

Zangwill and his Legacies Programme

Welcome and Introduction (11.00 - 11.15)

Panel 1: Fiction (11.15 – 12.45)

Chair: Claire Le Foll (Director of the Parkes Institute, University of Southampton)

Nadia Valman (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Matso Balls in Petticoat Lane'

Mélanie Labrande (Aix-Marseille Université), 'The schnorrer in Israel Zangwill's work'

Alice Crossley (University of Lincoln), 'Aged Infancy: Ageing in Israel Zangwill's 'An Odd Life' and F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button'

Break (12.45 – 13.00)

Panel 2: Jews (13:00 - 14:00)

Chair: Tony Kushner (University of Southampton)

Maja Gildin Zuckerman (Copenhagen Business School), 'Zangwill's Pilgrimage to Palestine: Accentuating Jewish Differences through Experiences'

Jakob Egholm Feldt (Roskilde University), 'Amalgamation and Improvised Regeneration: Futures Past of Jewish Civil Inclusion'

Break (14:00 – 14:30)

Panel 3: Legacy (14:30-16:00)

Chair: Miri Rubin (Queen Mary University of London)

Arie M. Dubnov (George Washington University), 'Degeneration Anxieties: On the little-known connection between Israel Zangwill, Max Nordau, and Ben-Zion Netanyahu'

Laura Almagor (Sheffield University) 'A Temple of Peace: Israel Zangwill's anticolonialism'

Bryan Chetty (University of Reading), 'The Ghetto as Palimpsest: From Zangwill to Elias Khoury'

Concluding Roundtable (16:00-16:45)

Chair: Nadia Valman (Queen Mary, University of London)

Meri-Jane Rochelson (Florida International University)

Eitan Bar-Yosef (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

Online Book Launch for *Beyond Zion* by Laura Almagor (16.45 – 17.15)

Chair: Bryan Chetty (University of Reading)

Abstracts

A Temple of Peace: Israel Zangwill's anticolonialism

Laura Almagor (University of Sheffield)

After leaving the Zionist Movement in 1905 following the so-called Uganda Controversy, the Jewish Territorialists sought to create settlements for Jews outside both Europe and Palestine. They explored possibilities from Angola to Australia and Tasmania, and from Madagascar to French and British Guiana and Suriname. Probably the best-known protagonist of the history of Territorialism is Israel Zangwill, who led the movement's first incarnation—the Jewish Territorial Organisation (ITO)—between 1905 and 1925.

When its successor organisation was established in the 1930s as the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation, Zangwill's intellectual influence was still explicitly acknowledged. Zangwill had conceptualised Territorialism as a colonial endeavour, hitching its fate first and foremost onto the British Empire. As geopolitical realities were changing during the interwar and into the postwar period, the Freelanders reinvented themselves as postcolonial critics of the Zionist state building project. Despite this seeming colonial metamorphosis, this paper will demonstrate the various ways in which Zangwill had in fact laid the foundations for the Territorialists' later attitudes vis-à-vis statehood and empire. In laying bare these connections, I will also challenge the dominant historiographical narrative that portrays Zangwill's Territorialism as a temporary lapse from his attachment to Zionism, to which he is erroneously said to have returned after the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

Amalgamation and Improvised Regeneration: Futures Past of Jewish Civil Inclusion

Jakob Egholm Feldt (Roskilde University)

In this paper, I will discuss Israel Zangwill's play "The Melting Pot" (1908) and Horace M. Kallen's article "Democracy versus The Melting Pot" in "The Nation" (1915) as two different visions for futures of Jewish civil inclusion. I will argue that revisiting Zangwill's vision of the Jewish future and Kallen's response shows us important ambiguities of connecting pasts with futures as ongoing processes of socio-cultural learning. Zangwill's play and Kallen's response reflect dramatic experiences of migration and socio-cultural change, and both visions employ Jewish experiences as exemplary for the world-to-come. Both show how Jewish experiences and conceptions of Jewishness were turned into universalist teleologies, but of very different kinds. Zangwill's play opened in Washington at the height of massive immigrations waves, rapid urbanization, and social change, and it very swiftly became exemplary for a certain strong vision for the American nation in the making, emphasizing concepts of amalgamation/alchemy more than old historical identities. In opposition, Kallen's response in 1915 emphasized historical identities and rejected the metal melting metaphors and replaced them with a Darwin-inspired improvisational-spontaneous "symphony". To Kallen, and other critics such as Judah L. Magnes, the melting pot was deeply problematic, dissolving the possibility of living Jewish lives, but this criticism arguably overlooked how Zangwill portrayed the melting pot as a Jewish shape. Zangwill and Kallen based their future-making on primordializations of Jewish historical experiences, and both their envisioned futures can be seen as modelling the future over these primordializations. In this way, Zangwill and Kallen

