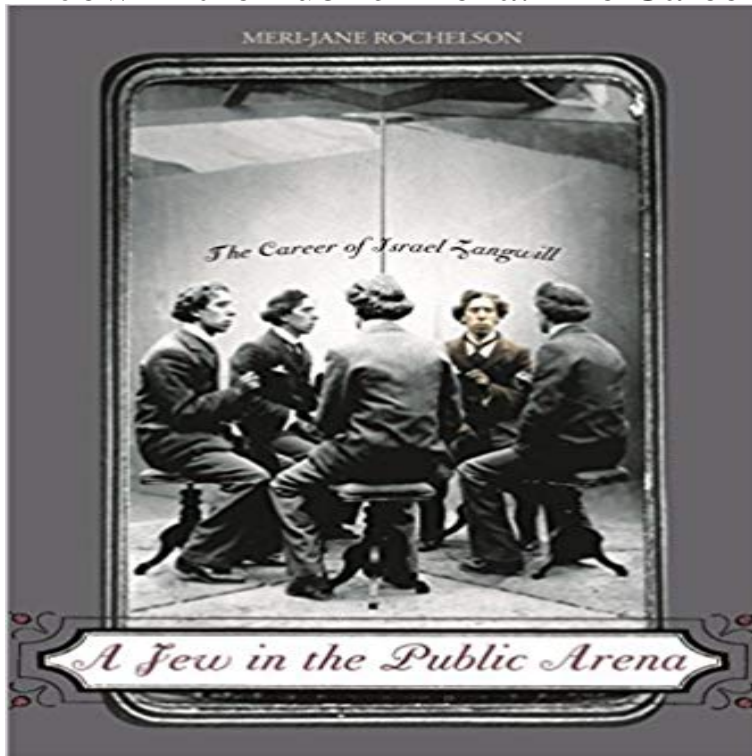


A Jew in the Public Arena: The Career of Israel Zangwill



After winning an international audience with his novel *Children of the Ghetto*, Israel Zangwill went on to write numerous short stories, four additional novels, and several plays, including *The Melting Pot*. Author Meri-Jane Rochelson, a noted expert on Zangwill's work, examines his career from its beginnings in the 1890s to the performance of his last play, *We Moderns*, in 1924, to trace how Zangwill became the best-known Jewish writer in Britain and America and a leading spokesperson on Jewish affairs throughout the world. In *A Jew in the Public Arena*, Rochelson examines Zangwill's published writings alongside a wealth of primary materials, including letters, diaries, manuscripts, press cuttings, and other items in the vast Zangwill files of the Central Zionist Archives, to demonstrate why an understanding of Israel Zangwill's career is essential to understanding the era that so significantly shaped the modern Jewish experience. Once he achieved fame as an author and playwright, Israel Zangwill became a prominent public activist for the leading social causes of the twentieth century, including women's suffrage, peace, Zionism, and the Jewish territorialist movement and rescue efforts. Rochelson shows how Zangwill's activism and much of his literary output were grounded in a universalist vision of Judaism and a commitment to educate the world about Jews as a way of combating antisemitism. Still, Zangwill's position in favor of creating a homeland for the Jews wherever one could be found (in contrast to mainstream Zionism's focus on Palestine) and his apparent advocacy of assimilation in his play *The Melting Pot* made him an increasingly controversial figure. By the middle of the twentieth century his reputation had fallen into decline, and his work is unknown to many modern readers. *A Jew in the Public Arena* looks at Zangwill's literary and political activities in

the context of their time, to make clear why he held such a place of importance in turn-of-the-century literary and political culture and why his life and work are significant today. Jewish studies scholars as well as students and teachers of late Victorian to Modernist British literature and culture will appreciate this insightful look at Israel Zangwill.

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