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Yiddishism and Creation of the Yiddish Nation

Proceedings of the International Workshop
Tokyo, January 7 and Kyoto, January 9, 2017

Edited by Yuu Nishimura and Mari Nomura

March 2017
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The Capital of Yiddishland:
Yiddish Culture in Vilna between the Two World Wars[1]

Cecile E. Kuznitz

The city of Vilna has always occupied a special place in the Jewish imagination. While it was known to Lithuanians as Vilnius, to Russians as Vil'na, and to Poles as Wilno, to Jews it was always "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," a legendary center of culture and scholarship. As the literary critic Shmuel Niger observed, "About no Jewish community, except for Jerusalem, of course, has so much been written as about the Jerusalem of Lithuania."[2] Indeed, many Jewish authors celebrated the city in their work. One example is the poem "Vilna," published in 1929, by the Yiddish writer Moyshe Kulbak:

> You are a Book of Psalms spelled out in clay and iron;
> Each stone is a prayer, each wall a hymn,
> When the moon trickles down in your mystical alleys . . .
> Each stone is a holy book, each wall a parchment.[3]

Why did Vilna inspire such lyricism? Other Jewish communities in Eastern Europe boasted much larger Jewish populations. In the period between the two World Wars, Vilna had about 55,000 Jewish residents while Warsaw had about six times that number. Nor could Vilna claim a great *yikhes* [lineage] as a particularly old Jewish center. While the earliest date of Jewish settlement is uncertain, a stable community existed there by the second half of the sixteenth century. Yet at the time Vilna was fighting to establish itself alongside older cities in the region such as Brisk, Grodno, and Pinsk.

In 1633 King Wladislaw IV issued a charter restricting Jewish residence to three streets in the heart of the medieval town center. While such regulations were never strictly enforced, this area became the focal point of Jewish life. Its

picturesque winding streets, some framed by arches, became an enduring symbol of the city until the present day. Activity centered on the *shulhoyf* [synagogue courtyard], which housed the Great Synagogue and many *kloyzn* [prayer rooms].

The shulhoyf was the hub of religious activity. It was said that there were so many *minyans* [prayer groups] meeting there that one could find Jews praying around the clock. It also functioned something like a town square as residents also gathered to use the bath, draw water from the well, shop for religious articles, or read the latest announcements posted on large boards there. Located a short walk away were other well known institutions such as Ramayles yeshiva [school for Talmudic study] and the Romm printing press, which produced a famous edition of the Talmud. Together they secured Vilna's reputation as a center of traditional Jewish piety and scholarship.

If the shulhoyf was the space that symbolized Vilna's status among religious communities, the person who symbolized this quality was Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, known as the *Vilner gaon* [genius of Vilna] (1720-1797). The Gaon embodied the traditional qualities of the *Litvak* [Lithuanian Jew], namely rationalism and sobriety. He was known for his strict discipline in his study habits and acetic lifestyle. It was no coincidence that he led the opposition to the Hasidic movement, with its belief in wonder-working *rebbes* [Hasidic leaders] and appeal to the emotions.

By the mid nineteenth century Vilna was a center of a new movement in Jewish life, the *haskalah* [Jewish Enlightenment], which led to cultural and educational innovations. The Romm press began publishing works of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature alongside religious texts. In 1847 the Russian government opened a Teachers Seminary designed to promote secular education among Jews, while that same year adherents of Reform Judaism founded the modernized Choral Synagogue (today the only functioning synagogue in the city). In 1860 the *maskil* [proponent of Enlightenment] Shmuel Yosef Fuenn published

a history of Vilna, the first ever devoted to an East European Jewish community.[4] The Strashun Library, founded in 1892 with a gift of the maskil Matisyahu Strashun to the Vilna Jewish community, joined the famed array of institutions in the shulhoyf.

