ISRAEL ZANGWILL AS AN APOLOGIST

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ISRAEL ZANGWILL AS AN APOLOGIST

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Zangwill's Mission

Israel Zangwill, novelist, playwright, poet, and essayist, can be understood and appreciated best as an apologist whose chosen mission was to introduce the Jew to the English-speaking reader, a reader who had often seen the word Jew on the pages of his literature but seldom had been able to meet an authentic specimen of the group in--or out--of print.

Traditionally, the Jew was grotesquely portrayed either as a glorious diamond reflecting light within or as a dark and damned spot which all the efforts of Christendom could not cleanse or eradicate. Zangwill notes that when the literature was favorable, as in Cumberland's The Jew, monsters of goodness were substituted for Shakespeare's and Marlowe's monsters of evil. In 1914, he claimed that only in Yiddish drama could readers of any western European language find the Jew "moving naturally in his true environment." By the first decades of the twentieth century, Yiddish literature, understood by few gentiles, was unacceptable to a great

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2 Israel Zangwill, "The Jew in Drama," Bookman, XXIX (June, 1914), 413.
number of Jews, a phenomenon which will be discussed in this thesis.

Zangwill was intensely aware of this literary inequity, a reflection of a greater social one, and according to some critics it is largely because of his efforts that the Jew in English literature is treated no longer as a limited creature of certain vice or virtue but "has become a human being--a living type which Jewish writers and (by contagion) non-Jewish writers attempt to delineate with sincerity and passion."³

Condition of the Jews in the Late Nineteenth Century

Not until twenty-six years after Zangwill's birth in 1864 were the Jews (and the Roman Catholics) of the British Empire granted complete equality. In 1890, the religious restrictions on candidacy to every position in the British Empire were withdrawn, ⁴ and in the same year a mass meeting of English citizens was held in London to protest Russia's harsh Jewish policy.⁵


⁴ Joseph Jacobs, "England," The Jewish Encyclopedia, V (New York, 1912), 172. Zangwill is listed as a subscriber to this important encyclopedia compiled 1901-1905.

⁵ Elkan Nathan Adler, History of the Jews in London (Philadelphia, 1930), p. 238. On p. 186 of this work, Adler expresses a negative historical opinion about Zangwill's drama: "In his Jewish dramas, he claimed to speak for Israel."
The Jews of Europe had been granted varying degrees of civil rights during the nineteenth century. Country after country had accorded recognition to Jewish citizens until it seemed as if a golden age of tolerance and progress was virtually assured. Only Czarist Russia proved a black hole of reaction.

For the most part, the European Jewish intellectual responded to the new status and the new zeitgeist with enthusiasm. He embraced his country as his father or grandfather had embraced the Torah in the synagogue, with fervor, understanding, and gratitude. Assimilation, in some cases total and in others partial, became the goal of not a few among the ranks of European Jewry. The literate, acculturated Jew was in the advance guard of the general assimilation that was to come. Indeed, "throughout the course of the century the topsoil of Jewish intellectual life was steadily eroded by the departure of those for whom personal Jewishness had become an inconvenience and an embarrassment."^6

Ludwig Lewisohn, himself a by-product of nineteenth-century emancipation whose unrestrained tone reflects the bitterness of his reaction and disillusionment, indicts the Jewish intellectual in no uncertain terms:

That was only half the truth. He really spoke for Israel Zangwill."^6

^6Howard M. Sachar, The Course of Modern Jewish History (Cleveland, 1953), p. 158.
A type of character was formed which, tragically and well nigh unbelievably, persists in America, in England, in France, to this day [1955]. This Jew is an ardent secularist. Imponderables of any kind are not for him. He looks upon such remnants of his immemorial Jewish past as have persisted... with a supercilious kindliness. These are antiquated matters which do not touch the modern mind. Sedulously he avoids all contact with authentic Jews; indeed he generally feigns unawareness of their existence. With equal though unobtrusive zeal he seeks the society of Gentiles; he feels wholly safe only when, with and among them, he can illustrate to himself his complete likeness to them. Every Gentile friend... is a source of pride, of joy, of security. And he does indeed require these acquaintances, these friends; he needs the constant reassurance of his likeness to them. For, despite all protestations, despite the fact that all intellectual currents seem—and seemed especially from 1830 to 1875... to be on his side, an element of inner insecurity continues to disturb him. He compensates for that element by an ever more ardent embracing of every wind of contemporary doctrine, by an ever more acrid contempt for every vestige of his ethnic and religious past.7

Many of Zangwill's stories illustrate the spectacle and the pathos of the Jew in transition, and indeed the Jews of Zangwill's day were in transition.

In 1894, Theodor Herzl, a promising young journalist on the staff of the influential Viennese Neue Freie Presse, was sent to cover the Paris trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Here Herzl, previously an assimilationist with a generally bland middle-class background, observed the increasing absurdity of the trial, the frenzy of the enlightened French, and came to the conclusion that since anti-Semitism was endemic, a

7 Ludwig Lewisohn, Theodor Herzl: A Portrait for This Age (Cleveland, 1955), pp. 27-28.
fact of life, combating hate was an empty and futile endeavor. In 1896, he published his call for repatriation, The Jewish State. Herzl, in his capacity as father of the modern Zionist movement, became a fast friend of Zangwill. They were both Jewish Europeans, intellectuals united by a common problem.

In 1893, Zadoc Kahn, the Grand-Rabbin of established French Jewry, a man whom Herzl characterized in the Diaries as a "little" Jew, surveyed the state of French Judaism in the introduction to Sermons et Allocutions, a collection of his sermons and addresses. He found the faith suffering from misconceptions, covered with ridicule and ignominy, and felt it necessary to excuse the apologetic tone of his sermons. Since false notions of all sorts were accepted even by the Israelites themselves, and since "la science" had only begun to bring truth to the nation, it was necessary for him to enter the lists—even though, Kahn reminds the reader, sermons have not the validity of scientific demonstration. During the Dreyfus affair, the rabbi was silent, probably because he could speak only in the name of an insecure French-Jewish establishment which felt that overt defense was somehow dangerous, somehow an admission of

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inherent inequality. Zangwill portrayed the contortions of those who represented the Anglo-Jewish establishment—and the embarrassment caused by those who would not or could not conform to its middle-class standards.

While some Jewish intellectuals preferred to remain silent apologists and others continued to go about their business as if the world were indeed a happy place for all of mankind, still others were growing impatient with the injustices and inequalities that formed a definite part of Jewish existence.

Attacks in Parliaments wrote Theodor Herzl in 1896, in assemblies, in the press, in the pulpit, in the street, on journeys—for example, their exclusions from certain hotels—even in places of recreation, become daily more numerous. The forms of persecutions varying according to the countries and social circles in which they occur. In Russia, imposts are levied on Jewish villages; in Rumania, a few persons are put to death; in Germany, they get a good beating occasionally; in Austria, Anti-Semites exercise terrorism over all public life; in Algeria, there are traveling agitators; in Paris, the Jews are shut out of the so-called best social circles and excluded from clubs. Shades of anti-Jewish feeling are innumerable. In our economically upper classes it causes discomfort, in our middle class continual and grave anxieties, in our lower classes absolute despair.

At about the same time, Zangwill wrote that English Jewry was "in the very midst of a chaotic period of transition."12

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Earlier he had revealed that English Jewry did not know where it was, that the real issues of Jewish life were obscured in endless press disputes, and that politic compromises of faith had been made frequently. If the situation in England were different from that in Europe, it was only a relative difference and not a complete difference in kind.

As for Judaism in the rest of the world, Zangwill observed that the religion was disintegrating from within:

In Germany the reactionary work of a Samson Raphael Hirsch has no seed of life within itself; the constructive work of Moses Mendelssohn appears merely to have disintegrated; the plutocracy is enabled and goes over to Christianity, most frequently to the Catholic form of it; the educated are chiefly agnostics, and are not even inspired by the hollow ghost of racial unity which is born of interest in one another's births, marriages, and deaths. In Austria, the Jewish teachers have openly broken with Judaism; in Australia Judaism is an anaemic invalid; in America, even more than Germany, the boldest, the most liberal, and the purest doctrines of Natural Religion are preached by salaried Jewish ministers. American Judaism reflects "the very form and pressure of the age." And it is healthier than our own, because there is a recognised outlet for the humors of free-thought.

English Jewry

The bulk of the Jews to establish themselves in England immediately after the Resettlement in the seventeenth century were of Spanish-Portuguese descent. These Sephardim, often aloof from co-religionists whose families originated in

\[13^{\text{Israel Zangwill, "English Judaism--A Criticism and Classification," Jewish Quarterly Review, I (July, 1889), 379.}}\]

\[14^{\text{Ibid., p. 398.}}\]
other parts of Europe, set about developing a highly centralized community which catered to particular needs and traditions. By the end of the eighteenth century, a Jewish Londoner with the name of Montefiore, Mendes, or Mocatta was "assisted at every stage from birth, through circumcision, to marriage and onward to death, while even the girls of the community were assisted with dowries."\(^{15}\) The Sephardim prospered, and through persistence, intermarriage, and conversion (as in the case of Lord Beaconsfield, who fancied himself a Sephardi—though that may not have been the case) became an accepted part of the life of greater London.

However, if a London Jew bore the name Belcovich, Sugarman, or Gradkoski, his way was not made so easily; immigrants of another sort began to seek refuge and opportunity in the British Isles. The Ashkenazim, European Jews whose ancestors could not have been found in Oporto, or Toledo, or Valladolid before the Iberian inquisitions, began to make their appearance in London. These Ashkenazim, too, set about to establish a community. Still, by the end of the eighteenth century, "apart from a very few distinguished merchants . . . the bulk of the Ashkenazic community consisted of petty traders and hawkers, not to speak of the followers of more disreputable occupations."\(^{16}\) By 1880 the situation had

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\(^{15}\) Joseph Jacobs, "London," The Jewish Encyclopedia, VIII (New York, 1912), 158.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 161.
corrected itself somewhat, and Ashkenazic names could be heard, if not in the best circles, then certainly in some very fine ones.

