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The Salamander and the Chameleon:

**Religion, Race, and Evolutionism
In The
Anglo-Jewish Press, Montreal, 1897-1914**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of History

in conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Most histories treating of the subject of Darwinism and its impact upon ethnic minority groups tend to stress the threat it posed. This is also the case when it comes to discussions of religion; evolutionary theory is usually represented as a juggernaut which religious groups must either bow before or leap away from. In the case of the Jewish people—an ethno-religious minority—evolution proved to be especially harmful, at least as the twentieth century wore on and “Social Darwinist” propaganda came to underwrite the European extermination of the Jews.

Yet, in the period and place under review (1897-1914; Montreal), a more complicated picture emerges. An examination of the city’s English-language Jewish press reveals that Darwinism and its offshoots—including race science and eugenicism—were not the monopoly of nativists and reactionaries. They could also be employed as weapons of group-defense and group-assertion, in battles against anti-Semitism as well as factional disputes. Combining biographical, social, and cultural historical approaches, this study explores the ways in which evolutionism played itself out in Canadian Jewish journalism, and in which the writings of a few key individuals were received by the Canadian Jewish (particularly, the Montreal) community.

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Prologue: The Adaptable Jew

The wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years under the leadership of Moses was a wise decree of Providence. During their sojourn in the wilderness their power of endurance was tried to the utmost, which, naturally strengthened their character. . . . for it is those people that have had the hardest struggle for existence who have attained the greatest power. . . . Never in the annals of mankind has the survival of the fittest manifested itself to such an extent as in the history of Israel.¹

In the Middle Ages it was the weaker Jew who, in order to escape persecution, went over to the persecutor. Thus only the strong remained who by the law of inheritance produced strong offspring. When, either by the law of atavism or by that of success and its consequential ease and luxury, the 'Ausscheidung's Prozess' [process of selection] again eliminated the weaker parts, this process continued for generations, thus leaving within Jewry only the strong, the fittest surviving.²

"Darwinism was in the air, and promised . . . to solve all the problems of humanity."³ The author of these words, Joseph Jacobs, was an English race scientist, a colleague of Francis Galton, the founder of the eugenics movement (and Charles Darwin's cousin). Jacobs was convinced that the Jews were a pure race reducible to a few characteristic physical types; he and Galton made photographic forays into Whitechapel to gather data for this hypothesis.⁴ A major Jewish authority in his day, Jacobs has been described as a "defender of the

¹ *Jewish Times* [hereafter *JT*], March 5, 1909, p. 273. Reprinted from the *Cleveland Jewish Review and Observer*.

² "Survival of the Fittest," from the *Chicago Reform Advocate*, reprinted in *JT*, December 2, 1902, p. 9.

³ Joseph Jacobs quoted in John Efron, *Defenders of the race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in fin-de-siecle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 61.

⁴ Efron, *Ibid.*, p. 90b, figure 2.

race.”⁵ From our present-day perspective, the attractions that race science held for Jews may be difficult to comprehend. It is not the promise of evolution but the threat it posed (in the form of Hitler’s Social Darwinism) that we associate with Jewish history. But if Social Darwinism—as racial scientific and eugenicist versions of evolution are often referred to—ultimately turned out to be a Frankenstein’s monster, it also held something in common with the Jewish golem: it could, for a time, serve subaltern as well as hegemonic interests.⁶

To come to grips with this counter-intuition, we must tear ourselves out of our period and enter Jacobs’. That is the view of historian John Efron, whose *Defenders of the Race* (1994) broke ground in the area of subaltern Social Darwinism (though he does not use that term) by pointing to the previously unrecognized work of turn-of-the-century Jewish race scientists. Describing their efforts as a type of ethnic self-defense, Efron argues that historians of post-colonialism, who focus on Africa and other continents, forget that European peoples could also be colonized, the Jews being a prime example. He contends that Jewish race-scientists were the first minority spokespersons to turn the discourse of racial evolutionism on its head, to face down colonizers; and makes

⁵ Jacobs had a hand in editing *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Fund & Wagnalls, 1901-1906), the extraordinary reference work that had originally been entitled *The Encyclopedia of the History and Mental Evolution of the Jewish People*. Cf. Rubin Shuly Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Ohio, 1991).

⁶ Springing from medieval folklore, the golem was envisioned as an automaton made of clay, a creature brought to life by mystically-inclined rabbis in times of persecution. In the most famous version of the story, a rabbi in sixteenth century Prague destroys his creation when it begins to run amok. Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988),

the invaluable point that distinctions must be made between the acceptance of premises and the leaping to dubious conclusions.⁷ One could believe in the reality of race and races, and even in the relative inferiority or superiority of certain of them, without concluding that exclusion or extermination was logically demanded.

Efron's study succeeds because he does a very good job of contextualizing the subject, of letting us into Joseph Jacobs' world-view. "The fact is," he writes, "race science was central to fin-de-siècle Western intellectual tradition. Modern European race thinking was not merely part of the ideology of extremist politicians and professional antisemites, or just a convenient tool for nationalist, antisemitic demagogues." Rather, "the notion that races existed and were fundamentally different from another, in a physical or psychological sense, was an integral element of modern European culture. It was a belief propounded with equal conviction by the aristocrat and the day laborer, the factory worker and the industrialist, by the illiterate masses and Europe's most gifted intellectuals. It was also an idea entertained by Jews."⁸

What should be added by way of qualification, however, is that limiting one's study to the racialist aspects of evolutionism clouds the issue somewhat. Doctrines of evolution (and there were several floating around independently at

p. 99.

⁷ Efron, pp. 2, 12, 180.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176. Another historian of anthropology has written: "no major figure in the social sciences between 1860 and 1890 escaped the influence of evolutionary racism." Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (New

the time, even if contemporary observers, either out of ignorance or for the sake of polemics, tacked each with the designation of Darwinism) could be employed to underwrite religious as well as racial identities. It is one of my main points that liberal Judaic and secular Jewish authorities held similar anthropological assumptions. Both subscribed to the evolutionarily-informed stereotype of the “adaptable Jew”. But, whereas the former glorified adaptability as a virtue, as the attribute that allowed Jews to succeed under emancipatory conditions, the latter, particularly secular Zionists, judged it a vice that, given the pressures of Diasporic existence, led to “assimilation”.

Both camps, in a word, employed evolutionism to further their competing visions and agendas. I employ “evolutionism” rather than “Social Darwinism” to denote the social analytical co-option of evolutionary discourse because the former is a fairly value-neutral term; Social Darwinism, with its negative associations, is not as suitable. Despite that the term is often used confidently and unquestioningly, Social Darwinism is as vague as it is sensational, if examined carefully.⁹

In his classic *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), Richard Hofstadter effectively identified Social Darwinism as

York: Crowell, 1968), p. 130.

⁹ Arno Mayer rehearses the received wisdom that what underpinned Adolph Hitler’s world view was “Social Darwinism” in his *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken: The Final Solution in History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990). He is correct in pointing out that Nazi ideology was based on an evolutionary scheme, but to call it Social Darwinism is to beg the question of denotation—or to take Richard Hofstadter’s definition at face value.

anything that rationalized a philosophy of “might over right”: robber barons, New Liberals (sometimes referred to as Reform Social Darwinists), militarists, racialists, nativists—all were tarred with the same brush, all having invoked the phrase “survival of the fittest”. The problem is pacifists and defenders of minority rights, not just war- and hate-mongers, also invoked the idea and/or accepted the ontology of race.

A few historians have acknowledged the existence of these problematic anomalies and turned their attention to the problem of what is actually meant by Social Darwinism. Some, like Robert Bannister, reject it as entirely meaningless, since it was always used as an epithet, not as a neutral descriptor.¹⁰ Others assert the term’s usefulness, this objection notwithstanding, with the proviso that its “multivalence” (potential for multiple and contradictory readings) is recognized.¹¹ Getting to the epistemological root of the problem, Robert Young has maintained that Darwinism is and was always social, since scientific expressions, whether vindicated by history or proven in hindsight to be pseudo-science, are never entirely outside the bounds of social influence.¹²

¹⁰ Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).

¹¹ Greta Jones’ *Social Darwinism and English Thought* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), D.P. Crook’s *Darwinism, War and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Mike Hawkins’ *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹² Young, “Darwinism is Social,” in *The Darwinian Heritage*, ed. David Kohn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

But I use “evolutionism” not to make an epistemological but an historicist point. In the period under review (1897-1914), no one doctrine of evolution had achieved the status of orthodoxy. Darwinism as we know it is a fusion of the theory of natural selection and Mendelian genetics, a marriage that was not to be consummated until the 1920s.¹³ Lamarckism—often attributed to Herbert Spencer, the so-called father of Social Darwinism, it is the theory that characteristics acquired in the course of a lifetime could be transmitted to progeny—was still alive and well. Historians of science have shown that not only Herbert Spencer¹⁴ but Darwin himself had Lamarckian tendencies, since, unfamiliar with Mendelism, he had an incomplete understanding of the mechanism of heredity.¹⁵

Distinguishing between Lamarckism, Darwinism, Spencerism, Galtonism, Kropotkinism or any other evolutionary -ism is not my primary concern, however. Their differences, while important, are less so than the fact that they all obviously held something in common: an historical context in which intellectuals,

¹³ Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, p. 295.

¹⁴ Whose distinction was not in being Lamarckist but in advocating a kind of liberalism that was laissez-faire in the extreme. His early work was so hands off that it was advertised by publishers as anarchism. See the end pages of *Social Statics; Or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of Them Developed* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1875). Despite popular conceptions regarding his role in the promulgation of racial or Social Darwinism (and despite that Zionist thinkers like Achad Ha-am and Simon Dubnow found in his work support for an ethnic definition of Jewishness), Spencer largely ignored the question of race.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the real differences between Lamarckism and Darwinism—the former having a linear vision of evolution, the latter conceiving of a branching patten—see Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and*

whatever their background or professional discipline, were far from shy about applying doctrines of evolution to social situations. Even Darwin, the naturalist, tried his hand at evolutionary sociology in the *Descent of Man* in 1871.¹⁶

Social Darwinism, then, cannot be defined as the inappropriate employment of natural historical ideas to social situations. Accepting that definition would necessitate the anachronistic privileging of Darwinism as an immaculately conceived expression of evolution. Historians cannot buy into the idolatry that “hard” science is impervious to the sociology of knowledge (above and beyond mere discourse), or presume that Darwinism, now accepted as orthodoxy, is indivisible and beyond distortion. Darwinists to this day are split into (at least) two camps, each of which accuses the other of being driven by political agendas, of relenting to the influence of soft science, of betraying the legacy of the founding father.

Stephen Jay Gould, who stresses the contingency and precariousness of environmental factors, views evolution as the story of random organic mutability.¹⁷ For Phillippe J. Rushton,¹⁸ who stresses the continuity of hereditary

American Thought, pp. 41-44.

¹⁶ Stephen Jay Gould makes a point of mentioning that, though a “kindly liberal and passionate abolitionist”, Darwin also looked forward to the extinction of chimpanzees and Hottentots—on the grounds that the links between apes and the human race might be safely severed. See *Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1891), p. 36.

¹⁷ Gould’s critique of what is referred to as adaptationism can be found in Gould and Richard C. Lewontin’s “The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptionist Programme,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences* 205, pp. 581-598.

factors, evolution is the story of intentional organic adaptability. If one's aim is to study what historical subjects thought, rather than to decide what they ought to have been thinking, these contemporary disagreements can be instructive. In the period under review, mutability—whether physically or psychologically manifested—was both prized and feared, since evolution was deemed both progressive and conservative. It was the tale of how certain collective forms of life adapt and survive, survival being defined as the retention of an essential group identity, and adaptation as the capacity (fitness) to maintain it. Extinction was not necessarily absolute; instead, it connoted the right abdicated (through lack of fitness) to exist as an identifiable *group*, a nation, a race, even a religion. Extinction could refer to physical extermination, but, more frequently, it was equated with assimilation.

It is perhaps a reflection of our habit of thinking as individuals that we can complacently accept the notion that races or ethnic cultures are social constructions rather than biological and/or psychological realities. But at the turn of the century (and this applies to hegemonic and subaltern groups alike) races did exist and evolution explained their essence, origin, and destiny: Rushton's essentialism, not Gould's relativism, would have reached a popular audience. The anthropology (and anthropometry, Rushton's notoriety deriving from his penis to brain size ratios) of Rushton is more in tune with a bygone era's presuppositions. And it is to the prevailing anthropological ideas of the past—pre-Holocaust (a

¹⁸ See his review of Gould's history of anthropometry for a summary of their differences. "Race, Intelligence, and the Brain: The Errors and Omissions of the 'Revised' Edition of S.J. Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*," *Personality and*

benchmark in the history of racism that cannot be underestimated)¹⁹—that we must turn to better understand why evolutionary –isms were attractive to Jewish spokespersons, whether secular or religious.

The anthropological stereotype of the “adaptable Jew” was the other side of the coin of the more familiar “unassimilable Jew” that was and remains the mainstay of anti-Semitic discourse. Just as scientific racism predates “Social Darwinism” so too does this image. The adaptable/unassimilable Jew was minted as a consequence of two preconditions: Jewish emancipation in the late eighteenth century, which made assimilation a possibility, a promise from one point of view and a threat from another; and the gradual acceptance of nineteenth century theories depicting human societies as ecosystems, instead of political systems, where individuals are organisms, instead of citizens, that may or may not fit into the environment of a given state.²⁰

If Jewish intellectuals contributed to the perpetuation of the image of the adaptable Jew, and it is apparent that they did, it was because they were compelled to combine discourses. To prove that they were worthy of citizenship,

Individual Differences 23, pp. 169-180.

¹⁹ Elazar Barkan contends that the Holocaust was the culmination, not the beginning, of the retreat of scientific racism. But, as I show in chapter two, he is only partly right. See his *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); see also, F. Samelson, “From ‘Race Psychology’ to ‘Studies in Prejudice’: Some Observations on the Thematic Reversal in Social Psychology,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 14, pp. 265-278.

²⁰ Ivan Hannaford defines modern racism as the rejection of politics in his massive study, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D.C.:

Jews had to demonstrate that they were capable of it, had to demonstrate their humanity. And for that they needed the science of humanity: anthropology was as much about the humanization of minorities like the Jews as their de-humanization.

Before Jews received the opportunity to be treated as civic equals, their status as Christ-killing ghetto-dwellers, exiles bearing the mark of Cain, had made their difference, inequality, and anachronistic nature matters to be taken for granted by the non-Jewish majority. With the (partial) break down of civic insularity that came with pre- and post-Napoleonic emancipation, the “Jewish Question” took on a new dimension, because cultural differences between Jews and non-Jews were blurring. It did not take long for new methods of differentiation came to the fore.

Whereas the Jews had previously been seen as unassimilable because unrepentant of an ancient religious slight, they were increasingly categorized as biological entities—as “Semites”—who may or may not fit into society, depending on the characteristics scientifically attributed to members of a Semitic race. *Judenhasse* (or hatred of Jews) became “anti-Semitism”, a term minted in the xenophobic welter of nineteenth century nationalism.²¹ So though the rise of anthropology may have led to a discursive decrease in religious bigotry, it has

Woodrow Wilson Center, 1996).

²¹ Cf. “Anti-Semitism”, *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901). Steven Bowman traces the etymology of the term to the 1870s work of German nationalist Wilhelm Marr in “Anti-Semitism and Antisemitism,” *American Jewish History* 79:4 (1990), pp. 553-554. Marr’s Anti-Semitismus reached France as antisemitisme—thus the two spellings occurring in English

also been argued that the discipline invented the terminology of modern racism. Doctrines of evolution like Darwinism came later, but they could be used to further legitimize the hierarchy which eighteenth century anthropologists, like Johann Blumenbach, the inventor of the “Caucasian race”, invented.²²

Semites, like Aryans, were entered into the Caucasian category; and, according to certain authorities (including French historian Ernst Renan, whose most widely read book was *The Life of Jesus* [1888]), the former were an inferior kind of Caucasian. Not everyone went that direction: Pro-Semitism was also possible. As Efron’s study of European Jewish race science shows, there lay in the concept of a Semitic race a potential for Jewish resistance, “a reversal of the Western gaze”.²³

The anthropological reversal of anti-Semitism occurred in the North American context, too. When Montreal’s (and, therefore, given the city’s Jewish community’s status, Canada’s) foremost rabbi, Dr. Rev. Hermann Abramowitz of Shaar Hashomayim synagogue, remarked in 1906 on the anti-Semitism of Goldwin Smith and Henri Bourassa, he ascribed their views regarding the “unassimilability” to a “false anthropology”.²⁴ He did not take the high ground of moralism; he referred instead to science and the proper place of the Jewish “race”

depend on whether one adopts the German or French variant.

²² See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 31-39; Hannah Arendt, “Race Thinking Before Racism,” *Review of Politics* 6 (January 1944), pp. 36-73.

²³ Efron, p. 2.

within it. (Abramowitz also believed, or at least preached, that Judaism would be the religion of the future, futurism—whether materialist or idealist, and these sometimes being mutually inclusive—being one of the hallmarks of evolutionary thinking).²⁵ “If the Jew possesses any distinguishing trait,” he countered, “it is his power to accommodate himself to his environment.” A more explicit invocation of the adaptable Jew occurred when Principal G.M. Grant of Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario expressed concern (in 1912) over the possibility that, without the existence of a religious test clause, large numbers of atheists, Jews, and “Hindus” might gain access to the professoriate.²⁶ A spokesperson for the Jewish community made the following remarkable retort:

The Jew is the most assimilable of racial material. This is borne out by statistics and anthropological data. Under the beneficent conditions the specifically Jewish type of countenance relaxes, and he is the first to adapt himself to his surroundings and enter into the national life. This can be verified any day of the week by a comparison between the physiognomy of the Jew who is Canadian by birth or training and the one who was born and reared in Europe. . . . And yet, in spite of the possession of these

²⁴ Rabbi Abramowitz on “The Jew in Modern Life,” *JT*, April 6, 1906, pp. 155, 158.

²⁵ “Judaism, the Religion of the Future,” *JT*, December 4, 1903, pp. 4-7.

²⁶ According to the Montreal *Daily Witness*’ follow-up story, Principal Grant intended to convey “no offence to the Hebrews when he said that upholding their view of the bill would open the door to similar objections by the Chinese or Hindus.” “The point,” Grant was nevertheless reported to have emphasized, “was that this is a Christian country and that Queen’s should partake of that character according to the wishes of its founders.” “Queen’s University Bill,” Montreal *Daily Witness*, February 24, 1912. See Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 245-246. Given that Brown considers the incident to be one of the most important events in pre-WWI Canadian-Jewish history, it is surprising that the official history of Queen’s University contains no mention of it. Cf. Hilda Neatby, *Queen’s University, 1841-1917: to Strive, to Seek, to Find, and Not to Yield* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978).

commendable qualities, Queen's thinks that the Jews should be excluded from her teaching staff.²⁷

To say, as the proverb went, that "the Jews are like other people, only more so," was potentially disarming, but it could also be alarming. A turn-of-the-century American academic, John Graham Brooks, asked in his 1909 bestseller *As Others See Us: What does it mean to be American?* His answer: "Adaptable." Then, looking into the matter further, he wondered, "But are we more 'adaptable' than the Jew?" Since Jews could by that criterion be judged to be the ultimate Americans, Brooks backed off: "This labelling fares ill, even with a race so sharply outlined as the Hebrew."²⁸ Nevertheless, this labelling was par for the course.

When Richard Wagner referred to Jews as "plastic daemons", as imitators non-pareil, he was reacting to and attempting to de-legitimize the image of the adaptable or assimilable Jew. His prejudices prevented him from believing that a German Jew who spoke German, read, wrote, and sang in German or even married a German could be authentically German—therefore, though Jews might pass for Germans, they could only be parasites in the German environment. The

²⁷ Bernard Rose, as quoted in David Rome, *Jacobs' Opponents* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1986), p 112. Rose's source was probably Maurice Fishberg's *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (1911), or perhaps Franz Boas' famous essay, published in several formats, on how the American environment worked to produce changes on the Jewish skull-shape. Cf. Boas, "Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants," in *Reports of the Immigration Commission, Sixty First Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document #208*. (Washington. D.C: Government Printing Office); and *American Anthropologist* 14 (1912), pp. 530-562. Because of their expertise on these matters, both Fishberg and Boas were called to testify as before the Dillingham Commission on American immigration policy in 1912.

Hitlerian notion that Jews were analogous to dangerous microbes constituted the most extreme negative example of such inversions (it is no coincidence that Hitler read the work of Wagner's similarly-inclined son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose histories pitted Jews and Christians against each other in a bi-millennial race war).²⁹

French-Canadian nationalists such as the young Henri Bourassa despised Jews not because they were obviously physically different but because they were not outwardly different at all.³⁰ Unflattering cartoons of "the Jew" were not so much intended to reflect actual outward differences in appearance as to reveal what was perceived to be the inner foreignness of the Jewish people. As historian Esther Delisle put it, "The caricature of the Jew with his big nose and crooked fingers, his smells and his dishonesty, his criminality and vice, comes precisely from the fear stemming from his invisibility. The Jew is an alien who stretches his perfidy to the point of looking like everyone else."³¹

²⁸ (New York: MacMillan, 1908), pp. 41, 44.

²⁹ Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, pp. 348, 362. Hitler declared the fauxness of Jewish Germanity in *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), p. 429.

³⁰ He eventually divorced himself from the extremists within the nationalist school. For the trajectory of Bourassa's political career from a Jewish standpoint, see Rome, *Jewish Biography of Henri Bourassa, Parts 1 and 2* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1988).

³¹ *The Traitor and the Jew* (Montreal: R. Davies, 1993), p. 29.

Delisle might have explored the issue of Jewish visibility/invisibility a little farther. Anti-Semites were not the only ones who held seeming-alike to be treachery. Supporters of emancipation and its universalistic ideal, emphasizing the physical and psychological plasticity of Jewish peoples everywhere in the Goluth (Diaspora), were sneeringly referred to by post- or anti-emancipatory critics as “Marranos” or “crypto-Jews” (both allusions to fifteenth century Spanish conversos), or, more strikingly in light of anthropological language: “assimilationists”.

It is my hypothesis that this sort of name-calling increased as the integrationist ideal came to falter in the early part of the twentieth century, that one can plot the course of the ideal’s depletion through a close examination of such language. The *Jewish Times* of Montreal, for instance, my primary source and subject, went through two distinct phases, the first being pro-integrationist and the second, anti-integrationist. By tracking its coverage of certain luminaries, one can discern a corresponding shift in patterns of response. In the newspaper’s first phase, which lasted from 1897 to 1912, Dr. Ludwig Zamenhof, the inventor of the universalist language Esperanto, was pronounced a hero.³² Yet, after 1912 and until 1914, in phase two, when cultural nationalism or “racial consciousness” became the cause of choice, Zamenhof’s universalism was denounced as

³² *JT*, September 8, 1905, p. 1; *JT*, “Nobel Prize to a Jew,” October 6, 1905, p. 356; *JT*, “Dr Ludwig Zamenhof,” October 25, 1905, p. 1.

cowardly “Hellenism;” he advised to go to a “beauty doctor” to have the shape of his nose altered.³³

This insult must be understood as a play on associations both ancient and modern. First, it was a reference to the post-Alexandrian era, when, under the rule of Seleucid Antiochus IV, Jewish aristocrats allowed the Temple to be defiled and circumcision outlawed. Moreover, even before the Syrian monarch invaded Judea, according to the First Book of Maccabees, some members of the “Hellenist” party underwent the painful process of reversing circumcision in an effort to physically pass as “Greeks”.³⁴ Nationalists looked to the Maccabees, who overthrew the overlords of Judea in the second century B.C.E., as positive role models and viewed modern “assimilationists” as reincarnations of Judean Hellenists.³⁵ Secondly, by the time Zamenhof had been told to consult a cosmetic surgeon, modern rhinoplasty was already celebrating its tenth anniversary, the first such operation occurring in Berlin in 1902. Although there is no substantial evidence that the first client was Jewish, cultural historian Sander Gilman surmises that he

³³ At the Esperanto Congress in Cracow, Poland, Jewish delegates who intended to form a special Esperantoist contingent were refused authorization by Zamenhof. The success of the movement, he said, could only be hindered by flaunting its Jewish roots and influences. “A ‘Pole’,” *CJT*, September 11 1912, p. 12. Hitler referred to Esperanto as a form of linguistic enslavement disguised as universalism in *Mein Kampf*, p. 423.

³⁴ I Maccabees 1: 13, 15.

³⁵ Donald Akenson has suggested that the “traditionalist” versus “Hellenist” dichotomy contained in the First and Second Books of Maccabees should be taken with a grain of salt, since they can be read as an attempt to delegitimize any later Judean party seeking to challenge the Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty. See *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), p. 121.

was, pointing out that the surgeon in question operated on many other persons thereafter who were verifiably of Jewish origin, ashamed of it, and eager to be “cured” of it through surgical means. Gilman argues that cosmetic surgery went hand in hand with Aryan race science in Germany; because of the widely shared assumption that only a pure white race could be beautiful, German Jews were shamed and neuroticized into invisibility. “It is in being visible . . . that the Jew is most uncomfortable,” he concludes. “For visibility means not being seen as an individual but as an Other, one of the ‘ugly’ race.”³⁶

There is the obverse to consider as well: that the image of the adaptable Jew, also a product of race science, remained intact as an internalized Jewish stereotype, but suddenly adaptability was seen as perfidy, as a Jewish talent that would ultimately be the undoing of the people as a people. The point is that there was an inherent ambivalence in the Jewish adoption of evolutionary rhetoric. On the one hand, emancipation demanded that Jews be “assimilable”; on the other hand, there was a danger that success in this regard would lead to “assimilation”.

“Indeed, Marranoism [the Spanish version of Hellenism—marrano (meaning pig) was the name given to Jewish converts to Christianity in the fifteenth century] may be regarded as an exemplification of the Darwinian theory of protective colouring,” declared Israel Zangwill at the Universal Races Congress in 1911. One of the gatherings purposes was to refute the premises of

³⁶ The connection Gilman makes is intriguing, but, then, given his psychoanalytical proclivities, he connects all of his subjects—Freudian analysis, Otto Weininger’s misogyny, anti-Semitism, and self-hatred—to circumcision (which he views as ritualistic castration). “Are Jews White? Or, The History of the Nose Job,” *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-172; 211.

positivist race science; still, this official stance was often undercut by an insidious essentialism. (Felix Adler, for instance, the Jewish founder of the Ethical Culture movement in the United States and Congress convener, proclaimed that the preservation of the Jews was “due to inherent, inalienable traits of Jewish character;” and that their supposed faults were theirs originally, though exaggerated by persecution.)³⁷ Camouflage skills could have positive results; Zangwill pointed to the illustrious career of actress Sarah Bernhardt. Left unchecked, however, the gift yielded tragic results.³⁸ Zangwill acknowledged this paradox on several occasions, alternatively identifying the Jewish people as a race that shared in Bernhardt’s “chameleon-like” capacity to “enter into every incarnation of humanity” (when addressing a Gentile audience); and as salamanders impervious to the fires of the North American “Melting Pot” (when meeting the concerns of Jewish critics).³⁹ Despite Zangwill’s assurances concerning their “salamandrine” capacities, many Jews in this period feared for a future in which the adaptive knack for invisibility they were alleged to possess would lead to their ultimate disappearance/extinction as a people.

³⁷ See “The Evil of Anti-Semitism,” from *The New York Sun*, and reprinted in the *Jewish Times*, January 21, 1898, p. 53. For a secondary source exploring this ambivalence, see Harriet D. Lyons and Andrew P. Lyons, “A Race or Not a Race: The Question of Jewish Identity in the Year of the First Universal Races Congress,” in Maier and Waxman, eds., *Ethnicity, Identity, and History: Essays in Memory of Werner J. Cahnman* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1983), pp. 149-162.

³⁸ “Israel Zangwill on the future of the Jew,” *CJT*, August 18, 1911, pp. 9-11.

³⁹ Cf. Zangwill, “The Jewish Race,” in G. Spiller, ed., *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* (London, 1911), pp. 277ff; and his afterword to the *Melting Pot: A Drama in Four Acts* (New York: MacMillan, 1925), p. 204.

Despite John Efron's argument that evolutionary anthropology or race science promised European Jews a sense of self-respect, hope, and consolation,⁴⁰ there is evidence that this strategy of resistance was a double-edged thing.

This was especially true in the North American context. Evolutionism could as easily feed fears as palliate them. It may have been surprisingly benign at times but the discourse was inherently jingoistic, trafficking as it did in superlatives—no one spoke of the survival of the more-or-less fit. How tempting it was to trade in the rhetoric of the level playing field of liberalism (skewed to begin with) for Darwin's tree of life, depending, of course, on which branch one found oneself sitting upon.

Given the top-dog status of the "white race" in the New World, minority groups that may have been highly visible in the Old World could gain invisibility only by claiming a common Caucasian heritage.⁴¹ Like the Irish before them,⁴²

⁴⁰ Efron, pp. 12, 180.

⁴¹ Eric Goldstein has recently shown that racialism was something that American Jews of Western European background adopted quite early on in the nineteenth century. It served two purposes, he argues: it pointed both to Caucasian commonality and to Jewish uniqueness (they being considered by some anthropologists of the time to be the ur-Caucasians). Goldstein's conclusion that North American Jewish racialism ended with the arrival of Eastern European Jews at the century's end is not supported by my evidence. There may have been a lull, a catching of breath, but racialism returned in full-force by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. I take this as an indication that these newcomers soon proved their salt—were accepted by the acculturated establishment as fellow adaptable Jews—and as a sign of secularization. "Different Blood Flows in Our Veins': Race and Jewish Self-Definition in Late Nineteenth Century America," *American Jewish History* (Winter 1998), pp. 29-55.

⁴² Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge,

Jews found in racist taxonomy an opportunity to be regarded as part of “white” society. This was easier to do in North America than in Europe, since the respective racial dynamics were quite different. Here, Jews were not as tellingly visible; there they were a more easily identifiable and openly scapegoated “Other”.⁴³ Here, Asians (in Canada) and blacks (in the United States) occupied the bottom rungs of the race ladder. There, Jews were Orientalized and Negrofied. Here, Jews, again like the Irish, could attempt to deflect prejudice by pointing to their whiteness; there, they could try to do so, and Benjamin Disraeli did,⁴⁴ but it would only work in places where, like Britain, where Jew-hatred was not so culturally entrenched. In North America, as scholars like Michael Frye Jacobs and David Roediger and others have shown, minority resistance based on the co-option of evolutionary racialism made it nearly impossible for subaltern or working-class solidarity to emerge. If one’s own inclusion into the club of whiteness entailed the exclusion of others, then the result was a kind of collateral, if usually unintentional, chauvinism.⁴⁵

1995). Together with David Roediger, fellow editor of the *New Abolitionist* journal *Race Traitor*, Ignatiev has made it his mandate to abolish “whiteness” as a valid concept. Cf. Ignatiev, “The Point is Not to Interpret Whiteness But to Abolish It.” Talk given at the conference, “The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness,” University of California, Berkeley, April 22-23, 1997.

⁴³ “In the European context,” cultural historian David Biale writes, “the Jews were the defining opposite of what is now called white;” on the Continent, they were the “paradigmatic minority.” Biale, “The Melting Pot and Beyond: Jews and the Politics of American Identity.” In *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multi-Culturalism*, ed. D. Biale, M. Galchinsky, & S. Heschel. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 27.

⁴⁴ Efron, pp. 48-49.

With these qualifications in place, I accept Efron's argument that evolutionism offered modern Jews a new form of resistance, which he calls the "scientific apology". Of course, not every practitioner of this form of resistance was a scientist. Evolutionism was sufficiently open-ended that Rabbi Minkin of Hamilton could cite the "idea that the fittest survive"⁴⁵ to proclaim Israel the "Superman of History."⁴⁷ He was arguing for the relative superiority (relative to the place which anti-Semitic rhetoric relegated them) of the Jewish people; hybridizing Nietzsche and Darwin, he answered anti-Jewish prejudice on its own terms. If the journalists of the Jewish ethnic press (Minkin being one of them) had no qualms about applying Darwinism and its sound-alikes to the problems and concerns of modern Jewry, it was because they did see evolution as something that could be used in self-defence. It was a theory that vindicated the place of Jews in history: not just as epigones of the ancient Israelites, but as moderns.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Seth Forman, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Being Jewish: Desegregation in the South and the Crisis of Jewish Liberalism," *American Jewish History* 5:2 (June 1997), pp. 121-142; Karen Brodtkin Sacks, *How Jews Became White Folks And What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ A phrase Charles Darwin borrowed as a less intentionalist synonym for "natural selection" from Herbert Spencer, with Friedrich Nietzsche in turn cribbing it from Darwin. Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), pp. 45-47.

⁴⁷ *CJT*, October 2, 1912, pp. 1, 7.

⁴⁸ This was one of the rationales for Zionist evolutionists as well. Cf. Efron, p. 134; David Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Haim Zhitlowski, Simon Dubnow, Ahad Ha-Am, and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identity* (New York; London: Holmes and Meier, 1996), pp. 51, 119, 158, 179,

Philosophical or idealist evolutionism was something that had already been employed for that purpose.⁴⁹ What Darwinism and other materialist versions of evolution offered, however, was a scientific explanation for why the Jewish people had survived the exigencies of the past and why they must be taken seriously as a factor in the future.

Since the “survival” of a group bespoke its “fitness”, the mere fact of the Jews’ ongoing persistence indicated not only that the original covenant still obtained but that they were “a people whose very existence is justified by history.”⁵⁰ The Italian Jewish criminologist Cesare Lombroso fused the Biblical and Diasporic existences of the Jews within a competing scheme of social evolutionism.⁵¹ Though a secularist, he made it possible to view Jews as doubly blessed, as beneficiaries of natural selection as well as supernatural election. As Lombroso put it, “the Jewish race represents the product of special selection.”⁵²

and 257; J. Frankel, “S.M. Dubnov: Historian and Ideologist,” in S. Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S.M. Dubnov* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 3, 8; and S. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha-am and the Origins of Zionism* (London: Halban, 1994), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁹ That Hegelian philosophy was also employed for the legitimization of modern Jewish existence is something Shlomo Avineri has explored in *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

⁵⁰ “Jewish Nationalism,” *CJT*, January 19, 1912, pp. 12, 14.

⁵¹ In an address before the Young People’s Society of Shaar Hashomayim, Samuel Jacobs called Lombroso the “originator of modern theories of crime.” “Criminality,” *CJT*, January 21, 1910. For a good summary of Lombroso’s impact on criminological theory, see Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 123-143.

⁵² *CJT*, October 22, 1909. Lombroso’s views are detailed further in chapters four and five.

The miracle of Jewish preservation could be restated as a scientific problem (and, increasingly, it was), a feat in social hygienic engineering stemming from thousands of years of adherence to eugenically correct precepts that just happened to be Mosaic in origin. Just as occurred in non-Jewish thought, natural history could be called upon both to bolster and to supplant sacred history.

But to reduce evolutionism to the level of counter-propaganda is to underestimate the degree to which it was believed in by Jewish defenders deploying it. The first editor of Montreal's *Jewish Times*, Carroll Ryan, declared Herbert Spencer the most important philosopher of the nineteenth century. It was an opinion that was once (before the association of his name with "Social Darwinism") widely shared.⁵³ Ryan attempted to reconcile Spencer's concept of the "Unknowable" (or first cause) with the Kabbalistic concept of Malkuth ("God's dominion or power in the world," depicted as a tree of life).⁵⁴ He also drew on the writings of Alfred Russell Wallace, the co-discoverer of the mechanism of natural selection, to prove the immortality of the soul; Wallace himself turned to spiritualism and used evolution to prove the existence of God.⁵⁵ As for the ostensible conflict between revealed and natural truth, Ryan maintained

⁵³ See Bannister, op. cit., chapter one; Ian Mackay, "Changing the Subject(s) of the 'History of Canadian Sociology': The Case of Colin Mackay and Marxist Spencerism," *Journal of Canadian Sociology* 23:4 (1998), pp. 389-427.

⁵⁴ Scholem, Gershom, *On The Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), p. 175.

⁵⁵ Cf. Michael Schermer, *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time* (New York: Freeman & Co., 1997), pp. 255-257.

that only “vulgar interpretations of the doctrine of evolution” could result in the view that it presented a threat to Scriptural readings.⁵⁶

The “impact of Darwinism” as a factor in secularization, a staple in “Christian” historiography,⁵⁷ is something that historians of Jewish Studies or Judaism have tackled only intermittently.⁵⁸ When the subject is broached, the approach has been to extrapolate from the ideas of one or two key institutional

⁵⁶ “Herbert Spencer and His Philosophy”, *JT*, December 18, 1903, pp. 34-35. See also his editorial on the “Immortality of the Soul,” *JT*, December 4, 1908, p. 8.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); and James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); David Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987).

⁵⁸ Cf. Naomi Cohen’s “The Challenges of Darwinism and Biblical Criticism to American Judaism,” *Modern Judaism* 4 (1984), pp. 121-157. Cohen’s major point—that Reform Jews in America had little trouble integrating evolutionary theory, owing in part to a pattern of intellectual accommodation similar to that of “Christian” thinkers like John Fiske—is repeated in Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). There are indications that the historiographical tide is turning: cf. Lois Dubin, “‘Pe’er ha-Adam’ of Vittorio Hayyim Castiglione: an Italian Chapter in the History of Jewish Response to Darwin,” *Interaction of Scientific and Jewish Cultures in Modern Times*, eds. Yakov Rabkin and Ira Robinson (Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), pp. 87-101; Jose Faur, “The Hebrew Species Concept and the Origin of Evolution: Rabbi Benamozegh’s Response to Darwin,” *Mentalities/Mentalites* 13:1-2 (1998), pp. 82-92; Marc Swetlitz, “Responses of American Reform Rabbis to Evolutionary Theory, 1864-1888,” *Interaction of Scientific and Jewish Cultures in Modern Times*, eds. Yakov Rabkin and Ira Robinson (Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), pp. 103-125; and Swetlitz, “American Jewish Responses to Darwin and Evolutionary Theory, 1860-1890,” *Darwin's Reception: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, eds. Ronald Numbers and John Stenhouse (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), forthcoming. On Fiske’s movement away from Calvinism to Deism, see Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and*

figures, these usually representatives of liberal denominations, i.e., Reform rabbis. The exercise, while suggestive, is unsatisfactory, since the biographical/institutional approach tends to be elitist. If one wishes to pursue the question from a social or cultural perspective, official statements of doctrine are less enlightening than ad hoc commentaries (such as a newspaper provides) on topical matters of communal concern. As well, a focus on the Reform movement confirms rather than contests a facile preconception: that self-conscious modernists accepted new ideas while keepers of tradition rejected them. As David Livingstone has demonstrated in his analysis of Christian evangelicalism, one must not be too hasty in assuming that orthodox faith and cutting-edge reason are by definition at odds with one another.⁵⁹

In any case, historians examining the doctrine(s) of evolution in light of their Jewish reception have rarely remarked on what appears to be a link between the biologization of Jewish history and secularization.⁶⁰ This may be because there is a widespread conviction that Judaism and Christianity were and are two

Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), pp. 63-66.

⁵⁹ Livingstone, op.cit.

⁶⁰ One exception being David Weinberg's *Between Tradition and Modernity* (1996). Weinberg pays passing attention to the fact that Zionist thinkers were attracted to the thought of Herbert Spencer. Overall, his ideological study of Zionism takes a similar tack to Ramsay Cook's work on Canadian secularization, in that he employs as his theoretical point of departure Owen Chadwick's thesis, first detailed in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Chadwick describes secularization as the "growing tendency of mankind to do without religion, or to try to do without religion." Quoted in Cook's *The*

very different religions. To use an overly simple but useful distinction, the latter is deemed to have been traditionally “other-worldly” and the former (except for brief apocalyptic periods) “this-worldly.” Since the categories of secular and sacred in Judaism are not as easily distinguishable, comparisons may be moot. Ramsay Cook, for instance, describes the secularization of Christianity as having entailed the transformation of theology (or “other-worldly” concerns) into sociology (“this-worldly” concerns). If Judaism, as historian Salo Baron has argued,⁶¹ was for most of its Diasporic history primarily a “this-worldly” religion, then an attempt to analogize goes nowhere. Still, I believe that Cook’s other points relating to the substitution of religious for scientific “sanctions” can lead to fruitful comparison, as I demonstrate in chapters three and, especially, four.⁶²

There is also the fact that one could claim to be a “secular Jew” (it is difficult to imagine what a “secular Christian” might look like). Secular or “cultural” Jewishness, of course, is a phenomenon that can itself be historicized. Its legitimation was certainly one of the by-products of *fin-de-siecle* Jewish nationalist ideology. Secular Zionists saw themselves as performing a task that Diasporic leaders, rabbinical authorities in particular, were impotent or unwilling to effect: the modern salvation of the Jewish people. Under the arrangements of

Regenerators: Social Criticism in late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 5.

⁶¹ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews: Vol. I: To the Beginning of the Christian Era* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), p. 9.

⁶² See Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in late Victorian English Canada*, pp. 7-25, 228-232.

emancipation (in Britain, Canada, and the United States), the only group-label that Jews might officially adopt was as one religious denomination among others. But, ran the secular Zionist argument, the concomitant denial of claims to a special racial/national identity was a compromise that did not work: not only did it not prevent anti-Semitism, it curbed Jewish identity, undermining its real reason for being, and ultimately led to absorption.

The cultural or secular nationalist view was marked by disillusionment with a primarily religious identity and a loss of faith in the restricted kinds of collective identities which nineteenth century liberalism allowed. Secularization was viewed by critics of emancipation not as a problem but as a solution to more besetting problems, a logically necessary response to the internal contradictions of emancipation. The assumption underlying this logic is beginning to be challenged, but it held sway for as long as it did for good reason: the Holocaust proved critics of the emancipatory project prophetic.⁶³

Some Jewish scholars look askance at an identification that ignores the issue of Judaic affiliation; they also decry the effect that the secular Jewish perspective has had on Jewish historiography. Jacob Neusner, for example, believes that an overemphasis on “ethnicity” in Jewish Studies has led to a view of Jewish history that elides the major role in which Judaism has played in it.⁶⁴

⁶³ See David Feldman, “Was Modernity Good For the Jews?” Chayette and Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 171-187. Feldman alludes to the Zionist employment of Spencerism on pp. 176 and 186n21.

Despite Neusner's feeling that he is a lone voice crying in the wilderness, the idea of Jewish ethnicity is coming under increased scrutiny.

Scholars are now re-examining the discourse of turn-of-the-century nationalists and testing some of their more problematic claims concerning the biological identity of the Jewish people.⁶⁵ Those who critique this aspect of Zionist ideology usually do so in their capacity as social historians and are critical of any and all nationalisms/racialisms.⁶⁶ This parallels historiographical developments in Canadian social history.⁶⁷

The first Canadian historian to engage the issue of racial evolutionism (referring to it as "social Darwinism") as it pertained to nationalist and imperialist rationalizations was Carl Berger. In *A Sense of Power* (which, like McKillop's *A*

⁶⁴ Jacob Neusner, "From Faith to Ethnic Belonging: How the Modern Academy Expunges Religion from the Study of Judaism" *Times Literary Supplement* (March 5, 1999), pp. 13-14.

⁶⁵ See Noam J. Zohar, "From Lineage to Sexual Mores: Examining 'Jewish Eugenics'." *Science in Context* 11:3-4 (1988), pp. 575-586.

⁶⁶ Cf. Raphael Falk, "Zionism and the Biology of the Jews," *Science in Context* 11:3-4 (1998), pp. 587-608. Falk's thesis is that the explicit biologization by Zionists of Jewish history and of Jewish identity came to a halt with news of the Holocaust, though not entirely—instead, hereditarianism gradually gave way to environmentalism. In his words: "Overt eugenic language and anthropological typology largely disappeared from the professional-scientific literature after WWII. Notions of population genetics, of gene frequencies and their dynamics often expressed in statistical terms, took their place. With the establishment of the State of Israel the Zionists' emphasis shifted to the mass immigration to Israel and the function of the country as a melting pot for the Jewish people." P. 599.

⁶⁷ See the Canadian Social History series edited by Gregory Kealey, which includes Angus McLaren's, *Our own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990); and Mariana Valverde's *Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

Disciplined Intelligence [see below] was originally a doctoral dissertation), Berger demonstrated how nationalists argued for selective immigrant restriction by interpreting the harsh Canadian climate in light of the law of the survival of the fittest. He demonstrated how “Nordic” races (like the Gauls and Anglo-Saxons) were privileged, since they were said to be predisposed to “adapt” to environments like Canada’s; tropical races, by this logic, were to be disallowed entry because their introduction into the national bloodstream would weaken domestic breeds.⁶⁸ Berger, though of a generation of historians that sought to emphasize Canadian nation-building, was helped bring about an awareness of the racial implications of nationalist rhetoric before it became de rigeur to do so.

The leading *intellectual* (as opposed to political or social) historian of Canadian Darwinism is A.B. McKillop. His work concerning the idealist evolutionary stance of John Watson is discussed in chapter three. For now, it bears mentioning that scholars (like Ramsay Cook) who broach the topic of Darwinism in Canada must on some level acknowledge McKillop’s thesis, which is that the Victorian and Edwardian national academic consensus was anti-Darwinist, and pro-Christian.

Given the resistance to Darwinist and Spencerist thought in Canada, one might surmise secularization was slow to take hold here. But, leaving aside the question of whether professors like Watson are more representative of national

⁶⁸ Berger, *A Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* (Toronto: University Press, 1970), pp. 129-131; McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era*. (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979).

norms than auto-didactic journalists or other or off-campuswriters,⁶⁹ it does not seem enough to speak of the “impact of evolution” as a means to delineate the course of secularization. The acceptance of evolutionary doctrines by itself does not point to the rise of a secular point of view, just as liberalism by itself did not necessarily de-privilege religion, especially if the religion in question was of the dissenting variety. (In fact, liberalism by way of emancipation supported Judaism, as secularists were wont to point out.) Since both Judaists and secularists accepted evolutionary assumptions of one sort or another, secularization cannot be said to have been merely a process set into motion by the collision of natural and/or social scientific ideas upon religious ones.

Instead of seeking a unidirectional causal connection, it may be more productive to look at correlations. Both Judaists and Zionists were dominated by bourgeois authorities⁷⁰ and accepted some form of liberalism and some form of evolutionism. Secular Zionists distrusted laissez-faire liberalism, however (deeming it a façade for an assimilative agenda), and believed the conditions of emancipation had thrown nature out of whack; they were skeptical of the Judaic ability to adjust, or “adapt”, to them. Whereas Judaists had viewed religion as the essence of Jewish identity (and Zionism as a sacred philanthropic extension of the Jewish religion), their secularist counterparts in the Zionist camp contended that

⁶⁹ A question Ian Mackay addresses in “Changing the Subject(s) of the ‘History of Canadian Sociology’: The Case of Colin Mackay and Marxist Spencerism,” *Journal of Canadian Sociology* 23:4 (1998), pp. 389-427.

⁷⁰ See Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the religious reductionism of emancipation was ultimately detrimental—a handicap that could only worsen given the unnatural or “degenerative” dynamics of modernity. Defenders of the primacy of Judaism were confident that, given “enlightened” conditions, the Jewish religion could carry on a successful ideological struggle for existence in the Diaspora. By contrast, secular nationalists asserted that only within a supervised “environment” (by which they did not mean a piously run Judaic household), could the Jewish “race” evolve to its true potential.⁷¹

One sees here a mirroring of more general ideological shifts: from natural to social selection, as epitomized by the eugenics movement; from “Old (laissez-faire) Liberalism” and “New (interventionist) Liberalism”;⁷² and from religious to “racial consciousness” (the subject of chapter two). The turn of the century battle between liberal Judaists and Jewish secularists partook of the rhetoric of these external trends and applied them to internal ones. Secularization, then, was signalled not so much by the *adoption* of profane ideas as a loss of faith in the *autonomy* of sacred ones.

⁷¹ According to Raphael Falk, “[Max] Nordau’s [Lamarckist] belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics made him less interested in the ancient biological roots of the Jews than in the need to take active measures at present, like making Jews engage in sports or in agricultural work, so as to counter the effects of degeneration imposed on them by life in the Ghetto.” Falk, “Zionism and the Biology of the Jews,” *op. cit.*, p. 594.

⁷² Hawkins alludes to this shift in the title of his *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (1997). See also P.M. Baldwin, “Liberalism, Nationalism, and Degeneration: The Case of Max Nordau,” *Central European History* 13:2 (1980), pp. 99-120; and Robert Bannister, *op. cit.*, pp. 79ff.

“Nobody ever claimed scientific authority for the sacred Hebrew books,” Carroll Ryan wrote in 1903, the *Jewish Times*’ first phase. “These stand apart and above all human approbation.” He meant that evolutionary theory neither contradicted the Bible nor, more importantly, acted as its judge and legitimating agent. If Jewish secularists, such as those who dominated the second phase of the *Jewish Times*, recognized the *evolutionary* importance of Judaism, they did so by claiming scientific authority for the Jewish Scriptures. Joseph Jacobs wrote in his *The People of the Book*: “The Jews have been made what they are by the Bible. . . . Their life has been dominated by its law, their feelings by its psalter, their ideas by its prophets, their outlook on life by its wisdom, and their hopes for the future by its apocalypse.”⁷³ Insofar as the Jewish religion was deemed (through sexual and dietary hygiene) to have contributed to the making of a race or nationality apart, secularists like Joseph Jacobs, and the editors of phase two, lent Judaism their approbation.

But faith had been lost in its theological and ethical efficacy, to say nothing of its version of human evolution as the ongoing story of competition between rationalism and irrationalism. Yet I hesitate to call this secularization, since each new generation produces challengers to religious tradition: Spinoza, Marx, and Freud are but outstanding modern examples. The co-option of Judaism, not its rejection, is the key moment and thus it is perhaps more elucidating to switch things around and describe secularization in theological terms. When science sanctioned, rather than corroborated, the covenant; when rabbis, accepting

⁷³ Efron, op. cit., p. 58.

rhetorical devices like Lombroso's "special selection", allowed the ineffable name to be uttered through scientific homonyms; when the process, begun at the point of emancipation, of justifying the Jewish place in history through idolatrous means—that was when secularism won the day. But only for a day. With three thousand years of history to consider, it is wise to avoid finalities when speaking of the fate of the Jewish religion. Then, too, some have argued that secularization—if by that is meant a general decline of religious authority in "Christian lands"—allowed for greater freedom of Jewish social mobility and intellectual expression. That Judaism may have suffered a loss of authority as well is, from this point of view, hardly the greatest of tragedies.⁷⁴

The aim, then, is not to show how evolutionism led inevitably and irrevocably to secularism and/or racialism, but that the relationship between these factors is more complicated than has yet been acknowledged. If I at times seem to privilege the Judaist point of view, that is because, as Neusner has said, it is a position that has been given "short shrift" (to use a somewhat inappropriate, because Catholic, figure of speech).

I discuss Jewish racialism not to prove the inane point that minorities can be racist, too, or to deny that Jewish intellectuals played a significant part in the fight for universal civil rights in North America and elsewhere. Rather, I take up Matthew Frye Jacobs' point that "much of the antiracist work of the period was

founded upon the very epistemology of race that it sought to dismantle.”⁷⁵ Samuel Jacobs, a co-founder of the *Jewish Times* and Member of Parliament, advocated that “Hindus” be granted the franchise by arguing: “their skin may be a little duskier than ours, but they belong to the Aryan race.”⁷⁶

My extrapolations from an obscure primary source, Montreal’s *Jewish Times* (in its second phase renamed the *Canadian Jewish Times*), may elicit charges of reading too much into too little. Yet, as the quotations that introduced this introduction suggest, the Canadian fortnightly served as an international reader’s digest of Jewish news. It had the disadvantage of not having a reportorial staff, so it relied on other organs for most of its copy. This becomes an advantage for the historian who wishes to show that his source contains evidence that is representative of parochial and cosmopolitan perspectives simultaneously. If what it offered by way of news was for the most part clipped from outside sources (including non-Jewish newspapers and journals from the United States, Britain, and other parts of Canada), the paper also supplied commentary that attempted to make local sense of these items. I have tried to make sense of this intellectual

⁷⁴ Cf. David Hollinger, *Science, Jews, And Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷⁵ “It was not only the virulent Madison Grants and the Lothrop Stoddards [both of whom were notorious anti-Semites], but Jewish scientists like Maurice Fishberg and Joseph Jacobs, who advanced the scholarly idea of Jewish racial purity.” Jacobs, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, pp. 103, 175.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Benny Figler, *Sam Jacobs, Member of Parliament, 1871-1938* (Ottawa, 1970), p. 138.

interaction in terms of three fairly specific themes: race, religion, and evolutionism. Whether I have succeeded is something the reader will decide.

Part I: The Journalists

Phases One and Two
Of the Jewish Times/Canadian Jewish Times

Introduction: Biographical Backgrounds

“[Its] back numbers will be useful to the future historian to obtain data concerning Jewish events and Jewish people in Canada. . . .”¹

The *Jewish Times*, the first Jewish periodical in Canada to actually appear periodically, was founded in 1897, in the midst of a period when the Jewish ethnic press in North America and elsewhere was flourishing as it never had. It was the era of the story that would not go away, the Dreyfus Affair. Its effects rippled outwards: It not only led to the reformation of French society, but a reporter covering the story for a Vienna newspaper interpreted the controversy as a sign that Jewish emancipation was a failed project—and thus began Theodor Herzl’s quixotic quest to build a Jewish state in Palestine. (He predicted in 1898 that it would take fifty years to accomplish—implausibly, impossibly, he was right.)²

It also served as the basis for the *Jewish Times*’ founding. While “L’Affaire” was not the sole reason for the proliferation of Jewish journalistic expression at this time, it certainly had a part in launching many of the approximately two hundred Jewish periodicals (excluding annuals and almanacs) that were then in circulation, including the *Jewish Times* of Montreal. Reflecting the heterogeneity of the Diaspora experience, Jewish newspapers and journals were published in at least seventeen different languages worldwide: Arabic,

¹ Lyon Cohen, *Canadian Jewish Times* [hereafter *CJT*], December 13, 1912, pp. 4-5.

² See excerpts from Herzl’s first speech at the 1897 World Zionist Congress in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 235-245.

Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Judeo-German (Yiddish), Mahrati (Indo-Iranian), Polish, Russian, Rumanian, Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), and Turkish.³ After 1880, with the mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe, from Russia, Poland, Romania, and Galicia, the Yiddish press arrived in the United States, the country that already boasted the greatest number of Jewish publications. (It was not until 1908, however, with the landing of the *Keneder Adler* or *Canadian Daily Eagle*, that Canadian Yiddish-speaking Jews were able to read the national and local news in their native tongue.) Great though the impact and influence of the Yiddish press was, the bulk of American-based periodicals were written in the English-language. Germany's output of Jewish was also impressive, but, taken altogether, Jewish-American ethnic newspapers and journals outnumbered their German counterparts by a factor of four.⁴

Before the advent of locally produced papers, which tended to be written in either English or Yiddish, most Canadian Jews seemed quite happy to rely on out-of-country reading materials. Had they known that the tiny Jewish communities of India (having two periodicals) and of China (one) had access to domestically based newspapers, Canada's Jews might have pressed for journalistic representation, if only for the sake of communal pride. As it stood, however, Canadian Jewry, benefiting as it did from a geographical proximity to the prolific New York scene and a cultural affinity with Britain (home to the

³ "Periodicals," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, vol. 5, 1905), pp. 602-640.

longest running Jewish periodical in the world, the London-based *Jewish Chronicle*),⁵ did not feel itself deprived of Jewish-oriented reading material.

It took the Dreyfus Affair and its anti-Semitic ripple-effect to galvanize two youthful members of Montreal's Jewish establishment, lawyer Samuel W. Jacobs (who was twenty six) and businessman Lyon Cohen (twenty eight), into taking action in 1897. Thereafter, the fortnightly (and occasional weekly) that Jacobs and Cohen built catered to the middle-class of Montreal's West End and dispensed a British Imperial brand of Jewish liberalism⁶ that would stand

⁴ "Periodicals," p. 639.

⁵ See David Caesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994).

⁶ One journalist remarked of Sam Jacobs (during his tenure as a Liberal MP) that "his pet theme is immigration. His critics declare he is the finest type of Liberal protectionist inasmuch as he believes in free trade in Polish Jews and nothing else." In this study, "British liberalism" refers more to the politics of minority treatment than to economics, though, given simultaneous developments in both areas—i.e., the turn-of-the-century Imperial movement away from *laissez-faire* to interventionist (or "New Liberal") thinking—the divisions between them are sometimes difficult to discern. Also, given its colonial status and contemporary concerns over American absorption, Canada was less enamoured of hands-off economic policies than either Britain or the United States, to which the Liberal Party's defeat in 1911 over the issue of reciprocity attests.

In any event, the Liberal Party was the most popular party among Montreal Jews because the Conservatives were seen as in alliance with anti-Semitic nationalists in French-speaking Quebec. Jews in Quebec were beneficiaries of "British liberalism" before their co-religionists in the British Isles (and long before the emergence of the Liberal and Conservative Parties). The 1740 Naturalization Act for the Colonies "was probably the first legislative act in the Christian world to consider Jews as the equals of Christians." By 1832, the right of Jews in the province to sit in the legislature was officially affirmed; in 1858, British Jews won the right to sit in Parliament (by which time Benjamin Disraeli had already been leader of the Conservative Party for a decade). Unattributed quotation from Bernard Figler, *Sam Jacobs, Member of Parliament, 1871-1938* (Ottawa, 1970), p. 115; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992), pp. 28-9;

unchallenged until 1912, at which time the paper's management changed hands and attitudes. It remained an English-language publication, but for the next two years, until absorbed by the *Adler's* owner in 1914, its new editor "Archie" (from Aaron) Bennett took the *Times* into an entirely new ideological, and pro-Yiddish, direction. The purpose of this chapter is to underscore that this was a consciously taken ideological shift and not merely the result of a change in demographics (see the epilogue for further discussion of the role of demographic analyses).

These were peak years in the immigration of Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews to Canada—Montreal's Jewish population leaped from 950 to 2,473 between the years 1881 and 1901; by 1911 the number had increased by 400 per cent—and one cannot overestimate the impact of their arrival in terms of community institutional organization.⁷ Yet, as backgrounds of the main players of our narrative indicate, there is more to the story than demography.

Readers familiar with the history of American Jewry may expect intra-communal differences to figure in this tale as well and to some extent they do. In the United States, there were three distinguishable waves of Jewish immigration: Sephardic Jews established themselves in the colonial period, with the Western European and Eastern European Ashkenazim arriving in the mid-nineteenth century and late-nineteenth century respectively. But as Gerald Tulchinsky has

Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif: Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1986), pp. 10-11.

⁷ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, pp. 50, 159.

pointed out in his two volume history of Canadian Jewry,⁸ the intra-communal conflicts—reflecting class and cultural divides—between second wave German Jews and third wave Russian Jews was largely absent in Canada, mainly because a critical mass of German-Jewish immigrants was absent. While a small number of German Jews did make their home in Canada, they were not easily identifiable as an ethnically distinct entity.⁹ Neither were they as socially powerful as their American counterparts, and, consequently, they did not crowd the ranks of Montreal's Jewish establishment to the degree that they did in New York (both cities functioning as national cynosures of communal influence and power). There were religious ramifications as well: Because Canadian Jews of German origin lacked influence, relatively speaking, the denomination of Judaism most usually associated with emancipated Central European Jewry, Reform, failed to make major inroads into the Dominion.¹⁰

The modest second wave of Canadian Jewish immigration, occurring a few decades prior to the breaking of the Eastern European dam in the 1880s, brought with it a quantity of German and British Jews but also a fair number of Lithuanians who went on to distinguish themselves as members of Canada's

⁸ The sequel to *Taking Root* is *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998).

⁹ For a colorful description of the German-Jewish establishment of the United States, see Stephen Birmingham's *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Some of his material reprises (sometimes without attribution) what Moses Rischin laid out in *The Promised City: The Jews of New York City, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977; originally published in 1962).

¹⁰ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. xxi.

Ashkenazic Jewish establishment. If influence can be flagged by national origins in the period under review, then the Lithuanians were probably the most important identifiable element. Still, though the wealthy among them resided in Montreal's "uptown" or West End, these "Litvaks" (a pejorative term in the Galician and Ukrainian Jewish lexicon)¹¹ were not of an entirely dissimilar background to the Jewish working-class residing near the docks in the East End. They were from Eastern Europe, after all; they were most of them able to speak Yiddish. Yet, like the German Jews of New York, many Lithuanian Jews chose not to speak Yiddish. One eminent historian of the Canadian Jewish scene attributed the rejection of the mother tongue to what he considered the "cool rationalism" typical of Litvaks.¹² Insofar as rationalism was involved, I would agree. But there is a more reliable method of determining cultural and ideological choices than to resort to or to take at face value the ethno-national stereotypes of that period.¹³

To cast the uptown establishment—the Germans, Lithuanians, and English who spoke English—in the part of Esau eager to give up their cultural birthright for a mess of materialist comfort is not only unfair. It confuses living in the West End with being a "Westerner". It ignores that, given the social and geographical

¹¹ The term "Litvak", as lexicographer Leo Rosten has pointed out, referred to "an erudite but pedantic type" or to someone "dry and humorless". See Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish* (New York: Pocket Books, 1970), p. 212.

¹² See David Rome, *The First Jewish Literary School*. (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1988), p. 103.

mobility of the city's Jewish immigrants, the distance, geographical and cultural, between East and West was not as far removed as may appear at first glance. With the exception of a downtown socialist and anarchist minority, West Enders and East Enders shared many of the same aspirations: to become Canadian, to speak English, and to rise up from the laboring classes, if that had not already been done. And, notwithstanding Irving Howe's argument that socialism became a modern and secular version of Judaism—with Yiddish as its liturgical tongue—¹⁴ the Jewish religion (bourgeois and otherwise) was not dead yet, and its intellectuals were still finding a receptive audience, in the United States and, especially, in Canada.

Yiddish Studies in Canada is flourishing, and its practitioners convey a compelling passion for their material.¹⁵ But in reconstructing a lost world, there is a temptation to romanticize one's subjects, be they individuals, a group, a language, a culture, and to essentialize them as representative of an irreproachable

¹³ For an example of the perpetuation of the Litvak stereotype in Yiddish popular literature, see I.L. Peretz's short story, "If Not Higher," in Saul Bellow's anthology, *Great Jewish Short Stories* (New York: Dell, 1964), pp. 137-140.

¹⁴ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich, 1976). Historians like Ruth Frager have reminded us that the world of Jewish mothers and sisters bears examination as well; but Frager also elides the issue of the primary role women played in inculcating religious values in the Jewish home. *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Ira Robinson, and Mervin Butovsky, eds *Renewing Our Days: Montreal Jews in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1995); Robinson, Butovsky, and Pierre Anctil, eds., *An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1990).

and trans-historical authenticity. This is to mistake heritage for history.¹⁶ One way to avoid this is to take the discourse of the day seriously but not literally. When Franz Kafka, for example, told a Prague audience in 1912 that their capacity to speak Yiddish was innate, remained an intrinsic part of their folk memory, one must respect the sentiment. But one is also bound to ponder the assumptions regarding the heritability of consciousness underlying it.¹⁷ It is important to recognize that the gathered in from a given season's ideational harvest. Ideas often have phylogenies containing traces of hybridizations past that cannot help but challenge our preconceptions, if we read critically enough.¹⁸ So it is not enough to explain Kafka's statements as pointing to the irreducibility of Jewish experience. That may or may not be true, but it is certainly un-falsifiable. The preservation of heritage naturally entails a mandated stress on continuity, on interpreting history as the working out of an eternal present; the task of the historian is not necessarily to revise such an emphasis and to favour discontinuity but to explore and assess the reasoning behind all broad-based claims of identity.

¹⁶ See David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Anita Norich, "Yiddish Literary Studies," *Modern Judaism* 10 (1990): 297-309.

¹⁸ For instance, to use an example not specifically Jewish, Ian Mackay has shown that Canadian Marxists saw no contradiction in combining socialism and Spencerian Social Darwinism in "Changing the Subject(s) of the 'History of Canadian Sociology': The Case of Colin Mackay and Marxist Spencerism." *Journal of Canadian Sociology* 23:4 (1998), pp. 389-427; and *For a Working-Class Culture in Canada: A Selection of Colin McKay's writings on Sociology and Political Economy, 1897-1939* (St. John's, Newfoundland: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1996).

Thus, while it is important to recognize the real differences obtaining between the political ideologies and communal organization styles of the denizens of Westmount and The Main, it is not necessary or fruitful to freeze them temporally.¹⁹ Time, after all, is the historian's metier, and in time—indeed, in very short order, within a generation or two—many Eastern Enders had moved on to enjoy the comforts of bourgeois existence and to worry over the new problems that came with it.

The journalists who spoke for either side of the East End-West End linguistic divide in Montreal shared Kafka's anthropological assumption: They agreed that, however adaptable the Jewish people may be, an innate identity continued to reside within their spirit; but disagreed as to what strategies of self- or group-expression might best preserve that identity, that covenantal spirit. As Donald Akenson has pointed out, if Jewish writings can be said to share a characteristic, it is covenantalism, a style of thinking which logically allows for the co-existence of diachronic contingency (If we obey certain dictates) and synchronic continuity (—then, we are and always will be). Given this tension

¹⁹ Relying upon David Rome's unmatched archival research, Oiwa Keinosuke has argued that the Jewish East End, popularly known as "The Main", was as culturally and ideologically discrete as it was geographically distanced from the West End community. As attractive as such an idea may be, particularly when employing the synchronic anthropological theories of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, scholars must be careful not to elevate snapshot analyses to the level of determinacy and immutability. "Tradition and Social Change: An Ideological Analysis of the Montreal Jewish Immigrant Ghetto in the Early Twentieth Century." Dissertation. (New York: Cornell University, 1988).

between covenant and conditions, heritage and history, one is obliged to keep an eye on the interplay between the poles, which requires an unblinkered motility.²⁰

The thinkers, whether English- or Yiddish-speaking, who comprised the Jewish press corps in Montreal were just that—intellectuals, members of an *intelligentsia* at home in a world of ideas. They may have had divergent ideas as to the source of Jewish consciousness and the meaning of Jewish cultural heritage and history. But, as intellectuals, they were all equally prone to reinventing traditions (sacred and/or profane) in light of present-day theoretical trends. And as one trend followed another, so did succeeding generations of thinkers find more modern ways to predicate their arguments. The point was to be modern and conservative simultaneously, to participate in society and to preserve one's community all in the same breath.

On both sides of the English-speaking and Yiddish-speaking divide, there was a tendency to legitimize "tradition" (however that was defined) via contemporary conceptual means, specifically in terms of competing interpretations of evolutionary theory. In doing so, both often syncretized materialist (Darwinian or Spencerian) evolutionary ideas with idealist (British or German) ones. What I call the "liberal religious" side (representative of the *Jewish Times*' first phase) stressed an optimistic rationalist view of the evolution

²⁰ Yosef Yerushalmi makes the point that the Jewish historico-narrative tradition is both old (Biblical) and new (Haskalahic; that is, dating from the Jewish Enlightenment of the early nineteenth century), with a huge Mishnaic ahistorical gap in between. Akenson defers to that conclusion. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983); Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

of consciousness—like liberal Christians, their motto was “onwards and upwards”; for them, adherence to Torah presented the best hope for Jewish survival. Their position was based on an emancipatory interpretation of Jewish Law as the ultimate politico-ethical guide. Advocates of the “cultural secularist” position (which dominated the paper’s second phase) argued that the stress on political and ethical Judaism forced upon the Jewish people by the terms of emancipation was actually unhealthy, since it cut out the inner spirit, the indwelling uniqueness, of Jewish identity. Thus they placed a curative stress on the importance of intuitive Jewishness, and distrusted theological formalism and politico-ethical rationalizations. “Racial consciousness” was their catch-phrase and folk literature their scripture.

Since both camps were for the most part led by Jews of the same sub-ethnic (Lithuanian) background, their disparities cannot be ascribed to one or the other side having the goods on authenticity by virtue of their background. The disparities were the result of ideological choices. These choices, in turn, depended on whether one was religiously or secularly inclined. Class also entered into it, but, since the evidence suggests that many middle-class Jewish youth were at this time disillusioned with the religion of their fathers and mothers, the generational differences that were also apparent, and probably more so in the long run, require serious consideration.

We begin our series of biographical sketches with an exception to the Lithuanian rule: Lyon Cohen was not a Litvak. His father Leizer, was from

Russian Poland; he sent for his wife Fraida and his three year old son in 1871 after finding work as a storekeeper in Eastern Ontario's Glengarry County. By the time the family moved to Montreal in the 1880s, Leizer had changed his name to Lazarus, Fraida to Fanny, and Leibele became Lyon. They joined the English, German, and Polish synagogue (later renamed Shaar Hashomayim), and both father and son eventually served terms (consecutively) as its president. Congregational lay leadership often fell to the wealthiest members; the Cohens having done well operating a brass foundry and a fleet of dredges on the St. Lawrence, they set themselves up in the Westmount where the city's Anglophone establishment, Jewish or otherwise, tended to gravitate. They remain one of Canada's most famous Jewish families; Lyon's grandson is the internationally renowned poet and recording artist, Leonard Cohen.²¹

David to Lyon's Jonathan, Samuel W. Jacobs, also of Glengarry County, was born in Lancaster, Ontario in 1871. His father was a Lithuanian-Jew who had made his fortune as a supplier of horses for Montreal's tramway system. As the business grew, the family found it necessary to move the city. This they did a decade later, in 1881. Having had from their arrival in Canada maintained a visitational relationship with the English, German, and Polish synagogue, the Jacobs now joined as full-fledged members and were soon nearly as prominent as the Cohens in that connection. Samuel graduated with a B.C.L (Bachelor of Civil Law) from McGill in 1893 (at the age of 22). He then went on to earn a post-graduate degree at Laval, an experience that allowed him to improve his French.

²¹ Bernard Figler, *Rabbi Dr. Herman Abramowitz, Lazarus Cohen, Lyon*

This stood him in good stead later as the federal member for the French and Jewish working-class constituency of Etienne-Cartier (later renamed Cartier), a position he held for twenty years (1917-1937). Though (unlike Cohen) Jacobs spoke no Yiddish, he was still quite popular by dint of his unstinting efforts on behalf of his constituents, whoever they might be. His willingness to flout the Liberal Party line when it came to the matter of immigration restriction admittedly endeared him more to the Jews of Etienne-Cartier than to the French. His famous sense of humor—he was known as the “Mark Twain of the House”—did not hurt, either.²²

Outside his work in the community, Jacobs’ main claim to fame was the part he played in extraditing Harry Thaw to the United States; the American millionaire’s shooting of architect Stanford White, who had been having an affair with Thaw’s show-girl wife, resulted in the twentieth century’s first “trial of the

Cohen (Ottawa: 1968).

²² In 1912, the *Canadian Jewish Times* reported on a speech Jacobs gave before the Montreal Reform Club on the schools question (Jewish children being taught in Protestant schools by Protestant teachers): “Dealing with the growth in the Jewish population locally, Mr. Jacobs recalled that in St. Louis and St. Lawrence divisions, the Jews were acquiring so much property that they had already converted it from a Catholic to a Protestant section—as far as school tax evaluation went. ‘Why, the thing is going at such a pace that Bourassa even foresees the day when there will only be two official languages in this province—English and Yiddish,’ exclaimed Jacobs, amidst laughter.”

On another occasion, a fellow Member of Parliament bemoaned the costs of the national railway, asking: “How do we feed this white elephant?” Jacobs replied, “Through its Grand Trunk.” “Mr. S.W. Jacobs’ Excellent Speech,” *CJT*, November 1, 1912, p. 7; Lloyd Roberts, “Have You Met Sam Jacobs?” *Saturday Night* July 7, 1934, p. 16.

century” in 1906.²³ The case that garnered him great respect in the Canadian Jewish community was the Plamondon “blood libel” affair.²⁴

Together Jacobs and Cohen distinguished themselves as community leaders not only in the realm of journalism, but in the areas of philanthropy, communal organization, and civil rights: both served terms as leading officers of the Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society (eventually renamed the Baron de Hirsch Institute), the Jewish Colonization Association Committee in Canada, the Canadian Jewish Congress (2nd), the B’nai B’rith. As Figler puts it: “Theirs was an exceptionally close relationship in every field of Jewish endeavor as well as in Canadian local and national affairs. Their careers of public service followed a parallel course, even to their life span.” Both passed away in 1937.²⁵

Jacobs’ first legal partnership was with Percy Ryan, a local barrister of some repute. Like Jacobs, Ryan would stand as a candidate for the Liberal Party, though his attempt to enter provincial politics came to nought (he was defeated by a landslide in 1906). Percy’s father, Captain Carroll Ryan, was an ex-soldier turned professional newspaperman with longstanding links to the Liberal Party,

²³ Bob Levin, “The O.J. Simpson Circus,” *Maclean’s* May 29, 1995, p. 24.

²⁴ J. Edouard Plamondon of Quebec City was sued after claiming publicly, among other things, that the Jewish Talmud demanded the blood of Christian infants be used in the making of Passover matzohs. Although the decision was reversed on appeal, the court found in favor of the defendant on grounds that libel law applied to individuals, not to groups. Jacobs was the lead prosecutor in this case, and gave the following version of the Jewish liberal position in his summing up: “We are proud of the fact, given equal opportunities, the Jew is as good a man as any other. We do not say he is any better, but we say, where ever given the same rights as others, they are able to do as well as others.” See Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*, Toronto, 1992, pp. 250-253; *Canadian Jewish Times*, July 27, 1913, p. 16.

and it was he who would become the first editor of the first Jewish newspaper of Montreal.

Ryan was another exception to the Litvak rule, and a glaring one at that. “It was a strange anomaly that for many years our working editor was a non-Jew, the late Captain Carroll Ryan,” Lyon Cohen recounted on the fifteenth anniversary of the paper, two years after Ryan’s death in 1910.²⁶ But neither he nor Jacobs ever felt obliged to justify that anomaly. All that appeared to matter to them was that Ryan was an experienced journalist of a similar political bent and someone with great sympathies for the Jewish people. An Irish Catholic born in Toronto (1839), William Thomas Carroll Ryan has been called “the virtual creator of Jewish opinion in Canada.”²⁷ He was an autodidact, having spent one indifferent year at St. Michael’s College, a Catholic institution (now part of the University of Toronto). Ryan discovered his lifelong passions—journalism, Freemasonry and freedom fighting (an admirer of the Italian revolutionary and Freemason Giuseppe Garibaldi, Ryan equated the two, at one point having served as one of Garibaldi’s many bodyguards on the island of Malta),²⁸ and Judaica—during his many years in military service. He never converted to Judaism, though

²⁵ Bernard Figler, *Sam Jacobs*, p. 208.

²⁶ “Birth of the Jewish Times,” *CJT*, December 13, 1912, pp. 4-5.

²⁷ B. G. Sack, *Yiddisher Kemfer*, Passover Issue, 1957. Reference from David Rome’s *Immigration Story II: Jacobs’ Opponents* (Montreal, 1986), p. 41.

²⁸ See Shulamis Yelin, “William Thomas Carroll Ryan: The Growth of a Man,” M.A. thesis, Universite de Montreal, 1961, chapter three.

his close association with Montreal's Jewish community led some (non-Jews) to believe that Ryan was himself a Jew.²⁹

His fascination with Judaism began during his time in service with the British Army during the Crimean war; he was billeted with a Jewish family in Scutari, in what is now north-western Albania. It was there as well, according to biographer Shulamis Yelin, that he took up the study of Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah.³⁰ Jewish mysticism, it should be noted, played a part in the development of Masonic theology.³¹ Ryan's involvement in Freemasonry allowed him to express dissatisfaction with Christianity (Catholicism especially, though not exclusively) while simultaneously providing him with a latitudinarian alternative that was closer in affinity to the Jewish Bible than to the New Testament. This, as chapter one shall indicate, proved significant in terms of the flavour of his editorial commentary.

²⁹ A Mrs. Marchand, woman who used to lunch at same boarding house as Ryan, described him as an "old Jewish Rabbi." Cf. Yelin, "William Thomas Carroll Ryan," p. 12.

³⁰ Yelin, "William Thomas Carroll Ryan: The Progress of a Man," pp. 21-35.

³¹ Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 18. Freemasonry, Jacob Katz has argued, also played a part in the acculturation of German Jews, was one route "by which these former ghetto-dwellers found their way into the social circles of their neighbors." Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. vii. A Canadian primary source bearing this out is Poole, W.H. *Anglo-Israel; or, the Saxon Race Proved to be the Lost Tribes of Israel* (London: 1889). Poole was a Freemason and Anglo-Israelite who believed the English race to be remnants of the ten tribes of Israel. He welcomed Jews (descendants, according to tradition, of the two tribes of Judah) as lodge members, since this would mean that the twelve tribes of Biblical times would be brothers reunited at last. For a secondary source regarding the role of Freemasonry and Anglo-Israelism in the Canadian Jewish context, see Michael

Once done his Crimean tour of duty, Ryan was stationed at the British military bases in Malta and Gibraltar. On his return to Canada, he spent a term in Ottawa, where he commanded a battery of volunteer artillery and joined the Dalhousie Lodge of Freemasons. The highlight of Ryan's military career came with his appointment as aide-de-camp to General E. Selby Smythe, Commander of the Canadian militia. Before his marriage (at the age of 29) in 1870, he also established and edited *Volunteers Review*, one of Canada's first in-house military journals.

After 1870 Ryan moved into the civilian sphere, accepting an editorial position at the Ottawa *Evening Mail*. A year later, he transferred to the Ottawa *Citizen*. From 1872 until 1875, the peripatetic Ryan worked as an editorialist for the Toronto *Globe*, Hamilton *Times*, London *Adviser*, Halifax *Chronicle*, and St. John *Telegraph*, among other newspapers. Although there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that he was a man who liked his drink—and this might account for the frequency of his movements—he was energetic and prolific enough (particularly in the national capital) to gain the recognition of his peers. After founding another newspaper, the Ottawa *Sun*, the Captain was elected first president of the Parliamentary Press Gallery (an association, it must be said, that also had a reputation for conviviality). Upon his departure from the city in 1883, he received a gold watch from the Liberal Party in recognition of his services.

Brown Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 25-28, 55.

Ryan was to eventually find his way to Montreal where he wrote for the *Daily Witness*,³² another Liberal booster and one of the few “Christian” papers in the city that took an interest in, and made a habit of defending, Jewish interests.³³ When approached by the *Jewish Times*’ proprietors he was in semi-retirement, still composing commentaries and working on his fourth collection of poetry. Already “the longest working newspaperman” in Canada by 1890,³⁴ he was 58 years old when the first number of the *Times* appeared on December 10, 1897. From that day forward, until his death in 1910, Ryan took his responsibilities as the first public defender of Canadian Jews very seriously. That his opinions tended to bear a strong resemblance to those of Jacobs and Cohen indicates not only that he wanted to keep his job but that he was immersing himself in the role of defender of the Jewish faith. When he employed the editorial “we”, it sounded like a subjective plural pronoun—as in “we, the Jews of Montreal.”

As long as the Cohen-Jacobs-Ryan connection remained in place, the *Jewish Times* remained closely allied to Montreal’s preeminent Ashkenazic synagogue, the aforementioned Shaar Hashomayim.³⁵ As a result, the newspaper

³² Not to be confused with the *True Witness*, founded in 1850 to fight “anti-Catholic libel,” though historians know it better as a propagator of anti-Jewish libel.

³³ He also worked for the *Montreal Post* and the *Montreal Journal of Commerce*.

³⁴ “Birth of the Jewish Times,” *CJT*, December 13, 1912, p. 4.

³⁵ This was a recent development. Shaar Hashomayim, conforming to Ashkenazic rituals, had just eclipsed its mother congregation, the Sephardically inflected Shearith Israel. The latter had been since its founding in 1768 Montreal’s and Canada’s oldest, largest, and most important Jewish congregation.

reflected its congregation's "British American" concerns and biases, and shared its language preference (English). Editorials placed a stress on religion as the keystone to Jewish identity, and on liberalism as the truest of Jewish ideologies. Religious liberalism was typical of the rationalist response to the conditions of emancipation that many middle-class Jews adopted. Religious, because the terms under which Jews were granted civil rights in Western countries dictated that the only group label they might validly espouse was denominational. As fellow monotheistic citizens of a nation-state, they had the right to worship God as they preferred, but none to special claims of chosen-ness as a people apart. Liberal, because emancipation required a level playing field—or at least, not an openly skewed one—in order that individual Jews might participate economically as well as politically in the new social order. Rational, because emancipation was a product of the Enlightenment, a project declaring superstition to be the enemy of progress: thus expressions of "faith" tended to be couched in terms consistent with political and scientific reason, including evolutionary theory.

The Rev. Dr. Hermann Abramowitz, rabbi of Shaar Hashomayim, was perhaps the most important and certainly one of the most frequent contributors to the *Jewish Times/Canadian Jewish Times*. Given his eminence in the Jewish West End, it devolved upon him to "adapt" (one of his favorite words) the liberal religious position to Canadian conditions and circumstances. He was born in Vilna, Lithuania, a major Jewish metropolis and home to a *yeshiva* (school of Judaic learning) renowned for its combination of religious orthodoxy and secular

It was led by the patriarchal de Sola dynasty, a discussion of which occurs at the

intellectual sophistication.³⁶ In 1888, when he was eight years old, he and his widowed mother sailed for New York (well on its way to becoming the largest “Jewish city” in the world). By 1902, he had completed both his rabbinical training at the Jewish Theological Seminary—the fountainhead of the Conservative movement he helped to establish—and post-graduate studies (in philosophy, Semitics, and education) at Columbia University. A pupil at the JTS of Solomon Schechter, the Romanian-Anglo-Jewish scholar who had left his academic appointments in Cambridge and London to salvage the then foundering seminary, Abramowitz brought his positive-historicist and orthodox Judaic sensibilities to Montreal’s Congregation Shaar Hashomayim at the age of 22. Though rather young to be hired for such an important post, he was readily accepted and not to relinquish his position until 1946, the congregation’s centenary; he passed away the following year.³⁷

Although a naturalized American citizen, he had left his American biases behind him, and always managed to interpret Judaism as though Canada was its truest North American home (like Schechter, Abramowitz was an advocate of Zionism). This was not much of a stretch for him. Unlike the radical Reform rabbis who dominated the American scene, Abramowitz and his like-minded contemporaries (including Schechter) respected the English-Canadian penchant

beginning of chapter four.

³⁶ Bernard Figler, *Rabbi Dr. Herman Abramowitz, Lazarus Cohen, Lyon Cohen: Canadian Jewish Profiles* (Ottawa: 1968), p. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

for “enlightened conservatism” in politics and religion.³⁸ His affinities, then, matched well with those of his employers. (In North America rabbis were employees, rather than dynastic appointees, so it comes as little surprise that American rabbis accommodated quickly to Canadian ways.)³⁹

Even before the Conservative movement became a movement in name (ca. 1912), the Canadian Jewish bourgeoisie had in fact observed Judaism in Conservative fashion. And Shaar Hashomayim was the prime institution of English-Canadian Judaism, self-consciously British and faithful to Judaic tradition (of the Ashkenazic-Lithuanian variety) simultaneously.⁴⁰ It was also obviously and unashamedly middle-class. By way of illustration: the centenary commemorative book contains a photograph, dating from 1890, of the synagogue’s interior with congregants in full attendance. The sexes are segregated, a nod to orthodoxy, the women occupying the balconies; the men wear prayer shawls over dark but stylish suits and top-hats or bowlers instead of skull-caps or yarmulkes. Many are bare-faced, and the few beards that are visible

³⁸ Abramowitz, “One Hundred Years of Spiritual Growth: A Brief Ideological Survey of Our Congregation,” *Shaar Hashomayim Centenary Book*. (Montreal, 1946), p. 7.

³⁹ Montreal’s Temple Emanu-El, one of two Reform synagogues in the country, also hired its clergy from the United States, but since its congregants tended to be transplanted Americans, the influence of British-Canadianism upon it was minimal. Michael Brown has examined the issue of continentalism and its impact on religious observance to some extent in his work *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 67-118.

⁴⁰ It was incorporated in 1859 as the body of the “English, German, and Polish Jews of Montreal”, its by-laws “modeled after those of the Bayswater Synagogue in London, England.” Abramowitz, p. 7.

are mostly evenly cropped and ruly. The rabbi of that era,⁴¹ whose cap more resembles a fez than those worn today, faces the worshippers in an attitude of sermonizing, preaching being a practice borrowed from Protestantism. There is no organ—another characteristic of Protestant churches that Reform synagogues were wont to adopt—but a cantor’s podium (eliminated by Reformers) facing Jerusalem, away from main body of the congregation. The scene, though obviously posed, is indicative of the delicate balance Canadian and Conservative Jews were attempting to achieve.⁴²

Because of Abramowitz’s situation, his views, though derived in part from Schechter’s influence, were not identical to his mentor’s. He was less sure, for example, that “Judaism...is thoroughly compatible with Americanism” and could hardly support the statement that “the future of Judaism is in America.”⁴³ Because he believed the conservative Canadian environment to be far more congenial to the cultivation of religiosity than the radical American, Abramowitz also failed to follow his old teacher’s suit when the latter became pessimistic in the face of secularist trends. Emancipation had brought with it the risk of assimilation: “In the social anti-Semitism of America lies the Jews’ only hope,” the Anglo-Jewish author Israel Zangwill had offered by way of ironic consolation. Schechter also expressed concern (in Abramowitz’s paraphrase) that “when social equality will

⁴¹ Rev. Elias Friedlander.

⁴² For a detailed analysis of Judaic-Protestant syncretization, see Leon Jick’s *The Americanization of the Synagogue 1820-1870* (Hanover, New Hampshire: 1976).

⁴³ “Schechter’s Visit to Montreal,” *JT*, January 1, 1908, pp. 54-55.

be added to political equality, it will mean the loss of many Jews to us who are united to us by few ties except outward pressure.”⁴⁴ While acknowledging the damage done by secularization, the Montreal rabbi answered that the first century of emancipation was merely a transition period and that Judaism was yet a positive force. “We shall soon get our bearings again and once more obtain a firm grip upon the eternal principles of Judaism,” he declared.⁴⁵

Despite its reputation for traditionalism, of course, the Ashkenazic Jewish middle-class establishment of Montreal was purposive in its shedding of Yiddish, the mother tongue of Eastern European Jewry. Contemporary critics labeled it a kind of cultural treachery, and to some extent the historiography reflects this judgement, if in less incendiary terms.⁴⁶ But if the rejection of the mother tongue signaled a measure of shame over one’s identity in some cases, there were also other dynamics historians are obliged to pay attention to. To better understand the reasons behind the Conservative Canadian rejection of Yiddish, for instance, we have to take as their rhetoric as seriously as that of their critics.

In the preface, the evolutionary trope of the “adaptable Jew” was introduced. Evolutionary discourse played a part in justifying the Conservative stance on the Yiddish language as well. Indeed, linguistic “selection” was part and

⁴⁴ “Bonds That Unite Us,” *CJT*, April 28, 1911, pp. 4-6.

⁴⁵ “Our Modern Emancipation,” *CJT*, April 18, 1913, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, the series of annotated primary sources on Canadian Jewry (edited by David Rome) put out by the Canadian Jewish Congress Archives (Montreal), including *Canadian Story of Reuben Brainin* (1993); *The First Jewish Literary School* (1988); *Jacob’s Opponents* (1986); *The Jewish Times, Etc* (1986).

parcel of the Canadian-Jewish way of “adaptation”, according to Hermann Abramowitz. When then president of Shaar Hashomayim, Lazarus Cohen, accepted an invitation to speak in New York City at the first convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary, he is said (according to Abramowitz) to have astonished the delegates with a dazzling verbal display that undermined his audience’s preconceptions as to what constituted Jewish authenticity:

Lazarus Cohen was given the floor and, as he mounted the platform, picturesque with his patriarchal beard, giving him the appearance of a venerable East European Rav, the delegates sat back fully prepared for a rattling good Yiddish speech. But instead they listened to a well reasoned out address in a cultured English, with the added charm of a slight Scotch brogue, which he had acquired in the County of Glengarry where he first settled.

“It made a profound impression on the American delegates to whom it was something novel,” Abramowitz recounted, adding: “In a sense it was a demonstration of Canadian Judaism, our extreme orthodoxy with all its trimmings and yet completely integrated with the vernacular down to its characteristics of dialect.”⁴⁷

To be sure, the Yiddish language question is important: it can help illuminate the problems of identity that *fin-de-siecle* Jews faced; but only if its relationship to the liberal Judaic stance is properly examined. We have to remember that Conservative Jews, including those dwelling in Canada, believed that the Jewish identity was by nature culturally flexible—the word used was “adaptable”—yet secure, if anchored by religion. It may have troubled fundamentalist Christians (and been one of their reasons for being), but

⁴⁷ Bernard Figler, *Rabbi Dr. Herman Abramowitz, Lazarus Cohen, Lyon Cohen: Canadian Jewish Profiles* (Ottawa: 1968), p. 102.

evolutionism—whether idealist or materialist, Darwinian or Spencerian or Hegelian, progressivist or degenerationist—was not considered antithetical or threatening to Judaic religious belief or expression. While ultra-modernist Reformers formally integrated evolutionism into their theology,⁴⁸ Conservatives never did so, perhaps because their approach was not theologically-oriented to begin with: a formalized system of belief would militate against the delicate balance their approach demanded. Nevertheless, the adherents of the Conservative movement believed it possible to be both traditional and innovative via an adaptationist theory of religion that proposed to “bind the rigidity of law to new conditions” [or “new environments”] actuated at all times by loyalty to basic principles.”⁴⁹

Culture, then (as embodied in language), as a preservative force was not an idea that the Judaic middle-class seriously considered at this point of time, since this tack tended toward the dissociation of religion from Jewish identity. They may have lived in an age of incubating secular trends, but they did not believe that they were yet living in a secular age. As far as they were concerned, Judaism was what made Jews Jewish and capable of outliving profane threats to their existence; Judaism, in their view, lent to its members a plasticity and resilience that proved their chosen-ness.

⁴⁸ Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 257-258.

⁴⁹ Editorial, *CJT*, March 7, 1913, p. 8.

Thus, though Yiddishists argued that the preservation of the Ashkenazic mother tongue was the key to Jewish survival and Jewish authenticity, Conservative and Reform Jews—in keeping with their religious, liberal (anti-segregationist), and progressive evolutionary outlooks—remained antipathetic to its preservation. New environments brought with them new survivalist imperatives, they believed. Yiddish, from this perspective, was analogous to the human appendix: an ancient evolutionary accretion that may have served a purpose at one time but which had been rendered redundant by the exigencies of modern Jewish life. Moreover, many Conservatives considered Hebrew the only Jewish tongue worthy of the name. Whatever else it signified, the abandonment of Yiddish was consistent with the rationalist evolutionary worldview that progressive Judaic groups were constructing. (Of course, secular Yiddish-speakers like the Bundists [Jewish socialists] also claimed to be the voice of progress; the point is that the historiography is more likely to believe their claims.)

Conservatives and Reformers alike believed that Jews had a moral responsibility, rather than a cultural right, to exist; they were chosen to be “a light unto the nations”, to be ethical missionaries, not a people segregated by language from Gentile neighbors. Unlike Conservatives, however, Reformers disputed the notion that keeping kosher was consistent with integrationist ideology; they regarded such observances as being out of date and as separatist as speaking in medieval dialects.

So, despite some of their similarities, the difference between the two liberal Judaic movements is clear: Reform Jews were anti- or non-*halachic*. That is, they did not revere Jewish law for its own sake. Or, more accurately, they defined *halacha* as ethical in essence. Dietary and other laws having no direct moral significance were held to be anachronistic and unnecessarily segregationist. It is for this reason that some Reform contemporaries labeled Canadian Judaism—which laid a far greater stress on the importance of *kashruth* (or kosher laws)—a “relentless species of obsolete Judaism.” Conservative Jews may have dismissed Yiddishists as promulgating a doctrine of atavism, but so too did Reform Jews look upon the Conservative (and, of course, Orthodox) philosophy with the disdain that comes from a progressive perspective.

Conservatives like Abramowitz, for their part, justified dietary laws position on the grounds that they were imbued with a transhistorical reason that was more scientific than Jewish or Christian critics could imagine. In an address entitled “Judaism-the Religion of the Future”, Abramowitz argued that Abraham's religion had been too difficult for pagans to accept, which accounted for its adulterated form—Christianity—which he described as an inferior rational, philosophical, and ethical system. Its stress on blind faith was indicative of its primitive character; indeed, it was initially successful because it appealed “to the human race when in its childhood.” Because Christianity was the product of an immature or underdeveloped imagination, it could not help but find itself in conflict with modern science. Reason, he contended, was the “handmaid of religion”, but only if that religion was essentially rational, rather than dogmatic:

“dogma constitutes an essential part of Judaism, it yet does not become an encumbrance.” Judaic dietary injunctions, for instance, were not “mystical” or “inconceivable”, simply held to as necessary mysteries. They were “this-worldly” rules of action whose pragmatic, prophylactic value, he claimed, were legitimized by the science of hygiene, just as sociological statistics had for decades shown that Judaic ethics prevented crime.⁵⁰

Abramowitz viewed the Darwinian challenge to Christianity and the crisis it engendered⁵¹ as indicative of an historic turn, itself an evolutionary benchmark, signaling the end of religious irrationality and the triumph of Judaism: “Already the liberal sects in Christendom [such as the Unitarians] are eliminating from their religion that which first made it acceptable to heathendom; and in purity of dogma and teaching they are approaching the Jewish religion.” He concluded: “Our age . . . is gradually preparing man for the acceptance of Judaism.”⁵²

As was his wont, Schechter was somewhat more skeptical. He feared that equating Judaism with reason would actually bring about its dilution, rather than its vindication. Making sarcastic allusions to the rhetoric of Darwinism, he argued:

⁵⁰ “Judaism-the Religion of the Future,” *JT*, Nov. 21, 1903, pp. 3-7.

⁵¹ For an account of the Canadian Christian response to Darwinism, see Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

⁵² *Ibid.* For a discussion of the relationship that developed between progressive Jewish and liberal Christian denominations, see Benny Kraut, “The Ambivalent Relations of American Reform Judaism with Unitarianism in the Last Third of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1986): 58-68.

We seek the foundation of Judaism in political economy, in hygiene, in everything except religion. Following the fashion of the day to esteem religion in proportion to its ability to adapt itself to every possible and impossible metaphysical and social system, we are anxious to squeeze out of Judaism the last drop of faith and hope, and strive to make it so flexible that we can turn it in every direction which it is our pleasure to follow. But alas! the flexibility has progressed so far as to classify Judaism among the invertebrate species, the lowest order of living things. . . . Political economy, hygiene, statistics, are very fine things. But no sane man would for them make those sacrifices which Judaism requires from us.⁵³

It was this lack of emphasis on faith, paradoxically, which led to the ideological shift promoted by culturalist opponents. The editor who cut the newspaper's denominational ties to Shaar Hashomayim and Judaic Conservatism in 1912, Queen's University student Archie Bennett, was simultaneously an avowed secularist and an advocate of "faith" (in the pragmatic, non-sectarian sense that his contemporary William James meant). A critic of religious liberalism precisely because he felt that its overemphasis on objective reason resulted in the constriction of Jewish identity, Bennett did not fit the stereotype of a "cool rationalist". Yet he was born in Lithuania and was proud of it.⁵⁴ His heritage, however, is less important than his age: the shift from a religious to a secular point of view evident during his phase as editor is also consistent with an ideological generation gap.

In 1905, when Bennett was age fourteen, the *Jewish Times* under Carroll Ryan published an item that reported his having won a high school scholarship in

⁵³ Schechter, "The Dogma of Judaism," in *Studies in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1896), pp. 149-150.

⁵⁴ See B.G. Kayfetz's obituary, "Bennett Was Congress Leader During Crucial Wartime Days." *Canadian Jewish News*, July 31, 1980: "Archie always prided himself on being a Litvak."

Kingston. The despatch writer declared that the success of “Archie Bennett, who three years ago [at age eleven] did not know an English word” signalled “the speedy assimilation” and the “remarkable cleverness of Russian Jews.”⁵⁵ Since Lithuania belonged to Russia, as did parts of Poland, Ukraine, and Bessarabia, many commentators on Eastern-European Jewish matters lumped immigrants from these parts together as “Russian Jews”. Initially, “Russian Jews” were seen as “strange and uncouth” even by the most sympathetic of observers.⁵⁶ But eventually a new set of stereotypes came into play: the Russians were clever and “adaptable”—adaptability and intelligence having been conflated in this period.⁵⁷ Zionist leader Max Nordau declared: “Where the young Englishman indulges in sports, the Russian Jew reads. Where the American goes into all manner of business adventures, the Russian Jew reads. Where the German travels, the Russian Jew reads.” “Books furnish the Russian Jew not only with his recreation but his hope,” Nordau explained, adding: “A twenty year old [Jewish] boy would feel ashamed if he didn’t know Spencer and Huxley and Darwin and Spinoza . . . as an American boy would feel if he didn’t know who had won the baseball pennant.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *JT*, July 26, 1905, p. 286.

⁵⁶ See Carroll Ryan’s editorial, “The Russian Jew,” *JT*, December 30, 1904.

⁵⁷ For an examination of the image of the clever Jew and the various ways it was manipulated by Jews and non-Jews—and for anti-Semitic and pro-Semitic purposes—see Sander Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

⁵⁸ Quoted in the *JT*, September 4, 1908, p. 362.

By these lights, Archie Bennett was the archetypal Russian-Jewish boy wonder. By the time he won the gold medal in philosophy at Queen's under the estimable John Watson, he was already finishing up his two-year stint (1912-14) as the third editor of the *Jewish Times* (or *Canadian Jewish Times*, as it been renamed). If Ryan was the oldest working journalist in Canada, Bennett may have been the youngest (though his youth has been exaggerated by some authorities—he was twenty one years of age, not eighteen, when he arrived in Montreal from Kingston).⁵⁹ Bennett's career as a writer continued for the duration of his life. In due time he was to become not only the doyen of Canadian Jewish journalism but, like Jacobs and Cohen before him, a president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.⁶⁰

These were not his ambitions: he never planned to be a newspaper columnist or particularly wealthy. He had wanted to be an academic, to follow in the footsteps of his teacher John Watson, Vice-Principal of Queen's and an idealist philosopher of international stature. Watson had written a glowing letter of recommendation that should have landed the young man a place in his graduate school of choice. Remarkably, he chose not to mention Bennett's ancestry; remarkable, since at the time it was standard procedure to warn scholarship trustees and post-secondary institutions whether the prospect in question happened to be Jewish, if only to assure them that he/she was an acceptable

⁵⁹ Cf. the Canadian Jewish Congress website: <http://www.cjc.ca>

⁶⁰ Kayfetz, "Bennett Was Congress Leader During Crucial Wartime Days," p. 2.

candidate despite the racial “defect.”⁶¹ Still there were no offers, and Bennett’s ethnicity appears to have been the deciding factor.⁶²

Watson’s influence on Bennett was life long, though never fulfilled in an academic career. His editorial post terminated in 1914 (the *Canadian Jewish Times* having been absorbed by the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*) and failing to receive a scholarship for post-graduate study, Bennett gave himself over to the improvement of the family’s lumber yard business, by then relocated from Kingston to the bigger smoke of Toronto. After their father passed away, Bennett and his brothers hit upon a radically new/old idea. They developed large structures designed to house a wide variety of shops and situated them far (downtown congestion already a problem) from city centre. As projected, families with automobiles discovered these “shopping centers” soon enough, the lure of free and easy parking—to say nothing of drive-in worship services—proving irresistible.

While the Bennetts can be said to have introduced “the mall” to Canadians in the car-crazed, suburbanized culture of the 1950s, business writer and historian Peter C. Newman suggests that Professor John Watson should receive some credit as well. Malls were still novel enough in 1957 that Newman was called upon to

⁶¹ This was certainly a factor affecting the course of A.A. Roback’s (see below) career. See Andrew S. Winston, “The Defects of His Race: E.G. Boring and Anti-Semitism in American Psychology,” *History of Psychology*, 1998, v 1 no. 1, pp. 27-51.

⁶² His son, Avi Bennett (president of the McClelland & Stewart publishing house), recalled that his father “always regretted not having the opportunity to pursue a career in philosophy, having felt there was no room for a Jew in that field.” Personal Correspondence, November 14, 1998.

spell out the concept for *Maclean's* readers.⁶³ He reported that Archie Bennett had taken for inspiration the Roman *fora*, the shopping plazas of ancient times that he had once inspected while waiting for a connecting flight from Italy to Israel.⁶⁴ Bennett's penchant for classical references Newman attributed directly to his education at Queen's (it being rumoured that Bennett kept the notes that he made in Watson's classes on philosophy on his nightstand): The "thwarted philosophy professor" in him craving expression, Archie Bennett refused to discriminate between entrepreneurial and metaphysical speculation.⁶⁵

Despite the intriguing nature of Newman's theory and the obvious fondness and respect that Bennett held for Watson, however, it cannot be said that his philosophy (the subject of chapter two) was identical to his mentor's. Just as Rabbi Abramowitz broke with his teacher Solomon Schechter on certain key points, so too did Bennett diverge from Watson. In the latter instance, it was the fact of Bennett's Jewishness that separated the two. Or, more precisely, Watson's Christianity—though far from sectarian or conversionist—prevented him from imagining a place in the present age for Jews as Jews. When Watson thought of the Jewish people as a corporate entity and as an historic presence, he thought of the ancient Israelites (the same could be said for his awareness of Greeks and

⁶³ Newman, "Canada's Biggest Landlords," *Maclean's*, February 4, 1956, pp. 10 ff.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 56.

⁶⁵ Newman, p. 55-56.

Italians).⁶⁶ Moreover, where the teacher was an objective rationalist who dealt in ostensibly universal ideals modelled on an abstract Christianity, the student was an intuitionist,⁶⁷ as well as a Jewish nationalist whose own life experience pointed to the concrete realities of race and racism.

It is instructive of the period's tendencies that, rather than devote himself to the "deconstruction" of the very racial stigmas which prevented him from taking the life course of his choosing, Bennett, in advocating the cultivation of Jewish "racial consciousness", chose to reinterpret Jewish stereotypes in a positive light. This approach to "Jewish Problems" he shared with A.A. Roback (see below).⁶⁸ The legitimization of stereotypes (through science or philosophy) that were deemed "good for the Jews" was common in this era. This is not a criticism or a statement meant to cancel out the significance of contemporary anti-Semitic stereotyping but a comment on the Jewish situation: despite emancipation, the modern existence of the Jewish people was something that was frequently ignored or invalidated by non-Jewish discourse. Jewish authorities of every stripe, consequently, were compelled to find up-to-date discursive means by which to justify Jewish persistence. And, frequently enough, this entailed the

⁶⁶ A trait he shared with Hegel. Cf. Watson's, *Interpretation of Religious Experience* (Glasgow: J. Maclehose, 1912), Vol. I, p. 350.

⁶⁷ I owe this terminology to my reading of A.B. McKillop's *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

⁶⁸ On the "double capacity" of the Jews, see Bennett, "The Canadian Jews and the War," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, September 11, 1914, pp. 6, 16; see also Roback on the Jewish "coefficient of genius" in "Jews and the Nobel Prize," *Jewish Tribune*, December 7, 1923, pp. 14, 37.

reification of racial and/or religious stereotypes. If the cultural secularists of the second generation or phase of the *Jewish Times* looked to the emerging discourse of racial consciousness, their liberal Judaic opponents of the first generation or phase remained stubbornly attached to the Victorian idea of the evolution of objective reason. It bears repeating that the revamping of communal tradition according to societal intellectual fashions was as common amongst those who continued to embrace aspects of Eastern European culture as amongst those who chose to leave it behind

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the work of Bennett's fellow young radical,⁶⁹ Abraham Aaron Roback. Raised in Quebec City, Roback left Montreal in 1914 for Harvard to study psychology and philology. Like Bennett, he wrote in both Yiddish and English and had already established himself as one of the most controversial writers (his bylines were sometimes appended with editorial disclaimers) on the Canadian Jewish intellectual scene.

Roback was to become one of the foremost defenders of race psychology in the American pre-war era. Arriving at Harvard in 1914, he came under the aegis E.G. Boring, the psychology department's *de facto* head (made notorious in Gould's *Mismeasure of Man* for having been one of the psychologists hired to rank according to racial categories the intellectual capacity of American soldiers during the Great War).⁷⁰ Roback followed in his footsteps, pioneering

⁶⁹ For a biographical breakdown of this generation of writers, see Rome, *The First Jewish Literary School* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1988).

⁷⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981), pp. 192-232. For a less polemically-engaged look at Boring's career, Barry Kelly,

assessments for “superior intelligence” in the 1920s.⁷¹ But he is a forgotten figure. His academic star gradually fell in the post-war period, and, though one of its best historians (having challenged Boring for that title in 1953),⁷² he died in 1965 a rather obscure figure in American psychology.

Roback, too, was of Lithuanian-Jewish heritage⁷³ and he was more attuned to what that represented in the popular Jewish imagination than most others. As compiler of the classic lexicographical work, *A Dictionary of International Slurs*,⁷⁴ he recorded a Polish/Ukrainian Jewish saying that a “Litvak does not die”. This, as Roback explained, meant that “the Lithuanian, in a constant state of ferment, either dies a Christian, or else is proscribed to Siberia as a revolutionary, or if he is pious, passes the rest of his days as a Palestinian.”⁷⁵ Roback’s fate was

“Inventing Psychology’s Past: E.G. Boring’s Historiography in Relation to the Psychology of His Time,” *Journal of Mind and Behaviour* 2:3 (Autumn 1981), pp. 5-25.

⁷¹ Roback, “Report on the Roback Mentality Examination at Simmons College,” *Simmons College Review* 3:8 (June, 1921). Roback Papers, CJCA.

⁷² Cf. Boring, “Review of A.A. Roback’s *History of American Psychology*,” *American Journal of Psychology* 66:4 (October 1953): 651-654. In his history, Roback had criticized Boring for not stressing the Jewish background of the developers of Gestalt psychology, which was in keeping with his Hegelian/racialist views. For his part, Boring mentioned Roback’s Jewishness when it came to writing letters of recommendation for him—as constituting one of his defects. Andrew S. Winston, “The Defects of His Race: E.G. Boring and Anti-Semitism in American Psychology,” *History of Psychology* 1:1(1998), pp. 27-51.

⁷³ His parents were from Goniandz, near Bialystock; he wrote under several pseudonyms, one of them being “Goniandzer”.

⁷⁴ (Cambridge, Mass.: Sci-Art Pub., 1944).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

not to become an assimilationist or a Zionist making *aliyah* but a psychological nationalist whose nationalism was expressed in his love for the Yiddish tongue—this despite his being “the only Yiddish writer brought up outside of a Ghetto.”⁷⁶ His upbringing in the relatively isolated Jewish community of Quebec City did not deter him from becoming one of the world’s most prominent defenders of the Yiddish language and the culture it encompassed.

If what was said about the “Litvak” did not overly bother (or impress) him, it was because he was a student of the psychology who minded slurs but did not take them to heart (that is, personally). Roback called himself a “collective” or “race” psychologist and, as such, took to task those colleagues in the profession whom he believed were wasting their time on individual case studies. He was extremely confident even as a young man and not every one appreciated his approach to debate. As a thirty-something professor of psychology at Emerson College (Boston), he was described by one of his targets—Sigmund Freud—as having “chuzbah”, i.e., audacity or impudence. Roback proved him right by correcting Freud’s spelling of the word.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “Curriculum Vitae”, June 20, 1917, p. 1. (CJCA, Roback papers).

⁷⁷ Freud wrote to Roback, saying: “Because of the great assurance of all your statements, I had assumed that you were a dignified old gentleman . . . I had overlooked the necessary result of the combination of the American democratic mind and Jewish ‘Chuzba.’” Roback published this letter and his other correspondences with Freud (as much of it as the latter’s ever chary estate allowed) in annotated form. Roback’s note concerning “Chuzba” reads: “Freud apparently had not seen this very common Jewish expression in print, or he would have written *Chuzpa*, pronounced in English *Khutzpa*. The word can mean anything from audacity to impudence, and its best equivalent is the slang ‘nerve.’” From *Freudiana: Including Unpublished Letters From Freud, Havelock Ellis,*

Roback's eclectic pursuits were unified by an unshakable conviction that races existed and that their mental topographies were map-able, but only if demotic expressions—including slurs and curses though not exclusively—were preserved, and analyzed as expressing collective rather than personal attitudes. This is why he took Yiddish popular literature so seriously, and why he conferred upon its best writers the title of “collective psychologist”.⁷⁸

It would seem likely, from our perspective in the late twentieth century, that someone so conscious of the ways in which the speaker reveals him/herself, of the ways of reflexivity, would eventually become a relativist of sorts. But Roback was dead set against relativism, or even individualism, which he took to be solipsistic. As a scientific positivist, he was particularly frustrated and angered by the “cultural relativism” promulgated by anthropologists such as Franz Boas and his “disciples”, as Roback described Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Ashley Montagu, all of whom were involved in the deconstruction of the idea of race.⁷⁹ Like many of his colleagues in experimental and social psychology—

Pavlov, Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, et alii (Cambridge, Mass: Sci-Art Publishers, Harvard), pp. 34-35.