By the late nineteenth century Vilna was again at the forefront of new developments in Jewish society as it became a hotbed of modern political movements, including both major streams of Jewish nationalism. On the one hand, Zionism advocated a Jewish homeland in Palestine and a revival of the Hebrew language, which was then used only for prayer and study. On the other, Diaspora nationalism sought to secure Jews' rights in the countries of their residence and to develop a modern culture in Yiddish, the Jewish vernacular.[5] The Jewish Labor Bund, a political party committed to both socialism and the Diaspora, was founded in the city in 1897.

How did Vilna come to play such a prominent role in so many areas of Jewish life? One reason was its location in the borderland region known to Jews as *Lite* [Lithuania], which included all of the Baltics as well as parts of present day Belarus and Eastern Poland. As the many names of the city suggest, Vilna itself was famously heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion, and language. It was historically inhabited by Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Belorussians, Tatars, and others, with Jews sometimes forming a plurality of the population.

Moreover, because of its borderland location the city fell under the rule of many different powers over time. Historically the capital of Lithuania, in 1568 Vilna became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. With the partitions of Poland it was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1795. After changing hands some half a dozen times during World War I, it was claimed by both Lithuania and Poland and eventually became part of the newly reconstituted Polish state. (After World War II the city was incorporated into the Soviet Union and today it

is the capital of independent Lithuania.)

For Jews, the lack of a single dominant element in the surrounding population meant less pressure to assimilate to any particular non-Jewish culture. In terms of language, Jews felt freer to maintain their own distinct vernacular tongue, Yiddish. This trend was reinforced by the frequent changes of ruling power. When a new set of government authorities began using an unfamiliar language some Jewish residents were unable or unwilling to adapt and instead kept to speaking Yiddish as the simplest course of action.

In addition to external conditions, the internal dynamics of the Jewish community contributed to its cultural fecundity. One factor was the Litvak intellectual tradition that stressed rationalism over Hasidic mysticism. Traditionally, Lithuanian Jews were more open to secular forms of learning such as science and mathematics as long as they advanced the ultimate goal of religious study. This made possible a smoother transition to haskalah and later to modern cultural movements.

The relatively small number of both Hasidic and assimilated Jews meant that class and religious divisions were less pronounced within the Vilna Jewish community than in many others. And while the competition between Zionism and Diaspora nationalism was usually mirrored by a rivalry between Hebrew and Yiddish, in Vilna Jews of all political orientations were more likely to maintain the use of the Jewish vernacular. Thus the Vilna Jewish community enjoyed a relatively high degree of unity, and one of the factors that united its members was the Yiddish language.

These trends became even more pronounced in the wake of World War I. When Germans occupied the city during the war they encouraged the use of Yiddish, which they viewed as a dialect of their own tongue and thus preferred to Russian. As a result, the first Yiddish schools were opened in Vilna under German occupation. As Poles and Lithuanians battled for control at the end of the war,

many Jews thought it prudent to remain loyal to their own culture rather than risk taking sides. In fact, as they waited for the resolution of the conflict some Jews who had switched from Yiddish to Russian now returned to using Yiddish.

Eventually Poland emerged as the new ruling power. As the map of Europe was redrawn at this time, newly independent states like Poland were forced to sign a series of Minorities Treaties pledging to support the cultural and educational work of their national minority populations. Language now took on new political weight, as activists argued that by uniting behind Yiddish Jews could make the best case for their entitlement to national rights. In fact, Jews were included in the list of groups covered by these protections, yet the Polish government rarely fulfilled its treaty obligations and formally abrogated them in 1934. Nevertheless, these developments led Jewish leaders to begin the interwar period in a mood of optimism.

In the following two decades Vilna became the site of arguably the greatest flowering of a modern secular culture in the Yiddish language. It was home to a flourishing theater, art, and publishing scene as well as the literary group *Yung vilne* [Young Vilna], which included such luminaries of Yiddish literature as Abraham Sutzkever and Chaim Grade. The Yiddish schools first opened during the German occupation became the kernel of a network of educational institutions from the level of kindergartens to teachers seminaries. For the first time in these schools Jewish children received a modern, systematic education with most subjects – from Jewish history to math to physical education – taught in their mother tongue. Despite the much larger size of Warsaw's Jewish community in the interwar period, more pupils studied in Yiddish schools in Vilna than in the Polish capital. Thus while Vilna was still called "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," these achievements earned it another nickname: "the capital of Yiddishland."