After 1881, the great Jewish migration from Czarist lands upset the margin of security English Jewry sought sedulously. A series of edicts, expulsions, and pogroms shook the Jews residing in the domains of the Little Father, the Czar, and refugees began pouring into London, many on their way to the United States. The East End of London, already largely a Jewish area, was swollen by the new immigration, many of whom were paupers without skills.

The problems that this new immigration of Eastern Jews caused for the older established Anglo-Jewry were gigantic. Not only had the newcomers to be fed, housed, and clothed, but their outlandish behavior, their inability to speak English— or at least the King's brand of it—caused the older Jewry, the establishment, immense psychic disturbances.

During the First World War, Franz Rosenzweig, a gifted German student of Hegel, was called to arms by his fatherland. He had seriously contemplated conversion to Christianity since it was obvious to him that Judaism offered little and that he was clearly as Christian as those around him. During the wartime service, this brilliant intellectual, son of a middle-class merchant, visited the ghetto in Warsaw.

In a remarkable letter to his mother, he expressed great shock. He had discovered what Israel Zangwill always knew,
that the Ost Jude, the same Jew whose brothers and sisters were crowding London's East End and New York's East Side, was not exactly a barbarian:

I did not get an impression of abject poverty, such as I expected from descriptions, nor of filth: least of all on Saturday [the Sabbath], when I saw many "extra uniforms." I can't help finding the costume very beautiful. . . . I don't believe in all that talk about "decadence"; those who now find all this decadent would have seen nothing but decadence even a hundred and fifty years ago.17

Earlier, in another letter to his mother, Rosenzweig remarked,

I can well understand why the average German Jew no longer feels any kinship with these East European Jews: actually, he has very little such kinship left; he has become philistine, bourgeois; but I, and people like me should still feel the kinship strongly.18

Rosenzweig's initial prejudices were typical of those held by many middle-class Jews in the West.

Joseph Jacobs, the historian, folklorist, critic, and communal worker whom his friend Zangwill called "a prince of good fellows,"19 felt that even though the coming of the Eastern Jews had set back Anglo-Jewry almost a century, "former experience shows that it is within the power of the community to remedy its own shortcomings."20 Perhaps Jacobs was hopeful that in a short time the ritual side-curls one saw on

18 Ibid., p. 74.
some of the newcomers would be shaved, the Yiddish mama loshan or mother tongue would give way to carefully accented English, and hawking and peddling would be replaced by more reputable occupations. In short, Jacobs expected the day to dawn when the English Jew could not be distinguished from his non-Jewish fellow citizen; it had happened before.
CHAPTER II

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

The Family and Childhood

According to some accounts, Moses Zangwill, Israel's father, was a Cantonist, one of those unfortunate Jewish children impressed into the military service of Czar Nicholas I for a twenty-five year term away from synagogue, family, and friends. In 1848, Moses made his way to freedom in England. By all accounts, he was an extremely religious man, quiet and passive, resembling Moses Ansell of Israel's Children of the Ghetto. Moses Zangwill never allowed himself to become acculturated to England and died in Palestine, a pious pilgrim. He was highly critical of his family's relative assimilation and seems to have rejected the entire Zangwill household.

Ellen, Israel's mother, was born near Brest Litovsk but came to England to be with relatives. She seems to have been a capable person with "no great religious piety." She was energetic and perhaps over-domineering—if not the "Tartar"

1Holbrook Jackson, "Israel Zangwill," Living Age, CCLXXXII (September 12, 1914), 792. See also Wolf Mankowitz, "Israel Zangwill," Spectator, CXCIII (August 13, 1954), 205.

Israel's biographer claims her to have been. Indeed Israel was a child of both the passive, religious Moses and of the slightly irreligious, active Ellen.

Although it is true that as a youth Israel Zangwill and his family lived for a time in the East End of London (as well as in Plymouth and Bristol), it is often forgotten that the section was not a Russo-Polish ghetto until after the oppressions of 1881. When Zangwill was a child, "Whitechapel and the Lane [the East End] were a stronghold of Dutch Jews." Many critics maintain that since he was a ghetto child Zangwill knew intimately the personalities and places about which he was to write. His first ghetto work, Children of the Ghetto, did not appear until 1892, long after he had left the ghetto for the University of London and for other centers of normative English life. In short, Zangwill did not spend his childhood in the same Russo-Polish Whitechapel about which he was to write, although he did live for a time in a Jewish Whitechapel and his parents did have a Russo-Polish background.

Early Efforts

Zangwill attended the Jews' Free School in Whitechapel and later taught for a time at the school, founded in 1817 by a community attempting to raise the standards of the Jewish

3 Ibid., p. 90.
4 Ibid., p. 57. See also p. 65.
lower class, which summoned its pupils "from the reeking courts and alleys, from the garrets and the cellars, calling them to come and be Anglicized." 5

When he was eighteen and a teacher at the Jews' Free School, Zangwill wrote and printed a sketch about market day in Whitechapel, Motza Kleis, which contained some passages in jargon. The philanthropist-president of the school, Lord Rothschild, whose name in the ghetto "stood next to the Almighty's as a redresser of grievances and a friend of the poor," 6 was outraged at the impudence of his young teacher. Lord Rothschild, Chief Rabbi Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler, and Headmaster Moses Angell regarded the school as a vehicle for acculturation. They were not anxious to have a satire of the community by a Jews' Free School teacher in general circulation. Perhaps even Christians would read it; the secret would be out—some English Jews spoke a broken English, and some none at all. Zangwill abstained from further publishing while he was a teacher at the Free School. 7

Later, Zangwill wrote a poem in a humorous mixture of German and Yiddish which, in translation by Joseph Leftwich, reads:


6Ibid., p. 152.

My sisters, brothers, greenhorns, 
Listen to what I say, 
That from this mighty country 
They don't send you away. 
You must surely understand 
England is not a Yiddish land.

You must make an effort then 
To live like Englishmen. 
Kugel you must now forget. 
Christmas Pudding you must eat.

If you listen to what I say 
You will be respected in every way. 
You will become Englishmen, 
And will sit in Parliament then.  

Zangwill wrote humor and satire for various Anglo-Jewish periodicals, but he does not seem to have enjoyed the work.  

After one 'failure, a political satire entitled The Premier and the Painter (1888) written by Zangwill and a friend but appearing under a pseudonym, two successful humor books were written, The Bachelor's Club (1891) and The Old Maid's Club (1892). In 1891, he wrote a feuilleton which appeared first in the London Star, The Big Bow Mystery, still regarded by devotees of the mystery novel as an outstanding example of the genre. 

Zangwill's fame was spreading as a result of these works and of several other pieces which were appearing in English periodicals.

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8 Leftwich, p. 56.

Later Career

In 1892, the Jewish Publication Society of America, attracted to Zangwill by an article he had written in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (of London), invited him to submit a manuscript dealing with Jewish life in London. The result was *Children of the Ghetto*. This novel was followed by a series of fictional works based on Ghetto themes, all published in both England and America: *Ghetto Tragedies* (1893), *King of the Schnorrers* (1894), *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898), and *Ghetto Comedies* (1907). It is noteworthy that the initiative for this series came from Jews in the New World who were perhaps more ready to accept Zangwill's characters than were the Jews of Europe.

Although usually he is remembered as a writer on Jewish themes, the bulk of Zangwill's published work is concerned with other aspects of national and international life. In 1896, *Without Prejudice*, a collection of informal articles on various subjects—art, love, travel, reading, gambling, the English stage—which he had written for *Pall Mall Magazine* appeared. Another book of essays, *Italian Fantasies* (1910), dealt with art, politics, and religion, and a third book of essays and speeches, *The War for the World*, appeared in 1916.

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10 This is the article noted above, Chapter One, footnote thirteen.

11 Schniderman, p. 123.
The Master (1895), a novel set in Canada, and The Mantle of Elijah (1900), a roman à clef dealing with the Boer War, were widely reviewed. In 1919, Zangwill wrote Jinny the Carrier, a rural folk-comedy about Jinny of Blackwater Hall, Little Bradmarsh, Essex—a locale many miles distant from the nearest English ghetto.

Zangwill also wrote poetry, some of which is collected in Blind Children (1903); a volume of political analysis, Principles of Nationalities (1917); a farce, Too Much Money (1918); and several other plays—the majority with a message.

As a playwright, he was prolific. Not only did he write dramatizations of some of his novels, but Zangwill is also the author of a trilogy of anti-war plays, The War God (1911), The Cockpit (1921), and The Forcing House (1922). Several plays deal with religion; one of them, The Next Religion (1912), was so unpleasant in implication that it was banned from the English stage by the Lord Chamberlain. The Melting Pot, first produced in Washington, D. C., in 1908, is perhaps his most famous play, and it is responsible for the popularity that the phrase "melting pot" has enjoyed; however, the term may not have been used first by Zangwill.¹²

Reputation

Although many of his more recent critics have felt compelled to point out his shortcomings as a literary artist--

¹²Leftwich, p. 251.
not a difficult task—the fact remains that Zangwill was at one time considered a major figure in English literary circles. At the beginning of the First World War, the English government called a conference of the nation's leading writers. Among those present were Thomas Hardy, G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells, Gilbert Murray, Arnold Bennett, James Barrie, and Israel Zangwill. Caricatures of Zangwill are to be found in Punch and other leading contemporary English and American periodicals—an index if not of popularity then at least of familiarity. Among the Jews, he was a major figure, an example to all that one could live seemingly with success in two worlds at the same time.

