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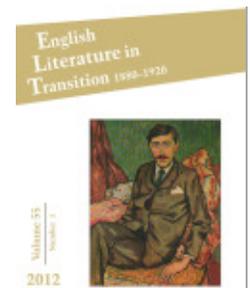
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## Language, Gender, and Ethnic Anxiety in Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto*

By Meri-Jane Rochelson

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In his 1909 study of *The Jew in English Literature*, Rabbi Edward N. Calisch wrote of Israel Zangwill, "He is a brilliant, versatile and picturesque writer, a novelist, poet, essayist, dramatist, and critic, and his place in English literature is assured for all time."<sup>1</sup> It would have surprised Calisch (and, indeed, most of Zangwill's contemporaries) to learn that outside of Jewish studies Zangwill is now virtually unknown. In the first quarter of the twentieth century until his death in 1926, Zangwill was an activist on behalf of numerous causes, including pacifism, feminism, and Jewish nationalism, and in the 1890s he had already established himself as a significant literary figure on both sides of the Atlantic. He began his career as one of the "new humorists" of Jerome K. Jerome's *Idler*, in 1891 published *The Big Bow Mystery* (which remains an outstanding example of detective fiction), and from 1894 through '96 contributed a regular column, "Men, Women and Books," to the American periodical *The Critic*—and this is just a small sample of his early literary output. A prolific and respected translator of Hebrew poetry, Zangwill's name is appended to many of the translations in the Jewish prayerbook, and most Americans are familiar with the phrase "the melting pot," though unaware that it comes from the title of Zangwill's 1909 play.<sup>2</sup> In 1899 James Oliphant (to whom Dickens seemed a "glorified newspaper reporter"<sup>3</sup>) wrote that although the novelty of his ghetto fiction hastened Zangwill's fame, "his genius would sooner or later have compelled recognition, whatever class of subject he had been led to choose."<sup>4</sup>

Today, however, it is precisely Zangwill's Jewish fiction, and most specifically *Children of the Ghetto*, that interests us. For in this novel Zangwill, more than any of his predecessors,<sup>5</sup> initiates the tradition of the modern Jewish novel in English, with all the ambivalence and complexity such a categorization entails. Zangwill wrote *Children of the Ghetto* in 1892 to dispel positive as well as negative stereotypes, to show that Jews are more than despised Fagins or the idealized Mordecai and Mirah of *Daniel Deronda*. But the book's form is the Victorian three-decker novel, one of the last of the genre, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Zangwill had George Eliot in mind also as a positive model.<sup>6</sup> Just as *Middlemarch* is "A Study of Provincial Life," *Children of the Ghetto* is subtitled "A Study of a Peculiar People," and Zangwill produced a similarly panoramic and microscopic view of Anglo-Jewish society. But apart from the real insight the novel gives into the lives of nineteenth-century English Jews, one of its major points of interest today is what J. C. Benjamin calls "a rhetoric of anxiety," the signs in the novel of the author's

sense of his own marginality. Benjamin faults Zangwill for lacking "critical detachment."<sup>7</sup> But Zangwill's true subject in *Children of the Ghetto* is the future of Judaism beyond the ghetto, under emancipation. The dilemma he presents (and never entirely resolves) is his own as the child of immigrants, seeking a place among the London literati.<sup>8</sup> In his ambivalent attitude toward the Yiddish language, in his choice of female protagonists, and in his hesitations, as author, in resolving their fates, Zangwill creates a work of fiction whose very structure figures forth the dilemmas and anxieties of a "hyphenated" writer. *Children of the Ghetto* is thus more than a compelling picture of life among nineteenth-century London Jews; it is also a document in the language of literary marginality, a product and illustration of the dilemmas it describes.

The novel is divided into two parts. Its first and longer section conveys a richly detailed picture of Jewish life in the East End slums of London, with a Dickensian energy and sense of abundant life. The second, shorter, section, "Grandchildren of the Ghetto," takes the book beyond the realm of local-color fiction and confronts the reader with the uncertainty and ambivalence of the Jew who was able to move out of the ghetto but whose traditions formed bonds that were difficult to break. The book's major plotlines trace the fortunes of four Jewish young people—Esther Ansell, Hannah Jacobs, Joseph Strelitski, and Raphael Leon—over the course of ten years.