both imagined the American-global world in the making as profoundly shaped by Jewishness albeit with very different consequences. Exploring futures past of Jewish inclusion shows us the limits of historical path dependency and it shows us how the inventory of Jewish of in/exclusion is continuously reconstructed towards the future.

Zangwill's Pilgrimage to Palestine: Accentuating Jewish differences through Experiences

Maja Gildin Zuckerman (Copenhagen Business School)

This paper looks at how Israel Zangwill's experiences of, in, and, to Palestine in 1897 accentuated Jewish differences through which he began to imagine and differentiate divergent Jewish political trajectories. I explore and discuss in the paper the role of embodied experiences as cultural know-how and sensemaking maps that informed and shaped Zangwill's political trajectory onwards and thus how individual experiences can become formative resources to imagine political future, while also enacting them.

At the centre of the analysis is the Maccabean Pilgrimage to Palestine that took place in spring 1897. In the Zionist historiography, the travel has been described as the first modern Zionist venture to explore Palestine as the homeland of Herzl's visions and aspirations. While the trip was initiated based on Herzl's motions to explore Palestine as a future Jewish homeland, its overall framework and aim was anything but settled. Just as the pilgrims themselves were never much in agreement about *why* they travelled to Palestine, *what* they experienced while they were there, and, finally, *how* the country and European Jewry should move forward from that point. Especially Zangwill's thoughts and experiences about the trip seemed to *enquire* rather than fixate the many elements that crossed his path.

I will argue that Zangwill's journey to Palestine can be fruitfully explored as a rich palette of experiences that accentuated for him several issues, relations, and values about not only Jewish presence but also Jewish future and past scenarios. The trip did not cement specific truths but rather made certain relations and scenarios salient. This, I argued, created an emergent repertoire for Zangwill to develop different understandings of Jewish collectivity as the Zionist movement consolidated itself and its truth about Palestine in the years to come. Through a sociological pragmatic lens, the paper fleshes out what the study of experiences can add to our understanding of early Jewish nationalism in general and the complex and intersecting positions that Zangwill enacted both in 1897 and onwards.

Degeneration Anxieties: On the little-known connection between Israel Zangwill, Max Nordau, and Ben-Zion Netanyahu

Arie M. Dubnov (The George Washington University)

It is well known that the author and playwright Israel Zangwill was the first public figure the Viennese Zionist leader Theodor Herzl's met during his first visit to England in November 1895. Subsequently Zangwill would play a central role in the chronicles of early Zionism, alongside the club calling itself "Order of Ancient Maccabeans," up to the so-called Uganda controversy culminating in the establishment of the ITO.

Less known is the fact that Herzl arrived at Zangwill's doorstep armed with a letter of introduction from the Austro-Hungarian doctor, essayist, and critic Max Nordau (1849-1923), author of the controversial essay on *Degeneration* (*Entartung*, 1892–1893, English translation

1895), which notoriously condemned numerous fin-de-siecle authors and artists for producing a sickening and harmful degenerate art, symptomatic of a sick society. Although *Degeneration* – part of a trilogy – was authored before Nordau joined the Zionist movement and did not deal explicitly with Jewish issues, his resounding critiques of European society and culture provided the theoretical foundation on which he later developed his Zionism. The axis on which the latter revolved included a yearning to break free from the humiliating conditions Eastern European "ghetto" on one end and an equally strong desire to avoid West European social and cultural "degeneration" on the other end. Lack of national dignity, disconnect from an ancient heroic Jewish past, and feeble femininity, which had to be overcome by the manufacture of "muscle Judaism" (*Muskeljudentum*), characterized both.