For three decades, Zangwill "was unquestionably the literary spokesman for English Jews, the immigrant masses as well as the Anglicized middle-class." His fame reached to all parts of the Jewish dispersion, which is to say the entire world. On the wall of a leftist-oriented Zionist youth group's clubhouse in Roumania, Zangwill's portrait stood with that of Marx and Herzl—in spite of the fact that Zangwill was critical of the Bolshevik Revolution and that he led an important splinter group away from the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905 to found a new organization, the Jewish

\[\text{Ibid., p. 156.}\]

\[\text{John Gross, "Zangwill in Retrospect," Commentary, XXXVIII (December, 1964), 54.}\]
Territorial Organization (I.T.O.), which he headed until it was dissolved in 1925.15

At the Texas Centennial of 1936, Zangwill's rather idealized portrait was included in the Jewish exhibit held in the Hall of Religion along with those of Lion Feuchtwanger, Georg Brandes, Emma Lazarus, Heinrich Heine, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), all of whom represented, to Texans at least, the Jewish contribution to modern world literature. Under Zangwill's picture was the notation, "His 'Children of the Ghetto' has become classic."16 But Texas Jewry had a more direct way to remember Zangwill; he was largely responsible for the Galveston Plan, an attempt to alleviate problems caused by mass immigration of Eastern-European Jews to the Eastern seaboard states by routing them through the port of Galveston, Texas.17 Zangwill's activities were manifold.

The Asian Mystery

Those who knew Zangwill were impressed—and sometimes astonished—by his wit and brilliance. Their written reactions

15 Statement by Ronald Gruen, businessman, Dallas, Texas, March 5, 1967.

16 Louis L. Mann and Gerson B. Levi, "Description of the Jewish Exhibit in the Hall of Religion," Henry Cohen, David Lefkowitz, and Ephraim Frisch, One Hundred Years of Jewry in Texas (Dallas, 1936).

often employ superlatives; none seems to doubt his ability. Even when they do point out stylistic faults, they dismiss these shortcomings to speak of him with respect as "the most compulsory wit, or wag, or sage before the public."\textsuperscript{18} G. B. Burgin, who knew him when they were both young men grouped around Jerome K. Jerome's \textit{Idler}, remembered Zangwill as an outstanding and complex personality, an "'Asian Mystery,'--but a very kindly one,--a man with many rôles":

You cannot be ten minutes in Zangwill's society without consciousness of the many rôles he is destined to play, and his greatness in the playing of them, for he is one of the mightiest intellects of modern time.\textsuperscript{19}

The novelist Louis Golding, a younger contemporary, writes about his friend in tones of unrestrained love and reverence: "In the last century or in this I can think of few persons as pure, as selfless, as vital as Israel Zangwill. He was a person, that is to say, of the Christ type."\textsuperscript{20}

Even Zangwill's enemies, or those who had reason to dislike him, give him his due. Chaim Weizman, the first president of the State of Israel, a man who remembered Zangwill's defection at the Seventh Zionist Congress, a deed that threatened to destroy the party, nevertheless relates in his

\textsuperscript{18}Gerald Stanly Lee, "Israel Zangwill," \textit{The Critic}, XXX (February, 1897), 141.

\textsuperscript{19}G. B. Burgin, "Israel Zangwill as I Knew Him," \textit{The Critic}, XLII (March, 1903), 268-269.

\textsuperscript{20}Louis Golding, "Zangwill the Man," \textit{Fortnightly Review}, CXXI (April 1, 1927), 521.
autobiography that Zangwill's understanding of Zionism was "subtle" and recalls that Herzl had once suspended parliamentary procedure out of respect for Zangwill's genius.  

Any attempt to understand Zangwill must take into account his contradictory nature, what his literary biographer Maurice Wohlgelernter calls his "violent contraries." Not only was he an Englishman and a Jew, but he was also a "novelist, playwright, poet, essayist, Zionist, Territorialist, pacifist, polemicist, suffragist, and member of other sundry quasi-political movements," and the list could be extended easily. He was anxious to embrace causes, to be engaged in struggle for its own sake. In this respect, one is tempted to link him with an earlier generation of romantics.

Indeed, Zangwill was a perplexing personality. He insisted that any Jewish autonomous territory be established "upon as orthodox a religious basis as possible," and yet he married a non-Jew, an extremely serious bit of heterodoxy among even the less conservative Jews of his day, failed to

22 Wohlgelernter, p. ix.
have his sons circumcised, and left instructions that he be
cremated at death. He neither lived nor died with much per-
sonal regard for the orthodoxy he wished to see in a Jewish
state.

His Hebrew background was weak, yet he undertook a
translation of the poems of Ibn Gabrion, a Hebrew poet of
the eleventh century, as well as a number of Hebrew prayers
and hymns by various liturgists.²⁵ There were few things
on which he feared to tread.

Zangwill prided himself on his cosmopolitanism, but,
after their first conversation together, Theodor Herzl wrote
in his diary that Zangwill's racial views, expressed in poor
French, were unacceptably extreme.²⁶ He was at once a na-
tionalist and an internationalist, a skeptic and a believer,
a sage and a buffoon, a Jew and a Christian. One observes
the contortions of this man; the motions might be different,
but they are of the same origin as those which animated
Zadoc Kahn and uncounted other Jewish intellectuals of the
late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period when
more than one "Asian Mystery" stalked the sidewalks of every
European capital.

²⁵ See Leftwich, pp. 46, 49. See also Israel Zangwill,
Speeches, pp. ix-x.
²⁶ Herzl, Diaries, p. 78.
CHAPTER III

APOLOGIA

The Jewish Problem in London

In 1901, two essays dealing with London Jewry were prepared for the trustees of the Toynbee Trust and were published in a volume entitled The Jew in London: A Study of the Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions. The two essayists were H. S. Lewis, "a Jew and a Cambridge Graduate, a Wrangler and an Oriental Scholar" whose professional duties had sometimes taken him to Whitechapel, and C. Russell, a gentile and an official of the Indian Education Department who had nevertheless spent much time in the East End. \(^1\) Evidently, these qualifications were sufficient to certify the essayists as experts, men who could enlighten the nation on what had become a public problem—the proliferation of Jews in London due to the heavy immigration from Eastern Europe after 1881. The volume is a remarkable source since it serves to indicate the many prejudices of which the ostensibly unprejudiced were guilty, the social problems of the day, and the zeitgeist in general.

At the turn of the century, the total Jewish population of London was "roughly estimated" at 110,000. Of this number,

about 100,000 lived in the East End (Whitechapel) and 60,000 were foreign born. The number was believed to be growing rapidly, but it was not sure whether the increase was due to immigration "or to the extraordinarily prolific character of Jewish marriages."²

As early as 1888, Parliament began to be concerned directly with the problems raised by the new Jewish immigration. Workers and their leaders were beginning to blame the cheap Jewish labor for the low standards of the British workers' wages. Anti-Semites, never entirely absent from the scene, were beginning to grow more brazen—and their audiences to grow larger. Finally, in January of 1906, the Alien Act was passed, and free immigration to the British Isles ceased.³

Meanwhile, many of the 50,000 native Jews were in a frenzy of sorts; they were faced with a dilemma. Either they could aid their brethren openly and endanger the respect and toleration won after a prolonged and rather difficult fight, or they could repudiate their brethren and let their consciences gnaw at them. From the beginning, compromise seemed to be the wisest course of action. In 1881, English Jewry sent funds directly to Russia to be used to aid pogrom victims desiring to emigrate to America. But as the Czarist regime

²Ibid., p. 12. These statistics were accepted by and reproduced in the Jewish Encyclopedia.

continued its oppressive measures, immigrants began pouring into Whitechapel. In order not to arouse their non-Jewish neighbors, the London Jewish Board of Guardians, representatives of established Jewry, supported only those immigrants who had been in England for six months, reasoning that thus no one could accuse the Jewish community of attracting paupers to the British Isles.\(^4\) For an immigrant, the first six months were the hardest.

**Publication and Contents of Children of the Ghetto**

Amid this national agitation and communal sensitivity, Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* was published in 1892. One can imagine how carefully it was read by the timid British Jews. Was the publication good for the Jews—or bad? That was the question. In all probability, British Jewry waited for the opinion of gentile critics since favorable comment from this sector would make all the difference.

Later, Zangwill's dramatization of the novel was produced in Washington and in London. Writing in *The Athenaeum*, an anonymous critic berated Zangwill and his Jews for (of all things) desiring segregation and charged not only that on stage the Jewish matrons were physically ugly, but that "the amount of osculation permitted to those who are betrothed

scarcely seems judicious.\(^5\) Most of the other critics were themselves more judicious.

In the United States, where the situation was similar to that in England, Henrietta Szold, a highly-respected Jewish communal worker, hailed the dramatization and decided without qualification that it was good for the Jews:

   In the United States the key-note of self-respect was sounded with bugle-tones at the very beginning of the year, when Mr. Israel Zangwill's "Children of the Ghetto" was put upon the boards at the National Theatre in Washington. Its production was an event . . . in the sense in which the conquest of a country is an event. . . . How does this play written by a Jew of Jews, who knows Judaism and Jews alike, who is in sympathy with Jews intellectually at least, and who has a cunning hand, how does this play which does more than merely skim the surface of the Jewish character affect the Jew in his own eyes? . . . How does it affect him in his relation to his fellow-citizen? In the last resort the two questions have but one answer. Whatever raises the self-respect of the Jew raises him in the esteem of the community. Mr. Zangwill's play did more: it created self-respect in Jews long lost to all sense of affiliation with the body Jewish.\(^6\)

It seems as if any comment about literary merit were largely irrelevant at the time.