Given this background it would seem only natural that Vilna would become

the home of the *Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut* [Yiddish Scientific Institute], known by its acronym YIVO. YIVO was founded in 1925 as the first center for scholarship in Yiddish and about the history and culture of Yiddish-speaking Jewry. The institute set out to document and research both the Jewish past and present, to publish its findings, and to train the next generation of Yiddish scholars. It founded four research sections: for Philology, which included the study of Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; for History; for Economics and Statistics; and for Psychology and Pedagogy. It also established a Library and Archives that today still comprise the world's largest collections on Yiddish culture and East European Jewry. It later added other components, most notably its Division for Youth Research.

Among YIVO's main goals were to raise the prestige of Yiddish, which had traditionally been denigrated as a lowly "jargon." By researching and standardizing the language, YIVO's scholars hoped to win respect not only for Yiddish but for all 11 million of its speakers. This was one aspect of the institute's mission to "serve the folk," the masses of ordinary Jews. Furthermore, YIVO sought to "serve the folk" by studying the experiences of the common people, by addressing topics that they would find relevant to their lives, and by presenting its research findings in a format accessible to a wide audience.

Finally, the institute sought to serve as a center for Yiddish culture in several senses of the word. Yiddish-speaking Jews were widely dispersed throughout Europe, with emigrant communities from North America to South Africa. Diaspora nationalists viewed them a nation lacking a territory of its own, united by language rather than land. On a practical level YIVO sought to provide Yiddish scholars with a common meeting place, an organizational base, and a main repository where they could find the documents and data necessary for their work. Moreover, on a symbolic level it functioned as the equivalent of a national language academy, library, and university for this stateless "Yiddish nation." Thus

it even took on political significance. As one supporter explained, since the Yiddish "language has no center and no government to support it," YIVO served Yiddish-speaking Jewry "instead of a government."[6] It was in this sense that the linguist and journalist Zalman Reisen, one of YIVO's founders, called the institute "the intellectual ingathering of the exiles for the international Yiddish nation."[7]

If Vilna was indeed "the capital of Yiddishland," then many saw Vilna as YIVO's natural home. As the linguist Noah Prylucki stated, "Yiddish itself is recognized as a territory, the anarchic republic with its seat in Vilna. YIVO is the scholarly academy of the territory 'Yiddish.'"[8] In fact, in retrospect many argued that this city was the only possible location for YIVO's main office. "It was entirely natural that the first to respond [to the idea of the institute] was Vilna," stated the head of the Historical Section, Elias Tcherikower, in 1930. "It couldn't have been otherwise."[9]

Yet such assessments were clear only in hindsight. Nokhem Shtif, the Yiddish linguist who formulated the detailed plan for a Yiddish scholarly institute, first spoke of his idea in Saint Petersburg in 1917. Shtif was then part of a group of Jewish students and intellectuals living in the Russian capital. As adherents of Diaspora nationalism they rejoiced at the overthrow of the tsar in February 1917, which they hoped would allow them to build a modern secular Jewish culture in a newly democratic country. However, this aspiration was soon dashed with the Bolshevik takeover of power in October as many fled Russia in the wake of war, famine, and political repression. Most went to Ukraine, which briefly held out the promise of autonomy for its Jewish minority, yet that country was soon engulfed by a wave of violent pogroms. Many then settled in Berlin, which proved another temporary refuge. Their wanderings strengthened their conviction of the need for a secure haven in which to pursue their work and build Yiddish culture.