⁷⁸ Roback, *The Story of Yiddish Literature* (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute, American Branch, 1940), pp. 41-43.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Montagu's influence on the United Nation's official view on the issue in *A Statement on Race: An Annotated Elaboration and Exposition of the Four Statements on Race Issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). A brief discussion of the Boasian school and its impact on racialist thought, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 100-103.

some of whom, like his some-time collaborator, the neo-Lamarckian William McDougall, were well-known for their racialist, even racist, statements—he was convinced that human behavior was to a great extent determined by unconsciously, because genetic, remembered heritage. Both McDougall and Roback were believers in “racial consciousness”.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ One Canadian commentator on the inter-war immigration debate compared McDougall’s work to the “violent rantings and fantastic claims” of Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, a nineteenth century proponent of Nordic supremacy. McDougall wrote on the relationship between race and culture, as these factors pertained to Haiti’s situation, in the 1930s:

The French, in their early enthusiasm for the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, imposed on a population of Negro race much of the culture of West Europe, including Christianity, the French language and schooling; and then, after a brief period, withdrew their controlling hand and left the people so generously endowed with an alien culture to work out their own destiny. The results are known to all the world, namely, a rapid relapse into barbarianism, with frequent outbreaks of voodooism, cannibalism, and other savage practices, and a political life such as is only to be paralleled by the fanciful efforts of comic opera.

Not to downplay the insidiousness of McDougall’s “differential psychology” but to stress once again the difference between racialist premises and racist conclusions, one must realize that the Haitian dictatorship was often analyzed in racial terms even by those who were themselves victims of racism. In 1933, a Jewish professor in Nazi Germany, commenting on the new regime, wrote in his diary: “We would more likely to live in a state of law under French negro occupation than under this government.” The notion that miscegenation between “superior” and “inferior” races led to degeneration was not the monopoly of Aryan supremacists. Robert England quoted in Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), p. 66; McDougall, *Religion and the Life Sciences* (London: Methuen, 1934), p. 12; Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer, 1933-41* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), p. 7; Marion Steininger, “Objectivity and Value Judgements in the Psychologies of E.L. Thorndike and W.M. McDougall,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 15:3 (1979), pp. 263-281.

Though it is counter-intuitive, we must try to comprehend that thinkers like Roback were in the norm in the period under review, while Boas (of German Jewish background, a fact that has garnered some explanatory attention)⁸¹ was not. Roback became a member of the American Eugenics Society in 1925, an association entirely consistent with his point of view. Eugenicism, that most social form of evolutionary theory, was before Hitler's time widely accepted by Jews and non-Jews alike;⁸² and while race science, a related though independent phenomenon, may have been criticized by Jews in terms of some of its anti-Semitic conclusions, its premises—races are real and scientifically identifiable—were generally accepted. Given Roback's prominence in the pre-WWII era and given that he is now a forgotten scholar (except in Yiddishist circles, his "second audience"), one cannot help wonder what had happened to bring about his fall from academic grace. It may have had to do with the impact of the Holocaust. Certainly, his views do not fit our post-WWII stereotype of what it means to be a twentieth century Jewish intellectual: leftist, anti-hereditarian, and socially critical in a *Boasian* sense.⁸³ If it was Hitler who brought his own views into disrepute, it

⁸¹ For an analysis of the German Jewish links between liberal Judaism and the Boasian philosophy of science, see Ellen Messer, "Franz Boas and Kaufmann Kohler: Anthropology and Reform Judaism," *Jewish Social Studies* 1986 48(2): 127-140.

⁸² Cf. Frank Dikotter, "Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics." *American Historical Review*, vol 103 (2) 1998: 467-481.

⁸³ A recent work that takes this stereotype of the Jewish intellectual at face value and with dubious results is Kevin MacDonald's *Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1999). MacDonald's premise is that Jewish anti-hereditarians, including Boas, Montagu, and Stephen J. Gould,

is no wonder that Roback—the proudest of Jews—died (in 1965) an embittered man.

This set of biographical and ideological sketches underscores how important it is to set aside presentist assumptions when delving into the past. More specifically, in describing the differences of approach taken by the intellectuals representing phases one and two of the *Jewish Times/Canadian Jewish Times*, the reader is alerted to the dangers of ascribing too much influence to the heritage of historical actors. This is not to dismiss all such contributing factors *a priori*. Rather, since one's genetic and/or environmental background played such an important role in the debates over the meaning of evolution, historians who wish to appraise the rhetoric of the day must be careful not to simply reprise or reproduce it. If looked at from the East End point of view—which the historiography tends to do—one gets the impression that English was spoken by ensconced assimilationists and Yiddish by disenfranchised traditionalists. This is to adjudge what was still under contest, and to disregard the creativity involved in setting about to redeem one's own sense of time, place, and identity in modern Jewish terms.

are actually, unbeknownst to them, operating as agents of an inherited impulse, a Jewish genetic/cultural imperative which aims to optimize Jewish racial superiority through the denial of race. He argues that Jewish intellectuals wish to turn the United States into a multicultural society for that very reason, the strategy purportedly being to minimize competition for resources through the introduction of intellectually inferior groups. See also his "Jewish Involvement in Shaping American Immigration Policy, 1881-1965: A Historical Review," from *Population and Environment* 19, 1988, pp. 295-355, for the original formulation. He will disagree with my formulation, but I believe I am reading him correctly, if bluntly.

Chapter One

Carroll Ryan: The Soldier Phase One of the *Jewish Times*

O, Earth! now drenched in blood of war, the crimes of greed and creed, of men imploring mercy, tho all mercy they denied,
Behold the sower soweth, thou wilt fructify the seed,
Till from thy tortured furrows comes a harvest glorified. The missionaries preaching, then the traders with their rum—their bibles, cottons, gun machine,
O? Blessed is? I see, to civilize, to Christianize, to make their factories hum, Men toil like slaves, they die like dogs, and call that liberty
—Carroll Ryan, from his poem “En-Sof.”

Between 1897 and 1912, under Captain Carroll Ryan (1897-1909) and Hyman Nervich (1909-1912), the *Jewish Times* was closely allied to Montreal’s preeminent bourgeois synagogue, the West End’s Shaar Hashomayim. Whatever else it did or attempted to do, the newspaper during this, the first phase of its incarnation, reflected its congregation’s “British American” concerns and biases, and shared its English language preference and liberal ideology.

Representing Jews who had attained some measure of economic success and social mobility under liberalism, it was openly apologetic, and not only when it came to battling anti-Semitism. It sought to protect the hard-won gains of its middle-class constituency in the face of pressures threatening their status both as loyal law-abiding citizens *and* as symbols of modern Jewishness.

The growth of East End Jewish settlement, composed of recent immigrants from the Russian Pale and elsewhere in Eastern Europe was watched warily, since

this exotic population was understood as providing grist for the anti-Semitic mill. In part, this attitude was simply the consequence of a hyperawareness of the Gentile gaze. Cross-town Jews brought what little they could with them from the Old World, including (in the eyes of West Enders) irrational and rigid religious attitudes, radical politics born of a harsh, unenlightened climate, an inclination to form their own societies or *landsmanshaftn* and, of course, they were seen as burdened with the Old World linguistic encumbrance referred to (by the acculturated) as the “jargon”. Many East Enders—male and female, the young and the not-so-young anymore—accepted charity doled out by the Baron de Hirsch Institute, chief among the organizations working to Canadianize Jewish newcomers, and took advantage of the English and French language courses it offered. Not everyone, however, appreciated the manner in which the helping hand was extended. The paternalistic attitude, verging at times on contempt, of the Baron de Hirsch (who counted among their officers Sam Jacobs and Lyon Cohen) that the established generation exhibited was a bitter pill to swallow.¹ Their

¹ There are parallels to the tensions existing between the German and Russian Jews of New York. Selma Berrol deals rather harshly with the assimilative efforts of the former upon the latter in “In Their Image: German Jews and the Americanization of the Ost Juden in New York City,” *New York History* 63 (1982), pp. 417-433. Naomi Cohen offers a more balanced account in *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publishing Society, 1984). In phase two, the *Jewish Times* (as the *Canadian Jewish Times*) published a lengthy editorial critiquing along Berrol’s lines the Jewish settlement houses of New York—and by implication, the Baron de Hirsch Institute of Montreal—and their attempts to make over the Eastern European immigrants. See chapter three.

peremptory dismissals of the *mame loshe* and the culture it encompassed were soon met with defiance in several forms, including a rival Yiddish-language press.

Acting on defensive impulses both understandable and questionable, the *Jewish Times* criticized Rival East End newspapers printed in the “jargon” as contumelious, un-Canadian, as tending towards illiberal “segregation”. “The right principle to be adopted by our people in this country is to join with their fellow citizens in all movements, not distinctly Jewish, on the good old principle - ‘In things necessary let there be unity, in things not necessary, liberality; in all things, charity’,” wrote Captain Ryan. Upon hearing of a group proposing to form a local Yiddish theatre, he remarked: “The sooner our people get rid of the idea of separating themselves in these ways, the better it will be for them. Their desire should be to become British subjects and Canadians in all things, while remaining true to their religion and the support of their benevolent institutions.” He felt the same way when it was bruited that an East End community patrol, to be named the Hebrew Protective Association, was to be formed.²

This is not to say that Ryan was unaware of or unconcerned about “violent personal assaults on *individual* Jews by hoodlums on the streets of Montreal,” as he put it. These were apparently occurring so frequently that “special efforts by police to put down this sort of blackguardism” were being made. He dismissed the theory that these assaults were directed exclusively at Jews, or that they stemmed

² “Segregation Not Desirable,” *JT*, September 7, 1906, p. 8.

from economic competition: “Some people incline to the opinion that labor disputes may have something to do with the outrages but we have reason to believe that racial animosity was the real cause. The same barbarous spirit has been manifested towards Italians, Syrians and Chinamen and betoken a very low condition morally and socially of the scoundrels who are guilty of this dastardly crime.”³

Despite his pleas against prejudice and for charity in all things, Ryan and other spokespersons for the West End explained away Yiddish culture as a temporary hangover, an atavistic consequence of persecution. Unruly Old World religious practices would give way to civilized ways, Gentile readers were assured. As for Jewish socialist and anarchist ideologies, they were imports—foreign to Canada, and foreign to true Jewishness—and would disappear given time, opportunity, and evolution. The true Jew, the fully evolved Jew, was a liberal Jew. The only thing preventing all Jews from becoming liberals, ran the argument, was retarded development brought about by inhibiting factors (e.g., living in backward and despotic lands such as Russia).⁴

The taboo against tribalism or segregationism also contributed to the newspaper’s initial reluctance to embrace Zionism. The rise of Herzlian Zionism,

³ Editorial, *JT*, August 10, 1906, p. 305.

⁴ In another editorial column borrowed from the *Daily Witness* (possibly written by Ryan himself, since he was a frequent contributor to that paper), it was argued that if socialism was “largely promoted by Jews” this was the result of “their racial separation” in other countries. Without such constraints, Jews were

while presenting a means by which to unify a widely dispersed and fractious people, was also risky from a public relations point of view. It had the potential of lending credence to the view that Jews were “sojourners” in their adopted Diasporic homeland and not bona fide Canadians after all.⁵ But within a few years, Zionism was subsumed within the liberal Judaic stance and the newspaper became an official organ of the movement in Canada.⁶ Ryan ended up writing a poem, “Song of Zion,” that was recited at local society rallies.⁷ Interpreted as *tzedeka* (religious charitable duty), Zionism was rationalized as a means by which to raise funds and provide refuge for underdeveloped Jews from unenlightened countries. Palestine, though not the only homeland proposed, was posited as an ideal “environment” where underdeveloped Jews could evolve naturally, without artificial obstruction or assimilationist temptations. In a letter to English Zionists, Clarence De Sola, president of the Canadian Zionist movement, remarked on the harmful interaction between North American conditions and overly-adaptable Jewish immigrants: “It is madness. The immigrants speedily come under the sinful

“naturally” individualistic. *JT*, October 4, 1906, pp. 359-360.

⁵ Domestic Zionists were at first regarded as aberrations, irrational and ungrateful: “Happily [in Canada] the recurrence of the annual festival [Chanuca] does not awaken that strong desire for a land of our own which characterizes our people, baited and persecuted in some countries in form scarcely different from the mode practised in medieval ages.” In Canada, “the first of all countries . . . Jewish patriotism is converted into charity to the poor.” *JT*, December 24, 1897, p. 26.

⁶ “Zionism is Not Segregation” *JT*, October 4, 1907, p. 365.

⁷ “Song of Zion,” relating the dedication of the poem to the Zionist Society

influence of the forces of assimilation out here, and in less than one generation learn to practically throw overboard everything that is Jewish. The environment is absolutely unfavourable to the culture of Jewish life. True, a remnant remains faithful, but should we be satisfied with that? No, as many of them should be sent to Palestine as possible, even though everything is not favorable there. . . but, at last, they will have a Jewish environment and a Jewish atmosphere there in which to live.” Zionism could also be rationalized, as de Sola’s writings indicate, as a project congruent with Imperial colonial policy: integrationist rationalizations were deemed necessary, even when it came to Jewish nationalism.⁸ By 1897, the Dreyfus Affair had taken a dramatic turn. News of evidence tampering and forgery placed Alfred Dreyfus’ court martial conviction in doubt. Theodor Herzl had already decided what the moral of the story was by organizing the first World Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. The stories were integrally linked. Since France was the birthplace of modern Jewish liberty, Herzl reasoned that liberalism was dead, and with it Diaspora. If Jews could not make it in France, they could not make it anywhere in the Diaspora.

That was not the way Ryan of the *Jewish Times* saw it, not initially.

Instead, his analysis of the Dreyfus Affair relied on images of a sacred past, casting

of Montreal, *JT*, December 8, 1899, p. 10.

⁸“Zionist News,” *JT*, April 5, 1907, pp. 146, 148. On de Sola’s Imperialism, see Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992), p. 200. For a discussion of German Zionist attempts to rationalize Jewish nationalism with German Imperialism, see Joachim Doron, “Social Concepts Prevalent in German Zionism,

the French military in the role of Haman reincarnated, and Emile Zola, author of “J’Accuse!” (the tract which had publicized the suspicious handling of evidence against Dreyfus), in the part of a modern Mordecai.⁹ That Zola was not Jewish apparently did not preclude this identification. After all, Ryan was himself a non-Jewish champion of the Jews. By interpreting the Affair in Biblical language, it becoming another in a long and ancient series of wrongs committed against the Chosen People, Ryan deprived it of the post-emancipatory significance Herzl attached to it: “The Dreyfus trial should not cause our people to lose courage or give up the fight against our modern inquisitors. The darkest hour is before the dawn, and who can say that the end will not be a *repetition* of the story of Haman and Mordecai, and that France, the modern Persia which has hitherto tolerated our people in its midst, may come to see that the Jew can combine within himself the qualities of attachment to his ideals with devotion to the land that sustains him.”¹⁰

The Dreyfus Affair was the catalyst behind the newspaper’s establishment. “At the present juncture of affairs,” wrote Ryan early on, “it is doubly important that the Jews of Canada should have a reliable vehicle for the expression of their sentiments. The Anti-Semitic movement in Europe is not without an echo in this country. It is to be found daily in those newspapers which take their old-world

1883-1914,” *Studies in Zionism* 5 (Spring 1982), pp. 25-43.

⁹ Mordecai figures in the Biblical story of Esther, a Jewish beauty who becomes the Persian king’s beloved; together they save the exiled Jews from mass execution at the hands of Haman (who is hanged and his followers slaughtered by their would-be victims).

¹⁰ *JT*, December 10, 1897, p. 1.

inspiration largely from those organs of opinion which are inimical to the Jewish people.”¹¹ He was referring to Eduoard Drumont’s *La Libre Parole*, which seemed to have generated a copy-cat propaganda industry in the province of Quebec and elsewhere.¹² Those Canadian journalists taking Dreyfus’ alleged *lese majesty* as indicative of Jewish character were not all French-Canadian. Indeed, at this early date (1897-1898), the only periodical Ryan accused of anti-Jewish slander was an Irish-Canadian publication, the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*. (One can see that his Catholic heritage could function both as kindling and as firewall.)

The *Jewish Times* put a drawing of Dreyfus’ face on the front page of its first issue, and reprinted as well an interview with Emile Zola and a report on Dreyfus’ condition on Devil’s Island. It also reproduced, in its entirety, Israel Zangwill’s impressionistic essay on the Zionist Congress in Basle. Not every Jewish periodical was as ready to acknowledge the Dreyfus controversy as a *Jewish* news story. French Jews hesitated because “they wanted to believe that the affair had no specifically Jewish aspect.”¹³ Some Jewish Socialist papers refused to discuss either Dreyfus or Herzlian Zionism, on the grounds that they were both matters of purely bourgeois concern.

¹¹ *JT*, December 10, 1897, p. 8.

¹² Phyllis Senese shows that in Canada both the anti-and pro-Dreyfusard camps expressed anti-Semitic views in “Antisemitic Dreyfusards: The Confused Western Canadian Press,” *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1992).

¹³ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 35.

What is less well-known is that, next to the Dreyfus Affair, the issue of Christian proselytizing was the single most important original reason for the *Jewish Times*' being. Historians have largely ignored the issue as a relatively minor phenomenon, given that the numbers of converts was quite small, here in Canada and elsewhere.¹⁴ But Jewish contemporaries took the missionary question very seriously.¹⁵ That in itself should pique the interest of scholars, but there is a far more salient reason to explore the subject. For just as Zionism (and the Dreyfus Affair, too)¹⁶ led to the quandary of defending particularism in a universalist context—and the charge of dual loyalties—so too did the mission issue challenge the uniqueness of the Jewish experience in a liberal context.

¹⁴ American historian Jonathan Sarna correctly recognizes that the Christian missions, despite poor results, had a galvanizing effect upon Jewish community reform efforts, particularly when it came to educational endeavors. See Sarna, "The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions," in Todd Endelman, ed., *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1987).pp

¹⁵ To get some idea as to the range of reaction, confer "Amalek in Modern Guise," *JT*, March 18, 1898, pp.14-116 (a sermon on the "Christian Missionary Movement to the Jews" by Rev. Medola de Sola of Shearith Israel). A few pages later, it is related how the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society paid a visit to the "Mission House" on St. Urbain Street, "bearding the lion in his den" and denouncing converts as *schnorrers* or beggars. The same issue also contains an editorial by Carroll Ryan, on "Christian Missions to the Jews," pp. 120-121. A month thereafter, Ryan, speaking too soon in a state of the situation assessment, remarked that the missionaries were too discouraged to continue. He also noted that the "Zionist Movement has taken practical shape in our city," which is "good for some sections of our people." "How We Stand," *JT*, April 29, 1898, p. 169.

¹⁶ Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: The French-Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). Marrus' study is one of the few recognizing that racialism could be used as a positive form of Jewish group-expression. Cf. pp. 10-27.

Christian Evangelicals asked: If Judaism was just one of many competing religions in the spiritual marketplace of liberal society, why should Jews, particularly the unbelievers among them, be exempt from conversionist efforts? Jewish defenders replied that evangelicalism was not only because it insultingly presumed to civilize those who had brought civilization into being, but a continuation of the historical subjugation of Jews by Christian hegemony, cultural and/or state-sponsored. When local Presbyterian missionaries essayed into Catholic territory, *La Presse* printed a letter to the editor (Jules Heilbronner, like Dreyfus, an Alsatian Jew) that stated, "Evangelization means civilization. What should we think of a movement among French Canadians to civilize Ontario?" Ryan reprinted the letter in the *Jewish Times* with the comment: "Not to Christianity but to the revolutions brought about by unbelievers in it . . . do we owe the tolerations we enjoy."¹⁷ Indeed, though supportive of the British Empire, Ryan believed what he called "Christian Imperialism" to be a modern *bete noir* (and not only for Jews, but, this being the time of the Boxer Rebellion, for Asian peoples as well).

Immigrant Jews, particularly those coming from countries like Russia, where Christianization was state-sanctioned,¹⁸ were acutely sensitive to evangelical efforts. Their visceral and sometimes violent reactions to proselytization were understandable. Especially difficult to bear was the employment of Jewish

¹⁷ "Evangelization," *JT*, February 21, 1908, p. 8.

¹⁸ Cf. Salo Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: MacMillan, 1975).

renegades—“*mushumadim*”—to do the dirty work. These persons, it was argued, were driven by financial exigency and assimilative compulsions rather than by a real identification with the message of the Christian gospel.¹⁹

Occupying a spiritual no-man’s land, they were considered not only bad Jews but false Christians—the “adaptable Jew” taken to corruptible extremes.²⁰ Some critics devoted their energies entirely to the unmasking of these “imposters” and “swindlers”. In an item dated August 5, 1898, the *Jewish Times* announced that Adolphe Benjamin of Buffalo was in town. An apostate-tracker for twenty-five years, Benjamin was about to write book recounting his experiences, and it appears that he was giving readings from his work-in-progress. (I have yet to locate it; it would make for interesting reading.) When Maurice Rubin of Pittsburgh and Mark Lev of Cleveland arrived in Montreal to help out at the mission three years later (by then having switched from a Presbyterian to Anglican auspices), Benjamin, “who has a gift for tracing meshumadim and may be able to locate them correctly,” was consulted.²¹ When this “relentless foe of missionaries

¹⁹ Todd Endelman is one historian who has shown sympathy for the circumstances and motives of Jewish converts to Christianity. He does not discount the fact that many Jewish-to-Christian conversions were genuine. Personal Correspondence, July 20, 1997.

²⁰ Ryan announced the arrival of Jewish itinerant preachers I.L. Herdtfeldt and Benjamin Frankenstein in an editorial entitled “Christian Mission to Jews,” referring to them as trickster figures out to destabilize the structures of East End family life. *JT*, February 18, 1898, p. 90.

²¹ *JT*, March 1, 1901, p. 105.

to the Jews” passed away, his death was duly noted by Captain Ryan.²²

Granted, considering that sinister confidence artist Trebitsch Lincoln began his checkered career as a missionary to the Jews in Montreal at this time, there were some grounds for suspicion. Lincoln operated in and around Montreal from 1900 to 1903. A Hungarian Jew who had come to Canada via Great Britain, he started off in the employ of a quixotic, penurious Presbyterian minister, Rev. John McCarter. He “succeeded Mr. McCarter and ran the mission for just one month,” explained the *Jewish Times*. “Finding there was nothing in it, he threw it up as a Presbyterian venture and put it under the Episcopal church and the London Society for the conversion of the Jews. After a while he dropped out altogether and was succeeded by Mr. Neugewirtz [another Jewish convert]], who holds the fort.”²³ Thereafter Lincoln transformed himself, in bewildering order, into a British Member of Parliament under the patronage of the Rowntree family, a railway speculator, a quadruple spy in the Great War, and a revolutionary involved in the failed Kapp *putsch* of March, 1920. (Adolph Hitler caught a glimpse of him in Berlin before the whole affair fell apart, noting in his journal that he would never appoint a Jew as his minister of propaganda.) When last heard of he was living as a

²² “Adolph Benjamin Dead,” *JT*, December 5, 1902, pp.13-14. Despite monetary aid from Jewish financier Jacob Schiff of New York, Benjamin’s work—deemed overly aggressive—was not well supported in New York’s Jewish community. See Jeffrey Gurock, “Jewish Communal Divisiveness in Response to Christian Influences on the Lower East Side, 1900-1910,” in Endelman, *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, p. 260.

²³ *JT*, June 16, 1905, p.235.

Buddhist monk in China—once, on a stopover in Vancouver, he styled himself the voice of world Buddhism.²⁴

The stoning of street-corner preachers and the riots that sometimes accompanied mission campaigns (which happened, for some reason, more often in Toronto and Winnipeg than Montreal),²⁵ though in breach of the liberal tenets of free speech and free assembly, were justified by citing mitigating circumstances. Both Ryan and Nervich in phase one, and Bennett in phase two, pointed to the fact that impoverished Jews, including children, were frequently bribed to participate in mission activities—missionary appeals to liberal principles, they said, had been cancelled out by such tactics. “We refer to the cruelty, baseness and immorality of the missionaries in their attempts to ruin and destroy the peace and happiness of Jewish homes by systematically poisoning the minds of our children and teaching them to dishonor their parents,” wrote Ryan. (As we shall see, in Ryan’s eyes, the dishonoring of one’s parents amounted to a crime against nature and evolutionary law.) Exploring self-defense tactics, he recounted how the “Jews of Baltimore, emulating the example of the Christian missionaries, opened schools, where they

²⁴ Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

²⁵ See Nervich’s editorial, *Canadian Jewish Times*, June 23, 1911, p. 9, for commentary on the Toronto incident. In an earlier story, “Evangelizing with the Aid of Policemen,” Winnipeg’s Hugo Spitzer, Missionary to the Jews, was subjected to the heckling by anti-meshummad league, with four hundred fun-seekers in tow: “Spitzer was to get Jews in by any means and by all means. It now takes ten policemen to keep Jews out. The young men find more amusement in the

gave instructions and taught household arts to all the Christian children they could gather, adding the prizes of cakes, candies, dolls, etc. as helps to the conversion of the little ones from the errors of Christianity to the truths of Judaism.” “This”, he said, “is what has to be done in Montreal.”²⁶

A bribe for a bribe was not the usual method of defense (and the story may, after all, be apocryphal—I have never seen it mentioned elsewhere). Invoking the convergence of Judaic practice and political or scientific reason, and the incompatibility of Christianity with same, was a more frequent tactic. Thus a Winnipeg rabbi, reacting to a local fund raising campaign organized by a Jewish evangelical from Toronto, was quoted in the *Jewish Times* as follows:

George R. Sims, the world famous journalist and acute observer, says the poor Jewish women can teach the high society ladies the duties of motherhood and housewifery. Dr. W. Saleeby [a colleague of Francis Galton, founder of the eugenics movement], in his recent book, says Jews illustrate the theory of the survival of the fittest and says it is because it is because the Jewish women are the most healthy, bear strong and healthy intelligent children, and look after them better than the women of any other nation or religious denomination. Hence the tears of Rev. Rohold and the solemn shaking of the head of the ladies of Knox Church, are pure waste, as is their time and money.²⁷

By citing the congruency of Galtonism and Judaism, Rabbi Levine felt he had rendered the philanthropic pretexts of conversionists redundant. Even the least

mission than in the theatre.” *CJT*, April 21, 1911, p. 2.

²⁶ Ryan, *JT*, May 5, 1905, p.182. Shortly thereafter, the Jewish Endeavor Sewing Society was formed; there is no sign that it attempted to cater to compete head-to-head with Christian organizations.

²⁷ “Provincial News: Winnipeg: Rabbi Levine Protests Missions to the Jews,” *CJT*, April 22, 1910, p.14.

educated of “greenhorn” Jewish mothers, he implied, were possessed of a eugenic knowledge that came naturally, springing as it did from Jewish religious tradition, a knowledge which ensured the survival and proper development of their progeny.

This was 1910, near the end of phase one of the *Jewish Times*. However fitfully and indirectly, cracks in the “wall of contempt” (as David Rome expressed it) surrounding Yiddish culture were beginning to show, and scientific apologia like these had something to do with it. I elaborate on the ironic effects of evolutionary racialism and social hygienicism in chapter four. For now, I should reiterate that the *strictly* biological strategy of self-defense taken above, though not unheard of, was somewhat unusual in the Ryan/Nervich era. Judaism was more usually described by Canadian progressive rabbis as a set of ethical—rather than dietary or hygienic—precepts that meshed well with the political system of liberalism. Ryan, for instance, in keeping with the ideals of emancipation, held the centrality of religious identity intact; and, contrary to accusations of quietism, he took Christianity to task for not living up to the liberal principles at the heart of emancipation. Instead of attacking the Enlightenment project, he attacked those failed to see it through.

Christian groups, it was argued, were likely to lose out in future competition over spiritual resources. Evolutionary arguments, then, were employed both to bolster the central role of Judaism (as a religion) in the emancipatory project and to identify the shortfalls of emancipation to the interventionist tendencies of Christianity. Left alone, left to develop “naturally”,

the Jewish religion would flourish and eventually become “the religion of the future” (together with creedless, “adaptive” Unitarianism, the only Christian denomination progressive and/or liberal Judaic authorities seemed to have an affinity for).²⁸

In phase two, Christianity virtually disappeared as a threat, ideologically, if not socially. In the summer of 1913, a mini-riot in Toronto prompted the *Montreal Gazette* to print an editorial on the subject of “Free Speech.” Police had had to be summoned to prevent the stoning of one of the local Jewish missionaries. It was advised that Jews simply ignore the preachments of what was little more than a street haranguer, annoying yet harmless and avoidable. Archie B. Bennett editorialized that the issue cut deeper than that. Rev. Singer was a “converted Jew” and not an authentic Christian preacher. Furthermore, it was a fallacy that Jews were “not sufficiently tolerant to be able to stand the preaching of another religion to us.” “The general press,” he chided, “is hardly aware of the deep humiliation it is to the Jewish people, to be preached to by a paid ‘meshummed.’” Whereas Ryan—not surprisingly, since he religiously sympathetic to Judaism but could hardly speak in the first person plural when speaking of the Jewish race—at

²⁸ The only historian to specialize in the relationship between liberal Judaism and liberal Christianity is American Jewish scholar Benny Kraut. See his “The Ambivalent Relations of American Reform Judaism with Unitarianism in the Last Third of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1986), pp. 58-68. For an overview of the American Christian-Jewish relations, cf. Egal Feldman, *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1990). No Canadian historian has as

least attempted to address the issue in non-racial ideological terms, Bennett spelled it out as follows: "When a man has turned traitor to his own race and returns to them to preach of his 'well-paid religion,' the insult this offered is of a character which makes it difficult for those to whom he is endeavouring to preach, to restrain from giving vent to their indignation."²⁹

That Ryan was not Jewish and Bennett was is only partly explanatory. With their secularist mind-set and scorning of the politico-ethical defences adopted by progressive Judaic authorities, the young journalists of the second phase deemed Judaism to be as much a part of the problem of assimilation as the hegemonic culture of Christianity. If they tended to explain things racially rather than religiously, it was because accommodative Judaism, in their opinion, had buried "ur-Judentum" (to use Martin Buber's phrase) for the sake of material comfort and public relations. The inter-generational ideological conflict and the flurry of epithets accompanying it must be examined fairly. Youthful Yiddishists such as Archie Bennett and A.A. Roback may have identified their elders as timid and quietist, but the historical record does not bear that out.

When, for instance, Christian lobbyists (Catholic and Protestant), in fighting what they considered a rearguard action against secularization, also threatened the observance of the Jewish Sabbath by pushing to make the Christian Sabbath mandatory, the voice of Montreal's Jewish middle-class was not

yet attempted these types of studies.

²⁹ "Toronto Missionary Plague," *CJT*, July 25, 1913, pp. 1-2.

quiescent. It sought to protect not only the rights of factory owners but of factory workers. It was not just that the civil religious rights of Canadian Jews were compromised: the legislation finally passed in Parliament in March of 1907 had the potential to interfere with their ability to make a living (by forcing them to take two days off the workweek).³⁰ The Lord's Day Alliance's success in enforcing Sunday as the nationally normative Sabbath was met in the Jewish community with arguments combining liberal and evolutionary conceits. Religious establishment, Ryan's *Times* contended, was not only undemocratic but a sign of "degeneration"—only a religion unsuited to compete for survival would find it necessary to prop up its beliefs through state support. Ryan, after pointing out that Canada was not constitutionally Christian, went on the offensive, turning the tables on the Alliance's leader, Rev. Edgar Hill. "Dr. Hill's remark that the Jews are an anachronism in the twentieth century is stupid and impertinent, serving only to show the animosity of his sectarian bigotry. He is the anachronism."³¹ Judaism, meanwhile, was touted as the true Protestantism, as a genuine because privately underwritten expression of religious dissent.

³⁰ One story out of Winnipeg reported that at least fifteen hundred people had been charged since the law began to be enforced. Surely this was polemical exaggeration. Still, the point being made was that "the best way to secure the repeal of a bad law is to rigidly enforce it." "Even reporters for newspapers were caught writing up sermons delivered in the churches were arrested," according to the report, "as also were the participants in a Jewish Wedding". The piece concluded: "It is impossible to compel religious observances by Act of Parliament." "Sunday Law in Winnipeg," *JT*, February 1, 1908.

³¹ "Sunday Bill: President of Lord's Day Alliance Opposes Jewish Contentions," *JT*, March 23 1906, p. 138.

Given that confrontational evolutionism (not the co-operative Kropotkinism A.B. McKillop maintains was the national model)³² was put forward in defense of the liberal Judaic position, facile judgements that relegate to middle-class defenders of the Jewish faith the role of assimilator/assimilationist require an equitable measure of nuance. The liberal Judaic stress on the ethical dimensions of Jewish law and the evolution of ideas was capable of delivering a powerful critique of Christian culture. To call another group an “anachronism” in this era was to question their place in the natural order of things. It was a charge Christians routinely leveled at Jews—but, using evolutionary concepts, Jews and their defenders were answering in kind. As Ryan’s views on the love triangle murders of November, 1897, indicate, the result was more than just an exercise in public relations.

In the early winter of 1897, the province of Quebec was the setting of two grisly crimes of passion. The *Jewish Times* took care not to stoop to the level of the local dailies. Still, Ryan could hardly refrain from commenting on the “recent tragedies,” since they “indicate[d] a mental condition among people supposed to be amenable to better influences.” What Ryan was suggesting was that it should not be surprising that people of Christian background—such as the felons involved in the three cases cited—might behave murderously. Before allowing Ryan his say,

³² See his article “Social Darwinism” in the *Canadian Encyclopedia*

the sensational details he so scrupulously spared his readers require some spelling out.

On the sixth of November, the *Montreal Gazette* ran the following series of headlines:

**A Terrible Tragedy
Four Children Foully Murdered Near Rawdon, Quebec
Unknown Assassin's Work
Father and Mother Were Away From Home
People Searching for the Murderer**

Two days later a surviving sibling, Tom Nulty, confessed to taking an axe to his brothers and sisters in a fit of “bad temper and jealousy.”³³ He was held in remand at the jail in Joliette pending trial. Nulty made a second confession just prior to his execution, a statement of motive as bizarre as his crime. Having secretly been betrothed, he found that he could not afford a domicile of his own: he hit upon the killings as a means by which to provide for his intended; if his parents had been at home, they might have met the same fate. Nulty’s mental state was the subject of much sociological theorizing by both secular and religious authorities. Abbe Baillarge, the parish priest, explained the tragedy as stemming from the ill effects of poverty, ignorance, and genetic deficiency.³⁴ Ryan would take a similar tack,

(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996).

³³ *Montreal Gazette* (hereafter *MG*), May 21, 1898: “Nulty Hanged—Left a Confession—Explains Why He Did It.”

³⁴ *MG*, November 22, 1897.

though he would go further by indicting Catholicism as well.

Meanwhile on Long Island, the very day of Nulty's arrest, the trial of Martin Thorn had commenced. He and Mrs. August Neck were accused of murdering, decapitating, and dismembering an acquaintance of Thorn's, William Goldensuppe. The brutal nature of the crime and the ensuing trial made world news; grim humourists turned the victim's name into a verb denoting any abridgment rudely achieved.³⁵ Thorn's behavior was also seen as illustrating some larger lesson—and he was willing to provide it. “The fatal mistake of my life was reading a book written by the atheist, [freethinker Colonel Robert] Ingersoll,” he confessed. “I am sorry that that atheist ever lived. I am sorry that I ever read a line of his. The reading of that book was the first step away from God and heaven. My course has been downward ever since, till I have come to a black crime and am now to face a most shameful disgrace.”³⁶

Just as the Nulty and Thorn dramas began to falter, Isidore Poirier was

³⁵ Thus we have the self-professed iconoclast, W. C. Brann: “When a man fails at everything else he is apt to be seized with a yearning ambition to become an editor. These amateur editors are the curse of the country. They *guldensuppe* John Stuart Mill. . . .” From William Cowper Brann, *The Complete Works of Brann, the Iconoclast* (1919), pp. 34-35. Brann was a newspaperman in Waco, Texas, whose organ *The Iconoclast* gained nationwide circulation. He took many an unpopular stand, including the defense of Texan Catholics, and paid for it. Having survived a horsewhipping and a lynching, he was finally shot in the back and died (but not before he turned around and shot his attacker dead). See Charles Carver, *Brann and the Iconoclast* (Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 1957).

³⁶ Quoted in Reverend Joe Hollen's online sermon, “The Evil Power of Atheism.” Hollen is a Methodist pastor in Indianapolis whose webpage can be reached at <http://www.debmark.com/pastor.htm>.

found dead in St. Canute, his throat slit. Neighbors said he was the victim of an adulterous wife. The Poirier case became Quebec's greatest *cause celebre*, surpassing in long-lived notoriety Guldensuppe's unfortunate contribution to the English language. There were irregularities in the prosecution of Mrs. Poirier, *nee* Cordelia Viau, sufficient to cast hind-sighted suspicion on the verdict and accounting for the historical and pop cultural attention it has garnered. Viau became the subject of a folk song ("Complainte de Cordelia Viau"),³⁷ a novel (*La Lampe dans la Fenetre*), a film based on the novel ("Cordelia", 1979), a television drama ("L'Affaire Cordelia Viau"), and an installment in the popular television series, *Les Grands Procès III*. A feminist analysis of the trial, Pauline Cadieux's *Justice Pour une Femme*,³⁸ was published just a decade ago.

Mrs. Poirier and Sam Parslow (her alleged lover and the actual perpetrator) were found guilty and hanged at St. Scholastique on the evening of March 10, 1899. The atmosphere surrounding the hanging of Tom Nulty the year prior (1898) had been described as a "Roman Holiday." Between three and four hundred attended what turned out to be the social event of the season. When Thomas Radcliffe, the hangman, arrived, he was cheered.³⁹ Radcliffe's audience for the

³⁷ See Donald Deschenes, *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 18 (July 1984), pp. 3, 20-22.

³⁸ (Montreal: Libre Expression, 1990).

³⁹ *MG*, May 21, 1898, p.1. For an examination of Thomas Radcliffe's place in the history of Canadian capital punishment, see Howard Engel's *Lord High Executioner: An Unashamed Look at Hangmen, Headsmen, and Their Kind* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996), pp. 76-83.

hanging of Parslow and Viau in 1899 was five times the size. “The double execution has awakened an interest, or problem, to speak more correctly, a morbid curiosity that is rarely witnessed,” wrote the *Gazette*, adding that it seemed that half the city of Montreal had ridden the rails to St. Scholastique the night before to hold a “high revel”. Two hundred pass-holders milled within the prison’s walls. Outside, a crowd of two thousand, a “howling cosmopolitan mob,” strained for a sight line.⁴⁰ A shroud concealed the gibbet’s pit, a precaution meant to spare the unseemly exposure of a feminine corpse. But the thin security cordon gave way, the gallows were stormed, and the black cloth torn down. The photographs taken in the midst of the melee are now stored in the Quebec National Archives.

The editor of the *Jewish Times* ran no pictures of Cordelia at the end of a rope. He barely mentioned the hanging. He commented on the crimes when the arrests were made and thereafter dropped the issue. Yet he believed the stories to be important: these crimes of passion and the “Christian” public’s reaction to them he interpreted as pointing up the contradictions inhering in a system where liberalism and Christianity were allowed to influence each other.

Ryan introduced the topic delicately: “To the Jewish mind accustomed to contemplation of life and conduct from an ethical point of view, taken from knowledge of the Old Law, these terrible crimes appear in a peculiar light.” Focusing on the Viau case, Ryan never doubted that she was guilty of adultery, if not murder outright. That the proceedings resembled a witch trial did not concern

⁴⁰ *MG*, March 11, 1899, p. 2.

him. What did were the arguments of prison reformers who used Christian appeals for clemency to argue that that women were not to be treated as men and punished accordingly.⁴¹ By way of illustrating his point, he alluded to a well-known story from the New Testament (John 7:7): “A lesson of profound significance to individuals is given in the story of the woman taken in adultery. When none were found without sin to case the first stone, Christ said to her, ‘Go and sin no more’:

But all experience shows that adultery leads to murder, the one crime follows the other so often, as in the cases of the unhappy men Poirier and Goldensuppe, that what was a terrible admonition to those who dare not cast the first stone, becomes an awful arraignment of the law which permits the crime of adultery to go unpunished. Better the adulteress should perish than that murder, with all its awful consequences, should follow her crime, and complete the terrible cycle of calamity. This is the principle of Jewish law. It sees far, and measures conduct in the fullness of its consequences.⁴²

Casting a stone in the name of Judaism, Ryan contended that Christian notions of mercy were holding the justice system and liberalism hostage. Prison reforms, including the abolition of capital punishment, were instances of the State abdicating its responsibility, worsening rather than ameliorating the conditions of

⁴¹ A half a century earlier, Grace Marks, Canada’s most notorious murderess, had benefited from the efforts of prison reformers. Her sentence was commuted, and, eventually set free, she went on to live in the United States and marry. For a fictional account of Mark’s story, see Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996); for a contemporary account, see Susannah Moodie’s *Roughing It in the Bush* (Toronto: Hunter, 1871). The downward trend of executions carried out on women can be tracked in *Homicide in Canada 1976-1985: An Historical Perspective* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1987).

⁴² “Murder and the Law, *JT*, December 10, 1897, p. 10.

society. In Ryan's words, "There are such things as mistaken leniency and mercy that is cruel, which if allowed too far would result in social chaos."⁴³

Pointing to the disintegrative effect of Christian interference in the workings of justice entailed not only a critique of the predominant culture but a defence of the minority culture he had been called upon to champion. "Many persons . . . who have not given this subject sufficient consideration are inclined to regard the Jewish law as too severe in its treatment of small offences," he went on. "But they should examine the underlying principle of that law, and discover why it was so ordered, before pronouncing an opinion." In Christian rhetoric, Jewish "legalism" was indicative of religious inferiority, a sign of backwardness. Because they clung to the old Covenant and rejected the new, Jews were often depicted as an antedated people. Ryan countered by holding that the love triangle murders stemmed from society's privileging of an anachronistic ideology like Christianity. Setting out to redeem Judaic conceptions of ethics and justice, he stressed their transhistorical value. "'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' is a saying which should not be interpreted too literally," he cautioned; what Jewish Law, even in this ancient and much maligned formulation, intended to convey was simply that "the punishment should fit the crime."

The problem with Christian culture, as he saw it, was that it confused private ethics with public justice, the role of the individual and that of the State:

Jews as well as Christians believe in the truth and of that pre-eminently

⁴³ "Murder and the Law", *op. cit.*

Jewish teaching expounded by Christ, wherein he inculcates meekness, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, but they hold that what is a virtue in the individual would be neither just nor wise in the State. Society stands in a different relation to those who commit offences to that occupied by the individual. Men in their social capacity can do great injustice and encourage crime by mistaken leniency. It is the duty of the individual to forgive, but it is the duty of society to protect. Herein lies the whole spirit of application of law in dealing with crime.

Judaism, on the other hand, was animated by “a more divine principle . . . than that which is found in the prevailing law of modern nations. It provides against consequences in time by suppressing the criminal instincts in their first showing, guards the individual against himself, and tends to ennoble and purify the whole social system.” Making pointed reference to the lack of Jewish representation in the House of Parliament, he expressed the hope “that the day will come when a Jew will find a seat in the Canadian Parliament and help in framing our laws, so as to bring out the fact that Jewish law in its essence is the same as Christian law, and that it differs only in first appearances of severity, while truly it is more merciful and in perfect conformity with the highest ethical standards.”

Conveniently enough for our purposes, Ryan’s employer, Samuel W. Jacobs, K.C., was to become the first Jewish Member from Eastern Canada. And, in fact, he did address questions concerning capital punishment and adultery. When comparing their views, we find them consistent, though not identical. (Jacobs, who out-lived his editor by thirty years, had begun to mellow somewhat by the 1920s, when he was called upon to address these issues.)

According to biographer Bernie Figler, Sam Jacobs received a letter in

1923 from a concerned constituent urging the commutation of the death penalty in certain circumstances. "I have ideas similar to you on the hanging of women," Jacobs replied. "In fact my views respecting capital punishment are slowly undergoing a change. At one time I thought *that punishment should be made to fit the crime* [my italics], but as I grow older, I am coming to see things with others eyes."⁴⁴ Jacobs had justified his previous position by invoking the universal equality of rights, the granting of which demanded that all individuals take responsibility for their own actions. An advocate of women's suffrage, he had believed they were as culpable for their own behaviour as were men. If his views eventually softened when it came to dealing the death penalty to women, he remained steadfast on the point of personal responsibility. When an amendment to the Criminal Code providing for a "spanking" (as Jacobs described it) of all minors found guilty of theft was introduced, and a sub-section added excepting females from this penalty, Jacobs remarked: "Now that women have the vote, I do not see why they should be deprived of this privilege."⁴⁵

Ryan and Jacobs were generally in agreement on the matter of individual responsibility—regardless of gender—and on the necessity of the law to punish at first offence, in accordance with what they took to be the philosophy behind Jewish Law and that of true liberalism. Leniency risked the loosening of social

⁴⁴ Figler, *Sam Jacobs, Member of Parliament, 1871-1938* (Ottawa: 1970), p. 121.

⁴⁵ Figler, pp. 121-122.

moorings. This argument was made readily apparent in Ryan's "slippery slope" exposition of the underlying causes of the brutal murders of 1897:

It will not be denied . . . that all crime is the result of small beginnings—slight deviations from the normal line of right conduct; and as impunity makes the criminal bolder, he goes on from bad to worse till blood guiltiness brings him to the scaffold. The initial error in the administration of justice in this country appears right here. Had the youth [the Catholic Nulty?] been arrested in his first downward steps on the path of evil, and made to feel the just consequences of his actions at the very start, he would have conceived a wholesome dread of the law, and in all probability would have led a different life. Thus Jewish law punishes small offences in order to deter from greater, being far more merciful than the law which allows impunity in small things only that it may deal with aggravated results later on.⁴⁶

Ryan, the ex-Catholic, obviously felt that the sacrament of confession actually encouraged anti-social behaviour. At the same time, he felt that in denying the possibility of divorce, Catholicism encouraged adultery. Again, if the law made it impossible for a woman to be released from an unhappy marriage, adultery was the result, and "experience shows that adultery always leads to murder." But his editorial on "Murder and the Law" went further, attacking not only ecclesiastical practice but civil law (which he saw as having been infected by similarly anachronistic and impracticable concepts) as well.⁴⁷ Ryan compared provisions for alimony available under the civil code to the medieval concept of "were-geld" or

⁴⁶ "Murder and the Law", op. cit.

⁴⁷ Since the British North America Act of 1867, Canada, following England's example, had placed recompense upon divorce under Parliamentary jurisdiction (in addition, each province had its own set of provisions). Previously, where applicable, it had been the business of ecclesiastical authorities. J.G. Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada 1900-1939* (Toronto: McClelland

blood money. Just as barbarians would happily toss a few silver coins at the feet of the victim's family for the privilege of slaying an inconvenient personality, "we see in the law which provides a money compensation for the crime of adultery, a direct incentive to the commission of that crime. The whole moral tone of the community where such a law prevails is debased, and a wide door is opened for the vicious to follow the impulses of their passions till the frightful and almost inevitable result is reached in murder."⁴⁸ Ryan's denunciation of the State's involvement in areas pertaining to marriage and divorce may be read as an attempt to show how, in "Christian lands," however enlightened, the separation between Church and State was a precarious arrangement requiring eternal vigilance.⁴⁹

Though Ryan was more old-fashioned, more patriarchal, than Jacobs, there was as an element of "feminism" (though ahistorical, the term fits) informing his excursions to and from criminal and family law—and I believe that this indicates Jacobs' behind-the-scenes influence. It was extremely difficult, even when Church procedure was bypassed, for a woman to obtain a *decree nisi* from civil authorities, not only in Quebec but within Canada generally.⁵⁰ Despite periodic attempts to alter marriage laws by modern reformers federal (including Sam

& Stewart, 1991), pp. 2-12.

⁴⁸ "Murder and the Law", op. cit.

⁴⁹ Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law*, pp. 14-15, 49, 56, 58, 21-47.

⁵⁰ Figler, p. 123. See also "Marriage and Divorce," *Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996).

Jacobs) and provincial, the old double standards remained in place for decades; terms of mutuality were not to be recognized until the 1960s.⁵¹ In Quebec, where the Code Napoleon (which recognized the mutuality of marriage law) had not been subsumed into its Civil Law, the husband's relative invulnerability was exacerbated to begin with and resistance to reform was stronger. Adultery was grounds for divorce; still, the definition of adultery was somewhat skewed. As Jacobs put it, "a wife may demand a separation on the ground of her husband's adultery, [*only*] if he keeps his concubine in common habitation."⁵² Merely proving extra-marital relations was not enough.

Jacobs advocated placing women and men on equal footing in terms of marital legislation, as everywhere else. "I have always been in favor of perfect equality between the sexes both in regard to law and in all relations of life," he said. And Jacobs also noted that in these matters Jewish Law was more consistent with true liberalism than the sentimental liberalism practiced by Christians. In theory at least, Jacobs pointed out that deserted or maltreated women of the Jewish faith had greater recourse to separation; and that "if the parliament of Canada were to adopt the old Levitical law there would be no question at all about

⁵¹ For instance, a married man who slept with an unmarried woman was not legally defined as an adulterer because the wife was defined as her husband's chattel. Because a married woman was defined as property, there were no legal loopholes to which she might resort once having strayed.

⁵² The wronged wife was left to demonstrate that her husband "has provided a habitation reserved especially for the lady upon whom he confers his favors; then and only then has the wife the right to obtain a separation." Quoted in

the rights of wife and husband. But I am afraid this will not be done, at least in my day and generation.”⁵³

All this begs the question: Were Jewish divorce laws as progressive, as liberating for women, as Jacobs and Ryan implied? Jewish culture law did permit for divorce; moreover, it maintained that a woman was entitled to a divorce under certain circumstances, and to compensation (not alimony, however, but the return of her dowry). Nevertheless, the original theory behind “Levitical” divorce law was literally patriarchal, Abraham’s capricious dismissal of Hagar being the model. Married men could not commit adultery (in the same sense that, in North American football, the ground cannot cause a fumble). By the early medieval period, rabbinical Judaism revised interpretations of the law so that the bias in favor of wayward males, their behavior deemed communally divisive, might be curbed through social sanctions. (Interestingly, the death penalty for adultery was abolished by A.D./C.E. 40—one wonders whether Ryan was aware of this.)⁵⁴ Jewish women were still—and, in Orthodox circles, are still—dependent on the husband’s permission. Only he could apply for and obtain a *get*, or certificate of divorce. Yet women were able to apply for a hearing in the *bet din* (rabbinical court), which in turn might proceed to pressure the spouse to do the right thing

Figler, p. 123.

⁵³ Figler, p. 122.

⁵⁴ See “Adultery”, *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1901), pp. 216-217.

and lend his consent. Women could in this roundabout way sue for religious divorce (the first step towards obtaining a civil divorce—Jewish law does not run counter to but in consonance with civil authority, though the reverse is not always true).⁵⁵ If the husband committed adultery, or abandoned his wife in some other way, (by refusing conjugal rights, for instance, or by being simply impotent), he was *socially* obligated to get a *get* so that she might remarry.

Deserted or stranded female spouses were (and are) referred to as *agunah*, which roughly translates as “enchained women”. The *agunah* problem, if we take contemporary accounts at face value, was rampant at the turn of the century.⁵⁶ A New York Yiddish newspaper, the *Daily Forward*, regularly published a “Gallery of Missing Men”; the paper’s editor, Abraham Cahan published a novel in 1896 that dealt with the topic. (*Yekl* was adapted to film in 1971, and “Hester Street” remains one of the finest film treatments of Jewish immigrant life.)⁵⁷ The *Canadian Jewish Times* also did its part in this regard, at one point publishing a picture and

⁵⁵ David Novak, “The Marital Status of Jews Married under Non-Jewish Auspices,” *Jewish Law Association Studies* 1, pp. 61-77.

⁵⁶ An assumption that has been perpetuated in works such as Moses Rischin’s *The Promised City: The Jews of New York* (1962) and Irving Howe’s best-selling *World of Our Fathers* (1976). Census data, according to Susan Cotts Watkins, shows that some qualifications are in order: wife-desertion was endemic among all immigrants, and, comparatively speaking, Jewish men were less likely to desert their wives. Cf. *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), pp. 634-635.

⁵⁷ New York was also the base for something called the National Desertion Bureau. Brown, *Jew or Juif?*, p. 88.

description of serial wife deserter, the “pathetic” Myer Litner, who was subsequently caught up with in Toronto.⁵⁸ Despite these and other efforts in support of abandoned wives, however, we should not lose sight of the fact that the legal parameters of Jewish law were partly responsible for this social problem, and that these measures could not entirely counterbalance the potential for abuse inhering in the system.⁵⁹ The *agunah* problem remains, for that reason, something that Jewish women continue to raise.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “A Pathetic Case,” *CJT*, July 29, 1910, p. 5; “Canadian Jewish Times Instrumental in Bringing Wife-Deserter to Justice,” *CJT*, August 12, 1910, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Unscrupulous rabbis were sometimes bribed to issue divorce certificates not sanctioned by a civilly recognized *bet din*, or so bourgeois Jewish authorities charged. Chief Rabbi Adler of London testified on the subject before a British Divorce Commission attempting to harmonize civil and religious divorce law in 1911. According to the 1906 Annual Report [43rd] of the Baron de Hirsch Institute and Hebrew Benevolent Society, deserted wives among the local poor was an issue this philanthropic—and paternalistic—organization was beginning to look into. East End men preferred to have their own rabbis settle these matters. The most popular and populist of local Orthodox authorities, Simon Glazer, was known “among the laboring classes . . . as a peacemaker, for he never grants a get unless the case be a real deserted woman.” The implication seems to have been that some women were not deserted in the literal sense, but, unhappy with their conjugal lot, were applying for divorce on less obvious grounds. (If impotence was one of them, one can see how this might impinge upon masculine sensitivity.) Archival historian David Rome has written about Glazer’s role as a challenger to West End authority: though Glazer denied ever having designated himself Montreal’s Chief Rabbi, he “petitioned the [civil] court that no Jewish divorce be issued without his approval.” Rome, *Jacob’s Opponents* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1986), p. 57; “Rabbi Glazer Will be Presented with a House”, *CJT*, March 1, 1912, p. 14; “The ‘Get’ Evil”, *CJT*, January 13, 1911, p. 8; *JT*, December 28, 1906.