The rambling, disjointed work called *Children of the Ghetto* is an actual picture of London's East End, Whitechapel, in the nineties. The characters, there are dozens of them, are reflections sometimes of actual persons, sometimes of types, but all are touched by the conditions of ghetto life.

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5"This Week," *Athenaeum*, No. 3764 (December 16, 1899), p. 800.

in general and by the facts of Jewish life in particular; "their faults are bred of its [the ghetto's] hovering miasma of persecution, their virtues straitened and intensified by the narrowness of its horizon."?

When Zangwill speaks of the ghetto, he has in mind the broadest possible application of the word. Any place where Jews congregate to live, either because they must or because they wish, is for him a ghetto:

People who have been living in a Ghetto for a couple of centuries, are not able to step outside merely because the gates are thrown down, nor to efface the brands on their souls by putting off the yellow badges. The isolation imposed from without will have come to seem the law of their being. . . . Such people are their own Ghetto gates; when they migrate they carry them across to lands where they [ghetto gates] are not.9

Zangwill's characters are not unique; their aspirations, conduct, and desires are familiar. These same characters appear not only in the Jewish family album, but also in the fiction of our country. One finds them in Roger Ikor's The Sons of Avrom, a novel portraying the latest generations of Paris' ghetto, the Street of Roses, and in I. J. Singer's saga of Warsaw Jewry, The Brothers Ashkenazi. They are found in several excellent American novels, in particular Abraham Cahan's The Rise of Abraham Levinsky and Henry Roth's Call

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7Zangwill, Children, p. ix.
8Cf. Zangwill, Speeches, pp. 3-27.
9Zangwill, Children, p. x.
it Sleep, but these writers can find little humor in the situation. In Albert Memmi's *The Pillar of Salt*, the scene has switched to North Africa. The Tunisian ghetto's children are in many ways the same as their European and American co-religionists, although they eat couscous instead of gefilte fish. With reflection, one can recognize the same Jews in the short stories and novels of Philip Roth, only here they have left the ghetto altogether and have become Americanized beyond immediate distinction. Nevertheless, as Roth has found, the defensive reactions of many Jewish readers have not changed much since the days of Zangwill's *Motza Kleis*.  

One is tempted to read *Children of the Ghetto* as a roman à clef; the puzzle is fun, and the solutions often easy. But the reward is meagre since most of the identities, once revealed, prove to be personages of limited importance. The ignoble rascal Melchitsedek Pinchas is certainly patterned after the beggarly and indecorous Hebrew poet Naphtali Herz Imber who, at the end of an extraordinarily varied and besotted career, appeared as a Hindu fakir in San Francisco and who wanted to be known "as the Jewish François Villon but he was not the scoundrel Villon was nor did he write such good poetry."  

Imber is remembered now only as the author

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10 See Philip Roth, "Writing about Jews," *Commentary*, XXXVI (December, 1963), 446-452.

11 Louis Lipsky, *A Gallery of Zionist Profiles* (New York, 1956), p. 134. This character sketch of Imber is by one who
of Israel's national anthem, *Hatikvah*. Others—communal, intellectual, and political figures of peripheral importance—could be found to match Zangwill's characters, but the game is an idle one. The importance for our consideration is that often Zangwill based his Jews on living models, not entirely on figments of his creative imagination or of his prejudices.

Since his Jews are real, they occasionally do heroic deeds, and just as often—perhaps more often—they are guilty of inanity, stupidity, and even cruelty as are all men everywhere. But this sort of an accurate portrayal nevertheless has its dangers.

Raphael Leon, one of Zangwill's characters, a graduate of Oxford and Harrow and scion of an assimilated Anglo-Sephardic family, who develops a sincere interest in Judaism and the life of his ghetto brothers, states his objections to fiction which portrays Jews as human beings, that is as people subject to faults and weaknesses:

> In a world full of smouldering prejudices a scrap of paper may start the bonfire. English society can afford to laugh where Jewish society must weep. That is why our newspapers are always so effusively grateful for Christian compliments. You see it is quite true that the author paints not the Jews but bad Jews, but, in the absence of paintings of good Jews, bad Jews are taken as identical with Jews.¹²

Zangwill was aware of what he was doing, of a duty and a responsibility.

**Apology, Plot, and Style**

When he touches an especially vulnerable point, Zangwill generally draws back and offers apology, sometimes only a phrase but often a complete break in the story. When, perhaps for the sake of authenticity, he must reveal that the sweatshop owner Bear Belcovitch over-adorns his kinswomen with costly trinkets, Zangwill succumbs to what appears to be an urge:

The jewelry he generously lavished on his womankind was in essence a mere channel of investment for his savings, avoiding the risks of a banking-account and aggregating his wealth in a portable shape, in obedience to an instinct generated by centuries of insecurity. The interest on the sums thus invested was the gratification of the other oriental instinct for gaudiness.\(^{13}\)

When Sugarman, a marriage broker and seller of lottery tickets, has an altercation with one of his clients, David Hyams, an Anglicised young man who is concerned about appearances, pleads that the case be settled by a religious court rather than by a secular one because while it is true that all marriages depend on money, "it is the fashion of police court reporters to pretend the custom is limited to the Jews."\(^{14}\) Zangwill sees to it that no one gets the wrong impression; the Jews might be peculiar in some respects, but


people in glass houses should not throw stones. A light hand is not one of Zangwill's virtues; oftentimes his desire to enlighten and to defend causes not only verbosity but other stylistic indiscretions as well.

One perceptive contemporary reviewer of Children of the Ghetto noted that Zangwill has "the gift of taking the Gentile point of view, the gift of belonging to a peculiar people and then not belonging to them, and then giving himself back again." Zangwill does indeed change his tone continually and intermittently. Sometimes he sneers aloofly—Yiddish is "the most hopelessly corrupt and hybrid jargon ever evolved"—and sometimes he is indignantly subjective as when he describes (often) the Christian missionaries in the ghetto attempting to wean starving Jews from religious heresy by offering bread and butter, a phenomenon which in fact has occurred in more than one ghetto. From his writing desk, the Asian Mystery brought confusion to the critics, apology to the gentile, and both joy and consternation to everyone.

If instances of overt apology are frequent in Zangwill's works, he is also capable of a more subtle technique. His exposition of prevailing Jewish attitudes helps to explain

15 "Children of the Ghetto," The Critic, XXVII (August, 1895), 130.

much that is strange about his subjects. In *Children of the Ghetto*, as well as in his other writings, Zangwill examines every type of Jew from the wilful assimilationist Sidney Graham to the pious Moses Ansell who, we suspect, would rather eat black bread and learn a page of *Gemara* than have a book of free tickets to the best London music halls.

Sidney Graham, the assimilationist, explains his attitude; he denies publicly that he is a Jew because it would be a lie to claim that he was:

> It would be to produce a false impression. The conception of a Jew in the mind of the average Christian is a mixture of Fagin, Shylock, Rothschild and the caricatures of the American comic papers. I am certainly not like that, and I'm not going to tell a lie and say I am. In conversation always think of your audience. It takes two to make a truth. If an honest man told an old lady he was an atheist, that would be a lie, for to her it would mean he was a dissolute reprobate. To call myself "Abrahams" would be to live a daily lie. I am not a bit like the picture called up by Abrahams. Graham is a far truer expression of myself.17

When asked why he does not utilize himself to correct the stereotype, Graham replies that he refuses to face martyrdom for the sake of "an outworn creed and a decaying sect." If not thoroughly convincing, the attitude is presented fairly at least.

**Jewish Self-hate**

Of all the effects of intolerance, perhaps the most insidious is the self-hate that is engendered unconsciously.

in those that are the objects of it. Manifestations of self-hate are sometimes subtle as when the Negro straightens his hair, or the Jew changes his name. Sometimes they are less subtle. Jewish history records more than one apostate turned informer and professional anti-Semite. Zangwill realized that "the Jew who absorbs everything from the environment absorbs also its anti-Semitism." 18

In "The Jewish Trinity," Leopold Barstein, a sophisticated young sculptor "fresh from the Paris schools and Salon triumphs," is dismayed to find that although he is surrounded by upper-class Jewish friends, he is also surrounded by anti-Semites. His beloved Mabel is fascinated as much by the gentile approval he receives for his work as she is by him. Indeed, the upper-class Jews are living proof of the reality of a trinity; they are super-patriots, Jews, and self-haters all at once:

The Jew's a patriot everywhere, and a Jew everywhere and an anti-Semite everywhere. Passionate Hungarians, and true-born Italians, eagle-waving Americans, and loyal Frenchmen, imperial Germans, and double Dutchmen, we are dispersed to preach the Unity, and what we illustrate is the Jewish trinity. A delicious irony! Three-in-one and one-in-three. 19

The Jews then, or at least a portion of them, are not only bifurcated, they are trifurcated, an extremely handy insight for Zangwill to give his readers. One observable

18 Zangwill, Speeches, p. 319.
component of this trifurcation is local patriotism; revelation of the fact is important to an author who must defend his folk from charges of parasitism and cosmopolitanism, perennial anti-Semitic canards.

Name changes among Zangwill's second generation are frequent. Levi Jacobs, son of a rabbi, becomes Leonard James; Isaac Levinsky hides from his family as Ethelred P. Wyndhurst; scratch a Percy Saville and you will find a Pizer Samuels. The second generation is an unhappy one. Crises of loyalty, of interest, and of faith are their lot. The school they attend as children and the air they breathe—filled with the odors of fish and chips fried in forbidden animal grease—call them to one side. The home, the narrow ghetto lanes congested with relatives and coreligionists, and the synagogue they pass on their way to work (they seldom go inside) ask them to step to another side. Only through high and fancy stepping can they bridge the two worlds and make peace with themselves. As a pair of American sociologists have noted, "Caught between the ghetto and larger society, members of the second generation suffered the common fate of marginality." Zangwill himself was a representative of this second generation, and his own ambiguous footwork is indicative of his problem.

