When contemplating why he sought to save so many Yiddish books, Lansky noted that it was not nostalgia; his grandparents spoke Yiddish, his parents only rarely, and they had not thought to teach him. 🡪He and his siblings were “American” and did not need to be burdened with the past.

Yiddish, though the primary and sometimes only language of many Jews, was regarded often as a bastard, half-bestial tongue; it was comprised of many linguistic influences spanning thousands of years, from Hebrew to German to French to Polish.

The one teacher he could find recognized that immersion was not practical for a language that so many Jewish Americans had abandoned, so he had to resort to reading.

Dictionaries for Yiddish were not yet standard, as the language had remained almost totally oral until the late 19th century.

Yiddish books themselves were rare, having phased out as Jews ceased teaching the language to their children.

Lansky read a book by Ruth R. Wisse called *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero*; the schlemiel is a Yiddish/Jewish-American literary protagonist that is often comic by way of being out of place amongst normal society.

The schlemiel was used to challenge standing political and philosophical ideology.

Pursuing graduate studies with Ruth, Lansky and his peers were often required to use the Xerox machine 🡪an example of technological advancement changing the ways in which we obtain literature.

Jews, as “dispersed and landless” for most of their history, held books to be a type of mobile homeland, the vault within which was kept safe their memory, identity, and history 🡪they venerated books.

The need to assimilate seems to have driven some Jews, even those that loved literature, to abandon Yiddish literature and other aspects of their historical culture.

Although Yiddish literature has lost its foothold as a contemporary style, it serves as a historical bridge/link between two epochs of Jewish history, especially regarding first-hand accounts of the Holocaust.

Note (p. 81): either the old or the young were interested in saving the Yiddish culture, NOT anyone in-between.

Does this point toward the idea that the young, having been raised with little of the culture by parents that took their own upbringing in the culture for granted, yearned for some kind of historical, cultural anchor?

Jews in Europe clung to tradition, whereas American Jews embraced and drove progress/change.

Is this part of the reason Jews were targeted as part of WWII?

Differences in language and ideology were frowned upon in America, so Yiddish organizations (unions, etc.) negatively impacted the Jews; however, their religious differences were acceptable, so they defined themselves with religion🡪recall that orthodox Jews frown upon Yiddish (hence, the language began to die).

Divides in ideology (anarchists, Zionists, communists, etc.) continue to divide Jews.

Methods of communication between generations made it difficult to convey ideas and organize.

Yiddish as a counterculture? By this, I think, is meant that the assimilated had given up their culture, and younger generations were turning back to their culture during times of war and social injustice in order to find some kind of anchor. 🡪A challenge of the mainstream

Yiddish was used to make the abstract more concrete.

Story on page 166.

The younger generations of Jews, having become successful (lawyers, etc.) and flippant, were too pleased with their current socioeconomic status and turned a deaf ear to the older generation trying to preserve the literature.

Yiddish, viewed by the orthodox as a conveyance of “modern literature,” was thought to contaminate the minds of students with secular ideas.

Surprisingly, many of the younger (3rd or 4th generation American) Jews had no idea of the details of their Yiddish heritage.

How can we reach younger generations increasingly removed from their cultural roots and teach them to value their cultures?

Yiddish was worldwide, largely due to the millions of Jews that fled Germany and eastern Europe as Hitler gained greater power 🡪very strong presence in South America, especially Argentina.

Jews living in the USSR suffered particularly harsh discrimination, as writers were labeled enemies of the people and executed en masse, their wives taken at night to women’s prison camps to do forced labor, forever separated from their children.

Again, emphasis on the fact that Jews were divided: some felt that Yiddish was relic of an immigrant past they wanted to forget, and others wanted to preserve it as part of their cultural heritage.

Some individuals were more concerned with the very survival of Israel, preferring instead to work on providing arms for the country.

Money problems continued to limit the scope of the operation: it is difficult to get people to donate money.

Do we harbor a secret aversion to openly supporting cultural endeavors, at least with money?

Lansky first felt that television and books were incompatible.

As different medium for culture, are they incapable of being combined? Why are they so different? Is this good or bad?

“Yiddish was famous already; all we had to do was make it accessible and the world was ready to listen.” (p. 276)

Is this quote applicable to all culture?

Digitization helped to solve the problem of accessibility to Yiddish books that were too brittle to be handled directly.

This was before ebooks, so the digitized titles, when bought, are reprinted on acid-free paper and sent to the customer.

Yiddish became the first digitized literature.