⁶⁰ The patriarchal bias remains the sticking point. A husband can affect the outcome of civil actions by holding his consent as ransom. In 1991, Canada

These objections notwithstanding, Jewish law, because it made for allowances that Quebec's Catholic culture and civil law did not, can be said to have been relatively more progressive in letter and in spirit. That, in any case, was what Ryan was getting at, and though he left it unstated, he also left the reader to infer that Judaism, rather than an anachronism, was actually a progressive force—in an evolutionary sense. In keeping with the tenets of Conservative Judaism, whose local congregants he served, Ryan maintained that it was Judaism's imperative to adapt "ancient opinions to modern conditions."⁶¹ Natural historical analogies were so common a rhetorical device one must wonder whether the exercise was more than simply rhetorical or merely analogical. In 1913, for example, Edith Ayrton, an English suffragette and women's rights advocate (and, incidentally, Israel Zangwill's Christian wife), commented on the defeat of the Ottomans in the most recent of Balkan Wars by making a connection between gender relations, military prowess, and spiritual superiority. The conservative Islamic culture of the Ottoman Empire, she argued, could not compete with the progressive Christian culture of the West; insufficiently sexually undifferentiated, Islamic women were little more than extensions of their male spouses' identity, she said. Thus the results of the war in the Balkans was as much a "triumph of the

became one of the few countries to legally recognize the plight of agunah by making a male spouse ineligible to qualify for divorce settlements if he attempts this tactic. See *Get and the Agunah: Facts about Jewish Divorce* (Toronto: B'nai Brith Women of Canada, 1993); "Agunot Vigil Draws Largest Turnout," *Canadian Jewish News*, Thursday, March 19, 1998, p. 1.

⁶¹ *JT*, December 24, 1897, p. 20.

Christian position of [Serbian] women over the Mohammedan position of women” as a testament to the impotence of the Bulgarian and Turkish militaries in the face of superior firepower.

For Ayrton, the key point was that the Ottomans were Islamic, not that they were composed of a different race or an amalgam of non-white races. Their religious culture, however, produced negative Lamarckian effects; one became what one believed. Patriarchal relations such as obtained in Islamic culture corresponded to the “hermaphroditic” stage of human development, and were “biologically undesirable for the race;” she concluded that the conflict’s lesson was that “the best results are not obtained when one sex is more fully evolved and more dominant than the other.”⁶² By extension, the more “feminist” a culture, the more evolved it was; the less “feminist”, the more anachronistic the culture in question.⁶³ This was also the message behind Ryan’s interpretation of the relative places of Catholicism and Judaism within the modern liberal order.

If Ryan’s *midrash* (exegesis) on murder and adultery approached the subject somewhat obliquely, he presented a more direct statement of Jewish liberalism in an address he gave at a Jewish men’s club, the Montefiore Club, on

⁶² “Real Balkan victory,” *CJT*, January 24, 1913, p. 28.

⁶³ Mike Hawkins explores the issue of feminist “Social Darwinism” in chapter ten (“Social Darwinism, Nature and Sexual Difference”) of his *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 272-290.

December 2nd, 1897. The paper, entitled “Influence of Judaism on Christian Thought”, was reprinted in the *Jewish Times* in three parts, the first of which appeared in the very first issue. It is necessary to recapitulate his arguments in order to demonstrate the manner in which Jewish liberalism was linked not only to Judaism’s continuing relevance in modernity, but to Jewish survival and its relation to the evolution of civilization. Ryan began this section of his talk modestly, as was only appropriate, given that he, a non-Jew, was undertaking to lecture on the subject of Jewish law to an audience of Jewish men:

We now come to the influence of Judaism on Law and Politics. Under this heading enters, I believe, the most profound considerations with which we have to deal. I have not the hardihood to attempt an exposition of Jewish Law before an audience like this. Such would be as unnecessary as it would be impertinent. But I may be permitted to point out wherein I think the Jewish idea of Law, as applied to the affairs of daily life and intercourse between men is more just and, in spite of its apparent severity—*now happily mitigated by the rise of a higher civilization* [my emphasis]—more beneficent in its ultimate results than other ideas which pass among men for law.⁶⁴

When Herbert Spencer, whom Ryan touted as the nineteenth century’s greatest philosopher, first laid out his idea of the “survival of the fittest,” he took care to alleviate the doctrine’s harshness. He posited an evolution of consciousness, the final result of which would be the development of hyper-sympathetic faculties, a philanthropic instinct. This instinct, however, would have to remain latent until the conditions were favorable. Until humanity had been purified in the alembic of evolution through struggle, emotions like empathy—

though fine for individuals—were inadvisable for society to incorporate into law.⁶⁵

Ryan may or may not have been alluding to this aspect of Spencerism, but if he was he would not have been the first defender of the Jews and Judaism to do so. One of the most respected Jewish intellectuals at the turn of the century, the spiritual Zionist Achad Ha'Am, stressed the affinities between Spencerism and Judaism in the following terms. "Herbert Spencer anticipates, as the highest possible development of morality, the transformation of the altruistic sentiment into a natural instinct, so that at last men will be able to find no greater pleasure than in working for the good of others. Similarly Judaism . . . anticipates the development of morality to a point at which justice will become an instinct with good men, so that they will not need long reflection to enable them to decide between different courses of action according to the standard of absolute justice, but will fall as in a flash, and with the certainty of instinct, even the slightest deviation from the straight line."⁶⁶ Given this interpretation of the connection between Spencerism and Judaism (which he was surely aware of), it would not be stretching things overly to infer that Ryan found in Spencerian evolutionism a congenial instrument by which to show the interplay between the progress of

⁶⁴ *JT*, December 10, 1897, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁵ On Spencer on beneficence, see Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Thought*, pp. 47ff.

⁶⁶ "Judaism and the Gospels," reprinted from the *Jewish Review*, London, in the *CJT*, August 11, 1911, pp. 4-6. From the Hebrew manuscript of Achad Ha'am, translated by Leon A. Simon.

civilization and Judaic concepts: Judaism contributed to progress by sticking to its allegedly harsh principles; progress, in turn, mitigated the harshness of Judaism, commandments coming through evolution to transform themselves into the instinct of conscience.

As Ryan explained it to his audience at the Montefiore Club, Judaism anticipated later developments in legal theory, whatever Christian critics said of its barbaric provenance. As modern as it was ancient, it occupied the seats of tradition and innovation simultaneously. Having been present at the creation of law, it was the evolutionary foundation upon which all functional modern legal systems were built: "Indeed, I may say that all the law invented since the awful deliverance of the tablets on Sinai is but an elaboration of those commandments. The declaration 'Thou shalt not' implies the power and the necessity of punishment for disobedience." The ineffectuality of legislatures dominated by Christian culture could be measured by the extent they departed from Judaic law.

Again, the perverse tendencies of Christian justice were reprised. Jewish Law was realistic, Ryan asserted; Christian Law, idealistic. The latter, while admirable in some respects, was ultimately impracticable. As easy to profess as it was impossible to apply, Christianity encouraged the subversion of its own laws, and was therefore a recipe for hypocrisy:

Those teachings, in so far as they have entered into the administration of justice, have had a vitiating effect, the tendency of which is to bring all law into contempt. Even the one 'new commandment' which Christ laid upon his followers is never practiced, at least in the sixty years of my sojourn on earth I have never come across an instance where one Christian

made it the rule of his life. This 'new commandment'—Love one another—do good to those who hate you—Return good for evil, is more remembered in its breach than in its observance by all the Christians I have ever met. But, if we look at law from a position unaffected by religious preconceptions, we will find that the influence of the Jewish idea, in its every day administration among things paramount, and properly so, over the Christ idea of submission to wrong and injury.⁶⁷

If Christianity was so patently impractical, why had it emerged in the first place? Ryan agreed with Rev. Hermann Abramowitz that Judaism was just too difficult a set of ideas for the pagan mind to accept. Eminently rational, this-worldly, lacking the palliative of mysticism, it could only be adopted in the adulterated form of Christianity, the irrational dogmatism of which “appealed to the human race when in its childhood.” Judaism, being neither “mystical” nor “inconceivable”, demanded action over belief, works over faith. Warning the younger congregants of Shaar Hashomayim not to be taken in by the pomp and ceremony of Christianity and its soothing doctrines of expiation through intercession, Abramowitz had urged: “You yourself must work out your own salvation.”⁶⁸

This was Ryan’s point also: The strength of Judaism lay in its emphasis on personal accountability. “Throughout the whole history of the Jews, as I have been enabled to study it, there runs the influence of one great guiding principle. I know

⁶⁷ *JT*, December 10, 1897, p. 13.

⁶⁸ “Judaism: The Religion of the Future,” *Ibid.*, December 4, 1903, pp. 3, 7.

of no better word to express it than *Responsibility*.⁶⁹ By contrast, Christians had been saddled with an overabundance of freedom. Their religion's stress on sin's remission through mediation had the debilitating effect of reducing a sense of personal responsibility. As Ryan put it:

Christianity, as practiced by the churches, has provided an alleged escape from the penalties that are supposed to follow the perpetration of evil deeds. Roman Catholicism has its sacraments, Protestantism its free grace and the efficacy of the atonement by Christ. But the Jewish principle, which admits of no escape for the individual from the consequences of his misconduct, is undoubtedly the only sound ethical idea, and just to the extent that it is recognized among Christians is the law respected. The *lex talionis* [law of retaliation] may appear terrible to some people, but if that were unflinching, upheld as the law of the land, there would be far less crime against the person, fewer murders, fewer lynchings, for a man only reaches the condition of moral debasement where he is capable of committing murder through impunity in the commission of less grievous crimes.⁷⁰

For Christians, their religion's hegemonic presence in Western culture signaled a kind of manifest destiny. What proved that providence still sided with Judaism, Ryan averred, was the miracle of Jewish self-preservation, achieved in the face of overwhelming odds: "Jewish law has given to its people a character of exclusiveness and preserved through ages of unparalleled suffering, persecution and dispersion in singular social purity." Through adherence to Judaism, survival had been crowned by worldly achievement, enabling "many Jews to reach those sublime heights of success in philosophical and material endeavour which has

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, January 7, 1898, p. 35.

⁷⁰ *JT*. January 7, 1898, p. 34.

placed their names high on the roll of fame in every land under the sun.”⁷¹ The rigors of Judaism had created a demanding people, for whom the pursuit of excellence was a natural and inalienable right, making them “good, worthy, valuable citizens under free institutions,” and dangerous opponents of “tyranny and despotism.”

In portraying the Jewish people as ur-liberals, Ryan could equate anti-Semitism with ancient systems of government like despotism. Anti-Semitism, then, became a sign of underdevelopment. “Historically considered,” Ryan wrote, invoking Disraeli’s formula, “we may regard as axiomatic, the proposition, that nations flourish or decay in accordance with the treatment they extend to the Jews.”⁷² Ryan then called the roll of empires and nations that had degenerated since making enemies of the Jews, and others who, given the virulence of their anti-Semitism, would soon follow suit: Egypt, Rome, Spain, Austria, Germany. As for the Roman Papacy, “it has been shorn of its once proudly asserted prerogatives among the powers of earth, and is respected only so far as it conforms to the spirit of modern progress.”⁷³

In Ryan’s opinion, the Bible made clear the secret of survival in the injunction: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *JT*, January 7, 1898, p. 35.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

land the Lord your God is giving you.”⁷⁴ “This promise of length of days as a reward for filial piety gives us the key, so to speak, of the underlying principle of Jewish jurisprudence,” Ryan continued. “The child who is loving and obedient is sure to follow that beginning by the practice of other virtues which go to make up the character of a perfect good citizen, just as the wilful, disobedient child is certain to develop into a dangerous man—a bad citizen.”⁷⁵

Forgetting that secularization is ecumenical, and ignoring the ever widening generation gap within Montreal’s Jewish community, Ryan asked: “What is there more common among Christians to-day than the rebellion and ingratitude of children, which are the first steps on the path of evil. The *only commandment which offers length of days in reward for its observance* is the one which in modern times is least observed by those who claim a higher revelation than that vouchsafed to the Children of Israel.” Simply put, Christianity was self-destructing, as the rise in violent crime in “so-called Christian lands” indicated; and Judaism, which obviated such behavior, would outlive it.

Understand the significance of this: Ryan was saying that Judaism—in its *politico-ethical rather than bio-hygienic aspect*—was consonant with the natural laws of self-preservation and the precepts of liberal Justice. In the post-Ryan era, eugenically-based apologies, were far more common. Ryan would later add Genesis 1: 28—“go forth and multiply”—as another evolutionarily correct Biblical

⁷⁴ Exodus 20: 12.

⁷⁵ *JT*, January 7, 1898, p. 34.

injunction. In 1901, Ryan discussed the pros and cons of a paper read before British Association for the Advancement of Science by political economist C.S. Devas, who made a correlation between the rise of irreligion and a decline in birth rates. Ryan thought this the most interesting part of an otherwise “dismal paper”: “It might be logically deduced that religion is a necessary element in human society, and that it is conservative of the race.” If true, “then religious societies and races have a tremendous advantage in the race for survival.”⁷⁶

In 1904, under the heading “Race Suicide and the Survival of the Fittest,” Ryan sided with Theodore Roosevelt against his critics. The American novelist Henry James had chided the President for fear-mongering; though he did not come up with the phrase, it was Roosevelt, alarmed at declining fertility rates among native (white) Americans, who had imprinted the issue of “race suicide” upon the popular consciousness. James, himself an unabashed patrician and (unlike Roosevelt) prone to anti-Semitism, had stated that Roosevelt should have been more class-specific in his analysis, since the evidence suggested that (in Ryan’s paraphrasis) “large families to the working classes are an inexpressible burden and the overstocked labor market leads to poverty, degeneracy and crime.” Ryan retorted that it was in fact the falling off of birth rates that should be taken as “a sign of demoralization in the race [since it is] accompanied by an increase of youthful criminality, lunacy, and physical decadence.”⁷⁷ James had not added that

⁷⁶ “Religious Faith and Population,” *JT*, October 25, 1901, p. 376.

he thought Jews—particularly the Eastern European poor among them—an overly fertile, poverty-stricken, and degenerate race.⁷⁸ Still, Ryan knew his views on the matter and caught his gist, or thought he did, and went on the attack:

The infertile, whatever be the cause of their infertility— whether, as Mr. James says, they are people ‘who are beginning to think for themselves,’ or as the Bishop of Ripon regards them, immoral persons regardless of the duties of life, or merely physically infertile—one fate will happen to them all. They and their breed will disappear, and a good riddance. They will leave the earth to the fertile breeds who will fill it with their progeny by obeying the law of nature and nature’s God, to increase and multiply.

He finished his prophetic harangue on a note of triumphalism:

Jews will not fail to notice that the scientific view agrees precisely with their religious convictions founded on the Torah, and they will see in the conclusions of science a principle which has helped more than anything else mundane to preserve their race through ages of tribulation and exile. The future of the world is unquestionably the heritage of the most fertile races. In this prospect the Jews, if they adhere to the customs of their forefathers, which they surely will, may contemplate a time when they will become a majority in countries where they are now in the minority, on the principle of the survival of the fittest in the obedience to the law.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *JT*, May 19, 1904, p. 208. It was a sentiment, however extreme it may sound, that was widely communicated. As late as 1928, a *Chatelaine* article warned readers that “contraceptives could kill and in any event a marriage in which there were no children was no more than ‘an agreement between a flirt and a philanderer.’” Sex was for procreation, not for recreation. McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, p. 82.

⁷⁸ “A great swarming that had begun to thicken, infinitely, as soon as we had crossed to the East Side and long before we had got to Rutgers Street. There is no swarming like that of Israel when once Israel has got a start, and the scene here bristled, at every step, with the signs and sounds, inimitable, unmistakable, of a Jewry that had burst all bounds. . . . It was as if we had been . . . at the bottom of some vast shallow aquarium in which innumerable fish, of overdeveloped proboscis, were to bump together, forever, amid heaped spoils of the sea.” Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York: 1907), p. 116, quoted in Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 279.

⁷⁹ *JT*, May 19, 1904, p. 209.

Ryan may have believed that the scientific view agreed with the tenets of the Torah, rather than the other way around, but it is apparent that he was gradually moving towards something that had the potential to undercut his former politico-ethical stance. Traveling from “honour your father and your mother” to “go forth and multiply” seemed to result in a more strident tone of evolutionary discourse, in a shift in emphasis from good citizenship to survivalism for its own sake, from politics and Judaism to population growth and racialism. The “ethical mission” was giving way to the “hygienic mission.”

That representatives of the most acculturated section of Canadian Jewry selected an Irish Catholic (all right, ex-Catholic) as their champion can be interpreted as overcompensation, a tactic born of timidity. Yet the manner in which Ryan undertook his mission contradicts such an assessment. He set out to prove not only the legitimacy of Judaism, but its sustainability as a new world religion superior to Christianity, arguing that its tenets constituted a truer expression of British American liberalism. This required doing battle with Jewish secularists and with Christians of every stripe, resulting in a militant tone at odds with the stereotype of the obsequious Diaspora Jew. Authenticity was not the issue. Or rather assumptions as to what constituted Jewish authenticity changed with the *Times*.

Chapter Two

Hyman Nervich: The Scribe Phase One in Transition

“Our poor editor became bed-ridden, so we were obliged to cast about for an editor,” recalled Lyon Cohen:

Captain Ryan desired to retain the honor of the position (about all the remuneration he received), and we were willing to accord him this slice in his declining days. One day there arrived in this city a scribe who claimed his fitness, and an engagement was arranged. It was left to me to instruct him in his conduct towards our sensitive collaborateur. I told him that we respected the old man’s feelings, which we would not injure at any cost, and that he must make the old man feel he was still at the helm. Our new editor assured me he would exercise the greatest diplomacy in dealing with the matter. He, of course, had a Yiddisher-Kopf.¹

Meaning, of course, that the “scribe”—Hyman Nervich—had a Goyisher-Kopf, as Cohen would indicate soon enough.² Not much is known of Nervich, other than that he had been the editor of a rival English-language paper, the short-lived *Canadian Jewish Herald*, which merged with the *Jewish Times* in December of 1908. The resultant hybrid,

¹ “Birth of the Jewish Times,” *CJT*, December 13, 1912, pp. 4-5.

² According to A.A. Roback’s *Dictionary of International Slurs*, a *goyishe kop* means “Gentile head,” or dunce, bonehead. A *yiddishe kop* is the opposite—but the term can be used ironically, as Cohen apparently does, which brings us back to *goyishe kop*: “It may be noted [Roback notes] that the Gentiles referred to here were peasants, but the Jewish folk mind denies far-sighted, sensitive intelligence, understanding, and brilliance even to highly trained and distinguished non-Jews. Thus *A goy bleibt a goy* (‘A Gentile remains a Gentile’) is usually said in disappointment or mild disgust at the intransigent.” (Cambridge: Sci-Art Publishers, Harvard, 1944), p. 139-40. The point here is to introduce Roback, a contributor to the *Jewish Times* and the editor of its successor, the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. His aim was to show that ethnic slurs are useful psycho-historical signposts; I would add that paying attention to them helps in understanding how easily racial evolutionary discourse subsumed pre-existing stereotypes and gave them a modern spin.

The Canadian Jewish Times, was managed and edited by Nervich for the next three years. By 1910, Cohen and Jacobs had been pushed out of the stock company directorship, and Nervich (and his partner Mortimer Gelbman) held the paper outright until 1912, when the newspaper changed hands for the second time.³ Nervich was sacked and his movements thereafter have gone unrecorded.

“Thus assured [that he would handle the situation diplomatically] I felt I had settled a worrying problem and dismissed the matter,” Cohen continued—

To my horror this is the tactful way he introduced himself to the captain. ‘Captain, I am the new editor of the Jewish Times. Mr. Cohen instructed me to treat you with the greatest deference, but as we are both journalists and not children, there is no necessity for any ceremony between us. The facts are, your usefulness is gone, and I am replacing you.’ The old man was so infuriated by this effrontery, that sick as he was, he kicked the scribe down the stairs, and until this day, the scribe cannot understand the reason why.⁴

Ryan had retired in January of 1909, after eleven years and two months as editor. (He died about a year afterwards.) After taking over from Ryan, Nervich continued to affiliate the paper with what he referred to as the “orthodox” (read Conservative Judaic) element of Montreal Jewish society. But there was a qualitative change in the manner in which he addressed social identity and difference. Instead of conceiving the fate of civilization as hanging in the balance of the contest between Judaic and Christian values, he added levels to the Manichaeistic (to use a neutral adjective, the followers of Mani having long ago played their part in human history and become extinct) tension Ryan set

³ Leon Goldman and Max Saunders became co-proprietors of the Canadian Jewish Times Publishing Company, with Harry Gordon as secretary-treasurer. The editor was Archibald Bennett, a recent graduate of Queen’s University, whose career is dealt with in the next chapter.

⁴ *CJT*, December 13, 1912, pp. 4-5.

up. Nervich still railed against the hegemonic religion but also introduced racial taxonomy as a means by which to differentiate Jews from other peoples.

The ethnic makeup of Montreal was becoming more diverse as a result of global migration patterns, and Nervich's editorials reflected the new multiethnic realities of pre-World War I Canada. The issue of a modern global diaspora was one Ryan had addressed in 1908, when discussing Israel Zangwill's proposed plan to settle Jewish emigrants from Russia in Morocco. He recognized that the exodus of Jews from the Pale should be understood within matrices of wider economic and demographic trends: "This question of immigration is not agitating our people alone. It has assumed worldwide proportions. Many thousands are pouring out every year from the congested population of East Asia towards countries where unoccupied land offers fields of expansion. This movement has already raised a serious for the British government." The Depression of 1908 exacerbated the problem; on the west coast of North America and in Australia there were "violent[ly] expressed popular objection[s]"—a reference to the previous year's riots in Vancouver's Japanese, Chinese, and South Asian quarters—to Asian immigration. Because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (abrogated in 1921 under Arthur Meighen's government) and since "the Hindoos" were British subjects, these mass migrations had "created an extremely dangerous state of affairs for the Imperial government, the colonies and the Asiatic dependencies of the Empire."⁵

⁵ "North Africa Project," *JT*, January 1, 1908, pp. 57-58. See also "ITOlant May Be in Morocco: Max Nordau Believes Zangwill's Plan Not an Impossibility," *JT*, February 7, 1908, p. 1. ITO was an acronym that stood for Jewish Territorial Organization, Zangwill's branch of Zionism.

After explaining how the situation of world Jewry fit into the British Imperial context, Ryan noted that “there are no such objections to Jewish immigration but the principal for the autonomous Jewish settlement has been refused admission in all British colonies.” Despite that agricultural colonies established in Saskatchewan and Manitoba during Clifton Sifton’s tenure (1896-1905) as Liberal Minister of the Interior and afterward were “Jewish”, they were not territorially autonomous. Sam Jacobs and Lyon Cohen, who (after 1906) acted on the matter of interior settlement at the behest of the Baron de Hirsch’s JCA (Jewish Colonization Association), did not push for recognition of a Jewish reserve system, since this might elicit the charge of “segregationism”.⁶ In helping Jews become farmers, their main concerns were to alleviate congestion in Montreal’s East End, but also to avoid ghettoization on the order of New York’s Lower East Side, such patterns of settlement attracted far too much negative attention.⁷ After the immigration act of 1910, however, shipping Jewish immigrants out to the Prairies became less of a problem: the JCA was forced to hire an agent to deal with immigration officials who were bent on reducing the number of Jews shipped into the country in the first place.

Whatever his personal faults, it is possible that Nervich’s lack of generosity towards other Others was connected to the increasing rate of immigration rejection and a

⁶ Wilfrid Laurier, in an interview published in the London *Jewish Chronicle*, stated that the Dominion Government opposed to the settlement of peoples of a single race and creed in “separate colonies.” “This extinguishes all hope of the ITO establishing an autonomous colony of Russian Jews in Canada,” Ryan explained. *JT*, May 17, 1907, pp. 191-192. Cf. Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 238-239.

⁷ The Jewish Colonization Association, like New York’s Industrial Removal Office (est. 1901), was founded through the Parisian-based Baron de Hirsch Fund. Turning immigrant Jews into farmers was also a means by which Chicago’s Jewish community went about “Solving the Ghetto Problem”, *JT*, January 21, 1901, p. 233.

concomitant intensification of competition for acceptance. In any case, Ryan's version of Jewish liberalism, with its espousal of the causes of fellow subalterns, was undermined by the new editor's approach: Ryan had taken an attitude that other non-Christian minorities were allies; Nervich saw them as contestants. For the most glaring example of the way in which Ryan's editorial copy differed from his successor's, we must take an unblinking look at Nervich's representation of the characteristics of another subaltern group whose alleged lack of assimilability also made them the targets of restrictionist immigration policies: the Chinese.

In an editorial dated July 2nd, 1909, the newly installed Nervich undertook to interpret a murder that had taken place in New York City. In his opinion, the story exemplified both the patronizing nature of Christian evangelism (which was in keeping with Ryan's approach), as well as the recalcitrant and subversive nature of ostensibly lesser races (which, for the most part, was not). "Christian missions to the heathen, as all non-Christians are impolitely designated by the missionaries, have suffered a severe shock from the discovery of the body of Elsie Sigel packed in a trunk in a room over a Chinese restaurant in New York," Nervich reported:

The unfortunate girl had been suffocated by a chloroformed handkerchief crammed into her mouth, the murderer being a pupil of hers in a church Sunday school class, and her alleged lover. Hundreds of her love-letters to the Chinaman were found in the room when the body was discovered. The hideous details of the crime have been given in the daily press, but will not be repeated now. What we want to point out is the folly, not to say the indecency, of detailing girls, hardly arrived as the age of discretion, to teach men, whose morality and sincerity are more than questionable, on subjects peculiarly apt to excite the emotions. However laudable the conversion of these heathens may appear to our Christian friends, it should now be clear to them, as it has been to those familiar with Chinese habits, that it is a form of proselytizing which should be reserved for men

or women of mature years. Certainly not to young women, for whom it may be presumed the missionaries entertain proper respect.⁸

Violent crimes, as we have seen, were indicators of civilization, or the lack thereof, particularly if connected to sexual sin. From sex crimes there were derived principles of racial survival, clues as to the direction society was taking, methods of identification pointing to the weak links in the chain of human being. “The connections linking deviant sexuality, immigrants, and national degeneration were . . . firmly established,” gender/social historian Mariana Valverde has noted of this period in Canadian history.⁹ Although her analysis is perceptive and frank in its treatment of Canadian social progressives, male and female, revealing as it does the Anglo-Saxon supremacism informing the activism of “Christian” reformers of either gender, Valverde fails to delineate fully the complexity of the era’s racial relations. The Anglo-Saxon elite were not alone in their compulsion to hierarchize race, in their assumptions that extreme behaviors were obvious manifestations of racial character.

Minorities were as compelled to reserve a favorable spot in the ranking system, as Nervich’s observations make patently clear. “The Chinaman’s guile and wile are as proverbial as his celestial smile,” he wrote, rhyming off the stereotypes of the day without the slightest glimmer of irony.

A Protestant clergyman, describing Canada as an organism ingesting its immigrants, put it as follows: “Any foreign substance in the body corporate [is] fatal to

⁸ *CJT*, July 2, 1909, pp. 672-673.

⁹ Mariana Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), p. 108.

its life as an indig [estable] mass in a liv[ing] organism. . . .”¹⁰ If Canadian Christians of British or French heritage imagined themselves at the top of the national food chain, that did not prevent other cultural or ethnic groups from imagining otherwise, or from relegating other competing groups to an inferior position. The battle was not incidentally rhetorical; racial slurring was directly correlated to immigration policy, and often took the form of pseudo-science.

If a minority group, such as the Jews, wished to engage the issue of immigration in a direct manner they were obliged to use the blunt tools of the trade. This often meant employing discourse that was anti-universalistic (because based on biology rather than some abstract Enlightenment notion of social justice). Immigrant groups with kith and kin still to come from the old country had to show themselves as not-so-foreign (as digestible, or assimilable), even if it also meant portraying other immigrant groups as innately foreign (indigestible, or unassimilable). One of the most effective ways of doing so was to create or perpetuate a stereotype that combined sexual and violent criminality: the other Other as parasite or predator.

The image of the Asian male as sexual predator was already a staple in Western racial discourse, and “the lure of the Chinaman” was precisely the tune Nervich was playing. Quoting from the report of a Christian missionary in New York who claimed to have looked into the matter, Nervich continued his exploration of the Chinese character. ““Competent and sympathetic male teachers were appointed,”” the Rev. Jay Benson Hamilton related in a letter to the *Brooklyn Eagle* (a Jewish paper). ““In a Sunday or two I was told by the scholars that men teachers were not satisfactory. They wanted Plittee

¹⁰ Valverde, p. 117.

girl teachers. I replied No girl teachers. I was curtly informed: No girl teachers, no comee. The next Sunday my Chinese school had vanished:”

Pursuing his investigations, Mr. Hamilton visited other Sunday schools, where he was told that it was impossible to hold the attendance unless each Chinaman was given the whole time of the woman. The younger and more attractive the teacher, the greater the regularity and interest of the scholar. The superintendent called his attention to a young woman teacher just entering. He said: ‘Every Chinaman desires her as a teacher.’ She was a radiantly beautiful girl, exquisitely dressed.

Before we excoriate Nervich’s willingness to take the Anglo-Saxon Christian’s perpetuation of the image of Chinese males as rapacious sex fiends at face value, let us pause to recall that Jewish males were deemed by the dominant culture to share many of the characteristics attributed to the Chinese. Excusable or not, it is certainly understandable that Nervich chose this story to deflect Gentile concerns away from the alleged perversions of the hermaphroditic—because circumcised—and perverted—because hermaphroditic—Jew towards some other candidate for the scapegoat role.¹¹

There were other shared stereotypes as well. Nervich declared: “No Chinaman has ever been converted. Heathen he was and heathen he remains, for his heathenism is woven in the warp and woof of his nature and personality.” The same—minus the charge of heathenism—was often said of Jewish resistance to conversion. Jews were actually reputed to be the most difficult of all evangelical targets, and Jewish authorities printed statistics, expressed in dollar values, proving as much. In terms of cost effectiveness, the

¹¹ See Sander Gilman on the image of the Jew as sexual deviant in the *Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and his discussion of Jewish sexologist Otto Weininger’s perpetuation of the idea of the hermaphroditic Jewish male in *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1986).

conversion of the Jews purportedly required greater expenditure in terms of missionary hours than any other group; the Chinese placed a distant second.¹²

Importuning “those Israelites who may be inclined to Meshummedism [conversionism], if there be any,” to take heed, Nervich acknowledged the sexual fears of Gentiles by speculating on the anti-Semitic “howl that might be raised were Jewish men to join a Sunday school demanding a distinct pledge that the English language would be taught free of charge and each scholar would be given the whole time and undivided attention of a pretty young girl.”¹³

Having looked into the matter locally, Nervich went on:

We have been informed that this is the system carried out in all the Protestant Chinese missions in Montreal. Every Chinaman, feigning a leaning to conversion, has a pretty girl all to himself. We are astonished that men, presumably gifted with common sense, should lead young women into such degrading contact with the off-scourings of Canton, the worst moral sink-hole in all Asia. It may seem a grand thing to lead the heathen to Christ, but the awful shade of murdered Elsie Sigel rises up to warn the missionaries that the heathen is not unlikely to lead innocent girls to the devil.

He concluded: “It is none of our business, of course, only as we Jews are pestered with missions, it is our right to point out the horrible risks of the business, and be thankful that our girls are not called upon to run them, while we leave all heathens and Christians to be saved, as our faith teaches us, by being good, honest observers of their religion whatever it may be.”

¹² “Editorial Notes: London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Claims 28 Jewish Converts at a Cost of \$7 000/Capita”, *JT*, June 9, 1899; “Costly Flesh,” *Ibid.*, July 16, 1909, p. 707. “The relative costs of converting various races to Christianity: African, \$14; Italian, \$42; Spaniard, \$55; East Indian, \$60; Japanese, \$80; Chinese, \$100; Jewish, \$2, 800.”

¹³ *CJT*, July 2, 1909, p. 8.

Let it be understood that this detailing Nervich's chauvinism is not done for the sake of sensationalism but to show how much it corresponded to "white" Christian rhetoric and to contrast his view of the "Chinaman" with that promulgated by Ryan—whose mandate it had been to express the liberal Judaic position. In Ryan's time, the newspaper ran a spate of stories relating to Chinese issues, and in none of them were scurrilous images of the Chinese people painted.¹⁴ This was because Ryan identified the Chinese people as fellow victims of Christian Imperialism. The links between the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and missionary interference in the affairs of the foreign, if not entirely sovereign, state that was China were frequently laid out. The actions taken by Chinese rebels against Christian missionaries and their Imperial co-conspirators were deemed justifiable, never judged as indicating a racial proclivity towards violence. Instead, they were portrayed as allied freedom fighters in the war against Christian hegemony.

Chinese statesmen and philosophic sages were quoted at length, elaborating the "Chinese Point of View," in the pages of the *Jewish Times*, which tried to drum up sympathy for the Chinese—insofar as Ryan could avoid indicting British Imperial policy towards China in the process. Loyalty to the Empire did not prevent the criticism of

¹⁴ *JT*, June 22, 1900, p. 234 (on the Chinese Boxer Rebellion); "Wu Ting Fang on Christianity and the Chinese," *Ibid.*, p. 235; Editorial, "From a Chinese Point of View," *Ibid.*, July 20, 1900, p. 264, "The Jews of China," pp. 267-68; "Philosophy of Lao-Tze," *Ibid.*, August 3, 1900, p. 277; "Chinese Jews," *Ibid.*, September 14, 1900, p. 327, "Christianity and Civilization" (regarding American and Russian Imperialism and the missionary incursion into China), pp. 328-329; Editorial, "Failure of Christian Missionaries," *Ibid.*, October 12, 1900, p. 360, "Robbers Bring Their Victim to Trial" (on Germany's culpability for China's opium related woes—note the absence of Britain's role), pp. 361-62; Editorial, "War and the Preachers" (concerning Christian demands for "bloody vengeance on the Chinese"), *Ibid.*, July 4, 1901, p. 41; "The Jews of China," Front page story, *Ibid.*, August 2, 1901; "Native Jews in China," Front page story, *Ibid.*, July 18, 1902; "Chinese Association of New York Raises Money for Kishineff Relief Fund," *Ibid.*, October 9, 1903, p. 365.

Imperialism, as long as the Empire in question was someone else's (American, German, Russian). The question of Chinese immigration to America was hardly ever addressed. When it was, the reference made had more to do with Christian bullying than with the alleged unassimilability of Asians. For the most part, however, Chinese issues were beside the point: The *Jewish Times* was a paper founded and written for the dissemination of Jewish news and the discussion of Jewish issues. The primary obstacle to Jews "feeling at home" in Canada was Christian insistence on it being *their* country. That Ryan's *Jewish Times* largely ignored Asian issues, except when the matter of Christian hegemony came to the fore, is therefore not surprising. The Vancouver Race Riot of 1907, during which Japanese and Chinese sections of the Canadian seaport were laid siege to by anti-Asiatic provocateurs, garnered one mention (see above). By contrast, the Lord's Day Bill then before Parliament took up reams of space, since the proposed legislation threatened the right of Jews—and Seventh Day Adventists, as Sam Jacobs saw fit to point out—to observe the Sabbath as they saw fit.¹⁵

There were moments when Jewish and Chinese news stories melded, and when they did, Ryan was quick to pounce on them. The "heathen" label, for instance, came in handy as a means by which to point out the hypocrisy of the Christian order. When the Canadian and American governments failed to express outrage at the massacre of Russian Jews at Kishineff in 1903, the *Times* ran a story detailing a relief fund set up by Chinese immigrants in New York for the express purpose of aiding pogrom victims. The moral,

¹⁵ Sabbatical conflicts were quite common even before the federal Lord's Day Act was introduced as law in 1907. See "Sunday Observance," *JT*, May 9, 1902, p. 184; *JT*, March 11, 1904, p. 132 (nine Montreal Jews were charged for keeping their stores open on Sunday and selling goods, under city by-law no. 36, section 1, passed June 2,

partaking of one of Ryan's favorite themes, was that even the "heathens" knew better and were quicker to act than Christians who preached but failed to practice in matters of social justice.

This is not to deny that Captain Ryan resorted to racialism from time to time. As far back as his lecture before the Montefiore Club in December of 1897, his remarks suddenly lurched away from religious systems towards racial issues as he attempted to account for the fact that not all Jews were as accomplished or as pious as the gentlemen sitting before him—the less civilized brought their *shtetl* ways, suspicions, and superstitions with them to Canada. "We must not . . . forget to give due weight to another consideration," he said. "People who have had to endure ages of persecution, oppression and spoliation, naturally, by force of these circumstances, develop a secretive, somewhat hypocritical, disposition."¹⁶ The character of Jews recently arrived from Russia and Poland was the subject of malicious commentary in mainstream newspapers.¹⁷ Ryan was willing to grant critics their grain of truth, as long as environmental/Lamarckian factors were taken into consideration: In places where Jews were not freely allowed to practice Judaism, they could not be expected to realize their full potential—not until they had internalized a more beneficent atmosphere and had opportunity to worship in freedom. This, Ryan conceded, might take time, for "a free open prodigal character is not the

1902); "Sunday Bill: President of Lord's Day Alliance Opposes Jewish Contentions," *JT*, March 23, 1906, p. 138; "Sunday Observance Bill," *Ibid. JT*, July 27, 1906.

¹⁶ "Influence of Judaism on Christian Thought," *JT*, January 7, 1898, p. 35.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Goldwin Smith's views on the subject, as reported in the *JT*, August 3, 1900, p. 280.

creation of two or three generations. It comes from a long ancestry of free men nurtured under generous auspices, unaccustomed to foreign dictation.” In the meantime, all Jews “cherished the memory of a great past, [and] that memory preserves them from degradation, although present oppression may make [certain of] them crafty and difficult to understand. Men learn cunning as the animals do from the necessity of self-preservation.” The adaptable human animal, especially the Jew, the ultimate adaptor, could not help but be affected by environmental pressures, whether negative or positive.

French historian Paul Leroy-Beaulieu once remarked that “the virtues of the Jews are their own, their vices they have learned from their persecutors.”¹⁸ While meant to be flattering, the French historian’s famous comment is an ambivalent one, containing both an environmentalist and an essentialist definition of character: a volatile mix. In the case of Leroy-Beaulieu and other philo-Semites, such as Ryan, the reaction to anti-Semitism began with a considered analysis of a negative stereotype and the conditions contributing to its origin, followed by a headlong rush in the other direction, towards another stereotype—less negative, perhaps, but a stereotype nonetheless. Ryan, for example, ventured into essentialist territory when he hastened to remind his audience that “kings and rulers have found among Jews their wisest councillors [a reference to “court Jews”],¹⁹ the Semitic intellect being in its nature more subtle and piercing than that of the Aryan”:

As writers in the higher avenues of political literature, the Jews have no equal. There are names among them of men who stand pre-eminent as exponents of the

¹⁸ Quoted in the *JT*, April 22, 1910, pp. 11, 14.

¹⁹ Gerald Tulchinsky describes the methods of Jewish advocacy practiced by Clarence de Sola, Lyon Cohen, and Sam Jacobs partook of the court Jew or *shtadlamut* method of Jewish advocacy in *Taking Root*, op. cit., p. 261.

very highest conceptions of political philosophy that have ever been given to the world. These gifted men are in fact the seers and prophet of the coming order of civilization, of which through them we are able to catch a glimpse, when the cruel, soulless scramble of the present time will have merged into a brighter day.²⁰

Switching from a religious identification to a racial one, Ryan proceeded to paint a portrait of the Jew as capitalist that, but for the absence of malice, was indistinguishable from the most worn-out anti-Semitic clichés of the day:

But where the Jew is most triumphant is as a lord of finance. It is no exaggeration to say that he holds the purse-strings of Europe to-day, and occupies the position of arbiter, for peace or war, among the nations that affect to despise him. Nor can those nations rob or suppress him, as they doubtless would if they could, for the fabric of the system he has created is such that, though destitute of armies and navies, he could decree bankruptcy and precipitate commercial disaster should they seek to push matters to a conclusion with him.²¹

This was likely an allusion to the relationship between the Rothschilds and the Russian government, which Ryan eventually grew to be quite critical of. When discussing the terrible situation of Romanian Jews some years later, he wrote: "Much more could be done if only the wealthy Jews would co-operate. But they will never do. At the time when Russia was persecuting the Jews the Rothschilds and one other Jewish family held the Russian government in her hands. They had only to refuse to float the loan which St. Petersburg was seeking to negotiate to have forced the government to change its policy. Instead, they took up the loan without a thought of their coreligionists.

²⁰ *JT*, January 7, 1898, pp. 34-35.

²¹ *JT*, December 10, 1897. It should be noted that, in answer to the charge that Jews were economic parasites rather than producers, a local rabbi undertook a statistical accounting of Jewish occupations in the city of Montreal. He discovered that "nearly 80% of the Jewish population gained a livelihood otherwise than by trade and pawn shops." *JT*, June 24, 1898, p. 232.

Roumanian finances are such that a little pressure on the money market would at once bring her to terms.”²²

Whatever Ryan’s ambivalence regarding the source of Jewish character (was it a product of the environment or an innate quality?) he did stress the former over the latter, as was consistent with the Lockean/Lamarckian element within Judaic liberalism. If, in his opinion, the Jew was morally and intellectually superior to the Christian and led a life less prone to violent crime (a sign of declension into barbarianism), it was because he believed the *tabula rasa* of the Jewish mind was etched early and permanently in the harmonious ways of natural reason. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ryan believed that liberalism and Jewishness were not only compatible, they were synonymous. And since liberal political economy and capitalism went hand in hand, we should not be shocked to see a champion of the Jewish liberalism identifying Jews with capital, even if it meant overlooking the Jewish proletariat—to say nothing of Karl Marx—in order to do so.²³ From Ryan’s point of view, it made sense: if capitalism had brought about the highest level of civilization thus far (as Spencerian evolution dictated),²⁴ then the capitalist Jew was not a negative but a positive image.

As might be predicted, the racial evolutionary defense had its drawbacks. Unlike Nervich, Ryan shied away from racial slurs; yet he did quote certain racist—and there is

²² *JT*, October 24, 1902, pp. 377-378.

²³ Captain Ryan identified Marx as a Jewish intellectual, but otherwise ignored him. In an editorial (entitled “Jewish Persecution in Europe”) in that same number of the *Jewish Times*, Ryan commented on how “the ignorant masses” despised Jews despite the fact “Jewish thinkers” like “Carl Marx” were attempting to alleviate their conditions. *JT*, January 7, 1898, pp. 40-41,

²⁴ See Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought*, pp. 89ff.

no use dancing around the subject in this instance—statements made by other commentators, some of whom cited the evolutionary superiority of the Jewish people only to point out the innate inferiority of blacks. When Thomas Dixon, the author of *The Leopard's Spots: A White Man's Romance, 1860-1900*—the book that in 1914 was made into the first feature film, “Birth of a Nation”—made invidious comparisons between Jews and blacks in an article published in the *Saturday Review*, Ryan published them without comment. They deserved at least some sort of disclaimer: “to compare the Jew, who occupies the highest pinnacle of human superiority and intellectual attainment, with the Negro who forms the mud at its base, is something which only a Negro with more than the usual vanity and impudence, could attempt.”²⁵ The racist dimensions of the liberal Judaic phase, then, were muted but still apparent under Ryan’s term as editor.

To be equally fair to Nervich, some of the more blatantly racial items he published came from other sources as well. There was, for instance, the letter one I. Sapier posted from a Russian jail. We are given no explanation for his presence in Odessa or for his incarceration (or whether he was having his heels cooled or just visiting), but while there he observed a group of prisoners, a troupe of five African actor-entertainers. Two of these happened to have a Jewish background and, in Sapier’s view, were behaving in a Jewish manner. In Nervich’s paraphrase, “Mr. Sapier . . . refers to certain psychological traits of the race: These two sons of the tropics showed a ready adaptation to circumstances, which is the characteristic of the Jews.” While their comrades sulked, “Isaac [his grandfather being an Anglo-Jewish merchant who “married a full-blooded Negress”] and Sympson [his Jewish father having “married a Mohamedan negress.”]

quickly fitted themselves to their environments, made friends with other prisoners and turnkeys, and developed a live activity.”²⁶ (We see here a conflation of the “adaptable Jew” with the notion of “prepotent” blood; on the latter, see chapter four.) Neither Isaac nor Sympson, since they lacked the necessary matrilineal connection and since they could not be counted as converts, would be considered Jewish today. What is interesting, however, is that their having Negroid features was a non-issue; looking Jewish, in this instance, was less important than acting Jewish, although both modes of being Jewish were believed to stem from heredity.²⁷

On another occasion, Nervich reprinted an article from the Montreal *Herald* entitled “The New Canadian Type”. The photograph accompanying the piece was a composite portrait that melded “the faces of the children of ten nationalities who [were] attending the schools of Montreal”: Jap [sic], Negro, Syrian, Greek, Italian, Russian and German Jewish, Chinese, British (Scottish and English), Irish, and French. Written some months after Israel Zangwill’s drama “The Melting Pot” played Montreal, the attitude displayed on the subject of racial mixing is astonishingly sanguine, given the phobias surrounding inter-breeding (cf. D.W. Griffith’s “Birth of a Nation”): “With more

²⁵ Reprinted in the *Jewish Times* from the *Saturday Review*, August 19, 1905.

²⁶ “Jewish Negroes,” *CJT*, November 16, 1910, p. 11. Sander Gilman deconstructs the stereotype of the intellectual Jew in his *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

²⁷ Rabbi Abramowitz of Montreal took aim at the Messianic makeover attempted by Ernst Renan and others (who preferred to think of Jesus as an Aryan), recounting in his Passover sermon of 1907 the story of the artist who, in seeking a “truer conception of the Nazarene,” spent “many months in the New York Ghetto to study the cast of the Jewish countenance.” His larger point was that modern Christians would likely reject their Christ on the basis of his looks, should he happen to walk the earth once more. Sam Jacobs made a similar argument on Parliament Hill in the 1920s, when he remarked that under current immigration legislation Canadian Christians would prohibit the entry of their own Savior. *Jewish Times*, April 19, 1907, pp. 170 ff; Figler, *Sam Jacobs: Member of Parliament*, p. 164.

intermarrying, with new blood ever entering the nation's veins, the result cannot but be wholesome."²⁸ Like Zangwill, the writer in question (who goes unnamed) was likely attempting to stem the tide of xenophobia; like Sam Jacobs, who worked to keep the doors to Canada open, the author reminded the reader of the glorious accomplishments of "composite races" like the English. "Many races entered into the making of the Englishman in the days before the Conquest, and some would attribute England's power to-day to the fact that the fusion did not cease then."²⁹

The article writer did not believe the "New Canadian Type" would or should contain more than minor traces of Asian or Negro blood.³⁰ The *Herald's* photographer was thus taken to task for exaggerating the future Canadian child's "Ethiopian features", and for supposing that "like the Negro, the Chinese and Japanese can [have] any deep effect on the physiognomy of the nation, unless the Yellow Peril develops into a Yellow Actuality." As for the German and Russian Jews, though "distinctive types," they would contribute a "healthy nose, straight, yet not chiselled to a bearlike thinness." Moreover: "The long upper lip will be brought by the Irish, the Greek and the Italian. If the Irish

²⁸ "The New Canadian Type," *CJT*, October 20, 1911, pp. 4-5.

²⁹ Jacobs made the following statements in Parliament in the 1920s: "After all, what is the British race but a conglomerate mixture? We all know that that is the case, and that there is no such thing as the pure British stock today, except perhaps in the fastnesses of Scotland, in the hills of Wales, or in the wilds of Ireland. It is only there that you find the ancient British race. All the others are a mixture of the Saxons, the Danes, the Normans, and people of that kind who in turn invaded and captured the country. That is what has made the British people great; it is the mixture of all these races." Figler, *Sam Jacobs*, p.169.

³⁰ When asked what he meant by an open door policy, Jacobs replied: "I am in favour of the open door as expressed by [opposition leader Arthur Meighen]. I am in favor of allowing into the country every healthy white person who is able to make a living." Figler, p. 151.

eyes, looking at the loveliness of the world through a mist of tears, can be gained, the face will have one beautiful feature. The Irish should give breadth to the head, and the effect of their coming may be seen in the hair.”

Apart from their appearances, each—even the Chinese (“the nation that produced Confucius must have some characteristics worth gaining”)—would also bring their racial gifts to the national table:

Jew and Gentile, White, Yellow and Black, are grouped together, growing to know each other, learning to respect what is good in each other, and ridiculing or crushing what is bad. The Canadian-born learns that his Jewish friends across the aisle is quicker at learning than he is. He finds out that the Italian can handle a ball just as neatly. The Syrian stumbles along picking up the language and shows that he can fight in his own way. The Irish boy shows capabilities for leadership. And so they become friends and grow up through the impressionable years. . . .

Clearly, racialism could be accommodated within liberalism, and it could go either of two ways: it could be argued (as Nervich’s disquisition on Chinese sexuality indicated) that the cultures of certain other racial groups of immigrants were less suited to, or evolutionarily incompatible with, the Canadian environment; racialism could also be used to argue the opposite—that all races had their place here, their share (not all share-holders being equal, however) in the future of Canada. That Nervich sometimes played the race card in the explicitly chauvinistic way he did may be more indicative of his individual personality (cf. his insensitive treatment of outgoing editor Ryan) than of anything else. But his attitudes may also have stemmed from an increasing sense of urgency that immigrant groups were beginning to feel; they had to get in the door before it shut altogether—and, consequently, some elbowing was to be expected.

Before moving on to the second phase, some transitional remarks are indicated. In my introduction I explained that Carroll Ryan was hired as editor because of his skills and experience, his Liberal Party connections (through his son, the barrister), his deeply felt sympathy for the Jewish people, etc. The question should be restated. Not “why was Ryan hired?” but, rather, “would Ryan have landed the job as editor of a Jewish newspaper at a later date?” I believe his appointment could only have occurred when it did, that it was consistent with the Canadian Jewish ideology then regnant. His not being a Jew did not hamper the elucidation of the liberal Judaic stance but was actually consistent with it, since it entailed the de-emphasis of segregationist concepts such as “race”, even though racialism appeared to be the wave of the future. Ryan could not have spoken as a defender of the Jews if “racial consciousness” was stressed (as was done in the second phase).

This is not to say that the editors and contributors who made up the paper’s secular or cultural nationalist phase despised him for being a Gentile. Quite the contrary. As A.B. Bennett’s affection and respect for his professor, John Watson, attests, the espousal of a racial identity did not necessarily lead to chauvinism. The sympathy of non-Jews like Ryan and Watson was duly and appreciatively noted, but sympathy was not enough. Empathy, actually living and sharing in the same spiritual (in the intuitive, as opposed to the theological, sense) reality—that was what the new generation of Jewish journalists demanded. If Ryan became redundant as a defender of the Jews, it was not because he had personally failed the Jewish people or (as they say nowadays) “stolen their voice”. Rather he would have been seen as lacking that special sense of group-awareness, that *ur-Judentum* which he could only approximate and which his Jewish

allies and employers—Rabbi Abramowitz, Sam Jacobs, and Lyon Cohen—had neglected to cultivate in their overcompensatory efforts to protect the bargain of emancipation.

Chapter Three

From Religious to Racial Consciousness: Archie Bennett and A.A. Roback Phase Two

“One form, one stage in the Idea comes to consciousness in one particular race, so that this race and this time expresses only this particular form, within which it constructs its universe and works out its conditions. The higher stage, on the other hand, centuries later reveals itself in another race of people”—Georg Hegel.¹

“Idealism is in the essence of the Jewish make-up; it is in his very blood.”² So wrote Rabbi Jacob Minkin, the spiritual leader of Hamilton’s congregation Anshei Sholem,³ on the biology behind the philosophies of Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, and Hermann Cohen. Why would Rev. Minkin explain Jewish idealism as having a material or physical basis? And why—given his antipathy towards organized religion and its leaders—did editor Archie Bennett publish Minkin’s sermons and articles (and make the rabbi’s wife a regular columnist)? Because, like Bennett and his fellow Young Turk, A. A. Roback, Minkin thought in terms of the Hegelian dialectic. For them, the positions of idealism and materialism did not lie at opposite poles; or, rather, the two positions existed as an interactive polarity, were synthesized by Jewish thought.

Carroll Ryan had expressed the Jewish relationship between mind and body in a

¹ Georg Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1892), Vol. 1, p. 33.

² “Future of the Jew,” *CJT*, April 4, 1913, pp. 5-7.

³ Formerly an Orthodox congregation, Anshei Sholem had accepted the Reform liturgy in 1908. See Benjamm Sack, *Canadian Jews—Early This Century* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, 1975), p. 49.

slightly different way, emphasizing its this-worldly pragmatism. "Judaism does not degrade the body," he said. "It recognises the interdependence of the spiritual and material organisms, and seeks rather to exalt and sanctify bodily functions through an infusion of spiritual purpose, than to emphasise their graver aspects by making them antithetic to spiritual life."⁴ Uncomfortable with or unaware of Hegelian thought (which had become the academic philosophical fashion in Canada),⁵ Ryan could not imagine how the thing and its opposite might amount to the same thing. But, then, he had spent only one year in college (and a rather unproductive ones at that), at a time when Scottish common sense realism was still the national norm.

What set Bennett and the contributors of the newspaper's second phase apart was that they were highly educated, at home in a world of paradoxes (Bennett managed to combine the attitudes of Hegel and Spencer, as we shall see). They spoke of special Jewish intuitions in a manner that would have made their predecessors at the *Jewish Times* uncomfortable, philosophically and politically; they argued that this uniqueness led to universalism, which sounded confusing, if not dangerous. This, too, was Hegelian in its dialectic: these appeals to national or "racial consciousness" were all about negotiating one's way to universality not through the denial of difference but through its espousal and overt expression. The Yiddish language came to hold such a special place in the hearts and minds of the intellectuals of this second phase because they were involved in a project to salvage the spiritual (in a non-denominational sense) nature of Jewish peculiarity. (That

⁴"Day of Atonement," *Jewish Times*, September 25, 1903, p. 344.

⁵ A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press,

the paper continued to publish in English indicates that they may have been fighting a losing battle.)

Judaism in its modern manifestations not appealing, seeming to him an outdated basis for the perpetuation of this identity, Bennett put the miracle of Jewish persistence down to “racial consciousness.” Not that he was entirely dismissive of the Jewish religion. He was demanding of it. Commenting on the recent “religious revival” occurring within the Menorah movement (a campus-based association that had originated at Harvard in 1906 and which often took a critical view of “organised Jewish religion”),⁶ Bennett declared that Judaism “must become militant if it is to exist in the Golus [Diaspora].”⁷ What he meant by militancy he did not say. One can safely assume, however, that the modern Judaism he knew best—Canadian Conservatism, with its adaptive approach—was too rationalist and materialist for his taste.

From the outset, Bennett took care to distance himself from his editorial forebears Ryan and Nervich, and he did so by abrogating the alliance with the local Jewish Conservative establishment. Comparing the old *Times* to an invalid whose illnesses were more “obvious to the readers” than to the “sick paper” itself, Bennett promised that “in the future our paper will be identified with no party or faction of the community whatsoever.” Zionism would be as staunchly supported as ever, “but we shall not be connected with any of the minor cliques or parties . . . which are ever at war with one another.” The cliques and parties in question go unnamed. We can infer, however, that the

1979).