The Rôle of the Apologist

In his role as apologist, Zangwill not only serves his people but also himself. If the Jews become more acceptable to Englishmen, Zangwill the Jew becomes more acceptable. If he can write as a Jew about Jews and be read respectfully by gentiles, he has indeed bridged a gap. He has become an English writer who remains a Jew. In 1909, a critic reviewed Zangwill's early career and expressed amazement that he did not choose to disguise himself as many other contemporary Jewish writers had done:

Mr. Zangwill has never made the slightest attempt to dissemble his Hebraic origin. He is proud of it, glories in it, and I believe that the ambition which lies nearest his heart is to go down to posterity as the nineteenth-century incarnation of the Jewish spirit. Now and then perhaps he insists rather too strongly on his aloofness from the Christianity which is not too evident among his contemporaries.  

Writing in the Spectator, Wolf Mankowitz denies that Zangwill is an apologist, and claims rather that he was influenced by a nineteenth-century ideal of progress which implied that evil was rooted in ignorance, a curable malady. As a consequence of this belief, Zangwill applied himself to the correction of evil:

So Zangwill systematically wrote up the East Side, wrote up the characteristics and customs and recent history of the Jews, not for a moment as an apologist, but as a nineteenth century idealist believing that the prejudiced are so because they have been deprived of educational opportunities which he, the devoted educationalist, now

strives to make good. . . . Zangwill belonged to the rationalist pre-Freudian age; he believed that to argue convincingly could convince.22

Mankowitz overlooks the fact that in any age the apologist makes his particular efforts because he believes that he can either change or modify opinion. Apologia is predicated on the assumption that it will serve a constructive purpose. Zangwill can be regarded correctly as a nineteenth-century idealist, albeit a slightly cynical one, but he nevertheless is an apologist as well. However, an apologist whose work is characterized by ambivalence becomes ineffective.

Ambivalence

In "The Model of Sorrows," a gentile artist, a romantic chap, searches for a Jew to serve as a model for a proposed study of Jesus. The Jews he finds in the London upper class lack the "dignity and beauty" which are to be found among the impoverished Jewish masses. Finally he decides to employ Israel Quarriar, a penniless Russian immigrant with "noble figure and tragic face." The artist becomes Quarriar's benefactor and devotes much time to the immigrant's tales of woe and hardship. Although his Jewish friends warn him, the artist refuses to believe that Quarriar is a charlatan, or at least that he exaggerates his plight. Ultimately the truth is recognized; the model is indeed poor, but he is also a liar who has manipulated the young artist. Adding a few

22Mankowitz, p. 205.
lines of craft and guile to his portrait of Jesus, the artist comes to a more satisfactory understanding of his model and of the Jews:

For surely here at last was the true tragedy of the people of Christ—to have persisted sublimely, and to be as sordidly perverted; to be king and knave in one; to survive for one thousand years the loss of a fatherland and the pressure of persecution, only to wear on its soul the yellow badge which had defaced its garments.23

If this naive artist's views are identical with those of his creator, and they probably are, we have an excellent example of Zangwill's ambivalence. Israel Quarrier's flaw, the same flaw which his people harbor in their character, is that he has become human, less than divine. Because the Jew is human, he is not always honest in the struggle for survival, an insight which Zangwill reveals often enough elsewhere. However, in this story the Jew's state has become suddenly one of "true tragedy," especially since he has persisted so "sublimely." Here it appears that Zangwill desires that the Jew be more than human, not subject to the frailties that characterize a species in which each member is indeed "king and knave in one."

Florence, a character who appears in the short story "Transitional," breaks her engagement to Alfred, son of a Christian clergyman. Impressed by the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice, she had wished to convert, but when she

23 Zangwill, Comedies, p. 55.
realizes that her father, a first generation Englishman, sacrifices all he holds dear for the sake of her happiness, she reconsiders her actions. By remaining Jewish she becomes Christian, especially if Christianity is self-sacrifice. In a letter, Florence explains herself to Alfred:

If a religion that I thought all formalism is capable of producing such types of abnegation as my dear father, then it must, too, somewhere or other, hold in solution all those ennobling ingredients, all those stimuli to self-sacrifice, which the world calls Christian. Perhaps I have always misunderstood. We were so badly taught. Perhaps the prosaic epoch of Judaism into which I was born is only transitional, perhaps it only belongs to the middle classes, for I know I felt more of its poetry in my childhood; perhaps the future will develop (or recultivate) its diviner sides and lay more stress upon the life beautiful, and thus all this blind instinct of isolation may prove only the conservation of the race for its nobler future, when it may still become, in very truth, a witness to the Highest, a chosen people in whom all the families of the earth may be blessed.24

The second generation had their own peculiar problems, and they had to work them out as best they could. Ambivalence seems to be a primary characteristic of this entire transition generation. Zangwill cannot make up his mind about what the Jew is to be, and he shows no more consistency in his attitude toward Christianity.

Christianity and Judaism

In "The Conciliator of Christendom," an intelligent bootmaker Zussmann Herz is determined to conciliate Judaism

and Christianity. The dream becomes a passion, and he enlists the services of his wife and a synagogue sexton turned radical. Zussmann expounds his ideas in a Hebrew work entitled *Brotherhood of the Peoples*. Zussmann believes that "Jesus must be restored to His true place in the glorious chain of Hebrew Prophets." Understandably, the Hebrew version of *Brotherhood of the Peoples* is not well accepted in the ghetto, and Zussmann is suspect as a tool of the Christian missionaries. Since he can no longer make an adequate living to support himself and his sickly wife, he considers asking the missionaries for food, but his wife dissuades him on the grounds that it would imperil "the Idea." Ultimately, all Zussmann's sacrifices are to no avail; he is another of the noble ghetto dreamers whose grand idea is doomed to fail.

"Moses and Jesus," a poem printed as a prelude to *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, equates the two Jewish sons. They empathize with each other in ecumenical bonds of sympathy. At the end of the same volume, Zangwill concedes that "the Christ story might be false, but it has idealized the basal things--love, pity, self-sacrifice, purity, motherhood," and claims that "the time has come for a new religious

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26 Ibid., p. 521.
expression, a new language for the old everlasting emotions, in terms of the modern cosmos."27

Shortly before Zangwill's death in 1926, a magazine queried several leading literary figures about their religious beliefs. In his response, Zangwill indicates that all religious credos are outmoded and adds a laconic remark about economics:

It is now the common duty of all civilized men of every creed to find "The Next Religion." There is very little real difference among the higher creeds of to-day even between such apparent opposites as Roman Catholicism and Judaism. What keeps them apart is largely the economic factor.28

John Gross, perhaps the most perceptive of the recent critics, remarks that

Zangwill was in fact far less caught up in Jewish culture, and far more ambivalent about being a Jew, than the popular legend suggests. . . . Liberated once and for all from traditional Orthodoxy, he was nevertheless anxious to maintain some kind of cultural continuity (of a positive kind, as opposed to a mere defensive reaction to anti-Semitism). As a result, his attitude was a mass of inconsistencies.29

Because of the mass of inconsistencies, Zangwill's literary apologetics are largely ineffective, and others with a more

27 Ibid., p. 522.

28 "What Literary Men Believe in Religion," Literary Digest, LXXXVII (October 31, 1925), 27.

29 Gross, p. 56.
consistent approach to Judaism have taken his place, making his apology appear more dated than it actually is.\(^30\)

The Myth of Jewish Conspiracy

One of the themes to which Zangwill constantly returns and about which he displays what is for him a remarkable degree of consistency is that the Jews are not to be viewed as a unified body, a monolithic community of world-wide proportions. Indeed, the myth of Jewish solidarity is one which persists to this day even among the otherwise enlightened. The infamous pseudo-historical Protocols of the Elders of Zion, long since exposed as a blatant slander to the satisfaction of most, still circulates in new editions, and John Beatty, a learned American scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature, could find, until his death a few years ago, an audience for his dubious researches into the history of an alleged Jewish conspiracy. Hitler collected his Jews from across state boundaries because to him they, like gypsies and communists, were part of an international conspiracy which knew no national limits.

Apologists have often found it necessary to combat the myth of Jewish solidarity. In societies both East and West, the prevailing presumption is that nationals owe their

allegiance primarily to the national state, although in our time the idea has broadened somewhat. In effect, the melting pot concept which Zangwill popularized has always plagued the Jew. If it can be demonstrated that the Jew is not malleable, does not melt, but rather that he is already fixed firmly in a mold of his own into which every Jew in every climate fits, then indeed the Jew presents a problem for his society. But the Jew does melt--and in all directions; he does not belong to a monolithic sect, public or private.

The King of Schnorrers, perhaps Zangwill's funniest piece, is set (somewhat inaccurately) in eighteenth-century London.

In the days when Lord George Gordon became a Jew and was suspected of insanity; when, out of respect for the prophecies, England denied her Jews every civic right except that of paying taxes; when the Gentleman's Magazine had ill words for the infidel alien; when Jewish marriages were invalid and bequests for Hebrew colleges void; when a prophet prophesying Primrose Day would have been set in the stocks, though Pitt inclined his private ear to Benjamin Goldsmid's views on the foreign loans—in those days, when Tevele Schiff was Rabbi in Israel, and Dr. de Falk, the Master of the Tetragrammaton, saint and Cabbalistic conjuror, flourished in Wellclose Square, and the composer of "The Death of Nelson" was a choir-boy in the Great Synagogue; . . . .

The hero of this tale, the king of all the schnorrers (a Yiddish word meaning beggars), is a cunning and delightful

31 See Cecil Roth, "Were the Sephardim Hidalgos?" Commentary, XX (August, 1955), 130.

hidalgo with the wonderful (and quite probable) Sephardic name of Manasseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa.