Looking more closely at these overlooked relationships, the main aim of this talk is to examine the degree to which Nordau's ideas might have had an influence on Zangwill and to reassess the ways in which both employed the word "ghetto" while absorbing and further developing a highly racialized imagination of themselves and their surroundings. Once reevaluated, these connections can help explain why the late Revisionist Zionist historian Ben-Zion Netanyahu insisted, contrary to almost all classic textbooks and monographs on the history of Zionism, on describing both Zangwill and Nordau as "Forefathers of Zionism" and how these ideas continue shaping our present discussions.

The *schnorrer* in Israel Zangwill's work: From the cultural and social type to the founding of a literary lineage

Mélanie Labrande (Aix-Marseille Université)

This paper will introduce the audience to a character from Zangwill's literary ghetto: the *schnorrer*, or the "proud beggar" – a possible translation for this Yiddish word. I will chart the historical origins of the cultural type of the *schnorrer* whose presence permeates Yiddish culture and literatures with Eastern European Jewish background. This will lead me to examine the originality of the *schnorrer* in Zangwill's literary work. My hypothesis is that by choosing to have his *schnorrer* Sephardic rather than Ashkenazi, Zangwill pulls this figure away from the ethno-social type and grounds it into a literary lineage while delving into an age-long memory of migration, exile and disguise that reaches far beyond the *Yiddishkeit*, and relates it to other transcultural archetypes as the fool, the minstrel or the picaresque. I will mainly focus on the characters of Melchizedek Pinchas (*Children of the Ghetto*) and Manasseh da Costa (*The King of Schnorrers*) for this study. Time permitting, I will eventually present intertextual echoes between Zangwill's work and the novels of francophone writer Albert Cohen where the character of Mangeclous (*Solal*, 1930; *Mangeclous*, 1938) supports the idea of a literary lineage of the *schnorrer* after Zangwill.

Aged Infancy: Ageing in Israel Zangwill's 'An Odd Life' and F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button'

Alice Crossley (University of Lincoln)

This paper will explore the challenges that Israel Zangwill's short fiction presents to biological, calendrical, and cultural age construction through his comic short story 'An Odd Life' (1894). This paper will suggest that, by living alternate years, talkative infant Willy Streetside occupies an unusual position in relation to age. He is simultaneously a little child (in body, and in freshness of outlook), old (as he retains all the memories and sensations of having been an old man), and

middle-aged (having experienced literally 39 years of life). In the story that Streetside's physician narrates, Zangwill challenges the very nature of what it means to age. This text will also briefly consider Scott F. Fitzgerald's 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button' (1922) as a correlative to 'An Odd Life', and – while not a direct response to Zangwill's own work – the story picks up the same challenges by thinking about ageing beyond cumulative linear temporality and reversing typical life-course enactment. My paper will interpolate ageing studies with theories of embodiment and disability theory, to reflect on both texts' engagement with ageist and ableist discourses, and open discussion of the texts' apparent rejection of heteronormative structures. Each narrative problematises the life course, I suggest, and in doing so the protagonists Willy Streetside and Benjamin Button establish alternative, nonnormative models for ageing.

Matzo Balls in Petticoat Lane

Nadia Valman (Queen Mary, University of London)

This paper discusses *Motso Kleis* [Matzo Balls], the short novella that Zangwill published in 1882 at the age of 18, and the first literary representation of the Jewish East End. As a teacher at the Jews' Free School in Spitalfields, Zangwill was witnessing the dramatic transformation of the area as tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants from Russia began arriving in that decade. Right away, even as it was forming before his eyes, Zangwill began to shape and interpret the Jewish East End. His story was an unruly mix of realism, social satire and farce among immigrant and acculturated Jews, a combination that he would recycle a decade later in *Children of the Ghetto*. But *Motso Kleis* was not only the first representation of the immigrant East End. In a decade that thrummed with anxious middle-class investigations of 'outcast London' it was the first description of lower-class life by an East Ender.