⁶ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 305.

Cohen and Jacobs connection was being severed, that the paper would no longer operate at the behest of congregation Shaar Hashomayim.⁸

Nor, for that matter, would Bennett automatically applaud the efforts of Jewish settlement houses such as existed in Montreal and New York. “They had the impression that they were engaged in settlement work,” wrote Archie Bennett. “But where the Gentiles give personal service, our German brothers give dollars.”⁹ “Where the founders of the [non-Jewish] settlements [like Toynbee Hall] give inspiration, the [Educational] Alliances and [Baron de Hirsch] Institutes give a discipline, *a theory of adjustment to conditions*, the very opposite of idealism.” In comparing Jewish motives and behaviour unfavourably with Gentiles, Bennett was making use of a hortatory standby. When, for instance, subscribers to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* were tardy in redeeming their pledges, Dr. Isidore Singer, Managing and Projecting Editor, shamed them by pointing out that all

⁷ “The Young Israel Movement,” *CJT*, January 24, 1913, p. 4.”

⁸ Editorial, *CJT*, April 26, 1912, p. 8.

⁹ His conflation of middle-class materialism with German-Jewishness is noteworthy, since it is based on an ideal type that too many historians take unquestioningly as unadorned reality. The difference between an ideal type and a stereotype is consensual: that is, the image of the German-Jew as businessman and Russian-Jew as intellectual conforms to a model that the majority of historians accept. There is the danger of reifying patterns and of assuming their universality—one upshot being that the tensions of the American Jewish community are sometimes superimposed upon the situation in Canada. Parallels existed, but, as Gerald Tulchinsky has pointed out, one can push them too far and thereby deny the Canadian Jewish community its unique dynamics. Hasia Diner challenges the bourgeois assimilationist German-Jewish/grass-roots traditionalist Russian-Jewish dichotomy in *A Time For Gathering: The Second Migration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); see also Steven Cassedy, *To the Other Shore: The Russian Jewish Intellectuals Who Came to America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Tulchinsky, *op. cit.*

“Christian subscribers remitted for their subscriptions without any delay whatsoever.”¹⁰

Methods of persuasion aside, Bennett meant it when he said: “the Jewish settlements were not vital institutions.” “They approached their clientele from the outside, from the material or conventional side,” he wrote. “They wanted to correct the manners, the customs, the externalities of character, and had nothing to offer for the spiritual man or woman. Of course, to know English and to understand civil government, the ways of the country, and how to earn a living in a new land was good; but that was a service that any well-conducted municipality could give the alien.” Bennett, like the cultural/spiritual nationalists in the Zionist camp, was warning that too great a stress on the dollars and cents side of Jewish communal affairs would actually bring about the extinction of the Jews, spiritually first and then physically as well. What was needed to balance things out was the cultivation of a Jewish consciousness that transcended Protestantized religious decorum and the modicum of material comfort afforded by middle-class philanthropy:

It is now admitted . . . that the Jewish settlements have outlived their usefulness by neglecting to cultivate the idealistic side of the persons who come to them for help. Instead of giving them American notions and manners and life, *a Jewish spiritual ideal should have been inculcated*. Americanization would have taken care of itself. Jewish culture needed fostering, and had young people been enveloped in a Jewish atmosphere, as a protest against the invasion of materialism and disloyalty, to-day in New York, there would not be rampant the social disorder which is so apparent to outsiders, and which is now being noted even by the smug leaders of the New York Jewish community.”¹¹

Still, it would be a mistake to assume that the paper under Bennett, for all that it championed the Yiddish underdog and chastised the comfortably acculturated, was a

¹⁰ Letter to editor, *JT*, August 1901, p. 277.

¹¹ “Settlements and Judaism”, *CJT*, June 20, 1913, pp. 4-5.

working-class paper. This was quite evident from the beginning of Bennett's tenure at the *Times*. In his maiden voyage as editor, he was called upon to make sense of the sinking of HMS Titanic. The manner in which he did so indicated that he was too much the philosopher to be a true populist.

Considering just how saturated our time is with Titania, it might come as something of a surprise that Bennett had to urge his readers not to forget the lesson of the Titanic. (The *Canadian Jewish Times* being a weekly, the timing was such that he had to wait ten days before he could say his piece.) So bewilderingly hurried was the pace of contemporary life, Bennett observed, that even the greatest of disasters were soon forgotten; history, he said, was already "drawing the thick veil of obscurity over this event." What was to be remembered? That human nature, despite the "mad scramble" of modernity, was yet "essentially Noble."¹²

Bennett cited as the first example of immanent nobility the actions of the women who had willingly stayed behind with their husbands rather than take to the lifeboats. He was alluding particularly to Ida Straus, wife of Jewish millionaire Isadore Straus, who had been the most notable (as far as press coverage was concerned) of these heroines. Her decision was glorified in Jewish and non-Jewish papers alike—and widely interpreted as a rare demonstration of fidelity in an era of rising divorce rates.¹³ Bennett's point was more philosophical, however. He pitched the story as an exhibition of the ultimately hopeful

¹² *CJT*, April 26, 1912, pp. 8-10. Page 13 contained a full-page advertisement reprising the announcement of Bennett's appointment and his assertions of non-partisanship.

¹³ See Stephen Biel's *Down With the Old Canoe: A Cultural History of the Titanic Disaster* (New York: 1997), pp. 129, 134.

direction that no-holds-barred economic competition was taking humanity.

“Every human being is more or less charitable,” Bennett allowed, “but . . . where there is competition, there is the accentuation of the self.” He was even willing to concede that the modern era was a time of “perpetual war”. Instead of bemoaning it, he recognized “that competition is the basis of our social organism.” Bennett was not arguing that competition or individualism for its own sake was a good thing. He believed it a necessary thing, however, a stage in human development that would inevitably give way to higher levels of civilisation. Like Spencer (unlike Marx), he believed that individualism would eventually lead to an instinctual altruism, but not before society was transformed to reflect the values of its fittest members. In the meantime, self-interest served as a mechanism of selection, casting off ruthlessly those who failed to make the grade. Bennett conceived of the Titanic tragedy as a rehearsal of that future, the lead roles played by passengers in first class:

Our age may be materialistic, mammon may be the object of our admiration. But still in our supreme moments, we shed our materialistic cloaks; we throw our idols to the winds, and we resolve ourselves into our ultimate substance, which [is] God-like. . . . Sixteen hundred men, among whom when in their office could turn a deaf ear to the piteous moaning of starving children of strikers, and think nothing of other human creatures, only for the sake of dollars will at a time when they stand to lose everything calmly say: ‘We will gladly go to death, so that yonder woman, the wife of a miner may be sure to come home unscathed.’

This was likely a reference to another Titanic celebrity: Benjamin Guggenheim.

Known now as patrons of the arts, the Guggenheims were in 1912 perhaps the most hated industrialists in America; recent strong-arm strikebreaking tactics in Colorado and Utah, resulting in the deaths of miners, aroused socialists and reformers alike. The I.W.W.

(Industrial Workers of the World or “Wobblies” as they were nicknamed) declared war on them and Theodore Roosevelt made mention of their excesses in justifying his presidential comeback bid.¹⁴ Bennett’s optimistic spin on the matter, together with his heroizing of first class passengers and failure to mention the plight of working-class passengers in steerage (an issue the Jewish socialist press in New York did not neglect),¹⁵ indicates that though the *Times* was embarking upon a new period, yet it remained a paper with middle- and upper-class biases.

One can make too much of Bennett’s secularism; as his idealist streak and approval of “militant” Judaism attest, he was not someone who dismissed religious feeling outright; neither was he an unthinking fanatic for scientism. He was supportive of (non-sectarian) Jewish spiritualism and far less inclined to assume the compatibility of Darwinism and Jewish thought than predecessor Ryan. It may be that he had a more thorough understanding of Darwinism’s implications. Having imbibed (at Queen’s University) the writings of metaphysical evolutionists like Henri Bergson, and heard John Watson’s disquisitions on the separate spheres of moral philosophy and biological theory, he saw better than Ryan that Darwinism unleavened actually flattened the spirit of reason that both Ryan and Watson championed.¹⁶ Leading the idealist assault on materialist

¹⁴ Edwin Hoyt, *The Guggenheims and the American Dream* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1967), pp. 222, 224.

¹⁵ See Biel, 110, 121, 125, 126-132.

¹⁶ Ryan’s auto-didactic eclecticism led him to equate thinkers whose systems were not entirely consistent. He saw no need to differentiate between the ideas of William Edward Hartpole Lecky, an anti-Spencerist, and Herbert Spencer, for instance. Lecky agreed with Spencer’s ideas regarding the inevitable decline of religious dogmatism and the rise of reason (as represented by industry, the pinnacle of human achievement thus

evolution,¹⁷ Watson set out a Christian Hegelian system which “constituted a new conception of design and purpose operating in the universe, one that could encompass, rather than capitulate to, evolutionary science.”¹⁸

One of the reasons Ryan had delighted in declaring affinities between Darwinism and Judaism was that he believed Christianity and Darwinism were at war with one another—and that Christianity (its “orthodox” branches) was losing. Lapsed Catholic that he was, Ryan took every opportunity to belittle Christian theology and to publish items that, on the one hand, showed Christianity unable to adapt to modernity and in decline, and, on the other, Judaism—by his definition the most reasonable of religions and therefore impervious to the vicissitudes of secular trends—was still going strong. In Ryan’s scheme of things, science in general, and Darwinism in particular, were themselves evolutionary mechanisms, selecting religious ideas that could withstand its onslaught and discarding the rest. When, for instance, an American foundation offered a prize for the best written work proving the compatibility of “[Christian] Religion, Science, and Theology,” he presented it as further proof that Christianity had lost its viability and was

far). But the Irish historian’s onwards and upwards conception of the progress of reason was at odds with the Spencerian notion of advancement through struggle—a notion, incidentally, that allowed Bennett to at times combine Hegelian conflict with the doctrine of the “struggle for existence.” (More on which below, at this chapter’s conclusion.) “Signs of the Times,” *JT*, June 22, 1900, p. 232 (“creeds are becoming discredited”); W.E.H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism* (London: Heinemann, 1866, 1889); Jeffrey Paul Arx, *Progress and Pessimism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Spencer was well aware of Watson, regarding him as the leader of the rival “neo-Kantians”. See McKillop, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁸ McKillop, p. 182.

going the way of the dinosaur.¹⁹ By contrast, Bennett made distinctions between objective and subjective ideas, privileging intuition over reason (as his coverage of the miracles occurring at St. Joseph's Oratory—see below—makes clear).

By Bennett's time—anthropologist/historian Marvin Harris has described this period as the “retreat of Darwinism”—²⁰ a rapprochement of sorts between religious thought and evolutionary science had been reached. Even Watson tolerated Darwinism, as long as it stayed within the bounds of natural history; he despised Spencerism because he understood it to be sociological. To be sure, it was an uneasy peace and certain Christian groups (like the fundamentalists who broke with their modernist co-religionists over this and other issues) rose up in defiance of the cease-fire.²¹ Unconventional thinkers like Richard Maurice Bucke had less trouble incorporating Darwinism into idealism: a

¹⁹ When a Christian College offered a prize of \$6,000 to the best book “on the connection, relation and mutual bearing of any practical science, or the history of our race, or the facts in any department of knowledge, with and upon the Xtian religion,” Ryan asserted that Judaism was compatible with science, but Christianity was not—and that the contest was proof of Christian desperation. Editorial, “Religion, Science and Theology” *JT*, January 2, 1903, p. 40.

²⁰ Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, p. 295.

²¹ Fundamentalism, which was created in reaction to the modernist impulse within evangelical Protestantism, was not as anti-scientific as one might be led to believe. Instead its proponents harked back to pre-Darwinian times—to Baconian inductionism, where religion came first and science's role was to confirm its findings—and were actively attempting to bring about the return of the former arrangement. It was not until the 1920s, with Scopes Monkey Trial and the negative publicity that came with it, that Christian Fundamentalism dropped out of the mainstream and went underground (an artesian split?) to be tapped into later, in the 1970s. William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 45–46, 88–90. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); George Rawlyk, *Champions of the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism and Maritime Baptists* (1990); Margaret Van Die, *The Evangelical Mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist*

Canadian alienist/psychologist and Whitmanite mystic (sometimes identified as the father of the New Age movement), Bucke invoked biological mechanisms to predict the advent of "Cosmic Consciousness."²² It looked as though the tiger of evolutionism had been tamed. As Bennett put it:

We have passed through a period of unbelief. Authority had been quiet, and the law of science had then taken the place of the Law of God. The foundations of civilization were shaken by the onslaughts of the evolutionists, of the Higher Critics, of all the satellites of modern science . . . Evolution is now lacking its sceptical implications. It has taken its place in the economy of life, and its truths have been reduced to their true value. The search for God has not ceased, but has persisted even through the mantle which science sought to throw over life, obscuring the vision of the spheres beyond this world.

Here Bennett lends us a glimpse into his own philosophy of religion. It is tempting to say that it bears the imprimatur of his mentor John Watson, but, in fact, it could as easily be derived from William James or Henri Bergson (whom he read under Watson's tutelage). Unlike Watson, they were secularists; though appreciative of mysticism, of the power of the unconscious mind, they could hardly be described as religious thinkers in the conventional sense, or even in Watson's Social Gospel sense. The following statements by Bennett, for instance, could just as easily have been penned by James.

Authority of the word has been replaced by the authority of the spirit. The method of science has even been applied to discover God once more. Comparative religious studies reveal much that was hidden, though the details are not as ennobling as first assumed, yet the facts of life have taught their own lesson, and today the controversy between science and religion has lost its bitterness, and men of science, being men, are being impelled to use the weapons of the new forging to reach out to get a glimpse of the world beyond, where the infinite knowledge of man is of no avail. For without faith, what is man?"²³

Tradition (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1988).

²² Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators*, pp. 88, 94; McKillop, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

²³ Editorial, "Man of Faith," *CJT*, March 7, 1913, p. 4. See also "Judaism and

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James had argued for faith's utilitarian or pragmatic value; it was not only good but *healthy* (or good *because* healthy) to believe. Bennett's views, in this respect, were quite similar. In the summer of 1912, he reported that a "certain Brother Andre at some shrine near Montreal" was rumoured to have cured fifty cases of blindness and over two hundred and fifty "cases of other bodily and spiritual afflictions [that] are alleged to have a colouring of the supernatural about them." In fact, Alfred Bissette, as Brother Andre had been known before taking his vows, had been gaining a following from amongst Catholics of the working-class for over a decade; his shrine to St. Joseph had been built in 1904—an event Ryan had not bothered to comment upon. By the 1920s, tens of thousands claimed to have been healed by his touch, and a basilica was built next to the original oratory. (An oratory is a small, modest chapel; a basilica is supposed to be awe-inspiringly massive, and St. Joseph's remains "Montreal's most imposing landmark.")²⁴ When Brother Andre passed away in 1937, tens of thousands of mourners thronged the streets; he continues to be Quebec's most revered religious figure, and was formally beatified by Rome in 1982.

Supernatural phenomena intrigued Bennett, though he did not believe in them literally. He certainly was not about to convert to Catholicism. It was the mind/body connection that interested him; he suggested that even professional sceptics found Brother

Culture," June 6, 1913, p. 3: "We are witness of a decided revival of interest in religion. The evolutionary theories have had their day, and though they have caused a revision of the theology of the past, they have not replaced religion. Religion today is being reinforced by the studies of scientists."

²⁴ "Andre, Brother," *Canadian Encyclopedia Plus* (1996). Note that this is the

Andre's miracles plausible, from a psychological perspective: "Medical science has signified a willingness to adopt this outcast, faith, as a legitimate child, and to give it due credit as a curing agency." "The explanation offered," he continued, "is that the mind being stronger than the body, is able to control and to influence the body even in matters of purely physical concern." Finally, as happened in his piece on the Titanic, he combined a critique of the present age with an assertion of its redeemability: "Is it not wonderful that in spite of our positivist and materialistic beliefs, we are compelled at times to admit that the force of mind is more potent than the force of matter."²⁵

Given such an attitude, it is somewhat surprising that Bennett never commented on the Christian Science movement. Founded in Boston in 1879 (the first Canadian branches opening in 1888), Mary Baker Eddy's sect was growing in leaps and bounds. On several occasions Carroll Ryan had identified it as the "most formidable antagonist" of Christian orthodoxy. Its rapid rise, he felt, signaled the decline of Calvinism and other creed-based forms of the faith. It signified something else as well: a decline in the dogmatic power of scientific materialism, especially when it came to matters of health.²⁶ The contemporary

CD-ROM edition of the encyclopedia, so there are no page numbers to cite.

²⁵ "Cure by Faith" from the Watchman column, *CJT*, August 2, 1912, pp. 6, 16.

²⁶ The advertisements run by the newly formed Montreal Young Men's Hebrew Association in the *Canadian Jewish Times* are corroborative. There were several reasons given for why a young man should join up or why older men should lend financial aid, among them: participation in the YMHA would help in the development of communal leadership skills; ready access to wholesome physical exercise would prevent youths from forming "a gang or a [socialist] club" (de-criminalization, de-politicization, and de-segregation—all delivered with one master stroke); in keeping with Max Nordau's call for "*Muskeljudentum*", the YMHA would further the development of the "Jewish Physique"; and, finally, the YMHA should be valued for its organization of "outdoor sports". This last advertisement went to some length to explain why playing outdoors was important:

passion for what was generically referred to as “Christian psychology” spread beyond Christian circles. One reader of the *Jewish Times* wrote in to suggest that an analogous “Jewish psychology” should be formulated. Ryan shot the idea down: the Torah and Talmud were already replete with plain and simple psychological insights and required no reinterpretation or bolstering by the likes of “Miss Eddy.”²⁷

That Bennett declined to make invidious comparisons between Judaism and any form of Christianity shows at least that he meant it when he said that sectarianism was no longer a prerogative of the *Times*. This, too, may be attributable to his relationship with the ecumenical Watson. But there is more to it. Had Ryan still been around, he would have explained the miracles away, particularly if he knew that Brother Andre had begun his charismatic career as the doorman and janitor of his order’s college. That the ex-Catholic held a brief against the faith of his upbringing does not need belabouring. In his emphasis on the rationality of Judaism, he was not merely being spiteful towards some personal priestly phantom. The invention of Judaism as a sectarian—as opposed to a national or racial—embodiment of reason was consistent with a pattern of Jewish historiography that had emerged with the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, and the

“The great world movement of physical culture is exerting a powerful influence on human progress. . . . Fresh air and sunshine and physical work or play are the great remedies for most national ills. The days of drug and doctors are passing in the dawn of a new day.” *CJT*, March 15, 1912, p. 14; March 22, 1912, 14; March 29, 1912, p. 10; April 12, 1912, p. 8.

²⁷ “The Church, the Synagogue, and Christian Science,” *JT*, May 15, 1908, p. 205. Eventually, what was called “Jewish Science” did emerge, the manifesto of the movement being Morris Lichtenstein’s *Jewish Science and Health* (New York: Jewish Science Publishing Company, 1925). Michael Meyer alludes to the movement in his histories of Reform Judaism and there are websites devoted to the subject. A full-length scholarly treatment might prove rewarding.

emancipatory project.²⁸ Ryan, his interest in Jewish mysticism notwithstanding, supported both wholeheartedly.

We will see that Bennett's reinvention of Judaism as an almost mystical feeling of national or racial—as opposed to sectarian—identity was part of a new pattern. His generation was engaging in a “post-emancipatory experiment”, to borrow the phrase John Efron used when describing what fin-de-siecle Jewish race scientists were attempting. That the race scientists and nationalists Efron writes about were medical theorists and/or practising physicians is not an incidental fact; neither was Bennett's interest in Brother Andre: just as the latter's miracles had lent legitimacy to the orphan of faith, the concept of race provided for the return of the orphan of nationalism to the Jewish fold—and this making whole again, Bennett and thinkers like him hoped, would result in the healing of the modern Jewish psyche. His deprivileging of dogma, then, together with the stress he laid on the power of the mind, was entirely consistent with a definition of Jewishness based on felt experience and a strategy of survival predicated on the recoverability of latent consciousness.

The idea of a Jewish national or racial consciousness—and the two types of consciousness were contiguous, if not exactly identical—was intended to counter what was considered the unhealthy passivity of integrationist attitudes. That it was a concept meant to encourage a louder kind of activism was made manifest when the issue of unflattering Jewish stereotypes in vaudeville venues came up. In most instances these comedians were themselves Jewish, but gradually certain ways of poking fun were considered more respectful, and genuine, than others. The American vaudevillian Joe

²⁸ Yerushushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 88-91.

Welch, who played the Orpheum in 1911, was one Jewish comedian that editor Hyman Nervich had found inoffensively funny. Jewish comedians tended towards either of two stock characters: the “fast-talking, aggressive winner”; and “the pathetic, world-weary loser.” Ben Welch, Joe’s brother, was a master of the former style. Joe played the other part, beginning his routine, “Mebbe you t’ink I’m a happy man?” and ending with, “Und I vished dot I vas dead.” But, in 1913, the Anti-Stage Ridicule Committee of Chicago organized a boycott of certain racial acts that were deemed as perpetuating negative racial stereotypes, and Welch was targeted. He said on his own behalf: “We ought to be broad enough to recognize our own racial eccentricities and to laugh with other peoples when their angles are emphasized purely for amusement purposes. But we ought also to protest when the low comedian debases the character and presents a type that does not in any respect typify the race. But if we were to remove from the stage the Hebrew character in comedy roles, the stage would lose much.”²⁹

Historian Harley Erdman argues in chapter six of his *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity* that the boycott of 1913 was the first step towards the de-racialization of the stage Jew, part of the “transition toward Jewish invisibility in popular performance.”³⁰ Perhaps in the long run this was the case, since the bearded and heavily accented mangler of English was on his way out. But Bennett took up the cause not to de-racialize or to de-nationalize Jews or to make them invisible but for precisely opposite reasons. Negative stereotyping, he believed, was a negative side-effect of a *lack*

²⁹ Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 102-104; Welch quoted, p. 152; Nervich’s editorial, *CJT*, November 3, 1911, pp. 13-14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 144ff.

of racial/national consciousness.

Though he did not name particular acts or theatres, Bennett urged the Jews of Montreal to boycott acts and theatres (like Joe Welch and the Orpheum, presumably) trading in what he considered to be scurrilous portrayals of Eastern European Jews. Like the Irish, who had already gained a measure of control over their public image via boycotts, they were to speak up and let themselves be heard. The Irish, too, had had “to suffer from caricatures on the stage, and for many years they bore it with a patient shrug.” But this had ended—“with increase of political strength and re-awakened national consciousness . . . they have hooted the green whiskered comedian off the stage.” “The fact that we Jews acquiesce in being treated with contumely indicates that we lack as yet that virile national spirit here, which is a condition precedent to our full liberation. We think too much of the shell of liberty and disregard tendencies and conventions that create that prejudice which government does not stimulate, and which grows because there is no opposition.”

A Bundist (that is, a self-consciously Jewish socialist or social democrat) might have said something similar; but, then, he/she would also have added something about how liberalism actually contributes to class division. No such talk here: Bennett’s point is not to call for a revolution (at least, not for an external one) or for territorial autonomy. Even when describing the anti-Jewish prejudices that liberalism did nothing or very little to eradicate, he resisted pointing fingers at the system. What Bennett demanded was an inner emancipation, a willingness to be visible, and a return to authentic Jewish expression. Neither was possible, he felt, as long as fears of the tribalist or segregationist charge

remained intact:

The law makes us equal citizens, but we are content with that. Political parties may ignore us, hotels may exclude us, college fraternities may discriminate against our students and professors, the public schools may be permeated with Gentile influences but having the shell of liberty, the formal grant of it, we are content, and prefer not to hazard what we have for larger liberties which may not be attained. A people proud of its traditions, jealous of its standing, fights hard always for every right that it claims. It is the fight that is important, not the victory. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty and liberty to be real must not be qualified or limited.³¹

This passage is especially poignant, given that at this very moment there were roadblocks thrown in the way of his pursuing an academic career because of anti-Jewish biases. It was not that he wanted to abolish liberalism; he wished to bring it to full realization. In his opinion, theories of adjustment, accommodation, or adaptation to conditions were not up to the task. These resulted in self—no, national—denial. As far as he was concerned, the Jews who were most guilty of huddling within the “shell of liberty” were those who believed organized Judaism, with its rationalist theology, to be the only sanctioned group identity that Jews might espouse. Circumscribing Jewish identity to suit external specifications benefited neither members of the Jewish community nor society at large.

That, for Bennett, nationalism and racialism were equivalent group concepts is nowhere better illustrated than in a piece he wrote under the byline “The Watchman”, wherein he compared a Jewish medical scientist who claimed to have discovered the cure for tuberculosis with the tragic hero of an ill-fated British expedition to the Antarctic.

³¹ Editorial, *CJT*, March 14, 1913, p. 4. Harley Erdman discusses the links between ethnic representation and theatre in *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an*

When Robert Falcon Scott's team arrived at the South Pole, it was only to find that the Norwegian Roald Amundsen had reached it first. They turned back, but Scott and his companions ended up freezing to death. The Englishman's diary, which detailed his final hours, was later retrieved and published. Wrote Bennett: "Death was a problem—but it was gladly faced, and faced by Scott, as he says: 'Like an Englishman.' England is stirred. This is but an indication of the great modern tendency of race consciousness . . . The phenomenon is not a new one for the English race, nor for the other races, who have their own land." What of Diasporic peoples? Had they access to this consciousness? Or were they, deprived of a homeland, of an environment of their own, also without recourse to race consciousness? According to nineteenth century English historian Henry Buckle (whose views A. A. Roback, a hereditarian theorist and advocate of race consciousness, would take a rip at),³² the answer was that wanderers, displaced minorities, could never partake of or develop a true nationalist spirit; however, according to Bennett:

The 'race consciousness' phenomenon is *more striking* with nomads, and with races who are under authority. The feeling of separation is strong and permeates every normal being of the race which it invades. The result is that its members live and die for it. . . . [Dr. F.F.] Friedman discovered a cure for TB—a discovery as important as that of the South Pole. The discoverer was for Germany. For Palestine. And Judaism—Pooh! Mais ça n'existe pas!"³³

That closing fillip of Bennett's sums up not only his view on the subject but that of his colleague Roback. Not only did he deny the efficacy of modern Judaism, he dismissed

American Ethnicity, 1860-1920 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

³² "Jewish Contributions to Philosophy," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* Sept. 4, 1914, p. 3; September 11, 1914, p. 3; September 25, 1914, pp. 3, 16.

³³ "Scott's Expedition," *CJT*, February 14, 1913, pp.16-17.

its existence as a vital entity.

In pointing to F.F. Friedman's scientific genius, more was involved than ethnic self-congratulation: the notion of "genius" was linked to the Hegelian idea of nationhood. Every nation/race exhibited some sort of characteristic aptitude, some gift, or else forfeited its right to be. As Roback put it when making up lists of Jewish Nobel Prize winners (in an attempt to put together a "national biography"): "It was Hegel who thought that every nation must manifest an idea, or else it has no right to exist."³⁴ In the introduction to his "Galley of Great Jews" (which included the apostate, Heinrich Heine), Rabbi Minkin concurred: "It is the prerogative of the great men of genius that in them the whole life and experience of an entire people is often reflected. Thus is the history and inner experience of our patriarchs. . . not a biography of individual men; but is symbolic of the whole people of Israel."³⁵

Thus, despite that Diasporic Jews possessed no environment of their own, Bennett and Roback and Minkin believed that an acknowledgement of Jewish worldly accomplishments, particularly in intellectual fields, would facilitate the cultivation of

³⁴ "Jews and the Nobel Prize," *Jewish Tribune*, December 7, 1923, p. 14.

³⁵ *CJT*, July 18, 1913, p. 5. Sander Gilman misses the Hegelian point when arguing that the viewpoint of Joseph Jacobs', the first and best known of Jewish race scientists, was "*strictly* 'eugenic' in that he [was] convinced that genius is inherited—genius here being defined as the inclusion of one's name in a biographical dictionary." Hegelianism and eugenicism, idealism and materialism, were often combined, as Roback's work below shows. (Lest we snort at the spuriousness of these biographical methods of measuring genius, Gilman reminds us that Miles Storfer's work, *Intelligence and Giftedness: The Constitutions of Heredity and Early Environment*, relies on the same dubious approach—and it was published, by an academic press, in 1990.) Gilman, *Smart Jews*, pp. 69-70, 12; Jacobs, *Jewish Statistics: Social, Vital and Anthropometric* (London: Heinemann, 1891).

national/racial pride. This, in turn, would engender a consciousness of nationhood without which a people's reason for being was null. Racialism, in other words, would save the Jews as Jews, as a group entity, the body of Israel, from extinction, and consciousness of race would take the place of Zion—mindscape substituting for landscape, if only while the Diaspora lasted.

The Friedman story has an unfortunate postscript. Arriving in New York City from Germany in the spring of 1913, the doctor, who had been offered a reward of one million dollars for the cure of a local businessman's son-in-law, was mobbed like Jesus among the lepers. The police were called to turn away hundreds of desperate tuberculosis victims. Friedman pleaded for time, promising results as soon as a proper dispensary was made available. Lyon Cohen, whose philanthropic work included the establishment of an anti-tuberculosis league in Montreal, excitedly announced in the *Canadian Jewish Times* that, once Dr. Friedman finished up in New York, he would travel up to Ottawa and explain his methods at a convention for the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. Alas, for reasons that are unclear, he never saw the intended patient (or any other patients), and apparently failed to show up in Ottawa as well. His assistant later denounced him as a fraud.³⁶

³⁶ Apart from mentions in the Jewish press of that day, I have found only one other source alluding to Dr. Friedman, in an interview of sexologist Harry Benjamin published in a German journal. Benjamin was Friedman's assistant at the time. An excerpt of his version of the story:

Haeberle: But you soon went to America in connection with your work on tuberculosis.

Nothing good came of this, but, then again, nothing terribly damaging happened either. Friedman's Jewishness, for instance, could have been made an issue. There was the precedent of bacteriologist Waldemar M. Haffkine, who found a way to inoculate against Asiatic cholera. He was acclaimed by Lord Joseph Lister in 1899 (the discoverer of antiseptic surgery) as someone whose accomplishments in the area of tropical medicine challenged the notion of "Anglo-Saxon superiority". The *Jewish Times* referred to him as the "hero of India" and came to his defence in 1908 when nineteen Punjabi patients died in the course of his prophylactic treatments; in language purposely reminiscent of medieval rhetoric, Haffkine was denounced as a Jewish spreader of plagues.³⁷ If any lesson can be

Benjamin: Yes, and I owe this, above all, to the great Karl Ludwig Schleich, the inventor of local anesthesia, who, at that time, was already an elderly gentleman at the end of his career. I don't remember how he came to notice me, but it was he who advised me to follow a certain Dr. F. F. Friedmann to New York. This Friedmann had, with a self-developed serum, obtained astonishing successes in the treatment of tuberculosis in bones and joints. He now wanted to extend them to the tuberculosis of the lungs. A rich American invited him to New York, where he was to continue his research and treat this man's son-in-law. For his complete cure, one million dollars were to be paid. Friedmann, accompanied by myself as his assistant and also by a press agent, then boarded the "Crown Princess Cecilie". Unfortunately, our cooperation did not last long, since Friedmann proved to be an unethical physician. His sponsor soon became suspicious, and we never even got to see the patient. When Friedmann then asked me to "beautify" his research data, the break was unavoidable. I first attempted to make a living in private practice, but in August 1914 tried to return to Berlin. Our ship was in the middle of the ocean when World War I broke out. We were redirected to England. Unable to return to Germany, I booked, with my last dollars, a passage back to New York. For me, this was a great piece of good luck. I was spared the war, and for that, in the end, I can be grateful to that unscrupulous Friedmann.

Erwin Haerberle, "The Transatlantic Commuter: An Interview with Harry Benjamin on the Occasion of his 100th Birthday," *Sexualmedizin* 14:1 (1985).

³⁷ "Dr W.M. Haffkine," *JT*, June 3, 1899, p. 1; "Bond of Brotherhood", *JT*, July 7, 165

drawn from this, it is to underscore the point that the heroization of prominent Jewish personages was done in an atmosphere when their villainization was done openly and as often as opportunity offered.

A.A. Roback

On the eve of the Second World War, A. A. Roback, by then a professor of psychology at Boston's Northeastern University and a member of the American Eugenics Society since 1925, tried to salvage flagging support for hereditarian race science. He pled: "It is quite a harmless doctrine even if we suppose that some races have reached a higher development than others."³⁸ In 1939, though Germany was not to invade Poland for another two weeks, it was difficult to propose the validity of race science, let alone its harmlessness. Acknowledging as much, Roback complained that Hitler and his henchmen had done more to set back the legitimate study of inherited human difference than critics had ever done. And now Franz Boas' theory of anthropology—which Roback regarded as politically motivated in its flat privileging of nurture over nature—was in the ascendant.

Franz Boas, the founder of cultural anthropology and co-founder (with W.E.B. DuBois, among others) of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored

1899, p. 8; "Dr. W.M. Haffkine, CIE," *JT*, May 17, 1907, p. 202; "The Jews and the Plague," January 24, 1908. Secondary references to the incident include Eythe Lutzker and Carol Jochnowitz, "The Curious History of Waldemar Haffkine," *Commentary* 69: 6 (1980), pp. 61-64; Eli Chernin, "Ross Defends Haffkine: The Aftermath of the Vaccine-Associated Mulkowal Disaster of 1902," *Journal of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 46:2 (1991), pp. 201-218.

³⁸ Roback, "Information Please," [unidentified newspaper clipping, datelined

People, was best known for his comparisons of the skulls of native American Jews with those of newly arrived Jewish immigrants. He found greater differences than similarities: the “round-headedness” (alleged to be an attribute of “blonde races”) of the former contrasted with the “broad-headedness” (said to be characteristic of the Semitic type) of the latter. As Roback put it, not only did Boas set about to discredit the tenets of physical anthropology he was also the “man who led the rebellion against the biogenetic conception of personality which seeks to explain individual differences on the basis of genes.”³⁹

Much to Roback’s chagrin, Boas, now leader of the American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, was pushing to have the term “race” expunged from school textbooks, or else placed in scare quotes. This, Roback felt, was a case of politics running roughshod over science. “By racialism is meant the view that there are racial stocks such as the Slavs, the Celts, the Jews, etc,” he argued. “The real sore in the world is ‘racism’ which holds out only that one race is the salt of the earth and all others are anything from scum to dung.” He went on in a personal vein: “I may consider myself racially a Jew, but I may have Nordic genes in me after all, while a so-called Gentile whose great grandfather had been converted to Christianity may be more Semitic than I am racially.” While of “two different cultures”, neither one was superior to the others. The difference was cultural, which to him meant a difference of consciousness: Roback felt himself to be Jewish, which mattered more than genetics but which, at the same time, was

Boston, Massachusetts], August 13, 1939. Roback Papers, CJCA.

³⁹ Roback, *Present-Day Psychology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 203.

not independent of genetics.⁴⁰

Roback's distinction between "racism" and "racialism", however, was to no avail. After the rumours of a Holocaust were incontrovertibly substantiated, the newly-founded United Nations issued a proclamation stating that racial differences did not exist because the concept of race was itself a figment of the imagination,⁴¹ effectively relegating "racialism" or race science to the dust-bin of pseudo-science. The original architect of this policy statement, Ashley Montagu,⁴² was one of Boas' graduate students, and like his mentor, of Jewish background. Damned by association, the American Eugenics Society eventually moved to rename itself (in March of 1973) the Society for the Study of Social Biology. To-day its members mutter about smear campaigns and the insidiousness of

⁴⁰ In his *Psychology of Character* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1927), on pp. 344-345, Roback addressed the question: "Are There Racial Differences?" The answer was, yes in many respects, including intelligence, but no in terms of "character". The latter quality, defined as behavioral self-control, he deemed to be a matter of environmental influence (in much the same way that Carroll Ryan argued that a Jewish upbringing militated against anti-social behavior). Still, Roback was willing to entertain the possibility that character was influenced by some hereditarian factors: "There seems to be ground for maintaining that there are racial endocrine differences—a thesis elaborated in a series of papers by A. Keith ["Evolution of Human Races in Light of Hormone Theory"] who sees in the European races the predominance of pituitary activity while the Negro type is adrenally centered and the Mongolian races governed by peculiarities of the thyroid."

⁴¹ In 1939, A.A. Roback also took the view that "race" was a "conventional symbol referring to a concept, a mental construct"—but that didn't prevent him from reifying it, or the concept of intelligence. Op. cit.

⁴² Ashley Montagu, *Statement on Race: An Annotated Elaboration and Exposition of the Four Statements on Race Issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); see also, Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York: 1942); and Pat Shipman, *Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

Jewish politicking.⁴³

Ethnicity—or, rather, race (the former term being a euphemism Boas helped introduce into the anthropological lexicon)—was actually more relevant to Roback than it was to Boring. Heredity was integral to his quest: to determine racial differences through quantitative means (his students were required to indicate their “racial stock” on their intelligence tests); and, more specifically, to prove the existence of the “Jewish mind.” The literature on the subject might lead one to assume that American Jewish intellectuals shied away from such conceits. Boas apart, such intellectuals as Richard Hofstadter’s *Social Darwinism in America*, Richard C. Lewontin’s *Not in Our Genes*, and Gould’s *Mismeasure of Man* are notable scholars whose Jewishness is often noted.⁴⁴ To assume, however, that twentieth-century Jewish thought is monolithically environmentalist (or “leftist”) is to ignore the pre-war period, to neglect Roback and the possibility that he was far from the only Jewish intellectual ranged in opposition to the Boases and the Montagues.

It is possible that Roback, once a force on the American psychological scene,⁴⁵

⁴³ I would include as sophisticated muttering sociobiologist Kevin MacDonald’s article, “Jewish Involvement in Shaping American Immigration Policy, 1881-1965: A Historical Review,” from *Population and Environment* 19 (1988), pp. 295-355; see also his *Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1999).

⁴⁴ See also the conclusion of Richard Meister’s anthology *Race and Ethnicity in Modern America* (Lexington, Kentucky: Heath, 1974) for remarks on the environmentalist nature of Jewish sociology.

⁴⁵ The only estimate of Roback’s life work is Joseph Berger’s *The Destiny and Motivation of Dr. A.A. Roback* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schoenhoff’s, 1957), a hagiography that suffers from the excesses of the genre. For a more measured assessment

was made ineligible as a representative Jewish thinker because others found his views out of synch, embarrassing, or difficult to rationalize. Some data resist recognition. In his *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, John Efron anticipated reader's objections by admitting that it is difficult to conceive of Jewish intellectuals conducting "large-scale statistical experiments to determine Jewish skull shape and the prevalence of blue-eyed blond Jews." Auschwitz prevents us from doing so.⁴⁶ Scholars have understandably viewed the pre-war period through the dark prism of the Third Reich, and certain angles of refraction fall outside the range of sensibility.

Roback's first published works on race psychology appeared in the Yiddish- and English-language newspapers of Montreal when he was still taking courses in mental and moral philosophy (it being not until the 1920s that W.D. Tait, who succeeded neo-Hegelian John Clarke Murray at McGill, set up that university's independent psychology

of his place in American psychology, one must turn to, of all things, a memorial address, delivered by Gordon Allport. He described Roback as a "hermit scholar," prolific and eclectic, producing over 2, 000 articles on subjects as far ranging as eugenics, graphology, criminology (Roback claiming to be the first American psychologist to create a course on the subject) and linguistics. He also noted Roback's masterful knowledge of the history of psychology. Allport, whose widely recognized work in the fields of "personality analysis" and racial prejudice sometimes ran counter to Roback's explorations of possible links between race and "character", opined that Roback's "principal and most enduring contributions to psychological science" was *The Psychology of Character* (1927), "appreciably influenced by the work of William McDougall whom he greatly admired." "A.A. Roback, As Psychologist." Manuscript (Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 24, 1965), p. 2; Ian Nicholson, "Gordon Allport, Character, and the 'Culture of Personality,' 1897-1937," *History of Psychology* 1:1 (1998), pp. 52-68; Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1954); Craig Cunningham, "'A Certain and Reasoned Art': The Rise and Fall of Character Education in America." M.A. Thesis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992).

⁴⁶ Efron, op. cit., p. 176.

department) and in philology.⁴⁷ He gained an immediate reputation as a polemicist on and off campus, and although his was one of the more strident and idiosyncratic of voices, his message was consistent overall with the purposes of the second phase of ethnic Jewish journalism: to defend and affirm an identity of difference.

The *Jewish Times* first noticed him in 1907, when he was elected president of a new club, the Talmud Torah Literary and Debating Club, where he honed his argumentative skills.⁴⁸ When the *Keneder Adler* came into being a year later, Roback became a frequent contributor and his reputation as a precocious and ferocious champion of cultural nationalism grew. The Yiddish-language op-ed pieces he contributed to that publication were barbed with disdain for Anglophonic Zionism. It is an understatement to say that he ruffled the feathers of the establishment. He would not even deign to write for a paper like the *Jewish Times*, however, not, that is, until 1912, and the hiring of Bennett. By the time he graduated from McGill University with a gold medal in philosophy (a distinction Bennett had himself earned at Queen's University), Roback had become a regular contributor to the paper he had once so despised. He proved he could write as well in English as he could in Yiddish, but he did not change his tune to suit the audience. Regular readers, still getting used to the ideas promulgated by young Archie Bennett, were given the full Roback treatment.

The first of his articles to appear before Bennett's English-language readership was "Yiddish or Assimilation," the thesis of which was clear from the title:

⁴⁷ "Psychology," *Canadian Encyclopedia Plus* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996).

⁴⁸ *JT*, March 22, 1907.

Some will be scandalized to find such a thesis propounded in an Anglo-Jewish journal. . . . You will observe that it is the fashion nowadays to be proud of one's Jewish descent. . . . Aye, and here's the rub: Yiddish they will not speak, Hebrew they cannot speak. It is the irony of fate that the agitations of the radical movements for the first quarter of a century should have greatly helped the development of a Yiddish literature and Yiddish press in America thus preparing the way for a universal national movement while enthusiastic Zionists should bring up a generation of assimilators estranged from the history and traditions of their people. . . . Need we be surprised to hear later on that they have cast off the stamp of their nationality and call themselves Canadians, Americans, or Englishmen of the Mosaic faith.⁴⁹

A member of said establishment, Mortimer Garber (Rome's "cool [Lithuanian] rationalist"), responded: "He only told us that without reading Yiddish we do not know our folk lore and national tales, but does one have to assimilate, even if he does not know these tales?" This rhetorical question was followed by several more, all of which were intended to cast doubt on Roback's premises: namely, the primacy of demotic literature as the key to group identity, and the role of Yiddish as the epitome of Jewish folk memory. "I venture to say that there are more than 75% of Englishmen who never read any of the Round Table romances, and yet does that in any way affect their nationalism?" "What about Zionism? What about religion? Mr. Roback asserts that religion is unstable, but hasn't the Jewish religion more than proved its stability by existing for so many thousands of years?" "The Jewish nation has been existing for thousands of years, while the Yiddish literature is only 30 years old. Is it not rather daring to assert that the Jews cannot exist without this infant literature?"⁵⁰ The latter was a crucial point: Yiddish had been spoken for almost a thousand years; but its emergence in literary form was very recent, a

⁴⁹ *CJT*, June 21, 1912, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Letter to editor, *CJT*, July 5, 1912, p. 11.

development reflective of late nineteenth century Jewish nationalism.⁵¹

In an attempt to shame community elders into becoming visible, into breaking out of the mould of liberal Judaism before it shattered from above, Roback actually downplayed the anti-Semitism of French-Canadian nationalism—an unheard of thing to do. Pointing to the cultural-linguistic virtues of Henri Bourassa's theories, he referred to the journalist-politician not as another Haman, an enemy of the Jews, but as a charismatic leader whose attempt to throw off the assimilative pall of Imperialism was exemplary:

These French Canadian celebrities do not fear to incur the displeasure of the English-speaking people. Would that matters stood the same in our [own circles]. But alas, our prominent men are prone to be too loyal to the language of the country in which they reside, forgetting that Jewish nationalism does not exclude the loyalty that one feels to his country. . . . Whatever we think of Bourassa's political views and his occasional anti-Jewish insinuations, we cannot help admiring his eloquent and instructive address on the subject of 'Race and Language,' wherein he pointed out that the characteristics of a people must be warped if there is no language to unite the disconnected members. If Zionism is to pervade the masses, it must encourage cultural work and not devote every bit of energy to practical work.⁵²

Much of the practical work of Zionism to which Roback alluded took the shape of fund-raising and political lobbying. Led by the middle- or upper middle-class, it was the sort of nationalism that cultural Zionists such as Achad Ha'am were leery of.⁵³ Roback,

⁵¹ For a sympathetic and well-informed contemporary account of the development of Yiddish literature and theatre, see Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto*, originally published in 1901 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967). The best informed account on the subject, however, is A.A. Roback's own *Story of Yiddish Literature* (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute, American Branch, 1940).

⁵² From "Chips from Many Blocks," *CJT*, July 5, 1912, p. 21.

⁵³ A broad discussion of the bourgeois leadership of the world Zionist movement and its attitudes towards the colonization of refugees from Eastern Europe, see Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

like Achad Ha'am (to say nothing of Archie Bennett), argued that nationalism should not be measured in monetary terms: That more energy was spent raising funds to purchase land in Palestine than towards preserving Jewish culture showed that priorities were skewed. If Jews were to understand Zionism's import, they had to be convinced not to buy into the idea that nationhood was about real estate.

To justify his view, Roback had to argue that the Jewish religion, whatever its past glories, was in decline, as much a casualty of modern trends as Christianity; and that the latent power of the "Jewish language" (which is to say Yiddish, the Ashkenazic tongue—the Sephardic dialect, Ladino, he loses by the wayside) was coming into its own. In order to show that the liberal Judaic paradigm was in shambles, since "Judaism" was not merely about religion but the sum of many cultural parts, Roback wrote:

If Judaism is to signify the Jewish religion, what is more natural than to expect a gradual falling away from the Jewish people as a result of the decline of religion in general as a faith? If we desire to obtain results, if we wish to stem assimilation we must pin our fate to something more stable than religion. Religion, we must remember, is only one phase of the Jewish culture. We must extend our scope to embrace every phase and aspect of Jewish life and Jewish activity.

Mortimer Garber had wondered why a Yiddish enthusiast like Roback did not consider himself a Zionist. One has to understand that Roback felt that Zionism, as practised by the Canadian Jewish establishment, was not nationalism in fact but an extension of the narrowly religious mind-set that he was so critical of. With the news that, at a recent congress of rabbis in Kattowitz, Silesia, a strictly religious form of Zionism (the Agudath Israel movement) had been mobilized, Roback wrote: "A Zionist movement is quite intelligible. So is a national movement, social movement, etc.," he wrote—and then he lowered the boom. "[Yet] if power is out of the question and it is only a matter of

pure faith with which the 'Agudath Israel' is dealing, the movement under consideration is absolutely useless, unless its true purpose is to oppose Zionism and nationalism and to further assimilation. With these orthodox luminaries religion and assimilation go hand in hand. Pure religion . . . requires no organization."⁵⁴

Since, in Roback's view, nationalism was psychological, and since language represented the *id* (although he disagreed with Freud's individualistic approach to psychology, Roback often made use of his terminology) of a people, the characteristics which made Jews a unique and discrete race would be lost if land took precedence over authentic linguistic expression. Moreover, if Zionism reduced itself to the logistics of attaining Palestine while ignoring issues of identity, then it would become as elitist, divisive, and liable to break down as the liberal Judaic paradigm that secular Zionism was meant to replace. This was precisely the point where Roback differed from Lyon Cohen and his generation: the former took the view that Zionism was to be divorced from organized religion, which, because bound to a liberal ideology of monoculturalism, tended towards assimilation; the latter, that religion had to be the basis of Jewish identity, with Zionism serving the auxillary role of pious charity (*tzedeka*) made available to Jews not fortunate enough to live in a liberal environment.

"Pure religion", in Roback's view, was more than a formal set of precepts, and it certainly transcended the sociological transformation of Jewish philanthropy: it was first and foremost a felt experience of mystical union. So while one might, for purposes of taxonomic clarity, label him a secularist, his passion for the Yiddish language took on the

⁵⁴ See also "Orthodoxy—a Movement?" *CJT*, June 28, 1912, pp. 2-3.

shape of religious fervour. It was a pseudo-religious passion that was nevertheless grounded in scientific language, the discourse of the day, as the case of Bennett shows, having begun to make room for subjective psychology (recall that Freud is making his impact at this time).⁵⁵ Long before the monumental philological studies for which he is best-known were published, Roback had begun to develop a theory of language that allowed him to study Yiddish not as a subject of antiquarian interest, but as an organic, evolving entity revealing the phylogeny of the human mind generally and the Jewish mind specifically. He was not longing for a return to the *shtetl* (indeed, he described himself as the only Yiddish writer in the world not born or raised in a ghetto). Roback sought to justify the preservation of the language not on grounds of romanticization and sentimentality, but through a racial evolutionary theory of consciousness.

He never gave up on this idea. Years later, after earning his doctoral degree in psychology at Harvard, he continued to draw upon and refine views he had held while an undergraduate at McGill University and the most outspoken critic of Montreal's liberal Judaic establishment. His racialism and evolutionism were shot through his theory of Yiddish as the "national language" of the Jews; this was made manifestly apparent when countering the objection that it was derivative of German, not a language *sui generis*. Roback admitted to its borrowed aspects, but, at the same time, argued that to label it a mere dialect was to misunderstand both the nature of language and of nationalism.

Borrowing was a cultural fact, he argued: *what* was selected was a question of far more significance. Elements of culture are "selected . . . in accord with the genius

⁵⁵ Peter Gay, *Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis*

[character] of the people borrowing them; and through that very selection we obtain a definite account of the mind of that people. The law of national selection bears the same significance in collective psychology as does the law of natural selection in biology. Once a nation is incapable of making a choice, we may be certain that that group is no longer in existence.”⁵⁶

I made the point early on (in my prologue) that evolutionary racialism was often adopted by Jews as a mechanism of self-defence. This holds true for the instance above, since Roback was here explicitly counter-punching the Wagnerian notion that Jewish intellectuals and artists, because they were Jewish, were not actually creative, merely clever—the adaptable Jew as accomplished mimic and nothing more. Still, it would be a mistake to think that Roback lacked conviction in these matters, that he was only expressing his response in this manner for rhetorical reasons. To Roback, remember, the problem was racism, not racialism.

It was Roback’s conviction, for instance, that his favourite Yiddish authors were not only great artists, aesthetically comparable to Goethe and Schiller. He insisted that, like these German artists, Yiddish writers were also cartographers of a national psyche: He called I.L. Peretz, the poet/novelist, a “collective psychologist.” By comparison, Roback saw the Anglo-Jewish novelist Israel Zangwill, author of *Children of the Ghetto* and *Dreamers of the Ghetto*, as a misguided liberal who used the ghetto as merely a “milieu

(New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁵⁶ Roback, *The Story of Yiddish Literature* (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute, American Branch, 1940), pp. 42-43. He was reprising an analysis he made twenty years earlier in a series of articles written for the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* on “The Psychology of Yiddish Proverbs.”

for the individual subject”.⁵⁷ (Montreal’s Jewish community had their own reservations regarding Zangwill [see the next chapter], but Roback lumped them all together into the same melting pot of liberalism).

His views as to the eugenic principles underlying Jewish identity were similarly motivated both by anti-anti-Semitism and pro-Semitism. In 1923, in response to the poisonous traduction emanating from automobile tycoon Henry Ford’s mouthpiece, the Dearborn *Independent*, Roback published his article “Jews and the Nobel Prize”. Ford’s writers had been reprising themes found in the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, a forged piece of propaganda (originally concocted in Tzarist Russia) that purported to be a secret programme for Jewish world domination.⁵⁸ They “directed their assault specifically to the Jewish plot in the United States,” historian Howard Sachar notes. “For them, the ‘unassimilable’ Jew was the source of the ‘corruptive and anti-American’ ideas that were destroying Anglo-Saxon civilization.”⁵⁹

Another of their sources was Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the Anglo-German historian (and son-in-law of Richard Wagner) whose ideas Adolph Hitler later used to denounce the meretricious nature of the Jewish intellect. Some Jewish thinkers accepted

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Peretz, he felt, captured the collective spirit of the Jewish ghetto. Roback, *Story of Yiddish Literature*, pp. 41-43.

⁵⁸ “Jews and the Nobel Prize,” *Jewish Tribune*, December 7, 1923, p. 14.

⁵⁹ Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage, 1992), pp. 313-314. According to David Rome, Roback’s “genetic studies led him to the conviction that immigrants inherited blood and cell components of persons [Jewish immigrants] that brought talent and wisdom to the land where they settled and where they added to the national treasures of the nations.” Rome, *The First Jewish Literary School* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1988), p. 117.

this judgement, insofar as it was admitted that Jews were only of late—after a long hiatus since the writing of that greatest of books, the Bible—coming into their own again. Taking a Spencerian (or neo-Lamarckian) approach to the question, Hebrew writer Achad Ha'am stated: "It is a law of nature that every vital function [including intelligence] which ceases to operate for any length of time becomes weaker and weaker until at the end it becomes completely atrophied, and two thousand years of disuse would suffice to incapacitate the strongest organ."⁶⁰

Roback took a less apologetic tack, replying to Ford, Stewart, and their ilk as follows: "Of the hundred-odd Nobel laureates, at least a dozen are Jews or of Jewish descent—when we consider the advantages in numbers on the part of [other nationalities] over the fifteen million Jews in existence, we may proceed to establish a coefficient of genius and come to the conclusion that this coefficient is phenomenally high among the Jews." The reference to a "coefficient of genius" signalled Roback's deference to the methods of Karl Pearson, who founded the science of statistics as the biometrician responsible for the confirmation of Galtonian principles.⁶¹ That Roback's opinions were informed by eugenicism is confirmed by his membership in the American Eugenics Society, of course, but also by his own analyses of the Jewish mind. Searching out the sources of what he considered to be the unique characteristics of Jewish humour, he argued—combining Lamarckism and hereditarianism—that what had begun as a

⁶⁰ Minkin, "A Review of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of Civilization*," *CJT*, February 7, 1913, p. 9.