As he delineated the ghetto life which had shaped his characters, and which they were inevitably forced to transcend, Zangwill found himself having to represent the language of the ghetto, Yiddish: in his narrator's words, "the most hopelessly corrupt and hybrid jargon ever evolved."<sup>9</sup> In *Jewish Self-Hatred*—a rather sensationalistically titled but provocative study—Sander L. Gilman explores the ambivalent relationship of Continental and American Jewish writers to both the mainstream and ethnic cultures, and posits language as central to these writers' difficulties. All the authors he considers, notes Gilman, "rely on language for their status (and thus their power) in society. No matter what their discourse, . . . when they use language it is always with the anxiety that they use language differently than their reference group, in a way that is understood by it as 'Jewish.'"<sup>10</sup> He adds that anxiety increases as the writer touches Jewish subjects. To quote Gilman quoting a hypothetical author: "Once I deal with the 'Jewish Question,' I raise the specter of the hidden language of the Jews and thus draw my own mastery into question."<sup>11</sup> The idea of the "hidden language" refers to a perception that resulted from the historical absence of Hebrew in Medieval Gentile Europe; Hebrew came to be viewed as a magical (therefore fearsome and mysterious) language as well as one of the "signs of the difference of the Jew."<sup>12</sup> According to Gilman, this negative outsider's perception of Jewish language found its way subtly into the Jewish psyche, as well. Although "self-hatred" seems to me a far too negative term to apply to Zangwill's anxiety, Gilman's discussion provides a context for the ambivalent attitude toward Yiddish that we see in *Children of the Ghetto*.

Zangwill sets up a situation in which the ghetto, with all its poverty and misery, is the true spiritual and ethical center of Judaism. With increased opportunities to assimilate into the majority culture comes the danger of forgetting Judaism and its morality. Knowledge of Yiddish and the willingness to use it thus become, in one sense, a touchstone to character. The point is illustrated in two parallel deathbed scenes, one in the first part of the novel and one in the second, where the intergenerational struggles are most fully enacted. The first involves Benjamin Ansell, who has been sent to an orphanage outside the ghetto. On a visit home he tells his sister, Esther, that he has hardly missed the family: "there's such a lot to do and to think about. It's a new life" (169). He scorns his grandmother for never having learned English, and expresses a hope that Esther does not speak "that beastly Yiddish." When he is dying and his father goes to the orphanage to see him, the teachers disgustedly lament the fact that the two cannot understand each other. One teacher, "who knew the jargon to perfection," wonders if he should step in to interpret, although he has pretended to no knowledge of Yiddish at all. Suddenly Benjy begins to speak Yiddish as part of a delirious return to the past; in the novel his "return . . . to intelligibility" appears also as a last-minute salvation (257). The sequence is repeated more pathetically in the life and death of Hannah's brother, Levi Jacobs, who has changed his name, disavowed religion and family, and become an actor,<sup>13</sup> only to die young, begging for forgiveness, with Hebrew prayers on his lips.

Yet, despite the value that Zangwill places on the "language of the Jews" in his novel, it poses problems for Zangwill as an author. Transcribing the dialogue of Yiddish-speaking characters, he translates literally rather than idiomatically: "Where are you going?" becomes "Whither goest thou?" and the speakers seem archaic and unnatural. In this respect Zangwill reminds us of Benjy's teacher, adept at the mother-tongue but seeking to distance himself from it. A different approach appears in the sprinkling of Yiddish and Hebrew terms throughout the dialogue and narrative, but this practice led Zangwill into new difficulties: his Gentile and probably some of his Jewish readers could not understand the foreign words and phrases. When the reviewer for the *Spectator*, among others, suggested rather critically that Zangwill's novel required a glossary, the author took offense, asserting that he had provided enough explanatory information in the text.<sup>14</sup> But in the preface to the third edition Zangwill writes that he has "reluctantly" added one, through which "[i]t will be seen that most of the despised [Yiddish] words are pure Hebrew; a language which never died off the lips of men, and which is the medium in which books are written all the world over even unto this day" (v). By first denying the need for a glossary and then by defending his foreign expressions in this way, Zangwill attempts to naturalize Yiddish, to assert it as simply a logical extension of his English readers' culture. Yet the denial and the defense only underscore further Zangwill's sense of its and his "other"-ness.