Zangwill's tale begins in Petticoat Lane, with a description of street life that was later incorporated verbatim into *Children of the Ghetto*. Here, the narrator celebrates the mess, noise and linguistic cacophony of the immigrant market street, which stands as a counter to the world of upwardly mobile Jews who aspire to bourgeois values. The story, I will argue, demonstrates Zangwill's early interest in the space of the East End as a site of energetic conflict. Distinctive for its plentiful use of Yiddish, considered vulgar by Zangwill's employers at the Jews' Free School, the publication of *Motso Kleis* eventually led to Zangwill's dismissal -- a story he retold and embellished throughout his life. The controversy over *Motso Kleis*, for Zangwill, epitomised his self-image as an antiauthoritarian in perpetual and righteous conflict with the Jewish establishment.

The Ghetto as Palimpsest: From Zangwill to Elias Khoury

Bryan Cheyette (University of Reading)

My talk will explore the history of the word ghetto with reference to two novels entitled *Children of the Ghetto*. The first, Zangwill's transatlantic bestseller published in 1892 and the second a Palestinian novel by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury called *Children of the Ghetto: My name is Adam* (2012) published 180 years later. I want to show the way that Zangwill appropriated the word ghetto from an earlier nineteenth-century German-Jewish tradition (which referred to rural ghettos in Central Europe) and repurposed it for the urban landscape in the Jewish East End of London. It was this appropriation that proved particularly influential in the United States and, after the 1940s, became associated with African-American urban landscapes in the northern cities of America. Khoury, although

aware of Zangwill's novel (as his Hebrew translator has made clear), takes a completely different history of the term which the Nazis used with reference to Jewish populated areas in Eastern Europe. But he also refers to an earlier history of the word ghetto in relation to Zionist thinking. His novel shows how the word "ghetto" was used by Israeli soldiers in 1948 with regard to Palestinian populated areas. My talk will trace these multiple histories of the word ghetto and show how the term has travelled from Western to Eastern Europe and across to the United States and the Middle East.

Participant Biographies

Mélisande Labrande is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Aix-Marseille Université with a doctoral fellowship to complete her PhD thesis on the representations of poverty in the works of Israel Zangwill, Albert Cohen, and Albert Cossery. This project investigates how the three writers revisit transcultural archetypes (the fool, the wanderer, the *schnorrer*) and articulate critical visions of modern capitalistic societies, thus complicating set alternatives such as productiveness vs. uselessness, or commercial exchange vs. charity. Mélisande holds an MPhil degree in Modern History (Sciences Po, Paris), an MA in Creative Writing (Université Paris 8), as well as an Agrégation in English (2017).

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Meri-Jane Rochelson is Professor Emerita of English at Florida International University, where she is also affiliated with the programs in Jewish Studies and Women's and Gender Studies. She is the author of *A Jew in the Public Arena: The Career of Israel Zangwill* (Wayne State UP, 2008), and has published editions of Zangwill's 1892 novel *Children of the Ghetto* (Wayne State, 1998) and his 1908 play *The Melting-Pot* (Broadview, 2018). Early in her career she co-edited the anthology *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s* (St. Martins-Palgrave, 1994). Her most recent book, a scholarly as well as personal biography of her father, is *Eli's Story: A Twentieth-Century Jewish Life* (Wayne State, 2018). The author of many publications and talks on Victorian and Anglo-Jewish literature, Professor Rochelson has kept busy during the pandemic doing online presentations for the New York Public Library, the Center for Jewish History, and the Miami Jewish Film Festival.

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Maja Gildin Zuckerman is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy at Copenhagen Business School. She was the Jim Joseph Postdoctoral Fellow at Education and Jewish Studies at Stanford University. Her research centers around questions related to modern and contemporary Jewish citizenship, the civil sphere, and national in/exclusion relations. She has co-edited the book *New Perspectives on Jewish Cultural History: Boundaries, Experiences, and Sense-Making* (New York, Routledge, 2019). She holds a PhD from University of Southern Denmark in Middle Eastern Studies (2016), a MA in Sociology and Anthropology from Tel Aviv University (2012), and a BA in Anthropology and Jewish Studies from Copenhagen and Haifa University.

