selves had died to enable to them to be born anew in the United States. To a large degree this search for continuity is a function of the YIVO writers having been adults when they emigrated. Moreover, for those politicized in Eastern Europe, radicalization in the social movements of the Old Country rivaled emigration itself as the most significant transformative experience of a lifetime. This is not to argue that the writers did not in fact change fundamentally. Rather, they take it as their task to weave their lives into a coherent whole in the face of a profound disjuncture between past and present.

The well-known published memoir literature also has little to say about relations among husbands, wives, and children (at least from the immigrant parents’ point of view). The YIVO autobiographies, to the contrary, give an intimate view of gender relations in marriage, from the joys of shared domesticity to deep conflict over money, religion, emigration, and politics in both Europe and America. In discussing their lives in Europe, the authors provide detailed, complex, and often unsentimental accounts of childhood, courtship, and relations with parents. Likewise, the autobiographies document the struggles of immigrant parents to maintain a living link to their children and to pass on to them at least some of what they called their “gayst,” their spirit. The loss of easy communication between the generations was an ironic by-product of the parents’ frequent success in seeing to it that their children got a good education and entered prestigious careers. Indeed, the women especially saw their children’s upward mobility as their proudest accomplishment.

Ironically, Orthodox Jews shared with radicals the problem of educating their American children in their own spirit. In Eastern Europe, the United States had gained a reputation as a treyfene medine, a non-kosher country. But some newcomers struggled mightily to keep the Sabbath, an observance made difficult by Sunday blue laws and by the six-day work-week common at the beginning of the century. Indeed, as the stories of
Shmuel Krone and Chaim Kusnetz show, some members of the immigrant generation strove to maintain their religious principles under the pressures of American materialist culture.

This hardly exhausts the list of important aspects of immigrant life on which the autobiographies shed new light. As YIVO’s research director, Weinreich argued so strongly for the centrality of life stories to social science partly because he believed that they represented the complexity of real life more fully than other kinds of documents. Readers and researchers will no doubt continue to come to the autobiographies with their own questions—and, in many cases, the autobiographies will reward them with important clues to the answers.

Translating and Reading the Autobiographies

This volume can present only a small handful of the more than two hundred manuscripts in the YIVO collection. The editors used several criteria for selection. First, those manuscripts chosen for inclusion had to be good stories. Second, they had to be interesting for their historical significance—not only because they touched on great events, but also because they said something about changes in everyday life. Third, the editors tried to make the sample included here at least somewhat more representative of the general immigrant population than is the collection as a whole—not only in terms of gender, but also in political and religious orientation, class status, age, time of migration, region of origin, and place of settlement.

The translation of these texts also presented a number of challenges. Writing in Yiddish for an insider audience, the writers often took it for granted that readers would share their historical and cultural reference points. And having lived through a time of tremendous change and crossed cultural and geographic boundaries, the authors had historical experiences of exceptional variety. To fully understand all of their stories, one must have some familiarity with traditional Judaism; with Eastern European Jewish folkways; with modern political movements; with various trades and occupations; and with the histories of Eastern Europe, North America, and the Middle East. One must also know something of the geography not only of these broad regions, but also of the cities and towns from which the writers came and in which they settled. Few readers today, including the editors, have all of that knowledge. We were able to
rely on the assistance of experts in all the necessary fields. We hope that the notes and Glossary will help the reader navigate the material.

The very fact that the authors were writing in Yiddish presented its own unique challenges. Like most Yiddish speakers, the writers also knew the languages of their native and adopted homelands with varying degrees of fluency. Thus their Yiddish is laced with expressions from Russian, Polish, German, and English. Sometimes, writers manipulated their use of these languages quite consciously. Those who had received a good traditional education, for example, knew at least a smattering of Hebrew and Aramaic as well. Following custom, they quote in the original from the Talmud and the Bible, thus demonstrating their status as educated Jews. These layers of language help give the writing some of its special flavor.

Ultimately, Max Weinreich was right. These texts deserve to be published precisely because the writers and the worlds in which they lived deserve to be remembered. This volume seeks to preserve a bit of that memory and present it to a new audience.

NOTES

1. In the mid-1950s the institute changed its English name to YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. YIVO is an acronym for the institute’s Yiddish name, Yidishe visnshaftlekher institut, which has remained unchanged. For the sake of consistency, the institute will be referred to as YIVO throughout.

2. Minnie Goldstein to YIVO, October 4, 1943, unsorted material, American-Jewish Autobiographies Collection, Record Group 102, YIVO Archives.


8. Max Weinreich to Harry Sprecher, July 4, 1942, letter accompanying autobiography #20, American-Jewish Autobiographies Collection, RG 102, YIVO Archives.

9. Ben Reisman (Yosem Halevi Me‘ir Kalush) to Weinreich, undated, American-Jewish Autobiographies Collection, unsorted materials, RG 102, YIVO Archives.


13. Autobiography #193, part 1, page 1, American-Jewish Autobiographies Collection, RG 102, YIVO Archives.