As the tale unfolds, we find that there is little unity in London Jewry. The Haughty Sephardi looks askance at the unkempt Tedesco, a semi-derogatory term used by the Spanish-Portuguese Jew to describe his less-fortunate Ashkenazi brother. The Sephardic community regards the newcomers with a disdain and contempt that would have warmed the heart of the most earnest inquisitor-general of Old Spain. Marriage between an Ashkenazi and a Sephardi is regarded by the Spanish-Portuguese community as an abomination, almost an act of perversion, not to be countenanced by the powerful Council of Five, the bewigged and immaculate leaders of the community. Indeed there is no semblance of overall unity in the eighteenth century, and the situation in the nineteenth century is no different.

In "Samooborona," David Ben Amram, another of Zangwill's idealistic young men, is sent to the Polish town of Milovka to organize a Jewish self-defense group. One of the perennial pogroms is rumored, but this time there is to be a novelty; if Ben Amram is successful, the slaughter will be avoided, or at least the list of casualties will contain more than Jewish names. Much to his dismay, Ben Amram finds that each villager has a plan of his own for salvation from the impending catastrophe. Some burgers gather money for a bribe to avert the severe decree, a trick that had worked in
the past; the town's Jewish banker refrains from any action, preferring to await the civil rights which are to come by a normal evolutionary process; the Marxists are willing to sacrifice Jews for a future utopia; the Zionists think only of a specific land which is far away and tightly clenched in the hands of a corrupt Turkish hierarchy; the parliamentarians rest secure in the notion that they will be granted autonomy as one other people in the Czarist family of nations; the pious trust God and their rabbis; the territorialists think only of emigrating from Russia to Angola, Cyrenaica, Argentina, or Louisiana; everyone trusts in one scheme or another suggested by the general European intellectual climate. In the meantime, the plan to murder, mutilate, and rape continues, and the victims-to-be fail to unite because they respond more as Europeans than as Jews; every ideological breeze from the outside offers a chimerical hope:

Yes, the new generation chopped the logic of Zionism or Socialism, as the old argued over the ritual of burnt-offerings whose smoke had not risen since the year 70 of the Christian era, . . . . The men of to-day had merely substituted for the world of the past the world of the future, and so there had arisen logically perfect structures of Zionism without Zion, Jewish socialism without a Jewish social order, Labour Parties without votes or Parliaments.\(^3^4\)

In one of his more successful surprise endings, Zangwill has the Jewish quarter of Milovka destroyed from a distance.

\(^{33}\) The fact that Zangwill was founder and president of the Jewish Territorialist Organization did not deter him from criticizing the group's ideology.

\(^{34}\) Zangwill, Comedies, p. 483.
by artillery. Troops of cavalry do not rush about slashing and probing, pulling at beards and carrying off portions of women's breasts for souvenirs as usual. Mobs do not loot, and children are not impaled on spikes. This time the holocaust is orderly, scientific, and efficient; the unity of the slaughterers surpasses the unity of the victims. The one Jew who had agreed with Ben Amram's plan has been conscripted into the militia and dutifully mans a Gatling gun at the massacre for his Czar. Under the circumstances, self-defense, too, would have been futile.

In an extended essay "The Legend of the Conquering Jew" printed in The Voice of Jerusalem, Zangwill proves that he is capable of practicing the art of apologia on a mature and effective level. Once free from the necessity of draping his apology around a plot, Zangwill can be relatively subtle and sophisticated. In this essay, he answers the canard that Jews have vindictive designs on society at large, and repeats what he had maintained always—that Jewry is in no way unified.

He begins by answering the popular notion that the Jews stand as still as the sun in the valley of Aijalon, an idea reiterated recently by the English historian Arnold Toynbee. The Jew has evolved in the several thousand years of his history, but many still insist that he is a Biblical figure with a unique, petrified mentality:
Great indeed is the power of the written word. Everywhere it interposes between man and the facts, between the eye and fresh personal vision. Nowhere has this obscurring power been more marked than in the blindness produced by the Bible to the most glaring phenomena in the life of the people whose epic it once constituted. It has fixed the ever-living Jew as unchangeably as the dead Roman or the ancient Greek. It forbids his development. From the last page of the Bible to the first page of Deor Hayom, the Jerusalem daily, he has rarely ceased to expand and create; yet he is eternally what he once was. The Book says so. It is the museum in which he is perpetually exhibited.35

The Bible, which ostensibly casts the Jew as a ruthless conqueror who follows the commands of an invisible God, is seen as one source of the legend. But even in this source, the Jews are not altogether uncivilized:

The Old Testament would not be the great literature that it is, did it mirror life as less savage than we know life still to be. And if its Jews fall occasionally almost to the level of some of the races in our recent war [World War I], their brutality is mitigated by many a prescription which puts those Christian peoples to shame. . . . Thus after the countless rapes of conquered women, with which recent history has made us so painfully familiar, it is like hearing soft music to read in Deuteronomy (xxi. 10-13) of the warrior's duty to the enemy woman who has aroused his lust: of the necessary marriage with its set ritual and its due delay before his passion could be gratified. Little enough of extermination here. Still less of a narrow matrimonial tribalism. And the Mosaic legislator proceeds to trace the course of the husband's duty in the event of the conquered alien woman failing to bring him the expected delight. "Then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not deal with her as a slave, because thou hast humbled her."36


36 Ibid., pp. 170-171.
Zangwill continues his essay by tracing the various forms the myth has taken. He reviews and refutes the accusation that Jews use the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes, a charge which had led the way for Jewish expulsion from England in the thirteenth century and which was still being heard in the twentieth. Finally he examines the accusation that Jews own the wealth of nations.

Millionaires among the Jews are few, claims Zangwill; moderate successes are more common:

The Jew, however, standing outside the Feudal system by which Europe was organised, was able to escape from this point of view. He did not belong to the lower classes for the simple reason that he belonged to no class at all. He thus ignored the general notion of the hierarchy of wealth, and had the audacity to make money beyond his social position.\(^3^7\)

In an analogy from the Arabian Nights, Zangwill describes the American Jewish businessman's technique of the early twentieth century:

He prefers to build up his property by an endless aggregation of the infinitely little. He grows rich like Alnaschar in the "Arabian Nights," who started with a basket of glass; except that the Arab's dream is the Jew's reality. With the returns from the glass he buys something larger, and goes on and on by petty stages till he ends in the palace with the slaves and concubines of the Oriental vision. And before kicking he waits till he has got whom to kick, unlike the poor day-dreamer in the story who kicks over the basket and shatters his glass and his hopes.\(^3^8\)

\(^3^7\)Ibid., p. 207.

\(^3^8\)Ibid., pp. 207-208.
The argument is similar to the one the Jewish pawnbroker gives to his assistant in the screen version of Edward Wallant's novel The Pawnbroker. Indeed, much of Zangwill's apology has become standard fare which can be found not only in popular literature but also in the statements handed out by Jewish defense groups both here and abroad, and even in the sermonic oratory of the clergy. However, it is difficult to guess how much of this material is originally from Zangwill and how much is the result of other apologists and apologies of the nineteenth century or earlier.

The Halacha

Any attempt to write extended apology for Judaism must take into account sooner or later the halacha, the all-embracing legal system which characterizes the faith and which is responsible for a great deal of its uniqueness. In Children of the Ghetto there is an episode much commented upon by the critics: Sam Levine, a robust and emancipated Anglo-Jew, jests with Hannah Jacobs, daughter of a pious and respected rabbi. He "marries" her by pronouncing the ritual formula of betrothal in the presence of witnesses. According to halacha, the jest is binding on both parties. Hannah and Sam are willing to forget the incident, but Reb Shmuel, Hannah's kindly and law-abiding father, insists that nevertheless his daughter, a virgin, is to be considered a married woman. He arranges a formal bill of divorcement for her
which, under the circumstances, no one contests. In the meantime, Hannah is attracted to David Brandon, a free-thinker who has returned from adventuring in South Africa.

Brandon is not concerned about the halacha, nor does he show much concern for Judaism in general:

Fancy a religion in which only two per cent. of the people who profess it have ever heard of its laws /more of an exaggeration then than it would be now/. I suppose we're so mixed up with the English, that it never occurs to us we've got marriage laws of our own--like the Scotch.39

But his flippancy turns to more serious stuff when, because of an involved legal technicality, he cannot marry his divorced virgin. Although Hannah has little respect for the law, she has a great deal of respect for her father, to whom the law is life itself. The halacha, it seems, haunts even those who scorn its dictates.

But once Zangwill has described the problem, he must (in another work) analyze it and, if possible, reconcile the halacha with views acceptable to his contemporaries. Thus halacha becomes to him "sanctified sociology," and, by implication, Moses the Lawgiver becomes a bearded scientist with all the medical wisdom and insight of a Salk, a Freud, and a Schick. The law has outstanding pragmatic value: "It may well be that the Mosaic regimen was physiologically beneficial, contributing to the longevity of the race and to

39 Zangwill, Children, p. 137.
its *joie de vivre* in the teeth of unpromising circumstances. Zangwill attempts to prove his point with a mass of statistics and anecdotes; gentile slum children are not as tall as Jewish slum children, and "circumcision seems now a recognised prophylactic." Indeed, in Judaism "sociology was transfigured into poetry, the professor was disguised as the prophet, and the driving-force found in the love or the fear of God." The greybeards with their peculiar practices and notions were not so barbaric after all, Zangwill seems to say.