Gilman sees in late-nineteenth-century German-Jewish writing the creation of "a new stereotype," of the "good," old-world, Eastern Jew of the ghetto as opposed

to the "bad" acculturated Jew;<sup>15</sup> part and parcel of this romanticization is the idealization of Yiddish as "the language of the child and the woman, . . . simple and direct,"<sup>16</sup> and clearly we see something of both these simplifications in *Children of the Ghetto*. Zangwill's discomfort with Yiddish may thus result, at least in part, from the sense that the language of women and children is not a fit vehicle for literary production.<sup>17</sup> But it is important to remember that in addition to reflecting Zangwill's own perhaps unconscious anxieties, one of the central articulated themes of *Children of the Ghetto* is the kind of "classic double bind" in which Gilman finds the acculturated Western Jewish author,<sup>18</sup> who in some sense owes allegiance to both worlds, the Western and Eastern, the modern and traditional. Benjamin Ansell, ironically defined as "the hope of the family," has dreams of becoming a writer. Through his early death Zangwill implies that his scorn for Yiddish makes him unfit to speak out in any language. Esther instead becomes the writer in the family, and Zangwill makes clear that she—like her author—"led a double life, just as she spoke two tongues" (103).

The choice of Esther Ansell as protagonist of *Children of the Ghetto* is additionally significant because in important ways the female experience is emblematic of the uncertainty and insecurity which pervade the novel and Zangwill's own relationship to the Jewish past and future. It may be argued that in this work as in others Zangwill is simply following the well-worn tradition of building fiction around a heroine. But the evidence of the novel itself suggests otherwise, and his practice has at least one contemporary parallel.

In a discussion of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, Gail Finney develops the concept of the sexually aggressive woman protagonist as a "mask" for the male homosexual author, citing Wilde's statement in *The Critic as Artist* that "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth."<sup>19</sup> Finney supports her persuasive textual analysis with a discussion of the marginality of both women and homosexuals in late-Victorian society and Wilde's own sympathy with feminism. For similar reasons I find the mask analogy apt in understanding Zangwill's heroine. Although, as has been widely noted, many of *Children's* characters in some way speak for their author,<sup>20</sup> Esther is most clearly his surrogate as a Jew in conflict with her Jewish identity. Yet her female identity allows him to express the uncertainties of marginality in a less immediate and personal way. And although it is problematic to call Zangwill a feminist novelist, as I shall discuss, he was certainly a serious political feminist, active in the suffrage movement of the early twentieth century and outspoken on the necessity for equal rights for women.<sup>21</sup>

In some ways Zangwill's commitment to feminism is as vexed as his undeniably even firmer commitment to Judaism. Zangwill's biographers tend to attribute his interest in the suffrage movement to his marriage to Edith Ayrton, the feminist writer. Joseph Leftwich, who seems to disparage his old friend's feminist interests, remarks that "[i]t happened to other literary men at the time."<sup>22</sup> Frequent comments on young ladies' appearance in Zangwill's diaries

at the time of *Children of the Ghetto* suggest that he was not an instinctive feminist.<sup>23</sup> Nor are his fictional portrayals devoid of stereotype or conventional sentimentality: when Esther visits Raphael Leon's office, for example, a sunbeam lights her face with a "celestial halo" (448) and she feels compelled to tidy up the desk (447); Hannah, for her part, is described as having a smile of "angelic tenderness" (488).

Still, just as Zangwill seems to distance himself from (as he embraces) his Yiddish linguistic roots, in his portrayals of women, too, he appears to pay lip service to an acceptable male rhetoric while identifying with the pain of his female characters' dilemmas. In *Children of the Ghetto* Esther and Hannah carry both the emotional and ideological weight of the novel. Where questions about the future of Judaism are quite literally debated by the two central male characters, they are enacted in the situations of these female protagonists. The women are presented with a depth that other characterizations lack, and an element of surprise in the development of each underlines for the reader the significance of the debate which surrounds them. Esther captures the reader's attention in the first scene of the novel. Here she runs up the stairs to her family's garret carrying soup in a pitcher which "an individualistic instinct of cleanliness" (5) had caused her to prefer to the charity kitchen's tin jug. As she reaches the top step she trips: the pitcher shatters and the soup is gone—and Zangwill has given us his first illustration of the dangers of difference and of setting oneself apart from one's own group, as well as from a larger majority.