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Alice Crossley is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature (University of Lincoln). Her research focuses on intersections between age and gender (especially masculinity) in texts primarily by Victorian and modernist writers. Her recent work includes *Male Adolescence in Mid-Victorian Fiction* (Routledge, 2018), an article on asynchronicity and aging queerly in the fiction of Israel Zangwill in *19* (2021), and another on 'The Aesthetics of Ageing in Tanizaki's *Diary of a Mad Old Man*' for a special issue of *Poetics Today* (forthcoming 2023). She's edited a special issue on age and gender in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* (2017), and co-edited a special issue of 'Narratives of Aging in the Nineteenth-Century' with Amy Culley for *Age, Culture, Humanities* (2021). Her next book will be *Old-Fashioning: Ageing Masculinity in Fiction 1830-1930*. Alice also works on nineteenth-century valentines, and published a book chapter on the subject in 2018. She's engaged in a project that explores the material and sentimental significance of the quasi-ephemeral valentine's card in nineteenth-century Britain and America.

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Bryan Cheyette is Chair in Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Reading and a Fellow of the English Association. He has published eleven books most recently: *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (Yale University Press, 2014), and *The Ghetto: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2020). A Series Editor for Bloomsbury (*New Horizons in Contemporary Writing*), he has been a visiting professor at Dartmouth College, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania. He also holds fellowships at the universities of Leeds, Southampton and Birkbeck College, London. He is currently working on a book on Testimony which will bring together slave narratives, Holocaust testimonies and refugee stories.

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Nadia Valman is Professor of Urban Literature at Queen Mary, University of London. She is author of *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge UP, 2007), and the editor or co-editor of nine volumes or special journal issues including *The 'Jew' in Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa*, ed. with Eitan Bar-Yosef (Palgrave, 2009); *Revisiting the Victorian East End*, issue 13 (2011) of *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* ed with Emma Francis (Birkbeck, University of London, 2011) *Nineteenth-Century Jewish Literature: A Reader* ed. with Jonathan Hess and Maurice Samuels (Stanford UP, 2013). She has adapted her research for a number of innovative public engagement projects include *Zangwill's Spitalfields*, a walking tour app in London's East End using *Children of the Ghetto*. She is currently principal investigator of an AHRC-funded research project, *Making and Remaking the Jewish East End*.

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Arie M. Dubnov is an associate professor of history who holds the Max Ticktin Chair of Israel Studies at the George Washington University. Among his publications are the intellectual biography *Isaiah Berlin: The Journey of a Jewish Liberal* (2012), and three edited volumes, *Zionism – A View from the Outside* (2010 [in Hebrew]), seeking to put Zionist history in a larger comparative trajectory, and *Partitions: A Transnational History of Twentieth-century Territorial Separatism* (2019, co-edited with Laura Robson), tracing the genealogy of the idea of partition in

the British interwar Imperial context and *Amos Oz's Two Pens: Between Literature and Politics* (2023 [forthcoming]), dedicated to the late Israeli novelist and public intellectual.

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Links:

<https://history.columbian.gwu.edu/arie-dubnov>

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Eitan Bar-Yosef is Associate Professor of English at the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. A literary scholar and cultural historian, his work examines the legacies of British imperial rule, especially in the Middle East, as well as the various affinities between British and Israeli cultures. His publications include *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (2005); and *vilah ba-jungel: afrikah be-tarbut ha-yisre'elit* (A Villa in the Jungle: Africa in Israeli Culture; 2013). His current research project explores representations of Mandatory Palestine in British literature and culture after 1948.

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Jakob Egholm Feldt is professor of global history at Roskilde University. His special research interests are temporality, historical synchronization, teleology (meaning and purpose in history), and Jewish history. He also has interests in critical education and higher education philosophy and theory. Among his recent publications are *New Perspectives on Jewish Cultural History. Boundaries, Experiences and Sensemaking* (Routledge, 2019, with Maja Gildin Zuckerman) and "The Future of the Stranger. Jewish Exemplarity and the Social Imagination", *Journal of Classical Sociology* (20(3) 2020). <https://forskning.ruc.dk/en/persons/feldt>
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