In a popular commentary on the Pentateuch, currently in widespread use throughout the British Isles and in numerous American synagogues belonging to both the Conservative and Orthodox movements, J. H. Hertz, late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, comments on the dietary laws found in Leviticus XI:

> There have, however, at all times been those who have seen a hygienic purpose in these prohibitions, and have held that the forbidden meats were not prohibited arbitrarily, but were unwholesome and repulsive in themselves. Modern research, too, recognizes that certain animals harbour parasites that are both disease-creating and disease-spreading. . . . Furthermore, as it is in the blood that the germs or spores of infectious disease circulate, the flesh of all animals must be thoroughly drained of blood before serving of food as is done with food prepared according to ritual. . . . Statistical investigation has demonstrated that Jews as a class are immune from, or less susceptible to, certain diseases; and their life-duration is frequently longer than that

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40 Zangwill, *Voice*, p. 32.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 33.
of their neighbours. Competent authorities have not hesitated to attribute these healthy characteristics to the influence of the Dietary Laws. . . . Although much remains to be discovered to explain in every detail the food-laws in Leviticus, sufficient is known to warrant the conviction that their observance produces beneficial effects upon the human body; cf. XVIII, 5.43

According to this argument, one is wise to practice the law if one is concerned with health. One need believe only in the omniscience of science to accept halacha; one can be both modern and Jewish at the same time. Presumably, Zangwill, the Asian Mystery, could find a pulpit for his apology almost a half-century after his death.

Historical Method and Intellectual Prejudice

Often, Zangwill uses historical backgrounds and characters for his fiction. His historicity is generally factual, although not marked by a great depth of scholarship or insight. His sources seem to be standard ones, especially Heinrich Graetz's monumental History of the Jews, regarded by many in the nineteenth century as a definitive work, but occasionally he uses more esoteric material. In the preface to Dreamers of the Ghetto, Zangwill acknowledges a manuscript lent to him by a friend, the scholar Solomon Schechter, which he uses, and in the story "The Master of the Name," he utilizes material (almost verbatim) from Solomon Maimon's

autobiography which had been translated into English.\textsuperscript{44}

Of course, Zangwill did not claim to be a professional historian, nor did he even think that the modern historical method was necessarily the best way of approaching the truth about the past:

Artistic truth is for me literally the highest truth: art may seize the essence of persons and movements no less truly, and certainly far more vitally, than a scientific generalization unifies a chaos of phenomena.\textsuperscript{45}

Often his prejudices are identical with those prevalent in the Jewish intellectual community. In regard to mystic elements in Jewish history (and Judaism), Zangwill strives to show them as exotic remnants, or as passing phenomena that would soon give way to enlightenment. He shares this view with more than one of his illustrious contemporaries and near-contemporaries:

The great Jewish scholars of the past century whose conception of Jewish history is still dominant in our days, men like Graetz, Zunz, Geiger, Luzzatto and Stein-schneider, had little sympathy—to put it mildly—for the Kabbalah /Jewish mysticism/. At once strange and repellent, it epitomised everything that was opposed to their own ideas and to the outlook which they hoped to make predominant in modern Judaism. Darkly it stood in their path, the ally of forces and tendencies in whose rejection pride was taken by a Jewry which, in Stein-schneider's words, regarded as its chief task to make a decent exit from the world.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44}In the authoritative Jewish Encyclopedia article "Solomon Maimon" (VIII, 269), Zangwill's Dreamers of the Ghetto, which contains a short story based on Maimon's life, is included in the bibliography!

\textsuperscript{45}Zangwill, Dreamers, p. iii.

In "Maimon the Fool and Nathan the Wise," Maimon declares that Jewish mysticism is "only an attempt at a scientific explanation of existence, veiled in fable and allegory" (the statement is not what makes Maimon the fool of the story's title). But there was a specific mystic movement in Judaism which was harder for a man of Zangwill's time to dismiss.

In the eighteenth century, a Jewish movement known as Hasidism arose and captured both the allegiance and the enthusiasm of the Jewish masses especially in Russo-Poland until well into the twentieth century. Their doctrines, practices, and beliefs were too colorful and exciting for an artist to ignore, but the manifestations of Hasidism were also permeated by an exuberant and unapologetic mysticism difficult for a defensive Jew like Zangwill to countenance. The movement grew among the Jews at the precise time that rationalism and science were believed to be triumphant in Europe. This growth of mysticism seemed to indicate that the Jews were retrogressing, the last thing that Zangwill could allow others (and himself) to believe about them. To a great extent, the Russo-Polish Jews who began coming to London around 1881 had their view of the world and of Judaism shaped by mystic Hasidism.

\[47\] Zangwill, Dreamers, p. 297.
In the discussion of English Jewry that he wrote for the Jewish Quarterly Review of July, 1889, Zangwill includes the Hasidim (along with reformed Judaism) as a heterodox element in the community. Later, he calls the movement the "one important heresy of Modern Judaism" and equates its founder with Francis of Assisi, a rather respectable mystic even among the enlightened of Zangwill's day.  

"The Master of the Name" tells of the rise of Hasidism and of its founder Israel ben Eliezer or the Baal-Shem-Tov (the Master of the Name). The narrator of the story describes his own "conversion" to Hasidic mysticism after getting his fill of Talmudic subtleties. The Baal-Shem-Tov is described in accordance with the traditional biographies, and the events given of the rise of the movement generally are in accordance with standard histories. But what makes the story interesting for our purposes is that the narrator, so recently converted, rejects the movement at the death of its founder and the ascension of a new leader: "Is it always to be thus with Israel? Are we to struggle out of one slough only to sink into another?" The narrator believes that the new leader is corrupt, and to prove his point he describes a visit to his "court." This is the description that Zangwill takes almost verbatim from the eighteenth-century

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48 Zangwill, Voice, p. 312.
49 Zangwill, Dreamers, p. 287.
autobiography of Solomon Maimon, a Hegelian who detested what he termed the superstition of the Hasidim. In the story, Zangwill succeeds in making the Baal-Shem-Tov palatable, an unsuccessful dreamer who has the right idea—or at least a very good one. But after the death of the founder, any one who makes claim to being a follower is, by implication, a corrupt or ignorant man. Zangwill the artist describes sympathetically the color, the exoticism, of the movement, and Zangwill the apologist rejects it all in the same story, a feat of literary legerdemain that one comes to expect from an Asian Mystery.

"Bethulah," another story which deals with the Hasidim, has for its narrator an American Jew, a tourist whose father was a frontiersman and, we learn, just as sturdy as any gentile pioneer. The American visits a small mountain village in the Carpathians where he is intrigued by both the local Hasidim and by the exciting daughter of their leader, a wonder rabbi. The rabbi does not mind entertaining tourists, but he does not want his daughter to marry one, especially since the mystic leader believes she is to give birth to a child fathered only by God. Bethulah, the daughter, whose name means virgin in Hebrew, becomes a forsaken spinster "symbolic of an undying, even rejuvenescent hope."50

50 Zangwill, Tragedies, p. 244.
In the course of the story, Hasidic customs are described in all their exotic vigor. To counterbalance what might be construed as a favorable response on his part, Zangwill provides an innkeeper who is an opponent of Hasidism and who supplies various innuendoes about his enemy including everything from sexual irregularities to gross charlatanry. As for the narrator, he is an American and a tourist, a chap resembling Henry James' Christopher Newman. If he is interested in Hasidism and in romantic dreams of an East-West marriage, one must consider his Yankee background and forgive him his naive interests.

Apology for Apology

Perhaps it is not surprising at this point to find that ultimately Zangwill wrote apology even for his own choice of Jewish subject matter. Replying to a charge by George H. Warner in The Jewish Spectre (New York, 1905) to the effect that too much fuss is made in contemporary literature about the ghetto, Zangwill is moved to justify (indirectly) his part in that fuss. Characteristically, Zangwill attempts to demonstrate that concern for and interest in the ghetto is no parochial matter. The ghetto, he claims, is a great experiment in sociology. Moreover, it should be a concern of much importance to the Christian:

"May he come to his place in peace," is the mystic formula pronounced as the clods rattle on the Jewish coffin. There were few places for the Jew to come to
in peace, whether on the earth or beneath it, for in the very heart of Christian civilization he dared to go unarmed, and the history of the Ghetto is from more than one aspect the story of the longest and bravest experiment that has ever been made in practical Christianity. Over nearly eighteen centuries the experiment has been tried, and a scientific study of the results would be an illuminating contribution to history, religion, and ethics.51

One can be scientific, which is to say modern, and still be interested in the ghetto.

The United States and The Melting-Pot

At times, Zangwill had great expectations for the United States, a new world in which the disappearance of ethnic groups, races, and sects was quite feasible.52 America would be the place where the Asian Mystery would find a solution for his dilemma, where the Jew would melt into gentile, yellow would blend into white, Slav and Teuton would become as one. The Melting-Pot is Zangwill's rhapsodic statement of this belief.

In the afterword to the revised American edition of the drama, Zangwill states that the play sprang directly from his "concrete experience as President of the Jewish Territorial Organization [J.T.O.]."53 He defends his play from critical attack by pointing out that Theodore Roosevelt, "with his

51 Zangwill, Voice, p. 27.
multifarious American experience as soldier, cowboy, hunter and historian, police-captain and President," comes far nearer to being the ideal spectator than does the critic. The President thought the play was "bully," and he said so loudly and clearly after its Washington performance.

In the play, a talented pogrom orphan David Quixano is determined to pay respects to his adopted land by composing an American symphony. David falls in love with a Christian social worker, Vera Revendal. To Vera, David expresses, in wild, Whitmanesque terms, his hope for America:

Not understand that America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to--these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians--into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.