It was in Berlin in fall 1924 that Shtif once again tried to realize his dream,

composing a detailed memorandum entitled “On a Yiddish Academic Institute.”[10] He wrote that the headquarters of this new institution must be in a “great European center” like Berlin or Vienna, with branches in Yiddish-speaking communities throughout the world.[11] At the time Shtif finished his memorandum he could not afford to have it duplicated or mailed. Once he managed to gather sufficient funds he sent copies to Jewish leaders in cities that he envisioned as YIVO’s bases of support: Berlin, New York, and Vilna.

In Berlin the great Jewish historian Simon Dubnow supported the plan in principle but was skeptical that it could be realized. He wrote to Shtif:

> First there must be found a wealthy man who will give several tens of thousands of dollars for the institute . . . and the second and third year we must pray to God that he (the wealthy man, that is) doesn't go bankrupt . . .[12]

Shtif also sent a copy to Chaim Zhitlowsky, the leading theoretician of Yiddishism, in New York. After a lengthy delay Shtif finally received a discouraging reply from Zhitlowsky, who maintained that American Jews would not give financial support for such a project devoted to high culture in Yiddish. The one exception to this disheartening pattern was Vilna, where the scholars Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen welcomed Shtif’s memorandum with great enthusiasm. They quickly organized a meeting of Yiddish school activists on March 24, 1925 that voted its approval of the plan.

The Vilna supporters placed greater weight than Shtif on addressing not just a narrow audience of scholars but the broader Jewish public. Living in the midst of the Yiddish-speaking “folk,” they felt more strongly the need to connect YIVO’s work to the concerns of contemporary Jewish society. They also envisioned YIVO as part of the network of modern Yiddish cultural institutions that they were then working to build in the city. In particular, as many were drawn

from the ranks of educators, they emphasized that the new institute should work in tandem with the Yiddish secular schools. Despite these minor points of difference, the Vilna activists agreed with Shtif that YIVO's headquarters should be in Berlin.

Shtif was delighted by his plan's warm reception in Vilna. As he wrote to Zhitlowsky, "Vilna idealists are great pragmatists, and they have shown how to make dreams come true . . ."[13] In fact, it quickly became clear that YIVO's strongest base of support was the city of Vilna and the surrounding region of Lite. By the spring of 1926, for example, Vilna supporters had prepared the institute's first scholarly publication and gathered thousands of items for its collections. In these early months support groups also formed in the Baltic cities of Riga and Dorpat. Meanwhile, YIVO's Berlin office became virtually inactive as Shtif departed for Kiev and Tcherikower for Paris. Yet for the next two years YIVO's leaders resisted moving their center to Vilna. Such a formal step was in fact never taken, but it became moot when the Vilna branch formed a Building Committee and began fundraising for a headquarters in the city in April 1928.

If Shtif first turned to Berlin and New York for support, this was in part because in the 1920s these communities were relatively prosperous. He hoped that Jewish individuals and organizations in Western Europe and the United States would be forthcoming with large donations to underwrite Yiddish cultural work. By contrast, in the interwar period Eastern Europe was impoverished and devastated by war. While YIVO's founders were encouraged by the warm reception they encountered there, as East Europeans themselves they were keenly aware of the poverty of the region, which only grew worse over the next two decades. They feared that under such conditions local supporters would never be able to cover YIVO's budget. As they wrote in 1925, "In Poland there is simply hunger among the Jewish masses . . . of course, in such a situation it is out of the question that in Vilna we can get some means for the institute."[14]

In addition, Vilna activists were already burdened by their struggle to build other institutions of secular Yiddish culture in the city. In particular, as YIVO's local leaders put it, they looked for money in "the pocket of the same paupers who support the school system."[15] Thus despite their enthusiasm for the institute, they feared that they would not be able devote sufficient energy and funds to its cause. Hence their initial agreement that the headquarters would best be located in Berlin. Once it became evident that Vilna was the de facto center of YIVO's work, they were painfully aware of how economic conditions limited what they could achieve. As Tcherikower wrote in 1927, "One must be in Vilna, in our institute, to see the poverty that reigns there. It's truly a wonder that in such poverty they do so much, but one can't pay the printer with wonder."[16]

Yet if poverty was one undeniable aspect of Jewish life in interwar Vilna, another was its intense cultural and educational activity. Playing on the rabbinic saying "Without bread there is no learning," the writer Daniel Charney entitled a 1939 article about the city "There is No Bread But There is Learning."[17] At this time the institutions of religious life and study were still centered in the shulhoyf and about half of the city's Jewish population still lived in the Jewish quarter. Yet by the interwar period this medieval neighborhood was dilapidated and overcrowded. It housed only the poorest elements of the population and the cheapest shops, sometimes dealing in second hand or stolen goods.