⁶¹ See Angus McLaren, *Our own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), pp. 16-21.

psychological self-defense mechanism born of centuries of persecution had become a slant of perspective that had become a matter of genetic transmission:

Environmentalists and behaviorists . . . will . . . ascribe the result to the conditions under which the Jews had been living in the diaspora and contend that they were bound to develop a keen wit in order to defend themselves against their persecutors, but it is to be noted that, from a biological viewpoint, one might have anticipated the reverse; for exercising sarcasm against oppressors is not conducive to prosperity, or for that matter, to longevity. It may be retorted that since the Jews could not engage in warfare to better their lot, they took refuge in sallies and witticisms as a means of escape. Such hypotheses . . . can neither be proved nor disproved but if the humour of the Jews is shown to have followed in the same lines in Biblical times as it did during the Diaspora, and if other peoples underwent similar experiences to those of the Jews nevertheless have been found to cultivate a different sort of humour, then the *genes*, in a predominant segment of Jewry, must be looked to for the explanation.⁶²

Like Bennett, Roback thought liberty's hull to be egg-shell thin, too delicate a protection against assimilation, since it tended towards complacent attitudes when it came to cultural matters. And like the young Archie Bennett, he considered race not as a problem but as a solution: a psychological cure for the fractured Jewish mind. For all their faith in the resilience of the Jewish mind, however, they nevertheless felt that the damage that had been inflicted had to some extent been irreparable—that adaptability to foreign environments was as much a negative side-effect as a positive one, a result of a mind-body split incurred by the conditions of Diaspora.

In an intriguing instance of organicism used to explain Jewish neuroticism and the “stunted” Jewish physique, Bennett once wrote of the “Jewish body”: that while it had been whole and healthy in ancient Palestine, it had been reduced to a bottled spirit in the

⁶² Roback, “Sarcasm and Repartee in Yiddish Speech,” *Jewish Frontier*, April, 1951, pp. 19-24.

Goluth (Diaspora). The upshot of this had been that when the Ghettos opened in the wake of emancipation, the under-used body of Jews had over-extended its vascular capacity: the problems of modern assimilation had come about because the blood drain from brain to body was too great to maintain integrity. It is a weird explanation, but it points to what both Bennett and Roback felt was necessitated before Jews were returned to Palestine: dealing with the pathological conditions of Diasporic existence.⁶³

In a piece written on the occasion of the Ninth of Av, a Jewish Holy Day commemorating the destruction of the Second Temple (which occurred on the ninth day of the month of Av, 70 C.E.), Roback questioned the need to mourn the ancient loss of Palestine. He observed that “Rome could conquer the body but not the mind of Israel.” “Our body was gone. We were deprived of our corporate existence. [Yet] the soul . . . remained intact.” History had vindicated the Jew and destroyed the Roman, he argued; and, he added with effect: even now “a Jew [Mayor of the Eternal City, Signor Ernesto Nathan] exercises his authority over Rome.” The Normans, too, Roback pointed out, were weaker in the long run than the Anglo-Saxons, and were “assimilated.” Turning from history to philosophy—or, rather, reading the former in light of the latter—he took on the “assimilationism” of a prominent contemporary French philosopher (whose subjectivist views he might otherwise have felt an affinity for): “We live and flourish despite Bergson’s utterances that there is no Jewish nation with special national traits.”⁶⁴

⁶³ “Jewish Problems,” April 8, 1913, pp.21, 23.

⁶⁴ “Conquerors or Conquered?” *CJT*, July 26, 1912, pp. 6-7. Bergson’s denial of Jewish nationalism reflected the French-Jewish communal consensus, which some have explained to be the reason behind the reluctance of many French Jews to take a stand on the Dreyfus Affair. See Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: The French-Jewish*

Despite these assured utterances, Roback entertained the same ambivalence as Bennett: "The Jews were born with a split consciousness," he wrote in an essay on "Personality and Nationality," "and the friction between the two halves of their ego will keep on perpetually."⁶⁵ As seen, Roback the Jewish nationalist joined forces with Roback the psychologist unabashedly. Here he took Boris Sidis' newly discovered concept of multiple-personality syndrome to explain how the drive to "fit in" and the imperative to preserve group identity interacted to create a "super-normal" race in the Jews.⁶⁶ "When we look back at the grand array of mighty nations that have been obliterated from off the globe," he concluded, "is it not possible that the miraculous preservation of the Jews is due to this very abnormality that we are so often reproached with, that it is to this very 'dibbug' (evil spirit) in us to which we owe our existence and which stimulates our true 'ego' by creating the Judges, by begetting the Prophets, and by raising so many martyrs for our ideal. In strife were we born, and through strife do we exist."⁶⁷

In attempting to accept the evil spirit of assimilation as an inevitable consequence of history, in viewing it as the *id* of the Jewish mind to the preservationist instinct's *ego*, Roback displayed his Hegelian tendency of viewing opposites in term of an organic whole,

Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁶⁵ "Personality and Nationality," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1914, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Boris Sidis and S. P. Goodhart, *Multiple Personality* (New York: Appleton, 1909). Sidis, a Russian-Jewish immigrant, was a colleague of William James' at Harvard (both had left the faculty of psychology by the time Roback got there), and named his son after him. William James Sidis became America's most famous child prodigy, having earned his B.A. at Harvard by age ten.

⁶⁷ "Personality and Nationality," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 4, 1914, p. 7.

a proclivity that itself tended towards eclecticism.⁶⁸

Perhaps the oddest analysis Roback ever wrote was an editorial written during his brief stint in 1914 at the helm of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, which commenced publication a few months after Bennett's *Canadian Jewish Times* ceased to be. The Harvard graduate student was back in Montreal for the summer break and he noticed a distressing trend in the speech of the city's young Jewish males. They were cursing in English, taking the Lord's name in vain. Not G_d's name, which was not to be uttered anyway, but Jesus Christ's! Roback appears to have been a somewhat serious young man and he accordingly undertook an unsmiling exposition of the phenomenon.⁶⁹ His critique of this "abominable habit" provides us with a glimpse into the early workings of the theory of language he was later to elaborate in his years as a psychologist at Harvard and one of the world's foremost Yiddishists.

During World War II, Roback published his *Dictionary of Ethnic Slurs*, a book that remains a classic in the field of demotic linguistics. His was not merely a dictionary of

⁶⁸ He glossed over the question of nature versus nurture in *I.L. Peretz: Psychologist of Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Sci-art Publishers, 1935), p. 396n1: "There is no need . . . of going into the interminable controversy between the Neo-Lamarckians, who maintain that acquired characteristics may be transmitted from generation to generation, and the Neo-Darwinians, who strenuously oppose this view, for it is self-evident that our discussion revolves around those who are born and bred in a Jewish environment and, therefore, must needs feel that pressure of the non-Jewish atmosphere. The anti-golusists strangely enough are infatuated with the principle of transmission, so they could prove that the 'golus' (diaspora) is responsible for the specific Jewish behavior of those members of the race who have never been subjected in the slightest to Ghetto life. The late Maurice Fishberg was a champion of that view."

⁶⁹ Note also his rather dry exposition, from mathematical axioms, on the differences between laughter and smiling. "Smiling and Laughing," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, May 29, 1914, p. 5.

slang. That had been done before. What he set out to do was produce as comprehensively as possible an assemblage of expressions that nationalities/ethnic groups use to deride others, and in some instances, themselves. These slurs, ran his theory, provide valuable insights as to the nature of a particular nationality's mental character—they were “the *id*” within the national mind, the lowest and yet the most authentic, because unconscious, form of group identity.⁷⁰ That the Englishman purchased “French letters” from the druggist, while the Frenchman preferred a *capote anglais* (“English Hat”) before embarking on a night on the town, revealed a link between sexuality and loathing that the psychologist in Roback found fascinating. What disturbed the nationalist in him was the fact that these terms were slippery. Anyone could use them, and if they floated freely enough, their usefulness as indicators of unique national characteristics would be lost.

His position was paradoxical enough. After all, here he was publishing a book that would disseminate helter-skelter the very slurs he wanted to pin in place. Then there was the matter of free speech. On the one hand, he believed that ethnic slurs and ethnic jokes were not only valuable as barometers, but that they were necessary to maintain national health. Legal restriction against their utterance was dangerous, was fooling with nature. On the other hand, he was well aware of the powers of anti-Semitic speech: Hitler's rhetoric had been realized in massacre. In certain instances, then, he allowed that ethnic slurs might be more dangerous in their expression than in their suppression. But he wasn't quite able to make up his mind as to where the line should be drawn.

One reason he was caught in this conundrum was that he sincerely believed that

⁷⁰ *Dictionary of International Slurs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Sci-Art Pub., 1944), pp.

the key to Jewish identity lay in the Yiddish language. As anyone who has read Leo Rosten's *Joy of Yiddish* or merely been alive in the last fifty years will acknowledge, is rife with expressions of ridicule—most of which poke fun at the Jews themselves. In *Wit and the Unconscious*, Freud mentioned Jews as “the people most able to laugh at themselves;” a sign, Roback felt, of an extremely healthy, evolved, national ego.⁷¹

This rather literal reading of the power of language and its effect on the mind, which he was to repeat in his essay on Jewish humour in the 1951, was already apparent in 1914. If Jewish boys couldn't swear properly, in Jewish, how could they be proper Jews? The problem he concluded, invoking the image one finds time and again in the discourse of the day, was that Jews were over-abundantly talented in the art of adaptation. That was their nature. And, though this capacity had served them well in the earlier stages of their development, helping them to outlast and overcome civilizations as mighty as the Babylonian and Roman Empires, to survive two thousand years of Christian hegemony, the time had come to turn off the irrational, unthinking, automatic Darwinian chameleon, or at least to regulate it—through reason. Otherwise, absorption into the surrounding culture—“assimilation”—was sure to follow:

The Jews have during their long post-biblical history been noted in all centuries for their aptitude to learn new things and acquire new ways. Generally speaking, this facility for adaptation is itself a valuable asset to the nation. According to present day psychology, it forms the most salient character of intelligence, for most writers on the subject it *is the capability of adapting oneself constantly to new situations, the alpha and omega of intelligence*. Biologically it is true that the more protean an animal is, the more readily it adapts to its environment, the more chances has it of surviving. But surely we must draw a demarcation line between the irrational and the rational. . . . Were adaptation to environment really the only supreme law governing us, we should never have reached the stage of reasoning, or religion, art

248-49.

⁷¹ *Dictionary of International Slurs*, p. 330.

or science. . . For men adaptation must be preceded by conscious selection . . . The Jews must not lose sight of the disadvantages of adaptation devoid of judgement.⁷²

Roback's primary distinction as a psychologist later in life was his work on "character", which he defined as an "enduring psychological disposition to inhibit instinctive impulses in accordance with a regulative principle." Gordon Allport remarked upon this definition that "it seems puritanical in its emphasis upon inhibition, negation, self-control. But the positive emphasis is more important, namely the possession by people of character of strong, purposes, persistent intentions, and a guiding self-image. Everyone has instincts and impulses (whether we view them in terms of Freud, the behaviourists, or McDougall); but a life given over to their satisfaction is immature, characterless, and more likely than not pathological."

The manner in which Roback expressed his summer-vacation concern over cursing indicates that he was already making the distinction between types of intelligence, between the adaptive and the inhibitory, *id* and *ego*, personality and character that would epitomize his mature work. The Jewish "genius for adaptation" could be taken too far, to the point where the *id*'s primitive survivalism superceded the *ego* of a people's character—which led to extinction in the long run, since survival depended on the environmental inculcation and biological transmission of character.

Whereas Carroll Ryan and the writers of phase one were wont to glorify the alleged super-capacity of Jews and of the Jewish religion to adapt to new conditions, Roback viewed the "adaptable Jew" with a mixture of pride and suspicion. Ryan's views were also based on an eclectic reading of various sources, though as a non-academic he

⁷² Editorial, "An Abominable Habit," *CJC*, July 31, 1914, p. 8.

felt less pressure to build a system out of his thought or to cite his sources. What of Bennett and Roback? Were they as graduates of Queen's University and McGill University indebted to these schools for their ideas? While their intellectual approaches are at times consistent with contemporary trends at those schools—viz., idealism—they are not entirely so. Neither can their ideas be seen as entirely derivative of Canadian academic philosophy, since Canadian philosophy was still as Christian as it was recently Hegelian. (And they are not in tune with the concepts of another Canadian eclectic, Richard Maurice Bucke, either, since he viewed man's innate and unconscious moral nature as tending toward "cosmic" rather than "racial" consciousness).⁷³

To say that Roback and Bennett were exposed to Hegelianism at these institutions is safe to say. McGill was an idealist stronghold under the lingering influence of John Clark Murray who retired in 1903, before Roback's arrival; whoever taught Roback—and it may have been W.D. Tait—is not worthy of mention in either A.B. McKillop or S.E.D. Shortt's work on the subject of Canadian idealism.⁷⁴ Perhaps Roback read the works of resident medical historian, Andrew McPhail, who synthesized intuitive idealism and evolution, and whose racial and hereditarian views sound somewhat alike to Roback's. But there the similarities end: McPhail believed that human instincts were driven towards religion;⁷⁵ Roback rejected religion as an artificial abstract, as something incidental to human identity rather than natural to it, an outdated form of consciousness. (To some

⁷³ A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, pp. 163-164. McKillop discusses the movement of Canadian philosophy from common sense realism to idealism in chapter six.

⁷⁴ McKillop, op. cit.; Shortt, *The Search For an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and Their Convictions in an Age of Transition, 1890-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

⁷⁵ Shortt, p. 23.

extent, he sounds like Auguste Comte, who identified religious thought as taking place in the intermediate “theological” stage of human development.)

With Bennett we can go further. The letter of recommendation John Watson wrote for him⁷⁶ indicates that Bennett read Hegel’s *Science of Logic*—wherein the dialectic was first set out—in the original German. (It also states that he read Bergson, though Bennett, like Roback, never had good things to say about the intuitionist, because of his anti-Zionist stance, which Bennett saw as typically French-Jewish.) But to say that Bennett was a Watsonite Hegelian is to stretch matters. They both read Hegel but they read him differently, and formed separate conclusions. McKillop writes of Watson’s application of Hegelianism that the core of his “social philosophy consisted of the desire to create a moral community based on the universalizing capacity of human reason.”⁷⁷ What Bennett’s social philosophy, at least as a young man, entailed was a desire to create an ethnic community based on the particularizing capacity of human intuition.

Shortt describes Watson as an “objective idealist”, meaning someone who privileges reason over feeling.⁷⁸ Bennett privileged feeling over reason, as did Roback. In a chapter entitled “The Invisible Church” in *Interpretations of Religious Experience*, Watson set out the view that faith—as an historical and personal phenomenon—comes first, is tested and tempered by enlightenment, and is finally restored, alloyed with reason.

⁷⁶ Queen’s University Archives, Kingston (QUA), Queen’s Historical Collection, Series 1, Deceased Alumni Files.

⁷⁷ McKillop, p. 198.

⁷⁸ Shortt, p. 48.

What Bennett and Roback were advocating—a return to racial instincts as a rational response to assimilation—is completely the opposite. Moreover, Watson’s stress on universal cooperation can be contrasted with Bennett/Roback’s stress on racial cooperation. In an editorial Bennett wrote on the Jewish year of 1912 (or 5, 672 in the Jewish calendar): “We are healthy. The struggle for existence is thrilling.”⁷⁹ He meant the Jewish race, and was referring to an aspect of Hegel (the aspect that most resembles Darwinism or Spencerism) that the anti-Spencerian Watson seemed to ignore: the role of conflict in the development of the human species.

Perhaps Bennett’s reading of Hegel was the more correct; perhaps not. In any case, it differed from Watson’s, though it does look a lot like Achad Ha’am’s “spiritual nationalism.”⁸⁰ Ha’am, as I’ve mentioned before, was also an admirer of Spencer’s, and unlike most Canadian philosophers (who, excepting W.D. Lesueur and Goldwin Smith, tended to despise the British philosopher, he read Spencer in a way that saw both the materialist and idealist aspects of his thought. I am compelled to infer, then, that Bennett and Roback, though they never explicitly discussed Spencer (or Ha’am for that matter), appeared to incline towards Ha’am’s combination of evolutionary naturalism and subjective idealism. It makes sense that they would find his formulation more appealing, since it better reflected Jewish history, a story of perpetual conflict and the preservation of identity in the face of overwhelming odds.

⁷⁹ *CJT*, September 11, 1912.

⁸⁰ Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981, pp. 116-121).

Watson's views, by contrast, were reflective of the Social Gospel, a Christian socialist vision that was optimistic about the moral development of society at large. Jews could not afford to be that optimistic, though they leavened their pessimism with hopes for the continuing survival of their own communities. Although Watson spoke highly of Bennett in his letter of recommendation, his views on the Jewish people were implicitly dismissive—as dismissive as Hegel's, in fact.⁸¹ Watson, like Hegel, believed that the Jewish place in history had already passed with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. They were now an epigonic remnant of a once glorious people, the erstwhile chosen ones who had brought to Civilization monotheism and the codification of law, but whose modern day existence merited nary a mention. That does not make Watson an anti-Semite. It makes him a typical turn-of-the-century Christian academic.

Because Watson's treatment of Judaism was solely historical, he did not seem to be able to deal with the fact that Jews still existed. If he did address the issue of Jewish character, it was to contrast the "Legalism" or "casuistry" of "Palestinian Judaism" against the universalism of Greek and Christian philosophy.⁸² That is what he meant when he stressed spirit over law. Bennett, openly and self-consciously Jewish, may have admired his professor but could not have constructed his own identity, and the Jewish nationalism it assumed, on a Watsonian foundation. There was nothing, with the important exception of Hegelianism, to build on. Watson was attracted to the notion of human reason evolving from particularism to universalism and the concomitant organization of moral, as opposed

⁸¹ Though that did not stop Jewish thinkers like Ha'am, and Nachman Krochmal before him, from finding a way to Hegelianize Jewish history. Cf. Avineri, pp. 14-22.

⁸² See, for instance, his *Interpretation of Religious Experience*, vol. I (Glasgow:

to ethnic, communities.⁸³ Bennett seems to have been drawn to the Hegelian dialectic and, in particular, to the meaning that a history of struggle and conflict might hold for the cause of Jewish national realisation. It was only later in life, during the Second World War, that Bennett came to associate Hegel with fascism and left off his own fascination with German thinkers. Watson never did.⁸⁴

Thus while Bennett greatly admired his teacher, he could not look to him or to his teachings for guidance on how to live as a Jew in modernity. He picked that up on his own, from his own readings, and like Roback, created a post-liberal critique of emancipation that owed as much to his own powers of imagination as it did to outside literary influences.

James Maclehose and Sons, 1912), p. 27.

⁸³ McKillop, p. 198.

⁸⁴ In 1941, Bennett wrote that he now preferred Spinozan ideas to Hegel's, despite the former's "hazy universalism." Hegel, while having a "firmness and concreteness" about him, and a "rounded out, symmetrical universalism," he believed had contributed to the rise of fascism, since his thought led to a reduction of the individual to a "trivial unit in a large group mass." "Between Ourselves," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, June 20, 1941. Watson, when critics of idealism pointed fingers at Hegel as a cause of the First World War, wrote an entire volume defending the German philosopher. See Frederick James Hoffner, "The Moral State in 1919: A Study of John Watson's Idealism and Communitarian Liberalism as Expressed in the *State in Peace and War*," M.A. Thesis (Kingston: Queen's University, 1998).

Part II:
Contributors and Community

Chapter Four

The “Melting Pot” Plays Montreal

In Archie Bennett’s opinion, the *Times* under Ryan and Nervich was little more than a sectarian society paper that specialized in news about which members of Shaar Hashomayim had just returned from Saratoga Springs and what gowns were worn and who wore them at the annual Montefiore Club Ball. Though Bennett was obviously biased, it is true that Ryan’s attempts to step up the tone and to increase reader participation met with resounding apathy. (For instance, in 1900 a new feature encouraging high-minded discussion— “Intellectual Intercourse”—was introduced; the first topic, “On Free Will,” was also the last.)¹ But letters to the editor flowed like Herzl Sherry² when the subject of matrimony was broached. The “Marriage Question” appears to have been the one constant connecting the Ryan-Nervich phase (1897-1912) of the paper to Bennett’s (1912-14). Thus in 1911, when “The Melting Pot”, an “assimilationist” answer to the related *intermarriage* question, came to play the Princess Theatre in Montreal, the controversy it touched off amounted to a continuation of an argument already in progress.

¹ *JT*, February 2, 1900, p. 75.

² Some years after Theodor Herzl passed away in 1904, the *Jewish Times* began advertising an assortment of Palestinian wine products, including the sherry named after the founder of Zionism, “from the vaults of Edmund de Rothschild, Rishon le Zion, Jaffa, Palestine.” *JT*, June 14, 1907, p. 237.

The protagonist of “The Melting Pot” is a young Russian Jewish immigrant (David Quixano) who sets out to compose a symphony in honor of his adopted land. This “American Symphony” is intended to symbolize the philharmonic union of the various racial elements of the American population. He is betrothed to a Russian girl (Vera Revendal, the daughter of a Czarist officer who oversaw the pogrom that destroyed David’s family) which action fulfills the symphonic metaphor.³ The section of the play most commonly read is the very end of it, where David expresses the hope that the burden of European history and its hatreds might melt away in the crucible of the New World. David and Vera, holding hands on a rooftop, look out over New York’s harbour after his triumphantly successful concert:

David: (very calmly) Easter was the date of the massacre—see! I am at peace.

Vera: God grant it endure! Look! How beautiful the sunset is after the storm!

David: (prophetically exalted by the spectacle) It is the fires of God round His Crucible. There she lies, the great Melting Pot—listen! Can’t you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth—the harbour where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian—black and yellow—

Vera: (softly, nestling to him) Jew and Gentile—

David: Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross—how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the

³ Ethnic pluralist Horace Kallen responded to Zangwill’s symbol of the American melting pot by coming up with an orchestral metaphor, indicating that he either did not read or see the play or that he felt that Zangwill had not properly exploited it. See his “Democracy versus the Melting Pot,” excerpted in Richard Meister, ed., *Race and Ethnicity in Modern America* (Lexington, Kentucky: Heath, 1974), pp. 53-61.

glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward! Peace, peace, to all ye unborn millions, fated to fill this giant continent—the God of our *children* give your Peace.⁴

The author of the play that gave America its twentieth century cliché was a popular writer from England, Israel Zangwill, the “Jewish Charles Dickens”. His optimism about the future of urbanized America (Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier having disappeared) can be viewed as an attempt to salve WASP fears over “degeneration”; as a reply to immigration restrictionists fearful of the passing of the pioneering Anglo-Saxon race.⁵ Although Zangwill was an Englishman, he was no disinterested party. A Zionist of the Territorialist school—meaning he sought Eastern European Jewish refuge wherever it might be granted rather than Palestinian restoration—and an organizer of the American Southwest resettlement scheme known as the Galveston Plan, he had a Jewish activist’s stake in making certain that the door to America remained open.⁶ But Jewish critics of “The Melting Pot” felt that Zangwill’s ideas were based on a false anthropology; it did not help that his reputation as a Jewish spokesperson, particularly after his marriage to a Christian woman, Edith Ayrton (in 1903), had already been a matter of considerable controversy.⁷

⁴ Zangwill, *The Melting Pot: A Drama in Four Acts* (New York: MacMillan, 1925), pp. 184-185. Hereafter *MP*.

⁵ See Madison Grant, “The Passing of the Great Race,” excerpted in Richard Meister, ed., *Race and Ethnicity in Modern America*, pp. 41-44.

⁶ See Joseph Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1990), pp. 121-122, 184-187.

⁷ One outcome of which was that his close association with Solomon Schechter

While conceding that Zangwill's vision was unique in its glorification of "mongrelization", cultural historian Harley Erdman insists that, like his peers, Zangwill "construed culture in terms of race." He points out that Zangwill's play "seethes with self-conscious racial politics," since it is "centered around the racial implications of the union between David and Vera."⁸ Superficially, it certainly appears so and the "Melting Pot" to be just another product of the time. Dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt (who had a personal hand in making revisions before acceding the stamp of approval: "That's a great play, Mr. Zangwill!" he hollered when the curtain fell at its Washington debut in 1908), "The Melting Pot" bore markings of the President's influence.⁹ Observing the decline in the birthrate of middle-class whites, Roosevelt had argued for eugenic population control in widely published articles on "race suicide" (a phrase he borrowed from E.A. Ross, the University of Wisconsin sociologist known for his use of racialist/racist arguments for immigration restriction).¹⁰ Roosevelt had declared: "Either a man is an American and nothing else, or he is not an American at all."¹¹ Zangwill's non-nationalist brand of Zionism (he was head of the "Territorialist" branch of the movement) coincided with, or at least did not contradict, this view.

Roosevelt made the play a household name, a symbol of the ideal of

was ended. Udelson, p. 150.

⁸ Erdman, p. 137.

⁹ Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 379.

¹⁰ David Lowenthal *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 202.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

Americanization.¹² Without his boosterism, “The Melting Pot” would not have become the American archetype-cum-cliché. (And without the popularization of this image, the counter-image of the Canadian Mosaic would not have come into being.) Still, his support for Zangwill’s ideas seems to have derived from a misunderstanding of them. For the president was a racist—that is, he believed races were real—whereas the playwright might be described as a racial deconstructionist, which habit of mind cut across the racial purist tendencies of the time.

Zangwill’s *midrash* on the meaning of Darwinian evolution at the First Universal Races Congress of 1911 supports that conclusion. In his keynote speech on “The Jewish Race,” Zangwill delivered a series of mixed messages, the ambivalence stemming from his habit of attempting to disarm Jewish and non-Jewish objections simultaneously. But he was clear on one thing—racialism was a concept made obsolete by modern evolutionary theory:

Sound science warrants . . . [the long surviving Jewish people’s] claim to be a ‘chosen people’. [However], the primitive notion of the abysmal separateness of races can scarcely survive under Darwinism. Every race is really akin to every other. Imagine a Canine Congress debating if all these glaring differences of form, size and color could possibly consist with an underlying and essential dogginess. . .

If the Jew [because of his “chameleon quality”] has been able to enter into all incarnations of humanity and to be at home in every environment, it is because he is the common measure of all humanity. He is the pioneer by which the true race theory has been experimentally demonstrated.¹³

¹² The phrase did not originate with Zangwill. J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur spoke of a “melting” of the American race in the revolutionary period, and in 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis referred to the American “crucible”. Meister, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹³ Israel Zangwill’s speech to the Universal Races Congress was published in its

In other words, the Diaspora—and the phenotypic variations of Jewry it produced—was proof of Darwinism. Zangwill’s doggy analogy was not picked out of a hat. The doctrines of the eugenics movement (laid out by Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton from 1869, with the publication of *Hereditary Genius*; not until the early twentieth century did the movement take on institutional form as the British Eugenics Society) had infected the business of animal husbandry.¹⁴ In response, Darwin had taken British breeders to task for “clinging with superstitious tenacity to the doctrine of purity of blood.”¹⁵ It would appear that Zangwill’s understanding of Darwinian theory was more in keeping with what Darwin intended than was Galtonianism. Because Darwin predicted that deeper gene pools allowed for more mutational possibilities, race purists such as the Anglo-Jewish Darwinist, Joseph Jacobs (a close colleague of Galton’s), were accordingly forced to come up with alternative interpretations of natural/sexual selection.¹⁶

While Zangwill’s Darwinist *reductio ad canine* went over well at the Congress (its mandate being to examine how innatism contributed to problems in “race relations”),¹⁷ it

entirety a month after the fact in the *CJT*, August 18, 1911, pp. 9-11; and August 25, 1911, pp. 4-5. For the original, see Zangwill, “The Jewish Race,” G. Spiller, ed., *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* (London, 1911), p. 277ff.

¹⁴ Stephen Budiansky, “The Truth About Dogs,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1999. The article includes an account of purist dog-breeder Leon Fradley Whitney receiving a letter of appreciation from Adolph Hitler after publishing *The Case For Sterilization* in 1934.

¹⁵ Lowenthal, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁶ Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, pp. 61ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Spiller’s introduction to *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* (London: 1911); Michael Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 104-109; and Lyons,

was not so well received by his popular audience. In Jewish circles, his evolutionary reinterpretation of chosen-ness notwithstanding, the fact that Zangwill denied the existence of a Jewish racial identity was taken as further evidence that he was an “assimilationist”. Wrote one special correspondent to the *Canadian Jewish Times*:

[Israel] Zangwill has undergone another metamorphosis, the Zangwill whose ideal is no more the preservation of his people as a separate entity, distinct and secluded from the rest of humanity, but rather their complete absorption into the vast families of nations amongst whom they are settled; a leech who would prescribe cowardly suicide as a specific for a poor aching nation, the Zangwill who ingeniously conceived the ‘Melting Pot’ nostrum as the solution for the vexing Jewish problem [while they] show by their normal material increase as well as other unmistakable signs no symptoms of a vanishing dying race or the lowering of individual vitality.¹⁸

American sociologist Maurice Fishberg’s environmentalist explanation for the existence of Jewish physical and mental characteristics was meeting with similar outrage. In an article written for *Popular Science* entitled “Are Jews a Pure Race,” Abram Lipsky, Ph.D. accused Fishberg of peddling “assimilationism.” “Fishberg sees nothing but the [influence of the] Ghetto” on Jewish head-form and “tenacity of life,” wrote Lipsky, who argued that these were innately derived attributes, as were immunity to tuberculosis and cancer, sobriety, and a low rate of criminal behavior. If Jews are not a racial unit, he asked, what kind of unit are they? If Jews were not a race because shaped by environment, he concluded, then there were also no American Indians, Anglo-Saxons, and Ethiopians. Taking a polygenic point of view, Lipsky challenged: “Does Dr. Fishberg imagine they

Harriet Lyons, “A Race or Not a Race: the Question of Jewish Identity in the Year of the First Universal Races Congress.” *History, Identity, and Ethnicity*. J. Maier and C. Waxman, eds. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1983), pp. 499-518.

¹⁸ Harold Berman, “Israel Zangwill: A Study,” for the *CJT*, September 11, 1912, pp. 4-6.

inherited [characteristics] in an uninterrupted line of descent from a primitive group or pair?" In answer to Fishberg's argument that Jews scattered throughout the Diaspora bore more of a resemblance to their non-Jewish neighbors than to Jews in other lands, Lipsky cited W.Z. Ripley's theory of Jewish "sexual selection". Jewish-Gentile resemblance, according to Ripley, were due to a tendency choose mates according to the local "ideal type": Jews married Jews who looked like Gentiles.¹⁹

As his Darwinist deconstruction of the concept of race indicates, Zangwill's ultimate aim was the privileging of individual over collective identity, believing that the "Jewish Question" and the problem of race relations generally would disappear with the disappearance of "the Jew" and all other racial categories. Despite his and the efforts of Franz Boas (whose countervailing views were not to have great effect until the late 1930s, when the example of Nazi Germany tainted hereditarianism),²⁰ however, fin-de-siecle evolutionary theory and its racial and eugenicist offshoots were tending towards the hardening of racial categories, not their dissolution.

In his *Our Own Master Race*, social historian Angus McLaren takes a sensitive look (despite the sensationalist tone set by his title) at "the circumstances that led so many respectable Canadians, imagining the race to be threatened with 'degeneration,' to turn to

¹⁹ Reprinted in the *CJT*, July 26, 1912, pp. 20-21, 24. See also Fishberg, *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (New York: Scribners, 1911); William Zebina Ripley, *The Races of Europe; a Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1899), and "Races in the United States," *The Atlantic Monthly* 102:6 (December 1908), pp. 745-759.

²⁰ McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, chapter eight: "The Death of Eugenics?"

eugenics as a guide for defensive action.”²¹ When referring to Jewish involvement in sexual hygiene or “race betterment”, McLaren underscores his point that eugenicism had many faces, including a liberal progressive one: “that Jews in Canada and elsewhere were actively involved in eugenics was one more indication of the success with which the movement presented itself as an objective science, not as a racist cause.”²² But it might have been helpful had not McLaren overlooked the distinction between “racist” and “racialist” that intellectuals like A.A. Roback and others were making: Jewish thinkers may not have supported the racism behind eugenics, but that did not stop them from accepting its racialism.

Though not racist in an openly antagonistic sense, the Jewish adoption of sexual hygiene cannot be said to be universalist either: that is, it was as much about a race between humans as about the human race as a whole. Nervich accepted the epistemology of racialism when he baldly stated that the issue at stake (for Jews and non-Jews alike) was racial cultivation or “race culture”. The extent of the era’s obsession with race and purity requires of the historian both a wide-angle lens and an ability to zoom on the real differences between racists and racialists. In 1913 Rabbi Minkin of Hamilton wrote a critical review of Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s recently translated *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (originally published in 1899), a book Minkin was correct in identifying the “scientific Bible of anti-Semitism.”²³ Though Minkin disagreed with the

²¹ McLaren, p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.76-77.

²³ Chamberlain was Richard Wagner’s son-in-law. If Wagner was Adolph Hitler’s favorite composer, the Anglo-German Chamberlain was his preferred historian.

conclusions of *Foundations*—that Jews were an ultimately uncreative and culture destroying race²⁴—it did not prevent him from agreeing with its racial hygienic premises. Summing these up, he wrote: “The man who belongs to a pure race never loses the sense of it—that which influences the destinies of nations is neither climate nor environment but the purity of race.” “In this theory,” Minkin commented parenthetically, “Chamberlain is at one with Disraeli,” referring to the Conservative politician’s racial definition of his own Jewishness.²⁵ Taken alone, that comment reveals little of his own opinion on the subject. A few pages later, however, Minkin inveighed against the dangers of intermarriage “on the grounds that it is a menace not only from the religious, but from the racial point of view.”²⁶

²⁴ Minkin was correct in stating that it was French historian Ernest Renan

who through scientific investigations in the sphere of race anthropology sought to establish the fact of the inferiority of the Jewish race, an intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic and physical inferiority. It was he . . . who gave currency to the idea that the Jews are the descendants of a race which . . . is much inferior to the dominant Aryan race. At first it was thought that of the three races—the white [Caucasian], yellow [Mongoloid] and black [Negroid]—the white race alone, together with some families of the yellow race, were capable of founding a superior civilization, but presently the white race was subdivided into two groups—the Aryan and Semitic races.

According to Renan, the Semites were clever but ultimately possessed of an uncreative intelligence: “The little that the Jews have contributed [to Western Civilization] is not due to the outflow of their own natural genius, but to the presence in their veins of Amorite blood, who were of primitive Aryan stock.” *CJT*, February 7, 1913, pp. 9-11.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 11. For a discussion of the subject, see Todd Endelman’s “Disraeli’s Jewishness Reconsidered,” *Modern Judaism* 5:2 (1985), pp. 109-123.

²⁶ “Rabbi Minkin Speaks Vigilantly on the Question of Mixed Marriages” from
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Note that Minkin's argument is preservative, not aggressively chauvinistic. The adoption of biologically-based discourse by Jews was usually a matter of self-defense, and facilitated, though not determined, by the peculiar nature of the Jewish religion. Religious Jews did not just choose their faith, they *were* their faith; somewhere along the line, rabbinical Judaism (beginning 70 C.E.) stopped seeking converts, so it was more dependent than Christian sects on inter-generational transmission.²⁷ Because the children of Judaism were so important to its future, the Jewish invocation of eugenic theory, which declared child-rearing and sexual hygiene to be the politics of the future, came readily and with little or no controversy, though not as a matter of course.²⁸

Hamilton *Herald*, reprinted, *CJT.*, February 7, 1913, p. 13. See also Bennett's editorial of August 22, 1913: "In the case of marriage with a proselyte, the danger of the instinctive antipathy between members of two faiths is much feared by Jews and thus . . . discouraged. When . . . a Jewish party marries out of the faith with one who has not shown a willingness to accept the Jewish religion, not only is marriage not recognised but such conduct is strongly discountenanced. From the racial point of view there is the destruction of a branch of the race which is greatly deplored, whilst from a religious point of view the loss of an adherent is sadly mourned. The differences which lie dormant in people of various races will appear after years of hiding and this tends to irritate and ultimately antagonise the other party, usually resulting in an unhappy life for both."

²⁷ Donald Akenson discusses the early relationship of Christianity and Judaism, and the competition for converts in the immediate post-exilic period, in *Surpassing Wonder*, pp. 273-294.

²⁸ It was not unusual for community pillars like Toronto rabbi Maurice Eisendrath to become members of local eugenic/birth control societies. He and his wife, along with "Rabbi Sachs and Mrs. Sachs", were honorary officers of Toronto's League for Race Betterment as late as 1938. See *Race Betterment News* 1:2 January 1938, p. 1. For mentions of both Eisendrath and Sachs, cf. Angus McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), p. 119 and his *Our Own Master Race*, pp. 76-77, 78, 83. Numerous works on the subjects of childcare, marital relations, and evolutionary sociology were published by Jewish authorities in Canada, the United States, and Britain, including: William Moses Feldman, *The Jewish Child; its History, Folklore, Biology, and Sociology* (New York: Bloch, 1918); Caleb Williams Saleeby, *Progress of*

Judaism was not innately biological or exclusionary.²⁹ Yet, in the early twentieth century, the progress of secularization meant that ethnic aspects of the Jewish religion grew more important: Jewish youth no longer swayed by religiously phrased injunctions, covenantal commandments were increasingly coated in the persuasive discourse of scientific empiricism. With the ascendance of biology as an explanatory force, organic analogies were the order of the day. Religion, cultural heritage, and a sense of duty to one's ancestors and descendants—all of these could be and were at some point reduced to or backed up by evolutionism, eugenicism, or racial hygiene.

Minkin's invocation of race, then, signified that religiously formulated prohibitions against exogamy were no longer effective unless given a biological twist or boost: that is why young people were no longer simply warned against marrying out of the *faith* but against marrying out of the *race*. This rhetorical tactic was employed whenever appeals to religious duty fell on deaf ears. When a proposed Jewish orphanage in Montreal failed to

Eugenics (London: 1914), *Evolution, the Master Key* (London: 1906), *The Cycle of Life* (London: 1904), *Parenthood and Race Culture: an Outline of Eugenics* (London: 1909); Morris Siegel, *Constructive Eugenics and Rational Marriage* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1934), *Population, Race and Eugenics* (Hamilton, Ontario: 1939); Herbert Solomon, *The First Principles of Evolution* (London: A & C Black, 1913), *The First Principles of Heredity* (London: A & C Black, 1917). On Canadian geneticist Morris Siegel's attempt to distance eugenics from Aryan supremacist thought, see Jean-Guy Prevost and Jean-Pierre Beaud, "Immigration, Eugenics and Statistics: Measuring Racial Origins in Canada, 1921-1941," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28:2 (1996), pp. 1-24.

²⁹ An oversimplification that has recently cropped up in the form of Kevin MacDonald's sociobiological history of the Jews, *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 1994). The late Ivan Hannaford argues that the "origins of race" cannot be attributable to the "Hebrew teachings about a chosen people of pure blood," since "Hebrew piety contains the possibility of conversion of the stranger into the faith." See his *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), p. 93.

receive sufficient support, exhortations to institute a building fund were pitched in racial as well as religious idioms. One particularly direct appeal began by evoking the spectre of Jewish foundlings wearing crucifixes (an allusion to the denominational alternative: the local Catholic orphanage) and ended by warning against racial extinction. This being the year 1912, the horrors of a recent boating accident were thrown in for good measure: “Every man on the Titanic that gave up his life, in order that a woman of a child may live, did not make a sacrifice. His instinct had to choose between the lesser and the greater sacrifice, and he chose the lesser. Chivalry had no part in it; the race instinct of race preservation decreed it.”³⁰ Even granting that charity work is a competitive business, it is significant that this was the language calculated to rouse an apathetic community to action. In a secular world where the law of survival outweighed all others, appeals to one’s better nature were bolstered or even supplanted by appeals to an innate nature.

Initially at least, the “Marriage Question” as posed in Jewish Montreal appeared innocent of race purist and social hygienic influence. It was Esmond Isaacs, the first regular columnist of the *Jewish Times*, who brought attention to the in 1899. A Catholic woman in New York had recently married a Jew whose attachments to Judaism had consequently been annulled. Such mismatches were bound to happen sooner or later in Montreal, Isaacs warned, since the city’s Jewish young people were marrying later in life, too caught up in materialistic pleasures and the social whirl of various cliques. These “charmed circles” prevented the kind of purposive intermingling which might better result

³⁰ *CJT*, August 2, 1912, p. 22.

in the meeting of mates. Whose fault was this? Isaacs found that “the ladies will tell you it is all the fault of the young men.” To a great extent, he agreed.³¹ He had previously gone to sarcastic lengths to describe the ill-effects of the local “popinjay” population.

“Popinjays”, as he defined them, were unmarried young and not-so-young Jewish men who devoted the best part of their time to the making and spending of money, hedonists who would rather gamble away their earnings than take up an active interest in the responsibilities of community building and family life: he called them popinjays because they “parroted” Gentile ways.

As Isaacs saw it, the marriage problem could be broken into three parts: marriage, particularly for young Jewish men, was becoming a priority later in life; the more time spent unmarried meant that chances of exogamy increased; and exogamy was destructive of the Jewish faith. As will be demonstrated, these are themes that continue to appear through to the second phase of the newspaper, with one very important difference—by phase two, the rhetoric of religious concern was starting to vie with the language of sexual hygiene and race culture, reflective of a new secularist point of view.

That fears over intermarriage were initially expressed in religious terms is evident in an editorial published in 1902. American and German statistics showed that unions between Jewish men and “Christian” women were taking place with an unprecedented frequency. While, in some cases, the woman in question chose to convert to Judaism, it

³¹ Esmond Isaacs, “One Point of View,” *JT*, May 26, 1899, pp. 194-195; see also, “The Marriage Question: Why Young Men Are Slow to Marry,” *JT*, March 1, 1901, p. 104.

was Ryan's opinion that unless she "loves as strongly as Ruth," the marriage would "end in misery". In any case, as far as he was concerned, mixed marriage was a sign of "decaying faith".³² Another item from that year reported that an increasing rate of "intermarriage among the wealthier Jews and Christians in England" was indicated by the fact that clauses were being written into wills stipulating that "sons who marry Christian girls" were to be disinherited.³³ No racial implications were laid out.

Meanwhile, young Jewish women wrote letters to the *Jewish Times* that suggested they had been reduced to pariah status. The "Melancholy Marital Meditations of a Montreal Maiden" asked, "Why Do the Flies Adhere to Us?"³⁴ Exaggeration and alliteration aside, the general impression appeared to be that marital delays were becoming quite common and constituted a community crisis in the offing. Historian Michael Brown has noted that wealthy or distinguished young Jewish men often traveled to the United States to find brides worthy of *yichas* (family prestige). One female letter writer to the *Canadian Jewish Times* inquired: "What have the ministerial heads of two of our leading congregations [Rev. Drs. Nathan Gordon of the Reform Temple Emanu-El and Herman Abramowitz of Conservative Shaar Hashomayim, both single] to say about it? "Is it not

³² Editorial, *JT*, April 11, 1902, p.152.

³³ *JT*, December 19, 1902, p. 31. See also "News From Everywhere," *CJT*, April 8, 1910: "During the ten years 1899-1908 there were celebrated in Amsterdam, Holland, 3 810 Jewish marriages, and 425 mixed marriages." According to Paul Spickard, "by 1900 far more Jewish men than women intermarried, and the gender imbalance was increasing." Still, exogamous arrangements were rare, at least among newcomers—"between 1908 and 1912, less than one percent of Jewish immigrants married non-Jews." *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 167, 180.

time they practiced what they so frequently preach, when solemnizing the nuptials of many young couples?"³⁵ A year later, Abramowitz married a young Jewish woman from New York—not exactly what the letter writer had in mind.

In Chicago the social pressures on bachelors to marry had taken on a punitive nature, albeit in support of a worthy cause. A graduated tax was being levied on single men by the Young Men's Associated Jewish Charity of Chicago. "The tax is to be increased \$5 for every 5 years older than 30," reported the *Times*. "Thus a bachelor 50 years old would pay \$25."³⁶ The funds raised were being used to resettle Jewish immigrants (along the lines of Zangwill's Galveston Plan, New York's Industrial Removal Office, and Montreal's Jewish Colonization Association), sending them from the unhealthy tenement districts of the city to the salubrious environment of the farm, thus solving two problems simultaneously: congestion on the wrong side of the tracks and marital reluctance on the right side of the tracks.

By 1910, Jewish husbands were "at a premium," even in New York, the phenomenon resulting in the returning importance of the shadchana or Jewish marriage-broker (often, though not always, a woman).³⁷ Companionate marriages, as opposed to arranged matches, were sometimes seen as the root of the marriage problem: the parents of unclaimed nubile daughters were getting impatient and not averse to allowing old ways

³⁴ *CJT*, January 29, 1909, p. 137.

³⁵ Letter to editor, *CJT*, December 9, 1910, p. 6.

³⁶ *CJT*, March 17, 1911, p. 6.

³⁷ "Husbands at a Premium," *CJT*., April 8, 1910, p. 3.

direct the new.³⁸ In a letter to the *Canadian Jewish Times*, A Married Man (identified as one of Montreal Jewry's "most prominent men") urged for a local marriage campaign: "Zionism is doubtlessly sufficiently important to claim considerable of your space [the newspaper having become an official organ of the Canadian Zionist movement] but after all, it has to do mainly with the future of Judaism. Marriage, here and now, is still more momentous, being concerned with the conservation of present Judaism. No marriage—no Jews for Canada, and all of us are not seeking to live in Palestine."³⁹ What is wrong with our young men, he said, was that they blame their irresponsibility on everyone but themselves. And as for their most repeated excuse—that Jewish girls were too extravagant in their tastes—"one young lady [his own daughter?] readily states that a sum of \$2 000/year is amply sufficient to maintain a cosy home."

The response filled the editor's inbox to overflowing: so many correspondents replied that it would have taken another year to publish everyone's opinion on the subject. The young men struck back, accusing the young women of taking on airs and their fathers of spoiling them, criticisms redolent of the class-based Jewish American Princess stereotype usually said to have begun in the 1950s.⁴⁰ Just as the JAP image of the post-war era, then, was the obverse of the devoted Jewish mother, the discourse here

³⁸ *CJT*, January 9, 1914, p. 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, January 2, 1914, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Riv-Ellen Prell, "Our Girls 'Evolute': The Invention of the Jewish Woman as Insatiable Consumer," *CultureFront* 5:3 (1998), pp. 12-19; Evelyn Torton Beck, "From 'Kike' to 'JAP': How Misogyny, Anti-semitism, and Racism Construct the 'Jewish American Princess'," in M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (eds.) *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1997).

contrasted the life-giving, self-sacrificing qualities of Jewish mothers with the irresponsible tendencies of single Jewish girls.⁴¹ Reflecting the pervasiveness of contemporary social scientific discourse, eugenicist rebuttals and charges of racial suicidal tendencies were leveled at unmarried Jewish women; they were said to be risking the future of the Jewish people by refusing to marry early or by rejecting men deemed below their station in life. (Meanwhile, Jewish mothers, already recognized as the anchor of the Jewish home, were now touted a symbol of natural eugenicist wisdom.)

The first respondent, signing himself Old Bach, angrily retorted that only the “sons of wealthy and easy fathers” earn two thousand dollars a year—and even half that amount was “no small salary.” (A yearly earning of one thousand dollars was twice the highest working-class wage.)⁴² No, he insisted, the young women were to blame. “She [the Jewish girl] rather looks for her future husband amongst the men who are rich enough to cater to her selfish and costly whims.” He punctuated his point with an allusion to survivalist concerns: “The future of the race never enters her mind.”⁴³ The next week, One

⁴¹ See also “The Typical Jewess,” an article originally published in *Lady's Realm* magazine, reprinted in the *JT*, September 4, 1908: “Judaism is essentially a home religion.”

⁴² The Child Welfare Exhibition Committee in Montreal, whose members included Lyon Cohen and Rabbi Abramowitz, estimated that the average laborer could expect to budget on \$555 a year, well below the poverty line of \$952. Of course, most working-class families had several income earners. It was only in the upper- and middle-class that women and children were expected not to work. Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897- 1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 34.

⁴³ Letter to editor, *CJT*, January 9, 1914, p. 14.

Approaching Bachelorhood pointed out that his mother married his father with an unconditional sense of marital duty. Not only that, but she had always been frugal: “[The] extravagance of Jewish women in America is a charge hurled at us by our non-Jewish neighbors,” he wrote, implying both that Jewish girls of his generation were sacrificing the future of “the race” for the sake of their whims and that they were legitimising Anti-Semitic claims.⁴⁴ Another letter writer made that dubious connection more explicitly. He began with a blessing of old country mothers who never saw the man they were to marry until their wedding day, and moved on to a denunciation of modern girls who fall in love innumerable times before the age of sixteen. Then, pressing a line of logic that might go some ways towards explaining why he was still single, this bachelor wrote: “After marriage these women begin to neglect themselves and soon become slovenly—a charge which our non-Jewish neighbors hurl at us and which may be the indirect reason for our not being welcome in some places.”⁴⁵

Some correspondents were not so straight-faced or mean-spirited. Wanted—A Wife resorted to ironic puns, declaring himself a “clean liver [a reference to being alcohol-free] and eugenically fit.”⁴⁶ Going on to describe in absurd detail his physical virtues—the main being that he was under fifty years of age—he was echoing a joke made the year prior by an amateur comedienne of local repute. Minnie Bernstein, who was especially adept at puncturing the egos of bachelors, could also poke fun at her own gender and the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1914, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, March 13, 1914, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁶ *CJT*, February 13, 1914, p. 10.

atmosphere of eugenic dread surrounding the marriage question. In a talk entitled “The Jewish Wife” she acknowledged that marriage was “no longer a question of sentiment, but of solid and knowing deliberation.” Instead, “the blushing maiden with a volume of Brieux [Eugene Brieux, a popular playwright of romantic comedies] in her hands, firmly demands—a Health Certificate!” In an intriguing association of contemporary concerns, Miss Bernstein was pointing out how social hygienic discourse constituted a critique of companionate marital relationships: “As for Love, what antiquarian shall speak of that? Lovers must hasten to ascertain that the beloved one’s antecedents bear no tendencies towards alcoholism and disease. They must carefully, unromantically investigate that in the corpuscles of the blood are to be found no taint of degeneration that may be transmitted to coming generations. It is a momentous problem as to whom we shall take to our antiseptic bosoms!” She ended her satirical lamentation exclaiming: “Truly we live in a Dangerous Age!”⁴⁷

Bernstein had summed up the difficulties of trying to find love in a time of tuberculosis, to say nothing of an age when fears of racial degeneration ran rampant. The marriage question partook of this devolutionary alarmism; gradually and with increasing frequency, links between race, sexual hygiene, and intermarriage were made. It may seem an oblique connection at first glance, but Jewish authorities were apprehensive that the acceptance of gentile notions (*goyim naches*)⁴⁸ like romance their young people would end

⁴⁷ “Jewish Wife,” *Ibid.*, December 1913, 1913, p.7.

⁴⁸ To be sure, Judaism had never upheld anything like the monastic ideal of celibacy or the virginal ideal found in the cult of Mary. Neither was romantic love a concept easily integrated. Daniel Boyarin, who has made a study of Jewish

up as gentiles or living like them: romantic love threatened to erase the essential differences between Jewish and non-Jewish priorities, between collective duty and the personal pursuit of happiness. Thus, while romantic novelists talked of a love tailored to suit the needs of individual longings, Jewish spokespersons spoke of marriage as an institution intended for the fulfilment of group responsibilities.

When for example Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago explained to readers of the *Ladies Home Journal* "Why Divorces are Fewer Among the Jews", he observed that "romantic exaltation is rarely the motive of marriage among Jews." Young people of Jewish families, he asserted, do not make decisions to marry on their own, nor for reasons as trivial as mere affection. "Respect and responsibility are the polar stars of marital felicity," he declared, implying that young Jews took marriage more seriously than their non-Jewish counterparts.⁴⁹ Perhaps he was speaking of ideals past rather than present-day realities; it may be that he had not yet read the popular Tevye stories of Sholem Aleichem (later to become the inspiration for the Broadway musical and Norman Jewison film, "Fiddler on the Roof"),⁵⁰ which meditated on the impact of modern love on ancient

heterosexuality, agrees with Tevye the milkman that "traditional Jewish culture had little use for the merely spiritual loves men and women that came to characterise European Romantic culture." Cf. Daniel Boyarin, "Goyim Naches, or Modernity and the Manliness of the Mentsh," in Cheyette and Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 85. See also Egon Mayer, *Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians* (New York: Plenum Books, 1985), p. 33.

⁴⁹ *CJT*, May 9, 1913, p. 21. See also Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 275, 290.

⁵⁰ The Tevye cycle was begun in 1896. In case the reader needs reminding: Tevye's first daughter Hodel married a poor tailor, rather than an elderly and relatively

traditions. In any event, there was an irony at work here: the perception that there was a marriage problem meant that even the most liberal of community elders—who had been so adamant that Jewish immigrants should be Americanized or Canadianize—now reconsidered Old Country methods of social control. (Consider the motivations behind the contemporaneous Kehillah movement in New York City.)⁵¹

The logic was that if modern nuptial attitudes were at least partly to blame for an increased tendency towards intermarriage, then a re-examination and/or reinterpretation of traditional practices might provide some answers. Despite this, the shadchana (Jewish match-maker) was not making such a good living in the New World and was unlikely to make a permanent comeback. So, instead, Jewish youth were provided with a scientifically endorsed shadchana substitute and inducted into the mysteries of marriage through properly supervised sexual education. The *Canadian Jewish Times* did its part in 1910 by reviewing a pamphlet written by a Dr. Philip Zenner entitled “Education in Sexual Physiology and Hygiene.” Then editor Hyman Nervich lauded the work as “as important

well-off butcher, against the advice of the village shadchana (match-maker) and the wishes of her parents; Hodel, the second daughter, fell in and fell in love with a young revolutionary and follows him after he is arrested and sent to Siberia; when daughter number three, Chava, marries a Russian clerk under Christian auspices, Tevye, in keeping with tradition, regards her as dead, yet is tormented by visions of her. In the Jewison production, the young Russian is a soldier—which adds to the feeling of betrayal—but a happy ending is tacked on: the milkman gruffly and off-handedly wishes the young couple well as he and they and the rest of the shtetl prepare to leave for America. “Chava”, *The Tevye Stories and Others* (New York: Pocket Books, 1965), pp. 61-75. See also Egon Mayer, *Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians* (New York: Plenum Books, 1985), p. 33.

⁵¹ Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 171-172; Arthur Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah*

chapter to the science of race culture.” That it was aimed at curbing the indiscriminate sexual proclivities of young males is indicated by Nervich’s comment that the doctor had shown incontrovertibly that it was neither “smart” nor “manly” to “pander to mental and physical degeneration.”⁵² (Under editor Archie Bennett the newspaper advertised local talks on the subject of “Sexual Hygiene”. One of these, sponsored by the local Young Men’s Hebrew Association, was presented by a local Jewish physician, Dr. Seymore Stein, with the help of lantern slides. According to the event’s reporter, it proved to be “one of the most interesting in the Heart to Heart Talks series.”)⁵³

By the time the “Melting Pot” played Montreal in 1911, it was widely interpreted in Jewish circles that Israel Zangwill’s theories pandered to mental and physical degeneration. But at the very beginning of the media blitz that accompanied the 1909 opening of “The Melting Pot” in Washington, D.C., Nervich of the *Canadian Jewish Times* proudly reprinted the kudos (and ignored the criticisms) that followed on the heels of the drama’s states-side run. Most of the reviews posted between 1908 and 1911 were mixed. Critics who had been eagerly anticipating Zangwill’s new work often came away disappointed by its aesthetics. It mimicked “realism” (fashionable at the time) but came off as melodramatic schmaltz: as Erdman puts it, Zangwill “was closer to Frank Capra than Henrik Ibsen.”⁵⁴

Expectations had been high not only as a consequence of the reputation Zangwill

Experiment, 1908-1922 (New York: 1970).