Quincy Davenport, Jr., who could have been described—if the acronym were available to Zangwill—as a WASP, is the first villain of the play. The rich playboy, against Jew, foreigner, and the masses alike, craves Vera. But Vera is not dissuaded from her true love, who according to Zangwill's stage direction is a "sunny, handsome youth of the finest Russo-Polish type." The second villain of the play arrives

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54 Ibid., p. 201.
55 Ibid., p. 33.
56 Ibid., p. 27.
and threatens to upset the impending marriage of David and Vera. Baron Revendal, Vera's father, comes to New York from Russia. He is a Russian of the worst Czarist stock; it is he who presided over the massacre of David's parents at Kishinev. But after the psychic shock wears off and after the success of the American symphony, David and Vera are united and stand hand in hand watching the sunset. Regarding the literary value of the melodrama, it is enough to say that at this point the stage direction reads as follows:

\[DAVID\] turns. The sunset, which has begun to grow beautiful just after VERAS's entrance, has now reached its most magnificent moment; below there are narrow lines of saffron and pale gold, but above the whole sky is one glory of burning flame.\]

The Melting-Pot indicates that the most outstanding solution to the Jewish problem and to other problems of race is total acculturation to a newly evolving American ethos. Zangwill denied that this was his intention, but the text of the play makes a denial dubious. In The Melting-Pot, Zangwill clearly states that intermarriage and amalgamation of race is the factor which provides for significant brotherly love; strife will have been ended when we are all of one flesh in fact, a deed which Zangwill regards as quite possible. If this is the goal and the hope, much of Zangwill's apology becomes even more ambivalent than it would be without

\[57\] Ibid., p. 184.

\[58\] See Leftwich, pp. 252-253.
this doctrine that provides for the disappearance of ethnic groups altogether.

There is one more puzzling aspect of the play which deserves to be noted. The hero of the play, David Quixano, who regards himself as an Ashkenazic Jew from Russia, bears a Sephardic surname, a fact which is acknowledged by one of the play's characters. It is indeed odd that Zangwill would give a "sunny, handsome Jew of the finest Russo-Polish type" an aristocratic Sephardic name. Perhaps Zangwill was attempting again to indicate that even among the Jews there were various racial strains, or perhaps he could not quite believe that the same type of Jew one saw in Whitechapel and on New York's East Side was really capable of such romantic idealism as that which David Quixano displays.\(^{59}\) One begins to suspect Zangwill of all sorts of grotesqueries.

One critic bemoans the fact that The Melting-Pot, the worst of all Zangwill's dramas, was the one which cemented his reputation as a dramatist: "'The Melting Pot' made a Zangwillian of every sentimentalist in America, from that apostle of romantic claptrap, Theodore Roosevelt, to so disillusioned a humanitarian as Jane Addams." The same critic also points out the perplexing fact that Zangwill rather bravely and single-handedly opposed irreflective Zionist idealism and at the same time "hymned hysterically the

\(^{59}\)Gross, p. 56.
mirage of a Utopia."\(^{60}\) Zangwill was a wild romantic and a
calm pragmatist at the same time; the more one observes, the
darker becomes the Asian Mystery.

**Stereotypes**

Although Zangwill was opposed to Jewish stage stereotyp-\(^{60}\) es, he did not hesitate to include in *The Melting-Pot* a
stage Christian, Kathleen O'Reilly, the Irish servant of the
Quixano family. She is an innocuous droll whose speech pat-
tern is the same one that has been heard on the English stage
at least since Restoration comedy: "Pots and pans and plates
and knives! Sure 'tis enough to make a saint chrazy."\(^{61}\)
Kathleen may be foolish and childish, but when the chips are
down she has a heart of gold.

In *Children of the Ghetto*, the young heroine Esther
Ansell must sell her storybooks to provide for her penurious
family's welfare. She turns to the one shop in the ghetto
which has a sign of three lead balls above it. In an in-
teresting reversal, the patron of the shop turns out to be a
gentleman of the Christian faith. But he is a kindly pawn-
broker, not at all avaricious; the entire incident is only a
bit of Zangwill's more pleasing wit, and for once Zangwill
lets the jest go by without extensive comment.

\(^{60}\) Johan J. Smertenko, "Israel Zangwill," *The Nation*,
CXVII (October 31, 1923), 484.

\(^{61}\) Zangwill, *The Melting-Pot*, p. 3.
However much Zangwill hated the stereotyped Jew of the English stage, he is responsible for shaping at least one such monstrosity. In *The War God*, Karl Blum, the personal secretary of the Bismarckian chancellor and the only Jewish character in the play, is an insidious fellow who by cunning and deceit makes himself the power behind the throne. He out-plays the Bismarckian chancellor at his own game. The figure is a stock one, and the fact that Zangwill is in this instance his creator has not gone unnoticed by the critics.  

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Zangwill was too earnest, although he often feigned humor when he was at his most serious. He wanted the attention of his contemporaries because he loved them and believed that he could modify their conduct. To make them listen to him, he was willing to be indiscreet, to be a pretentious "sage" or an outrageous buffoon whose main stock in trade was the pun. As many critics point out, Zangwill would rather be outspoken than diplomatic, merely polemical than artistic: "He was too earnest, even too rhetorical, to compete with those who agitate the surface of life's problems for an audience that needs to digest its dinner rather than exercise its brain; his art suffered."¹

By the twenties, Zangwill was lamenting the fact that his public had forgotten him,² and even the critics were complaining that their journalistic fraternity was ignoring his work.³ The Great War had been fought, and its aftermath was a series of absurd treaties which taxed Zangwill's

¹S. L. Bensusan, "Israel Zangwill," Quarterly Review, CCXLVII (October, 1926), 298.
²See Walter Tittle, "Israel Zangwill," Century Magazine, CVIII (October, 1924), 800.
³Smertenko, p. 483.
ability to denounce. His Jewish Territorial Organization had failed to ameliorate significantly the Jewish problem. Earlier, Zangwill had doubts about the efficacy of those peculiar nineteenth-century dreams of progress and of goodwill on earth, but now he had experienced the failure:

The nineteenth century's own idols have not proved so worshipful as it imagined. If the Press diffuses light, it can also—as Bismarck discovered—diffuse darkness. If Science as a maid-of-all-work is a success, Science as an interpreter of the mystery of the Universe is a dismal failure. Even her immense practical boons only serve to amplify our senses and increase our speed: they cannot increase our happiness. Giants suffer as well as dwarfs, and the soul may sit lonely and sad, surrounded by mechanical miracles.4

Although he always sought controversy and delighted in creating a storm, he finally reached the point where this sort of life and labor began to tire him mentally and physically: "He saw himself as Azazel, the scapegoat, and he sank under the burden of self-inflicted woe."5 Zangwill began to argue with critics and stage managers, to exaggerate myriad petty matters until his health suffered and he was forced to withdraw from all his activities, a withdrawal which ended in death.

Zangwill was subject to all the problems common to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectual, but, as a Jew, he found them compounded several times. As a


Jew, he was sensitive to issues, tones of voice, and ideas which went unnoticed by the gentiles around him. He lived in an age when many Jews regarded their heritage as either a curse or a blessing. When they regarded it as a blessing, they felt the need to take defensive measures on its behalf. Seldom was the heritage regarded with the sort of naturalness that makes for comfort and a healthy mental state. The Jew could not say "I am what I am" because he was forced to be more specific.

At the turn of the century, a large group of leading Jewish intellectuals from all parts of the world (especially the United States and England) joined together to find out what they were. The magnificent "descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day" entitled the Jewish Encyclopedia, was the initial step toward their self-discovery:

The editors have felt a special sense of responsibility with regard to this work, in which for the first time the claims to recognition of a whole race and its ancient religion are put forth in a form approaching completeness. They have had to consider susceptibilities among Jews and others, and have been especially solicitous that nothing should be set down which could hurt the feelings of the most sensitive. They consider it especially appropriate that a work of this kind should appear in America, where each man's creed is judged by his deeds, without reference to any preconceived opinion. It seemed to them peculiarly appropriate under these circumstances that THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA should appear under the auspices of a publishing house none of whose members is connected with the history or tenets of the people it is designed to portray /Funk and Wagnalls Co./. Placing before the
reading public of the world the history of the Jew in its fullest scope, with an exhaustiveness which has never been attempted before—without concealing facts or resorting to apology—THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA hopes to contribute no unimportant share to a just estimate of the Jew.  

Often, notes of apology do creep up in the work. For a Jew in the nineteenth century (and for some in the twentieth), apology was second nature.

Above all, Israel Zangwill wanted to be understood and appreciated as a Jew, as a Londoner, as an Englishman, as a European, and as a citizen of the world. His heart was not only in many places, but it also spanned centuries of time. He had an insatiable desire to be understood by everyone, and was not content to be appreciated by a chosen few. He was a cosmopolitan of an unconventional sort; Zangwill did not wish to embrace the All in toto, but rather the Each in propria persona. He was compelled to live in many climates at once. For one he required a certain suit of clothing, and for another, an entirely different costume. To succeed he had to be a consummate quick-change artist. But he was never nimble enough to succeed, nor could he afford the luxurious wardrobe that success required. He overexposed himself in one climate, and underexposed himself in another.

This problem was faced by many of the Jewish intellectuals of Zangwill's generation. However, in general they did not

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6 "Preface," Jewish Encyclopedia, I (New York, 1912), xxi. This preface was written in 1901.
seem to have become more than trifurcated. Zangwill himself was divided into so many bisecting segments that their point of contact no longer had independent existence. Ironically, he has become an asterisk in surveys of literature.

Recently, much has been said about alienation and the Jewish writer. Zangwill's tragedy is that he was peculiarly unalienated in a world that forces each man to be estranged from his brother, that demands one be Jew or gentile, specific or general; many accept the world's demand and become alienated, but Zangwill refused to countenance that. He believed that a man could live in both the metropolis and in the suburbs--and in each place find a comforting hearth and familiar slippers.

If we have solved one specific Asian Mystery, there yet looms a larger and more important puzzle for us to solve; how is a man to live successfully in more than one world? From Zangwill, all we get are clues.
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