By contrast, many of Vilna's modern institutions were located in the neighborhood of Pohulanka, a short walk to the west of the Jewish quarter. This part of the city had only recently been developed with broad, straight streets lined with trees. There one could find the offices of the relief society Yekopo and the public health organization TOZ, as well as several schools and student organizations. This area still featured empty fields, one of which was used as the playground of the Maccabi sports club. In addition, many secular activists and intellectuals made their homes in Pohulanka's modern apartment buildings. The

area's new construction, open space, and greenery presented a clear contrast to the Jewish quarter. One school described its new location in a "beautiful hygienic building . . . roomy, sunny, and airy" in "remote" Pohulanka as "truly a salvation for the children who come from the city center, from the crowded, stale, and dusty streets."[18]

This contrast between the Jewish quarter and Pohulanka is reflected in a comparison of the Strashun Library and YIVO. With its renowned collection of rabbinic and maskilic works the Strashun Library found a fitting home in the shulhoyf, where a special building was constructed to house it in 1901. YIVO, on the other hand, first rented offices in Pohulanka, where many of its leaders also lived. In 1928 the Building Committee purchased a plot of land in this new neighborhood and set about updating an existing structure on the site. Renovation work was delayed by the onset of the Great Depression and other financial woes that nearly bankrupted the institute. Yet when finally completed in 1933, the YIVO headquarters made an impressive sight. It was set back from the street by landscaped grounds and outfitted to suit the needs of a modern research institution. Its green setting and up-to-date facilities presented a clear contrast to the conditions of the Jewish quarter. The historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz, who spent a year as a student at YIVO in 1938-1939, wrote in her memoirs:

> Everything about the YIVO – its location, its landscaped setting, its modern design, the gleaming immaculateness of the place – delivered a message. . . . The YIVO was no seedy relic of the past; it belonged to the future.[19]

In this way the building symbolized the vision of Yiddish culture in interwar Vilna as forward looking and dynamic.

The YIVO headquarters quickly became an attraction for local residents and tourists alike. As the YIVO newsletter *Yedies* [News] wrote, "People come from

all countries and parts of the world, and as they arrive in Vilna they go first of all to YIVO."[20] The Yiddish guidebook *1000 yor vilne* [1000 Years of Vilna] recommended that visitors with only half a day to spend in the city begin their tour in the Jewish quarter and end at YIVO, as if retracing in a few hours the path from traditional to modern Vilna. Thus the institute was considered the apex of the famed array of Jewish institutions in the Jerusalem of Lithuania as well as a landmark for all Yiddish-speaking Jews. Supporters like Charney viewed "the small, modest building of YIVO" as "the symbol and ornament of our highest cultural achievements in the entire world."[21] If Vilna was indeed "the capital of Yiddishland," then the YIVO headquarters was the closest thing that the Yiddish nation had to a capitol building.

These ideas were embodied in one of the facility's most striking features. Upon entering one saw on the staircase landing a large map of the world labeled in Yiddish and marked to indicate the location of YIVO branches and support groups in many countries. The largest pin was reserved for the YIVO headquarters. This map thus gave visual representation to the concept of the Yiddish nation as a Diaspora that spanned the globe with its center in Vilna.