⁵² “A Physician’s Message,” *CJT.*, December 2, 1910, pp. 8-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1914, p. 16.

had garnered through his previous efforts, notably the novel *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), but because the Jewish literary scene seemed to be on the verge of coming into its own. The opinion in some circles was that, given the newly creative course of emancipated Jewry,⁵⁵ an English-language Jewish masterpiece was sure to be in the offing.⁵⁶ The American dramatist Augustus Thomas, a white writer who sometimes wrote on “Negro” subjects, went so far as to predict that the “great American play of the near future” would be written by a Jew. When Zangwill’s paean to Americanization finally opened in New York, one member of the city’s theatrical press declared: “Zangwill is the man and the ‘Melting Pot’ is the play.”⁵⁷

Until 1911, all the Jews of Montreal had to go on were these press clippings. In March of that year, five months prior to the Universal Races Congress, the “Melting Pot” opened at the Princess Theatre in Montreal. A week later, the *Canadian Jewish Times* published Rabbi Abramowitz’s review. In it, he described the play as touching “the general American problem as well as the Jewish.”⁵⁸ His impression that the play was as much

⁵⁴ Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, p. 137.

⁵⁵ Erdman’s book does not discuss the contemporaneous Yiddishist movement, focussing instead on the development of English language Jewish-American productions between the years 1860 and 1920. George Michael Cohan, an American Jew who made the transition from vaudeville song and dance to Broadway musical, enjoyed enormous popularity. There were also French-Jewish authors of note at this time. For instance, the dramatist Henri Bernstein (touted as Victorien Sardou’s successor) had his “After Me, The Deluge” produced in both New York and Montreal. See *CJT*, September 16, 1910, p.1.

⁵⁶ “Zangwill’s New Play,” *JT*, October 16, 1908, p. 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *CJT*, March 17, 1911, pp. 4-5.

about the “Jewish Question” of assimilation as about the role of America as assimilator is significant: those of us familiar with its Americanization aspect solely are reminded that “The Melting Pot” was considered as one side of a *Jewish* argument on the issue of intermarriage. Thus we have the drama critic of the *Montreal Gazette* summing up the play with a headline reading “Melting Pot Deals with Jewish People and Causes Discussion.”

The *Gazette* critic went on to note that the drama was “pleasing for most people, if not Jews.”⁵⁹ Certainly, Abramowitz was not impressed. He wondered whether any of the “unborn millions” who were to comprise American “super-humanity” (Zangwill’s phrase) would be Jewish to any identifiable degree. In Abramowitz’s opinion, if “Americanization” or “assimilation” (he used these terms interchangeably) entailed intermarriage, then Zangwill was advocating “nothing short of suicide, racially and religiously.” Commenting on the closely tied spiritual and biological aspects of Judaism, he wrote: “Intermarriage in the case of the Jew has always meant the final step into oblivion. It has always meant recreancy to one’s faith and people, and if practical to any extent would mean the death of the Jew and his Judaism.”⁶⁰

We see intermarriage in “ethno-cultural” terms. But in the period under review, it was defined as “miscegenation”: the intermingling of markedly discrete racial types. A Mrs. Rose Harris wrote to the *Canadian Jewish Times* to express her horror over

⁵⁹ *MG*, March 14, 1911, p. 7.

⁶⁰ This was a theme rehearsed in a sermon entitled “The Present Problem,” *CJT*, March 3, 1911.

Zangwill's work, illustrating the moral/biological connotations so common in that era. "I have yet to be explained how by any law of eugenics or otherwise, the marriage of David, the dreaming bodily suffering victim of the Pogrom, and Vera the sensual daughter of a wholesale murderer, the product of a semi-savage race, is likely to give the world, the hope of the future, the superman, the perfect American," she said. "More likely the offspring will be a degenerate of a very pronounced type."⁶¹ Community pillar Harris Vineberg said, "Every self-respecting Jew must revolt against anyone putting himself at the head of a race in whose destiny he cannot see anything but ignominious extinction." Even Minnie Bernstein could not think of something funny to say: "I question the art that preaches the violation of every natural law, in order to further the doctrine of assimilation. . . . Can the Jew, better than any other, struggle against the immutable laws of heredity and atavism?"⁶²

Zangwill's Jewish defenders in Montreal and elsewhere warned against misconstruing the author's intent: he spoke as a poet, not as a politician or race scientist. One local literary pundit, Dr. Joseph Stern, entered the heart of the matter when he told the readers of the *Canadian Jewish Times* that Zangwill's work was a timely antidote to the dangers presented by the headlong pursuit of race purity; nevertheless, he described Zangwill's play as representative of an alternative form of eugenicism.⁶³ Describing the "Melting Pot" as being about "Forgiveness not Assimilation," he responded to Bernstein: "There is a greater relevancy between physiology and ethics than your youthful

⁶¹ Letter to Editor, *CJT*, April 14, 1911, p. 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, March 31, 1911, pp. 4-5.

correspondent suspects, and the modern system of Eugenics if ever realized by mankind will probably bring about the day of pure living and clean thinking sooner than we have ever dreamed.”⁶⁴ It is not clear what he meant by this, except perhaps to imply that overemphasizing race purity was actually antithetic to racial health, since it led to unhealthily intolerant ideas.

The idea that evil persons were actually evolutionary throwbacks or degenerates made for a powerful literary device and was a staple in popular fiction. In chapter 25 of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Dr. Van Helsing solicits an opinion: “Now you shall speak. Tell us two dry men of science what you see with those so bright eyes.” Mrs. Harker obliges: “The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. [Max] Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of an imperfectly formed mind.”⁶⁵ The objections of Rose Harris, Harris Vineberg, and Minnie Bernstein bore the mark of Nordau and Lombroso’s influence. As Stephen Jay Gould has observed, Lombroso’s theories regarding atavism and inherited physiognomic markers led to the reorientation of law enforcement towards the scientific pre-identification of recidivists.⁶⁶ Positing that criminality (which could be discerned from physiognomy and primitivist body markings such as tattoos) was a sign of “atavism” or “degeneration”—and, often as not, the result of indiscriminate cross-breeding—Lombroso, an Italian of Jewish background, had placed Manitoba Metis leader Louis Riel in his gallery of born criminals. In doing so, he stamped

⁶³ “Correspondence,” *CJT*, April 7, 1911, pp. 4-5, 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Abraham Stoker, *Dracula* (Westminster: 1897), p. 143.

⁶⁶ Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 123-143.

the hatred of “half-breeds” with the imprimatur of evolutionary science.⁶⁷

Zangwill’s play was objectionable because it ran counter to popular and scholarly wisdom, Jewish and non-Jewish, on the issue of mixed-blood unions. German economist Werner Sombart argued that variegation was the key to survival, whether one spoke of flora, fauna, or human races. Despite the wisdom of nature, there was now a “tendency is to flatten the human race into a uniform type.” He stated that the Jewish race, a “precious” and idealistic race, ought to be preserved so as to set up an alternative to Hellenic and Anglo-Saxon materialism: “How poor the world would look if only the grinning Americans or only the laughing Greeks remained.” Sombart supported the Jewish nationalist movement, since it would alleviate problem racial mingling, dampen the “eagerness [of Jews] to adapt themselves to other races.” Of course, Sombart went on to become a Nazi, so his comments must be taken with a grain of salt.⁶⁸ The ubiquitous Sander Gilman has written on the issue of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage in light of the interpretive spin that Aryan supremacists put on it: *Mischling* (the progeny of an exogamous union between a Jew and non-Jew) were considered even more dangerous,

⁶⁷ Daniel Pick, “Faces of Anarchy,” *History Workshop* 21 (Spring 1986), p. 69.

⁶⁸ “Professor Sombart on the Future of the Jews: German Scholar Argues that the Disappearance of the Race by Assimilation would be a Calamity,” from the *New York Sun. JT*, April 19, 1912, p. 4. Sombart is generally considered an anti-Semitic propagandist, since he relied on the stereotype of the capitalist Jew. His essay “The Jew in the Economic World” was linked to the ideas of Houston Stewart Chamberlain in Rabbi Abramowitz’s “Contribution of the Jew to Modern Civilization”, *CJT*, December 27, 1912, p. 8. Sombart turned from Marxist historicism to German romanticism, defending in due course the correctness of Nazi theories.

more Jewish, than racially pure Jews.⁶⁹ It is likely Sombart bought into these assumptions, however much he dressed up his observances in the guise of sympathy.

Max Nordau, the other prophet of degeneration, was by 1911 the first lieutenant of the Zionist movement. Previously, he had built on Lombroso's ideas and applied them to culture in his 1895 international best-seller *Entartung* (or, in English, *Degeneration*). Ideas, for Nordau, were not merely mental epiphenomena but signifiers of moral health, which could in turn affect a civilization's overall well-being. Declaring certain ideas to be pathogens of a diseased consciousness, Nordau argued that authors and artists—including Leo Tolstoy, Oscar Wilde, Henrik Ibsen, and Friedrich Nietzsche—were in fact vectors of the modern malaise.⁷⁰

Calling his Zionist colleague's marital choice "anti-national", Max Nordau confessed privately: "I cannot forgive Zangwill."⁷¹ "The Melting Pot" did not please him either. One can only conjecture as to whether he might have included it as a proscribed work in a revised edition of *Entartung*. Zangwill's play, though partaking of the trendy realism Nordau was wont to condemn, was an unusual artistic work for the time, given its

⁶⁹ Gilman, *Smart Jews*, p. 150-151.

⁷⁰ Alfred Kazin has surmised that, without Nordau's sensationalist fulminations against Nietzsche, the German's work would have remained in obscurity. *On Native Grounds*, p. 40. It is ironic that the celebration of Max Nordau's virtues by nationalists were sometimes expressed in Nietzschean terms. For instance, Dr. N.E. Aronstain, a German Jewish Zionist, described Nordau's writing as bristling with "Dionysian" strength. Aronstain also declared that Israel would someday be "a supernation that shall serve as a model for other less progressive nations—a people whose existence is justified by history." "Jewish Nationalism," *CJT*, January 19, 1912, pp. 12-14.

⁷¹ To Chaim Weizmann, eventually Israel's first president. Udelson, p. 152.

explicit rejection of the premises of purist race science. The first feature film ever produced, D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" (1914), was rife with race purism, based as it was on Thomas Dixon's 1905 novel, *The Leopard's Spots: A White-Man's Romance or The Klansmen*. That the discourse on race purity was pervasive in that era's literature is also indicated by the fact that it was not the monopoly of "whites". Novels written by "black" authors also reflected a paranoia regarding racial mixing.⁷²

In the Jewish case, appeals made to race purity served to defend a sense of community in an age when the tenets of liberalism and religious behavioral sanctions were becoming less and less effective. It was a sign of secularization, but also, of an increasing fear of laissez-faire evolution, of the idea of letting nature take its course. The conjunction of new immigration patterns and secularization on the one hand, and hereditarian discoveries in biology on the other, resulted in new kind of discourse. Thus, despite Zangwill's view that, in America, good things would happen because people there were more likely to do what came naturally, there were others who were fearful of just that and adopted eugenicist arguments to prevent it from happening.

Zangwill's was a eugenicism more typical of eighteenth century attitudes, when admirers of the British Empire attributed its strength to "mongrel" origins. But, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the British Empire was beginning to experience

⁷² See Sutton Griggs' *Imperio et Imperium* (1899). An admirer of W.E.B. DuBois, Griggs was accused by certain black nationalists of having "assimilationist" tendencies. His novel attempted to point out the tragic absurdity of race purism. In it, his full-blooded Negro heroine, caught up in the rhetoric of race purity, chooses to commit suicide rather than carry through with her marriage to a mulatto.

performance anxiety. The poor showing in the wars against the Boers in South Africa had led to fear-mongering expressed in terms of “degeneration.”⁷³ It is not a coincidence that public interest in eugenics soared thereafter.⁷⁴ Perhaps the English-born Zangwill looked to America because he saw that the sun was beginning to set; perhaps he felt, as an old-fashioned liberal, that, in America, the interventionist spirit underlying race purism might eventually shrivel up and die. In any case, there were politico-economic dimensions to his stance.

Compare him, for instance, with Max Nordau. The latter’s pre-Zionist ideas have been classified as typical of the nineteenth century (i.e. laissez-faire) liberal view.⁷⁵ But he ended up going where many liberals of his generation did, towards interventionism (or New Liberalism, as it sometimes called). Indeed, his version of Zionism can be understood as a biological critique of the failure of so-called laissez-faire liberalism to allow for the natural physical and mental development of the Jewish people. A proponent of “Muscular Jewry”, a physical cultural program aiming to counter the effects of persecution on the Jewish body and mind (Montreal’s YMHA, recall, offered similar rationalizations for its existence), Nordau was a participant in the *fin-de-siecle* trend towards the governance of evolution.⁷⁶ In that sense, he exhibited eugenic attitudes: in his thought, nature had been

⁷³ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, pp. 212-219.

⁷⁴ McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, pp. 15, 22, 92.

⁷⁵ George Mosse, “Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 27, 1992, p. 566.

⁷⁶ Raphael Falk, “Zionism and the Biology of the Jews.” *Science in Context* 11:3-4 (1998), pp. 587-608. Nordau came up with the phrase and the proposal at the World Zionist Congress in London, in 1900.

transformed from a reliable social model to a maladjusted state of affairs requiring external controls.⁷⁷ (In other respects, his belief that Jewish development called for a Jewish environment—Palestine—fails to correspond with strict hereditarianism. A truly eugenic point of view privileged the latter: As Winnipeg correspondent Sheila Rand put it in the *Canadian Jewish Times* in an article entitled “Eugenics and the Jews”: “Environment is no longer to be considered the scapegoat for all physical defects and moral vices. Heredity has now by careful and lengthy investigation being proved to be by far the stronger of the two factors.”)⁷⁸

Even the obviously fantastic *Dracula*—which struck a plangent chord because it spoke on one level to fears that humanity’s capacity for dark genius was atavistic, ever latent, and possibly ineradicable—spoke in covert ways to the race purism that Zangwill was attempting to counter. (Some historians have noted that the character of Count Dracula, like Svengali in George DuMaurier’s *Trilby*, was a composite of anti-Semitic stereotypes—the Jew as modernist, the Jew as anachronism, the Jew as sexually rapacious—which makes Stoker’s reference to Nordau and Lombroso doubly ironic.)⁷⁹ Its denouement also suggests a turn towards social scientific secularization. That it is not a

⁷⁷ A development of evolutionary thought which Mike Hawkins has recently explored in *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Hawkins identifies both Nordau and Lombroso as Social Darwinists; see pp. 219-220, 74-80.

⁷⁸ “Eugenics and the Jew,” *CJT*, August 15, 1913, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹ See Daniel Pick, “Powers of Suggestion: Svengali and the Fin-de-Siecle,” in Cheyette and Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 105-125. Hitler described Jews as vampires in *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), p. 451.

priest with a cross but a scientist with knowledge of anatomy who brings about the demise of the vampire is instructive. Science, not religion, was the champion people called upon to remove the evils in contemporary society. Since bad breeding (nature), rather than the lack of moral training (nurture), was seen to be the root of all evils, those who were able to sort out the bad breeds from the good and deal with them were left in charge of civilization's future.

Zangwill took the concerns of hereditarians and race purists, Jewish and otherwise, seriously enough to write a special afterword for the 1914 edition of "The Melting Pot". He admitted that he was indeed describing the making of an inter-bred super-race. But, in a rhetorical turn that threatened to undo all his work in the deconstruction of race, he said that the transformation of the immigrant into super-man was to be a gradual process. Eventually all races would be one, but in the meantime prudence, recognition of the parameters set out by race science, was indicated.

This meant that certain races were as yet ineligible for mating with whites: The "prognathous face [of the Negro] is an ugly and undesirable type of countenance," he wrote—undesirable because connoting "a lower average of intellect and ethics."⁸⁰ "White and black are as yet too far apart for profitable fusion," Zangwill conceded. Still, a genetic bridge between them might be built if Italians and other Mediterraneans—"Spaniards, Sicilians, &c." representing a racial gradation between the Caucasian and Negroid races—were to begin the process by marrying into the darker sections of the American

⁸⁰ *MP*, p. 206.

population.⁸¹

To assuage “Melanophobes” who worried that the even the gradual introduction of Negro qualities into the white nation’s bloodstream might produce degeneration, Zangwill replied that “the devil is not so black nor the black so devilish as he is painted”:

The African negro has obviously already not a few valuable ethnic elements—joy of life, love of colour, keen senses, beautiful voice, and ear for music—contributions that might somewhat compensate for the dragging-down of the white and, in small doses at least, might one day prove a tonic to an anaemic and art-less America. . . .

But the negroid hair and complexion being, in Mendelian language, ‘dominant,’ these black traits are not easy to eliminate from the hybrid posterity; and in view of all the unpleasantness, both immediate and contingent, that attends the blending of colours, only heroic souls on either side should dare the adventure of intermarriage.⁸²

“The adventure of intermarriage” was only for “heroic souls”. Given that he had married a non-Jewish or “Christian” woman, Zangwill may have considered himself one of these heroic figures. So was he buying into scientific racism or was he co-opting it for rhetorical purposes? I argue the latter case. I believe that he believed men like him, and women like his wife, were enlightened persons who saw the way beyond conventional rules of conduct: leading a chary world into a new age; they would make the New World the site of an experiment in eugenic libertarianism. That the herd might be moving in the other direction—towards racial homogeneity and politico-scientific interventionism—was

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 203.

something he dealt with by expounding a cryptic and contradictory compound of populist pandering and elitist gnosticism.

Zangwill was particularly contradictory when addressing his Jewish audience. The crucible of Americanization, he assured in his afterword, did not necessarily entail the loss of group identity. Comparing the Jewish people to the mythical salamander, a creature that could withstand flame, he wrote:

The Jewish immigrant is . . . the toughest of all the white elements that have been poured into the American crucible, the race having, by its unique experience of several thousand years of exposure to alien majorities, developed a salamandrine power of survival. And this asbestoid fibre is made even more fireproof by the anti-Semitism of American uncivilization.⁸³

If this was vague (was he saying, for instance, that anti-Semitism is good or bad for the Jews?) Zangwill exacerbated the reader's bewilderment by elaborating: "The action of the crucible is thus not exclusively physical—a consideration particularly important as regards the Jew. The Jew may be Americanised and the American Judaised without any gamic interaction."⁸⁴ What would benefit both America and its Jewish citizens the most, he asserted, was not the marital assimilation of the Jews but cultural interchange: The phrase he actually used (to calm the fears of "Melanophobes" and Jewish critics alike) was "spiritual miscegenation". He had once made an enigmatic observation that "no theological differences" divided his characters David and Vera, or himself and Edith; perhaps it was their "spiritual

⁸³ *MP*, p. 204.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

miscegenation” to which he was referring (the explanation of his biographer to the contrary, Zangwill did not think of himself as a Christian Jew).⁸⁵

It has been suggested that Israel Zangwill was habitually inconsistent—did he believe in the reality of race or did he not?—and that this inconsistency was the result of foggy notions as to what it meant to be Jewish. I suggest that, at least in the instance of “The Melting Pot”, Zangwill was not so much confused as deliberately obscurantist: that he was undertaking a conscious strategy of rhetorical persuasion along Nietzschean lines. Near the beginning of the play, the audience’s attention is drawn to a bookshelf where a Jewish Bible leans against a volume of Nietzsche (*Christ/Anti-Christ?*).⁸⁶ Taken together with numerous references to super-men and super-humanity, one wonders how much more hand-waving Zangwill could have done. Instead of taking their cues from the text itself, however, biographers and historians seem to have been distracted by the connection between the story of intermarriage the Anglo-Jewish writer tells and his own decision to marry a non-Jew.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Udelson, pp. 6, 197-198.

⁸⁶ Zangwill, *MP*, p.19. It may be of significance that Roosevelt was also an admirer of Nietzsche—see Alfred Kazin’s, *On Native Grounds* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 71.

⁸⁷ For instance, Udelson argues that Zangwill’s contradictions are partly explainable by his failure to distinguish between Christianity and Judaism (thus his marriage to a Christian woman), and hints that Zangwill did not know how to be “authentically Jewish”. Udelson’s theory that Spinozan universalism had an impact on Zangwill is more plausible, though explaining the “assimilated” writer’s lack of Jewish understanding by referring to its Jewish source is bemusing. Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto*, p. 6; see also David Biale, “The Melting Pot and Beyond: Jews and the Politics of

Even Zangwill's most recent biographer, who styles himself a semiotician in the Umberto Eco mould,⁸⁸ missed what readers and audiences of the day did not. Remarking on Zangwill's allusions to Nietzsche, one sympathetic Montreal critic went so far as to explain the bookshelf scene as a satirical reference to the reading habits of Jewish youth.⁸⁹ (Years previously, Zangwill had described the delegates of the first Zionist Congress in Basle [1897] as dreamers "enamoured of the modern [with] lurking admiration of the 'over-man' of Nietzsche, even to be overpassed by the coming Jerusalem Jew.")⁹⁰ But the overall tone of "The Melting Pot" plays too heavily, is far too earnestly serious to admit of a satirical reading. There was something else at work here.

I contend that Zangwill's Nietzscheanism, while it could be seen as contributing to racialism (indeed, one historian has argued that Nordau's theory of degeneration was in fact a response to Nietzsche's anti-Semitism),⁹¹ was actually used as a weapon against it. This may come as something of a shock, given that Friedrich Nietzsche's concepts of the "Super-Man" and viral-like "culture-destroyers" were co-opted for full-blown racist purposes.⁹² That much

American Identity," in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multi-Culturalism*, eds. D. Biale, M. Galchinsky, & S. Heschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), for a discussion of Zangwill's ambivalence on the general issue of intermarriage.

⁸⁸ Joseph Udelson, op. cit., p. xi.

⁸⁹ Joseph Stern, "Forgiveness not Assimilation," *CJT*, April 7, 1911, p.16.

⁹⁰ *JT*, December 10, 1897, p. 4.

⁹¹ Steven Aschheim, "Max Nordau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Degeneration," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28:4 (1993), pp. 643-657.

⁹² Some historians contend that Nietzsche's legacy was tampered with by his sister

must be conceded. But one must realize that, after breaking with Wagner in 1879, Nietzsche had denounced both German nationalism and its anti-Semitic tendencies. Indeed, he was suspicious of all forms of nationalism, including Zionism. At one point, he had argued their historical lack of nationalism to be the primary reason for the persistence of the Jewish people. Danish literary critic Georg Morris Cohen Brandes, disagreed: "With all due respect for the Philosopher, we hold there is a deeper cause for the survival of the Jewish people. They were the guardians of the Divine Law and observed it. Thus their preservation. Should they cease to observe it, they will pass away like other nations."⁹³ It was a minor disagreement, for Brandes was Nietzsche's translator and most avid reader. Just as Max Nordau had brought attention (however negative) to this otherwise obscure author, Brandes introduced his German texts to the wider world. Friedrich Nietzsche was indebted to two Jews for the modicum of fame he achieved in his lifetime. (He died in 1900, not long after the English-language publication of *Degeneration*.)

and literary executor, Elisabeth Nietzsche, herself a pro-Nazi Paraguayan colonist. Ben Macintyre, *The Forgotten Fatherland: The Search for Elisabeth Nietzsche* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993); H.F. Peters, *Zarathustra's Sister: The Case of Elisabeth and Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Crow Publishers, 1977). Others recognize his early association with the nationalists within Wagner's circle of intellectuals, but also his break from them in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War in the late 1870s. Carol Diethe, "Nietzsche and Nationalism," *History of European Ideas*, 14(2) 1992, pp. 227-234; Michael Duffy, and Willard Mittelman, "Nietzsche's Attitudes Toward the Jews," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49(2) 1988, pp. 301-318.

⁹³ "Why Races Decay and Israel Survives," *CJT*, September 10, 1909, pp. 874-875.

Likewise, Zangwill used Nietzsche not to support ethnic nationalism but an intellectual, individualistic approach to the problem of race-relations. His super-man was a spiritual, not a racial champion, and Zangwill was a madman announcing the demise of scientific racism itself. He realized, however, that the world as he knew it was not ready for his real message: that the interbreeding of races was necessary to demonstrate *a posteriori* what he believed *a priori*—races did not exist and the continuing belief that they did was what actually prevented the evolution of “super-humanity”. That he stooped to racialism in later editions of “The Melting Pot” can be read as a strategic retreat, a sop for the unenlightened, an extension of his intellectualism. A snob Zangwill most certainly was, which is why his play must be seen as amounting more than a mere bundle of contradictions. One must see “The Melting Pot” as a document containing two messages: one for the initiated; and another for the uninitiated. Never mind that Nietzsche’s gnostic influence has never been acknowledged in the literature: The play’s ambiguity was a consequence of the fact that Zangwill was writing for two different audiences and assumed two levels of understanding. If he was forced to resort to racial or national stereotypes, it was because the day had not yet come that they could be set aside.

The “Melting Pot” and “Mosaic” stereotypes are tired tropes. The latter arguably has never signified much except the attempt to convert the failure of an analogous Canadianization into a virtue. It has been and is being critiqued on both idealistic and

empirical grounds. It has been verticalized⁹⁴ or hardened into cultural solitudes, its parts heaped askew or frozen into place.⁹⁵ Americanization, too, has become a contested ideal rather than an inexorable process. Instead of historicizing the dialectic or eliminating it altogether, however, present-day observers often simply reverse it, so that Canada starts smelting and the United States becomes a “rainbow coalition”, a “salad”, a “stew”, “kaleidoscope”, or even (to the chagrin of American conservatives) a Mosaic.⁹⁶

Set up in opposition to the Melting Pot by a Canadian sociologist in the 1930s,⁹⁷ the idea of the Mosaic failed to reflect the real differences obtaining between Canada and the United States in that decade, let alone the ideals that Canadians and Americans previously espoused. Majority and minority progressives (to say nothing of the

⁹⁴ John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965).

⁹⁵ According to New York-based semiotician, the mosaic metaphor “provides very hard edges to the limits of cultures, the ethnic tesserae, the tiles of the mosaic. One contributor ironically proposes ‘fusion’ instead, and another calls for eclate Canada—the exploded diagram of Canada. What we have tried to express is that there is already this sense of explosion, that the tiles do not have hard edges and are not square and are not cleanly abutted; they overlap and they pile on top of one another.” Jordan Zinovich quoted in Carl Wilson, “Guerilla Intellectuals Blow Up Canada,” *This Magazine*, 27:8 (April/May 1994), pp. 26-27.

⁹⁶ Jeffrey Simpson, “Canadian Melting Pot Remains Sturdy, but US One is Cracking,” *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1998, p. A10; Peter Salins, *Assimilation: American Style* (New York: Random House, 1998), introduction. Salins views the possible adoption of Canadian-style multicultural policies in the United States as a threat to the republic: “Ethnic federalism explicitly rejects the notion of a transcendent American identity, the old idea that out of ethnic diversity there would emerge a single, culturally unified people. Instead, the United States is to be viewed as a vast ethnic federation—Canada’s Anglo-French arrangement, raised to the nth power.” P.10.

⁹⁷ John Murray Gibbon, *The Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1938). The metaphor had already been employed a decade earlier in Kate A. Foster’s lesser known *Our Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto:

reactionaries), as Angus McLaren has shown, possessed as keen a sense of nationalist entitlement as their American counterparts, were as intent on remaking immigrants in their own image (or of banning their entry altogether).⁹⁸ Acknowledging as much, historians are revising the standard dialectic,⁹⁹ and that is all to the good. But perhaps Melting Pot/Mosaic should be laid to rest as a false dichotomy, since based on a basic misunderstanding or underestimation of the cultural artifact that started it all.

“The Melting Pot”, despite its eponymous metaphor and prima facie obviousness, was a complex piece of work, and intentionally so. I have not argued that it is a great work of art. It is not. But it is a mix of messages and metaphors that cannot be read as a straightforward propaganda piece for undifferentiated Americanism (or, for that matter, undifferentiated Canadianism or Australianism—Zangwill having identified Canada and Australia together with the United States as natural migrant destinations and future sites of mongrelization.)¹⁰⁰ A British Columbian member of the Christian Identity movement, an extremely racist nativist organization, recently analyzed the North American situation as follows: “We’re being led into a multicultural melting pot that’s the anti-Christ.”¹⁰¹

Y.W.C.A., 1926).

⁹⁸ See J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1908); and Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); and McLaren, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Howard Palmer, “Ethnicity and Pluralism in North America: A Comparison of the Canadian and United States Perspectives,” *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* (August 1989), pp. 257-286.

¹⁰⁰ Zangwill, *MP*, p. 210.

¹⁰¹ “US man to open Aryan Nations-style church in BC (Charles Scott),” *Canadian*

However witlessly and unwittingly, and only if we read the last bit as a reference to Nietzsche's *Christ/Anti-Christ*, this is a better description than most of the farrago of dynamics underlying the "The Melting Pot".

Chapter Five

Torah: From Moral Guide to Eugenics Handbook

“The history of nations is determined not on the battlefield but in the nursery. The politics of the future will be domestics.”¹

In the first issue of the *Jewish Times*, at the beginning of phase one, Captain Carroll Ryan made the case for the place of Judaism within a liberal theory of justice. He contended that young people raised under Judaic influence were less likely to commit crimes, violent ones particularly, than those brought up in a Christian household because the former religion laid a greater emphasis on personal responsibility. At the end of phase two, in the last issue of the newspaper (just before its reincarnation as A.A. Roback’s *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*), an article entitled “Juvenile Offenders” appeared. It stated: “we are informed from good authority that no less than 45% of the offenders who appear before the Juvenile Court are Jewish children.” That was a significant admission, even discounting the fact that most of these were crimes of misdemeanour. What was even more significant, however, was the solution proposed. “The latest scientific method of treating youthful delinquents is to release them ‘on probation,’” the reporter commented, suggesting that the Jewish community look into the establishment of a probationary force modelled after the “Big Brothers” organization.²

Something had happened. The first phase counted on a uniquely rational (not

¹ Caleb Saleeby, from his *Progress of Eugenics* (London: 1914); quoted in Fred Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1994), p. 150.

² *CJT*, April 10, 1914, pp. 4-5.

unique because it was rational but because it was especially rational, as compared to Christianity) family-based philosophy of religion to provide the preventative ethical medicine that a healthy society required. The second looked beyond religious rationalism and the domestic inculcation of values to race psychology and sociology as a specific for the damage the Jewish people had sustained since the emergence of emancipatory Judaism. Jewish criminality was denied in the first phase, admitted in the second. A cliometrician might well ask: was there an increase in poverty, in crime? Did the demographic shift of the early twentieth century not contribute to this change in attitudes? Notwithstanding the lack of thoroughgoing statistical evidence,³ the answer is obvious. Yes. There probably were more Jewish offenders, juvenile and otherwise, if only because there were more Jews living in the city, especially in the East End, more economic competition and lives lived in desperation, more motives, more opportunities to offend. But, even if we prorate historical and geographical numbers, the important thing (in terms of attitude) is not so much the scale of offence or the admission of offence, but that a shunting of responsibility had taken place meanwhile.

Correspondingly, the ethical mission of the Jews was being replaced by something else, by rationales that had less to do with social justice and more to do with social

³ The first sociological analysis of Jewish statistics was based on numbers collected a decade and a half later. See Louis Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada, 1931-61; a Study of the Changes in the Population Characteristics* (Montreal: Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1965). Except for Herbert Brown Ames' *The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montréal, Canada* (Montreal: N.P., 1897), which predates the period under review and is too geographically narrow, we have nothing but conjecture to go on.

hygiene. This chapter examines the development and implications of a new kind of mission: since there does not seem to be a name for it, I will dub it the “hygienic mission”.

The ethical mission was, like the image of the adaptable Jew, a product of emancipation, a reinterpretation of chosen-ness that began in Germany under the influence of Reform rabbis in the mid-nineteenth century. It reached its apogee in the late nineteenth century in the United States, again under the aegis of Reformers. As intellectual historian Arnold Eisen has said, liberalism forced the argument for chosen-ness “to be made in terms borrowed from and acceptable to the gentile world rather than in traditional terms of discourse.”⁴ This idea, the notion of an ethical mission to the world, was one Carroll Ryan and the other figures of phase one also bought into, though, admittedly, they were not as dependent upon it as their American counterparts. For, at least when advanced by Reform thinkers, an emphasis on ethics brought with it a de-emphasis on other halachic prescriptions, such as those pertaining to dietary practice, as well as a de-emphasis on nationalism. In America, New York had become the New Jerusalem. Montreal, a good place for Jews to live in, never attained that status in Canada.

Thus we have Ryan explaining to his readers that “The Mission of Judaism” was a matter that American rabbis were prone to hash over, and that their “arguments and conclusions are influenced according as the bias of the writer is for or against Zionism.”⁵ Canadian Jews far more likely to support Zionism—having, by virtue of an extant context

⁴ Arnold Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 19.

⁵ Editorial, *JT*, October 24, 1902, p. 376.

of bi-nationalism, fewer fears over the issue of divided loyalties⁶—they viewed the American Jewish wranglings with a mixture of curiosity and disdain. When Rabbi Abramowitz discoursed upon the continuing applicability of “Dietary Laws”, a letter to the editor praised his orthodox perspective, condemning “liberal Jews” who “preach Judaism and break the law . . . and by discarding everything distinctly Jewish, they continue their missionary work, they adopt un-Jewish elements in their faith, and claim to convert the world, while they themselves are being converted to it.”

This Constant Reader agreed with Orthodox Jews that Judaism “is not a Jack-of-all-trades. It stands for something distinctive.”⁷

When looking south of the border, Ryan often sounded like a sociologist of religion himself. In discussing New York Rabbi Stephen Wise’s new experiment, a “Free Synagogue” (Wise having turned down a position at the prestigious Temple Emanuel in order to institute a democratic synagogue with no pew rents or gendered divisions),⁸ he wrote that the “effects of the American environment on Jewish character, religious customs and observances offers a subject of curious interest.” In Canada, he said, Orthodoxy preponderated; in the United States, Reform. Taking in the overall American religious picture, he delineated two diverging paths: “Orthodoxy and Radicalism.” “But in all cases, the bulk of the movement is in the direction of greater freedom from dogma, and

⁶ A point Gerald Tulchinsky has made in “If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem,” *Taking Root*, chapter ten, pp. 181-203.

⁷ *JT*, March 11, 1904, pp. 133-134.

creedal restraints.” For that reason, the Vatican considered “Americanism” incipient heresy. Since “industrial commercialism is the ruling secular cult and the idea of personal independence has assumed the most exaggerated form,” American religions, including Judaism, could not help but reflect these environmental dynamics.⁹

The ethical mission theory, in Ryan’s view, was an American phenomenon, and smacked of individualism even when its advocates claimed to be striving against its excesses. He admired Wise’s ideals but warned against the rise of a personality cult, against what might turn out to be “Wiseism”. Moreover, he believed that the movement towards synagogical “social service”—that is, a Judaic version of the Social Gospel—was the result of a confusion of purpose: synagogues were houses of worship, not settlement houses. Besides, the Baron de Hirsch Institutes of Montreal and Educational Alliances of New York already served the latter function. When New York financier Jacob Schiff, a member of Temple Emanu-El, justified the socio-ethical mission theory by citing Herbert Spencer disapprovingly—“There is nothing more cruel in this world than Spencer’s Law of the Survival of the Fittest and any movement which is calculated to help the poor souls that are left behind in the struggle cannot but meet with the full approval of any right minded man”—one can almost hear Ryan sniffing. He and his Canadian and American Orthodox allies, noting Schiff’s Reform-informed rejection of Zionism and dietary law, felt that well-intentioned secularism was secularism nonetheless.¹⁰

⁸ Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America*, pp. 394-396.

⁹ *JT*, February 8, 1907, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88. Detroit’s Rabbi Hershman, speaking in tandem with Clarence de Sola at a Zionist meeting in Cleveland, ridiculed opponents of Zionism like Schiff (and

In his forays into criminology, Ryan had also been operating under the dictates an ethical mission theory, the difference being that he was allied with Orthodoxy. Granted, it was a “decorous”¹¹ and middle-class form of Orthodoxy; yet, unlike the case with many American Reformers, keeping kosher was still a priority. While Ryan had never found a way to integrate the practices of *schechita* (Jewish slaughtering methods) and *kashruth* into an alternative theory of mission, it was not much of a stretch for his successor Hyman Nervich, also a booster of Shaar Hashomayim, to do so. Neither did Nervich have to invent the hygienic mission of the Jews. A Montreal precedent had been set over a half century before. What

their “mission theory”), and pointed out “the compatibility of Zionism and loyalty to the country in which one dwells.” “Zionist News,” *JT*, January 1, 1908, pp. 62-63.

¹¹ Articles describing how the Jewish festivals used to be practiced in the old days and ways were a common feature in the newspaper’s first phase. See for instance, “Feast of Tabernacles,” *JT*, September 23, 1904, pp. 349-350: “Succoth . . . is the Cinderella of the sisterhood of the Pilgrim Feasts, and little attention is paid to its history and importance. In ghetto days, and just before Judaism became ‘respectable’ it ended with a bacchanale; the joyousness, despite our father’s dictum, is going—the festival follows suit.” On the “decorous” nature of Shaar Hashomayim’s services, see “Communal Sidelights,” *JT*, March 7, 1908, p. 118. In 1898, the *Jewish Times* proudly published a letter from “A European Jew”, Dr Leopold De Leibovitz, who had remarked favorably on the decorum of the services at Shaar Hashomayim and on the learnedness of Rev. Kaplan’s sermon. If he had one criticism, it was that he saw very few young people in the pews. Columnist Esmond Isaacs devoted an entire column to the matter. Four years later it was discovered that this distinguished gentleman (also known as the immigration agent de Oppert of Quebec City) was a hoaxter on the scale of Trebitsch Lincoln. According to a story from the *American Israelite*: “A man who calls himself Leonard de Bouvis claims being or having been: a personal friend of President Roosevelt, medical adviser to the Sultan and his Seraglio, Roumanian correspondent for the London Times, a Red and physician in Cuba, agent for the Rothschilds” as well as Roumanian Immigration Agent. “The name is charlatan,” the reporter concluded, adding that it was suspected that a man calling himself Dr. Leopold e Blowits in Mexico City was the same swindler. Despite his dishonesty in other areas, the confidence man was probably telling the truth of the matter when commenting on the Shaar Hashomayim’s generation gap. *JT*, July 18, 1898, p. 254. “Dr. de Bouvis This Time,” *JT*, August 1, 1902, 280-81.

Nervich did, however, was apply the hygienic mission theory to a specific set of circumstances, and set the stage for phase two's reappraisal of East End old country Orthodoxy.

East End religiosity had barely even been recognized before, either because deemed “unrespectable” or “indecorous” in its manner of observance, or because East Enders were often viewed as God-less socialists, victims of Russianization requiring re-Judaizing.¹² Despite this turn in perception, the newly sympathetic West End paper did urge emulation of their “primitive” co-religionists on the Main. Instead, if the strategies suggested by letter writers and women's and children's page columnists are any indication, they sought to remodel Judaism according to interventionist scientific specifications, that is, the tenets of Galtonism or some other version of eugenicism. And along with a stress on eugenics came an increase in racialization: not because the two are necessarily linked, but because religion, as practiced by the West End middle-class, was no longer seen as an adequate honer of “Jewish instincts”. In short, the sudden respect for old country religiosity was premised on its presumed “natural” psychological and sociological wisdom. But, as mentioned, this had been said before, though not quite so forcefully or as insistently often.

In 1912 a reporter asked Dr. Joseph Fish of the Sinai Sanatorium (in Ste. Agathe,

¹² As late as 1912, Jacobs still thought re-Judaization necessary, which is why he favored the organization of a Kehillah (centralized community council) such as New York's. The Mosaic wisdom which the Kehillah would instill in newcomers would allow them to “conform to modern rules respecting hygiene.” Letter to the editor, *CJT*, August 30, 1912, pp. 9-10.

just outside of Montreal) whether Jews were resistant to tuberculosis. This was not a new concept, but it was topical because of the recent findings of Canadian medical authority Sir William Osler,¹³ who had apparently made a study of Russian Jewish susceptibility to the “white plague”.¹⁴ Fish, who had been the supervisor of Denver’s pioneering Jewish Consumptives Relief Society before coming to St. Agathe, countered Osler’s naturalist conclusions, remarking that environment and diet (which could turn on religious custom) were the main factors to keep in mind. If the Jews in Russia were remarkably less prone to tuberculosis than their Russian Orthodox neighbors, it was because Judaism forbade the eating of pork and excessive drinking. The stark contrast in terms of statistical evidence had nothing to do with racial differences obtaining between Jews and Slavs; rather, he said, they were reflective of an environment, which—unlike the Canadian one—was more religiously stringent and therefore conducive to the development of separate cultures than was the case in North America.

Such a consistently localized interpretation of the data was rare. Whereas Fish (and sociologist Maurice Fishberg) ventured to distinguish between Jews living in different locales, other theorists saw Diasporic Jewry as one unit, tied together not only by religion

¹³ Trained at McGill, Osler was by the turn-of-the-century “the best-known physician in the English-speaking world.” He taught at Baltimore’s Johns Hopkins Hospital until 1905, when he left to take an appointment at Oxford. Neither his biographer nor the various bibliographies of Oslerania mention his work on Jews and tuberculosis, but, given the timing of Fish’s statements, it may have been in England that he took an interest in the health of Jewish immigrants. Charles Roland, “Sir William Osler”, *Canadian Encyclopedia Plus* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart); Roland, “Sir William Osler”, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XIV, 1911-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 799-805.

but by race, by both blood and Bible. This was the case even with scientists aware of Mendelian genetic transmission. The Anglo-Jewish race scientist Joseph Jacobs, who called the Jewish people the “people of the Book” (meaning: they were a race called into creation by scriptural injunctions), drew the following analogy: “We used to speak of ‘prepotency’ then where the Mendelians speak of dominance, and of ‘atavism’ where they refer to recessives.”¹⁵

Notions of prepotency, atavism, and racial hygiene predated Darwinism; they were expounded in Montreal as early as 1852. In response to a wave of cholera epidemics in North America and Britain and the attendant interest in public health policy, a local Orthodox rabbi published a series of articles in which he sought to demonstrate the congruence of Jewish Law and the laws of nature. Invoking the Hobbesian conceit of self-preservation (Darwin’s *Origin of Species* yet seven years in the offing), Abraham de Sola asserted that God demanded obedience to a corollary as well: the law of racial preservation. Racial survival lay in adherence to the Mosaic and Talmudic Codes, he argued, prefiguring the transformation of ritual practice into medical science and the Jewish Scriptures into a survivalist’s handbook.

“The most ancient, and at the same time, most sacred treatises on the subject of a

¹⁴ *CJT*, June 7, 1912, pp. 5, 20.

¹⁵ “Mendelism and the Jews,” *CJT*, December 1, 1911, pp. 8-9. A belief in prepotency entailed a kind of blood-based determinism that made distinctions between cultural choices and biological heritage almost impossible. For instance, the news that a seventy year old man of Irish-Jewish parentage had joined a Winnipeg synagogue—and, in converting, consented to the requisite “operation”—was greeted with the assertion that this was “a remarkable example of the ineradicable tendency of Jewish blood to assert

national and individual hygiene” were contained in the Torah, he said. “The wisest and most valuable principles, recommendations, and enactments on the subject of health” found their expression in the dietary proscriptions of the Jews.¹⁶ The patriarch of the Sephardic congregation Shearith Israel (mother synagogue of the just-formed Ashkenazic Shaar Hashomayim), and the first Jew to lecture at McGill University (on the subject of Hebraica), de Sola’s pronouncements on the relationship between science and religion were taken seriously outside of Jewish circles as well. In 1849, he was asked by a member of the Canadian medical establishment to find scriptural sanction for the use of chloroform at childbirth. His reading of Genesis 3: 16, the passage wherein the penalty for Eve’s disobedience is laid down, allowed for chloroform on the grounds that carrying the child to term was punishment enough, and that the infant’s life need not to be jeopardized.¹⁷

The message conveyed in his treatise on *kashruth* was also intended for an extra-Jewish audience: the world at large, including scientists, should view Jewish dietary laws not as superstitious practices but as the principles responsible for Jewish survival, principles which if heeded by non-Jews might ensure their preservation also.

The resistance to certain diseases often attributed to Jews was, according to de

itself.” “Winnipeg: A Rare Occurrence,” *CJT*, July 16, 1909, p. 716.

¹⁶ From De Sola, “The Sanatory Institutions of the Hebrews as Exhibited in the Scriptures and Rabbinical Writings and as Bearing Upon Modern Sanatory Regulations.” From a reprint published in Montreal, by John Lovell (1861). Pamphlet housed in Queen’s University’s Special Collections.

¹⁷ Jack Cohen, “Doctor James Young Simpson, Rabbi Abraham De Sola, and Genesis Chapter 3, Verse 16,” *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, volume 88, no. 5 (November 1996), pp. 895-98.

Sola, primarily though not solely the result of religious observance.¹⁸ “It is undeniable,” he wrote, “that the mass of the nation, who are duly observant of their dietary laws, are remarkably free from certain classes of diseases, particularly those of the skin and the hypochondriac [below the ribs] regions.” Remarking on the recent epidemics and the statistics taken in their wake, he pointed to the “extraordinary fact, especially during the ravages of the Asiatic cholera, that proportionably, the Jewish community have remained in a remarkable degree unscathed under these awful visitations.”¹⁹

Despite his environmentalist interpretation of the potentially wide social applications of *kashruth*, de Sola was clearly someone who believed that races existed and that each race displayed unique characteristics that were to some degree transmissible through bloodlines. Thus he explained the survival of the Jews was not only a religious miracle affirming the validity of God’s original covenant with the Israelites, but as a racial scientific problem:

Although there now flows in the veins of the Hebrews the blood of the most ancient nation remaining on earth—the same blood which once animated Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah—although the stake has destroyed of them its thousands, and the sword its tens of thousands—although monarchs and legislators, from the days of Pharaoh downwards, have passed enactments for their extermination, forbidding, as is the case even in the present day, their obedience to one of the first laws of nature (in some parts of Europe the laws of the State permit only a certain number of Jews to marry)—although found in every country and clime, amidst the snows and ice of a northern, and the burning sun of a southern, latitude—and although, at all periods of their history, subject to a thousand adverse and

¹⁸ See Rubin Shuly Schwartz on sociologist Maurice Fishberg’s work in this area in *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Ohio, 1991), pp. 110-112, 123, 200.

¹⁹ De Sola, p. 6.

destructive influences, yet do they remain a wondrous living problem, the same undeteriorated, indestructible race, with the same characteristics everywhere traceable among them. . . .²⁰

The effects of dietary laws he did not consider merely physical in nature. De Sola also pointed to statistics of criminality to indicate the moral side-effects of hygienic practices: “Let us search the calendar of crime of every country and we shall be led to the conclusion that these same dietary and sanitary laws have had the effect of exempting them in a remarkable degree from that, to speak technically, plus-animalism, or preponderance of the animal organs and instincts, which has led in others to the commission of the most awful crimes.”

To the connection between atavism—“plus-animalism”—and criminality he added an alcoholic link. This was particularly evident in his remarks concerning the Irish poor (see below). Alcoholism was said to lead to a raft of degenerative diseases, including cholera and tuberculosis, and, indirectly, syphilis. Statistics proving the relative immunity of Jews to these diseases and to violent criminality would later become standard fare. Their abstemiousness, frequently commented upon in the pages of the *Jewish Times*,²¹ was

²⁰ The uniquely Jewish characteristics he identified include a brightness of the eye, a high level of energy and organization among the men, and a “rare attractive beauty among the women.” The persistence of the stereotype of the distinctiveness of the Jewish eye pervaded even the work of “deconstructionist” (to use an anachronistic descriptor) Maurice Fishberg, who, after attributing all ostensibly Jewish features to the effects of ghetto existence, had nevertheless asserted: “There is one part of the Jewish face that is undeniably characteristic and that is the eye. The next time you come across it observe it carefully.” From “Is the Jewish Face Disappearing: The Theory of Dr. Maurice Fishberg, medical examiner of the United Hebrew Charities,” *JT*, 14 August, 1903, pp. 291-293.

²¹ See the *JT* editorial from December 2, 1910, p. 8, which (using statistics gathered by the Ministry of Justice) pointed out that of the 1 859 convicts in Canada, only 17 were Jews, or less than 1%.

said to signify a racial immunity to the forces of moral and physical “degeneration” alike. (The Italian-Jewish criminologist, Cesar Lombroso who had written a treatise on the “development of the human race on lines of evolution, a work written independently of Darwin or Herbert Spencer,” could not fully account for the Jewish reputation for sobriety. He would or could not say whether nature or nurture could take credit. Nevertheless he stated: “It is at least certain that we are a singularly sober race and that must have a profound advantage for us in our struggle for existence as a people, and in our future development.”)²²

That de Sola’s scheme of Jewish hygienic history was racist is indicated by his approving quotation of a colleague’s statements on the reasons behind Jewish persistence:

We see the Children of Israel scattered over the face of the earth since eighteenth centuries, without a country, yet finding a home in all; scorned and trampled upon,

²² The full quotation ran as follows:

The Jews, as has often been observed—so often that the phrase has passed into a colloquialism—Jews are a peculiar people. In the first place, the Jewish race represents the product of *special selection*. . . . Jews, for many years past, have been and are today subject to strong and consistent persecution, a moral persecution as well as a physical one. The effect has been to eliminate the worst and weakest elements in the population: The fittest has survived. The less fit has gone; and what has remained has been the proportion which by the exercise of intellect or virtue, could either escape from persecution or overcome it.

Reprinted upon his death in the *JT*, October 22, 1909. Lombroso claimed that his theory of evolution and references to the Jewish place within it could be found in his book *Man and Genius* (1910). Apart from a short chapter on “Jewish Genius” and Jewish psychopathology (Lombroso posited that most geniuses were prone to epilepsy, with Jews being an exception), there was nothing specifically Jewish or evolutionary in the work. For a discussion of the manner in which his theories intersected with contemporary Jewish stereotypes, see Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

yet often the power behind the throne directing the destinies of kings; poor and abject, yet holding the golden keys of war and peace in Europe; excelling in philosophy and in theology, in music and in art, in war and in statesmanship; despised, yet ever powerful; counted as aliens, yet, with their genealogies of forty centuries, looking down with scorn upon the aristocracy of Europe, which is but as of yesterday, when compared with their own proud lineage. The Hebrew people still preserves all its natural characteristics, and stands proud and imperishable before us to-day: the representative of the earliest ages of the world's history, and the evidence of the undying vigor of the *pure Caucasian race*.²³

These, admittedly, were not de Sola's words. They were taken from "The Unity of the Races", a paper given by McGill geologist Thomas Sterry Hunt. An American native who helped found the Canadian Geological Survey and the Royal Society of Canada,²⁴ Hunt was commenting on the polygenist ideas of Louis Agassiz.²⁵ While Agassiz claimed that the Caucasian and Negroid races were of separate origin, created by God at different times, Hunt maintained the monogenist view: all human beings could be traced back to Adam and Eve.²⁶ This did not prevent Hunt from also maintaining that some sub-species, though all equally human, were not exactly equal, inequalities having been brought into

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8. De Sola also cited passages from Benjamin Disraeli's novel, *Coningsby* (1844) wherein the future Prime Minister of Britain outlined his views concerning the Caucasian origins of the Jewish peoples.

²⁴ He also invented the ink used on the American dollar bill. See "Thomas Sterry Hunt," *Canadian Encyclopedia Plus* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996).

²⁵ Agassiz and McGill's John William Dawson were to become leading anti-Darwinists in the geological sciences. See A.B. McKillop's *A Discipline Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1979), pp. 115, 125, 127-129.

²⁶ On Agassiz, cf. Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), pp. 44-46. Also Richard Popkin, "Pre-Adamism in Nineteenth Century American Thought, 'Speculative Biology' and Racism," *Philosophia* 8 (1978-1979), pp. 205-239.

being by adaptations to local conditions, some of which (northern climes, in particular) being more propitious than others.

Neither monogenists nor polygenists were immune from racialism. Polygenists such as Agassiz claimed that the Adamic story told of the origins of the Caucasian races exclusively and that the Bible was their history. But even in the monogenist camp—for whom the Josephian explanation for the divisions existing between Semites (descendants of Noah's son Shem), Negroes (descendants of son Ham), and Caucasians (descendants of son Japhet), held credence—the last among brothers was Ham.²⁷

Scientific creationism tended to equate superior breeding with a higher morality—higher, either because consistent with science and/or Providence—and it seemed to hold some appeal for de Sola. Modern evolutionary theory, in the form of Darwinism, brought the debate between Biblical monogenists and polygenists to a halt. Still, in Stephen Jay Gould's opinion, Darwinism provided “an even better rationale for their shared racism.” While, on the one hand, “monogenists continued to construct linear hierarchies of races according to mental and moral worth,” on the other, “polygenists now admitted a common ancestry in the prehistoric mists, but affirmed that races had been separate long enough to evolve major inherited differences in talent and intelligence.”²⁸ Abraham de Sola never stated outright whether he was a polygenist or a monogenist, but one can see from his

²⁷ It was Josephus Flavius (37-95), Jewish rebel general and author of the *Jewish War*, who is credited with the invention of the “Hamite heresy”. In his division of the world, Japheth's descendants inhabit Europe, Shem's Persia, Chaldea, Armenia and the Indian Ocean, and Ham's Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia. Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), p. 91.

²⁸ *Mismeasure of Man*, p. 73.

hygienic interpretation of post-cosmogonic Jewish history that he believed in racial hierarchies, both as an innatist and an environmentalist. One could call him a late Lamarckian (neo-Lamarckism being a twentieth century school of thought), but he apparently was under no compulsion to label himself as such.

Both before and after Darwin, the biological science of the nineteenth century telescoped moral virtues and survivalist capabilities. De Sola's pre-Darwinian ideas led him to argue, for instance, that the Jews were a people whose religious practices made them, through some unnamed mode of transmission, racially superior to others—well, to certain Others. For example, in his discussion on the benefits of *schechita* or Jewish slaughtering methods, he took as his counter-example the methods of French Canadians. Their butchers did not carefully drain blood from the animal, he pointed out, and this in his opinion had had an observably detrimental effect on their physical and mental capacities. He had obviously previously quarreled with someone on this issue. “To select the Canadian *habitants* with whose unrestrained addiction to blood-eating we are sufficiently acquainted, as a proof of the non-injuriousness of the practice, we deem singularly unfortunate,” he said. “The Canadian *habitants* are doubtless, a worthy, happy, contented, and so far as creature comforts, and, perhaps, business transactions, are concerned, an acute people, yet few would charge them with too much intellectuality, enterprise, or with a too free spirit of inquiry either in matters spiritual or secular.”

