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LISA MOSES LEFF. *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust*. (The Oxford Series on History and Archives.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xii, 286. \$29.95.

Lisa Moses Leff's *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* is the story of Jewish scholar Zosa Szajkowski (1911–1978) and his impact on the recovery, collection, and archiving of European Jewish documentary heritage in the wake of the Holocaust. Szajkowski is particularly well known for his research on the history of the Jews in France since the seventeenth century. He has also gained a reputation as a notorious archive thief. Szajkowski's motivations for his post-1945 thefts and the historical and institutional context in which they occurred form the thematic, intellectual, and ethical focus of Leff's book. As much as a study of Szajkowski, this book is an analysis of the impact of what Raphael Lemkin would call Nazism's "cultural genocide" on the politics, activism, and institutions of Jewish reconstruction in America and Europe after the Second World War.

In many respects, Szajkowski's own life was as eventful as the French Revolutionary period so often addressed in his research. Szajkowski was born in Zaromb, Poland and joined his two older brothers and sisters in Paris at the age of sixteen. There, he worked for the Yiddish-language Communist press and met the Ukrainian émigré Jewish intellectuals Elias (Ilya) and Rebecca (Riva) Tcherikower. The Tcherikowers were synonymous with YIVO (*Yidisher visnshaflekher institut*, an institution dedicated to the academic study of the Jewish people) and ignited Szajkowski's passion for archiving and writing European Jewish history. During World War II, Szajkowski fought for the French Foreign Legion, was a paratrooper with the U.S. Army, and from July 1945 participated in the Allied occupation of Berlin. Leff's chapter on this period evocatively chronicles the chaos of Berlin's ravaged postwar

cityscape and Szajkowski's determined efforts to salvage and ship back to YIVO's offices in New York any recovered Jewish communal documents or archival evidence of Nazi antisemitism. The cast of characters in this section of Leff's book also suggests the extent to which various forms of Jewish cultural activism in the immediate postwar years would influence the future field of Holocaust Studies. For example, Leff shows how Libe or Lucy Schildkret (also known by her married name, Lucy Dawidowicz) worked in a displaced persons camp and carried out cultural reconstruction on behalf of YIVO. Equally, in Paris, Léon Poliakov collected the documentary evidence of German occupation, while by 1950, Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) representative Hannah Arendt was in conflict with the President of the Hamburg Jewish Community over where its archives ought to be preserved. The seeds of Holocaust scholarship were thus far removed from the ivory tower of Leopold von Ranke's historical "objectivity." Instead, resembling Leff's reproduction photograph of Szajkowski rummaging through the documentary remains of Berlin's Nazi Propaganda Ministry (131–132), the founding figures of Holocaust studies such as Dawidowicz, Poliakov, and Arendt were intellectually shaped by the physical, emotional and existential experience of the rubble, debris, and barbed wire of Europe's ruins.

If Szajkowski's documentary shipments from Berlin were against Allied occupation regulations, his postwar archival activities caused the most controversy. After the Second World War, Szajkowski gained a growing reputation as an archive thief. He was sometimes caught and arrested for his transgressions. One arrest occurred in Strasbourg, France, on April 13, 1961. Szajkowski confessed, "I admit to having lacerated volumes belonging to the Strasbourg Municipal Library" (9). Another arrest had far more tragic consequences. This arrest happened outside the New York Public Library and was in relation to Szajkowski's removal of rare Jewish pamphlets and ephemera. Facing professional and personal disrepute

in his adopted home city, Szajkowski committed suicide on September 26, 1978. His body was discovered drowned in a bathtub at the Hotel Taft in Manhattan (199).

Leff presents a balanced and nuanced portrait of Szajkowski. She argues that during the war Szajkowski's thefts were motivated by his view that he was preserving European-diaspora Jewish identity through "rescuing" its material remains and making these objects available to future scholars. However, by the 1970s, disillusioned with an academic world that had never fully accepted him, Szajkowski's thefts became more fueled by personal profit and the need to fund his own research. In reaching these conclusions, Leff meticulously documents the changing motivations and contexts for Szajkowski's actions. She pieces together Szajkowski's wartime activism, archival violence, scholarly achievements, and personal foibles, working up a complex picture of an intellectual, a self-made man, a soldier, and a trickster. The result is a very human portrait full of light and dark: a story of personal struggle and scholarship in the wake of catastrophe.

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