Yet while Vilna's modern Jewish activists lauded the institutions of Pohulanka, they did not denigrate the traditional way of life represented by the shulhoyf and the Jewish quarter. On the contrary, they celebrated it. Writers and artists, attracted by the neighborhood's quaint streets and evocative atmosphere, often depicted it in their work. These included Moyshe Kulbak (quoted earlier) and Zalman Shneour, who wrote, "Every wall absorbs tradition with the scent of Sabbath spices."[22] In this way secular Jewish cultural figures added to the city's mystique, then co-opted that mystique for their own work. This was possible because they described the activities of traditional and modern Vilna not as competing but as complimentary. They argued that they did not wish to supplant

Vilna's heritage but rather to preserve its essence in a progressive form that combined the best of the old and the new.

These activists described themselves as merely taking the next step in extending Vilna's "tradition of *beginning* new things . . . a pioneer tradition." As Shmuel Niger explained, "Even the revolution of the Vilna Jewish street began from building, not from breaking."[23] In such a formulation even politically radical movements were seen as part of Vilna's long legacy rooted in its religious heritage. Thus one author asked rhetorically what represented the true essence of the city: the rabbi, the maskil, or the socialist Bundist; the "primitive," "dying" shulhoyf or the institutions of the "living new Jewish humanist culture." His answer: all are links in the "golden chain" of Vilna Jewish life, all ingredients of "*nusekh vilne* [the Vilna style]."[24] In this way often starkly opposing trends were synthesized into a seamless whole.

These factors made Vilna a fitting home for YIVO, an institution that carried on the city's tradition as a center of culture and education. Niger described the institute as the modern equivalent of the Vilner gaon's kloyz and Ramayles yeshiva, a place where students studied debates among Yiddish linguists instead of rabbinic sages. Although he had resisted the move of the YIVO headquarters for several years, in 1935 Weinreich wrote that "Vilna is the only place where the institute could grow to its present level." Weinreich argued that modern Jewish scholarship could only thrive in a city with as rich a legacy as Vilna, where even "the houses and the stones retain a memory" of the Jewish past.[25]

One reason for this was YIVO's deep commitment both to preserving Jewish history and to producing innovative scholarship. Its very function, Weinreich continued, was to act as "a bridge from the past to the future." It thus found its rightful place in the Jerusalem of Lithuania, a city where "there is paired Jewish tradition and the Jewish present. Only from the two elements together can one build a Jewish cultural future."[26] Another was that only in a city like Vilna,

in the midst of a vibrant Yiddish-speaking community, could YIVO fulfill its wider mission of "serving the folk." Ironically, in cosmopolitan Berlin YIVO would have likely remained just a small, poor institution speaking to a handful of scholars. In provincial Vilna it became the lynchpin of a worldwide network of modern institutions in the Yiddish language.

By the interwar period Vilna had assumed an almost mythic stature among East European Jewish communities. As a speaker at the 1929 YIVO conference put it, "For us Vilna is not simply a city; it is an idea."[27] Several factors accounted for this special "idea" of Vilna, among them its distinctive intellectual tradition as well as its highly diverse population and the resulting low levels of assimilation. In the wake of World War I these longstanding factors combined with a new political reality to produce an unprecedented flowering of modern Yiddish culture. Paradoxically, this intense cultural activity took place amidst great poverty and increasing antisemitism, placing severe limits upon what Jewish leaders could achieve. Yet such constraints did not dampen their devotion; if anything, these adverse conditions seem to have strengthened their resolve.

While an institute for Yiddish scholarship was originally conceived in Saint Petersburg and planned for Berlin, in retrospect it seemed inevitable that Vilna would become YIVO's home. As Max Weinreich put it, "We can say resolutely that Vilna did not grab the institute; rather, it was laid upon our city."[28] While Vilna's reputation as a center of traditional piety and learning was represented by the shulhoyf in the Jewish quarter, the YIVO building in Pohulanka became part of an array of new institutions that both complemented this legacy and extended it for a new era.