Esther has frequently been identified as Zangwill's own persona in the novel, and the parallels continue. As a child Esther is shown to have a "sceptical instinct" (102). She loves the traditions and customs of her religion but at the same time reads the New Testament with interest. In the second part of the novel she expresses her disgust with modern Jewry, seeing it as lacking ideals. Zangwill undermines Esther's distaste for Judaism by showing that her feeling is based in ignorance, but he, too, shared her cultural self-criticism and her fascination with other beliefs, as well as her sense of alienation from other Jews. Speaking to the Maccabees, an organization of educated Jews formed to be a living denial of negative stereotypes, Zangwill presented his own version of Hebraism and Hellenism: "It is on the side of art and general culture that the Jew needs most development," he stated; "his aesthetic faculty is swallowed up in his spiritual."<sup>24</sup> He often spoke of Christianity as an offspring of Hebraic moral law and admired Jesus as a great Jewish teacher;<sup>25</sup> ultimately he favored a universal religion that would transcend both Judaism and Christianity. Zangwill was outspokenly opposed to the Jewish proscription against intermarriage, saying it was post-Mosaic and that "the very Rabbis of the Talmud could not endorse this principle."<sup>26</sup> Unlike Esther, Zangwill later married a Gentile, and he refused to have his first son circumcised, though—like Raphael Leon—he saw the importance of Revelation, rites, and ceremonies in maintaining the essence of Judaism.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, Esther shares Zangwill's position as an intellectual and a writer who comes from the ghetto, is educated at the London University, and writes a book that is critical of Jews. Her *Mordecai Josepfs* (from what we can gather in *Children of the Ghetto*) is a more consistently vituperative exposé of materialistic wealthy Jews than Zangwill himself offers, but the criticism it meets with in the Jewish community is a forecast of what Zangwill, too, would encounter. As a child her reading of novels had led Esther to aspire to English society outside the ghetto, though Benjy was the one assumed to be destined for achievement. Readers of *Children of the Ghetto* know from the start that Esther is a much more sensitive individual than Benjy, that her questionings and aspirations are more complex than his facile rejections of tradition. Yet her taking over the son's mantle as "the hope of the family" is emblematic of Esther's—like Zangwill's—precarious and marginal position. Zangwill emphasizes Esther's marginality as well as her daring by having her attempt authorship from the double disability of being a Jew and a woman. He does not allow her quite his own courage: the disapproval of her pseudonymous book is such that she never publicly ventures to reveal her authorship. But Zangwill knew that a case like Esther's could exact a heavier toll. Three years earlier Amy Levy, author of the novel *Reuben Sachs* (on which *Mordecai Josepfs* is said to have been based) committed suicide.<sup>28</sup>

Esther does, finally, reveal her authorship to Raphael Leon, and in that moment of self-identification we can read the release of long-suppressed fear and self doubt:

she went down the stair and into the keen bright air, with a fierce exultation at her heart, an intoxicating sense of freedom and defiance. It was over. She had vindicated herself to herself and to the imaginary critics. The last link that bound her to Jewry was snapped. (456)

Though Esther's last statement turns out to be incorrect, there is a triumph in that vindication of "herself to herself," the outsider daring to say "I am." And it is difficult not to see Zangwill himself thinly veiled as Raphael re-reads *Mordecai Josepfs* and sees Esther on "every page": "She was the heroine of her own book; yes, and the hero, too, for he was but another side of herself translated into the masculine" (457). Unfortunately, Esther's writing career has no future that we can discern, as Zangwill opts for turning her into a romantic heroine. But she is never permitted to lose her symbolic weight, or to gain too much ease of soul. Called by Raphael Leon "an allegory of Judaism," at the end of the novel she is still "the gray spirit of the ghetto that doubts itself" (535), albeit engaged to be married.

Finally, in Hannah Jacobs we have another rebellious young woman who questions tradition, and it is through her romantic subplot that Zangwill questions what he perceives as Judaism's adherence to the letter over the spirit of the law. In the first part of the novel, Hannah falls in love with David Brandon, a non-

observant Jew, and becomes engaged to him. When the couple discovers that a tiny intricacy of Jewish law prevents their marriage,<sup>29</sup> it is Hannah who initiates the idea of civil marriage and emigration to America, and they arrange to elope.

