

Jacques Schiffrin: A Publisher in Exile, from Pléiade to Pantheon

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Jacques Schiffrin was an influential publisher in Paris at the outbreak of World War II, but soon he had to flee the life he'd built and begin again in the United States. The story of his impressive rise, and of his unexpected second act, is told in Amos Reichman's *Jacques Schiffrin: A Publisher in Exile, from Pleiade to Pantheon*.

Born in modern-day Azerbaijan, Schiffrin fled to France after the Bolshevik Revolution and established himself as one of that country's leading publishers. In 1931, he founded La Pléiade with the goal of making great literature affordable to a wider audience. Over time, the series would champion writers from Charles Baudelaire to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, as well as contemporaries like André Gide, who became Schiffrin's longtime friend.

However, like many Jews, Schiffrin lost his livelihood when France fell to the Nazis and the Vichy regime passed discrimination laws. Fired from the company he helped found, Schiffrin took his family to Casablanca and then New York. While he co-founded Pantheon Books in America and continued to publish important authors, and his son André became an influential publisher in his own right, Schiffrin desperately wanted to rejoin his old company and return to his own country. He never did either.

Reichman tells this story via a thorough mix of historical documents and correspondence. The story alone is fascinating, and Schiffrin's own words add valuable context. Similarly, letters from his former colleagues in Paris trying to justify their treatment of him, and those by friends like Gide trying to talk him out of returning to a country he would have found unrecognizable, underscore the sadness of his situation. *Jacques Schiffrin* is a fitting tribute to a man who did so much for literature—and who could have done even more, had he been allowed.

JEFF FLEISCHER (May/June 2019)

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