There YIVO became a tangible symbol for the Yiddish nation, a community of Yiddish-speaking Jews spread across the globe that lacked the trappings of a state. It therefore found its rightful place in the city called not only "the Jerusalem

of Lithuania" but also "the capital of Yiddishland." Both the institute and the city it made its home transcended the poverty of their material conditions to promote a unique vision of Jewish culture: one rooted in tradition but on the cutting edge of European trends, embracing both the elite and the masses, that demonstrated how Jews could be at the same time deeply Jewish and deeply modern.

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[1] The author would like to thank Dr. Yuu Nishimura for the invitation to present the lecture at Kyoto University on which this text is based. The material here is drawn in part from Cecile E. Kuznitz, "On the Jewish Street: Yiddish Culture and the Urban Landscape in Interwar Vilna," in *Yiddish Language and Culture: Then and Now*, ed. Leonard J. Greenspoon (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1998), 65–92 and Ibid., *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 112–140.

[2] Shmuel Niger, "Vilne," in *Vilne: A zamelbukh gevidmet der shtot vilne*, ed. Yefim Yeshurin (New York: Vilner branch 367 arbeter-ring, 1935), 776–777.

[3] Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk, eds., *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), 406-7. Translation by Nathan Halper modified by the author.

[4] See Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, *Kiryah ne'emanah* [Faithful City].

[5] This description is broadly schematic. In the movement's early years, some Zionists supported the notion of a Jewish homeland in a territory other than Palestine. After the failure of the proposal to accept Uganda as a Jewish homeland in 1903, they split to form the Territorialist movement. Zionists also varied greatly in the importance they attributed to Hebrew culture as well as to work in the Diaspora. At the same time, while all Diaspora nationalists supported Yiddish they varied in the weight they placed on language in their overall conception of Jewish identity.

[6] N. Pereperkovitsh, "Unzere shprakh-gilgulim," *Folk un visnshaft*, Riga, 8 October 1925, RG 82, Tcherikower Archive (YIVO, Vilna), YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, folder 2388.

[7] *Barikht fun der konferents fun dem yivo* (Vilna: YIVO, 1930), 12.

[8] *Der alveltlekher tsuzamenfor fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Vilna: YIVO, 1936), 37.

[9] Elias Tcherikower, "Tsu der geshikhte fun a gelungenem pruv," RG 82, folder 2444.

[10] See Nokhem Shtif, "Vegn a yidishn akademishn institut," in *Di organizatsye fun der yidisher visnshaft* (Vilna: TSBK and VILBIG, 1925).

[11] Ibid., 31–32.

[12] Dubnow to Shtif, 18 February 1925, RG 82, folder 2369.

[13] Shtif to Zhitlowsky, 3 April 1925, RG 82, folder 2370.

[14] Organizational Committee to Culture League, Mannheim and Mushinski, Chemnitz, 8 December 1925, RG 82, folder 2393.

[15] Organizational Committee to Efroykin, 16 January 1926, RG 82, folder 2396.

[16] Tcherikower to Shatzky, 10 September 1927, RG 82, folder 2410.

[17] Daniel Charney, "Eyn kemakh – yesh toyre," in *Vilner almanakh,* ed. A. I.

Grodzenski (Vilna: Ovnt kurier, 1939), 151–154.
[18] Sh. Bastomski, "Der yidish-veltlekher shul-vezn in vilne, " in *Vilner almanakh,* 206.
[19] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 77–79.
[20] *Yedies* 57–58 (August–September 1936): 16.
[21] Daniel Charney, *Vilne (memuarn)* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine, 1951), 227–228.
[22] Zalman Shneour,"Rekhov ha-yehudim be-or ve-tsel," introduction to *Ein Ghetto im Osten (Wilna)*, by M. Vorobeichic (Zurich: Oreil Fussli Verlag, 1931), 3–4.
[23] Niger, 778–779.
[24] Y. Rubin, "Unzer vilne," in *Unzer tog, spetsiele oysgabe far amerike* (Vilna: n.p., 1921), 9.
[25]Max Weinreich, "Der yidisher visnshaftlekher institut (yivo)," in *Vilne: a zamelbukh,* 323.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *Barikht*, 28.
[28] Weinreich, 322.