This assertiveness is in line with other instances of Hannah's independence. "Don't you believe any Jew ever really believes in Christianity?" she at one point asks her father, a rabbi (89); at the same time she scorns the hypocrisy of Jews who try to hide their religion when not in synagogue (135). Hannah is also assertive of her rights as a woman. She resents her mother's complaints that she is not married, says she would rather marry for love than money, and, mocking the form of a woman's daily prayer, states that a woman can never be "satisfied" with her lot: "she has no voice in her destinies. She must shut her eyes and open her mouth and swallow what it pleases God to send her" (136). Her lament reminds one of Eliot's Mrs. Transome, another woman who suffered under patriarchal laws.<sup>30</sup> It is also Hannah, however, who at the last moment cannot leave her parents' home and faith. The pull of tradition and ritual on the Passover night are too great, and as she closes the door on David she tells her mother that the man outside is "only a Christian rough" (314).

It is difficult at first to believe in Hannah's acquiescence, but eventually the narrative is persuasive. When Esther Ansell returns to the ghetto as a young adult, she finds a soul-mate in Hannah Jacobs. Esther also expects never to marry, and sees in the older woman an example of one contented with her chosen life. Hannah's face "looked earnest, almost spiritual, telling of suffering and patience, not unblest with peace" (485). The philanthropy practiced by Hannah toward the poor of the ghetto is generous, matter-of-fact, and free of illusions. She has found a role for herself, and seems happy in it. Zangwill jolts the reader's expectations once more, however, when news arrives that Levi Jacobs, a.k.a. Leonard James, is seriously ill. Hannah clashes with her father, who denies his son's existence; she urges the rabbi to abandon his rigidity as she had urged before when the question was of her own future. When other arguments fail, Hannah finally tells the story of her aborted escape, and reveals the sacrifice she has made: "My life is but a shadow," she says. As to how her father can atone, she answers, "forgive Levi" (540).

The revelation of Hannah's bitterness comes as something of a surprise, and raises new questions. The regulation that forbade her marriage "was not His law," she tells her father; "it was a miserable juggling with texts" (540). Zangwill retreats from the implications of his narrative by having Hannah reflect to herself that the family reconciliation was worth her sacrifice. As with Esther, he sentimentalizes what is problematic. But the shock of Hannah's statement of despair remains with the reader as, itself, a reproach to sentimentality.

Zangwill placed Hannah's story at the center of the action when he turned *Children of the Ghetto* into a play in 1899.<sup>31</sup> In this version the story ends

on the eve of Passover, when Hannah rejects her fiancé; the titles of the four acts suggest the exploration of a conflict between "the spirit of love" and "the letter of the law," with ancient law and tradition ultimately triumphant. The play does not show Hannah ten years later; letters Zangwill received after the opening suggest the effect was a poignantly sentimental "tragedy."<sup>32</sup> But in the novel Zangwill makes clear that even for Hannah the ambivalence, anxiety, and regret continue. He shows the inadequacy of ghetto values for the new generation even as he affirms (in Part Two as Part One) their enduring power.

Esther Ansell leaves her wealthy patrons to support herself in the ghetto, but by helping a family of new immigrants move into the Ansell's garret, she effectively shuts herself out of her old home. Called, explicitly, "an allegory of Judaism," she trips and falls as she leaves the synagogue at the end of the Day of Atonement. She had been musing about the destiny of the Jews, wondering whether Judaism will "break down at last, sinking in morasses of modern doubt," whether it will be saved by Raphael's "sacred phalanx" of believers, or whether, as Joseph Strelitski envisions, the Jews will be the seed of a universal faith (546). (All of these are possibilities which Zangwill presented and debated, as well, in his non-fictional essays.) As if in answer to Esther's questions, she is rescued by Strelitski. Her fall no longer has the painful consequences of the one which began the novel; she is no longer penned in and hampered by the ghetto, but has been liberated by her renewed contact with it. As a symbol of the future of her race, however, Strelitski's stopping of Esther's fall is not the final word. As the two leave for America at novel's end, Esther goes with the intention of returning to marry Raphael Leon. The two men wish each other success in their respective ideals; the possibilities for Judaism's future remain not only open, but manifold.

Still, Zangwill knows he cannot with confidence predict his people's future: "The sun was still bright, but for a moment everything seemed chill and dim to Esther Ansell's vision. With a sudden fit of nervous foreboding she stretched out her arms toward the vanishing figure of her lover" (549). She finds him again in the crowd, but the uncertainty is still there. The marriage has not yet taken place; the ship's cargo is an evanescent "freight of hopes and dreams" (549).