To assure Anglo-Saxon readers, he added an environmentalist clause: “Of course with other nations there may be, and indeed are, other causes and agencies, educational

especially, to counteract this serious error in diet. . . .”²⁹

De Sola’s explanation as to the reasoning behind the pork taboo exhibited a similar marriage of racialism, innatism, and environmentalism. “As with the prohibition of blood,” he wrote, “Hebrew authorities have assigned both religious or moral, and hygienic, reasons for the institution of such law.” After citing a Spanish work on the subject (*Las Excelencias de los Hebreos*), de Sola commented parenthetically: “Could our author have seen some of the poorer Irish neighborhoods and cabins, as we have seen them, both in Britain and America, presenting so many revolting sties where man and hog assist each other to engender and diffuse fever and pestilence, he would have found powerful and fearful testimony to the truth of the idea of which he writes.” In another aside, De Sola explained that it was to counter the circulatory-inhibitive effects of lard that Irishmen took to consuming “such fearfully vast quantities of intoxicating liquors.”

The point is not to prove that de Sola’s work was at times chauvinistic. That is all too obvious, and could be said of most nineteenth century science and scientists. More to the point, one must consider that Rabbi De Sola anticipated the greater biologization of religious customs and ethics to come. Yet, in his day, religion and science at least shared the podium of public authority.

In the eugenic age, Moses the Ur-Liberal became Moses the Microbiologist.³⁰ A

²⁹ De Sola, op. cit., p. 34. He made similar statements regarding the sanguinary tastes of Native Americans as well.

³⁰ See Mitchell Hart, “Moses the Microbiologist: Judaism and Social Hygiene in the Work of Alfred Nossig,” *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Fall 1995), pp. 72-97. Hart analyzes the work of a leading Zionist who related environmental health to racial health. For another example of the manner in which Mosaic law was being reinterpreted in

few examples—Jewish, and non-Jewish—of Holy Day revisionism suffice for now. In phase one, on the occasion of Passover, Ryan, in keeping with the liberal dictates of the ethical mission, had referred to Moses as “the first man to proclaim the human right of freedom and speak the word liberty.” The London *Jewish Chronicle*, a few years earlier, interpreted Yom Kippur in terms redolent of Ryan’s exposition on “Murder and the Law”: “The Jewish conception of the Atonement must always constitute an essential feature differentiating Judaism from other religions. Its leading note is personal responsibility . . . The Jew has quite as much salvation to hope for as the Christian, but he must work it out by his own efforts, without reliance upon any extraneous aid.” There being no intermediary sacrifice, or priestly confession, “the Jew confesses his sins direct to God.”³¹

In 1913, in the midst of phase two, Rabbi Fine of Ottawa interpreted the Jewish Pentecost as an hygienically historic landmark. Fine wrote: “the Revelation on Sinai accomplished a metamorphosis; it transformed a misguided degenerate world, steeped in vice and idolatry into one, humane and respectable—rendering it physically healthier, morally cleaner, and religiously saner.” (That evolutionary assumptions underpinned his declaration is clear from the subsequent statement: “this transformation, from the human animal to the humane man, is still progressing, advancing step by step; generation by

light of hygienic science, see *Canadian Jewish Times*, April 16, 1909, p. 401. In 1909, at a meeting of the Sanitary Inspectors’ Association in Leeds, England, the city’s health inspector read a paper entitled “The Mosaic Sanitary Code and its Relation to Modern Sanitation.” “If,” said Mr. Raskin, “the laws of Moses were not inspired by supernatural wisdom, Moses must have already been in possession of something akin to the germ theory of disease.”

³¹ Editorial, *JT*, April 29, 1905, p. 8; “Jewish Atonement”, reprinted in *JT*, September 13, 1901, p. 323.

generation the world is becoming more amenable to reason more and more responsive to righteousness, more and more conforming to the type set up at creation—man in the image of God.)³² In a 1912 editorial (“Moses and Modern Science”) the *Duluth Herald* chided those who would snicker at Jewish kosher laws. “They needn’t smile. The laugh is the other way. These, customs, handed down for countless generations, have a sound hygienic basis, show a marvelous prevision, and have had much to do with keeping the Hebrew race so clean and sturdy and vigorous in body and mind.” The laws that command that “every Jew must wash his hands in running water after handling diseased or dead people or old polluted things” were to be understood “in the light of modern knowledge about germs.” (The Biblically sanctioned segregation of lepers was “the first quarantine in history!”) Had not Abraham de Sola written his treatise on dietary hygiene prior to Louis Pasteur’s elaboration of germ theory, he might have altered his justification for the prohibition against pig to read: “while pork is a popular food, there are many non-Jews who feel that it is not good to eat. Animals that ‘chew the cud’ have an elaborate digestive machinery which is a cleansing laboratory for their flesh-making materials; the pig has but one poorly constructed stomach arrangement and very limited facilities for elimination of undesirable flesh-making material.” The *Herald* writer concluded: “The laws which Moses handed down are intensely practical, highly scientific and thoroughly wholesome. If more Gentiles obeyed them there would be fewer cases of a class of organic disease which Jews seldom have, but which Gentiles who break these wholesome laws have all too

³² “The Pentecost and Its Inheritance,” *CJT*, June 6, 1913, p. 5.

plentifully.”³³

Was Cleanliness next to Godliness? Or was it the other way around? Solomon Schechter had warned against the social scientific reduction of the Jewish religion. Yet there were some unexpected, and, depending on one’s perspective, positive consequences. When Jews and Gentiles came to regard eugenicism as an updated rearticulation of ancient Jewish folkways,³⁴ “Westernized” Jews were urged to become “Easternized”—not by reversion to type but through a recognition that eugenic and hygienic science was a tool that could intervene in the process of assimilation. Rather than bad examples, the East Enders and their counterparts elsewhere became exemplars of a primitive or pure Judaism, an “instinctual” Judaism devoid of sectarianism and its attendant problems of fragmentation. So, while Ryan, in phase one, had stressed the ethical and environmental dimensions of Jewish law and the evolution of ideas, there came to be a reverse tendency: a stress on the hereditarian dimensions of Jewish law and the evolution of races. Ryan’s anti-Yiddishist stance was reversed in phase two, and as an ironic result, the same Jews whose exoticism had previously been seen as inviting of anti-Semitism were now beneficiaries of the same discourse that anti-Semitic propagandists used against them.

This happened for reasons stemming as much from “real-life” developments (as

³³ Reprinted in *CJT*, June 14, 1912, p. 17.

³⁴ Though there are echoes here of Mordecai Kaplan’s Reconstructionist version of natural theology, there is a difference: being an American, he was careful never to make claims to any kind of chosenness, functional or otherwise. In his most important book, *Judaism as a Civilization*, he justified traditional “folkways” through a combination of American philosophical pragmatism and cultural Zionist thought (Dewey and Ha’am), not through evolutionism, whether racialist or eugenic or social hygienic. Cf. Eisen, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-91.

Donald Akenson would put it) as from discursive turns and scientific trends. The improving socio-economic status of (*certain*) East Enders was becoming evident by 1909, Nervich's transitional phase (and pronounced by Bennett and Roback's time). (As though in acknowledgement of this, Bennett introduced a real estate page in 1913; in keeping with his mandate to capture youthful readers, it featured the exploits of up-and-coming entrepreneurs.)³⁵ Simultaneously, however, there was worrying news from New York. Police Commissioner Theodore Bingham, upon investigating Jewish and Italian gang activity in the Lower East Side, had referred to Jews publicly as having a "propensity" for criminality, for arson and white slaving especially. Some spill-over was expected, and Montreal Jews braced for a defense of their racial character.³⁶

Though it is partly true that Jewish authorities embraced social hygiene, eugenics, or race science so as to respond defensively to the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the day, there is another matter to consider: the influence and encouragement of Gentile *philo-Semitism*. The as yet un-Protestantized rituals of newly arrived Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe that had once been deemed by Christian society as foreign, uncivilized, and superstitious—the queer doings of an outmoded race—were now recognized by sympathetic non-Jews as containing scientific wisdom. It may be too much to claim that a sea-change in the public

³⁵ *CJT*, January 31, 1913, p. 30.

³⁶ Sachar, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-173. "Jews and Criminality: Bingham Report, New York" and "Bingham's Retraction", *JT*, September 2, 1908, pp. 398, 400-401. A little over a year later, the *Canadian Jewish Times*, in an article entitled "White Slave Traffic", was forced to respond to claims—made by Jewish publications in New York—that Montreal was an entrepot for Jewish prostitutes from Eastern Europe. January 7, 1910, p. 9.

opinion of Eastern European Jews was afoot. Still one cannot dismiss the fact that certain progressives, Jewish and non-Jewish, went to considerable lengths to defend the modern existence of the Jews—and the “assimilability” of these new immigrants pouring into North America—on hygienic grounds.

Finally, the manner in which the West End writers eyed their co-religionists across the way had something to do with a new perception of themselves as well. The acculturated middle-class began to wonder whether material advantages had lulled them into a false sense of security. They worried whether their children were being compromised, if they had been properly equipped for the hyper-competitiveness of modernity wherein the “struggle for existence” was exacerbated to the nth degree. If—and the emergence of an East End middle-class (of whatever size) was seen as illuminating—struggle could result in strength, could not comfort result in weakness?

In the same number that reported the findings of the Bingham report (and Bingham’s racist extrapolations from it), Captain Ryan informed his readers that Dr. Ward, Board of Health Statistician for the city of Montreal, had declared the Jewish infant mortality rate to be the “highest of any nationality for Montreal.” In a pointed aside, he mentioned that, taking all nationalities into consideration, a full 30% of those children dying before age 5 were illegitimate. The implication was that prostitution was the problem. Bingham had pointed to the existence of Jewish prostitution rings in New York, causing the Jewish community there to mobilize, to found the Kehillah, an internal affairs organization that worked to establish a united public relations front but which also put in place its own intelligence network to do battle with Jewish criminals. Lest the public think

that similar things were happening here, Ryan quickly asserted that none of the Jewish deceased in Montreal had been born out of wedlock.³⁷

If that sounds like a bit of hyperbole, it was issued for defensive purposes: Ward had used the high rate of infant mortality to urge immigration restriction. Numbers were not Ryan's forte: In phase one of the *Jewish Times*, numbers were proffered only occasionally.³⁸ Since Judaism was not touted for its physiologically hygienic virtues but for its sound-mindedness relative to Christianity (because of their stress on bodily sins and mystical redemption, Christians were seen as emotionally morbid), qualitative rather than quantitative evidence was most commonly given. "Healthy thoughts have helped to keep up the vitality of the Jew," the *Jewish Times* offered in 1899," and [this] is probably a cause of his longevity."³⁹ As phase two approached, however, statistics relating to morbidity (susceptibility to particular diseases) and mortality trends, especially those pertaining to children, were increasingly used as barometers of racial health, as though to keep track of one's relative place in the struggle for existence. The *Canadian Jewish Times* devoted more and more space to the detailing and interpretation of numerical data published by insurance companies, whose findings on rates of alcohol abuse were frequently reprinted.⁴⁰

³⁷ Editorial, *JT*, September 2, 1908, p. 398.

³⁸ See "Professor Stowe's Medical and Demographic Facts," *JT*, May 27, 1898, p. 199.

³⁹ *JT*, September 1, 1899, p. 310.

⁴⁰ "Jewish Longevity," *JT*, December 18, 1908, an article reprinted from the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette*; "Are Jews Immune to Alcohol?" *Ibid.*, March 19, 1909,

New York's Jewish newspapers had for years regularly used statistics for apologetic purposes, the burgeoning immigrant Jewish population there being comparatively healthy despite the brutal conditions obtaining in the Lower East Side.⁴¹ "From estimates of Manhattan's birth rate it might be judged that the Jewish race will be the dominating one in the world before the next epoch in the world's history," one writer trumpeted in 1905.⁴² But that was pre-Bingham.

It does not appear that Dr. Ward singled out the Jews in the same way that Bingham had done. Still, any talk of crack-downs against immigrants was taken as potentially disastrous for Jews. Thus it was with a sigh of relief that Ryan's successor Hyman Nervich was able to announce the Jewish community to be statistically vindicated. "During 1908 our people showed the lowest birthrate, according to the classification of the city statistician, Dr. Ward. This year [as per the report of Dr. Laberge] the record is reversed." He could not explain 1908's numbers, but the new ones he attributed to Jewish

originally from the *Literary Digest*, which asserted that religion, not race, lay at heart of issue; "Interesting Figures," *Ibid.*, May 7, 1909 (on Jewish longevity in Vienna). On August 11, 1911, the *Canadian Jewish Times* excerpted Dr. G. H. Kirby's analysis of "alcoholic insanity" rankings. According to Dr. Kirby, the rankings ran as follows: 1) Irish, 20%; 2) mixed group, 10%; 3) German, 9%; 4) Italian and American, 5%; 5) Negro, 4%; 6) Jewish, 0.6%. See also "The Longevity of Jewish Women," *Ibid.*, November 3, 1911, p. 11, which includes statistics from the New York Board of Health.

⁴¹ "The Dominant Law," *JT*, June 2, 1905, 214. Dietary laws accounted for Jewish longevity, according to life insurance experts in New York. For a description of the conditions of the Lower East Side, see Moses Rischin's *The Promised City: New York City's Jews, 1870-1914* (New York: 1970); and Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), originally published in 1901.

⁴² "Jewish Success," reprinted in the *JT*, September 8, 1905, p. 161.

success in business and industry, to the rise of a Jewish middle-class in the city's East End. The Theodore he appeared to be addressing was not Bingham but Roosevelt and his "race suicide" sloganeering, his bemoaning of the decline of white middle-class birthrates. Nervich wrote: "Success does not spoil Israel any more than persecution lowered him . . . For the acquisition of wealth or a rise in intellectual status do not weaken our moral fibre, or slacken our religious observance of family obligations."⁴³

He quietly alluded to the fact that the Jewish mortality rate had fallen off only marginally; nevertheless, in terms of overall percentages, it was "exceedingly small in comparison with that of other denominations." Nervich then went on to do as de Sola had done, and construed the data "as a tribute to the sanitary and healthy conditions of our mode of life, and the value of our method of slaughter of animals and the strict adherence to *kashruth* (kosher laws). The figures are still more remarkable when it is remembered that the majority of our people in this city do not live in the most salubrious parts of the city, many having to content themselves with living in our congested districts."⁴⁴

Rabbi Hermann Abramowitz also saluted the rise of the East End middle-class, explaining the resilience of his cross-town co-religionists in terms which partook of natural selective rhetoric. "It is not the scum of Europe either . . . who reach our shores," he wrote, "but pride and strength as represented by its best manhood. The weak, the feeble,

⁴³ Editorial, *CJT*, October 22, 1909, p. 995. See also "Jewish Birth Rate Good; Death Rate Low," *JT*, August 1, 1909. From *Annual Report of the Sanitary State of the City of Montreal*.

⁴⁴ "Vital Statistics," *CJT*, October 29, 1910, p. 8.

the decrepit remain behind.”⁴⁵ The Montreal *Daily Witness*, a paper that had always shown sympathy for Jewish causes (and to which Carroll Ryan was a frequent contributor), provided a more overtly “Social Darwinist” explanation for Jewish success in East End Montreal:

In seeking answers to these questions we must remember that only the strongest and most capable of Russian and Roumanian Jews have survived the centuries of persecution to which they were subjected, and that this persecution has developed in them the qualities which are the secret of their success in a new country of free opportunities. This answer suggests the further question: How are those who complain of the Jewish invasion going to resist it with any hope of success? The answer is plain. They must imitate the self-regarding virtues to which the Jewish immigrants owe their success. If they do not, they must inevitably go to the wall. They cannot do in Canada, as the people of Russia are doing, invoke repressive laws and resort to massacre occasionally and persecution always to keep the Jews from asserting their superiority. It is a question of the survival of the fittest.⁴⁶

Similar natural historical analogies had been employed to explain Jewish immigrant success in New York, a year previous to the Bingham Report. “What has made the Jew so uniformly successful in business?” one commentator asked: “The animal which is the prey of man and other animals adjusts itself to conditions and nature lends its help. The pheasant is as brown as the forest leaves in which it hides. Excluded from land and the mechanical trades, the Jew adapted himself to other things. Conditions and the Jewish law have made him what he is.”⁴⁷

Now it was the Montreal Jewish community’s turn to be noticed as a

⁴⁵ “Stranger Within the Gates”, a sermon on the occasion of the first day of Succoth, reprinted in the *CJT*, October 25, 1910, pp. 9-11, 15.

⁴⁶ Reprinted in the *JT*, April 30, 1909, p. 459.

⁴⁷ Isaac Seligman, “The Rise of the American Jew,” *JT*, February 8, 1907.

demographically-validated evolutionary phenomenon. “The Jews are becoming an important factor in our population, to be counted on in the future,” announced an Anglophone newspaper in rural Quebec in October of 1909.⁴⁸ Three years later, an American newspaper went so far as to link the recent manifestations of French Canadian anti-Semitism to evolutionary theory: “In commerce, industry, politics, and even religion, it is the abler and the stronger who triumph. The principle applies to races as well as to individuals. It is not by calumnies [a reference to the Plamondon blood libel case]⁴⁹ that we arrive at something worthy, and the Canadians of Quebec as elsewhere will realize this, for the Jews will continue to implant themselves in Quebec and in Montreal, just as they have implanted themselves in the US, and France, and elsewhere. Their ‘*entrainement*’ is better than ours, that is all.”⁵⁰

Entrainement, went the unspoken assumption, began in infancy and parenthood. In the pre-WWI period, when the eugenics movement began to make major inroads into

⁴⁸ “As Others See Us,” *JT*, October 29, 1909, an article about the vital statistics report in Montreal excerpted from the *News and Advocate* of St. Johns, Quebec, in dealing with the vital statistics of Montreal.

⁴⁹ For descriptions of the trial, see Gerald Tulchinsky, “Is It Good For the Jews?” in *Taking Root*, pp. 250-253, as well as Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif*, pp. 147, 155. Sociologist David Riesman discussed the import of the case in terms of the development of anti-hate laws in “Democracy and Defamation: Control of Group Libel,” *Columbia Law Review* 5 (May 1942), pp. 727-738.

⁵⁰ From *Le Messenger* of Lewiston, Maine, excerpted in the *CJT*, July 4, 1913, p. 21.

Canada and other Western nations,⁵¹ the mother's relationship to her child became increasingly a matter of public concern. And the Jewish mother, whatever her class or economic condition, was coming to be regarded as the era's "model mother."⁵² It was a reputation largely earned, but the purposes to which it was bent extended far beyond the home and nursery: Jewish mother became a puppet in the Punch and Judy Show of evolutionary dialogue.⁵³

Caleb Saleeby was perhaps the most outspoken and widely quoted Jewish authority on the subject of eugenicism and Jewish motherhood, and his views were frequently reported in the *Jewish Times*. A founding member of the Eugenics Education Society (later to become the British Eugenics Society), he had by 1909 become one of the most famous public health spokesperson in Britain. (It was he who coined the distinction between "negative" and "positive" eugenics. Negative eugenics involved contraception and sterilization; positive eugenics entailed the scientific nurturing of children).⁵⁴ Although he devoted relatively little of his prolific output⁵⁵ to the subject of Jewish childbearing, he

⁵¹ McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, pp. 1-11.

⁵² See Lara V. Marks, *Model Mothers: Jewish Mothers and Maternity Provision in East London, 1870-1939* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1994).

⁵³ Beth Wenger has shown that this racial scientific manipulation of "family values" continued on through the 1940s in "Mitzvah and Medicine: Gender, Assimilation, and the Scientific Defense of 'Family Purity,'" *Jewish Social Studies* 5:1&2 (Fall/Winter 1999), pp. 177-202.

⁵⁴ G.R. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-1914* (Leyden: Noordhoff International Publishing, 1976), p. 73.

⁵⁵ Brief mentions to Jewish child-rearing practices and the Jewish mother's role are made in *Progress of Eugenics* (1914); *Evolution, the Master Key* (1906); *The Cycle of*

was regarded as the foremost eugenic champion of the Jews.

In a 1909 story headed “Dr. Saleeby on the Survival of the Jewish Race”, the *Canadian Jewish Times* summarized the major points of his most recent speech, “The Future of Man: Brain or Brawn?” According to Saleeby, the Jews survived because they were smart; and they were smart because Jewish mothers followed child rearing practices that were sanctioned in the Old Testament.⁵⁶ His positive version of eugenic theory, while it emphasized environmental factors such as education, certainly did not discount hereditarian factors. (The fact that he believed that races were discrete, identifiable groups indicated as much.) He was certain, for instance, that some races were predisposed to alcoholism—and thus to mental and physiological disease—while others were resistant to it. The difference between current theories on “fetal alcohol syndrome” and his theory, of course, is that whereas we speak of persons as individually responsible for the health of the fetus, he invoked racial determinism and evolutionism. A year later, in an article on “Jewish Genius” published in the London *Westminster Gazette*, he “reminded the student of eugenics that this ‘amazing people’ has been the most continuously and stringently selected of any race.”⁵⁷

Clearly, mothers, Jewish and otherwise, were raising children in a highly charged atmosphere. In a world thought to be characterized by an “unnatural” level of stress and competition, it was incumbent upon parents to give a child every advantage; it could ill-

Life (1904); and *Parenthood and Race Culture: an Outline of Eugenics* (1909).

⁵⁶ *JT*, October 29, 1909, p.1016.

afford to be merely normal, had to be exceptional, and, therefore, could not be left to its own “natural” devices. The woman’s page editor of the *Canadian Jewish Times* complained that a “backward child” was “better fitted for the life he has to lead” because sent to a reform school, where trades were taught and moral and physical discipline strictly enforced. “Feeble” girls were sent to institutions and trained to sew, cook, garden, and do housework. The same went for the blind and deaf, who benefited from their disabilities because of social compensations. “In a simpler age it may have been fair to them [“normal” children] to teach the three Rs and then let them fend for themselves. But in these more complicated days of bitter competition and economic unrest is it not expecting a bit too much of even the intelligent boy and girl to think that they can shape their lives independently and make a success of them?”⁵⁸ A week later, the rhetorical question was answered under the heading “Improving the Mother’s Instinct”: only through scientifically proven methods, and stringent mental discipline, it was averred, could a mother successfully raise a modern child.⁵⁹

Perhaps the most telling evidence that an inordinate pressure was being brought to bear on Jewish parents is the fact that *Times*’ children’s page editor set club applications and infant mortality statistics side by side.⁶⁰ “Uncle Jacob” did little to alleviate his reader’s fears. In October of 1912, in an effort to drum up Jewish support for Montreal’s

⁵⁷ *CJT*, February 25, 1910, p. 5.

⁵⁸ “Neglect of the Normal Child,” *CJT*, March 21, 1913, p. 25.

⁵⁹ *CJT*, March 28, 1913, p. 25. See also “The Education of Our Girls,” April 18, 1913.

⁶⁰ *CJT*, September 6, 1912, p. 17.

annual Child Welfare Exhibition, he had a “Chat with Parents on A Question of Great Importance” (which because of its remarkable directness I reproduce in full):

There probably has never been a time in recorded history at which so much attention has been given to the subject of child rearing and up-bringing as at the present moment of our existence. The world has focussed its eyes upon the child and scientists declare that the future of the human race depends in a very great degree on the physical quality of children yet to come. It is with this as a basic principle that the new field of knowledge called eugenics has been brought before the intellectuals, among whom may be counted our most famous university professors, and social workers.

Men have said that we are fast becoming degenerates and hardly capable to hand on to generations to be born, the civilization of which we are but trustees. Therefore, they propose to regenerate virile mankind and womankind and thus assure a happier world wherein to complete the ‘three score years and ten cycle’ of our lives. The question of welfare centres about the welfare of our children. The mere babe has become the topic of a symposium, and all the nations of the two hemispheres are giving the best of their thoughts and wisdom to see how best to grapple the problem and arrive at sane and logical conclusions.

We Jews, along with our fellow-citizens, are very much interested in this matter, not only locally in Montreal, but throughout the globe, for have we not given to this department of science our [Cesare] Lombrosos, [Max] Nordaus, [Alfred] Adlers, and our [Abraham] Flexners,⁶¹ and are we not to-day worried about the problem of our second generation? But the road we have to traverse is a long and tedious one, and we have therefore to start early and give the subject of child upbringing all consideration that it undoubtedly deserves. Though education and proper civic life are the foundations, requisite, still in this drama of a new creation and of a ‘re-birthed’ people the parents are the sole hope and salvation.⁶²

Archie Bennett’s editorial advertising the Exhibition put the situation more succinctly but with a similarly alarmist edge: “We are living a fast life. We have much to

⁶¹ Abraham Flexner was a medical reformer and author of the famous Flexner Report (1910), the recommendations of which (including the separation of research and clinical work) William Osler found disagreeable. See Roland, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, p. 803.

⁶² *Ibid.*, August 16, 1912, p. 18.

care about and worry over. But our cares and worries are for the most part selfish.” While humanity’s forebears in the “pastoral era of evolution” had at least the excuse of ignorance, moderns had to bear full scientific responsibility for the future evolution of their race or respective races.⁶³ Not surprisingly, some mothers found themselves overwhelmed. An elderly woman confessed that, in her attempt to keep up with the latest sociological developments she had forgotten her first duty: “To stay sunny and sane.”⁶⁴ A tall order, given the enormous pressures placed upon women to do right by their children.

Even the baby beauty contests popularized in this era were fraught with eugenic import. In August of 1913, the women’s page carried the story of a “perfect baby” born in New York City:

It is an interesting, sociological fact that the ‘perfect baby’ just discovered in New York through the university settlement’s ‘baby contest’ was born and resides in the ‘crowded East Side.’ This infant, rated at the very top on all the 1 000 points which Dr. Holt laid out in the elaborate score card, is no ‘eugenic’ child. He is the son of plain, everyday, ordinary parents who probably wouldn’t know what the word meant. Abe Edelowitz attained physical perfection despite of adverse surroundings because his mother had a particular regard for his sleep, physical cleanliness, and fresh air supply, and heeded doctor’s advice to refrain from dosing him with the nostrums which unfortunate childhood usually falls heir to.⁶⁵

Little Abraham’s mother and father may not have been formally inducted into the mysteries of modern sociology but as “ordinary Jews” they were “model” parents whose “instincts” had not yet been dulled by the forces of modernity. It appears that middle-class

⁶³ “Child Welfare Exhibition,” *CJT*, October 18, 1912, pp.1-2.

⁶⁴ *CJT*, March 14, 1913, p. 25.

⁶⁵ *CJT*, August 8, 1913, p.11.

Jews were beginning to view their working-class brothers and sisters somewhat sentimentally, as a symbol of what they once were and might yet become again. But whereas “ordinary” (read “traditional”) Jews came by their child rearing practices “naturally”, the acculturated bourgeoisie were convinced that they had to find their way back to the old ways via the interventionist medium of modern scientific education. Though science and religion were seen to be mutually reinforcing, it is evident that the route to the goal of good parenting was being mapped out by sociologists rather than rabbis.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The Kehillah movement in New York, and precursors like the Educational Alliance, influenced the Montreal situation, and by 1914 the push to unite the city’s various Jewish organizations finally met with fair success. This is something both Gerald Tulchinsky and Michael Brown have noted. What Canadian and American scholars of Jewish history have yet to recognize is that the pleas for more money for education (as opposed to mere charity), were driven by a combination of religious and sociological (including eugenic) rationales based on the gendered idea that the mother of children is the general preparing troops for war with the future. Without such acknowledgement, we are unable to understand the crisis of faith then experienced, expressed in statements like the following:

We need a Kehillah educational program. In Montreal, 7, 000 children of school age; 1, 250 of which only who receive adequate religious training. The notion that ‘our girls’ need no Jewish education is bordering upon the ground of treason, when looking upon conditions and environments as they are. What we still find in our young is due mainly to the heroic efforts of our self-sacrificing Jewish mothers. If the future Jewish mothers be left without proper Jewish training, what will become of the next generation? The great trouble with our community is its overzealous efforts to waste its energy in what is commonly called ‘charity,’ and has but little of its strength left for educational purposes. This community spends \$120, 000 for purely charitable purposes and but \$20, 500 for educational purposes. We would not like to see a reduction in the in the amount spent on charity, but we would like to see an increase in the amount spent on education.

From “Our Young?” *CJT*, February 9, 1912, p. 3. See also Ida Seigler, “The New Jewish Woman,” *Ibid*, p. 9: “With all our praiseworthy desire to spiritualize our religion,

The level of grass-roots support for the Child Welfare Exhibition of 1912 is difficult to assess.⁶⁷ What is known is that West End Jews did participate in the organization of the event. Lyon Cohen, president of the Baron de Hirsch Institute, sat on the executive committee and was chairman of the publicity committee. Rabbi Abramowitz volunteered his services for the committee for Moral and Religious Training. If Yiddish-speaking visitors did arrive to have a look at the exhibits, “a band of Jewish girls and boys, under the convenorship of Miss Essie Hirsch, [was] on hand to interpret and explain everything in the Jewish language.”⁶⁸

A year later, in 1913, Carrie Derick, another organizer of the Exhibition and the first Canadian woman to attain the academic rank of professor,⁶⁹ addressed the Young People’s Society of Shaar Hashomayim on the subject of “Biology and Social Reform.” A prominent woman’s rights advocate, she taught evolution and genetics at McGill University. In her speech to the group (among whom numbered several of her students), she argued in favour of the segregation of tuberculosis victims and the mentally

we can’t dispense altogether with ceremonial observances,” and Mary L. Read, “What Every Mother Knows,” *CJT*, March 1, 1912, pp. 12, 14: “From the standpoint of biology and sociology—which is the standpoint of race welfare and social progress—it is the duty of every mother to come well-prepared for her work.”

⁶⁷ For a social historical overview of the event, see Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 34, 37.

⁶⁸ *CJT*, October 2, 1912, pp. 12, 14.

⁶⁹ See Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, “Last in the Field? Canadian Women Natural Scientists, 1815-1965.” In Ainley, ed. *Despite the Odds: Essays On Canadian Women and Science*. (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1990).

handicapped, and in doing so illustrated how easily the “eugenics conscience” combined with the tough-love of Social Darwinism: “while in our charitable endeavors we were eager to protect the weak and the deceased, we were really preserving disease. . . . What is needed is some reform to the root of this evil.” Her main point was that “biology shows us to what remarkable extent heredity plays a part in human characteristics. . . .” It was a message she preached consistently throughout her career.

According to Canadian historian Angus McLaren, Derick had for decades “attacked as nonsense the idea that social legislation could improve the degenerate.”⁷⁰ In short, the sanatoriums she envisioned were to have little or nothing to do with the curing of inmates or the amelioration of their condition. They were meant to be warehouses of terminal quarantine. Though this may sound reactionary, she was a progressive. Indeed, as Angus McLaren and other historians have demonstrated,⁷¹ the line between what was progressive or what was reactionary was drawn differently then. Eugenicism drew overwhelming support from some of the most progressive and influential figures in the first half of the twentieth century. John Maynard Keynes headed the British Eugenics Society before taking up the directorship of the World Bank after WWII; McLaren’s history of Canadian eugenics begins with the revelation that Tommy Douglas, founder of universal health care in this country, wrote a graduate thesis urging society to “recognize that mental and physical misfits warranted no better treatment than that once reserved for

⁷⁰ McLaren, *Our own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), p. 38.

⁷¹ Ian Robert Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

lepers and criminals.”⁷² Like Derick, Douglas perceived poverty as a symptom of degeneration.

Because of the Nazification of eugenic theory and “Social Darwinism”, they are usually viewed as predisposed towards racism and anti-Semitism. Yet, in Derick’s day, respect for Jews and Jewish culture might actually be expressed in those terms. Indeed, she ended her talk with “the opinion that owing to the immense struggle the Jewish race had experienced, the fittest of them survived to-day, so that in so far the Jews had, in some way, benefited by their tribulations.” Her words were well received. Summing up, the reporter for the *Canadian Jewish Times* wrote: “Altogether the lecturer, who recognized many of her old students in the audience, succeeded in making her address one of the most interesting and instructive ever delivered before this society.”⁷³

Sometimes Gentile opinions on the scientific rationales behind keeping kosher were solicited to do battle with anti-halachic Jews. Priding themselves on being the most progressive and modern of clergymen on the continent, the rejection by American Reformers’ of “irrational” dietary laws had once been taken as validation of their modernity. Yet now their attachment to the ethical mission theory was making them sound old-fashioned and out of touch. When, for instance, the Rev. Dr. Emil Hirsch of Chicago asserted that Jewish food taboos were based on nothing but unthinking (and pre-Mosaic) custom, Archie Bennett wrote: “the important thing is not whether or not Moses was the

⁷² McLaren, p. 9.

⁷³ *CJT*, February 14, 1913, p. 20.

originator of these laws, but what sanitary effect they had upon the life of our people. And on this point we have the testimony of the greatest medical authorities that the influence of the dietary laws on the preservation of the Jewish people is incalculable.⁷⁴ In order to buttress his argument, Bennett quoted the late French historian (a non-Jew) Leroy Beaulieu: “If our slaughterhouses . . . were placed under the supervision of the Jewish *Schochet*, there is no doubt that disease would be less prevalent and the average duration of life would be increased . . . Sanitary progress . . . as far as we Christians are concerned, requires a return to the practices which the Hebrew adopted 2 000 years ago.”

Already in 1901, a Canadian judge had approved of Jewish slaughtering methods on the grounds that Jews were quantifiably the “healthiest race,” which was why insurance companies “take risks on them” in preference over others.⁷⁵ A decade later the number of non-Jews to take up the defense of Jewish dietary practices was on the rise. In 1910, American politician Albert Beveridge combined the ethical and hygienic missions when he said on the floor of the Senate: “We Anglo-Saxons, in the pride of our worldly science, forget that the first time the word liberty was ever announced to the human race was in the laws of Moses—the words mercy, cleanliness, liberty and justice.”⁷⁶ The most consistently pro-Semitic Gentile to take up the hygienic mission cause, however, was T. Hunter Boyd, a Presbyterian minister from New Brunswick, and a leading member of the Canadian “Tuberculosis Movement” (one assumes he was against it).

⁷⁴ “A Rabbi Flouts Moses,” *CJT*, November 22, 1912, pp. 1-2:

⁷⁵ “Hon. Dr. Sullivan on the Jews,” *JT*, July 5, 1901, p. 250.

In July 1909, Boyd gave a lecture entitled "Judaism: The Guide to Health" at the Tuberculosis Exhibition, in the Whitechapel Art Gallery of London.⁷⁷ He declaimed not only upon the advisability of Gentile imitation but also on the meaning of Jewish chosenness. Begging world Jewry not to "abandon their mission just when the world stands most in need of it and when the world has at last awakened to its great value," he gave advice that intellectuals like Ha'am, Bennett, and Roback might have had some trouble with: "Don't trouble about culture. Continue to show the way to the pure and healthy life." Depending on one's definition of Jewish culture, Boyd was either a champion of the Jews or someone bent on their destruction. If that culture was defined hygienically, he was a righteous Gentile like Ryan or Emile Zola; if defined spiritually or linguistically, he was a well-intentioned Haman. It did not seem to matter whether his views were entirely or only partly congruent with Jewish views; he was doing his part to defend the Jews, in the only way he knew how.

Later that same month, Boyd took on animal rights activists who attacked the practice of *schechita* at the Congress on the Protection of Animals, London, England, again by invoking the Jewish hygienic mission.⁷⁸ In the words of Nervich, "Mr. Hunter

⁷⁶ From the editorial page of *CJT*, July 29, 1910, p. 8.

⁷⁷ *JT*, July 9, 1909, p. 702.

⁷⁸ For references to the various cases worldwide involving the indictment by Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Jewish slaughtering methods, see "Schechita in Finland," *CJT*, February 25, 1910; "Schechita Again Attacked at the International Protection Congress, Copenhagen," *Ibid.*, August 25, 1911, p. 16; "Attack on Schechita in New Zealand," *Ibid.*, December 9, 1910, p. 9; "The Schechita Problem in Germany," *Ibid.*, February 10, 1911, p. 9; "Halifax Schechita Trial," *Ibid.*, April 11,

Boyd, a Canadian delegate, took up cudgels in behalf of the Jews and paid a striking tribute to their mode of slaughter.”⁷⁹ Boyd’s message struck a chord in the Canadian Jewish community and he was invited to deliver lectures on the subject of hygiene by Jewish authorities glad to have a champion. In the Hazen Avenue synagogue of St. John, New Brunswick, the Presbyterian minister took as his text Deuteronomy 22: 8: “When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if any one fall from it.” “The essence of the text is Prevention,” Boyd said. “This is the keynote of the Tuberculosis Movement.” As to the Jewish contribution to the movement, he remarked upon the important part Jewish women were to play in its furtherance: “It is interesting to recall that the campaign against this disease, which is largely a house disease and due to unhealthy conditions, has been greatly assisted by Jewish women [who make a ‘ritual habit’ of closely supervising the handling of meats].” Suspecting that some hygienic customs were falling by the wayside, he urged “every Jewish mother to nourish her own infant. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the breast-feeding of infants.” He ended with the imperative: “Do not betray your trust.”⁸⁰

1913, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *JT*, July 30, 1909, p. 749.

⁸⁰ Excerpted in the *CJT*, May 20, 1910, pp. 14-15. On the connection between milk and disease, cf. “Summer Complaints in Children,” *CJT*, June 14, 1912, p. 14. Cynthia Comacchio explores the relationship between state policy and infant hygiene in *Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario’s Mothers and Children* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

The perception that Canadian Eastern European Jews were up-and-comers was one shared by both Jewish and non-Jewish observers. Those sympathetic to the Jewish cause were impressed with their recent upward mobility, as well as their continued fertility, and low infant mortality and morbidity rates. These newly minted model citizens were exhorted not to forsake traditions pertaining to dietary injunctions, for in their hygiene lay their chosenness.

The science of eugenics, then, was beginning to take over the role of supreme social arbiter. Eugenicism was markedly different from the types of evolutionary theories produced in the nineteenth century. Whereas Spencerism, for instance, insisted on a hands-off stance and could be used to support the liberal Judaic position, the eugenics movement—fueled by the xenophobia that accompanies moments of immigrant influx, by fears of “degeneration” and “race suicide”—took a hands-on approach to the solution of social problems. Neither politics nor religion was held up as an ideal model for social organization; times were too urgent to wait out the outcome of a sectarian or ideological “struggle for existence”—eugenic science being viewed as transcendently objective, a kind of tough love that just made common sense. Fears of feeble-mindedness, criminality, disease, and poverty led to the conclusion that the human eco-system was not self-regulating. In order that a steady state might be reached, it was believed that a guiding hand was required. That governor was eugenics, the science of “good genes”.

Although some Canadian historians have shown the impact of eugenics and social hygiene on the moral reform movements in this country, less has been said of their actual secularizing influence. But the impact was apparent. Just as religions, including Judaism, had

in the previous era been placed in a position of having to justify their existence by demonstrating liberal laissez-faire fitness, they were now judged according to their hygienic-interventionist value. If a religion wished to “regenerate” itself, it had to follow eugenic science’s lead. (It is one drawback of Cook’s *Regenerators* that he overlooks the eugenics factor when examining the impact of sociology on religion in Canada; but then, his period is the late Victorian, a decade too early.) This was a new state of affairs. Previously, religion and science had found ways to sanction each other; now the relationship had become lop-sided.

Epilogue: The Adaptable Jew Revisited

Woody Allen's "Zelig" (1983) is a pseudo-documentary, complete with commentary from experts like Susan Sontag and Irving Howe, playing themselves, that tells the story of a Jewish man's compulsive need to belong. He is like other people—only (to paraphrase a Jewish proverb) less so, because he cannot be himself. Not only does Zelig pick up the affectations of others, he becomes physically indistinguishable from them within minutes of meeting them. His unfortunate condition is exploited by freak-show hucksters and he is put on exhibit like Kafka's hunger artist. People pay to see him transmogrify according to the shifting requirements of his surroundings: set amongst the immensely obese, he becomes fat and jolly; he grows instant side-curls and gestures expansively in a group of Chasidim; standing next to native Americans, he takes on the features of a Plains Indian, war bonnet and all. Eventually rescued by a psychiatrist he escapes treatment before she can effect his cure; and, in the most extreme manifestation of his pathology, Zelig (whose name translates as "blessed one") shows up as a Nazi at the Nuremberg rallies.¹

¹ The real-life inspiration for Zelig was almost as incredible a character. A famous trickster of the twenties, his name was Stephen Jacob Weinberg—also known as S. Clifford Weinberg, Nathan Allen Weinberg, Rodney S. Wyman, Sterling C. Wyman, Stanley Clifford Weyman, Allen Stanley Weyman, C. Sterling Weyman, C. Sterling Weinberg, Royal St. Cyr, etcetera—and he made international headlines for the most famous of his scams. When Rudolf Valentino died, he took it upon himself to console the his grieving lover, Pola Negri, assuring her: "Rudy would have wanted me to take care of you, my dear." He became her public relations officer during the hysteria attending the aftermath of the funeral of Hollywood's first male sex symbol. (Thousands of women wept in the streets of New York; riots broke out.) Meanwhile, Weinberg performed his duties with the aplomb he brought to every one of his ventures. Needless to say, he had never known Valentino. Neither had he ever practiced medicine, but that didn't prevent him from becoming Miss Negri's "personal physician." Even after his unmasking, Miss

Critic Richard Grenier, writing for *Commentary* magazine, found the latter scene especially reprehensible and Allen's serio-comic approach to tragic matters generally problematic. The film-maker, he said, was constantly disguising his frivolous endeavors as sociology, and an out-dated kind of pop-sociology at that. Naming David Riesman's study of post-WWII conformism (*The Lonely Crowd*)² as Allen's inspiration, he advised Allen to treat historical subjects historically, within their context. Applying 1950s critiques to the situation of the 1920s is not only conceptually anachronistic, Grenier said, it also prevents one from taking into account the realities of Jewish life in the pre-war era.³

My own enjoyment of the film notwithstanding, I can also appreciate Grenier's point. I encountered something similar in this study: historians approaching the issue of Jewish emancipation, nationalism, and immigration in the present-day use terms like "assimilation", "acculturation", "accommodation", "survival", "environment", not to mention "adaptation", as though these terms have no historical provenance. Granted, when subjects are treated historically, they cannot but help but be conceptualized terms that are simultaneously presentist and in the past tense. Maybe Allen should add some

Negri claimed she'd never encountered a more competent medico. The story of Weinberg's life is told in St. Clair McKelway, *The Little Big Man from Brooklyn* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).

² *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

³ Grenier, "Woody Allen on the American Character," *Commentary*, November, 1983, pp. 63-67.

more recent sociological or historical literature to his library. But that would not change the nature of the problem.

I have not solved it but have tried to keep aware of the “evolution” of sociological epistemology transpiring in the period under review. It was interesting to learn, for instance, that some scientists at around the turn-of-the-century were beginning to make distinctions between “adaptation” and “accommodation”, reserving the former for natural scientific discourse and the latter as a social scientific synonym. Among the first to do so was James Mark Baldwin,⁴ an American who taught mental philosophy at the University of Toronto from 1883 to 1889 (and who, incidentally, was unpopular there because his materialist experimental approach clashed with the Canadian idealist norm).⁵ Because the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1905) was simultaneously in production, I made sure to compare its terminological definitions with the usages found in my subjects’ writings. Since the journalistic medium is idiomatic and less bound to precision than academic writing, there was never a perfect match. Nevertheless, if (as A.A. Roback would argue) popular expressions are more revealing of an era’s mentalities than scholarly formulations, I do not think it difficult to defend my decision to allow my subjects to speak for themselves as much as possible.

Moreover, allowing them their say in their own words we can see how our terminology subtly transforms our understanding of how people in the past thought—and

⁴ See his *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology; including many of the principal conceptions of ethics, logic, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, mental pathology, anthropology, biology, neurology, physiology, economics, political and social philosophy, philology, physical science, and education; and giving a terminology in English, French, German, and Italian* (New York: MacMillan, 1901-1905).

what rationales they used in thinking so—according to our preconceptions. The terminology that many historians of American and Canadian Jewry continue to use, either explicitly or implicitly, is derived from another sociologist of Riesman's generation.

Thus, a recent excellent survey of American Jewish history begins as follows:

In his class work *Assimilation in American Life*,⁶ Milton Gordon drew clear and useful distinctions between *acculturation*—accommodation to the larger society without total loss of ethnic distinctiveness—and *assimilation*—complete or nearly complete disappearance of traditional cultural traits. The Jewish experience in the United States is a powerful example of acculturation: Jews have been able both to maintain their own particular ethnic identity and at the same time to become American and middle-class. . . . they did not “melt.”⁷

Having no particular quarrel with this argument as an argument—though there are others, like religious historian Jacob Neusner, regarding the celebration of Jewish ethnic identity, who may—I merely wish to point out that, even when sociologists (or historians) use it, assimilation is a far from neutral term. When the *Jewish Times* columnists and their contemporaries employed it, assimilation was denoted as conversion and intermarriage; yet, more significantly, it connoted Darwinian disaster, racial or religious extinction. When Conservative rabbis like Hermann Abramowitz were called upon to justify their reinterpretations of Judaic law and practice, to fend off charges of assimilationism, they did not use the word acculturation, and not just because it had not been invented yet. It would not have captured the intended meaning. Conservative theology, such as it was, took as its point of departure the ““evolving religious experience

⁵ “James Mark Baldwin,” *Canadian Encyclopedia Plus* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996).

⁶ The full citation: *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁷ Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. viii.

of the Jewish people?”⁸ Conservative spokespersons may not have been as precise as James Mark Baldwin when speaking of adaptation and accommodation but it seems unlikely that these terms were chosen haphazardly or merely because they were readily available. It is, I think, reasonable to infer that evolutionary assumptions were in operation here, especially given the era’s anxieties and high-pitched awareness of a theory (or theories) that we tend to take for granted.

For similar reasons, I do not think we can take Gordon’s terminology for granted, either. His work (like Will Herberg’s contemporaneous *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*),⁹ was also historically specific. At the time of his writing, Jews, for the first time, were beginning to be widely recognized as comprising one ethno-religious third of an otherwise (so-deemed) monolithic American culture. The Jews had arrived. Yet, just as we cannot (or, at least, I am unable to) make sense of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity without an awareness of the influence of neo-Platonism,¹⁰ one cannot understand what Gordon and Herberg were talking about without considering a specific set of ideational circumstances: Whereas religion and culture could previously—before the Holocaust—be said to be expressions of racial identity, now race had been eliminated (or driven underground or euphemized as ethnicity) and one could safely speak of religious and ethnic identities as being cultural phenomena. Those who assimilated were no longer

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹ *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1960).

¹⁰ This was a point that one occasional contributor to the *Jewish Times*, Lewis Hart, made to refute the Jewish origins of Christianity, which he described as deriving from paganism: “If the Hebrew Scriptures are right, then Christianity must be wrong.” *JT*, March 11, 1904, pp. 122-123.

“traitors to the race”, not in mainstream or pop-sociological discourse at any rate. They were conformists who had taken the process of “acculturation”, or adjustment to wider society’s values, too far. This is “Zelig” in a nutshell—Allen’s character, as Grenier said, is a product of the fifties, the creature from the grey flannel lagoon.

A new generation of Jewish scholars (notably Matthew Frye Jacobson¹¹ and Karen Brodtkin Sacks) are eschewing triumphalism and apologetics. Though not taking anything away from a remarkable success story in which their own parents played a part, they show that it is not enough to say that the strength of the Jews was in their ability to adapt or acculturate.¹² Sacks argues that the Jewish rise to the American middle-class

¹¹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹² In my introduction, I downplayed the importance of demographic analyses, but a few words of explanation and qualification are in order. If numbers are used to merely bolster plausible but unexamined assumptions—for instance, that the waves of Jewish immigration from Russia from the 1880s onwards came about purely as a result of persecution—then they must be challenged. Sometimes, as in Gerald Tulchinsky’s approach in his history of Canadian Jewry, cliometry (the historical employment of statistics) allows for the challenging of such “myths” (his term). In referring to immigrant myths, Tulchinsky was not denying that pogroms pushed Jews to North America but was adding to it the equally powerful factor of a population explosion in the Russian Pale and the socio-economic stresses that came with it. Along the way, he implicitly identified what I have referred to as the stereotype of the adaptable Jew:

Such myths are especially prevalent in some of the popular perceptions of Canadian Jewish history: Jews fled from the persecutions of the Russian-Polish pogroms; Jews adapted themselves readily to the new environment and became one of Canada’s great success stories; Jews moved quickly up the social and economic ladders and established a well-organized communal life marked by cohesion and self-help, except for minor divisions between the earlier and later arrivals. The trouble with myths is that they usually contain a certain amount of truth, and the difficulty lies in distinguishing between the times and places when they are and are not true. To apply them as universal truths denies the validity of the special and the unique.

respectability was aided by two crucial factors: anti-Semitism was muted after the Holocaust; and many working-class Jews benefited from housing programs and the educational opportunities afforded by the G.I. Bill. These governmental initiatives, she notes, were implemented less-than-universally; as a consequence, returning black soldiers were not given the same advantages.¹³

In a 1904 editorial on Montreal's mayoralty merry-go-round—a French Catholic elected for one stint, an Irish Catholic for the next, and these only after turns taken by Protestants of British origin—Carroll Ryan said that it was time for Jewish representation, “the Jews of Montreal now . . . compos [ing] the fourth *respectable* minority.”¹⁴ Minority or “subaltern” (a handy word taking into account that sometimes minority status is assigned to those in the majority) studies are almost unavoidably comparative. This, even when some of those compared are not mentioned. Who were some of these less-than-respectable minorities silently indicted by Ryan, for instance, and why were they assigned this status?

Well, if being implicitly identified as a member of the white middle-class was important in the 1950s, in Ryan's era it was just as important, if not more so. One could be a lot more explicit about it, since races were unquestionably real and evolutionism encouraged frank talk. That is what I have tried to capture by not putting words in my

Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, pp. 3-4.

¹³ Sacks, *How Jews Became White Folks And What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ “Minority Representation”, *JT*, February 12, 1904.

subject's mouths: the voice not of one newspaper, or one people, but of an era, the tone of which, admittedly, is sometimes grating to our ears.

If the story of Zelig rings false, it is because it assumes that acts of conformity occur in a vacuum. Historians know better, identify pressures from above, measure resistance from below. But, whether one is of an older school and still speaks of minorities, or whether one refers to subalterns and Othering, it also seems a mistake to assume that up and down are constants, or that all Others like to be lumped in together. If, on the other hand, Zelig's story resonates, this is because it presupposes that (to paraphrase Zangwill) individuals can enter all incarnations of humanity, and that people are like other people—neither less so, nor more so.

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Appendix

“Eugenics and the Jew” by Sheila Rand
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Professor J. A. Thomson of the Aberdeen University, when speaking at the Eugenics Education Conference, held in London, England on March first last, referred to the Jewish race as a ‘people of high eugenic practice and ideal.’

I doubt whether such great praise has ever been given to the Jewish nation. . . . For what is the eugenic ideal and practice but the belief that the progress of mankind can be continued in the future so that our descendants will be better than ourselves, morally, mentally, and physically, combined with the deliberate and unswerving efforts of a nation to improve all social conditions under human control, so as to leave as valuable a heritage as possible to its posterity. And what constitutes the basis of Judaism but a code of laws, the observance of which tends towards the realization of this eugenic ideal.

Karl Pearson has said that a nation’s greatest asset is her thoroughly normal and healthy children. The health and soundness of a nation is the ‘bed-rock on which alone a great nation can be built up,’ and by which an empire ‘once founded can be preserved.’ Many centuries before Karl Pearson uttered these words of deep significance, the Jewish people had been exhorted to ‘increase and multiply,’ and to observe those dietary and sanitary laws which have resulted in the superior healthiness of the Jews—laws to the hygienic character of which modern science has amply testified. To preserve and promote physical health is to the Eugenist a sacred duty. It is also a duty which Jewish teaching has consistently enforced. To the conforming Jew, the preservation of health is an obligation. Judaism, unlike other civilizations, has never regarded the body as vile. . . .

The greatness of a nation does not rest entirely upon its physical fitness. Sir Francis Galton, the founder of the science of Eugenics, realized this, for he gave as his definition of Eugenics, ‘the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally.’ Judaism, considered in the light of eugenic ideals and teaching, has gone one step further. It has paid great attention to the physical and mental life of the Jewish people, and it has at the same time applied itself with great insistence to the strength of the moral and spiritual life of the individual and of the community. As regards the mental life, from the cradle of existence, Judaism has proclaimed it the bounden duty of every Jewish father to teach his child, and long before the world recognized the meaning of education, schools were spread broadcast through the length and breadth of Palestine. And further, when we come to consider the moral teachings of Judaism, we find that obedience to these very laws that are considered by some to be solely of hygienic value, has not only resulted in physical purity but also spiritual purity. For human life is not a bundle of separate discontinuous elements but forms of one organic whole, and the respectful treatment of the physical laws must tend to the purification of the spiritual element of the human mind.

Today the eugenist is striving to awaken the public consciousness to a sense of national duty. Environment is no longer to be considered the scapegoat for all physical defects and moral vices. Heredity has now by careful and lengthy investigation being proved to be by far the stronger of the two factors which go to determine the future characteristics of an individual. Parents, cry the eugenists, must be taught that they are

responsible to the nation for the kind of child they bring into the world. The man or woman who is either physically or mentally defective is committing a grave sin if he or she bring a child into the world. The very lesson that the great moral teacher of old gave the Jewish people, when he said, 'the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me'—that is, upon those who have not observed the laws of God but violated them.

At the very same Eugenics Conference . . . Mr. Graham, the medical Inspector of schools, said 'all his hearers had studied the Jewish race; wherever they were found, in any town, were there such mothers? Were there such babies? Were there any other people so devoted their creed?' He has put his finger upon the strongest and most beautiful characteristic of Judaism—its constant effort to retain the purity of home-life as its mainstream. . . .

Up to the present, it cannot be said that the Jewish people generally are taking an active part in that world-wide movement which is the late outcome of the study of the science of Eugenics. This inactivity is neither proof of lack of interest, nor of disapproval of the eugenics movement. It is simply because eugenic principles are so part of the Jewish religion, that those lessons which the eugenists are striving to teach all peoples, the Jews themselves consider as important as those other laws about which they were commanded thus: 'and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkst by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt find them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between they eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and upon thy gates.'¹

¹ *CJT*, August 15, 1913, pp. 6-7.