For all *Children of the Ghetto's* sentimentality and melodrama, it is a serious and unsettling novel. Its force derives in part from the images of two young men who had sought success in a wider world murmuring Yiddish and Hebrew at their deaths, and from the even more powerful (because less sentimental) vision of two young women living on in continued questioning and second-guessing, trying to make sense of hybrid lives. These were dilemmas that their author felt keenly. In Jewish circles *Children of the Ghetto* was not only popular, but controversial. A debate raged in the correspondence pages of the *American Hebrew* over whether the novel was more harmful than helpful to the Jews. "Thanks to the kindness of our Christian friends," wrote Cyrus L. Sulzberger, in words reminiscent of more recent criticisms directed at Philip Roth, "we are

in no danger of overlooking our weaknesses. No charge that has been made by anti-Semitism but will find substantiation in 'The Children of the Ghetto.'"<sup>33</sup>

Sulzberger's complaint is hyper-sensitive, and *Children of the Ghetto* had many eloquent Jewish defenders. One of the great strengths of Zangwill's novel is his subversion of stereotypes by pairing them with unexpected revelations. Melchitsedek Pinchas, for example (a minor character who seems almost to insinuate himself throughout the novel), is portrayed as a shrewd, conniving, over-sexed, money-grubbing flatterer, but he is also called "a poet of genius," "a real poet with an extraordinary faculty for language and a gift of unerring rhythm" (185, 184). Zangwill's narrator throughout the first part of the novel jokes at the lack of cleanliness in the ghetto, but when Esther Ansell does the same in Part Two, Raphael Leon calls it a "cheap sarcasm" (391). And yet, somehow the reader is unsettled by Zangwill's repeated insistence on the dirtiness of ghetto Jews. There is something disturbing in his description of Yiddish as a "hopelessly corrupt . . . jargon" (30). The reason lies not in Sulzberger's fear that "others" might use such comments as ammunition, but rather in the reader's sense of Zangwill's own discomfort as an "other," an outsider who has grown apart from the ghetto and its ways, and yet is still, as a Jew, an outsider from the world of English letters.

One of Zangwill's biographers has mentioned his friendship with Gissing, and Zangwill himself was fond of dropping references, in his essays and speeches, to conversations with such figures as Meredith and Pater.<sup>34</sup> Zangwill's file at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem contains telegrams from Kipling, Walter Besant, James Barrie, and Sarah Bernhardt—all wishing him success at the opening of *Children of the Ghetto* but regretting that they cannot attend. Conan Doyle did see the play, and wrote Zangwill a kind and admiring note when he learned it was to close after one week.<sup>35</sup> There is thus no question that Zangwill was in some way a part of important literary circles in the nineties, and his treatment by the periodical press tends to confirm his importance to his contemporaries. But that Zangwill felt his position secure is by no means clear. Another missive connected with the dramatization of *Children of the Ghetto* is a postcard addressed to "IKEY" ZANGWILL, "JEW." It gloats in an angry scrawl over the short run of the play and is signed, "ANTI-SEMITICS."<sup>36</sup>

Zangwill's column for the *Pall Mall Gazette* was entitled "Without Prejudice," and the catchphrase became his slogan, dropped slyly into all sorts of writings. At the same time as Zangwill sought and achieved acceptance, he was aware of the prejudice that surrounded him and might at any moment leap out to remind him of his difference. He was also well aware of his differences from other Jews. In the ambivalence with which he describes his beloved yet transcended ghetto, in the portraits of strong yet self-doubting female characters, Zangwill weaves his autobiography into *Children of the Ghetto*. His own insecurities as an Anglo-Jewish writer add poignancy and power to his epic of the past and future of Judaism. They also provide a context for his later feminism.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Edward N. Calisch, *The Jew in English Literature, as Author and as Subject* (Richmond, VA: Bell, 1909): 179.

<sup>2</sup>This may be changing. In a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, Andy Logan considered the phrase in its original context, referring directly to Zangwill, his play, and the circumstances that brought it about, in a discussion of present-day New York politics ("Around City Hall: Crucible," *New Yorker*, 14 September 1987:116-29).

<sup>3</sup>James Oliphant, M.A., *Victorian Novelists* (London: Blackie & Son, 1899): 32.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*: 242.

<sup>5</sup>For a historical survey of the modern Jewish novel in England, see Linda Gertner Zatlín, *The Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel* (Boston: Twayne-G. K. Hall, 1981). Zatlín's study is only the most recent to confirm Zangwill's important place in the tradition.

<sup>6</sup>That Zangwill admired Eliot as a great and important writer central to the literary tradition is apparent in the very frequency of his references to her, in the series "Men, Women and Books" for the *Critic*, in his essays for *Pall Mall Magazine*, and elsewhere. Eliot is his example or point of comparison for any number of ideas, and her centrality to Zangwill's thinking is manifest even when the comparison is to her detriment. (See, for example, Zangwill's repudiation of "art for art's sake" in "Opinions of the Young Fogey" [originally in *Pall Mall Magazine*], rpt. in Israel Zangwill, *Without Prejudice*, Essay Index Reprint Series [Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries], 113.)

<sup>7</sup>J. C. Benjamin, "Israel Zangwill (1864-1926): A Revaluation," *Jewish Quarterly* 24:3 (1976): 5.

<sup>8</sup>That the dilemma is Zangwill's has been noted by all recent commentators on the book. Bernard Winehouse, for example, writes that the characters are all "the offspring of a mind in conflict with itself." See "Israel Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto*: A Literary History of the First Anglo-Jewish Best-seller," *English Literature in Transition* 16:2 (1973): 99.

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<sup>9</sup>Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), in *Selected Works of Israel Zangwill: 'Children of the Ghetto', 'Ghetto Comedies', 'Ghetto Tragedies'* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938): 30. All future page references in text will be to this edition.

<sup>10</sup>Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986): 19.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*: 20.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*: 23.

<sup>13</sup>Sander Gilman reminds us that in *Daniel Deronda* "Eliot's self-hating Jew is an actor, one who relies on a command of the tool of a European language" (19). Gilman points specifically to Lapidoth, Mirah's father, but the Alcharisi, Daniel's mother, a singer, could also be cited. And of course acting has even further symbolic ramifications, as the self-denying Jew "plays a role" in the conduct of his or her life. One might consider, in this context, to what extent Zangwill's own interest in the theater may have been a reflection of or an escape from the pressures of his dual identity, though the point could be taken too far.

<sup>14</sup>"Recent Novels," *The Spectator*, 26 November, 1892: 774; also Winehouse, 105. The J.P.S.A. appended a glossary to the first American edition without asking Zangwill's approval; he later based his English glossary on this one (Winehouse, 105; *Children* v).

<sup>15</sup>Gilman: 270-71.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*: 279.

<sup>17</sup>In an important recent addition to the theory of gender and literary language, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar advance the thesis that male writers seek to transform the "mother tongue" (of women and children) into a more "occult" and mystifying patriarchal language of art; after tracing historical divisions between the two modes of discourse they use Joyce and other modernists as their primary examples ("Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality," *New Literary History*, 16 [1985]: 534-35).

On the romanticization of the ghetto, at least one critic, Harold Fisch, has faulted Zangwill for "his unqualified commitment to the Ghetto as both center and circumference of Jewish spirituality" ("Israel Zangwill: Prophet of the Ghetto," *Judaism*, 13 [1964]: 419). As I hope this essay demonstrates, however, Zangwill clearly recognizes the limitations of nostalgia and of the efficacy of ghetto ways in giving meaning to the lives of modern Jews. The debate pursued and enacted in "Grandchildren of the Ghetto" carries the

weight of Zangwill's questioning of ghetto values, and this may be one reason why his novel had more contemporary appeal and enduring power than his play, which omitted that second half (see below).

<sup>18</sup>Gilman: 271.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted from *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collier, 1966): 1045, in Gail Finney, "Blurring Gender Lines in Late Victorian Culture: Wilde's *Salome*," Special Session on "Race and Gender in Victorian Culture," MLA Convention, New York, 28 December 1986; to be published as part of *Women and Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and Turn-of-the-Century Theater* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Winehouse: 99.

<sup>21</sup>Zangwill's major feminist essays and speeches are collected in *The War for the World*, in *Works of Israel Zangwill* (New York: American Jewish Book Company, 1921).

<sup>22</sup>Joseph Leftwich, *Israel Zangwill* (London: James Clarke, 1957): 100. See also Elsie Bonita Adams, *Israel Zangwill*, (New York: Twayne, 1971): 23; and Maurice Wohlgelernter, *Israel Zangwill: A Study*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964): 40, 218. Adams and Wohlgelernter, however, are on the whole more willing than Leftwich to take Zangwill's feminism seriously and on its own terms.

<sup>23</sup>See, for example, the diary for January 1893 in file A120/8 in the Zangwill Collection at the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. On the one hand there is his dismissal of "an old bore at the club" who "thinks Ibsen's views [on marriage] provincial" (January 3), and on the other there is this comment on Miss Hall Caine: "Curious I have not alienated her by my frank freethought. She seemed less pretty than the evening I first met her at her brother's, perhaps through her unbecoming brown dress" (January 4).

<sup>24</sup>Israel Zangwill, "Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite," *Speeches, Articles and Letters of Israel Zangwill*, selected and edited by Maurice Simon (London: Soncino, 1937): 38.

<sup>25</sup>Leftwich: 178.

<sup>26</sup>Israel Zangwill, "Zion, Whence Cometh My Help," *Speeches, Articles and Letters*: 77.

<sup>27</sup>Zangwill enunciated his ideas on these points in an 1889 article for the *Jewish Quarterly Review* entitled "English Judaism: A Criticism and a Classification." It was this article that won him the J.P.S.A.'s commission.

<sup>28</sup>See Zatin 90-97 for a discussion of Levy and her novel.

<sup>29</sup>It is truly an arcane intricacy. At a party Sam Levine jokingly places a ring intended for his fiancée on Hannah's finger and recites the Jewish marriage formula. He is then informed that, since his act was witnessed by at least two Jews, he and Hannah are legally married; but all is not lost, as they may obtain a religious divorce. David Brandon, however, as a Cohen (a descendent of the priestly tribe) is forbidden to marry a divorced woman. Most modern rabbis would probably not take the original mock marriage as binding, and even in Zangwill's day objections were raised that the consent of the bride is needed for a valid marriage. But commentators came to Zangwill's defense, citing similar cases in the 17th, 18th, and even 19th centuries (see, for example, Dr. G. Deutsch, "Zangwill and the Rabbinical Law," *American Hebrew*, 24 November 1899: 82-83, and Maurice H. Harris, "Zangwill's 'Children of the Ghetto,'" *American Hebrew*, 24 November 1899: 77-79.

<sup>30</sup>I am reminded particularly of Mrs. Transome's bitter remark to her servant: "What is the use of a woman's will?—if she tries, she doesn't get it, and she ceases to be loved. God was cruel when he made women." (George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical* [1866; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972], 488.) Other parallels (heroines named Esther, for example, who first reject and then turn to strong, kind, religious men named Rufus Lyon and Raphael Leon) suggest that Zangwill may have had *Felix Holt* somehow in mind as he wrote *Children of the Ghetto*. Though *Daniel Deronda* as Eliot's "Jewish novel" is seen as an obvious influence, Zangwill is likely to have seen affinities between his own work and Eliot's novel of competing values in a time of rapid social change.

<sup>31</sup>The play is unpublished, and I have been unable to locate any manuscript copy. My discussion of the structure and emphasis of the play are based on a playbill of the original London production in file A120/43/1 of the Zangwill Collection at the Archives, as well as on periodical reviews and letters to Zangwill, some of which are cited below.

<sup>32</sup>Cecile Hartog, for example, writes that Zangwill has found "the true vein of tragedy; and if the play and the stories do not inspire sensations of horror . . . they leave one with an uplifted feeling that is full of pity and tenderness and longing to do what may be done to lessen the burden and the sorrow of the tragedies that surround us" (12 December 1899, in file A120/43/1 of the Zangwill Collection). Abraham Cahan, taking a sober look at the state of turn-of-the-century Jews, came closer in deriving from the play some of the uneasy message of Zangwill's novel: "Hannah has obeyed the Law, at a terrible sacrifice," he writes. "Will her children obey it?" ("Zangwill's Play, 'The Children of the Ghetto,'" *Forum*, 28 [December, 1899] 506).

<sup>33</sup>"Communication," *The American Hebrew*, 2 December 1892: 151.

Rochelson: Zangwill's 'Children of the Ghetto'

<sup>34</sup>Wohlgeleirnter: 53. For a few examples of Zangwill's remarks, see "Palestine Regained," *Speeches, Articles and Letters*, 343; and "Men, Women and Books," *Critic*, 15 September 1894: 165.

<sup>35</sup>In file A/120/43/1 of the Zangwill Collection.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*